

Ecological Impacts of Imperialism in Kimani's *Dance of the Jakaranda*: A Critical Analysis

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Abstract

The study examined the ecological impacts of colonization in Peter Kimani's Dance of the Jakaranda. The scope of the study included the analysis of colonial strategies used by British colonizers in East Africa, the plunder of resources, and the resulting environmental consequences as depicted in the novel. Textual analysis was employed as a method of study. The novel was selected using a purposive sampling method for its strong environmental and ecological concerns. The data were collected through close reading of the novel. Excerpts were gathered and categorized according to postcolonial thematic categories with direct connections to the environment and ecology, and the analysis was conducted using tenets of ecological imperialism. The result of the analysis shows that the novel depicts colonial plunder of resources as an archetypal issue, illustrating that the colonizers' subjugation of the indigenous peoples of East Africa was exclusively to satisfy materialistic desires. The plunder involves both human and nonhuman entities. This is followed by the catastrophic environmental repercussions of colonial rulers' violent colonial strategies, or ecological imperialism, which include the use of disease, deforestation, conservation, and ecological degradation caused by military aggression and fire. The text depicts a complete environmental transformation as a result of the sequential exertion of colonial instruments, colonial exploitation, and resource transfer. Colonialism causes the nation's birth in East Africa, evolves into neocolonialism eventually, and continues to impact this new nation and its ecosystem, either directly or indirectly.

Keywords: Ecological imperialism, colonialism, environmental impacts, Peter Kimani, Dance of the Jakaranda

Introduction

Ecological imperialism as a theoretical concept is coined from two words: ecology (adj., ecological) and imperialism. The term ecology is derived from Ancient Greek (oikos) to mean "house", and (-logia) to mean "study". It is defined as the scientific study of the relationships between the living organisms, including humans, in the house (the environment) and the house itself (Real & Brown, 1991, p. 1-2). The word "imperialism", on the other hand, is derived from the Latin

word "imperium", which means ultimate power, "sovereignty", or "rule" (Etymonline, 2020). It is the strategy of expanding a state's control and influence through colonization, the use of military force, or other means. Thus, the term "ecological imperialism" refers to a system of political, economic, and cultural oppression as well as coercion and violence of the environment and its inhabitants.

The theory of ecological imperialism, first put forth by Alfred Crosby, holds that the reason why European settlers were successful in

colonizing other areas was due to their unintentional or intentional introduction of animals, plants, and diseases that caused significant changes in the ecology of the colonized regions and population collapses among the endemic peoples (Mayor, 1995). Ecological imperialism as a process can be seen as a byproduct of capitalism's globalization. It contends that colonization was not only a kind of cultural and political oppression, but also a sort of environmental violence.

Ecological imperialism can be viewed as a legacy of the globalization of capitalism, where the exploitation of natural resources in colonized territories was used to fuel the growth of capitalist economies. The impact of ecological imperialism can still be seen in postcolonial societies, where environmental degradation and resource depletion continue to affect the trajectory of development.

Ecological imperialism is often seen as a form of environmental terrorism, as it can have devastating effects on local ecosystems and the people who depend on them. The concept of ecological imperialism has been explored in various academic fields, including history, ecology, and literature. In literature, authors use their works to shed light on the environmental and social consequences of ecological imperialism and to critique the power dynamics that perpetuate it. For example, in Yvonne Owuor's *Dust* and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's *Petals of Blood*, the authors use their characters and settings to illustrate how ecological imperialism is intertwined with political power dynamics and social inequality. The post/neo-colonial nation-state perpetuates this legacy by continuing to prioritize economic development over environmental conservation, leading to devastating consequences for local ecosystems and communities (Anthonia, 2023, p. 2-3).

Ecological imperialism is better understood if it is articulated in terms of the contact between native and non-native nations in the colonial zone. The non-natives who are commonly known as settlers come to the territory of indigenous peoples not as fugitives, or exiles, or guests, but as masters or rulers to occupy large and fertile land. They bring their socio-

political and cultural ideologies, technologies, and animals and plants, and they also come with microorganisms that are not visible to the naked eye (Crosby, 1986). They used military force to evict the natives from the land. They intentionally or unintentionally destroyed the natural ecology and culture of the native land during the contact process. They settled among the natives, pushing them to the periphery and enslaving them on the ancestral homestead. They also established a center that serves as a dominant culture among the natives. This center eroded the nation's culture and natural resources.

Besides, they controlled all trade routes and took part in using all possible means to take wealth to their mother country. They imposed self-serving laws to control natives and show the politics of ownership. In this way, they had colonial empires which had the goal to increase their wealth through trade and resource extraction. This was accomplished through the growth of cash crops and the exploitation of natural resources. These were frequently done with grudging concern, worse, with little regard for the local ecology (Fairhead & Leach, 2000).

The dichotomy of mind and matter gave the Europeans the power to advance science, which unintentionally facilitated the process of colonization itself. Carolyn Merchant refers to this approach to "mechanistic science" as "egocentric ethics," and she claims that this opens the door to the operation of utmost dominion over nature by a superior human agency (1992, p. 66). She claims that mechanical philosophers and scientists proposed a world of spirit separate from the world of matter. A separate human mind functioning in accordance with reasonable laws might describe, fix, and control nature, the human body, and animals, like individual components of a machine.

European anti-ecological thinking is attributed to theories by Francis Bacon, René Descartes, and Isaac Newton, who led the Scientific Revolution. Descartes, the main proponent of this theory, saw nature as a machine and believed humans would become masters and possessors of it. He reduced animals to robots,

analyzing their physical and chemical components for mankind's benefit. Descartes argued that animals had no mental faculties, making them bodies or machines, and therefore, incapable of feeling pain (Sessions, 1995).

In this view, nature is treated as a subordinate, inanimate resource that can be exploited by rational beings for their own material benefit. The assumption is that natural organisms are machines that obey "universal mathematical laws," in contrast. Descartes' mechanistic perspective receives the scientific legitimacy it deserves from the Newtonian mechanical model of the cosmos, which is based on reason and experiment and is articulated by the ostensibly distinct and unambiguous mathematical laws. The basic concepts of classical science are thus represented by the Cartesian-Newtonian paradigm.

Francis Bacon, nevertheless, was the first to make the connection between scientific knowledge and imperialism, highlighting the necessity of the coexistence of scientific knowledge and imperial power in order for the colonial ideologies that underlie ecological imperialism to be successfully established. Bacon's work thus served as a framework for applying scientific theories that eventually led to Newtonian mechanics. It had a noticeable impact on the advancement of western anthropocentric ideologies, which viewed humans as imperialist agents and nature as a pure commodity. Thus, Bacon's program to establish man's superiority over nature was very useful in enabling the imperialist policies of environmental conquest in the colonized lands.

Ecological imperialism and mechanistic science emptied nature of its intrinsic value and turned it into a wholesale commodity. The impact of enforced land conversion to production value, or for capital resource, regardless of its suitability to the local ecosystems, in the indigenous environments, for instance, resulted in such damage that it included not only the non-human resources but also the indigenous peoples themselves.

The study is thus aimed at critically reading, analyzing, and interpreting Peter Kimani's novel for its representation of the ecological impacts of colonization, with the specific intention of investigating the disastrous ecological repercussions of imperialism.

Materials and methods

Methods

This study uses textual analysis to examine how characters make sense of the physical world in narratives. It focuses on setting and scenery events, observations, and experiences of characters, as they are the writer's articulations of what is happening in the ecological setting. The study explores the behaviors, interactions, interconnections, and feelings of characters, as well as environmental tropes and ecological landscape crises used in natural ecology. The textual analysis follows the post-structuralist perspective, asserting the multiplicity of readings, and considers a range of textual features in the analysis.

Criteria for Text Selection

The study employed a purposive sampling technique to select the novel for analysis based on its relevance to the study's research objectives. It was used to investigate how Peter Kimani depicts the ecological impacts of colonization in his narrative as an African literary writer. This novel was selected for its strong environmental and ecological concerns. The selection criteria for the novel took into account what Buell refers to as "environmentally oriented" literary texts as well as "those" that do not appear to be so (1995, p. 195). The selection method was based on searching for thematic concerns that are relevant to the study rather than simply taking samples from geographical variants.

Data Analysis Procedures

This research employed close reading, interpretation, and in-depth analysis of the primary source to identify areas for further investigation and evaluation. Data analysis was

used to organize and cross-examine excerpts collected from the novel, allowing for pattern identification, theme discovery, relationships, explanations, interpretations, and pattern findings. Textual analysis was used to analyze the novel, with ecological and colonial thematic categories connected to the environment and ecology. Then the analysis was conducted using the tenets of ecological imperialism, which examined the representation of ecology, human-nonhuman connections, and the ramifications of (neo)colonization.

Results and Discussion

Peter Kimani's historical novel, *Dance of the Jakaranda*, can be critiqued as a tale of environmental horrors caused by colonization. His novel shows how imperialist control is promoted by taking advantage of natives' ecological vulnerabilities. Kimani condemns the use of military violence, disease, deforestation, and torture by imperialists to establish their colonial enterprise. He also condemns colonial conservationist activity and its effects on animals and gaming in East Africa.

Ecological Destruction through Military Violence and Fire

Military aggression and fire are often used as strategies of ecological imperialism, leading to environmental degradation and deforestation (Hussain, 2019). The British colonial power, as depicted in *Dance of the Jakaranda*, used military violence to expand into East Africa, affecting both human and nonhuman individuals. Kimani's novel reveals that the colonization of Kenya was not based on treaties between the British government and native village councils, as documented in colonial documents. The British colonial administrators destroyed the environment and natural ecosystems through military power, resulting in the complete annihilation of both humans and nonhumans in one village. The novel highlights the devastating effects of military violence on both humans and nonhumans.

The very purpose of the British colonialism in Kenya is expressed in the words of the British

East Africa Protectorate commissioner on the day of the inauguration of the railway construction as being commerce, civilization, and Christianity. Commerce is understood in the sense of taking part in the competition with European powers for the exploitation of East African natural resources and wage labor. This precious and sacred purpose, as the colonizers think, becomes successful by battling the grassroots resistance from the natives using military technologies that the natives are not capable of using.

McDonald, the colonial administrator, faces stiff challenges as a result of the natives' opposition to colonialism in general and the construction of a railway in their territory in particular. Consequently, he instructs his policemen to encircle the *kaya*, the place which is considered sacred and "the hallowed seat of god" (p. 95). Kimani describes *kaya* as that the natives "have mortal fear of the place and the elders." The people feed the trees with honey and meat, which grows the trees to "gigantic scales that several men cannot hold the girth of one such tree" (p. 95).

The colonial authorities prioritize capturing the *kaya*, the central and unifying place for the natives, as it is the epicenter of resistance. Without the *kaya*, fathers are powerless to influence their offspring's affairs, and elders' influence dwindles. Captain John Adams emphasizes this in his letter to McDonald. McDonald orders the clan head to provide 500 men for the construction of a railway as a pretext for theft of materials and detention of two engineers. When the clan head challenges him, McDonald instructs the chief to work on the rails as punishment for attacks on his caravans and kidnappings. The inhabitants of the nine villages of Griama drumbeat, mourn, and show hesitation as the code to summon the community to a meeting in the *kaya* the following day.

At the meeting, the nine elders' leader describes the perilous situation that threatens their collective future, eloquently stating that McDonald had imposed a fine on the natives to be paid—"not in terms of money, not in terms of grains, not in terms of animals, but in terms

of humans" (p. 112). To incite more rage among the people, the chief elder recalls the prophecy, saying, "This thing that the white man is building on our land is the snake that Me Katilili warned about. And for an appetizer, he is asking for five hundred men to push into the belly of the beast..." (p. 112). The head of the elders is describing the nature of the colonizers as materialists. This is part of the mission of the colonizers as they diminish the value of humans and nonhumans into commodities. The colonizers come to the villages with the intention of integrating both human and nonhuman resources in order to satisfy their materialistic desires through the exploitation of ecosystems, which is expressed in capitalism.

Following the speech, more ferocious eruptions break out. The women dance around cursing the white man, their genitalia on display and their loincloths ripped off. The boys draw their swords from their sheaths and show how they kill the white man. Elderly men openly cry as a result of an unjust intrusion into their way of life. They end the meeting by taking the oath to defend their hallowed land to the "last man, to the last woman, to the last child," and to their "last breath."

McDonald sends 40 policemen to swoop into three villages and arrest all the men after hearing about the meeting's reports. However, women and children are found during the search because all of the elderly and young men from the three villages have already left for the forest. Then, among the policemen, as one of them tries to pull at the breast of a young woman, and the woman screams her protest and shakes off his hand, the pan tosses oil on the open flame, and a new blaze leaps into the air and burns down huts. Since there are no men to contain the fire, it spreads quickly, razing an entire village.

The colonizers are unethical in their approach towards both the humans and the nonhumans because they have got inverted image of the natives and their environment in their discourse, and this brings a total environmental damage. As Joseph Conrad's narration depicts, Africa is a dark continent where uncivilized

and pagan people live. McDonald and his policemen have similar attitude towards the Africans and their natural environment. Consequently, they do not sympathize with the natives and their overall environment.

It is clearly understandable that the destruction caused by the fire is extremely horrific; not only the huts and possessions within the huts are burned down, but as Kimani puts it, "the entire village is razed by the fire." In rural villages in Africa, huts are not normally interconnected in their structural construction. Since each household in the village has its own plot of land and hut, they are simply scattered in different locations in the form of dots. Therefore, in order for the fire to jump from hut to hut, it must first burn the ground in between them, along with any nearby forest and living things. The number of microbial and tree species that are wiped out in the village is unimaginable. The entire habitat, including their homes, is destroyed by the fire caused by the policeman's uncaring gratification.

The kaya remains the epicenter of the local uprising. McDonald struggles with his next move. He has tried and failed to appoint local elders as chiefs in order for his colonial strategies to succeed. He has also taken rams, as he was ordered to do by the elders to appease the rage of their gods for stepping into kaya without permission. He eventually becomes irritated and erupts in violence, ordering the kaya to be destroyed with dynamite (p.119). McDonald, as an experienced colonial soldier, decides to follow cautious and quick steps to avoid an expected backfire during the operation.

McDonald secures the perimeter of the Edenic kaya, an Edenic place with mangrove forests and palm trees, with the help of British policemen. The darkness within the forest is intense, especially at night. McDonald rings the kaya with dynamite, turning it into ashes within a blink of an eye. The incident is described as a flash of lightning lit the dark forest, followed by a clap of thunder. McDonald aims to demonstrate his country's superior military and technology to the locals, a strategy used by the colonial power, as Alfred Crosby states. British

imperialism's success was largely due to their superior organization and technological prowess.

Kimani describes the destruction caused by colonial authorities, giving it a transcendental demeanor, and attributing it to the annihilation of nature altogether, including the religious cite (kaya), as "it was an episode recorded in local lore as the day the figs walked and birds froze in midair." (p. 136). He also refers to it as "the day of the earthquake, for the powerful blast upturns trees, casting light upon the dark enclave that has preserved the power and mystery of ancient gods for generations."

When the colonial authorities are unable to persuade the native elders through argument, they do not hesitate to demonstrate the power of militarism and technology. The colonial master, McDonald, shows the natives that his power in the technological military can do anything. He threatens that he can wipe out the natives from the face of the earth at once. One of the characters in the text, called Nyundo, first compares the cannon blast to none of the gun in his admiration of the white man's power. "Mark my word: a cannon blast has no equivalent; it is the mother of all blasts." (p. 88). Nyundo describes the horrific blasts and its environmental consequences as:

Sparrows suspended their fluttering to listen to the blast, for they had never heard such a sound. The roaring sea waves, he said, flattened out to duck the cannon fire so that the sea lay flat like a mirror reflecting the sun above. The palm trees dropped all their fruit—mature, immature, raw, and ripe." Nyundo dropped his voice and said sotto voce, "Like a woman losing a pregnancy." Then, resuming his narration in a well-modulated tone: "The swinging branches were suspended in midair, the leaves arched awkwardly like a dreadlocked head . . . Maajabu! (p.88).

In this excerpt, Kimani uses Nyundo's account to illustrate the ecological destruction caused by military violence and fire. Nyundo is a survivor of the second explosion, which was dynamite and targeted the kaya, the cultural and religious center of the nine villages. The

blast causes a complete obliteration of the environment.

In general, during a rebellion against the colonial government, as depicted in the novel, colonial authorities use various methods that are unsafe for the natural ecosystems, including killing natives' animals and razing their villages, which are done through military tactics, machines, and fire to show the power of the white man.

The Use of Disease

Campbell et al. (2010) elaborate on colonialism's violent engagement by asserting, "[T]he impacts of colonialism were similar, regardless of the specific colonizer: disease; destruction of indigenous social, political, and economic structures; repression; exploitation; land displacement; and land degradation" (p. 37). The colonial powers were harsh toward the natives and their environment. According to Crosby (1986), the success of European imperialism has a "biological and ecological component" in particular. Unintentionally—and less frequently, purposefully—spreading European diseases to other parts of the world led to the annihilation of local populations, which paved the way for European military and technological invasion (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 92). In order to propagate themselves in the strategic land of Kenya, the imperialists do not flinch from using whatever means necessary to subdue natives along with their homestead.

As depicted in the novel, they embark on the use of viruses and kill the cattle of the natives to make them weak and dependent on the colonial enterprise. What makes the situation horrific is that the virus does not kill the herds instantly; instead, it is a gradual act that affects the mouth and feet, prohibiting the herds from going far for grazing. After it lends them suffering from starvation, it kills them at the end.

Colonizers manipulate the Maasai tribe to support railroad construction in their territory. Captain John Adams introduces a disease from Europe that kills their herds, using it as a divide-and-rule strategy. He discovers Chief

Lonana and his brother Sadaka are at odds and plans to exploit the conflict. The British School of Tropical Medicine is about to open a field station in the colony, and the discovery of foot-and-mouth disease in Europe provides an opportunity for colonizers. Pellets containing the virus are dropped in specific paddocks, leading to thousands of herds starving to death. The community blames Chief Lonana for not informing their medicine men about the disease, leading to the colonizers sending agricultural extension agents to spray a foot-and-mouth antidote in Sadaka's paddocks. Sadaka overthrew his brother's leadership by staging a palace coup. The colonizers exploit the situation by introducing a foot-and-mouth antidote in Sadaka's paddocks.

In general, the use of disease is depicted as a deliberate strategy employed by the colonizers to weaken and control the indigenous population. The British School of Tropical Medicine provides the virus, known as nagana, to the Maasai, which causes their herds to start dying off, leading to starvation and economic devastation. This illustrates how the use of disease was a tool of colonial violence and exploitation, causing ecological destruction and social disruption.

Deforestation

Deforestation is the act of destroying forests, which have a dreadful effect on the ecosystem. Ecological imperialism is the phrase used to characterize the subjection of a nation's political, economic, and social institutions to the biophysical, metabolic needs of another nation, usually in order to make resources available and conducive to the accumulation of foreign capital (Burkett, 2006). Deforestation and ecological imperialism are related because deforestation is a type of ecological imperialism. Environmental injustices result from the powerful nations' ability to dominate other nations' natural resources.

There are noticeable effects of railroad construction, which natives are made to endure, on humans and nonhumans, as depicted in *Dance of the Jakarand*. Forests are cleared to get wood for the construction of the railway

and houses for the workers, who come from different regions. As has been discussed, the rail work brings huge movements of population and labor that are interconnected with the exploitation and transfer of resources. These huge population movements are dispatched on the colonial environment and yield environmental degradation and cultural erosion. In addition, the colonizers cut down trees to supply the firewood needed to run the steam-powered trains. Additionally, they cut down trees to provide wood for building rail tracks. Large areas of forest are destroyed by all these activities in the colonies, and the results are catastrophic. Since most of the forested land is destroyed as a result of cutting trees, increased soil erosion results, which worsens the drought in the area.

On the day the railway construction is inaugurated, the first thing the colonial authorities do is show their covert project in the treatment of the natives and their environment through the cutting of the mvinje tree, which is revered as sacred among the natives. Charles Erickson, the colonial governor, comes to Mombasa in order to commence the East Africa Railway Construction. After making a brief speech, he is given a pitchfork and shovel, and he scoops up the soil from the ground to show their ultimate power to do whatever they want with land of aliens. McDonald then arranges the cutting down of the mvinje tree to represent "the clearing of virgin lands" to make way for the railroad and to landscape for the forthcoming colonial settlement. He orders the native workers to cut down the tree and remove it forever, but they all shrug and leave the place. (p.215).

The mvinje tree holds a great position of importance to the natives, and Kimani describes its importance in his novel. He explains that the tree shields the village from the elements, just as a mother hen shields her chicks, and that is why it is named after the word *nifiche*, which means shelter (p. 213). The mvinje provides more than just safety for the community; when the old men gather beneath the tree to drink, they also build trust among one another.

The tree also gives them the confidence to speak more clearly and improves their memory. The locals also hold the belief that mvinje restores health to the sick. Kimani claims that leprosy sufferers only need to touch the bark in order to recover. Children with hookworm simply need to chew its leaf in order to have the last worm washed out of their stomachs. The locals also hold the view that fire will breed itself if the old men clap their hands together and utter a certain phrase being beneath the tree. In general, the mvinje tree is associated with the natives' daily lives; it is part of their cultural lore for people to meet under this tree.

The destruction of the mvinje tree involves not only clearing the forest, which is understood from the perspective of environmental annihilation, but also obliterating the culture and the existence of the locals. The tree is a metaphor for the natives' metaphysical consciousness of their environment. Unlike that of the colonizers, their culture is interwoven with their environment, and the two define and support one another's existence. The destruction of the environment is reciprocally linked to the destruction of culture. The people know that cutting down mvinje tree is cutting down their culture. It is beyond destroying the tree. We later witness the workers that McDonald orders to cut the tree failing to follow his orders. They are aware of the distinction between adhering to a colonial-energized anthropocentric culture's rules and following the norms of their own pro-environment culture.

The colonizers use ecological imperialism as an insidious method to establish their colonial rule in their East African protectorate. Any environmental calamity is permissible as long as it aids colonialism's nourishment in the land. The railroad is deemed necessary for this purpose, and the railroad affects the natives and their natural environment. Starting from its construction commencement, it greatly impacts the ecosystem. Cutting down the mvinje tree is thought to be necessary in order to debilitate the conscious cultural resistance that could empower natives to organize themselves to oppose the colonial enterprise. It is thus the

deliberate act taken by the colonizers to ravage the natural ecologies that the natives consider sacred, with a purpose to enfeeble them and include them in the colonial dominion.

Conservation: Its ecological impacts

National parks and conservation areas are the colonial government's attempts to restore pre-colonial ecosystems. These efforts have frequently encountered opposition and have been seen as a version of neocolonialism (Ashcroft et al, 2013, p.133). To make room for game parks for affluent tourists, indigenous people are driven off their land. The key conflicting area raised in both postcolonial ecocriticism and postcolonial zoocriticism is whether poor human communities are given less focus than wildlife on land. Human communities are uprooted from their homes to make way for game parks that will serve wealthy tourists, where the indigenous people are subjected to a double burden imposed on them by the colonizers: natives were evicted from their land and lost their ties to the environment during the colonial era's exploitation; their ecological environment was transformed and severely damaged. Conversely, natives are subjected to displacement for the colonial conservation projects run in the name of restoring the tranquil precolonial environment and conserving natural inhabitants.

As depicted in *Dance of the Jakaranda*, McDonald's conservation project is actually torturing wildlife, destroying the environment, and displacing and exploiting local people. At the end of his unsuccessful series of projects, he makes a tactical change in the use of his deteriorated vast land and turns it into a conservation area (sanctuary). He acquired the land by displacing a large number of natives during the colonization as explained here: "McDonald's farm, whose acreage was expanded during the 1923 land adjudication to include the lake and the hot water spring, was certified as his with a shiny red seal; the embossed letters announced that Her Majesty had granted him a hundred-year lease for the thousand-acre piece of land." (p. 200-201).

McDonald is unconcerned about the number of families who had to relocate in order for him to construct his project. In 1923, he uses his clout to craft a policy known as the Devonshire White Paper, which prohibits other foreigners, particularly Indians, from owning land in the colony under the guise that African land ownership takes precedence (p. 201). Meanwhile, white farmers have taken over all arable land, claiming to be holding it in trust for Africans. The land is given to them when they are ready for it.

McDonald devotes himself to farming, cultivating wheat to feed the nation until the war broke out in Europe which prevents him importing pesticides. Kimani writes, "He'd had enough with trying to domesticate the land and its people. He simply walked away, leaving farm equipment and the diseased crops still standing" (p. 201).

This demonstrates how colonizers appropriate native land and apply pesticides and fertilizers to produce a single crop repetitively, which in turn completely degrade the land eventually, even until the land is transformed into something to be done for. When large tracts of land are used to grow a single crop, the deterioration of the soil is accelerated. Regarding the environmental impact of the use of pesticides, environmentalists suggest that pesticides and herbicides have played a significant role in the extinction of numerous species. It is important to note that "for every extinct species, approximately 30 other dependent species move into the "at-risk" category."

McDonald now seeks to restore the peaceful and tranquil environment that existed prior to the British colonial establishment, which he himself witnessed and was an integral part of the cause of the destruction. He concentrates on conservation to construct a sanctuary and make a study the wild animals. He observes their behaviors and makes note of their habitats. All wealthy tourists in the colony and from Europe eventually turn to him for tour guides to enjoy nature at its finest. He keeps the native poacher, who kills animals for food, away from wild animals. He has no trouble passing legislation

that outlaws poaching because he is the chairman of the Farmers' Association, which is entirely composed of white people. He denies local communities by making normal subsistence pursuits like hunting and wood collection illegal. In contrast to the natives' concordance with the environment, he considers them the adversaries of wildlife conservation—that they are the illegal traders, poachers, hunters, and habitat destroyers.

Kimani criticizes the Western style of conservation through the characterization of McDonald. The Western idea of conservation is not used to create a sustainable environment by adhering to environmental protection principles. It is instead used to marginalize and exploit nonhuman animals and indigenous people. In the text, it is permissible for the white, wealthy tourists to poach and feed on animals, and to fish in the lake, hunt, and kill animals for trophies, while it is legally prohibited for the natives:

Wealthier tourists arrived on hunting expeditions. They lived in tented camps where they could shoot kudu for dinner, trail impala for lunch, and fell rhinos for trophies to take home. It was the only resort of its kind in the entire colony, where man and wildlife lived in such close contact (p. 202).

McDonald creates a kind of animal sanctuary that serves white settlers so they can easily access and feast on fresh animal meats, fish, and plants. In this conservation area, he kills animals and exploits native servants alongside other colonial settlers. McDonald alone has thousands of male servants under his command (p. 202). Natural ecologies, animals, and indigenous peoples are organized in such a way that they are meaningfully useful for colonizers' materialistic needs rather than receiving safe protection from conservationists. The goal of colonial conservation was to benefit the colonizing power, despite the fact that nature preservation was promoted as a universal goal. The colonizing states, whose own lands had already been developed for other economic purposes, initially reaped benefits from the protection and preservation of pristine natural environments (through tourism, trophy hunting,

and scientific research) (Laltaika et al., 2018). In addition, these policies were used as a cover for imposing control over the locals and the colonized territory.

Ecological Transformation

Alfred Crosby, a pioneering scholar, emphasized the importance of ecological change in the conquest and colonization of non-Western environments. He referred to this as ecological imperialism, highlighting the irreparable damage Indigenous people experienced due to colonization. These relationships were crucial to their understanding of their existence as part of the land, unlike those of their conquerors.

These are visible in the conflicts over land claims that are portrayed in *Dance of the Jakaranda* between natives and settlers. The natives' relationships to the land go beyond personal possession of material goods. African indigenous cultures view land as a vital part of communal holism, in contrast to how Europeans view it as a personal possession. Kimani depicts that, as a result of colonial incursion, the natives are alienated from their land and subjected to suffering.

Natives and their land suffer from the loss of their cultural heritage due to the colonizers' exploitation. The land and natives are subjected to harsh exploitation, with the people becoming servants of the colonizers. The land and its nonhuman habitats become an economic target for the colonizers' materialistic desires. The bodies of humans and land are pillaged for the economic development of England. Despite this, natives have lived on the land for ages without causing harm to their natural environment. They adopt submerged cultural practices that function with the will of the ecosystem, understanding that when nature is mistreated, it responds in kind. In the African worldview, all life, including spirits, humans, animals, plants, trees, oceans, and rocks, comes from God, infused by the active and dynamic life force of the creator.

Like indigenous communities in Africa, the people in the novel live off hunting, farming,

and raising animals. People in all the established farming areas observe the particularities of their own environment and look for ways to rationally deal with it. Some regions employ cutting-edge techniques like terracing, mixed cropping, green manuring, mixed farming, and controlled swamp agriculture. The use of iron tools, particularly the axe and hoe, to replace wooden and stone tools is the single most important technological development underlying agricultural production. Even in cultivation activities, the majority of them consider the farming of their own unique staple to be a form of art.

Agriculture is conducted based on an accurate assessment of the soil potency, which is not as great as it first appeared from the dense vegetation, and the outcome was devastating when the colonists began disturbing the thin soil surface (Rodney, 1972, p. 63–64). This demonstrates that a new ecological system is not as effectively functional for the non-natives who are not adopted to the culture, even if they are more skilled, as it is for those who have become accustomed to the environment over centuries. There is a fine art embedded within the culture of cultivation that protects the environment both virtually and contextually. These people's defining characteristics are harmonious, intricate relationships between nature and humanity, so they are not harmful to the environment.

When the powerful pillage native land, it becomes a commodity for colonial settlers. The colonizers brutally exploit it in order to produce more crops to ship back to the mother country and other European nations. The voracious capitalism of colonial enterprise causes ecological transformation. Capitalism consumes people, land, and nature in general. Me Katilili, Kenya's traditional prophet, foretold environmental change in the text. The giant snake, which symbolizes capitalism, requires "communal feeding for an eternity" (p. 176). Me Katilili foreshadows the years of colonialism that will come to indigenous people's land.

The colonizers pillage the natives of their land and launch the British East African Protectorate

railway as the first colonial project in order to exploit what the Kenyan land produces. The natives and the land undergo irreversible changes during the construction of this railway. In the process of building the railroad, natural ecosystems, people, and nonhuman animals are all exploited and suffer irreparable harm. After the railroad is finally completed, colonizers create non-native settlement areas strategically along its path. The colonial government designs resource use policies that benefit the Europeans by giving them complete access to Kenya's arable lands. Then, these settlers transform Kenya into a farmhouse, using all possible means at hand to produce any type of crop on the land.

Kimani depicts the life of McDonald as that of a representative who engages in the appropriation, modification, and alteration of the landscapes. He first acts as a commissioner of the colonial government and supervises the railroad's construction. In his role, he exploits both humans and nonhumans. He instructs policemen to destroy the villages, including sacred nature and religious sites, using military technologies in order to show the power of his country. He plunders the natives' land based on the willingness of his government in England. He uses the land for whatever he wants, even if it goes against human interests.

He shows his country's power over the land as well. He constructs a replica of Taaj Mahal, which symbolically represents the British empire in Africa, for his wife in England who divorces him later for his unchanging bad behavior. He converts the place into a farmhouse, where he exploits and tortures domestic animals. When he fails with the farmhouse, he converts the place into a club and a sporting venue for settlers to enjoy the maximum of life in a foreign land. He becomes unsatisfied with it and changes his mind, converting the land into farming, where he repetitively grows wheat using fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. Eventually, McDonald is unable to harvest wheat because he cannot import pesticides because of the war in Europe.

The land has already lost its fertility and is incapable of producing any crop. As a result, near the end of his life, McDonald launches a conservation program. As he puts it, his goal is to restore the pristine environment of the pre-colonial era. However, he continues the colonial goal of exploitation of natives and their natural resources. He allows colonization to continue in the country, exploiting it under the guise of "neo-colonization," knowing that Kenya's independence is inevitable. He advocates a conservationist policy that excludes natives and Indians as chairman of the Kenyan Farmers Association, and he claims that Europeans own all lands. Kimani describes how the country's colonial exploitation is upgraded to neocolonial exploitation in the independence era.

Following in the footsteps of the colonizers, particularly Ian Edward McDonald, the newly independent Kenya continues to aid conservation efforts. Tourists from Europe are greeted at the train station by tour guides eager to retell an old story. They will point to the imposing Jakaranda Hotel, a replica of which is restored shortly after independence at a huge cost to the independent government. Experts from London are flown in to ensure that the house is an exact replica of the one built by Ian Edward McDonald in 1901. Tour guides will point out various features of the establishment and proudly proclaim, "That's the place that heralded the birth of this town" (p. 259). This demonstrates that even in the post-independence era, all development projects and policies are designed in such a way that they benefit the colonial nations and their innovators at the expense of the colonized countries.

In addition to McDonald, who experiments with the indigenous land, Reverend Turnbull also contributes a lot to the transformation of the ecological environment. He represents colonizers in ecological transformation by contributing to the transformation of the ecological environment. He modifies the indigenous cows into the cows that Europeans use, inseminating the cows of indigenous people with those of Europeans to help the cows give more milk. Turnbull is preparing the way for the settlers' coming to Kenya and plays

a key role in fueling the establishment of British imperialism in East Africa. Although he picks evangelism as his main role to save the heathen from their sins, this role becomes only an overt masquerade as he is used by the colonial rulers in order to pave the way for imperialism. Turnbull's actions reflect the anthropocentric practices of European colonizers, which allowed nature to be exploited to the maximum, resulting in ecological destruction and transformation.

Conclusion

The environmental consequences of ecological imperialism were examined in Peter Kimani's historical novel, *Dance of the Jakaranda*. The novel focuses on colonial strategies used by colonizers as well as historical colonial exploitation and suffering of both humans and nonhumans during British colonial rule in Kenya. Colonial plunder of resources is identified as an archetypal issue, demonstrating that the colonizers' occupation of the indigenous peoples of east Africa is solely to satisfy materialistic desires. The plunder includes the pillage of both human and nonhuman entities. This follows by the horrifying environmental effects of colonization, which were a direct result of the harsh colonial strategies used by the colonial rulers. There are several of them, including the use of disease, building railroads, conservation, and ecological destruction caused by military violence and fire. A complete environmental transformation as a result of serial exertion of colonial tools, colonial exploitation, and resource transfer is observable in the text. The colonization becomes the cause of the nation's birth and evolves into neo-colonization, directly or indirectly affecting this new nation and its environment.

Recommendations

The study recommends that ecological imperialism can provide a useful framework for understanding the complex relationships between colonialism, ecology, and literature, and can contribute to ongoing efforts to address environmental issues in Africa and beyond. The study also recommends further research in this

area to expand the scope of the study and to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the ecological impacts of colonialism in Africa. Additionally, the study suggests that environmental activists and policymakers can benefit from the insights provided by ecological imperialism to develop more effective strategies for addressing environmental issues in Africa and beyond.

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