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# Intertwined Lives of Women and Nature: An Ecofeminist Analysis of the novel A Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith

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**Abstract**
This study has attempted to analyze interconnectedness of women and nature in the novel a Tree Grows in Brooklyn by Betty Smith (1943), the researcher has utilized the lens of ecofeminism to explore the symbiotic relationship between female characters of novel and the ever-prevalent part the nature plays in the novel. The investigation shows how the struggles of women and their plight in the hands of both societal barriers and economy play a pivotal role in their closeness to nature. This strife to survive is akin to nature's resilience in the face of urban growth in parts of Brooklyn of twentieth-century, women of Smith have it all in their plate as well, poverty, inner turmoil, motherhood and insufficient means for insufficient dreams. They take their resilience and determination to grow upward from the tree, which plays the character of both a symbolic sister to these women as well as an insignia of industrialization and environmental crises. This study has applied ecofeminist framework to highlight the nurturing nature of women, a feminine bond of women and earth and survival of both in the face of patriarchy and capitalism, particularly the ideas of Karen J. Warren have been integrated into the analysis. Women and nature, the paper strives to portray, are in dire needs of care giving as they both are unconditional care givers to fellow humans. Ultimately, the study has seeked to establish the need of women voices in environmental talks as well as the importance of healthy nature to nurture healthy minds.

**Keywords:** A Tree Grows in Brooklyn, Ecofeminism, Karen, J. Warren, Women, Voices

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## Introduction:

### Background of the Study:

For long in literature, both women and nature have been constructed as subservient to nature, where women were portrayed as soft and pensive, men have always taken the lead for reason and rationale. Looking back at the times when nature won the seat to be the central theme for poets and philosophers alike, namely romantic period, women were still not spared from being romanticized as nature herself, thus, to be revered and protected. From Keats to Shelly all celebrated the beauty of women as parallel to nature, calling women, flowers and rain and sometimes the sky or even seasons. In collective mythologies around the world, women were depicted as Goddesses of earth and mother of all life (Gaia the goddess). Victorian era went one step ahead in calling disasters of nature as feminine and confining their women to attics (Jane Eyre 1847 p.244). Women of colonial times in literature are almost always put in the category of landscapes and treasury to exploit and ravaged upon. They are considered one such commodity to be taken and tamed. (The Poisonwood Bible, 1998. P511). Postmodernists have put her into psychic wards, as they have confined nature into caged vases and glass.

Betty smith lived through her art, as she garnered her childhood into the character of Francie Nolan, the protagonist of her bestselling novel, *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*. Smith explores the themes of poverty, urbanization, and human struggle in the face of environmental adversity. The boom in industrialization in the mid-twentieth century also translates into waning of the nature into nooks and crannies. The lives of both women and nature are in a steady degradation throughout her account. Francie's resilience in the face of her meager circumstances and the will to forgo her sickly settlement of Williamsburg (also the hometown of the writer) is akin to the resilience of the tree that grows in an

unusual environment without being nurtured or cared for; it simply exists through all the calamities in a cement block and seeps hope of upward progression into the life of Francie, who observes the lifecycle of tree as her own. The yard, where Francie sits for hours, gives her a sanctuary away from the hustle of urban life. Flowers of Katie keep growing as grows the agitation in their loves, for Katie, they provide beauty and aroma in their otherwise deformed lives and location. The sky itself brings excitement in Francie with its azure and copper and orange hues, compensating the lack of colors and vibrance in her life.

Nature has long been assigned the ascription of femininity for as back as literature exists. The concept of mother nature is one such tablet that precedes time and history, dating back to when the god used to speak through scriptures. The feminine drive to nurture and care, to birth and bathe, to provide and console is interlaced with nature's roles as same. Many scriptures calling women as 'fertile soil' upon whom the crops are grown and harvested, leads women to be sisters with nature itself. Culturally, the reproductive capability of a woman, her procreative strength assigns her 'womanhood'. This symbiotic relationship of nature and the women of Smith's novel Francie the main character and Katie Nolan her mother is the subject matter of this paper, which aims to explore the said relation under the lens of Ecocriticism.

Ecocriticism is a critical approach to literature and culture that focuses on the relationships between human beings and the natural world. It emerged in the 1990s as a response to growing concerns about environmental degradation and the impact of human activity on the planet (Glotfelty and Fromm). The movement emerged in the late 20th century as a response to environmental concerns, addressing topics such as environmental degradation, the representation of nature, and the interconnectedness of all living beings. The researcher aims to explore tenets of Ecocriticism, namely Ecofeminism which is loosely attached with the

said theory and builds on the foundations of ecocriticism by integrating feminist perspectives into ecological discourse. It analyzes the connections between the exploitation of nature and the oppression of women, arguing that both stem from patriarchal structures and ideologies. In *the Death of Nature* historian and writer, Carolyn Merchant argues that the scientific revolution objectified nature, mirroring the oppression of women. She claims that nature is often represented as female, and she believes that the progress made during this time negatively impacted both women's rights and the health of the environment. (Merchant Carolyn, *the Death of Nature; Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution*. 1980) This paper seeks to examine the principle of interconnectedness of this sort between the women of the novel and the nature depicted in the same.

Published in 1943 *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is a coming-of-age story of a girl Francie Nolan and her family, who's growing in an impoverished area of Brooklyn around the age of 12. Another main character of the story is the tree that takes central stage in the lives of women in the book. Francie forgets the misery around her and becomes totally oblivious of her penniless state whenever she observes the tree thriving in a cement block. Both Francie and the tree are neglected sections of their society, yet they bloom in their own ways, and thrive in the environment stripped of any hope or good days. They are never nurtured nor given second thoughts by the passerby but their will to move upward has its own course. Environment of bleak urban bareness of the area aligned with general gloom of the poor is not a mere setting but a lively participant in the course of action of people's lives, particularly women. Timothy Morton, A Rice University Professor and the writer of the book An Ecological Thought published in 2010, established the idea that all living forms are interconnected and stem from each other, he goes on to argue that nature sustains in duality, humans and nature are dependent on each other to thrive, thus he challenges the dichotomy of human-

nature. (Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. 2010.) The paper goes on to evaluate this interconnectedness of nature and women through the lens of Ecofeminism.

**Problem Statement:**

Ecofeminism has stood large and wide in advocating the connection between gender and environment. Under the shade of this framework the studies unearth struggles of the nature and subjugation of women and the ways they form a bond to give nurturing and solace to each other. This paper puts foreword the reading of Betty Smith's novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* under the lamp of Ecofeminism to evaluate the intertwined lives of both the nature and women in the said work. The struggle of Francie Nolan to thrive in hostile surroundings and crushing poverty is akin to the struggle of the tree in their junk backyard to keep growing despite the harshness of the wretched setting. In the same way, the nurturing and caring nature of Katie, the way she struggles and sacrifices her whole life for her family, to feed and clothe them mirrors nature's endurance of unforgiving weather and yet provides shade and clean air to humans. This symbiotic relation between the nature and women connects both. This paper will try to highlight this aspect under the lens of Ecofeminism, particularly the tenet of interconnectedness of gender and nature.

**Research Questions:**

1. What connections can be drawn between the characters' lives and nature in the novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith?
2. How do the women of Smith find sisterhood with the tree, the yard and flowers and in what ways these interactions symbolize their struggles and resilience in the novel?
3. Which of the elements of Ecofeminism can be ascribed to the novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*?

**Research Objectives:**

The objectives of the present study are:

- to analyze the symbolism of the tree in the title and its significance within the narrative as a representation of growth, resilience, and the potential for regeneration in both women's lives and the environment.
- to highlight the nature's part in performing the role of a haven for women, also imparting lessons of empowerment and growth.
- to evaluate the aspects of Ecofeminism in the novel and principle of interconnectedness of nature and gender.

**Significance of the Study:**

This article aims to bridge the gaps depicted in literature on women's bondedness with nature, it further provides insights in representing the nurturing part in women that is borrowed from nature and her selflessness in providing shade and shelter. This paper can be helpful to visualize the ways a personal account of women's lives can highlight broader issues like ecological justice, negligence to care for nature, and for granted status of women as mothers portrayed by Katie Nolan, who, from the severe thuds of reality, finds solace in her plants.

**Literature Review:**

It has not been so long since ecofeminism became a mainstream lens to apply on texts. The years of 1970S witnessed the surge and activism for the idea among the literary circles of women. It *was Le Féminisme ou la Mort: Feminism or Death* a book published in 1974 in which the French author Françoise d'Eaubonne coined the term "Ecofeminism" and brought light upon the connection between the treatment of women and nature. Later, the advocates for this theory interlaced the oppression of women and degradation of environment to patriarchy and capitalism. Sherry B Ortner in his essay *Is female to male as nature is to culture?* in 1974 turns inside out the concept of women being subordinate, subsidiary and

second fiddle to men and brings to light that women are closer to nature. Ortner remarks that women are closer to nature in respects to their ability to create life. Their bodies just have it within themselves to bring a life about, as for men, the creation is something in the outer realm dealing with culture. women play an important role in culture due to their awareness and involvement in social conversations. However, it also implies that women are viewed as being in between culture and nature and are considered less transcendent or elevated than men in this context. In essence, it reflects a perception of women as integral to cultural discussions but also associated with a more natural or basic level of existence compared to men.

Ecofeminism gained popularity as a theoretical framework quite recently with the insights and publications of Vandana Shiva's collections. She is a stalwart advocate for sustainable development and ecological practices to empower women. "the new insight provided by rural women in the Third World is that women and nature are associated not in passivity but in creativity and in the maintenance of life." She remarks in *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development* examines how feminism, ecology, and development are interconnected. The book highlights the important role women play in protecting the environment and discusses their historical efforts for ecological sustainability. Shiva critiques how industrialization and globalization negatively affect both women and the planet. She advocates for a fair and sustainable development model that values and includes women's knowledge and viewpoints. Shiva has successfully integrated in Indian culture an issue which has never been discussed or put light upon by any forums or movements ever before. For Shiva, a just setup can only be one where women are given key positions and their opinions heard. For her, women have ingrained knowledge about nature, and they deem her their second self. She put detailed accounts on rural women and their informed guesses

on the upcoming rain, a rotten crop, a mold kicking in, or even the aroma being different of a growing sapling by what it should be. They know the soil and what it can and cannot grow just by sniffing it or weighing a fistful through their hands. This knowledge has come down to those rural women by staying close to nature for generations.

As for their political or social uptake, women have struggled long to be considered fellow human beings with all the fallacies of human nature. They are now finding their anchor through arts and never were they thought to be on equal footing as men. This systematic shelving of women in all fields is quite the same as the surge in industrialization and factories did to nature and environment. "The tyranny over the feminine world directly links to staining environmental honor of our planet rendering issues of power, dominance and subordination immensely momentous to ecofeminism." For Karen J. Warren (2000) it is high time to start dealing both nature and women with care and respect she is a significant figure in ecofeminism, which connects feminism and environmentalism, emphasizing the interrelatedness of the oppression of women and nature. She posits that understanding this connection is essential for addressing both social justice and ecological crises. Warren's work, including her book *Ecofeminist Philosophy*, explores how historical and experiential links between these two movements can yield insights into how to promote sustainability and equality. she puts emphasis in eradicating sexist and unfair dealings with the female gender in all walks of life, for her, this change in the long run can guarantee a steadily healthy and flourishing environment. For both environment and women, the culprit is one.

The fact that both women and literature have been put in the category of 'others' speaks volumes about the systematic subjugation and ill-treatment of both. From the period of enlightenment to the postmodernists of current times, with little exception, all have considered women as threatening force of nature to be

controlled and put to place. Man has proved himself to be the biggest consumer on planet earth, he has deteriorated climates, changed weathers, caused catastrophes, catalyzed environmental hazards, he alone has changed the shape and routes of waters, causing floods and landslides, his industries and plants have alone inflicted extinction upon lifeforms both beneath the earth and above it. His urbanization sidelined nature and its course resulting in global warming and unpredictable weather fluctuations. On the other hand, it was man who waged wars and launched atomic bombs, occupied lands and burned harvests, every single form of retaliatory actions of man have changed the very balance of ecosystem on earth. Women always have found a connection with nature, and a motherly affection for plants and all animate life, they have strived and struggled to undo the damage done by men in their own ways, Yawar (2019) in his essay *Ecofeminism: An Overview* states the following: "Throughout the globe women have been working to eradicate, expunge and uproot the environmental issues both at national and international level. For example, women of the Green Belt movement in Kenya planted and cultivated millions of trees in derelict, desolated and deserted lands. Similarly, in India, women became an indispensable, intensive and integral part of Chipko movement to rescue trees from being cut down by hugging them. In Canada, women out cried the uranium processing near their towns. In USA, housewives wrought at local level to clean up the waste sites."

According to Treva M. Williams in her article *"The Role of Women in 'A Tree Grows in Brooklyn',"* women play a crucial role in shattering glass ceilings of the society. She further goes on to put characters of Francie Nolan, Sissie (the Aunt) Katie Nolan as unusual as per the rules designed for women of that era. Francie has no desires to be married, rather she finds herself in a perpetual fancying state where she observes her soundings like a third person and never lets the ugliness of her poverty-stricken childhood get into her. She dreams of being a writer and

has even characters well thought out and ready to be executed for her bestseller. Her resilience in the face of sheer hopelessness charms Treva to call her a tougher hero for tough times. Williams goes on to state in her article how the resilience of Nolan women made them wonder about stars when they were practically living in the sewer. She put the character of Katie as being one such optimist and gutsy woman who takes all the sorrows and failures in her life on face value and never for once she trembles under the weight of judgmental society, her meager finances to manage home, her husband's drunkenness and later death in young years. Kate lives life one day at a time and is hardcore enough to never yield to her circumstances. Williams, Treva M. *"The Role of Women in 'A Tree Grows in Brooklyn'." Women's Studies (2019)*

Connecting these studies with the reading of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn*, this paper tends to explore the said tenets of ecofeminism prescribed by the cited works and their pioneers. The intersection of nature and women in the novel makes it a strong case for ecofeminist study. Both nature and Francie, Katie and her meager red roses she keeps watering, are sisters in their suppression. For Francie, the ever-looming poverty and endless chores put on her lean child's body will never change the fates of her family, yet the oozing hope from the unusual tree makes her keep growing into her own art. The mother who loses her husband to drunkenness and is crushed by harsh and fatal poverty that never leaves no matter how hard she puts herself to work, has her respite in her flowerpots, for that part of her day, Katie pretends to be among beauty and not in the ugly surrounding of her shabby little house. The impoverished urban landscape of Williamsburg is as ignored and poorly cared as are the neglected sections of women who are crushed by patriarchal chains in the novel. For both seep hope and resilience into each other every day. The ragged junkyard of the house of Nolan, the never planted or watered stubborn tree in the midst, the river leading to nowhere apparently, the

little sky peeping through tin roofs and the musty air herself, all elements of nature offer solace and a hope in the face of adversity, in the same go, they are the witness of burgeoning urbanization and capitalism that has sucked life out of every lively being, be it women or nature.

**Research Methodology:**

This study has utilized qualitative approach for the analysis of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* to examine the intertwined lives of women and nature which inhabit the novel. The researcher has thoroughly studied the novel as primary data and will further highlight the concerned portions in the section of data analysis. Secondary data collection is internet sources, articles, journals and books on the theory and movement of ecofeminism as well as prior studies done on the novel. Karen J. Warren in her book published in 2000 *Ecofeminist Philosophy, a Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* has postulated that both nature and women are subjugated by the same institution and their oppression is interconnected. She goes on to claim that the only way forward is the demolishment of patriarchy as she deems ecofeminism as more transformative and radical in its urgency. Some of the prominent components of ecofeminism are given below.

**Ecofeminism:**

Ecofeminism has emerged around the globe as a powerful political movement and theory. Despite important differences among ecofeminist theories, they share a common concern for making visible historical associations of 'women' with 'nature,' and, at least in Western societies, the attendant devaluation of both as inferior to men and male gender identified 'culture' (Merchant 1980) the movement so far has taken many shapes and detours, eventually settling into third world narratives and inclusive of all textured skin. Started as a political call to collaborate feminism with environmentalism, this theory has become a household

name to view texts and situations anew. This discussion has brought light into the aspects of a healthy ecology bringing out healthy human forms which have rarely been given the part of debate. Most of the works of late ecofeminists, like Vandana Shiva, put emphasis in acknowledging women as closest kin to nature. "The domination of nature is closely related to the domination of women. In the history of the world, the natural world has been treated as a resource for exploitation and women have been treated as property to be owned." States she in her work, *Staying Alive: Women, Ecology, and Development*" (1988) when we sectionalize a group, we are putting ourselves off it, our emotions as detached and our beings totally distances, making the section alienated and othered.

- **Interconnectedness of Oppression**

"Ecofeminists assert that the exploitation of the environment and the subjugation of women are products of a patriarchal worldview that values hierarchy and power over relationality and care. Just as women have historically been marginalized and viewed as property or secondary to men, nature has been objectified and exploited for human gain. This shared experience of exploitation highlights the need to address both gender inequality and environmental issues simultaneously." Karen J. Warren (2000) *Ecofeminist Philosophy: A Western Perspective on What It Is and Why It Matters* this factor can be well witnessed in the novel of Smith, as both women and nature suffer most in the hands of economic and environmental sufferings. For nature to thrive, Williamsburg provides no clean air or enough sunlight, the dainty rooftops and urbanization has taken away the little sun and stubborn plants growing in abundance. Karen has paved the path to set things straight for both victims of man's sullenness by taking down the very institution of capitalism and patriarchy.

- **Dualism of Values:**

In her ideas on ecofeminism, penned in her book, Karen strongly condemns and

calls for demolition of the dualist perspectives of division. For her, to put categories of all forms of life into human/nonhuman, nature/culture, man/woman has achieved only further marginalization for the less acclaimed sections of society, she put women and nature in the same bucket of oppression and concludes that for long, women and nature have been otherized, made entities of control, reigned over and be put to place. When entities are given binary or dual qualities, the dominant ones pursue the subservient to be ruled. In comparison to culture, nature was deemed unruly and wild and thus curtailed and manipulated. Similarly, unlike men, women are considered an emotional wreck who are incapable of running offices or hold higher positions, they are boxed in the category of everything that the man is not. This marginalization eventually, when applied to nature, sidelined her, and urbanization swept in. as for women, their plight has much more to be accredited with patriarchal understanding of her body and intellect.

- **Nature and Gender:**

"Ecofeminism emerged in different geographies through political activism and scholarship around two conjoined categories of "ecology" and "gender." One of the central tenets of early ecofeminist thinking is that women's oppression under patriarchy is closely linked to the oppression and domination of nature under capitalist, colonial, and modernist forces including those of Development and Science. The field has since evolved through an intersectional lens that considers the links between gender, race, class, nationhood, animality, and ecology." Stated Padini Nirmal (2020). For a long while gender construct has been awarded as social symbol to treat women as beneath men, both socially and economically. Women had no say in decision making or the issues concerned nations or worldly affairs. They were and still are put in boxes of weak, brittle and shallow. This systematic degradation of women has been shared by nature since the inception

of industrialization. Man has considered women and nature as commodities to be consumed and put away. But for Susan Griffin *Woman and Nature: The Roaring Inside Her"* (1978) - "The earth is a woman, and she is strong. She is creative and she is angry."

This study employs ecofeminism as a lens to explore interconnectedness between women and nature in the novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith. By focusing on the shared themes of exploitation, oppression, and resilience, the research can illuminate how the novel portrays the struggles of its female characters in relation to their environment, highlighting the parallels between their personal challenges and broader societal issues. Ecofeminism suggests that both women and nature share the same plight in their fate by the hands of men, for the former, its patriarchy and later is being cornered by capitalism. This study aims to analyze the text of *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by using the works of Karen J. Warren's Ecofeminist philosophy, particularly the feature of shared oppression of women and nature.

**Data Analysis:**

Women have a long history of resilience and fighting back, as they're the only section of society who have been under subjugation and manmade laws since Eve's times. Laws and scriptures were devised to put a rein to their fierce bearing, religions were invented to place them within four walls and take away their right to liberty and expression, they bore punishments for being too good, burned on stakes alive and were branded as witches because they knew the secrets of earth, their sister in bond. Woman is earth and earth is woman claims Susan Griffin in her book *Woman and Nature* (1978). She has been barred from holding public positions, to vote, to own property, to travel alone, to say no as an answer, to eat before her family men, to talk about her body inflictions, to study STEM, go to university, or even laugh her heart out quite in recent times. But she grew and

thrived, in corners and kitchen tables, in coveted libraries and pariah rooms, she did not let the mold of patriarchy and scriptures nibble on her. Just like nature, who's deprived of life necessities and nourishment, shelters mankind.

Betty Smith's novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* is explored in the light of ecofeminism, particularly Karen J. Warren's prescribed features of the said theory. The analysis involved touches upon the shared oppression of women and nature in the novel, also exploring the nurturing aptitude of women, their sheer resistance and capability to outgrow the hopelessness of their condition same as nature to thrive despite the adverse environment and grow upward, nonetheless. The analysis also brings out the feature of dualism of values as states Karen in her *Ecofeminist Philosophy: What it is and Why it Matters* (2002). Smith's women characters are as fierce as nature itself; they take inspiration to never give up from their surrounding elements. Francie herself grows alongside the tree that grows in Brooklyn, both are mirroring each other's struggle and make a bond, as ancient as earth itself has with femininity. "The tree that grew in Brooklyn had a special quality it had the ability to endure." (Smith, 1943, P. 26). Warren argues that the struggle of women and nature is shared so is the oppression been done to both. We witness this intertwined oppression in the lives of women and nature throughout the novel.

The endurance and steady growth of nature around her, turns Francie into a strong woman who grew up witnessing the resistance of nature in the face of urbanization and decay. For Karen, patriarchy and capitalism have demolished and degraded women in the equal measures as nature, this can be starkly put to perspective through the lens of ecofeminism in the novel. Smith's women face poverty, dejection, deaths and constant struggle to stay put, yet they have their joyous moments, they have carefree laughers, they do not dwell in despair for long. So is the mantra of the tree in their yard, who only knows one kind of movement,

upward. "It was a tree that grew in a place where no other tree would grow. It had no right to be there. It grew in cracks in the sidewalk where there was hardly any dirt" (Smith, 1943, P. 14) this imagery in the novel is a standpoint of the determination of tree to never give in to harsh conditions.

The one tree in Francie's yard was neither a pine nor a hemlock. It had pointed leaves which grew along green switches which radiated from the bough and made a tree which looked like a lot of opened green umbrellas. Some people called it the Tree of Heaven. No matter where its seed fell, it made a tree which struggled to reach the sky. It grew in boarded up lots and out of neglected rubbish heaps and it was the only tree that grew out of cement. (Smith, 1943, P.6)

One of the important features of ecofeminism is nurturing gift of women that they share with nature, after being so close with her for so long. The character of Katie Nolan in Smith's novel at one place mentions the hardships and resilience of the tree in their front yard and compares the scarcity of facilities for both the tree and her impoverished children, she's determined to see them grow in the miserable neighborhood of the penurious streets of Williamsburg, in Brooklyn. Katie is the mother figure in the novel who retains all qualities of mother nature herself, the care giver and provider of shelter in storms, she stands tall in the face of economical struggles and widowhood, Katie's role has manifold aspirations in the novel, and she proves to be bigger than her problems, she's facing her financial issues, declining health, bereft from husband in a young age, and worsening rates of rent have choked her last hopes of a decent living.

Katie never lets these issues singe the minds of her children, she wants a good education for them, no matter how hard she must work and how many shifts, she never lets her Francie or Neeley fall into labor. Her shapely hands have turned coarse and damaged by the lye and soda in her janitor's job, but when she plants flowers with those hands, she's compensating for the ugliness of her reality with

borrowed beauty of nature. This nurturing and care giving nature of women are in alliance with nature herself, are an act of resistance in the face of economic hardships. “Who wants to die? Everything struggles to live. Look at that tree growing up there out of that grating. It gets no sun, and water only when it rains. It’s growing out of sour earth. And it’s strong because its hard struggle to live is making it strong. My children will be strong that way.” (Smith, 1943, P.95)

We witness this resilience and stubbornness of Katie to never give in, when her youngest falls ill and the physician has no better answer, Katie becomes the storm herself and roars the prophecy: “This baby will live,” said Katie fiercely. “I’ll make it live.” (Smith 1943, P.41)

Unfair cuts in salary and more workload crushes the already crippling working class, Ecofeminists blame the destituteness of women workers and their plight on capitalism and industrialization, that has sucked the life out of literally every lifeform. In the novel, after Johnny dies, the mother must go to two jobs to make ends meet. Wealth disparity and values’ dualism another important tenet of ecofeminism given by Karen J. Warren in her work, is dualism of values, where the marginalized groups are treated unfairly by the dominant group, here the wealthy class has no idea what goes on in the lives of their impoverished renters. “The people in the brownstone houses weren't even aware of the existence of the overcrowded tenements.” (Smith, 1943, P. 85) In the novel, this dualism is so stark that Katie is unable to pay the rent and manage the household. She simply can’t afford milk for her newborn even after breaking her back as janitor, she nurtures the baby as one would do the soil. With more love and fewer resources, Katie never gives up trying to give a better life to her children, as she has always carved beauty and respite in the things that give away only hopelessness. She takes care of the baby, runs two jobs, sends her two teen age children to school with the aim of a college education, mends home and smiles cheerfully in

between. “But she was proud of her home. She kept it clean, orderly, and well-fed” (Smith, 1943, P. 68)

“Katie nursed the baby, not only because it was the instinctive thing to do, but because there was no money for fresh milk. Since the baby couldn’t be left alone, Katie started her work at five in the morning, doing the other two houses first. She worked until nearly nine when Francie and Neeley left for school.” (Smith, 1943, P.345)

This affirms the ecofeminist perspective of the character, as she seeps life into her family, as she would to the soil to grow flowers and gives up on none. This resilience in the body of a woman is the same found into soil. They both are intertwined in their motherly nature and the exploitation they face. They both procreate and the process of giving birth is the same as well, they must rip the very essence of their bodies to bring out life. Nature is female and offers the same selfless care and shelter, food and fodder just as the women can’t help giving their ancient earthly parts of nurturing to everything they touch. Smith’s women only know one form of loving, giving care and putting their family foremost. “She had a strong desire to protect Neeley, to make his world better” (Smith, 1943, P. 150).

All ecofeminists without fail have preached environmental justice and interconnectedness of all lifeforms on earth. "To understand the interconnectedness of all beings and the need for justice and respect across both gender and species lines is to embrace ecofeminism." States Lisa Krimmer in her Eating *Earth: Environmental Ethics and Dietary* (2014) the tenants of Williamsburg are living in destitute and despair, in rental portions with dainty yards, with little sky to be seen and dust filling their lungs with each gulp of air. The streets are contrastively ugly to their beautiful names, the shops are greasy, and lanes are clogged. This part of Brooklyn is not given a second thought because the residents are mostly immigrants working odd jobs. Francie finds solace in the

library or in the tree where she reads books and can for a short while be away from her pungent surroundings. “Every day, during the week the tree stood there, Francie put on her sweater and zitful cap and went in and sat under the tree. She sat there and enjoyed the smell and the dark greenness of it. Oh, the mystery of a great tree, a prisoner in a tin wash bucket in a tenement front room!” (Smith,1943, P.209) Francie escapes into the bits of nature grown or flowing on their own. She loves the flowers her mother has planted, and the residents come and love the sight “the flowers in the yard were always the most beautiful and the most fragrant, and the neighbors would often come to admire them” this little beautiful sight compensates for the ugliness and depravity around. The urbanized neighborhood is grey and dull, full of dirt and repugnant odors. The flowers add a feminine touch to the otherwise manly setting. The same is the role of the yard, it is a handsome little space which gives the onlookers a respite from their usual scenes of cement and blocks. Francie particularly fancies that little area where she can daydream and read books for hours. “the yard was a little oasis, a patch of green in the midst of the concrete jungle” (Smith,1943, P.65) “the flowers in the yard were a riot of color, a vibrant splash against the drab backdrop” (Smith,1943, P.131)

There is the river, to make Francie forget the tininess of her state, the river which flowed with the smell of long journeys, held its spell over Francie and other kids of the meager livings. “the sound of the river was a soothing background hum, a constant accompaniment to their lives” (Smith,1943, P. 191) river symbolized something big in their lives, a phenomenon too big yet so close, a fistful, all wrapped in one glance, For Francie this element of nature was another solace for lack of their lives. Francie found in the sound of waves something ethereal, as if nature herself was cradling her, making her forget about the harshness she was born into. “the river’s lapping waves created a lullaby effect, rocking Francie into

a peaceful sleep." (Smith,1943, P. 391) this calmness offered by the river is symbolic to the soul's need to lie still after a day's labor. It is not only the exertion of body but the entire being is sucked out in those deprived scenes. Francie strives for peace during chaos and nature is there to lend her a hand. Through lens of ecofeminism the study highlights how nature provides both solace and hope in times of economic deprivation and suppression.

**Conclusion:**

The undertaken study reveals a profound sisterhood among natural elements and women in the novel *A Tree Grows in Brooklyn* by Betty Smith (1943), when analyzed through ecofeminist viewpoint. Women find a bond with nature in their struggles for survival and identity as well as their resilience in the face of environmental adversity and patriarchy proves data analysis. Francie Nolan and her mother Katie Nolan undergo one such symbiotic bond where they find solace in the meager and cornered nature and in return try to retrieve her by giving her their utmost attention and thoughts. Nature provides costly hope and lessons of never giving up in exchange. The novel has depicted nature in the nooks and crannies growing on her own pace, so are the women of Smith, who despite all odds never give in. this study ultimately calls for a holistic approach to understand the interconnectedness of women with their surroundings, thus both need same care and encouragement for a sustainable tomorrow.

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