8-9-2010

# Environmentalism, Modernity, Capitalism, and Cultural Hegemony in Six Contemporary Authors

Motasim O. Almawaja
*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

# ENVIRONMENTALISM, MODERNITY, CAPITALISM, AND CULTURAL HEGEMONY IN SIX CONTEMPORARY AUTHORS

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Motasim O. Almawaja

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

December 2010

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

The School of Graduate Studies and Research
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Motasim O. Almawaja

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

_____ _____
James M. Cahalan, Ph. D.
Professor of English, Advisor

_____ _____
Susan Comfort, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of English

_____ _____
Christopher Orchard, Ph. D.
Associate Professor of English

ACCEPTED

_____ _____
Timothy P. Mack, Ph. D.
Dean
The School of Graduate Studies and Research

Title: Environmentalism, Modernity, Capitalism, and Cultural Hegemony in Six Contemporary Authors

Author: Motasim O. Almawaja

Dissertation Chair: Dr. James M. Cahalan

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Susan Comfort
Dr. Christopher Orchard

In this dissertation, I examine how Wendell Berry, Leslie Marmon Silko, Linda Hogan, Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi, and Abdelrahman Munif have made connections between socio-cultural and economic subtexts and environmental deterioration. These authors suggest that those who are connected to the earth—those who have the color of the earth—are still at the bottom of the sociopolitical ladder. These writers' contested terrains are not solipsistic, but ecologically far-reaching. They draw attention to imminent perils enshrouding the earth if the same reductive, dichotomous, and capitalist paradigms persist. I postulate that the culture-nature, man-woman, modernity-tradition, and developed-underdeveloped polarizations constitute the locus of ecological degradation. These separations have pigeonholed the latter component of the dyad into the realm of the irrational, uncivilized, or unlawful, legitimating violence against it.

I critique these superimposed divisions, for they entail hegemonic, "assimilative" impulses and discourses, arguing that "subaltern" subjects are always caught up in subordinate power relations, and thus the knowledge they produce will be valued and devaluated vis-à-vis Western standards. I address the intrinsic, interlocking undertones of many kinds of oppression, as they originate from the same will to power and domination. Hence, I explore the ways in which Western-style modernity and

"development"—embedded in imperialist and global capitalist dynamics of co-optation and appropriation of assets, privatization of the "commons," and exploitation of the indigenous land and people—have denigrated land and its inhabitants, mainly women, people of color, indigenous communities, and minority groups, who become signifiers of dispossession and eco-resistance.

Throughout this dissertation, I essentially apply ecofeminist and environmental-justice approaches, but also refer to theories of postcolonialism, global capitalism, and deep ecology, as they are all intertwined through their search for alternative forms of eco-resistance. Hence, I build on critiques by such scholars as Lynn White, Vandana Shiva, Carolyn Merchant, Patrick Murphy, and Enrique Dussel, among others, to provide the ideological, hermeneutical, socio-political, and aesthetic filters through which all the texts can be given fresh and original examinations. This theoretical synthesis cements my corroboration that global capitalism and "maldevelopment" go hand in hand with imperialism and androcentrism, constituting an intricate nexus of hegemonies.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I wish to express my deepest appreciations to a number of people for helping me conceive and complete this dissertation. Foremost, I acknowledge the time and attention my dissertation advisor, Dr. James Cahalan, has dedicated to this project. I thank Jim for his unceasing and ever-prompt responses to every section of this dissertation, for his astute insights and scholarly advice throughout the process, for his protean literary knowledge, and for his critical example, which I have ever strived to emulate. Dr. Susan Comfort provided me with invaluable feedback and helped broaden the scope of my enquiry to encompass many, mostly international, books and movements I wouldn't have considered without her recommendations. I thank Susan for her encouragement, devotion, and critical insights. Dr. Christopher Orchard's productive critiques and reflections have helped shape and complicate my arguments. Interestingly, Dr. Orchard not only highlighted the gaps and shortcomings of my drafts, but also offered feasible suggestions on how to forge them. It has been a privilege working with the three of them!

I am indebted to my parents, twenty brothers and sisters, and my in-laws for their continual encouragement throughout this process of long research, revelations, and metamorphosis. My parents always called from Irbid, Jordan, to check on us and make sure my dissertation was progressing. My father has been my greatest model and teacher; he raised twenty-one children and never complained about our responsibilities and demands. My mother is the wisest and smartest woman I have ever known. Also, many thanks go to my brother Ziad, who has never failed me down and supported me both spiritually and financially.

I owe a particular debt of gratitude to my wife, Maryam Tbayshat, and our son, Rashed Almwaja, whose contribution to my work is immeasurable. They constitute the impetus behind my inspiration and happiness; without their presence, I couldn't have stayed for six years in Indiana without visiting my family in Jordan. Maryam is a strong woman whose power and passions are beyond description. She lost three family members during our stay here in Indiana, but refused to leave me alone, given the complications of coming back to the U. S. after the tragic events of 9/11. Rashed is a naughty-sweety kid, yet he gives me all the hope I have.

Special thanks go to my friends Dr. Raj Murthy, Dr. Hussam Al-Shammari, and Dr. Mohamed Almostafa and his family. These three real friends have been caring and supportive. Raj generously offered me a job in a quiet atmosphere and always made sure I was doing my work. Hussam kept pressing on me to finish this project and brought me a lot of Turkish coffee from Jordan to keep me up in order to do more work. Mohammed is an honest man who always believed in my ability and praised my language skills. These are three real friends of whom I am proud!

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# CHAPTER 1

# THEORETICAL AND HISTORICAL OVERVIEW: ROOTS OF ECOLOGICAL DEGRADATION AND VARIED FORMS OF RESISTANCE

An environmentally just system would not pile up privileges from the earth's exploitation for one part of humanity with the rest bearing the costs.

—Mary Mellor, "Building a New Vision" (38)

It is inconceivable to me that an ethical relationship to land can exist without love, respect, and admiration for land and a high regard for its value. By value, I of course mean something far broader than mere economic value; I mean value in the philosophical sense.

—Aldo Leopold, *A Sand County Almanac* (223)

The earth provides enough resources for everyone's need, but not for some people's greed.

—Mahatma K. Gandhi, quoted in Vandana Shiva's *Earth Democracy* (13)

## I

The world as a whole is facing an ecological crisis induced by ethical and epistemological failures. From the imperialist annihilation of Native American tribes with their nature-based lifestyles in North America, to the insatiable and fraudulent capitalist mining projects and imperialist nuclear tests that wipe out entire biotic systems

and displace human communities in the United States, to oil and gas explorations in the Middle East, to mega-dam construction projects and deforestation in India, the natural environment and its inhabitants endure capitalist, imperialist, and racist encroachment on them under the façade of development and progress, corporate profit, comfort, and putative happiness and convenience. Environmental justice and ecofeminism are theoretical approaches linking the environment to the juggernaut of sexism, classism, racism, and colonialism, positing deconstructing these ideologies and exploitative mindsets in order to alleviate human and nonhuman conditions. In this dissertation, I synthesize ecofeminist and environmental justice perspectives, along with theories of postcolonialism and global capitalism, and claim common denominators and conventions. At the same time, I acknowledge various contexts in which different peoples, cultures, and agencies cooperate to construct a world that treasures the environment and appreciates diversity.

By applying these theories, this study endeavors to expose the root causes and implications of ecological degradation and reconnects literature with real-life situations to unmask the injustices suffered by the land and those who subsist on it.[1] Here, I concur with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her conceptualization that "One must fill the vision of literary form with its connections to what is being read: history, political economy—the world" (*In Other Worlds* 96). According to the *Global Encyclopedia of Environmental Science, Technology and Management*, environmental degradation refers to "the deterioration of the environment through depletion of resources such as air, water,

[1] In his convincing book *Should Trees Have Standing?* Christopher D. Stone argues for reforming the scope of the legal system to guarantee the right of forests, seas, animals, and land to "stand" (sue) in U. S. courts. Of course, his thesis should not be taken narrowly or literally; he means that special guardians should be empowered to file suits on behalf of the ecosystem and other entities in nature, giving these entities voice, agency, and "standing."

and soil; the destruction of ecosystems and the extinction of wildlife" (388). And it is one of the ten most serious threats officially cautioned by the High Level Threat Panel of the United Nations. I build on and extend the range of this definition by interweaving a complex web of literary texts and theoretical approaches that attend to the socioeconomic, epistemological, and ideological insinuations of environmental degradation as mainly stemming from systems of domination—racism, patriarchy, global capitalism, and (neo)colonialism.

To this end, I focus on six contemporary literary texts—Wendell Berry's *The Long-Legged House* (1969), Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1995), Arundhati Roy's *The Cost of Living* (1999), Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps* (published in Bengali in 1989 and in English in 1995), and Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (published in Arabic in 1984 and in English in 1987). Taking ecological degradation and its implications as their focal point, these texts' value and "typicality" in the development of global environmental justice and ecofeminism recommend them as cornerstones to engage with questions of ecological and social justice. These texts focus on various manifestations of environmental injustice, "modernity," in its ontological and technological sense, "development," culture-nature and self-other transactions, and cross-cultural interactions. Still, the concentration of these authors on local ecological injustices wrought by forces of patriarchy, modernity, (neo)colonialism, and global capitalism extends to the whole endangered universe. These authors depart from the Western discourse concerning the representation of nature, proffer individual expressions of shared pains and constituencies, identify common adversaries, and suggest viable means of environmental defense. Thus, I will read these

texts as a sextet of critique of environmental racism and patriarchy in which each author presents a counter-discursive paradigm that subverts the conventional horizons of romanticized Western nature writing by prioritizing the interconnections between the well-being of nature and that of culture.

Although ecofeminism and environmental justice constitute the key guiding theoretical parameters, filters, and hermeneutics of this study, I find myself compelled to encompass theories of postcolonialism, global capitalism, and deep ecology, given their coextensive junctures and intersections with ecofeminism and environmental justice.[2] In other words, I strive for a holistic treatment of the underpinnings and complex ways in which these approaches are interwoven and even fused, and I believe that it is this multidimensional analysis that must ground our visions for the future. The chief authors in this study inscribe a special niche for themselves in respect to ecofeminist and environmental justice subtexts, transcending the position of an outsider and going beyond being observers or voyeurs describing nature's beauty and power. Instead, they seek identification with the natural world through a shared willingness to struggle against any prevailing cultural discourse that pits culture against nature. More specifically, they demonstrate that environmental degradation is inseparable from gender-based, class-based, and social oppressions, enunciating a disgruntlement with the status quo. Also, they employ various forms of eco-resistance, advocating collective solidarity and a reformation of individuals' consciousness and personal lifestyles as momentous ramparts

[2] I often expostulate on ecofeminism and environmental justice in the same breath, but my application of these theories highlights their various emphases in regard to gender or sexuality and race, which can sometimes create conflicts between them. Plainly, these are two autonomous, albeit interconnected, approaches, with a considerable range of positions within each formation. They have wide-ranging strategies and apparatuses in exposing and undoing injustice. However, I sometimes use them unavoidably as umbrella terms, especially when I address issues of common concerns to both theories.

of counteracting environmental adversities. This discontented urge to act against all forms of oppression is manifested in all these texts, albeit their discrete cultural and social contexts. However, the six authors approach the question of the intersections of all forms of oppression in different ways, and some of them are better at it than others, because they are more unequivocal about it. Therefore, I utilize an interdisciplinary theoretical approach and draw variously on theories of environmental justice and ecofeminism and present complex, corrective critiques of global capitalism and modernity. My premises about the environmental leitmotifs in these showcased texts connect, in essential ways, with the contemporary study of gender, race, imperial ideologies, and postcolonialism. Instead of presenting a single approach in the chapters of this study, I pursue a sustained environmentalist investigation of the environmental undercurrents in these texts.

In this chapter, I trace the evolution of the hubristic, reductionistic polarizations and doctrines that view nature as merely an object of capital accumulation and analyze the structures that espouse and nourish such condescendingly patronizing stances toward land and those who rely on it. Here, I aim to address the following questions: How is the ecological degradation caused? What are its consequences, underpinnings, urges, and configurations? And how do theorists and writers respond to and resist it? This first part of my introduction will set the theoretical and historical foundations for the evolution of the systems and philosophies that justify environmental destruction. I then ground in their history the all-inclusive scope of ecofeminism and global environmental justice, combined, in addressing interrelated environmental and social disasters. At the end of this chapter, I tie concepts of global capitalism, individualism, consumerism, and

(neo)colonialism to the emergence of dysfunctional environmental, socioeconomic, and political systems and realities. Given these gaps and shortcomings, I argue for an urgent need to reimagine and reformulate the ways in which we interact with each other and with the earth.

## II

To begin, the ethics of modernity and global capitalism—embedded in Eurocentric, ethnocentric, logocentric, androcentric, and anthropocentric epistemologies—have exerted a shaping influence on humans' perception of nature since the beginning of capitalist explorations of new lands. Particularly, such power-thirsty metaphysical and epistemological systems have transformed humans' spiritual conception of nature as an equal, living organism and engendered instrumental views of it—both locally and globally. Even more problematically, the objectification, desanctification, and commodification of nature and women's bodies have institutionalized hierarchical and exploitative arrangements that create a vacuum serving models of environmental devastation—which has hit the poor, minorities, women, and third-world countries particularly hard, especially given these groups' subsistence on communal land.[3] In "Climate Justice and People of Color," Robert D. Bullard reports that numerous studies document that "the poor and people of color in the U. S. and around the world have borne greater health and environmental risks than the society at

[3] Lorraine Elliott posits that women, people of color, the poor, and developing counties are more heavily and more quickly damaged by environmental degradation as it poses a serious threat to the livelihood of these groups and to their subsistence economy. They add that the impact of "global environmental degradation" will be felt first in developing counties, though the industrialized north accounts for 70 percent of CFC consumption. The third-world contributes only 26 percent of fossil Co2 emissions. See Elliott, 18-22.

large." The environmental and economic justice movement was born in response to these injustices and disparities. The group of 77, which has served as a key player for third-world countries to coordinate their shared apprehensions regarding central global issues, has frequently reiterated that

> Poverty and environmental degradation are closely interrelated. While poverty results in certain kinds of environmental stress, the major cause of the continued deterioration of the global environment is the unsustainable pattern of consumption and production, particularly in industrialized countries, which is a matter of grave concern, aggravating poverty and imbalances. (UN, 1992: Ch. 4)

As a matter of fact, the members of the group of 77 are chary of the mounting pressures put on natural resources, which have unleashed problems such as land exhaustion, deforestation, and desertification. The members of the group articulate the operating principles of environmental justice: "Since developed countries account for the bulk of the production and consumption of environmentally damaging substances, they should bear the main responsibility in the search for long-term remedies for global environment protection" (UN, 1992: Ch. 4).[4] In a similar vein, indigenous communities express their uneasiness at the recently adopted, problematic United Nations program on Reducing Emission from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), as it scapegoats them

[4] In his December 2009 statement at the climate summit, the Bolivian president Evo Morales demanded that industrialized countries pay climate change compensations and denounced capitalism as the "real cause of climate change." He added, "If we want to save the earth, then we must end that economic model." He castigates industrialized counties, especially the U. S., for not allocating sufficient funds to help solve environmental problems. He states that the U. S. has a budget of 687 billion for defense, but "they only put up $10 billion" to save the environment.

and denies them their inherent prerogatives to natural resources that constitute, for the most part, their basic, if not only, means of survival. According to Kathrin Wessendorf,

> Indigenous people therefore urged the world's decision-makers to be cautious when planning climate change mitigation strategies. Despite having contributed the least to the problem of climate change many indigenous peoples are bearing the brunt of misguided mitigation measures when, for example, hydro-power plants flood their lands, geothermal plants displace their sacred sites and nuclear power plants affect their health. (598)

I also argue that the culture-nature, man-woman, global-local, and white-nonwhite dichotomies (first and foremost, ones of tension and antagonism), so prevalent in Western metaphysics, have subordinated and disenchanted the latter constituent of the binary and characterized it as less truthful, realistic, civilized, or even desirable. Hence, the logical subject (white man) acquires power and status over the object of knowledge (nature, women, and people of color), and he even channels and regulates their urges and impulses. Because of power maldistribution, the knowledge produced (by the locus of power) is deemed as the peak of human civilization. Thus, Western metaphysics, epistemologies, philosophies, codes, institutions, and literature set the standards of civility and admission to their cultural paradigm and thus occupy an impregnable universal niche and become fundamental in terms of presuppositions taken for granted in global capitalism.

Obviously, this Manichean thinking is suppressive of the latter part of the equation as subordinate and less rational. This subject is not only created in relation to an

object, but it is invested with power and authority. This metaphysics is strictly monological and pertinacious due to the intolerant nature of the "Truth," which essentializes the components of the dyad as both mutually defining and exclusive. In short, the seeming equilibrium between the dialectical binaries hides a deep rift in their (de)valuation, if not suppression, of one category by the other as manifested in praxis in such arrangements as colonialism, the exploitation of nature, and the division of labor between men and women. Let me stress here that I do not want to reify or replicate these binaries, elisions, and diminutions; rather, to state the argument is to refute it. Though I focus on the pervasiveness of these dualities in Western metaphysics and cosmologies and their widely felt impact on a global level due to the ethics of modernity, hegemony, and global capitalism, I acknowledge their presence in other realms and ontologies. Nonetheless, the troublesome aspects of Western modernity and global capitalism have exposed humans and nonhumans worldwide to new actualities and challenges, along with a pressing need to coordinate efforts of environmental, anti-globalist, anti-capitalist, and anti-imperialist movements—anchored in the old-age quest for social justice.

The six authors explained here critique the deafness and blindness of such superimposed codes, separations, and dyads, chiefly as they evolve into a "typical" inclination in the "enlightened" contemporaneous era of science and technology. In such structures, the former constituent of the binary should not only control, but also dictate, the logos that stigmatize, reduce, and exploit the latter. For instance, Plato's philosophical orientation, which gives precedence to humankind's power of reason to the virtual exclusion of passions, dooms the subject-object and other subsequent splits to ossification, as they do not permit a shift in position: The subject is always superior in

relation to an inferior object. This situation is inescapable as it permeates language use and consciousnesses, especially when it comes to the realm of criticism and theory. In *Discipline and Punish*, Michel Foucault delivers one of his most famous and noteworthy prescriptions:

> We should admit rather that power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge. . . In short, it is not the activity of the subject of knowledge that produces a corpus of knowledge, useful or resistant to power, but power-knowledge, the processes and struggles that traverse it and of which it is made up, that determines the forms and possible domains of knowledge. (27)

To clarify, knowledge and language, to Foucault, verge on and are governed by power relations, according to which people are positioned in hierarchies of "knowers" and objects of knowledge, men and women, and haves and have-nots. In "Discourse on Language," Foucault proposes that societies engender various modes of discourse that are "controlled, selected, organised and redistributed according to a certain number of procedures, whose role is to avert its power and its dangers, to cope with chance events, to evade its ponderous, awesome materiality" (150). He adds that Western discourse operates by "rules of exclusion" (binaries) in regard to what is desirable and what should be shunned.

The essence of Foucault's hypothesis is that those with power carve out and universalize their own versions of knowledge (history) or discourse. On the other hand, the disadvantaged (their subordinates) are made to take for granted and consume the knowledge passed down to them through totalizing, coercive institutions. Knowledge in this Foucaudian dystopia serves to ensure that potentially unruly masses remain passive and productive. As I will show in my last body chapter, Spivak critiques Foucault's diagnosis of power mechanisms and his unsettling of the notion that humans are "sovereign objects" ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1) endowed with choice and agency over their consciousness. To transgress or think through and beyond these pertinacious limitations in Western knowledge-creating practices, environmental justice and ecofeminism, albeit being variously positioned toward the center, constitute a holistic approach in place of dialectal binaries and abstractions, seeking to subvert any superimposed hierarchies.

To counteract the simultaneous marginalization of women, the poor, and land, I employ a counter-discourse with a trend that rises above dualisms and self-centered materialisms and reaches for solidarity and interconnectedness in an ecological sense, rather than a purely universal and humanistic vein. Hence, I build on forceful assertions by Lynn White, Carolyn Merchant, Patrick Murphy, Vandana Shiva, Glen Love, Rinda West, and Enrique Dussel that Western cosmologies have been dominated by the idea that humans are superior to the rest of nature and raised above our animal being by reason or divine ordination. Undoubtedly, these assumptions not only generate a form of hierarchical ethics that places humans on the top of other life forms on earth, but they also impose corresponding hierarchies among human communities and races, with the

white male guaranteeing cultural, epistemological, and economic superiority over women and non-whites.

In contrast to "the planetary paradigm," to borrow Enrique Dussel's term which he uses in opposition to the "Eurocentric paradigm," this Western notion of the "modern" or "civilized"—which has integrated the West and divorced the rest of the world—suggests that Euro-Americans have an obligation to rule over and promote the assimilation of people from other ethnic and cultural backgrounds until they can take their place in the world by fully adopting Western philosophies, presumptions, and ontologies (Dussel 3). Such formulations, which conceptualize the West in its relentless quest for power and hegemony as a paragon of axiomatic truth or "the locus of enunciation," to use Walter Mignolo's expression, give the West the justification to "modernize," "democratize," and exploit other nations. Scholars refer to this phenomenon as "cultural imperialism" or "the white man's burden." Walter Mignolo's endeavors to formulate an alternative to this imperialist epistemology involve a strenuous effort to overthrow the sociocultural hierarchies that imperialism has imposed. But more than this, "subaltern reason," as he calls it, must aim to "rethink and reconceptualize the stories that have been told and the conceptualization that has been put into place to divide the world between Christians and pagans, civilized and barbarians, modern and premodern, and developed and undeveloped regions and people," especially to the extent such divisions are based on putative cognitive capacity ("Geopolitics" 98). In his treatment of the subordination of non-European modes of knowing, conceptualization, and representation, Mignolo suggests a "reconstructive" project that demands not only a new sociology of knowledge, but also a new normative epistemology that can

automatically correct and improve upon the falsifications of colonial education and pretexts.

Such presumptions have endowed Euro-Americans with an *indisputable* obligation to "enlighten" the non-white races. They have separated not only humans from the rest of the natural world, but also whites from and above the other races. Vandana Shiva defines her term "maldevelopment" as "the violation of the integrity of organic, interconnected, and interdependent systems, that sets in motion a process of exploitation, inequity, injustice, and violence" (*Staying* 6). Likewise, with the scientific and industrial revolution of the seventeenth century and the rise of capitalism, Europeans—intensely prepossessed with long-standing ideologies of the modern and logocentrisms (egoisms)—ceased to see the earth as an organic, autonomous living system. Instead, they viewed it as a commodity and an object of exploitation, resulting in the exclusion of nature from human culture and non-whites from European civilization. Exploitation then becomes acceptable and feasible (Merchant 44).

Equally noteworthy, the paradigm that formulates modernity as an entirely Western phenomenon—and assumes that from 1500, Europe, with its so-called "civilizing mission," has provided a quintessential model for the world as a whole—was advocated by such philosophers as Friedrich Hegel, Rene Descartes, and Immanuel Kant. In Hegel's words, "The German Spirit is the Spirit of the new World. Its aim is the realization of absolute Truth as the unlimited self-determination (*Selbstbestirnrnung*) of Freedom—*that Freedom* which has its own absolute form itself as its purport" (qtd. in Dussel 3). In order to break through such "reductionistic fallacies," Dussel suggests that "Philosophy, especially ethics, needs to break with this reductive horizon in order to open

itself to the 'world,' the 'planetary' sphere" ("Beyond Eurocentrism" 4). In short, modernity and global capitalism, in their Western configurations, are predominated by imperial and neocolonial cultural and economic impulses, and in this dissertation I aim to expose their impact on the underprivileged and once-colonized people who are misled by their subtly cryptic messages.

In spite of a plethora of verbal rhetorical calls to "modernize" and "democratize" colonized countries, historical records prove otherwise—the colonial powers have not been serious about modernizing the colonized. Rather, critics such as Walter Rodney, Ania Loomba, Maria Mies, and Vandana Shiva convincingly argue that the colonizers have been instrumental in underdeveloping and hindering colonized people's struggle to modernize and break away from reliance on the colonizer. Actually, it is naive to expect that a colonial power would allow its colonized others to build national and modern industries that would ultimately expedite their getting rid of the imperial yoke. Emancipation and independence are the last rights an imperial power would grant to the colonized, and historical and current events attest to this reality. Indeed, even when they abandoned or were forced to leave their colonies, the colonizers had installed puppet regimes in affiliation with the West, and the World Bank loans to these debauched governments contribute to the victimization of the poor masses and the imposition of wasteful industries on debt-drowned nations.

Take, for example, what happened in Egypt during the reign of Mohammad Ali Pasha, who ruled Egypt for thirty years—from 1805 to 1835. He endeavored to institutionalize modernization in Egypt in every conceivable way so that it could compete on equal terms with its European trading counterparts—England and France—as well as

renovate its infrastructure, industry, and military. His economic aspirations led him to buttress trade with Europe as a means for raising money for further investment. He encouraged agricultural exports to use the profits to build more industry, pave roads, and purchase ships. Pasha's military and economic ambitions posed a threat to the interests of imperial powers in the East and caused them to respond. In *Epidemics and History*, Sheldon J. Watts sums up the reaction of the imperial powers to such moves: "In 1827 at Navarino Bay, a combined Franco-British fleet sank the navy Mohammad Ali had sent to help his Ottoman Sultan master discipline the rebelling Greeks" (35). He adds, "In 1830 French and British consuls in Cairo teamed up to ensure that Pasha didn't help his co-religionists in Algeria drive newly arrived French settlers back into the sea" (36).

Another example entails the struggle of the activists in the Niger Delta to designate oil as a "common," just like water and air. These activists demanded that oil revenues be equally shared among the members of the local communities in order to provide the livelihoods and bases of wealth for them. This contemporary movement for justice was predictably paralyzed by global corporations, and the oil company not only "refuted many accusations held against it but also held the local indigenous population and the MOSOP [Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People] responsible for environmental problems" (Haller et al. 87). Shell Oil Company also blamed radical activists such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, the late playwright and activist who was executed by the Nigerian government, for instability and internationalizing internal problems, doubting that the local people supported him. Tobias Haller states "that the oil company has paid the armed forces to suppress rebellion." Since then, the Nigerian police have "subjected activists of MOSO to constant surveillance, questioning, searching and arrest"

(90). There are dozens of movements deconstructing norms of Western-oriented modernization. The Chipko movement, which I will explore in my last chapter, offers another instance of indigenous resistance to "maldevelopment."[5] These historical and contemporary episodes, among many others, serve as stark manifestations of my assertion that imperial powers have frustrated the efforts of other nations and groups to modernize and develop. Keeping the "Other" underdeveloped, the imperial powers not only enjoyed cultural supremacy, but also secured global markets for their industrial products and ensured the growth of European capitalism and industry. Conversely, these powers have been supportive of exploitative development that brings exorbitant wealth only to the superpowers and their elite allies, at the expense of nature and humans.

As reflected in my selection of texts, the pervasive concern with issues of environmental justice, a major preoccupation for the majority of the world's people, has aroused the interests of writers and theorists who belong to various cultural, geopolitical, and ethnic paradigms to address these quandaries in diverse genres and contexts. On the one hand, the recurrent delineation of the earth as a living, responsive organism in contemporary literature designates the prevailing ecological awareness in recent decades. On the other hand, these counter-discursive formations and spaces indicate that we are facing a global environmental crisis occurring at an unprecedented rate because of the ethics of modernity and global capitalism which, "[f]rom the very moment of their inception," have "constituted nature as an 'exploitable,' dead object of consumption, with

[5] Some other popular environmental justice movements include Love Canal, the Green Belt Movement, Silent Valley Movement by KSSP, Narmada Bachao Andolan, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP), and many others worldwide. These movements tend to employ several key ecological concepts, such as "Mother Earth," "Gaia" (criticized by ecofeminists), earth healing, sustainable agriculture and agroforestry, and environmental ethics. Developed to raise humans' awareness of the repercussions of their reckless stances towards nature, these terms are spreading widely and are employed in and out of academic and social contexts.

the increase of the rate of profit of capital as its goal" (Dussel 19). This attentiveness to the ramifications of humans' blatantly irresponsible actions on human and nonhuman entities in today's world has inflamed divergent movements to prioritize and propound the necessity of conserving nature in order to maintain an environmentally just world, one that strikes a balance between anthropocentric and ecocentric paradigms.

Because of this global weariness, my analysis of the novels, short stories, nonfiction prose narratives, and even theories employed in this dissertation—while recognizing the cultural specificity of each text—at the same time reaches beyond ethnic, geopolitical, national, and gender-based boundaries in order to claim key common denominators of resistance to ecological and social injustice. More specifically, the six primary texts in this dissertation deal with the devastating effects of modernity and capitalism on human and nonhuman levels, not only in writing, but also practice in real-life situations. Here, I look at how these authors enliven and envision nature in opposition to popular concepts of nature recreation. They go beyond merely romanticizing the "scenic view" offered by traditional nature tourism and blur the boundaries between culture and nature and reject binaries. In particular, they redefine the nature ideal away from a recreational vision and valorize the concept of nature over the ideal of pristine, unadulterated wilderness. Thus, they not only disturb the conventions of dominant culture, but also subvert readers' expectations, mixing the real and surreal. For who can deny the importance of myths and rituals in people's lives, especially when the "normal" reality fails to "home" them (in Homi Bhabha's sense of the word) or when it excludes them? These texts entangle the reader in multitudes of personal, political, and allegorical meanings and carve out a copious horizontal space of subversion and

counterdiscursivity for eco-resistance. Notwithstanding their shared constituencies and adversaries, these authors construct dramatic disparities in terms of emphasis, social and political activism, and critique, and I will elaborate on these differences in my main body chapters.

These geographical and ethnic interconnectivities aid me in stretching the scope of my inquiry and in delving into theories of global capitalism, modernity, and transnationalism, ones that surpass Anglo-American boundaries. Here, I concur with Ursula Heise, who argues in her essay "Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies" that the "ecocritical lack of engagement with theories of globalization and transnationalism has begun to be recognized as a challenge for the field" (387). To mitigate this deficiency, such critics as Patrick D. Murphy, Lawrence Buell, and Susan Comfort, among others, have exerted intensive efforts to broaden ecocritical research from its Anglo-American parameters by engaging with non-Anglo-American literatures. Besides, an array of recent publications has centered on the intersections between environmentalism and postcolonialism. Though a great deal of this work seeks to expand the scope of environmental inquiries to literatures and cultures beyond Britain and North America, "attempts to work through theories of transnationalism and globalization have been more rare to date" (Heise 387). Accordingly, I side with the global activist groups who do not see themselves as limited by race, nationality, past, sexuality, political affiliations, or class, although they acknowledge the magnitude of these factors. They actually view themselves as citizens of the universe. On the other side of the spectrum, ecofeminists, indigenous writers, and, most recently, environmental justice activists have, according to Heise

> put far greater emphasis on collective modes of inhabitation, on the ways in which they are shaped by social inequalities, and on the necessity of political resistance in the face of persistent and disproportionate technological and ecological threats, especially to the health of women and minority communities. (385)

To take just one example, Arundhati Roy—who tackles in her writing sociopolitical inequalities in world structures that permit the stronger part of the equation to dominate the weaker one—gives voice to the voiceless millions of disempowered and excluded Indians who constitute the "ecological refugees." Her writing deals with issues of ecological dislocations and oppressions triggered by dam construction, deforestation, and capitalist ideologies of "maldevelopment."

The question of environmental degradation and its effects on humans and nonhumans stimulate scholars who belong to a range of disciplines, including deep ecology, history, and philosophy. I critique deep ecology for its overemphasis on nature at the expense of human integrity. I rather argue for an "ecohumanistic"[6] approach, one that strikes a balance between ecocentric and anthropocentric paradigms. In *Ecology, Community, and Lifestyle*, deep ecologist Arne Naess notes that from an ecological standpoint "the right of all forms to live is a universal right which cannot be quantified. No single species of living being has more of this particular right to live and unfold than any other species" (166). This notion of placing a great value on the lives of human and nonhuman species alike serves as a counter-discourse to the relationship of exploitative dominance based on Judeo-Christian doctrines. Here, environmentalism assists us in

[6] I have coined this term to argue for a position in the middle between postmodern ethics and deep ecology. I critique both approaches because each lacks an essential angle and can thereby contribute to the marginalization of subaltern communities or nature.

precisely couching the impact of our ethical system on the natural world and how we can reform this ethical realm in order to improve the reciprocal relationships between culture and nature.

In addition, the Judeo-Christian conventions and technological inventions have transformed people's sacred relationship with nature and made them exploiters rather than protectors of it. In his foundational 1967 essay "The Historical Roots of Our Ecologic Crisis," the eminent environmental historian Lynn White, Jr. maintains that our modern ecological crises are the direct legacy of the anthropocentric Judeo-Christian doctrines and philosophies which purport that nature has no intrinsic value apart from serving humanity. Underpinning humanity's dominance over nature and establishing a trend of anthropocentrism, the Bible urges humans to "be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth and subdue it; and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air and over every living thing that liveth upon the earth" (Genesis 1:28). The verses above reify Christianity's denunciation of the earth as a living entity; it rather sees land as nothing more than an object of exploitation. Given this delimitation, the Christian perspective on creation magnifies humans' alienation from the earth, because creation is separated as something detached from human beings, and they will not be blemished by what happens to it.

Therefore, we need to modify and reconceive of our ethical systems in accordance with the beliefs of Native American and other indigenous communities as sources of reciprocal and ethical treatments of nature as an equal organism, "in which the whole is not merely the sum of parts, because parts are so cohesively interrelated that isolating anyone distorts the whole" (Shiva, *Staying* 29). There is a vast array of evidence that an

egalitarian lifestyle and a unity with nature were regnant among these communities. White points out that the distinctive Western tradition of science and technology was not enacted until the late eleventh century, and the word "ecology"[7] was not even coined in the English language until 1873. The medieval relationship between humankind and nature, following the invention of a new method of plowing in the seventh century, was profoundly transformed, because the "distribution of land was based no longer on the needs of a family, but, rather, on the capacity of a power machine to till the earth" (White 8). Here, the Christian annihilation of pagan animism "made it possible to exploit nature in a mood of indifference to the feelings of natural objects" (White 10).

Since the age of explorations beginning in the fifteenth century, also known as the age of discoveries, Western thinkers have been obsessed with the concept of the "great chain of being," whose premises, according to Roderick Nash, foreground a hierarchical order of the universe. This classical Western classification places God at the top of the pyramid, and beneath Him are the angels, humans, and other forms of life, situating nature at the very bottom of the hierarchy (Olson and Wilson 15). In *Native Americans in the Twentieth Century*, James Olson and Raymond Wilson argue that in this hierarchical order of life,

> Poor people were not equal to rich people, nor were animals equal to any people at all; a divinely imposed hierarchy fixed the ranks of life according to natural, inflexible inequalities. The grace of God extended only to higher forms of life: human beings and angels. To the European, humanity unquestionably represented the highest form of life, as humans

[7] In "Revaluing Home," Judith Plant notes that the word ecology "comes from the Greek *oikos,* for home" (21).

> were the only beings on earth possessing immortal souls with the prospects of eternal existence and thus the only forms of life deserving serious ethical consideration. (15)

Rinda West, who is greatly influenced by Aldo Leopold, contends in *Out of the Shadow* that the Eurocentric position toward nature sanctioned the conquest of land and all creatures living on it. Her chief argument rests on the ground that human supremacist systems of institutional structures, policies, and practices elicit and sustain privileges and assumptions that benefit humans and exploit nonhumans. This separation between nature and culture, which is a moral failure, constitutes nature as a commodity that can be exploited for humans' benefit, "rather than a community of which we are a part" (22). These anthropocentric and hierarchical processes of transference, degradation, domination, and sometimes idealization have served as pretexts for the exploitation and manipulation of natural resources, women, people of color, and colonized countries. Most indigenous communities and epistemologies regard the earth as a nurturing mother who supplies the needs of all living forms.

Global environmental justice and ecofeminism devote abundant attention to the binding linkages between environmental and social injustices wrought by forces of modernity and global capitalism. In their introduction to *The Environmental Justice Reader*, environmental justice theorists Joni Adamson, Mei Mei, and Rachel Stein transformed the dominant paradigm of environmental studies and redefined the environment holistically as being where "we live, work, play, and worship," even if these settings do not coincide (4). Hence, they broaden our focus beyond bucolic and farming areas to also embrace the urban sphere. They define environmental justice, in turn, "as

the right of all people to share equally in the benefits bestowed by a healthy environment" (4).

The term "environmental racism" was first introduced by Dorothy Nelkin in 1981, after conducting a survey of environmental liabilities located on Native American lands in the U. S. Reversing environmental racism, the term "environmental justice" was coined and defined in 1982 by political and environmental activist Benjamin Chavis, Jr., due to a local protest against a polychlorinated biphenyl landfill slotted for a rural, predominantly African-American county in North Carolina. Generally, the concept of environmental justice has been applied to groups and nations experiencing disproportionate amounts of environmental burdens stemming from prejudices from a range of factors, including race and ethnicity, class, gender, and geopolitics. The global environmental justice movement, which I perceive as a moral stance vis-à-vis the "Other," has amply ruminated on the inherent distributive racial and social inequalities in the implementation of environmental policies, linking the struggle for environmental justice to human rights and social justice movements.

Ecofeminists identify a strong parallel between patriarchal oppression and the degradation of nature by corresponding androcentric cosmologies. Environmental justice theorists see an intrinsic link between ecological breakdowns spawned by forces of modernity and global capitalism and worldwide social and racial inequities, which culminate in targeting women, minority communities, and third-world countries for exposure to hazardous waste sites and industries. Given such threats to their bioregions and ecosystems, the local inhabitants are either displaced to degraded landscapes or employed at low wages in unsafe and abusive work environments. Environmental justice

theorists Robin Morris Collin and Robert Collin comment: "Antiurban attitudes, covert and institutionalized or normalized racism, and conscious ignorance can undo efforts to resolve nearly any contemporary problem" (208). They continue, "antiurban and racist values have left a critical gap in our approaches to environmental justice" (209). Here, I aim to refute the claim that dismisses environmental justice as a concept that lacks clarity and fails to capture the essence and breadth of the different types of environmental questions. Rather, in its thorough engagement with various paradigms of injustice—racial, social, cultural, domestic, and international—environmental justice, coupled with ecofeminism, precludes replicating the same reductions it sets out to debunk, thereby guarding itself against any separatist, monologic positions. Paying a long overdue tribute to frequently neglected repercussions of socio-cultural systems, a global environmental justice vision ties the struggle of people of color and lower classes in the U. S. with transnational movements that seek to address and forestall dangers resulting from environmental injustice, global capitalism, and non-sustainable development in cultures whose metaphysics may be as reductive of the "Other."

This approach will not only facilitate the claiming of common denominators, but also unite the efforts of ecofeminist, environmental justice, political movements, and anti-globalist organizations and bridge U. S. and third-world struggles. Indeed, these transnational movements need to coordinate their efforts, exercise political weight, and thus influence decision-makers to abolish unjust practices and obviate imminent perils. If these voices and efforts are separate, injustices may not be eliminated. Also, love and affection for one's local landscape should translate into concern for the whole universe. Narrow, individualistic divisions serve neocolonial schemes purportedly designed to

break up and conquer the subalterns, and also fragment resistance. These disunities assist the larger frameworks of market hegemony and help maintain the status quo. Conversely, environmental justice and ecofeminism initiate dialogue and promote collective communal identities beyond the strictures of autonomous and non-dialectically conceptualized individualism, a state of oneness.

Constitutive questions that go to the heart of environmental justice and ecofeminism include some of the following: What groups are most affected by ecological disasters? Why are they affected? Who is responsible for this distributive problem? And how could environmental degradation have been avoided? By addressing the racial, androcentric, materialistic, and social impetus behind discrimination, these movements have served to make invisible and disenfranchised communities discernible and vocal. Unlike postmodern ethics[8]—which valorize "alterity" and give voice to other historically, politically, and socially marginalized groups, yet turn a blind eye to the nonhuman "Other"—the ethics of environmental justice and ecofeminism fluctuate between human and nonhuman paradigms. It has become increasingly noticeable that environmental burdens and benefits are disproportionately shared within and across countries. Over the past four decades—particularly with the rapid growth of industrialism, which was accompanied by a resurgence of imperial globalization, capitalist consumerism, urbanization, and the erosion of community and family ties—human and nonhuman agencies, now more than ever before, are subjected to an

[8] Postmodernists rebut "universal ethics" as an oxymoron, given the array of cultural and social paradigms and worldviews. They posit that humanity has not reached a consensus on the universality of ethics. Postmodern ethics, as I understand it, regards so-called universal ethical codes as either delusions or a disguised scheme aiming to homogenize discrete cultures and nations. Accordingly, actions that may be desirable in one cultural context are incorrect in another. For an extended discussion of postmodern ethics, see Bauman, 1-36.

unprecedented onslaught of market imperatives and influences that threaten to disrupt and overwhelm all that has no cash value by assigning a cash value to it.

This assault is not free from imperialist motives. Global capitalism and individualism, rooted in colonialism, are closely linked to escalating the ecological burdens in far-flung parts of the world, especially in third-world countries. Basically, the economically and politically privileged tend to enjoy life at the expense of others and live in relatively uncontaminated terrains, while the historically disadvantaged, economically oppressed, culturally alienated, and politically ostracized tend to have less access to natural resources and live in highly polluted areas. In other words, there is injustice in the way people and countries experience "development" and pollution.

Environmental studies, overall, raise our consciousness of the metaphysical and physical interdependency of humans and nature and re-establish humans as an environmentally embedded part of what Aldo Leopold called "the biotic community"—a phrase suggestive of a continuum that encapsulates humans and nature. To counter reductive mystifications and theoretical obfuscations of nature, Leopold, in his classic and extremely influential book *A Sand County Almanac*, published just after his death in 1949, places humankind within instead of above the biological community. He states that "a land ethic changes the role of *Homo sapiens* from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it. It hints respect for his fellow-members, and also respect for the community as such" (204, emphasis in original). He adds that "a thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (224-25). Leopold contextualizes his ecological and ethical claims by explicitly utilizing "spatiotemporal" scales as a norm for

evaluating direct human impact on nonhuman nature, an impact denied by only a few people.

Leopold's epistemological contentions invoke Native American and worldwide indigenous views of land as a sacramental, spirited entity, rather than a passive object of utilization and consumption. More precisely, environmental justice and ecofeminist philosophies attract public attention to the fact that we are all connected and that our actions and inactions may either forestall natural disasters or ameliorate human conditions. These movements are doubly instrumental in environmental debates, especially in an era characterized by social fragmentation of modern life, economic fluctuations, political uncertainties, and, most important, various forms of *resistance* to environmental crises and social injustices facing the whole world.

Environmental justice and ecofeminism signal a need for change in environmental perception and warn against co-optation into the existing power structure that is based on anthropocentric worldviews. In effect, these approaches strike a balance between anthropocentric and biocentric concerns and foster deference for culture and nature, posing thereby as the most accommodating theoretical approaches. They prioritize the integrity of subaltern groups—women, the urban and rural poor, and minorities—who most severely experience environmental injustice. These categories were conventionally ranked low as a priority among environmental activist coteries and have largely been underrepresented in the leading positions of most environmental organizations.[9] These

[9] Joni Seager argues that, until very recently, green movements have been dominated by white males who tend to be at the top as leaders and decision-makers in these movements. Although women have become active in campaigns about environmental issues and are locally overrepresented, they are underrepresented and marginalized in leading positions. See Seager, *Earth Follies*, 6, 176-85.

approaches thus expand the reach of environmental studies to questions of social well-being and exhibit a sympathy toward those who have been relegated to second class and silenced vis-à-vis their views about, and participation in, environmental policies. They prove that environmental studies are neither deaf nor blind to transparent representations of the other. Environmental justice activists point out that the disadvantaged often disproportionately experience the ill effects of environmental degradation due to current racial, political, and economic dynamics and considerations. Ecofeminists argue for an inherent connection between ecological degradation and androcentric objectification of women, as they inferiorize and marginalize the "Other."

"Ecofeminism" is a term combining two distinct fields of study—feminism and environmentalism, both working toward the abolishing of the cultural denigration of the "Other." The term "ecofeminism" or *ecologie-Féminisme* was first used by French writer Françoise D'Eaubonne. She wrote such radical articles as "Le Feminisme ou la mort" (1974) and "Ecologie-Féminisme: Révolution ou Mutation" (1978), in which the "destruction of the planet" coincides with the oppression of women as it is maintained through "the profit motive inherent in male power." Maria Mies's and Vandana Shiva's collaboration on their jointly authored landmark book entitled *Ecofeminism* (1993) reveals how these theorists, who "live and work thousands of miles apart" are, as they put it, "divided yet united by the world market system, that affords privileges to peoples of the North at the expense of those in the South" (1). They define ecofeminism as a term that grew out of various social movements—"the feminist, peace and ecology movements—in the late 1970s and early 1980s . . . [and] became popular in the context of numerous protests and activities against environmental destruction, sparked off

initially by recurring ecological disasters" (13). In *Literature, Nature, and Other*, ecofeminist Patrick D. Murphy offers a more philosophical, yet clear-cut perspective by approaching ecofeminism as an extension of the study of ecology, which he argues is a way of recognizing the *interconnectedness* of all living organisms: "not as the 'external' environment which we enter," but rather as the recognition of the distinction "between things-in-themselves and things-for-us," as they correlate with "us-as-things-for-others" (4). By attending to the authenticity and groundedeness of the other as fullness, rather than an object of exploitation and reduction, we can "begin to comprehend a gender heterarchical continuum," one that accommodates and cherishes difference "without binary oppositions and hierarchical valorizations" (4-5). The term "ecofeminism" is generally used to point to the existence of substantial common ground—historical, experiential, symbolic, and theoretical—between ecological and feminist paradigms. Broadly speaking, ecofeminists argue that a close parallel exists between patriarchal oppression and the subordination of women in families and society and the degradation of nature by similar androcentric patterns and cosmologies. In congruence with this valid contention, I use the term to refer to the close links between the twin oppressions of women and nature.

Patriarchy is not a uniquely Western phenomenon, yet the unmitigated and unparalleled hegemony of Western patriarchy has adversely affected most of the world's inhabitants and ecosystems. In her foundational book *The Creation of Patriarchy*, Gerda Lerner discusses the rise of patriarchy and traces male hegemony over women throughout civilizations. She proposes,

> Patriarchy is a historic creation formed by men and women in a process which took nearly 2500 years to its completion. In its earliest form, patriarchy appeared as the archaic state. The basic unit of its organization was the patriarchal family, which both expressed and constantly generated its rules and values. We have seen how integrally definitions of gender affected the formation of the state. Let us briefly review the way in which gender became created, defined, and established. (212)

Lerner's theory ascribes "patriarchy" to physical and socioeconomic developments in agriculture, which lead to the division of labor and other hierarchical structures. Ecofeminists often stress the value of correlations among humans, non-human others (such as animals), and the earth. The consensus among ecofeminists is that the excessive and multi-layered violence inflicted on women and nature emanates from androcentric domination. In her introduction to *Ecofeminism and the Sacred,* Carol J. Adams asserts that "the overwhelming majority of the millions of people denied access to the basic rights of clean air, water, food, shelter, health, and well-being are women" (1). Ecofeminism comprises a quantum leap beyond some other modernist critical theories that are either reactionary, or bound to repeat the same reductions they seek to break down. Thus, employing this approach precludes reduction and gives feminism a wider scope by guarding it against any separatist, monologic points of view.

Mikhail Bakhtin's dialogics and architectonics, as opposed to Kant's or the Western culture dualisms, ecofeminism, and ecocriticism commence with a holistic theory of life contrary to patriarchal supremacist theories of reduction and death—the death of the "Other." Critics and theorists of these domains advocate correcting the

situation and restoring the value and rights of the culturally and unjustifiably impoverished part of the equation. Their pronouncements are not solipsistic, but universal and environmental. They draw our attention to looming dangers enshrouding the earth and all its inhabitants, if humans proceed with the same reductive, unethical, dichotomous, and violent practices. Unmistakably, damage—discursive or physical—is injurious to both the victim and victimizer. Murphy argues for the need to reconceptualize woman-nature and nature-culture dichotomies or associations. He both defines and critiques the current premises of literary ecocriticism and nature writing, arguing that ecofeminism, Bakhtinian architectonics, and ecocriticism, combined, make the student and the critic immune to the background of what other theories have failed to do. As Murphy puts it, "In marked contrast to the critical maladies of enervated humanism, solipsistic skepticism, and paralytic undecidability, a triad of (re)perceptions has appeared, which, if integrated, can lead toward an affirmative praxis: the Bakhtinian dialogical method, ecology, and feminism" (*Literature* 3).

Bakhtin's theory overcomes the state of division from which the Western culture has been suffering. His philosophy is "unitary," and his terms are carefully selected to convey his truly humanistic theory of dialogism. He prioritizes the necessity of participation, where other philosophers espouse dominations, abstractions, and dissections. Participation also counteracts the tendency of abstraction processes to exclude concrete existence, where existence means humans are actively involved on mental, psychological, and emotional levels—all are constituents of the same act without a tendency to classify them *a priori* and hierarchically. To Bakhtin, the self is a participative entity that encompasses all dimensions and faculties of the participative

agent; the "manifestation of myself" incorporates "feeling," "desire," "mood," and "thought."[10] Three aspects of the manifestations of the self are personal and architectonic, while one's "thought"—not reason, a classical value and preference as the superior part of the dualism—is taken into consideration. Reason has an abstract sense to it; it sounds patriarchal and oppressive, or suppressive, in terms of Enlightenment philosophy. Even more, participating in the world of the others entails sharing their world and realizing that they also share in one's world, exceeding self-limits—the true characteristic of existence. Hence, all attempts at setting the self aside, or above, as superior to other natural phenomena, are fallacious and violent in that they tend to deny this important side of existence.

Ecofeminists aim to deconstruct the logic of domination that has justified the subjugation of humans based on gender, race, ethnicity, and class and served to legitimize those institutions that have plundered the people and the land through industrialized agriculture. In describing the essence of ecofeminism, Karen J. Warren points out that "ecofeminists insist that naturism is properly viewed as an integral part of any feminist solidarity to end sexist oppression and the logic of domination which conceptually grounds it" ("Toward" 125). She adds, "ecofeminism is quintessentially anti-naturist . . . reject[ing] any way of thinking about or acting toward non-human nature that reflects a logic, values, or attitude of domination" (126). Above all, ecofeminists argue against the feminization of nature and naturalization of women in such patriarchal metaphors as "mother nature," because of the subordination latent in these gendered constructions. These processes of relegating one entity into another realm—women to the realm of the

[10] It is important to note here that Bakhtin was indebted to Marx's *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*.

natural and the natural itself to evil—place some ecofeminists in a state of confusion. Hence, the boundaries between nature and culture are artificial and even responsible for humans' alienation from nature. Attending to power relations in their traditional configurations, this "transference" culminates in feminizing nature and masculinizing culture, thereby representing the viewpoint of a certain gender, class, and race, rather than corresponding to universal truths about the interconnectivity of nature and culture. Mies and Shiva explain that an ecofeminist perspective is not to create relations of antagonism; rather, it is to propound "the need for a new cosmology and a new anthropology which recognize that life in nature is maintained by means of co-operation, and mutual care and love" (6).

Further, ecofeminists have exposed the sexist implications and prejudices embedded in the concept of reason, particularly when it positively characterizes males and derogatorily associates females with nature. Women, Val Plumwood notes, have been associated with nature, the mundane, the emotional, and the particular, while men have been linked with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract (23). Plumwood impugns not only the gendered culture-nature dualisms, but also the main bases upon which this dyad has been constructed, namely reason or rationality. Reason has been manipulated to legitimize the exclusion of the "dehumanized" classes which include not only animals, "primitive" people, and "savages," but also women. These classes are thought to be incapable of reasoning. This nefarious pattern culminates in the mastery of man over them, as they are "unable to enjoy mental capabilities" (25).

I wholly support the ecofeminist position on the bases of environmental racism and the intersections among the oppressions of women, nature, and colonized people.

Ecofeminist thinkers such as Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva link ecofeminism and postcolonialism via their historical analysis of colonialism as oppressive of colonized peoples, nature, and women, attributing decades of human and land exploitation to the rise of European colonialism, which opened up both nature and colonized communities for unprecedented brutalization and subordination. According to Mies, "The relationship between these overdeveloped centers or metropoles and the underdeveloped peripheries is a colonial one. Today, a similar colonial relationship exists between Man and Nature, between men and women, between urban and rural areas. We have called these the colonies of White Man" (56). What distinguishes European colonialism from the long history of colonialism of other civilizations is its use of capitalism and technological efficiency. For example, Shiva has poignantly scrutinized the position of women in relation to nature and unhesitantly imputed sexism and deforestation to British imperial domination launched more than three hundred years ago (*Staying* 61).

While ecofeminist and historian Carolyn Merchant analyzes the exploitation of New England in North America through colonial expansion, Shiva brings this exploitation—culturally, historically, and geopolitically—to an international level. The whole process of international maltreatment of natural resources and the destruction of land, as the most indispensable asset in predominantly agricultural countries, qualitatively intensified when Europeans, in the name of development, "colonized other parts of the world, under the guise of its scientific 'advancement.'" In order to further utilize Shiva's postcolonial concept in relation to ecological destruction, it is necessary to recount colonial discourse and postcolonial theory, especially how they have affected the ecosystem. The colonial mentality seeks to "improve the labor [and natural] resource[s]

*even at the cost of wasteful use of nature's wealth*" (Shiva, *Staying* 11, emphasis in original).

The colonizing process presupposed the "underdevelopment" and "inferior" status of the colonized; therefore, supervision and development became necessary and crucial. With the operation of a dualistic and dichotomized ontology, colonization generates "maldevelopment because it makes the colonizing male the agent and model of 'development.' Women, the third world, and nature become underdeveloped, first by definition, and then, through the process of colonization, in reality" (*Staying* 41). Ecofeminism involves an effort to topple the boundaries and hierarchies that colonialism and androcentrism enforced. The most dangerous European patriarchal ideology that needs to be reproached is the one assuming that white European values are universal and unfailing and that technology and development are required by any part of the world in order to join the "world market," as it was supposed in the time of colonialism. Mies and Shiva insist that "catching-up development is not even desirable" (300).

The ecologically flawed understanding of culture-nature relations is ascribed to the scientific revolution of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries and the industrial revolution of the nineteenth century. In *The Death of Nature*, Merchant observes that prior to the scientific revolution, most Europe and most of the world enjoyed daily interactions with nature structured by "close-knit, cooperative, organic communities" (1). Focusing her discussion on the "ecological revolution" of New England in the first two hundred years of European colonization of North America, Merchant argues that a cosmology that believed nature was a responsive entity was severely challenged by the new science in the late eighteenth century and early nineteenth century. Hence, humans

ceased to consider themselves imitators following in nature's footsteps, but as masters of its process. Merchant comments, "The changes in imagery and attitudes relating to the earth were of enormous significance as the mechanization of nature proceeded" (*Death of Nature* 22). The organic image of the earth as the "Mother Earth" in European history prior to the scientific revolution was drastically changed into a mechanical image by the mid-seventeenth century when Europeans rationalized their separation from nature. In short, the "death of nature" accounts for treating it as a commodity subject to production, not valued according to its own ability of reproduction.

Certainly, we share common adversaries and tribulations resulting from environmental collapse, though some of us are *de facto* more affected by environmental degradation than others. The industrialized countries' emissions of carbon dioxide are causing most of the damage to the earth in terms of global warming. Yet the adverse effects of maldevelopment and globalization are felt more strongly by women and "nonmainstream" subjects in third-world countries.[11] Despite their disparities and sometimes tensions, environmental justice and ecofeminism intersect with postcolonialism in many respects. These meeting points instill a salutary alliance among these critical schools that opens up new aesthetic horizons. They also justify my focus on recent (postcolonial) texts such as *Ceremony*, *Solar Storms*, *Imaginary Maps*, and *Cities of Salt*, whose authors and their characters respond to and cope with social and environmental injustices.

One might reasonably wonder if it is necessary to study literary works written by people who might be less knowledgeable than others about the ecological, political, and

[11] Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva also assert that the impact of ecological deterioration is harder on women than on men and on the third word than on the first world. They argue that women are the "first to protest against environmental destruction." See Mies and Shiva, *Ecofeminism*, 2-3.

socioeconomic repercussions entailed in maldevelopment and global capitalism. Put another way, why do such works of literature prove more valuable than other studies mostly done by scientific scholars in the field?[12] True, there are certain aspects that natural and social scientists are more equipped to tackle, but I believe that the unique status of literature should be taken seriously, especially with its capacity to explore and communicate topics and feelings more comprehensively than other forms of expression. Literature is pivotal because it doesn't fulfill an immediately and manifestly defined function. It leaves much space for imagination, contemplation, and critique, while incorporating aspects from other disciplines such as science and technology. Take, for example, poets such as William Wordsworth and Thomas Hardy, who dealt with transcendental hopes contradicting human reason and science. They were the first to address the feelings of city-dwelling groups and express the pain of parting and the shocks of detachment that came with modernization far more eloquently than any history or science book ever could. Likewise, Silko's *Ceremony*, Hogan's *Solar Storms*, Roy's *The Cost of Living*, Devi's *Imaginary Maps*, and Munif's *Cities of Salt* rethink and revolutionize the epistemological foundations, conceptual bases, and substantive implications of relations of power, and verbalize the psychological and physical distress that comes with colonialism and capitalism in sophisticated ways.

I understand global capitalism as a foreseeable outcome of late capitalistic acceleration, a process devoid of the pathos and mythos (pretexts) of colonial and imperial enterprises, though it still functions on parallel lines with them. It involves subtle rearrangements of territories that foreground economics and corporations instead

[12] Intriguingly, Wendell Berry, Arundhati Roy, Mahasweta Devi, and Abdelrahman Munif all provide scientific insights into the mechanisms of the extraction about which they write, as they are all experts in these fields. For instance, Munif was a petroleum engineer and thus an authority in the field of oil industry.

of forms of war rhetoric. To explicate, the agents of global capitalism carry out their "mission" of controlling the world and exploiting its resources under the masque of prosperity and present global capitalism as a panacea to the world's ills, a "supreme" Western model that should be emulated regardless of cultural, social, and economic backdrops. Further, global capitalism is problematic because, in its paradoxical (hypothetical) exertion to converge the world's people into a single homogeneous global culture, it eliminates diversity and qualitative differences and homogenizes resilient cultures and historical eras into a monolith.

As a concept or a phenomenon, global capitalism has come to amalgamate disparate processes to various people. It has thus become another controversial term or a buzzword. Bruce Knauft defines it "as the images and institutions associated with Western-style progress and development in a contemporary world" (18). Advocates of global capitalism "present themselves as guardians of 'the world community,' 'global peace,' 'global ecology,' or of universal human rights and the free world market" (Mies and Shiva 9). They pledge a "free world market" that will culminate in peace, synchronization, and affluence, imploding the regressive taboos responsible for discriminating against people on the basis of gender, race, and religious beliefs. Nevertheless, in the name of common or global ends—which recognize that we all share and hinge on the same planet—they "claim the right to exploit local ecology, communities, and so on" (9).

Contrary to the postulations of proponents of global capitalism, the global doesn't really represent universal human interests, but, as Shiva puts it, "a particular local and parochial interest which has been globalized through its reach and control" (9). People

all over the world—irrespective of culture, ideology, race, political affiliations, and socioeconomic status—especially in local areas, are bound to dispose of their ways, wisdoms, and heritage and accept and consume stereotypical colonial presuppositions, forms of knowledge, and products. In this manner, the new global system has turned into a universal means of hegemony and objectification that will intensify the sense of injustice, especially in third-world countries: The close nexus between global capitalism and hegemony is unequivocal. All these disruptive "homogeneities" spring from the dissemination of the capitalist system, which thrives at the expense of subaltern victims and their ecosystem.

This manipulation is the result of a "globalized" economy retaining the residues of colonialism and imperialism, but this time with a tilt toward ecological, racial, and gender-based exploitations. Hence, the world's nations are "classed" or hierarchized as First (more "enlightened" or "progressive") and Third World (barbarous). These stigmatizations do not measure civilizational qualities as much as they convey power relations, a division of labor, and a class separation based on material and technological advancements and progress. They function as a reincarnation of orientalist and imperialist attitudes. I am particularly interested in the new forms of exploitation this global capitalism has created by enforcing alienating and objectifying paradigms on poor countries and classes as well as on women. I question the universal propositions to subsume, take for granted, or even suppress the Other(s). These tendencies show that the universal, which essentializes its Other as naturally inferior, is a mask for privileging a group of people over the Other(s). The universal is that which takes over and

manipulates as its logos "coincides" with Anglo-Saxon middle or upper-class male motives.

If the neoglobal order promotes justice and equality among all people, then how and why some people become disenfranchised and disempowered vis-à-vis others who accumulate more power and wealth under the same system? Such real-life manifestations of entitling some groups with more power and privilege make me skeptical of global, Western-style progress and collective well-being advocated by elites in the developing and developed countries, whose goal is to propagate corporate economic values globally, in order to secure free access to natural resources, human labor, and markets. More problematically, the "high" and "desirable" values of global capitalism have been used as excuses for ecological abuses and military occupation of other regions. Difference is not ontologically evil, but it has been made so for power-induced motivations. Therefore, the dissimilar other has to assimilate, or more accurately, has to be neutralized, until he or she winds up conceding to cultural hegemony and hitherto subordinating his or her difference as untrue in relation to the overwhelmingly stalwart imperial other.

In *Global Transformations,* David Held and his colleagues offer a largely optimistic overview of the theoretical or declared foundations of global capitalism as "the widening, deepening, and speeding up of global interconnectedness" made possible by new information, communication, and transportation technologies (16). They divide globalization into four spatio-temporal dimensions: extensity, intensity, velocity, and impact. First, globalization implies that social, political, and economic activities traverse the nation-state borders and in so doing presents people in divergent areas with shared aspirations, material standards, social institutions, and mutual cooperation. Second, this

transnational interconnection intensifies because of the greater frequency and regularized patterns of interactions that formulate the transnationally embedded networks. Third, the extensity and intensity of global interconnectedness culminates in speeding up the interplay of many traditions and procedures. Fourth, the repercussions of any practices or disasters in one part of the planet can affect remote dominions, and the magnitude of this impact is determined by the extensity, intensity, and velocity of global interconnectedness (15). Ronald Robertson describes the dynamic of globalization as "the twofold process of the particularization of the universal and the universalization of the particular" (*Globalization* 177).

The definitions above are based on abstractions and buoyant hypotheses, not on what is at stake in real-life settings. These definitions are inconclusive, as they don't engage with the sociopolitical, economic, and ecological ruptures induced by global capitalism. Here, Fredric Jameson advances a provisional but more realistic outline of globalization "as an untotalizable totality which intensifies binary relations between its parts—mostly nations, but also regions and groups, which, however, continue to articulate themselves on the model of 'national identities' (rather than in terms of social classes, for example)" (*The Cultures of Globalization* xii). Correspondingly, in his groundbreaking book *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey sums up the tenets of globalization as "the shrinking of the world because of revolutionary changes in communication and transportation technologies" (285). He acknowledges that globalization—which necessarily entails the Westernization of the world—widens rather than bridges the political and cultural rift between the West and the other world. In Marshall Berman's words, "modernity can be said to unite all mankind. But it is a

paradoxical unity, a unity of disunity" (*All that is Solid* 15). Indeed, it is an illusion of unity among the world's nations. So a new world in which, as Marx puts it, "all that is solid melts into air [and] all that is holy is profaned," is created (*Communist Manifesto* 10).

There is no more pressing need for ethics than when avarice, power, and technology overlap. Ethics have the power to curb our longing for material gain, and even to protect us from our own selves, for the principles of class, competition, and free market announce a war and a contest among people where to win is the name of the game, regardless of human and nonhuman misery. The historical evidence is accumulating to expose the scientific involvement in the cultural violence exerted on the Other, where social values and ethics are subject to change in order to accommodate the expansive nature of power supported by scientific findings and advanced technology. The roots of the division of people into high and low according to gender, race, or class are economically determined to a great degree. This is, of course, not a new discovery, but it allows us to rewrite history from the point of view of the subaltern, as I will explicate how the authors considered in this dissertation do.

In the barter system, to take an example of an ancient, environment-friendly economic and social transaction, people do not use money. Instead, they exchange goods for goods to satisfy minimal needs, not luxurious, non-vital ones. People's exchange of their products for other products foregrounds and sustains the natural balance. However, to feed the expanding colonial industry, peasants in most colonized countries were forced to cultivate cash crops which not only replace indigenous subsistence plants and animals, but also transformed humans' relationship with land and with one another. Originally,

most people worked for themselves; sometimes they would even barter labor for labor, but with colonialism, people and land were divided into hierarchies of utilitarianism.

I am not suggesting that before colonialism, people were living in utopia, but, for the most part, life was less complicated and was more controlled and morally driven. However, my hypothesis is problematic, because it is not always accurate. For instance, the caste and landlord hierarchies or systems in India existed before colonialism and remain pervasive until today. Still, nature was sanctified, and its rules were observed, but with the advent of modernity and global capitalism, not only the earth, but also those whose lives are contingent on it, have been subjected to depletion and abuse. Those who are squarely linked to the earth are still at the bottom of the economic, social, and political ladder. Moreover, defined by male culture as masculine and manipulated to overpower and subjugate people and natural phenomena, technology has started to do modern and postmodern people's business for commodity production. The World Trade Organization (WTO), International Monetary Fund (IMF), and World Bank have been major counterparts in the creation and management of the modern world economy. In *Perpetuating Poverty*, Doug Bandow and Ian Vasquez point to what amounts to a strategy of lending money to the poor countries to the extent of addiction, flooding the Third World with hundreds of billions of dollars. Yet there is no real development. Instead of growth, the Third World has been experiencing social disintegration, economic stagnations, debt crises, and, in some regions, decline in agricultural production and incomes. What's more, agencies of global capitalism have escalated their lending after their realization of the failure of the lending process. This process entails complacency

and even conspiracy as the assumption was that the Third World was poor because it lacked capital, but this was not really the case.

Ultimately, we live in a hyper-technological, globalized, digitized, and relatively post-human era dominated by the ethics of consumerism. Due to such ethics, responsible for the degradation of human and nonhuman entities, the subaltern classes and their environment have entered the production cycle as victims of the multiple victims of the past and the renewing present injustices against race and gender. In their revisionist views of environmentalism—which are much "deeper than deep ecology"—global environmental justice and ecofeminist theorists build on, modify, and sometimes rebut the presumptions resulted from the shortcomings of their feminist, deep ecologist, and ecocritical forerunners. Hence, they turn us back equally to often-neglected groups and the earth. In fact, behind these theories is an alarming note of the urgency and necessity of attending to this long forgotten provider for fears that are not only aesthetic, but also pertinent to the possibility of further survival. Our inattention to the "objects" of our consumption and sustenance is indicative of our immorality toward other groups. Consumption should be an ethical act, not too damaging to the object of consumption and not too improvident that it becomes over-consumerism or consumerism as a value per se.

The six chief authors examined in my dissertation renegotiate and subvert, not only through writing but also activism, both the patriarchal legacy of their cultures and the destructive dynamics of development, neocolonialism, and global capitalism, offering potent alternatives to these systems. These authors' forceful environmentalist critiques evoke, of course in distinct ways, paradigms of environmental justice and ecofeminism that tackle hierarchies of race, gender, class, and ethnicity in exceedingly complex ways.

I recapitulate the necessity to extend multi-cultural perspectives on environmental issues, so I explore both white and nonwhite authors. I try to demonstrate how pollution and exploitation are unequally shared based on cultural and sociopolitical parameters.

To this end, the next chapter of this dissertation examines Wendell Berry's *The Long-Legged House* and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony*, paying special attention to their treatment of home, tradition, and environmental justice. Both authors advocate the importance of storytelling and traditional beliefs and practices that bolster people's attachment to the land. For instance, Silko's uniquely Native American stories are almost always situated in specific places with which she associates. Berry and Silko also invoke pre-modernist frameworks to explicitly confront a great many environmental and human injustices. This next chapter will begin with a brief comparison elaborating the major divergences and common grounds these authors construct toward environmental justice and ecofeminist implications. In the second part of this chapter, I will engage in an in-depth critique of each author's work, showing how each author articulates and enlivens environmental and social paradigms by bringing these dynamics together in a forceful critique of the ethics of capitalism, industrialism, environmental discrimination, and imperial hegemony.

In my second body chapter, I address the impact of positioning mega-dams on terrains belonging to communities squarely depending on nature for their daily sustenance. I expose the sexism, racism, and classism embedded in such projects as the Narmada Dam valley and the James Bay hydro-Quebec Project. I elaborate the sociocultural, psychological, and economic aftermaths of destroying the commons of these communities. In my third chapter, I take this study to a different level by

discussing the dark side of maldevelopment and global capitalism, which take over communal land and forests in the name of progress and growth. I pay special attention to the rise of elitist groups in line with the (neo)colonial powers that take neoliberal capitalism, “development,” and free trade as the apparatuses through which they rule the world and enslave the masses.

# CHAPTER 2

# MYTHS AND TRADITIONS VERSUS MODERNITY AND CAPITALISM: WENDELL BERRY'S *THE LONG-LEGGED HOUSE* AND LESLIE MARMON SILKO'S *CEREMONY*

A community is the mental and spiritual condition of knowing that place is shared, and that the people who share the place define and limit the possibilities of each other's lives. —Wendell Berry, *The Long-Legged House* (61)

## I

After having established in my introduction a necessarily complex theoretical framework for conceptualizing environmental analysis and reviewing some of the most foundational environmental theories and their significance to this dissertation, in this body chapter I bridge the gap between theory and practice and pursue a chronological environmentalist reading of Wendell Berry's *The Long-Legged House* (1969) and Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* (1977), along with briefer comments on some other works by these authors. I examine Berry's and Silko's engagement with the interlocking bonds between ecological degradation and socioeconomic, psychological, and spiritual disorientations; I also explore their comparable critiques of the dynamics and implications of environmental racism along with their depiction of their locales, concepts of home and community, history, mythology, tradition, storytelling, and the vivisectional imperatives of capitalism and imperialism that have wreaked havoc upon their home places. These contested terrains have suffered the ramifications of environmental

discrimination, which targets them for toxic strip-mining projects and nuclear-testing sites and mines.

Reimagining and negotiating the culture-nature divide and establishing themselves as equal, sentient members of their biotic community, Berry and Silko—authors from quite different ethnic, philosophical, and religious paradigms—construct a dramatic understanding of how environmental racism affects cultural and environmental spaces, and they propose new formulas to our social and environmental failures. In general, they outline the ways in which interrelation with and commitment to the land constitute an exigency necessitating a "glocal"[13] environmental justice awareness; they appeal to organic past models and remind us that there are people whose lives hinge on the well-being of their ecosystem and whose proper relationship with the land leans toward a binding spirituality. *The Long-Legged House* and *Ceremony* are not set in "pristine wilderness" vicinities; the events take place in populated terrains—in the city, in open-pit coal mines, and on a Laguna reservation surrounded by nuclear sites. These works "question and confront our most popular assumptions about 'nature' and 'nature writing' by inviting us to take a hard look at the contested terrains where increasing numbers of poor and marginalized people are organizing around interrelated social and environmental problems" (Adamson xvii).

Berry occupies an impregnable niche in the growth of environmentalism. Briefly, contemporary U. S. environmentalism (as we now understand that word and what it means) is credited to writers and scholars such as Aldo Leopold, Rachel Carson, Edward

[13] "The term 'glocal' has been used in economics and other fields since about 1996" (Cahalan 268n5), often referring to the taking over of the "local" by the "global." Cahalan argues for a new use of the word in which the global and local are joined together as equal partners, because every place on Earth is both local and global.

Abbey, and Berry, as their ideas and activism contributed to mobilizing public opinion to counter environmentally unsustainable policies and practices and led to the emergence of "environmentalism" in the U. S. Foundational environmental books such as Aldo Leopold's *A Sand of County Almanac* (1949), Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962), Edward Abbey's *Desert Solitaire* (1968), and Berry's *The Long-Legged House* (1969) were all published before the cause of environmentalism became so popular.[14] Environmentalism constitutes an alternative aesthetic of production in its embrace of harmless pre-modern and postmodern (in the literal meaning of the words), small-scale methods. To a great extent, environmentalism disputes the validity of the systems, ideologies, and mechanisms that dictate the parameters and criteria of the modern world. Given the genesis of the environmental movement in the late sixties, it is important to understand the context of Berry's pioneering work in helping alert the public to the need for an environmental movement.

Berry and Silko renavigate and reintegrate ancient cultural mythologies and customs that have been systematically subsumed by an unbridled confidence in techno-scientific "progress" and global capitalism. Hence, both *The Long-Legged House* and *Ceremony* feature the disruptions kindled by imperialism, industrial capitalism, and "maldevelopment" on communities deeply rooted in the land and attached to a particular territory. In their portrayals of the earth as a source of life and renewal, the writings of Berry and Silko—contrary to mainstream views on land as something to be subjugated,

[14] On April 22, 1970, some 20 million Americans took to the streets on the first Earth Day—the event that environmental historians identify as the real beginning of environmentalism (with "environmentalism" itself defined as such only around that time). Those protestors had hopes that life on earth might be salvaged and maintained during an era pervaded with weapons of mass destruction and corporate businesses which threaten all of creation. This campaign underscored a pressing need to act swiftly to protect people and their environment from harm.

subdued, and parceled—function as crucial forms of resistance against the ecological and sociocultural injustices and crises facing the disenfranchised poor and Native Americans in the U. S. Specifically, these authors enact an emancipatory discourse prioritizing vested communal environmental rights and humanity's urgent need to reconnect with nature to avoid the destruction of both, finding meaning in traditional ethics and cosmologies underrated in the mainstream. In so doing, their writings corroborate communal aesthetics and myths as valuable tools not only in sustaining people and nature, but also in disclosing the impasses and hypocrisies of capitalism and imperialism.

In spite of their many divergences, Berry and Silko encompass questions of environmental justice in a larger scheme of redefining and renegotiating what it means to be a human in a world of shifting identities to inhabit places that are incessantly constructed, reconstructed, and destructed, due to ethics of modernity and global capitalism. Thus, they write "ecohistory" from a holistic perspective, foregrounding the strong interrelation of self with land and community. Their texts juxtapose customary paradigms of reciprocity, constructed from tribal oral rituals and ethos, and the "progressive" worldviews emerging from metaphysical and epistemological interpretations of postmodern sciences entailing themes of separation and consumption. In short, these texts remap the whole world as home, breaking down the nature-culture and human-nonhuman dichotomies. Particularly, the writings of Berry and Silko, which resonate with echoes of myth and tradition from which to draw sublimity, have the power to conflate "ethics" of exploitation and commodification and promote an ethic of subsistence and wholeness. Therefore, they proffer rhetorical devices for political engagement that can play a decisive role in thwarting any stultifying, separatist practices

that legitimize environmental and social racism. Perhaps more than anything else, Berry and Silko offer their works to the world with the hope of transforming and purging injustice through revising Western metaphysics. Their discourses are tied to political agendas and forms of activism that aim to transform our imagination and thus mobilize resistance to current global ecological crises. Lawrence Buell posits, "Western metaphysics and ethics need revision before we can address today's environmental problems . . . Environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination the amelioration of which depends on finding better ways of imagining nature and humanity's relation to it" (*Future* 2).

Berry's prose and poetry endeavor to reinstate lost traditions, the responsibility and answerability of ethics for one's deeds, and revitalizing such principles as sustainable agriculture, innocuous technologies, rootedness to place,[15] and the interconnectedness of life as compelling mechanisms to curb environmental degradation. Janet Goodrich describes Berry's prose as forming a "constellation of place, community, and self [that] cannot be separated" (13). Beginning with an awareness of widespread homelessness in our era, Berry stipulates that attachment to place and "beloved communities" comprises an effective antidote to "the specialization and abstraction of intellect" in the modern world:

> Man cannot be independent of nature. In one way or another he must live in relation to it, and there are only two alternatives: the way of the frontiersman, whose response to nature was to dominate it, to assert his presence in it by destroying it; or the way of Thoreau, who went to the

[15] I use the words "land," "place," "landscape," "environment," and "ecosystem" interchangeably to refer to any terrains that have a socioeconomic and cultural signification to their inhabitants.

> natural places to become quiet in them, to learn from them, to be restored by them. (*Long-Legged* 41-42)

Such familiarity with place is the first imperative for awareness, and this consciousness will lead to a moral reform that enshrouds the whole community and the whole world—those who belong and those who don't belong to one's culture.

In a similar vein, the spirituality expressed in Native American writings is of an earth-centered bent. Native Americans conceive of the land and themselves as intertwined entities, and their writing is often provoked by an imperial-driven divorce of land from community. They do not place humans above other living forms; instead, all forms of life, including animals, trees, and rivers, are integral parts of the ecological web, which is a vigilantly balanced holism that guards against fragmentation and reduction. In the holistic Native American outlook on life, which perceives all life forms as consecrated and respects them as such, humans don't have the right to disrupt this intricate equilibrium beyond satisfying minimal needs. Hence, Native Americans' sanctification of nature as a spiritual being subordinates the human will to the natural balance. John Collier, who served as the head of the Bureau of Indian affairs in the 1930s, stated that the Native American tradition "realizes man as a co-partner in a living universe—man and nature intimately co-operant and mutually dependent" (qtd. in Jenkins 90). Overall, Native American lifestyles and ecological philosophy (ecosophy) have been central for preserving a biodiverse system of an ecological niche as a way to resolve social as well as environmental inequities. For instance, in her essay "Landscape," Silko discusses animism and the sanctity of everything for the ancient Pueblo people who "called the earth the Mother Creator of all things in this world . . .

Rocks and clay are part of the Mother . . . A rock has being or spirit, although we may not understand it" (265).

In *The Unsettling of America*, Berry advances comparable views about the interdependence of all entities and insists that no real culture can exist in abstraction from place and that the "concept of health is rooted in the concept of wholeness" (103). He describes our environmental crises in terms that should be applied to our understanding of public life: "We have given up the understanding—dropped out of our language and so out of our thought—that we and our country create one another, depend on one another" (22). As one begins to unravel the complex fabric of nature and the indispensability of every aspect of the natural web, the need to be a caretaker of place becomes requisite, and the failure to do so will be calamitous: "human and plant and animal are part of one another, and so cannot possibly flourish alone . . . our culture and our place are images of each other and inseparable from each other" (23).

For Berry, this individual failure to understand the interconnectedness of life is one of the U. S.'s worst national fiascos: "the assumption that when a man has exploited and used up the possibility of one place, he has only to move to another place. This has made us a nation of transient, both physically and morally" (*Long-Legged* 85-86). Here, he decries coal-mining and agribusiness companies for leaving the land in wreckage and the people in pecuniary adversities. He, in effect, gives voice to environmental ideas that are about to fade away from all cultures because of global capitalism. He thus plays the role of the disruptor who seeks to protect his home and traditional ways of life because they are more humanly, ecologically, and ethically rewarding and more conductively true. Berry's abundant images of eroded, denuded land mark his vision of how our

current farming models betray the human and non-human communities that uphold them. His emphasis on the importance of ethics, history, and art in unmaking the devastation of the earth is part of what makes Berry such an imperative environmental voice. In the next section of this chapter, I focus on Berry's environmental philosophy, especially his concentration on the role of ethics and literature in confronting ecological racism.

## II

As an eloquent spokesperson for small, family-operated farms and place-based, community-oriented commitments—and as an essayist, novelist, farmer, and conservationist widely known in the U. S. environmental movement—Wendell Berry envisages the agriculturist as a servant who worships through replenishing the ecosystem that sustains him or her. He farms land that has been in his family for generations, land that he came back home to revive as a working farmer; therefore, his agricultural ethics and place-based thinking, much like that of Abdelrahman Munif and Mahasweta Devi, spring from a long familiarity with his own practice. In fact, his corpus of writing manifests a profound recognition of humanity's potential while at the same time grieves our failure to develop it. There are those who are skeptical about Berry's focal postulates, alleging that his wisdom is impractical, and others who romanticize his writing and thus diminish its impact. On the contrary, I argue that Berry's vision of local communities as places of healing advances a strident environmental justice critique that can be applied both locally and globally. In fact, he uses the predicament of his community as a microcosm of the crucial interactions between socioeconomic factors and major environmental problems. Accordingly, the value of his writing extends beyond the

borders of his home place to encapsulate the whole world: His concentration on the local does not obviate concern for the global. Yet Berry's notions of environmental justice are often misconstrued, and he is often pigeonholed as a vehement propagandist of the Southern agricultural heritage. Daniel Cornell explains that once Berry's criticism "leaves the literary studies that place him within a particular genre tradition—southern regionalism, romantic nature writing, pastoral agrarianism—it often focuses on his politics and even more particularly on the viability of his personal political stance" (7). Berry's critiques of industrialized agriculture that devours small, family-owned farms have mistakenly aligned him with romantic nature writing and pastoral agrarianism.

He is acutely aware of how corporate agribusiness divorces humans from nature, and even farmers from their land, rejecting this commerce-based, monocultural, and techno-scientific business model. Agribusiness, for Berry, not only decimates bonds between humans and land, but also reduces the farming process to cash transactions, alienating both land and people in the process. In its process of substituting capital for competence and technology for labor, corporate agribusiness has turned family farmers, not only in the U. S., but throughout the world, into technological practitioners. In his case against inordinate reliance on injurious technology, Berry questions whether technology is a means or an end, and if it is a means, what is it a means for? If it is an end, what *is* the end? Is it humanitarian or (neo)colonial, or is technology an enactment of the twentieth century's moral dilemma of not knowing where to stop? This thorny issue evokes Bakhtin's idea of "uniqueness." Is technology a war against the unique and the different? Berry expresses a similar stand on technology when he discusses the cow

that produces too much milk as a result of agribusiness, but that it has lost many other qualities that are, in the long run, better than those gained.

The idea of "progress" has garnered a specialized material value with those who are ironically trying to improve creation, or to reduce its diversity, but they never apply progress to human conduct. The principle of mercy should always be there, and there should be no separation among the ecological, the scientific, the economic, and the moral. In *Ethics of Place*, Mick Smith argues that confronted with the fallout of corporatized agribusiness, nature writers, especially ethicists, are rallying to seek an "alternative *modus vivendi* to save communities and topsoil" (216). By deifying, for instance, "cost benefit analysis" at the expense of the "common good," corporate agribusiness and "maldevelopment" have also managed to annul the productive dimensions of the family farm system and eliminate its economic and environmental advantages, particularly as they relate to building genuine communities. Berry lucidly states that we belong to nature, but it belongs to nobody, critiquing the capitalist idea that "a man may own the land in the same sense in which he would own a piece of furniture or a suit of clothes: it is his to exploit, misuse or destroy altogether should he decide that to do so would be economically feasible" (*Long-Legged* 15).

Attending to the aftermaths of industrializing and mechanizing agricultural practices, Berry promotes small farms, the regeneration of rural communities and local economies, and place-based commitments as viable means to reformulate and re-envision our present ethical and political contortions and solve the vicissitude of small farms. Mahatma Gandhi's epistemological stances resemble Berry's contentions about capitalism as draining the wealth out of villages and centering it in the hands of a few

city-dwelling elites (532). Gandhi draws crucial distinctions between the colonial and the indigenous, which shapes his attitude towards the natural environment, rather than the distinction between the urban and the wild. He believed that third-world countries can never attain economic independence by emulating Western-oriented models. Like Berry, Gandhi advocated small, family-operated businesses and healthy communities in which each person produces enough food, clothing, and shelter for his or her consumption. Given his dismissal of planetary activism, Berry holds that relations with the local integrate everything fundamental in people's lives.

Hence, people should be environmentally conscious in their interactions with their neighbors—humans and nonhumans. Berry calls for seceding from global capitalism to a local, community-based economic system—"from industrialism to agrarianism." He urges urban dwellers to make contact with their land and community, wherein urban and rural realms share concerns and responsibilities for each other. He abhors lack of connection to places as a consequence of technology and materialistic values that strand not only the self, but harm culture and nature. In Berry's words, "In a sound local economy in which producers and consumers are neighbors, nature will become the standard of work and production." Consumers who understand their economy will not "tolerate the destruction of their ecosystem . . . as a cost of production" ("Whole Horse" 116). In contrast, the global economy "institutionalizes global ignorance, in which producers and consumers cannot know or care about one another, and in which the histories of all products will be lost. In such circumstances, the degradation of products and places, producers and consumers is inevitable" (117).

In Berry's eyes, our most serious ecological problems are rooted not in government policies, but in our daily lives and attitudes. At the root of his quarrel with environmentally exploitative practices and institutions is the belief that only individuals can properly define and enact their relationship with the world, through actions whose impact is specific and tangible. For Berry, conservation organizations can only define relations with the world in general terms. Instead of delegating one's ecological and social responsibilities to such movements and activists, he encourages all people to situate their political ideals in the center of their daily lives and to think and act in accordance with their duties, not only in their political activities, but also in their work and play. Berry's ecological stances go in line with environmental justice transformative characterization of environmental studies as necessarily encompassing the whole universe—the rural and the urban.

He complains, "The political activist sacrifices himself to politics: though he has a cause, he has no life; he has become the driest of experts" (*Long-Legged* 83). Here, Berry's effective discourse aims to rejuvenate pre-modern traditions or to look for other alternatives in other cultures such as the ethics of thanking in Native American cosmologies. He reiterates his opposition to professional environmental activists on the ground that they tend to fall victims to the very forces and reductive epistemological and ideological superstructures they seek to subvert. Berry's writings and activism are essential steps in this direction: Focusing on capitalist exploitations of nature should supplement the status of nature in our epistemological formulas.

Because of global capitalism, the urban world has dissociated humans from themselves, other fellow humans, and the earth: "The failure of the modern cities, I

think, is that they have become, not communities, but merely crowds of specialists and specializations" (60). Berry warns against "the loss of the future," calling Americans "an exceedingly destructive people" and informing them that they "are guilty of grave offenses against our fellow men and against the earth . . . It is deeply disturbing, and yet I think it is true, that as a nation we no longer have a future that we can imagine and desire" (*Long-Legged* 45-46). Specialization serves as a point of escape from culpability; worse is the emphasis on doing one's responsibility to a system or an organization at the expense of self-integrity and the separation between work and character or home—the separation, or even the invalidation, of roles. In order to deflate such illusions of autonomy and self-sufficiency, Berry assumes the disciplines of unity, knowledge, and morality. No longer can we have that paltry "objective" knowledge so prized by the academic specialists. "It is impossible to divorce the question of what we do from the question of where we are—or, rather, where we think we are" (*Unsettling* 47).

To combat the feelings of entrapment, disillusionment, and instability that he sees as indicative of his contemporary society, Berry posits and actualizes the need to return to his ancestral birthright and natural place, perhaps more so than any of the other writers featured in this dissertation. Buoyed by a firm moral foundation, Berry demonstrates an ethical imperative to return to his agrarian roots and replant himself in his native soil of Port Royal, Kentucky, where he grew up on his family's land. Thus, he literally and symbolically returns to his home place. In returning, he espoused the indigenous ground, to live, farm, and write as one who has "made a marriage with the place" (166). As Kimberly Smith acknowledges in *Wendell Berry and the Agrarian Tradition*, "Berry's return to Kentucky baffled his friends, but in retrospect we can see it as an early

manifestation of the broader social trend in the 1960s toward 'dropping out' and pursuing alternative lifestyles" (14).[16] Smith maintains that Berry possesses an anti-institutional flair, given the agrarian tradition from which he arises: "Berry's critical perspective on politics continues a long tradition of hostility toward politicians and government in democratic agrarianism . . . Berry advocate[s] withdrawal from a political system that has become hopelessly corrupt" (179-80). He voices a distrust of what Arundhati Roy terms as the "Bigs," which comprise centralized governments, big dams, big movements, and big companies (*Cost of Living* 12). This trend explains Berry's recurring analogies between the ecological degradation of Kentucky and the Vietnam War, as both are driven by "Big" environmentally destructive capitalist hunger. He parallels the violence inflicted by the war to the degradation of East Kentucky: "I am opposed to our war in Vietnam because I see it as a symptom of a deadly illness of mankind—the illness of selfishness and pride and greed which, empowered by modern weapons and technology now threatens to destroy the world" (29).

The moral requirements of the writer should be linked to responsibility for the land and environmental justice. Berry indicts industrialization and professionalization for grounding a simultaneous "physical and metaphysical" split between culture and nature and sees literature as a chief medium to encourage morality and bridge this gulf. In "Poetry and Place," Rufus Cook comments:

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[16] In "Teaching Hometown Literature," James M. Cahalan states, "Berry brought a strongly bioregional dedication to his literary endeavors—the insights of a working farmer who left New York University in order to return to his native Port Royal not only to write about it, but to revive and tend his native lands" (259). A senior professor, invoking Thomas Wolfe, tried to dissuade him from returning to his home and continue teaching in the English department at New York University: "'Young man,' he said, 'don't you know you can't go home again?'" But Berry insisted that "there was no reason I could not go back to it if I wanted to" (*Long-Legged* 174).

> Common to Berry's view . . . is the belief, first, that literature ought to function primarily as an instrument of moral understanding and evaluation, that it ought to be governed by standards of truth or propriety or decorum, and, second, that this function is frustrated by attempts like that of T. S. Eliot to establish literature (or criticism, or language) as some sort of specialized self-referential, professional discipline. (503)

One should be held accountable for what one says, whether in real life or in literature, and the idea of specialization, or literature as surrogate religion, is a disappointment because all fields are connected, and the writer is a reformer, not a separate esthete. Modern "specialist-poets" have abandoned any "responsible connection between art and experience" (Berry, *Standing* 9). Therefore, Berry feels responsible for enlightening people about the ecological and social problems the world is facing and for envisioning solutions to these complex crises.

The divorce between words and action is a fallacy that needs to be rethought seriously. Cook argues that the process of denying "truth-value to literature has been going at least since Kant developed his concept of the 'aesthetic idea'" (504). Berry claims that literature has lost its designative power, and culture, in general, has been "driven into the mind" because, increasingly since the Age of Reason, we have been uprooted simultaneously both from any "beloved community" to which we belong "by history, culture, deeds, association, and affection" (*Standing* 58). We have been cut off from any established niche in the total "order of creation" (59).

The disparity between words and actions not only is a moral decline; it is also reproductive of the same ethical failures. Thus, every activity and realm should be

judged within the realm of the ethical and ecological. Hence, a writer ought to have a horizontal teleology that organizes his or her ends and the means to achieve these goals. In *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, Bakhtin avers that theoretical and esthetic standpoints on life can be brought into a better synchronization with one another only within the feat or deed itself. In Bakhtin's words, "An act must acquire a single unitary plane to be able to reflect itself . . . in its sense of meaning and in its being: it must acquire the unitary of two-sided answerability both for its content (special answerability) and for its being (moral answerability)" (3). To elucidate, participative answerability and philosophy toward the world of life versus the world of culture, the pernicious non-fusion and non-interpenetration of culture and life could be surmounted (3).

In Berry's philosophy, self-benefit should not justify harming human and nonhuman entities, and the principle of "no direct or indirect harm" is invalid, even more there are limits on the profit one should make, and in no way is it justifiable to harm the ecosystem, or spoil people's means of subsistence for personal advantages. An answerable act is precisely that deed which is performed on the basis of an acknowledgement of one's obligatory uniqueness: "I-for-myself," "myself-for-others," and "others for me" (Bakhtin 11). It is this avowal of one's non-alibi in "Being" that constitutes the basis on which one's life is actually and compellingly projected as something to be achieved.

Environmental racism lies in institutionalizing false pragmatic systems of hierarchical thought and ideologies that perceive of creation in terms of disjuncture and utilitarianism and subject-object relations, where the subject has the power necessary to exploiting the object. The division between culture and nature is not hierarchical in that

nature is “evil” or can be stamped out more easily as much as the human is given the lead for the faculty of reason and choice to use the nonhuman “in the right way.” Nature writers view the nonhuman world as a composite system that should be cherished and observed; otherwise, the human will lose or spoil the essence of his or her existence. Thus, we need a system of values that will curb our longing and thirst for material benefits and to protect us from our own selves, for the principles of class, competition, and free-market announce a war and a contest among people, where material accumulation is all that matters. With such diminutions, not only nature but also human communities, especially the ones who rely on nature for their everyday life, are vaporized and imperiled.

Our relationship with the environment is the originator of value, and it should administer the ground of our being: Without consideration for the consequences of our activities (in culture) on the human and nonhuman others, the world will crumble. The value of land changes when a person thinks in terms of a relationship with, rather than ownership of, the land. It is only by “staying in place” that one can begin to “conceive and understand action in terms of consequences . . . The meaning of action in time is inseparable from its meaning in place” (*Standing* 88). To paraphrase, belonging to a place and a community morally orients one’s stances toward land as he or she becomes accountable for this location. Then, one’s powers and prerogatives will be restricted, “limited by responsibility on the one hand and by humility on the other” (*Standing* 55).

Although it is nonfiction prose, Berry’s *The Long-Legged House* injects the stories of the furniture-maker and Mr. Curtis Collier, whose plight exemplifies the ecological grievances of his hometown. It thus constitutes the most extensive record of

how Berry comes to appreciate what it means for him to be a "placed" person, rather than the kind of "displaced person he finds more typical of modern America" (Knott 140). The furniture-maker lives in an impecunious house; few are willing to buy what he makes, and he cannot afford to send his children to school as a result of the excessive technological advancements that cripple manual skills. His penury exemplifies the degradation of Kentucky's ecosystem instigated by coal-mining companies. Although he is skillful with his hands, the furniture-maker is unable to increase his income, because his hometown is degraded by the capitalist, fraudulent coal companies. Here, Berry juxtaposes the furniture-maker's work that causes no harm to the environment to the damage inflicted by these companies on the ecosystem. The furniture-maker, with his customary, eco-friendly tools, who sticks to the work inherited from his ancestors, regardless of all the financial hardships and obstacles he faces, is better than the coal companies that pollute the environment and dispossess its inhabitants.

People must learn to appreciate and respect nature rather than "manufacturing too much human significance" (Slovic 116). According to Scott Slovic, "To invest too much imagination in understanding or describing the natural world amounts to an attempt to possess it, to make nature the imaginative property of the human observer" (116). Replete with the feeling of being at home, *The Long-Legged House*—far from being a "static, polished artifact of this ideology of humility—demonstrates a process of growing and learning, as if in remembering the course of his [Berry's] association with a special place, the author discovers anew what it means to be indigenous" (116). Celebrating his maxim of "how a person can come to belong to a place, for places belong to nobody" (*Long-Legged* 145), Berry *reverses* the predominant capitalist outlooks on land. Instead

of land belonging to people, he argues for people belonging to land. He declares, "A place and a person come to belong to each other or, rather, a person can come to belong to a place, for places really belong to nobody" (143). What's more, the language of Berry's writing is devoid of flamboyant, "manipulative phrases and the jolting metaphors that often animate the works of other nature writers" (Slovic 117). It relies on a subtle use of farming vocabulary for the field and the mind, adhering to unity rather than dualisms, and the fields are resurrected the same way the mind is revived.

Disinheritance has been the single most significant phenomenon in modern history, causing the erosion of local communities and the degradation of nature. As Rufus Cook puts it, "dispossessed both of any specific spot on earth that he treasures and wants to preserve, today's 'urban nomad' feels obligated to nothing that is not included within the particular professional specialty in which he has been trained" (506). The "dispossessed modern specialist" is inclined to withdraw "from responsibility for everything not comprehended by his specialty" (*Standing* 4). Undeniably, the institutionalizations of personal freedom, lack of the inculcation of values, and social compartmentalization have isolated humans from the land and from issues directly affecting them. Berry prioritizes association with land, even if where one works and where one lives do not coincide, which is a common phenomena. This orientation invokes environmental justice's all-embracing outlook on environmentalism as necessarily encapsulating the whole universe: rural and urban areas.

Introducing the concept of place as a category of geographical studies in the early 1970s, Yi-Fu Tuan has offered numerous insights into the concept of place. Tuan coined the term "*topophilia*" (place-love) to point to "the effective bond between people and

place" (*Topophilia* 4). Place, for him, calls forth a moral dimension pertaining to matters of social and ecological justice. He exhorts geographers to insert ethics in regard to land and favors balanced, vigorous, and moral judgments. Tuan's *Topophilia* reverberates with a plethora of modalities that give rise to place affection, which can and should occur in any setting. His evaluation of four diverse physical settings—rural, wilderness, urban, and suburban places—expands the scope of environmentalism and goes on parallel lines with the environmental justice definition of environmentalism. Tuan's historical standpoint on each of these locales is essential to recognize humans' shifting attitudes toward rural and urban settings.

Nonetheless, the recurrent exclusion of urban dwellers and cities from the environmental sphere as polluted and undesirable, with the wilderness viewed as pristine and sacrosanct, contradicts the ancient perception of cities as the sacred cynosure of the universe (Tuan 106). According to Tuan, by the time of ancient Rome, there was a great ambivalence toward the city, as documented in Roman poet Horace's account. Horace "contrasted the peaceful life in his secluded valley not only with Rome's polluted air, but with its ostentatious wealth, aggressive business, and violent pleasures" (107). Wilderness, on the other hand, was regarded as a desolate place. For example, Puritan settler Cotton Mather described the "unsettled expanses of America as the empire of Antichrist, filled with frightful hazards, demons, dragons, and fiery flying serpents" (Tuan 110).

Generally, Tuan focuses on the constructive side of adoring land, yet he doesn't overlook the disavowing facets of fetishizing and romanticizing a place. He classifies

such an obsession with place as an "imperial topophilia," drawing a distinction between "imperial" and "local" patriotisms. He chides the former:

> Since the birth of the modern state in Europe, patriotism as an emotion is rarely tied to any specific locality: it is evoked by abstract categories of pride and power, on the one hand, and by certain symbols such as the flag, on the other. The modern state is too large, its boundaries too arbitrary, its area too heterogeneous to commend the kind of affection that arises out of experience and intimate knowledge. (100)

Quite the opposite, "Local patriotism rests on the intimate experience of place, and on the sense of fragility of goodness: that which we love has no guarantee to endure" (101). "Local *topophilia*" helps rethink humans' relationship with their environment in ways that enhance the exuberance and vivacity of these places. In his article "Language and the Making of Place," Tuan, reminiscent of Berry, suggests reforming the way we discourse about place: "Our speech can direct attention, organize insignificant entities into significant composite wholes, and in so doing, make things formerly overlooked—and hence invisible and nonexistent—visible and real" (685). As it informs us of the immediate steps that one must take, moment by moment, to preserve a place's inhabitability, environmental thinking must address what forms of social organization and practices are ethically and politically, quite as much as environmentally, sustainable; more than that, it must delve deeply into the means by which our language represents the other-than-human, the human, and the nonhuman together. Tuan addresses what he calls "place-making," using the European explorers' arrival in the new world as a vicarious model of place-making. Based on their ethos of "civilization," these discoverers regarded

North America as untrammeled, pristine, and muddled wilderness and its indigenous inhabitants as savages in desperate need of a "civilizing mission."

Likewise, Berry introduces in *Home Economics* the phrase "nature as measure," which indicates working within the limits and capacities of nature. Thus, any technological advances and economic growth must be measured in accordance with the harm that they inflict on the other and thereby subordinated to the ecological, communal, and spiritual in the sense of good, evil, just, or unjust: "A properly scaled human economy or technology allows a diversity of other creatures to thrive" (16). To make this continuity between nature and culture, we have only two sources of instruction: nature "herself" and our cultural tradition (20). Berry explains that "In the Great Economy, each part stands for the whole and is joined to it; the whole is present in the part and is its health" (*Home* 73). There is no "outside" to the Great Economy, no escape into either specialization or generality, and no "time off." Even insignificance is no escape, for in the membership of the Great Economy everything signifies; whatever we do counts (74-75). With its closely associated revolution in agricultural productivity, industrialism has, in truth, increased the agricultural productivity, but "the solution has been extravagant, thoughtless, and far too expensive" (206). It has damaged soil and shaken human communities loose from their traditional ways of life and forced millions of rural farmers into urban wage-laborers living in disconnected, degraded environments. Instead of "the technological end-run around biological reality and the human condition," Berry advocates local agricultural values and practices that preserve the land and its inhabitants. Since nature is the standard, people will operate within its limits and capacities and

modify their practices as such. Neglecting these ecological and social lessons, humanity will capsize and perish.

Notwithstanding the adoration Berry exhibits toward nature and the links he establishes between nature and culture, he tends to feminize land and associate it with women. This problematically fashioned logic of dualities that aligns women with nature and men with culture grounds the processes of objectification and patriarchy in society; it also intensifies the subservient status of women in patriarchal cultures. In doing so, he reinvigorates and unleashes a "naturalized" domination of both women and nature entailing forms of social and patriarchal misperceptions. Although the association of women with nature is seemingly used to promote an ecocentric consciousness as the "love your mother-earth," mother-earth, and Gaia maxims and innuendos imply, many ecofeminists agree with Catherine Roach that

> engendering the earth as female mother, given the meaning and function traditionally assigned to "mother" and "motherhood" in patriarchal culture will not achieve the desired aim of making our behaviors more environmentally sound, but will instead help to maintain the mutually supportive, exploitive stances we take toward our mother and toward our environment. (53)

The earth is expected to give unconditionally insomuch as the "ideal mother" is expected to sacrifice her needs for those of her family, especially her children. It is a fundamental ecofeminist endeavor to "see clearly the Earth as Earth and not as the mother or female we have imagined the earth to be" (Roach 55). Critics—feminists and ecofeminists—agree that this androcentric idealization of women and nature, which alienates both

women and nature from masculine-encoded culture, is a dangerous ideology that necessitates reconsideration and reformation. Carol J. Adams draws attention to what she calls a process of "transference," which she identifies as metaphorizing what is considered as other to other realms on the basis of association and naming, where to name is to control and to be perforce telling the truth (1).

Endorsing and praising many of Berry's contentions doesn't mean that I overlook the problematic nature of his rhetoric which sometimes employs Gaia, or Mother Earth, imagery, and thus reinscribes what Patrick D. Murphy calls Western patriarchal "sex-typing." Indeed, Berry's work is marred by some intensely problematic assumptions about socially designated roles and gender issues. Murphy notes, "It seems highly unlikely that Gaia imagery can be used without invoking any of the Greek patriarchal baggage attached to the symbol" (*Literature* 59). The Western predisposition to render the planet in female gender terms is very problematic, as it, in Donald Davis's words, "reinforces our own prejudices toward each other" (152). Berry's land is represented as a woman, and his ideal farmer is projected as a nurturing male, "a protector of his mother and mate" (Murphy 60). He also evokes themes of stewardship and responsibility of the male for the *female* earth. Doughty ecofeminist pioneers Elizabeth Dodson Gray and Val Plumwood have addressed how the celebrated "mother nature" metaphor engenders subordination and exploitation. Gray elaborates that in patriarchal Western culture, masculinity is defined not only as independence, but as "not-dependent" on any other entity (40). To Gray, the same transference is at work in Western culture's relationship with nature. Men have put into practice with "Mother Nature" this same "dominance/submission flip-flop," as Gray puts it. By their technologies, men have

"worked steadily and for generations to transform a psychologically intolerable dependence upon a seeming powerful and capricious 'Mother Nature' into a soothing and acceptable dependence upon a subservient and non-threatening 'wife'" (42).

Along the same line, Plumwood imputes to Western metaphysics and ontology this invidious association of women with nature and the pejorative ideas it connotes like wilderness, irrationality, domesticity, and violence, contrary to men's correlations with reason, culture, civilization, and rationality. Scrutinizing the root causes of the women-nature equation, Plumwood points to a "route of escape from the problematic that the traditional association between women and nature creates for feminists, to opposition which neither accepts women's exclusion from reason nor accepts the construction of nature as inferior" (20). She suggests that the subordination and instrumentalization of women and nature have originated in the phallocentric, materialistic charge of perceiving both nature and women as "limitless providers of life," and the backgrounding of the needs of their own existence. The other downsize of connecting woman to nature is that this correlation has been established in Western metaphysics from a male-centered perspective, one that excludes women from the realms of reason.

Murphy deprecates Berry's reinvigoration of Gaia images, which has led to "a presentation of the land as not only female but also feminine in a stereotypic sense of being passive, of waiting to be seeded and shaped . . . His agricultural division of labor for women and men and his sex-typing of the planet go hand in hand" (65).[17] Berry's relationship to the land is that of a husband; he believes in "man's" ability to nurture wild

[17] On the other hand, Berry's use of "man" and "Mother Earth" should also be seen in historical context: These were common terms and concepts in the 1960s when he was writing *The Long-Legged House*, which was published before the first appearance of *Ms. Magazine*, for example, whose first issue came out in January 1972. After the 1960s, Berry increasingly changed his gendered discourse, much like many other thinkers and writers did too.

landscapes; it is his moral mission to appreciate the wildness and mystery of the world, to be at home in the world. And through this act of nurturance, people will be directed in life; immersion in the wilderness teaches Berry propriety. He learns the rules set forth by his native environment: "the goal is to turn the wilderness into a place—not so much to domesticate it. But to become domestic to it" (Smith, *Ethics of Place* 145). John Knott echoes a comparable attitude, stating that "Berry resists the common tendency to oppose culture and nature, the wild and the domestic, and finds meaning and health in their interaction" (133). He consistently draws parallels between the covenant of marriage and the commitment of a farmer to the land. Berry's gendering of land as female is related to the patterns of environmental conservation and exploitation evident in Western metaphysics. "Virgin" lands are valued while "raped" land is discarded as damaged. But Berry wanted to revive the damaged land. He did not just move onto an established farm; he built it, cultivating the land and building the house. The gendered land is at stake when reading Berry's work, as the male farmer is consistently wedded to a feminized land. I recognize the problems of continuing to see land in a gendered tradition characterized by exploitation of the feminine and posit that Berry's vision of a covenantal relationship with the land is a suitable model for Western culture. Berry acknowledges the feminization of land and offers a model in which the feminine may be a respected partner. In a parallel vein, Berry's stance vis-à-vis the human other reaffirms dialectical hierarchies, given the complete absence of racial and gender-based paradigms from his critiques.

On the other side of the spectrum, with her Pueblo heritage, Silko proffers a more comprehensive critique that interweaves racial, social, ethnic, gender-based, and

environmental injustices and suggests revitalizing and restoring Pueblo cosmologies, rituals, mythologies, stories, and ceremonies to heal ecological and socioeconomic ills. These rituals reintegrate these dynamic tensions *within*, not without, the environment and attend to culture and nature. Silko's *Ceremony*, which resonates with forceful postcolonialist emphases and critiques, will be explored in the third part of this chapter. Silko's treatment of the Native American spiritual tradition, which has long been the most popular and accessible of the earth wisdom teachings, is a source of undoing injustice and reuniting humans with their environment.

## III

Novelist, poet, essayist, photographer, cinematographer, and storyteller Leslie Marmon Silko advances comparable, albeit more wide-ranging, critiques of the dynamics of environmental racism. Silko is perhaps the most esteemed and most often anthologized contemporary Native American writer. She has a mixed ancestry: The family of her father is a mixture of Laguna and white, her mother comes from a Plains tribe, and she has Mexican ancestors. A great deal of her writing deals with the larger fabric and tapestry of environmental justice that intertwines with the integrity and dignity of people of color, their families, and their larger communities. As Joni Adamson puts it, "Silko always has her eye on power inequities that have distinct and interconnected social and environmental consequences for impoverished people-of-color communities" (*American Indian* xv). It also focuses on her experiences as a mixed-breed of Laguna, European, and Mexican American descent, as a woman, and as an inhabitant of the American Southwest. Silko was born in 1948 in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and was

raised on the Laguna Pueblo Reservation in northwest New Mexico, not far from Albuquerque. In 1969, she received a bachelor's degree in English from the University of New Mexico, and she has taught in New Mexico, Alaska, and Arizona (Coltelli 135).

The Laguna culture has been influenced by many civilizations, including Hopi, Zuni, Acoma, and Jemez, whose peoples had married into the Laguna before its settlements were established in New Mexico five hundred years ago. During the colonial period, many European settlers married with Lagunas as well. Those who joined the Pueblo further enriched Laguna culture by integrating their rituals and myths into Laguna culture. The telling title of her first book, *Laguna Women* (1974), a collection of poems, designates that it is Laguna women, tradition, history, and landscape—as seen from women's perspectives—that have preoccupied Silko. In *Ceremony*, Silko fashions a story about healing from a sense of loss, bereavement, and agony after World War II, exposing the logic of imperialist mentality and ongoing colonial projects and digging deeper for causes of social injustice and environmental decay. Most critics interpret *Ceremony* in terms of "in-betweenness" and hybridity and describe its author and characters as oscillating between conflicting cultures with no place to call "home."

While drawing on these interpretations, I dedicate more attention to the role of environmental racism in exacerbating the socio-cultural status of Native Americans. *Ceremony* chronicles the healing ceremony that brings its main protagonist, Tayo, back to wholeness. It also features the fundamental functions of storytelling, mythologies, and ceremonies in conserving Pueblo culture and nature. These cultural myths are part of what makes people and their cultures, so their reality, if it is to be captured, should take account of their seeming unreality. Storytelling has undoubtedly been the primary

vehicle by which Native Americans have been taught how to live in harmony with nature, as opposed to the counterproductive ethics of modernity and capitalism. Also, Silko enacts a vigorous critique of the ongoing radioactive poisoning of indigenous land and nuclear tests that wipe out entire biotic systems and shatter indigenous communities. She continually reminds us that the health and balance throughout the many ecosystems of our planet verge on the extent to which humans live with a consciousness of the interrelatedness of all aspects of our respective world.

Oddly, scientist Robert Boyle, who was also the governor of the New England Company, declared his intention of ridding the "Indians" of their "ridiculous notions about the workings of nature whom they misguidedly perceived as a kind of goddess" (qtd. in Tickner 108). He denounced Native Americans' perception of nature as an active organism for impeding the control of humans over it. As Leopoldo Zea succinctly puts it, the identity, the rationality, and the very humanity of the peoples of the "New World" were "put on trial and judged by the jury of its conquerors" ("Identity" 36). Amerindian (American Indian) people were not in a position to present their own epistemic credentials, much less to judge European credos.

Native Americans and Euro-Americans have thoroughly different perceptions of place and space.[18] Euro-Americans tend to regard the earth as a compilation of resources to be exploited, subdued, and parceled, and much of their writing comes from this colonial impulse. Native Americans' ability to live in balance with the natural world lies

[18] In *Space and Place*, Yi-Fu Tuan emphasizes that place is more abstract than space and that they "require each other for definition. From security to stability of place we are aware of the openness, freedom, and threat of space, and vice versa" (6). Tuan locates all human lives in a "dialectical movement between shelter and venture, attachment and freedom," adding that in "open space one can become intensely aware of place; and in the solitude of a sheltered place the vastness of space beyond acquires a haunting presence." He adds, "A healthy being welcomes constraint and freedom, the boundedness of place and the exposure of space" (18).

in their harmonious and reciprocal relationships between humans and the natural world, and their concept of harmony is rooted in traditional ceremonies and rituals. On the other hand, Euro-Americans have more often privileged reason over passions and viewed land as a commodity. Silko's revisionist, counter-discursive novel rewrites history from the standpoint of the victimized, propelling that history should no longer be relayed or written from the perspective of the overriding subject. Writing it from the perspective of the objectified Other corrects the image by making the concealed overt. The colonial Western narrative manipulates and appropriates voices as it confiscates resources and freedoms. The colonial narrative, for example, if written ecologically, will disclose important facts about the interdependence of nature and culture. In this regard, Tayo re-constructs his own story by generating a counter-discursive, counter-colonial, nonconformist narrative that deconstructs and demystifies mainstream hegemonic discourse, one that ratifies the Self against a trespassing, disparaging Other. Tayo's story provides counter-narratives and critiques the hegemonic systems of thought entailed in Western discourse.

Despite tallying the tragic, traumatic account of Tayo and Laguna land and culture, *Ceremony* should not be narrowly perceived as merely an account of dejection and destruction; rather, it should be holistically construed as entailing valuable lessons of environmental justice, rejuvenation, and buoyancy that will aide its main character and his community in subverting all systems of oppression and exploitation. To capture the continuities between past and present, Native American writers tend to register and reproduce stories of their tribal tradition, which transmit a culture that respects the land, hoping to provide an alternative cultural paradigm that can replace political and social

hegemony and global capitalism and thus cherish environmental survivability. To explicate, Silko not only raises the question of "What will happen if we do not come together in dialogue to work for a more socially and environmentally just world?" (Adamson 160), but she also envisions, through myths and ceremonies, convincing models overcoming environmental and social racism. Unlike Rocky, Tayo's cousin and adoptive brother, Tayo does not blindly abide by the prevailing Western discourse which essentializes Laguna lifestyles and beliefs as mere nonsensical superstitions and fallacies that should be foreclosed. Despite being pulled between two cultural paradigms—the Euro-American and the Amerindian—Tayo, by virtue of his rich hybrid heritage, succeeds in fathoming and reacting in a nonchalant manner to the reproachful Eurocentric discourse. Such dynamic tensions prove that Silko's writing resonates with political stakes in the broadest sense, and her subversive political statements are embedded in the stories she formulates. In Helen Dennis's words, "Silko feels that she can be more efficacious as a writer than as an AIM [American Indian Movement] activist. Thus a further dimension of this novel [*Ceremony*] is her engagement with the actuality, the economics, and the politics of the atom bomb" (55). This proclamation evokes Berry's skepticism about the institutionalization of dissent and movements and his emphasis on the impregnable role of literature in mobilizing eco-resistance.

To undo injustice, Amerindian communities whose epistemologies and ontologies are anchored in the land need to be fully represented in and guarantee access to decision-making arenas and play a key role in environmental politics. Dennis points that "the issues of environmental degradation, invisible but present deadly threats to human health, political and military exploitation of tribal people and their land, are written into the very

texture of *Ceremony*" (56). Centralized governments, militaries, and transnational corporations comprise the primary beneficiaries and agents in formulating and implementing environmental policies that are controlled by male elites whose noxious military bases are located on Native American terrains. In effect, I try to do justice to the complex and multifarious representations of environmental and social justice in this uniquely Native American novel vis-à-vis the forces of imperialism, environmental racism, militarism, and global capitalism, combining a triangle working model of environmentalism, postcolonialism, and Native American literature.

Colonial European writers and thinkers who used biblical authority as a pretext for their encroachment on land—such as John Winthrop, Mary Rowlandson, John Locke, and William Bradford—viewed indigenous land as a "wilderness" void of civilization. To provide two prototypes of such widely held ideas, John Winthrop (1588-1649), the recently arrived governor of Massachusetts and founder of the Massachusetts Bay Colony, commented: "This savage people ruleth over many lands without title or property; for they enclose no ground, neither have they cattle to maintain it, but remove their dwellings as they have occasion, or as they can prevail against their neighbours" (qtd. in Caustad and Schmidt 10). Another example comes from John Locke (1632–1704), one of the founding fathers of liberalism and foremost Enlightenment philosophers, who postulated that Native Americans' lack of private rights over "Mother Earth" justifies the settlers' annexation of this communally held land. Consistent with his biblical beliefs, Locke used Native Americans as an illustration of how an individual can appropriate "private" property, when the world was "given by God to men in common." Most of his assumptions pertaining to Native Americans were false, as the idea of

"private property" on "Mother Earth" was an anathema to most indigenous communities. Rather, at the very basis of their beliefs was the idea that the earth was "given" to no species at all, and all life forms are entitled to equally share in its bounty. Basically, the idea of ownership of land was an unfamiliar concept for indigenous tribes in North America: it was like trying to own the air, the sky, or the water in nature. While individual nations claimed territorial hunting or fishing grounds, the concept of individual private ownership of the land was non-existent. Communities of people coexisted together and shared particular territories, and humans' humble status and qualities make them caretakers, not owners, of land.

Such colonial assumptions and patterns shaped most settlers' attitudes toward the indigenous people and their land until at least the end of the nineteenth century. Accordingly, European settlers deemed themselves "civilized" in relation to a "savage" other, and the local inhabitants had to pay the price for so-called "progress." Where the settlers saw "virgin land," they also saw God's mandate to appropriate and "civilize" it. Winthrop's and Locke's worldviews, much like mainstream conceptions of land, held property the innermost principle of the government. Land's only purpose was for exploitation and farming, and to leave it uncultivated—as a "waste land," to use Winthrop's words—was a sign that it was his Christian duty to occupy this "promised" land and work it.

As a result of such chauvinism and misconceptions, Native American terrains became some of the most tainted terrains in the United States, with at least "twelve-billion curies of radiation" having been released into the atmosphere through atmospheric and underground nuclear-bomb tests, which are all carried out on "Indian" lands (Kuletz

9). The land-based local populations who reside in the nuclear landscape bear its weight of health risks disproportionately. Other toxic research and testing facilities are located adjacent to Pueblo and Apache land and communities, creating severe health and economic conditions (Kuletz 10–11). These "radiolanthanum" tests were only performed when the winds were blowing away from the testing site of Los Alamos, which is inhabited by privileged white scientists (Kuletz 12).

Furthermore, more than "244 simulated" nuclear tests were conducted in the vicinity of Native American and Hispanic communities during the 1940s and 1950s. The affected communities, who were never advised that the contamination of their commons—land, air, and water—would linger for years after the tests were completed, have struggled for decades to end nuclear testing on their land in the Nevada desert. According to Kuletz, these tests have exposed indigenous communities to levels of radiation many times higher than that "generated by the bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of the Second World War" (43-44).

Here, Silko exposes environmental racism in all its nakedness, pointing that Laguna terrains are racially singled out for situating uranium mines such as the nearby "Cebolleta land grant" (*Ceremony* 243). This case, among many others around the world, proves that race is still a determining factor in the positioning of "commercial hazardous waste facilities . . . sixty percent of African American and Latino communities and over fifty percent of Asian/Pacific Islanders and Native Americans live in areas with one or more uncontrolled toxic waste sites" (Adamson, Mei, and Stein 4). Yet this mortifying and unnatural situation has engendered resistance and stimulated many human rights and environmental movements to alleviate these injustices. Under this onslaught on nature

which is taking place under the façade of corporate profit, personal comfort, and social convenience, Native Americans and other minority groups around the world face patterns of ecocide that intersect with cultural and ethnic genocides and annihilations; therefore, environmental justice tenets are vital for the continuation of these communities, a continuation enormously tied to preserving their ecosystems.

As targets of co-optation, assimilation, and subsumption, Native American writers have endeavored to preserve their cultural identity through reinvigorating and revitalizing Native American cosmologies that curdle subtle associations with the environment. Aware of the indispensability of land and rituals for the endurance of their people, Native American writers, including Silko, Linda Hogan, and Paula Gunn Allen, among others, shield their cultural traditions through rooting Native American literature, which foregrounds the role of traditional Native American ethical codes and mythologies in providing the key for human survival, in cherished landscapes, in order to redeem an ethics of subsistence and reverence for nature. For them, defending "Mother Earth" is not a project; it is, as Tom White Fassett puts it in his afterward to *Defending Mother Earth*, "a way of life; it is a call for the radical transformation of nations, societies, and individuals" (183).

Silko's *Ceremony* is unquestionably one of the most acclaimed cultural productions by any Native American author. The novel delineates the story of the young mixed-blood Laguna war veteran Tayo, who, raised mostly on a reservation in New Mexico, attempts to regain the intricate balance of nature and rediscover, through his ancestors' landscape and culture, his interconnectivity with the land. Tayo suffers from a kaleidoscope of psychological, spiritual, and bodily muddles and disorientations resulting

from his being away on the Pacific front during World War II. When he returns to the Laguna reservation, Tayo tries to make sense of the unspeakable violence and destruction he witnessed during the war. His war experiences and divorce from his land and communality leave him out of harmony with the world he comes to inhabit, his people, cultural tradition, and, worst of all, with his own self. Thought Woman, the "respected creator of all things" on the earth, prescribes "a good ceremony" as the finest cure for him in addition to the stories about the tragic history of the extermination of his people and the usurpation of their land. According to Paula Gunn Allen, "Two of *Ceremony*'s major themes are the centrality of environmental integrity and the pacifism that is its necessary partner, common motifs in American literature in the last quarter of the twentieth century" (*Sacred* 96). Allen sees these discourses as playing out through ideas "of ecology, antiracist, and antinuclear movements," which constitute the novel's key premises and themes (145).

At the heart of *Ceremony* is Tayo's struggle to overcome the debilitating anxiety and mental and cultural dislocation that plagued him after his time spent fighting the Japanese during World War II. However, Tayo's story of healing has much deeper communal, socioeconomic, and existential connotations and allegories, as he cannot be restored to health in abstraction from the "glocal" environment and its inhabitants. Markedly, Ku'oosh, the old medicine man, reassures Tayo that his healing ceremony "is important to all of us. Not only for your sake, but for this fragile world" (36). Here, Tayo comes to understand his across-the-board duty toward his tribe and creation as a whole. While particularizing and situating Tayo's experiences, Silko undermines the myth of the individual narrative by foregrounding the junctions between Tayo's plight

and that of the earth as well as many others that she portrays as "dislocated." These include nonhuman entities, other half-breeds, other veterans, and other "Indians" on the reservation. However, this list expands, widening from small, marginalized communities to larger ones, until ultimately it encapsulates the whole world. In "There Are Balances," Susan De Ramírez and Edith Baker note that *Ceremony* foregrounds the well-being of "the land and the people with the health, integrity, and happiness of individuals, families, and communities being largely determined by their interconnected wholeness with each other and all of creation" (215). Reminiscent of Silko, Allen contends that individuals must be broadly defined as creatures, plants, humans, and even the land and waters because "The Indian does not regard awareness of being as an abnormality of one species, but, because of a sense of relatedness to (instead of isolation from) what exists, the Indian assumes that this awareness is a natural by-product of existence itself" (*Sacred* 247).

Through its forceful emphasis on the restorative power of tribal stories and ceremonies to confront dominant society's ethos of infidelity to the land that has decimated the Laguna tribes and their natural and social patterns, *Ceremony* can be seen, in many ways, as a revisionary response to Euro-American imperialistic relationship with nature. It reconceptualizes the objectification of nature outlined in the work of such scholars as Carolyn Merchant's *The Death of Nature*, a death fed by a culture of hegemony and profit. Such a culture institutionalizes hierarchical, patriarchal, racial, and exploitive arrangements and thus creates pretexts for environmental and social discrimination. The ideological reasoning of the Europeans who displaced and divested Native American communities of their natural resources unmask the radically distinct and

largely irreconcilable worldviews of these two paradigms. In "Writing Nature," Lee Schweninger observes, "For Native Americans the land is alive, and the farmer interacts with environment; the corn tassels reciprocate. For the Euro-American the land is outside himself, separate, objectified, alien, and therefore ultimately dead" (5).

Tayo is incapable of demarcating various time periods, locations, and experiences easily distinguished by others. For example, a memory of a deer intermingles with an incident when he and Rocky were out hunting. This amalgamation of a variety of memories and occurrences melds into a memory of the two of them oiling their rifles on the last day they spent together during the war, the last day of Rocky's life. And then Rocky's death dissolves into the deaths of countless others and into Tayo's mystification—his belief that his Uncle Josiah was one of the Japanese soldiers his sergeant ordered his group to kill one day (7-8). Tayo's initial disorientations are characterized by his seeming confusional insanity:

> The memories were tangled with the present, tangled up like colored threads from old Grandma's wicker sewing basket when he was a child, and he had carried them outside to play and they had spilled out of his arms into the summer weeds and rolled away in all directions, and then he had hurried to pick them up before Auntie found him. He could feel . . . the tension of little threads being pulled and how it was with tangled things, things tied together, and as he tried to pull them apart and rewind them into their places, they snagged and tangled even more. (7)

The narration of the novel, particularly at the onset, also epitomizes this sense of disjointedness and fragmentation. *Ceremony*'s seemingly structureless narrative evokes

Tayo's state of puzzlement, as it leaps from the present to the past without warning, blurring Tayo's memories, his visions, and his reality. Nonetheless, Tayo's healing from this trauma doesn't lie in learning how to draw a dividing line among these periods and phases, but rather in conceding to the fact that they are inseparable—that they are all intermingled parts of the same story. Tayo feels relieved after recognizing, at the edge of the uranium mine, the way all the stories "fit together—the old stories, the war stories, their stories—to become the story that was being told . . . He had only seen and heard the world as it always was: no boundaries, only transitions through distances and all time" (246). Rediscovering these subtly complex liaisons can generate an improved vision of the universe.

This same reconstruction of scientific understanding is embodied in the ideas of Alfred North Whitehead who, consonant with Berry, refuted the scientific or mechanistic materialism that reduces nature to a "senseless, valueless, and purposeless" matter, in favor of "a vision of vital relatedness" that "suggested a more complicated, indefinite, unpredictable world that earlier scientists would acknowledge" (316-17). From a Native American standpoint, the world is composed of interwoven segmentations, and that "Only by rediscovering this depth of relatedness could science be restored to its full sight" (Whitehead 317). Deeply entrenched in the oral tradition and landscape of the Laguna Pueblo, Silko enacts an environmentally conscious rhetoric in which humans are perceived as merely one of many equal parts of a complex ecological web.

In essence, Tayo seeks to undo the witchcraft that disorients his reality and successfully perform Betonie's cosmic ceremony by realigning himself with the land and cultural tradition of his people. At the edge of a uranium mine, Tayo gazes into the black

hole it created and pulls the strings of what he terms as a "monstrous deign" (246). In Joni Adamson's words,

> Finally, he [Tayo] understands the connections between the historical oppression of his people, the mining of a deadly, yellow mineral, the work of scientists in a top-secret laboratory deep in the Jemez Mountains, the testing of a nuclear bomb at Trinity Site in New Mexico, and the incineration of twelve thousand Japanese people in two repulsively beautiful clouds of heat and light. (166)

According to Tarter, "At the mine, the novel's sense of place is most radically historicized and politicized as Tayo's traditional, place-based ceremony is inserted into a particular, contemporary historical context that calls for action" (105).

Tayo's anecdotes are achronologically related, and his story involves both prose narratives and tribal songs (poems) in line with the Native American artistic habit of mingling stories with poetry. Silko reveals that all of creation, including Reed woman, Fly, and Hummingbird (humans and nonhumans), consolidate to propitiate the Corn Mother and retrieve the rain and fertility to the land. Still, she indicates that undoing or reversing what has been done is not a cakewalk. Spider Woman tells Fly and Hummingbird who visit underground to ask advice from Grandmother and Old Buzzard: "Stay out of trouble from now on/ It isn't very easy/ to fix up things again. Remember that/ next time" (268). In the Native American worldview, humans and nonhumans collaborate to save the earth from the "destroyers" (a term Silko employs to describe those whose voracity makes them rationalize damage).

Connecting the well-being of the earth to that of its inhabitants, Silko frames Tayo's restorative process within his implementation of the ceremony: The more he abides by the dimensions of the ceremony; the faster his recovery is. Here, Silko reinvigorates ancient rituals, myths, and ceremonies and applies them to a postmodern Laguna man; this strategy functions as a revelation of how oral stories uphold the Native American heritage and how these stories shape their tribal identity, culture, and cosmologies, grounding the need to revamp techniques of carrying down stories in response to time-space compression.

In the early stages of the novel, we become acquainted with Tayo's dilemma of disorientation and his constant "self-examination with feelings of fear, anger, guilt, or shame" (Mezirow 22). At the veteran's hospital in Los Angeles, Tayo is diagnosed with a post-war trauma involving shivering and nausea. He suffers from a state of mental confusion in which a myriad of fragmented voices—Spanish, Japanese, and Laguna—are constantly merging and fused. In Tayo's mind, voices, ideas, and visions blur past and present, whites and people of color, and global and local. Plainly put, Tayo's inner identity crisis is closely related to the outer issues of ecological, structural, and cultural violence and injustice, especially to Laguna's drought-stricken, infertile land. His bitter and bleak struggle epitomizes the existential sense of absurdity and a split between his inner self and the outer world, which "faded in and out until he was frantic because he thought the Laguna words were his mother's, but when he was about to make out the meaning of the words, the voice suddenly broke into a language he could not understand" (6). The passage above specifies Tayo's restlessness with the intrinsic meaning of his existence and voice.

Much like Angel Jensen, the protagonist of Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms*, Tayo is inarticulate and incapable of piecing together fragments into meaningful sentences. In the hospital, he hears a voice telling the doctor that he "can't talk to you. He is invisible. His words are formed with an invisible tongue, they have no sound." At this point in the novel, Tayo "reached into his mouth and felt his own tongue; it was dry and dead, the carcass of a tiny rodent" (15). He is an empty shell that must be infused with metaphysical meaning derived from the Pueblo past and present and landscape. Without such knowledge, his sense of self and reality crumbles at the thresholds of "bifurcated inarticulateness" and temporal breakdown, which constitute Tayo's most serious shortcomings. Nevertheless, it is this state of "formlessness" that allows Tayo to transgress the part of his mundane self prompted by the Eurocentric ideology to which he has been subjected; it also helps him complete and assemble a ritual ceremony that reunites people with place and heals his muddled society, a society estranged and shattered by imperialist and racist intrigues.

The medicine man Ku'oosh describes Tayo's mundane universe as a "fragile" world "filled with the intricacies of a continuing process, and with a strength inherent in spider webs woven across paths through sand hills" (35). The analogy between the spider web and Tayo's world evokes the delicacy and fragility of the systems through which organic life has been sustained on earth. Albeit its seeming vulnerability, the spider web is strong enough to sustain existence and meaning for humans living on this earth, and people's main role is to celebrate the art of storytelling which requires both affections toward this intricate complexity.

Thus, the first lesson Tayo ought to grasp is to prize his cultural heritage through a firsthand experience of the parameters and specifics of Laguna culture, embedded in history, myths, and ritual ceremonies, not through the distorted lens of the mainstream media. He should also come to the conclusion that "the past is not dead, fixed in the linear record of the whites' concept of history" (Sanders, "Southwestern Gothic" 48), but rather exists in a cyclical, constantly changing relaying of the stories. In order to be fully responsive to the ceremony, Tayo needs to purge himself of any feeling of aversion to the white "enemies" and to realize that "Nothing was all good or all bad either; it all depended" (11). He must concede to the fact that "good" and "evil" should coexist in this complex web. In order for the ceremony to materialize, Tayo should not only cleanse himself of hatred toward the other, but also substitute this hatred, incompatible with Pueblo values, with love, one that encompasses TS'eh, nature, and all its creatures. Tayo's ill-feelings toward the whites embody a broad collective reaction to land destruction, not a narrow parochialism. He abhors the whites "for what they did to the earth with their machines, and to the animals with their packs of dogs and their guns" (203). As a Laguna with a sense of courtesy toward the earth and its inhabitants, Tayo embodies the "anger" of his people who "had to watch [the annihilation of the land], unable to save or to protect any of the things that were important to them" (204). In the early stages of the ceremony, Tayo is deracinated, abashed, fragmented, traumatized, and alienated from self, family, past, land, and tribal tradition. However, as he moves forwards with the ceremony, he absorbs the communal ire from his anguished ancestors and degraded land.

Silko highlights that stories are a double-edged sword, depending on who uses them: They have the power of retaining Native American rituals and identity, but they can also generate witchery, which has perpetrated dichotomous, reductive approaches toward the other and "created white men" who introduced unsympathetic, individualistic ideologies into the world. After all, the misconceived notions the white hold about Native Americans are also stories that contribute to the degradation of indigenous people and their collectively owned land. By the end of the novel, we discern a dramatic picture of the distortion and manipulation the witchery has injected into ritual storytelling:

> The destroyers had tricked the white people as completely as they had fooled the Indians, and now only a few people understood how the filthy deception worked; only a few people knew that the lie was destroying the white people faster than it was destroying Indian people. But the effects were hidden, evident only in the sterility of their art, which continued to feed off the vitality of other cultures, and in the dissolution of their consciousness into dead objects: the plastic and neon, the concrete and steel. Hollow and lifeless as a witchery clay figure. And what little still remained to white people was shriveled like a seed hoarded too long, shrunken past its time, and split open now, to expose a fragile, pale leaf stem, perfectly formed and dead. (204)

At this juncture, Tayo's task is to resist Emo's temptation as well as the harmful witchery; he can do so by identifying and purging "the lie which they [the white men] had wanted him to learn: only brown-skinned people were thieves" (190). Tayo stumbles upon this "lie" and realizes how deeply embedded such deformations are within

himself as an "Indian" person. He figures out that this is merely an illusion of white supremacy and history of naming and othering to justify the annexation and extermination of the "inferior" other. Scott P. Sanders remarks, "The gothic tone in Silko's novel rises from the modern Pueblo Indians' need to understand the realities of their culture in context with the cultural heritage expressed by the ruins of the Great Pueblo culture" (48). Tayo replaces "the whites' lie" with the reality of his past to claim the equality and dignity of tribal communities and affirm his people's right to survive on untainted landscape. As he rids himself of this prevarication, the past time and people converge into the present, and "He knew then why the oldtimers could only speak of yesterday and tomorrow in terms of the present moment: the only certainty; and this present sense of being was qualified with bare hints of yesterday or tomorrow" (192). Tayo's escape from the restrictive strictures and entrapments of the linear concept of the Western world with its emphasis on separation into the nonlinear, the ceremonial concept of time coincides with Tayo's rhythmical movements along "the contours of the mountain peaks [and] the mountain lion" (196).

Here, Tayo transcends the superimposed binaries of body-spirit and culture-nature (storytelling and the earth) and repairs severed ties with the spiritual world through celebrating a sense of place. In "Landscape," Silko remarks that not until humans "could find a viable relationship to the terrain, the landscape they found themselves in, could they emerge" (391). Tayo reestablishes a harmonious, "viable relationship" with the locales that he comes to inhabit, and his existence, much like that of his people's, is defined by how much he identifies with the land. He opposes technologically driven ecological devastation and abandons the symbols of this technologized and machinerized

culture, and decides to follow his intuition which leads him to nature. As Tayo communes with the earth, following the valleys to look for the stolen spotted cattle, he comes across TS'eh (Montano), a Native American woman from whom he "learns about the roots and plants" (224). Tayo's attention to TS'eh after their fortuitous meeting signifies his nullification of the deformed self-image that has detached him from his roots. On the mountain, Tayo realizes that "he had arrived at the point of convergence where the fate of all living things, and even the earth, had been laid" (246). Hence, he understands that "the pattern of the ceremony was completed there." Having grasped the intricate interconnectedness and interdependence of all creation, Tayo develops a solid Laguna identity as well as an aptitude for empathy with others and articulation of his emotions, human qualities he lacked before the ceremony. By coming to terms with the intricate coherence of the Pueblo rituals, Tayo himself becomes an emblem of the underpinnings of the tribal tradition, integrating the stories that will continue to be passed down from generation to generation.

Through Betonie, the Navajo medicine man, Silko outlines the role of laissez-faire and elasticity in injecting new vitalities into the "Indian" World. In Silko's words, "Things which don't shift or grow are dead things . . . Witchery works to scare people, to make them fear growth" (126). Donald A. Grinde and Bruce E. Johansen write: "This recognition of the need for change in our environmental perceptions must also encompass the realization that indigenous peoples need once again to enforce their own environmental values, unfettered by regulations and environmental management practices of the industrial state" (19). Here, Silko documents the shifting and protean nature of the ceremonies and stories, underlining the rootedness of Laguna culture in oral tradition,

regular retelling of stories, and a specific landscape. Betonie explains to Tayo that "the ceremonies have always been changing" (132) and that they are supplemented and reinforced by each new performance. Thus, the ethos and philosophies, embedded in ceremonies, should not be stiff but rather fluid and keep up with the new modifications. Despite the forced moves, wars, starvation, erasure, and the tremendous pressure to assimilate, Native American tribes prevailed and managed to perpetuate their cultural legends and stories through customary telling and retelling of these stories. Passed down from generation to generation, these tales speak of universal, timeless truths and provide insights into environmental justice and cultural values, as they are loaded with parables about life, death, and the synchronization of various systems in nature.

With such a worldview, Silko approaches nature from a marginalized, postmodern, "other" position as a then late-twentieth-century (now twenty-first-century) Native American woman—as opposed, for example, to William Wordsworth, who approached nature from a Western worldview, with male privilege, and a Romantic imagination. Schweninger points out:

> Like other Native American novelists, Silko contrasts the Euro-American and Native American attitudes toward nature and also demonstrates the alienation of the Indians themselves from their environmental heritage. Oppression of nature, Silko suggests, goes hand in hand with oppression according to race, gender, or class. Despite its similarities with other American Indian literature, Silko's novel is unique in that it draws heavily on Laguna Pueblo myth and lore and thus has a significance separate from Western tradition. (4)

*Ceremony* thus dramatizes the plight of a people surviving under a dominant society that undervalues both non-mainstream subjects and nature. To communicate her vision of environmental justice, Silko suggests that nature oppression coincides with other racial and patriarchal processes that subordinate the other.

Throughout her writing, Silko underscores the function of storytelling in dismantling systems of oppression. Storytelling is not a unique Native American tradition; it exists in many other cultures and has been one of the primary vehicles by which people have been taught how to coexist in harmony with nature. Although stories signify the artistic developments in each culture, they also embody foundational knowledge in ecosophy, history, science, medicine, and moral teaching. Susan Berry Brill De Ramírez and Edith Baker emphasize these narrative roots:

> Unlike more discursive forms of contemporary literary texts, Silko's writing takes on the conversive form of an oral storytelling event. Thereby, she invites her readers to step into the story worlds of her books to understand those worlds relationally and deeply. The more textual nature of critical readings works with the literary discourse of Silko's books, often leading readers to presume that each book, story, and poem is about the surface details of the narrative. (214)

In the context of literary studies, Silko's *voice* deflates both the conventions of the Western novel and the oral tradition of Native American folklore. Specifically, her combination of manifold, overlaid Laguna and Pueblo folktales into this disjointed, tumultuous narrative creates a literary space in which form closely follows function—as

Tayo completes the ceremony, as the land regains its fertility, the text reconstructs its coherence and stability.

Structurally speaking, *Ceremony* is a multifaceted novel, formulated of frame poems surrounding a contemporary plot. The body of the novel comprises a number of tribal story-poems with traditional myths about threats to the natural world and to Laguna people. All these tales are continuous with Tayo's quest to save his tribe and end the drought, spawned by his skewed vision of every thread in the web of the universe: "He damned the rain until the worlds were a chant. . . He wanted the worlds to make a cloudless blue sky, pale with a summer sun pressing across wide and empty horizons" (12). This tarnished awareness of the world has wrought ecological repercussions on his environment. Josiah tells Tayo: "These dry years you hear some people complaining . . . But wind and the dust, they are part of life too, like the sun and the sky. You don't swear at them. It's people, see. They're the ones. The old people used to say that droughts happen when people forget, when people misbehave" (46).

From the very outset of *Ceremony*, the narrative persona sets the theme of cultural uniqueness of an ethnic group that is characterized as Native American, by claiming to be one of a very long line of storytellers whose role is to maintain and pass along the story set in motion by Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman (also called Spider-Grandmother, who in many of the Laguna and Acoma stories, figures as the original life-force). The ensuing description of the land and the array of references to it as "Mother Earth" lay out the foundation for a conceptualization of Native American worldviews. By the end of Silko's prologue, a general horizon of discourse and identity is well established:

Ts'its'tsi'nako, Thought-Woman,

is sitting in her room

and whatever she thinks about appears.

She thought of her sisters,

Nau'ts'ity'I and I'tcts'ity'I,

and together they created the universe . . .

She is sitting in her room

Thinking of a story now

I'm telling you the story. (1)

A text that begins with cultural figures and motifs such as storytelling, the history of oppression, and the interconnectivity of all creation is incontestably dedicated to a Native American cultural worldview. In *Native American Representations*, Gretchen Bataille explains that to begin the novel with a creation myth is certainly among the "most economical and efficient ways to signal an ethnocultural difference, since it insinuates what the representation and the reconstruction of such difference is all about: a difference in epistemologies and worldviews, a difference in 'realities' and perceptions" (183-84). In the consequent part of the prologue which takes the form of a poem entitled "Ceremony," Silko describes a "world made of stories," establishing the critical role of stories in preserving Native American culture and the intricacy of the natural web: "I will tell you something about stories / They are all we have, you see, / all we have to fight off / illness and death" (2). Native Americans have only stories to recall and preserve their cultural tradition:

You don't have anything

if you don't have the stories.

Their evil is mighty

but it can't stand up to our stories.

So they try to destroy the stories

Let the stories be confused or forgotten.

They would like that

They would be happy

Because we would be defenceless then. (2)

This poem underlines the essential role that storytelling plays in upholding Native Americans' distinct cultural paradigms, given that these stories are imbued with resistance to imperialist ecological degradation, one that has minimized their amount of farming and hunting land and forced the "Indians" into a cash economy. This trend of land appropriation explains Native Americans' underprivileged status in American culture. It also recapitulates the continual attempts of Euro-American imperialism to wipe out the Pueblo culture by thwarting its ceremonies.

Silko substantiates that the ancient Pueblo people survived even in the worst of circumstances, and they "depended upon collective memory through successive generations to maintain and transmit an entire culture, a worldview complete with proven strategies of survival" ("Landscape" 268). As mediums for cultural buildup and historical transmission, stories have the potential to hold together the community members. As Silko puts it, "Traditionally everyone, from the youngest child to the oldest person, was expected to listen and to be able to recall or tell a portion, if only a small detail, from a narrative account or story. Thus the remembering and the telling were a communal process" ("Landscape" 268-69). Most important, these stories also represent

topological spaces in the sense that the Laguna people "couldn't conceive of themselves without a specific landscape" (269).

Intricately interwoven with the spatial practices of the people, land plays a central role in Silko's writing; therefore, the Pueblo oral tradition that informs her texts doesn't separate nature from culture. In essence, landscape is intertwined with the people who inhabit it: Both the inanimate and animate in the landscape enter into a relationship. The world of Native Americans is shaped by the land, thereby the literature they produce, in Patricia Smith and Paula Allen's words, "must be understood in the context of both the land and the rituals through which they affirm their relationship to it" ("Earthly Relations" 176). Native Americans communicate with the land as "something mysterious, certainly beyond human domination, and yet as something to be met and spoken with rather than confronted . . . It is a multitude of entities who possess intelligence and personality" (176). For Silko, stories are "most frequently recalled as people are passing by a specific geographical feature or the exact place where a story takes place. The precise date of the incident often is less important than the place or location of the happening" ("Landscape" 269). The Pueblo oral tradition lays much emphasis on and is coextensive with the land insomuch as it is rooted in storytelling, which serves chiefly as a bond between the Pueblo people and their landscape. Paula Gunn Allen asserts that "The stories and the land are about the same thing . . . the stories are the communication device of the land and the people" (*Sacred* 118).

The stories interspersed in *Ceremony* are themselves ceremonies that reconcile the division between the tormented landscape and estranged human beings, embodied in Tayo's relationship to the land and to the old stories. The polarities are mainly caused by

the mainstream Eurocentric ideology that is perpetuated in the Native American communities. According to Kenneth Lincoln, "The primacy of language interfuses people with their environment: an experience or object or person is inseparable from its name. And names allow us to see, as words image the spirits of things" (92). Humans, nonhumans, landscape, and mythologies are vital to the continuation of Native Americans, and any discontinuity in the oral tradition means the ultimate collapse of both nature and culture.

The first conversation Tayo has with Betonie evokes the magnitude of a historical bond with the land:

> People ask me why I live here [Betonie] said, in good English . . . "They keep us on the north side of the railroad tracks, next to the river and their dump, where none of them want to live." He laughed. "They don't understand. We know these hills and we are comfortable here." There was something about the way the old man said the word "comfortable." It had a different meaning—not the comfort of big houses or rich food or even clean streets, but the comfort of belonging with the land, and the peace of being with these hills. But the special meaning the old man had given to the English word was burned away by the glare of the mirrors and chrome of the wrecked cars in the dump below. (117)

Botonie is educating Tayo about a sense of belonging *with* the land that disturbs any object-subject dichotomies, one that is much more complicated than any associations. James Tarter points out that this belonging *with* is "more sophisticated than the familiar reversal of property ownership (as in the popular bumper sticker quoting Chief Seattle,

'The land doesn't belong to people / people belong to the land')" (101). Tarter adds that the "difference is in the use of *with*: it is a 'mutual appropriation,' a belonging with that involves a coequal relationality between person and place" (101). This "comfortable" bond with land takes many generations to develop. Silko has repeatedly declared in her essays and interviews that the landscape "sits in the center of the Pueblo belief and identity. Any narratives about the Pueblo people necessarily give copious attention and detail to all aspects of a landscape" (*Yellow Woman* 43). Substantiating this notion, Karen Waldron explicates that "Silko's poems, essays, and novels manifest the relationship between the human being and his or her surroundings as one of being rather than viewing" (179-80).

Much like other nature writers—including Hogan, Devi, and Roy, as I will discuss in my subsequent chapters—Silko rethinks the concept of "place" by merging the local and the global ("glocal") to a degree that is as impressive as it is consistent, celebrating the interlacing of the Laguna reservation with the entire world. She portrays Laguna land as endowed with epistemological meaning necessary to regain mental and physical integrity and connection to self and to glocal landscapes and communities, entangling everything into a circle of communal ties in the broadest sense. The themes of Silko's novel transcend the borders of her reservation and can be applied to other cultures worldwide, principally to ones facing similar imperial or anti-nature systems and threats. In this fashion, she exceeds the regional accounts and visions of many of her male and female predecessors. Her artful integration of local and global concerns consummates with the disorientation of Tayo's memories and through descriptions that demonstrate the amalgamation of humans, machines, and nature. For instance, Tayo's picturing of a

Japanese soldier resembling Uncle Josiah and Old Betonie's links of the world outside the tribe and the tribal ceremonies foreground the interrelation of the local and the global, stressing that all phenomena are inextricably interconnected. In "Keeping the Native on the Reservation," Jeff Karem argues that scholars' tendency to analyze Tayo in a Western context, as a hero in a "Laguna grail story," has generated "the unfortunate effect of assimilating Silko's narrative into an ahistorical Western archetype, rather than exploring the historically specific cultural and aesthetic work of her text" (22).

Interestingly, Silko struggled against Richard Seaver, her editor at Viking Press, who suggested drastic changes to or bowdlerizing large portions of *Ceremony*, to make it conform more to the status quo of American ecological writing. With these portions expurgated or even adjusted, *Ceremony* would have lost its unique epistemological orientation, immediate relevance, and the universality of the lessons it communicates. In Karem's words, "these changes would have had the effect of eliminating the novel's challenging literary and cultural material, particularly Silko's representations of the world-historical forces connected to her protagonist's personal quest" (21). Because Silko's vision disrupts dominant epistemological, economic, and political formulations, her revisionist novel did not fit into the "expectations of a published work by a Native American author" (22). These dichotomies of nature versus culture and savage versus civilized have been utilized as pretexts to "enlighten" and "civilize" Native Americans, and thereby usurp their land and wipe out entire populations, because Native Americans were "primitive," meaning "closer to nature," in contrast to Euro-Americans who were more "advanced" with respect to technological progress.

Clearly, writing from an ecological perspective requires re-estimations of ideological models of nature to facilitate the regeneration of a different paradigm for "conceptualizing environmental writing that focuses on relational inhabitation as a fundamental world-view" ("Anotherness" 42). This ideological shift, Murphy argues, must occur for reconceptualizing the culture-nature dynamic in more ecological terms; he suggests a dispensing of ideological models of the victim-victimizer or self-other transactions in a way that is more cooperative by embracing, instead, the idea of "anotherness" (40-41). In this way, "the ecological process of interanimation—the ways in which humans and other entities develop, change, and learn through mutually influencing each other day to day—can be emphasized in constructing models of viable human/rest-of-nature interaction" (42).

The deep-seated stereotypes or idealizations of Native Americans "as the people with an ancient wisdom" (Adamson xiv) and environmentally friendly lifestyles and practices have been widely celebrated in this age. They are almost always portrayed by environmentalists and nature writers as having a unique role to play in sustaining and saving the planet. Nonetheless, environmentalists such as Greg Garrard and Joni Adamson, among others, critique such idealized, problematic, and socially and culturally entangled discourses and representations for keeping the indigenous people in their disadvantaged position. These romanticized images have led to the crass co-optation of indigenous practices and belief systems by Western ideologies. Also, "At its crudest, the Ecological Indian represents a homogenisation of the 600 or so distinct and culturally diverse societies in pre-Columbian North America, or even the 314 federally recognised tribes in the USA today" (Garrard 126). Indeed, Native American lifestyles and

cosmologies should not be glamorized through a trend of celebrity that exalts their distinctiveness and persistence in the most technologized and "developed" nation on earth. Rather, they should embrace projects of sustainable development, for inflexibility and refusal to adapt to new circumstances and realities indicate fragility and unacceptability. All in all, rigidities or complete assimilation would debilitate this great tradition and diminish its impact.

## IV

Although *The Long-Legged House* is a collection of essays and *Ceremony* is a novel, there are many commonalities between Berry's and Silko's environmental justice critiques. Both conceive of the violence practiced against the environment as the gravest offense, not only because of its degradation of the earth, but because of its subsequent enslavement and reckless, vivisectional liquidation of human communities. The connections they establish between nature and culture have prompted me to examine them from an environmental justice perspective, which is incomplete without equally attending to anthropocentric and ecocentric dimensions. Both formulate workable substitutions to the detrimental impulses of imperialism and capitalism, resorting to constructive mythologies and traditions, as they realign humans with the land. Although they converge into many points, Berry and Silko diverge on substantial tenets pertaining to environmental justice, given their distinct socio-cultural paradigms, contexts, motives, and exigencies. For instance, Silko stresses the position of the physical landscape surrounding her and the internal landscape that shapes her identity as a Native American woman living in a postmodern society. What is at stake in Silko's writing is the theme of

rejection of self-identity caused by the imperialist enclosure of indigenous land, and her vision of environmental justice attends to race, gender, class, and culture. Since the day of the initial contact between Native Americans and European settlers, Euro-Americans' exploitation of the earth has been always accompanied by the marginalization of its inhabitants. For example, when the loggers and ranchers objectify nature, the soldiers and businessmen see Laguna women only as servants or prostitutes, and the miners take uranium from the earth for atomic bombs.

Driven by a sense of dispossession, Silko suggests that the economic, social, and cultural dilemmas facing Native American communities are the result of the loss of their land to the industrial, capitalist culture. Hence, Silko's environmentalist critiques call for environmental justice theory as an indispensable approach to decipher Silko's sophisticated writing. In contrast, Berry's vision of environmental justice is devoid of the gender-based and race-based angles. His writing exhibits a longing for a "pure" natural world, a world of rudimentary simplicity free from human destruction, accepting no division between culture and nature. Silko echoes comparable views but lays more emphasis on race as a determining factor in environmental policies.

In the next chapter, I will examine Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* and Arundhati Roy's *The Cost of Living* in the same chapter, because they contain an intricate intervention that advances keen environmentalist critiques of mega-dam constructions. I begin with a brief introduction to the history of dams and their harmful consequences on the environment, comparing and contrasting Hogan and Silko. In the second section of Chapter Three, I analyze Hogan's vigorous statements against dams, arguing that Hogan's *Solar Storms* was inspired by the events surrounding the James Bay hydro-

Quebec Project. It is historiographic in the sense that it chronicles historical events; it thus recuperates and rewrites history from the standpoint of the wronged and excluded parties—women, indigenous inhabitants, animals, the poor, and the environment. In the third section, I focus on Roy's critique of dams and their portentous effects on the environment and India's poor peasants. I engage with her activism and tie it to her writing. In the last section, I outline the differences and similarities between Hogan's and Roy's environmental interventions.

# CHAPTER 3

# THE UNSPEAKABLE COSTS OF "DAM/AGE" IN LINDA HOGAN'S *SOLAR STORMS* AND ARUNDHATI ROY'S *THE COST OF LIVING:* WHO PAYS THE HIGHEST TOLL?

In the first flooding [resulting from the dam construction], they'd killed many thousands of caribou and flooded land the people lived on and revered. Agents of the government insisted the people had no legal right to the land. No agreement had ever been signed, no compensation offered. Even if it had been offered, the people would not have sold their lives. . . Overnight many old ones were forced to move. Dams were already going in. The caribou and geese were affected, as well as the healing plants the people needed.
—Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms* (47)

I began to follow the story. The more I read, the more horrified I became. In March I traveled to the Narmada valley. I returned, numbed. I returned unable to ignore or accept what everybody (including myself) has, over the years, gradually accepted and successfully ignored.
—Arundhati Roy, *The Cost of Living* (ix)

## I

In this chapter, I investigate ecofeminist and environmental justice nuances and implications in Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* (1995) and Arundhati Roy's *The Cost of Living* (1999), a pair of texts that delineate a form of maldevelopment and injustice

different from the ones explored in the previous chapter. Hogan and Roy differ from Silko and Berry in their reactions to environmental degradation and in the types of environmental injustice they dispute and seek to disrupt or even obstruct. While Silko and Berry contest the positioning of nuclear mines, testing centers, and coal mines on terrains belonging to "subaltern" communities—Native Americans and poor Kentuckians—Hogan and Roy dramatize mega-dams as a form of environmental racism and "maldevelopment" detrimental to both the environment and human and nonhuman populations. There are more similarities between Hogan and Silko than between Berry and Silko or between Hogan and Roy, but I decided to organize these texts thematically around specific industries of extraction and pollution. Thus, my dissertation goes international for the first time in terms of its primary authors. Silko and Berry choose not to join any organized movements and believe in the ability of the individual to undermine the status quo, but Hogan and Roy see in institutionalized movements pivotal players in purging injustice. In spite of their divergences and convergences about myriad issues, Hogan and Roy share their advocacy on behalf of women. Roy's advocacy is literal, as she herself defends the rights of the adivasis, and Hogan's is fictional, for the actions of her fictional characters speak of advocacy. Roy herself has led campaigns against all kinds of injustice, ecological in particular. Also, Hogan and Roy put more emphasis on the role of women in subverting environmental degradation and exposing the impregnable role of women in dissenting environmental racism. Therefore, their texts lend themselves to ecofeminist analysis, as they establish that women are more predominantly jeopardized by environmental destruction.

By exposing the role of mega-dams in ousting millions of local inhabitants and extinguishing their communal rights to natural resources, environmental writing has transformed our attitudes toward dams that were formerly one-sidedly deemed as the "pride" of nations. Mega-dams epitomized (and still largely symbolize) progress, ingenuity, and humankind's triumph over nature. Reflecting on the infantilization of rivers in the U. S., Robert Devine illustrates that according to a children's book from the 1960s in the U. S., people "need dams to make rivers 'behave'" (88). Environmental writing has subscribed to the environmental, socioeconomic, and psychological ruptures produced by mega-dams which constitute a startling ecological problem facing indigenous groups today. The appropriation of land and its resources stultifies the well-being of its inhabitants as well as their sovereignty over communal, political, and spiritual matters. Controversies surrounding the disastrous ramifications of dams emerged with a particular gravity after various public debates about blocking the construction of gigantic dam projects throughout the world.

Nowhere has this rung more true than along the banks of the James Bay River in North America and the Narmada Valley, which traverses three of India's northwestern states: Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, and Maharashtra (Fisher 13). Environmental writers and activists started to negotiate the manifold costs of dams. Therefore, bemoaning dams and fantasizing about tearing them down have become popular topos in contemporary environmental literature. This relatively novel paradigm congregates far-flung "subaltern" struggles and writers who are rarely spotlighted in the same breath.

Linda Hogan's *Solar Storms* and Arundhati Roy's *The Cost of Living* both reckon and disclose environmental and social inequities caused by the unjust annexation of

indigenous lands for the siting of huge hydroelectric dam projects. Hogan and Roy tell the truth and unveil lies to the readers, relate the ineffable, and bring these dynamics together in a complex tension, one that coalesces around environmentalist, capitalist, and ecofeminist paradigms. They articulate an intricate intervention that advances keen environmentalist critiques of huge hydroelectric dam projects and resonate with a note of exigency regarding the destructive aftermaths of mega-dams. In light of their analysis of the erosion of many communities by multinational capitalism's ubiquitous commodification of nature and people, Hogan and Roy reveal that indigenous inhabitants worldwide share a common experience of colonization and marginalization into a capitalist, hegemonic nation state. Most remarkably, they share a legacy of resistance to oppressions of imperialism and cupidity. Hence, my scrutiny of these texts will oscillate between investigating mega-dams as metaphors of modernization and as reifications of neocolonialism (global capitalism).

Before analyzing Hogan's and Roy's ecofeminist and environmental justice stances as embedded in their dam-centered writing, let me first provide some biographical information and broad background on the historical context of mega-dams and the authors' battles against forces of environmental racism, imperialism, (neo)colonialism, and neoliberal global capitalism. Hogan and Roy come from two completely different sociocultural, geopolitical, and philosophical contexts, yet they are united by the burdens of environmental degradation that has wreaked comparable havoc on locales belonging to historically marginalized indigenous groups. Linda Hogan—a Chickasaw poet, novelist, essayist, playwright, and activist—is one of the most influential and "provocative" Native American figures on the contemporary literary

canvas. Arundhati Roy is a powerful Indian novelist, essayist, and critic who, over the years, has been fighting a non-violent war through words and peaceful protests against atrocities committed against human and non-human entities all over the world. Yet her primary writings are centered on the Indian scenario, especially the rights and liberation of the indigenous adivasis (original inhabitants or indigenous people in Sanskrit) of India.

To begin, the emergence of anti-dam movements cannot be attributed to a specific place, or an occurrence at a particular juncture in time, but to a history of unswerving postcolonial and capitalist exploitation and marginalization that has warranted both a combination of daily struggles for dignity and survival and some critical struggles in relation to major dislocations around land. However, U. S. nature writers have been pioneering in tallying dams' juggernauts and speaking against them. For example, in *A Week on the Concord and Merrimack River* (1849), Henry David Thoreau conceptualizes the notion of sabotage when he asks, "Who knows what may avail a crow-bar against that Billerica dam?" (31). Similarly, John Muir polemically contested to defeat the rising movement to dam the Hetch-Hetchy valley and convert it into a water reservoir for the city of San Francisco. In his book *The Yosemite* (1912), Muir contravened the Hetch-Hetchy dam construction, denouncing many of the claims made by the supporters of the dam project. He disputed their proclamations that the valley was a common feature: "On the contrary it is [a] very uncommon feature; after Yosemite, the rarest and in many ways the most important in the National Park" (260). He was also adamant that nature should be preserved and protected. In Muir's words, "These temple destroyers . . . seem to have a perfect contempt for Nature, and, instead of lifting their eyes to the God of the mountains, lift them to the Almighty Dollar" (266).

In addition, Aldo Leopold's and Edward Abbey's writings lament the construction of mega-dams. For instance, in *Desert Solitaire* (1968), Abbey bitterly complains about the "beavers [who] had to go and build another goddamned dam on the Colorado" (151). In *Slickrock: Endangered Canyons in the Southwest*, Abbey comments that Glen Canyon was expected to generate all the power the Southwest would ever need: "Deception: less than a decade later the Bureau of Reclamation, prime instigator of the dam, is now one of the principal agencies involved in promoting the new set of fossil fuel plants" (74). When speaking about "The Damnation of a Canyon" in *Slickrock*, Abbey points out that physically and metaphysically, the contrast between the flowing, chaotic river and the dammed reservoir at Glen Canyon Dam is literally the difference between *life* and *death*. Here, the freely flowing river is associated with anarchy, freedom, autonomy, and purity, whereas the reservoir created by Glen Canyon Dam connotes debris, bureaucracy, containment, and suffocation.

For Abbey, dams symbolize progress and advancement run amok, and a "fully industrialized, thoroughly urbanized, elegantly computerized social system is not suitable for human habitation. Great for machines, yes. But unfit for people" (*Beyond the Wall* 96). In *Edward Abbey: A Life*, James Cahalan recounts the role of environmentalists in preventing ecological catastrophes in Dinosaur National Monument (in Colorado) and the Grand Canyon itself, but not in the case of the beautiful Glen Canyon just above the Grand Canyon:

> By 1954 David Brower, Wallace Stegner, and the Sierra Club would mount a successful publicity campaign against the proposed Echo Park dam on the Colorado River in Dinosaur National Monument, as a result of

> which Brower eventually agreed (much to his subsequent chagrin) not to stand in the way of Glen Canyon Dam. (55-56)

Today Glen Canyon is "buried under a few hundred feet of Lake Powell, having been flooded by Glen Canyon Dam since June 1964" (55).

David Brower and the Sierra Club succeeded in blocking the construction of more dams on the Colorado River. Cahalan notes, "They placed full-page ads in the *New York Times* and other newspapers that cemented public opinion against these dams and forced their cancellation" (99). They overcame Bureau of Reclamation head Floyd Dominy's argument, contained in his book *Lake Powell: Jewel of the Colorado*, that dams brought people closer to nature and to God. "When articles in such mainstream magazines as *Reader's Digest* and *Life* joined the opposition to the dams in the spring of 1966, it was obvious that the Grand Canyon dams were doomed" (99). The histories of dammed rivers provided by these writers point out the failure of the dams to meet the goals and projections of their promoters, the exploitation and abuse of water resources at the hands of corporate and government forces, the corruption and waste associated with the projects, and the ecological and social displacement that accompanies the damming of a river. These writers echo John Warfield Simpson's call in *Dam! Water, Power, Politics, and Preservation in Hetch Hetchy and Yosemite National Park*, "Let us remove that dam and erase that line as we redefine progress and voluntarily limit our economic based exploitation of nature for a higher concept of the greater good" (325). While acknowledging and building on these writers' eye-opening and revolutionary ecological and political writing, I go beyond these writers in the narrower sense, demonstrating that dams are extensively featured in contemporary Native American and third-world

literature. What's more, I present a critique of Western ecocentric, romantic-inspired environmentalism as not only unseemly, but also detrimental to indigenous communities.

The stories and controversies delineated in Hogan's and Roy's writing are provoked by and based on actual events. On the one hand, notwithstanding a disclaimer on the copyright page of *Solar Storms* declaring that this novel is a work of fiction unintended to "resemble any actual events or locales," Hogan notes, in an interview with Janet McAdams, that the novel was inspired by the events surrounding the James Bay hydro-Quebec Project that ravaged Cree, Inuit, and Innu[19] homelands in the subarctic region of Canada (7). On the other hand, Roy astutely expatiates on the horrible consequences of the Narmada Dam Project on India's poor and unambiguously utters her opposition to the dam. In 1970, the Quebec province drew up plans to dam three major rivers that flow into James Bay, building colossal networks of 215 dams and dikes along the rivers that empty into the bay. The diversion of the La Grande and Eastmain Rivers bred widespread, comprehensive damage to the James Bay ecosystem and displaced indigenous communities, who practiced a vibrant, resilient, and renewable subsistent way of life passed down through generations. The protests and legal struggles mobilized against the dam project gained support from numerous environmental groups and acquired widespread media attention. In his informative essay "James Bay II," Andre Picard points out that, intended to harness 26,000 megawatts of power from Canada's rivers, this project, initiated in the early 1970s, radically altered the topography of the region, changing the course of rivers, drying existing lakes, and inundating entire regions

[19] The Innu, Cree, and Inuit people are not the same. The Innu are most closely related to the Cree Indians. The Innus and Crees don't have much in common with the Inuit culturally, but they did interact with them sometimes. It was probably Innu or Eastern Cree Indians who gave the Inuit their familiar Algonquian name, *Eskimo* (people who eat raw meat).

and incinerating forests. It has brought about much injury to the environment and to the lifestyles of the native people, who largely depend upon hunting and fishing. Although Cree, Inuit, and Innu tribes—who had not even been notified about the project—contested it through political activities and took all permissible measures to impede its erection, their claims were unfairly denied and thus were fruitless in blocking the preliminary phases of the project (10-12). A spokesman of the Cree tribes, Guy Bellefleur, denounced the project's proposal as "anti-democratic," since the local inhabitants were not even consulted about it:

> We have already paid too much. We were never consulted or even informed when the dam . . . began, and we were never compensated for the damage from the flooding. Our people lost not only our lands and possessions . . . but also a part of our history and identity as Innu. We will accept no more developments imposed from the outside. (qtd. in LaDuke 65)

Much like Hogan depicts events in *Solar Storms*, Cree, Inuit, and Innu tribes were made absent from mainstream space or nation state. Hogan's apt remarks provide the historical context of her story, which is set in the climax of the controversy surrounding the James Bay project. This framework gives poignant, subtle insights into the most complicated of relationships: the one between humans and their landscape.

In a similar fashion, India ranks third in the world in dam-building, after the U. S. and China—the latter being the largest dam-builder. In her preface to *The Cost of Living*, Roy reports that in the last fifty (now sixty) years after "independence," India has built

over 3,300 big dams (ix). According to a study conducted by Southern Asian Institute in 1992,

> Since independence in India, 18.5 million people have been displaced—70 percent of them because of dam projects—and another 500,000 are likely to be displaced every year for the next ten years. With 1,500 major dams and 3,600 medium dams built over the past 40 years, there are still 350 million Indians permanently living on the borderline of starvation. (qtd. in Fisher 9)

The largest and most criticized of these dams belong to the state-administered Narmada Dam Project, which has fueled extensive altercations about its foreseeable consequences and the involvement of the World Bank, which expressed its willingness to finance the project regardless of the hardships and miseries it would inflict on indigenous communities.[20]

Generally speaking, Indian and third-world public opinion is caught between two contrasting paradigms: One leans toward the implementation of traditional concepts of decentralized development and self-reliance; the other endorses global capitalism and Western-style development in every conceivable way. These conflicting models of modernity and tradition are exclusionist in the sense that modernity demonizes and stamps out tradition. These recurrent poles incite most of third-world countries' social, environmental, political, and economic upheavals. Tradition in India is tied to Gandhi's principle of economic autonomy as principally distinct from a heavy-industry-centered, Western style mode of growth. As I have previously noted, Western-style

[20] The literature on dam displacement in India is vast; an excellent introduction to the subject is Jean Dreze, Meera Samson, and Satyajit Singh, eds., *The Dam and the Nation*.

industrialism—accompanied by global capitalism, urbanization, imperialism, and the disintegration of community and family—has enslaved "the wretched of the earth," to borrow Frantz Fanon's famous phrase.

It has blindly embraced technology and departed from constructive tradition. The machine is alienating humans from their products, and the relationship between humans and their products is changing. Who is the "master" now? Is it the machine-maker or the machine? Is technology humans' slave, or is it the other way round? Even these machines are not originally synthetic; the raw material is subtracted from nature. All in all, technology is becoming a universal obsession, a movement towards separation and self-sufficiency. Fully aware of all these colonial rifts and ruptures, Hogan and Roy launch complex, timely, and courageous critiques of mega-dams and the ethics of global (imperial) capitalism. Evoking a multifaceted vision of place, they polemically divulge the social and environmental ills embedded in enormous dams on the environment and the indigenous people who depend on the land. Roy not only writes about and battles against ideologies and institutions of uneven development, but has also managed, optimized, and led a range of display campaigns against social and environmental turbulences. Although Hogan doesn't take part in any campaigns against mega-dams, her fictional characters do, and her eloquent writing clarifies their hazards. Both authors suggest that imperial expansion and global capitalism provide the impetus for the erection of more dams.

II

Though her family relocated several times because her father served in the army, Linda Hogan has always considered Oklahoma her "home." In an interview, Hogan reflects that the development of her writing, much like Silko's, meshes with her personal development and her mixed background:

> My father is a Chickasaw and my mother is white, from an immigrant Nebraska family. This created a natural tension that surfaces in my work and strengthens it. And as my interest in literature increased, I realized I had also been given a background of oral literature from my father's family. I use this. It has strengthened my imagination. I find that my ideas and even my work arrangement derive from that oral source. It is sometimes as though I hear those voices when I am in the process of writing. (Coltelli 71)

Hogan's first book, *Calling Myself Home* (1978)—a collection of poems which she describes as an attempt to mediate upon the dissonance between her backgrounds and mainstream U. S. culture—was inspired by her Oklahoma experiences. It is a manifestation of her love for the history, oral tradition, and landscape of the Chickasaw relocation land in Gene Autry, Oklahoma. Her father's family has lived in Native American Territory since removal, and Hogan grew up surrounded by a tradition of storytelling, incorporating stories about farmlands lost to the oil boom land swindles of the 1920s.

Correspondingly, her first novel, *Mean Spirit* (1990), set during the Oklahoma oil boom of the 1920s, depicts a fragmented world, one in which both Native Americans and

nature are under the onslaught of the "mean spirits" of mainstream imperialist and capitalist thirst for land and power. The split between indigenous and white worlds is embodied in the novel's setting, where the same town has two names: The Osage people call it Watona, "the gathering place," and it is christened "Talbert" by the white settlers (53). Hogan's *Mean Spirit* resembles Munif's *Cities of Salt* in correspondences of themes, capitalist oppression, and the discovery of oil. In a new world order in which many indigenous communities around the world are deprived of their land, the remnants of the Osage people face removal and threats of genocide for their oil-rich territories. They escape to the hidden village of the Hill Indians, who uphold a rudimentary lifestyle, given their seclusion from white-dominated American society. Hogan's more recent novel *Power* (1998) is about the endangered Florida panther and its relationship to the survival of the fictional Taiga people—whose life in a small village in the forest is threatened by land developers and loggers. Her second work of fiction, *Solar Storms*, like that of Leslie Marmon Silko's *Ceremony* and much other contemporary Native American writing, epitomizes dialogic and meditative exchanges between Native American and Euro-American discourses, cosmologies, and philosophies. It embodies the assault of mainstream culture on indigenous peoples and their environment, including animals, and retains themes of environmental degradation and cross-cultural identities characteristic of Native American fiction. In *Writing for an Endangered World*, Lawrence Buell points out that the ecological crises on native lands result from "a combination of racist contempt for the region's indigenous inhabitants and utter disregard for massive environmental disruption caused by rerouting rivers, radically changing water level of lakes and extermination of fish and mammals" (238).

This cursory overview of Hogan's pivotal premises essentializes that her writing builds empathy in terms of imagery, characterization, events, and context for pressing environmental and social imbalances; it thus provokes readers, no matter what prior knowledge they bring to the text, to ask whether they, too, might have a stake in the struggles of her characters. From the beginning of her career to her most recent published work, *Rounding the Human Corners: Poems* (2008), Hogan locates the intimate links among all living entities and uncovers the layers that both protect and disguise our affinities. Hence, central to Hogan's writing is the question of Native American survival and the epistemological meaning of place in shaping individual and collective memory and identity: Specific landscapes signify survival in the face of the extreme personal, communal, and cultural losses of unabated colonization and "development." Besides, she links the survival of her characters to the solidity of their ties to Native American tradition, land, and family—common topos in Native American fiction. Hogan encompasses these knotty questions in a dynamic, complex tension, one that redefines and renegotiates what it means to be a human being in a world of shifting identities to inhabit terrains that are continually shaped and reshaped due to ethics of imperial global capitalism and maldevelopment.

Literature is a key means of expression to weave stories and mythical reflections on places. In line with this trend, Hogan's *Solar Storms* fictionalizes and sketches a vivid picture of Native American people struggling against mega-dams to tell the story of Angel Jensen, a young girl separated from her family and her past. Angel journeys to find Hannah Wing, her lost mother who bit her face when she was an infant, and recover past memories that have faded in the wake of this tragedy. She searches for place in the

world and tries to regain a sense of harmony and equipoise. Yet this emergence narrative is fashioned by a history of colonization and the continuation of colonial practices in North America, one that inscribes the bodies of indigenous women and the land.

Thus, *Solar Storms* is historiographic in the sense that it chronicles fictional accounts of actual environmental justice struggles with a forceful ecofeminist emphasis—the ongoing collective exertions of indigenous people, especially women, to stop the building of the dam—and warns against the ensuing socioeconomic, cultural, and ecological ills resulting from it. Nature writing is historiographic in the sense that it utilizes and builds on historical facts and events, rather than simply replicating them. Hogan tells Janet McAdams that she has deliberately "fictionalized [*Solar Storms*] in a way that would make it impossible for anyone to pinpoint a location or tribe" (122). In this way, she blurs the boundaries between fiction (constructed or imagined) and history (reality), foregrounding questions of human identity, the fluctuating boundaries between humans and the natural world in particular. She exhibits uneasiness about critics' restrictive penchant for reading Native American writers as "voices of history." Such an inclination erroneously presumes that Native American writers don't have "the liberty to fictionalize" history: "This is very limiting and serves to keep us in our literary place, not as fiction writers, not as creative people, but only as voices responding to the oppression of history." Mitigating the awkward conflict between history and fiction, Hogan sees "history itself as fiction, since the true story isn't represented, has been changed in many ways to accommodate the conscience of people. And I think of fiction as a form of truth, that a writer takes a story and with it seeks a deeper truth" (123). In this sense, Hogan's counter-discursive, revisionist gestures aspire to tell the "truth" and obviate aggression.

Therefore, she recuperates and rewrites history from the point of view of the wronged and victimized—women, subaltern groups, animals, and the environment. More importantly, "indigenizing" history—writing it from the perspective of the traditionally neglected—serves many purposes, including reckoning with, redressing, healing, and voicing the subaltern party.

Tellingly, Hogan's demystifying and corrective novel, much like Silko's *Ceremony,* is politicized, given its commitment to the political struggle against the developers who are trying to expropriate Native American land. Also, it astutely illuminates the complex environmental and social interactions that shape the ways in which indigenous people's epistemologies and practices are closely linked to the well-being of the earth. It breaks down the dualistic division between Euro-American and Native American voices or philosophical foundations. In one of her interviews, Hogan states,

> I ask myself how best to let my words serve. I know that part of that is to take a *global* perspective, because I see what's happening in the world . . . and our combined voices are a chorus, a movement toward life. They are a protest against human-imposed suffering. They are a vital energy going out into the world. We feed each other with that energy when we read each other's work. (qtd. in Smith, "Linda Hogan" 154)

In *Place and Vision*, Robert Nelson juxtaposes Western anthropocentric literary modes of reading with Native American epistemologies, which are based on wisdom and structured hierarchies and social rituals. Nelson observes that in Native American fiction, communal and personal identities originate from a particular landscape: "To put the

matter in existential terms, the 'existence' of the land precedes the 'essences' (of cultural and personal identities, and the stories about these identities) that come into being there" (7). By the same token, Laura Caster notes that in the worldviews of Native American peoples, "landscapes animate characters rather than the other way around" (161).

In short, *Solar Storms* recounts the physical and spiritual journey of its main character, Angel, back to her home of Adam's Rib, a place that bears wounds and scars inflicted by imperial "development." As a beleaguered, puzzled, aggravated, and mixed-blood seventeen-year-old female, Angel narrates the story of her return to this poverty-ripped village on a spit of land in the boundary waters between Minnesota and Canada. The village's penury emanates from dams that have diverted the flow of several rivers, drastically reduced water supply, and ruined farming land and forests, and thus dispossessed Cree and Inuit populations. Angel unites with three generations of her paternal foremothers—her grandmother Bush, her great grandmother Agnes, and her great-great grandmother Dora-Rouge. Significantly, the four women join forces and embark on a "ritual" journey of environmental justice, gender equality, cultural, geographical, and historical reclamation of place and self-discovery. Maria Mies and Vandana Shiva maintain that "the liberation of women cannot be achieved in isolation, but only as a part of a larger struggle for the preservation of life on this planet" (*Ecofeminism* 16). The motives behind this expedition vary from one character to another: Angel seeks answers from her estranged mother, who currently lives close to the site of the project; Bush wants to protest against damming the Northern rivers; Dora-Rouge is returning to her homeland to die among her ancestors, the Fat Eaters; and Agnes is going to "deliver her mother to that place and grieve" (138). However, Hogan,

corresponding to ecofeminism, refutes the socially designated associations between indigenous women and nature, the falsification that women are biologically closer to the environment, yet she establishes that they almost always bear the brunt of maldevelopment. Thus, indigenous women tend to spearhead any native resistance to environmental degradation, which coincides with systems of patriarchy and racism. They are predominantly affected by systematic, headless development that plunders their commons, the sources of their survival. Hogan designates that both women and nature are simultaneously exploited and muffled by imperial Western patriarchal ideologies. At the same time, she carves out a space for women's resistance to such patriarchal and imperial systems.

Remarkably, the narrative elicits a sense of empathy among the main characters and between them and the land. And the land and its histories of bounty and hostility enable Angel to empathize with those around her. In her days with Agnes, Dora-Rouge, and Bush—the most somber period for her to be with them—Angel learns segments of her personal past that intersect with cultural heritage and the origins of the environmental devastation brought by the fur trade. She absorbs traditional parables that instruct her on "remak[ing] place within this broken world," to live by what the land gives her. Also, she formulates intricate relationships with animals (fish, deer, butterflies, wolverine, and turtles), plants such as Akitsi, or people such as her mother (Arnold 95). These affiliations are framed within the larger history of Adam's Rib, a Cree-Anishinaabe village in northern Minnesota, reconfiguring a fresh and complex essence of place, tradition, and community for Angel. Agnes's lover, Husk, fishes and provides food and wood for the women; Agnes cooks, and Dora-Rouge relays the stories, all sustaining one

another in the sparest of times. Angel arrives at decisive forms of knowledge about how to fit into this cycle of seasons and relationships, and soon becomes accustomed to her place. Eventually, she loses track of time and sticks to the stories that map out her homeland of Adam's Rib and the history of the region. These anecdotes become creation itself.

Arriving in Adam's Rib twelve years after Angel was tragically separated from her mother and community, the four female characters find out that they are witnessing the construction of a series of hydroelectric dams that will inundate and submerge millions of acres of land, eternally unsettling the indigenous cultures that have thrived on these islands for thousands of years. What's worse, these dams will evict the local inhabitants and confiscate their communal land and water—indispensable sources for their endurance. Most of the dislocated people have been recklessly relocated after forcefully relinquishing their lands on which they had lived "since before European time was invented. . . . The resettled people lived in little, fast-made shacks, with candy and Coca-Cola machines every so often between them, and Quonset huts left behind from the military . . ." (*Solar Storms* 225-26). The narrator explicates the impact of the project on the environment: "Not only was the lake at a record low, but dead fish had been found belly-up on the south shore and a few poisoned otters were found mired in mud. 'The fish are dying by the hundreds up at Lake Chin'" (70).

Hogan adeptly links this project to the extermination of Native American populations, resulting from an official designation of indigenous land as "uninhabited and useless." Dams and the subsequent submergence of land—which benefit a handful of people but poison the ecosystem and deprive local communities—have led to formidable

losses of arable farmland and forests. Here, Hogan stresses that one's race, class, color, gender, and nationality do affect his or her representational rights and cast him or her as a representing agent or a representable (reducible) object. Representation exposes positions on the grid of power relations as not only discursive, but also materialistic, physical, and institutional. The narrator of *Solar Storms* declares, "To the builders of the dams we were dark outsiders whose lives had no relevance to them" (283). In "Telling News of the Tainted Land," Annie Ingram contends that this trend of Native American land appropriation "ignore[s] the cultural heritage and human habitation of this sparsely populated area, not to mention its useful sources of food, medical plants, and other resources valued by the Native inhabitants" (236). This maltreatment of Native American land raises questions of official ownership of the land, which give the pretext for its takeover as well as permanent alteration: Indigenous communities hold no certified titles to the land, so their land is deemed vacant wasteland.

To counteract the forces behind the dam, the four women decide to travel farther North from Adam's Rib so as to join the campaign against the dam project, traveling by canoe to a primary activist meeting place. In the course of this voyage, the women realize that the water level has already risen, and the land of their ancestors is almost inundated with water due to the river diversion: "Our paddles touched the tops of trees. On the land many trees were half-submerged . . . looking like bushes" (178). This block or alteration of the river course has distorted the course of water, land, history, and culture as well as the lives of these characters. Notably, *Solar Storms* equates the main characters' physical and psychological muddles with the deformation of their natural world and animal kingdom: As the landscape is transformed, so are the lives of the

characters, often in profoundly resonant ways. However, this analogy extends to encompass all Native Americans, not only these characters. As Hogan puts it, "*Solar Storms* is about people and the land and what happens to each when one is destroyed" (McAdams 134).

The narrative speaks to the ways in which ecological degradation affects individuals and communities—both materially and psychologically. Hogan's scrupulous portrayal—in which Angel's personal narrative of family violence and reconciliation is framed within the larger context of Native American diplomatic resistance to the dam project—draws intimate parallels between the infringement of social and familial bonds and the ravages of indigenous land and its inhabitants. In her essay "Activism as Affirmation," Rachel Stein affirms that, along with the physical threats that environmental injustices pose to communities of color, *Solar Storms* articulates the "emotional harm done to intimate, familial relations and suggests that social ills such as child abuse and youthful violence may result from environmental causes, and should thus be addressed within the context of environmental justice" (194). In this respect, scarred, abandoned, and victimized Angel and, for the most part, her mother Hannah become allegorically synonymous with Native American land and historical experience, which correlate with the multifaceted roles they occupy in the narrative.

In addition to the four women's stories, *Solar Storms* presents the story of Hannah—her life and death. Hers is the story of "the frozen heart of evil that was hunger, envy, and greed, how it had tricked people into death or illness or made them go insane" (12). Hannah "stood at [sic] bottomless passage to an underworld. She was wounded. She was dangerous. And there was no thawing for her heart" (13). In Ingram's words,

"Just as the traditional tribal areas are threatened with cultural extinction and actual fragmentation and division because of the dam-building, so does Angel struggle against the internal fragmentation resulting from her own lack of cultural and familial heritage" (236). As a child, Angel drifted through a series of foster homes far removed from Adam's Rib. She decides to return to her homeland when she discovers evidence of her great-grandmother in some court records. When she first comes to Adam's Rib, Angel is reticent and obsessed with self-objectification: "I cared only about what I look like," she declares (147). She recalls elsewhere the state of confusion from which she used to suffer: "I remembered so little of my life that sometimes I thought I had never really existed, that I was nothing more than emptiness covered with skin" (74). Distanced from herself by the internalization of dominant cultural values, Angel is "further split by her mixed blood, the history of conquest written on her body," argues Ellen Arnold (96).

Certainly, the characters' specific stories are more than just personal anecdotes; rather, they should be understood in terms of a larger history. Through Angel's individual story, the history of (neo)colonization and uneven development is explored: The disfigurement of Angel's face goes hand in hand with the colonial blemishes exacted upon Native American lands and people. As Angel aptly puts it, "My beginning was Hannah's beginning, one of broken lives, gone animals, trees felled and kindled. Our beginnings were intricately bound up in the history of the land" (96). Like Native American land, Hannah's body was a "meeting place . . . where time and history and genocide gather and move like a cloud above the spilled oceans of blood" (101); the marks pierced into her skin give account of the "signatures of torture" (99), which Angel and her half-sister Henriet reproduce by cutting their own skins. "Development," in

Shiva's words, entailed disintegration of "women, nature, and subjugated cultures, which is why, throughout the Third World, women, peasants, and tribals are struggling for liberation from 'development' just as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonialism" (*Staying* 2). Hogan formulates decisive associations between past and present by working through the prominence of colonization in the lives of Cree and Inuit people. In her conversation with Tommy about the ancient iron kettle which symbolizes Native American history, Angel rues, "This kettle had witnessed the killing of my people. It had been fired by trees no longer there . . ." (142).

Like Angel, many Native American people were vulnerable to fragmentation and mystification accompanying such mass destruction. Furthermore, the ubiquity of references to animal skeletons, fractured mirrors, "unravel fabric, unfinished stories, broken pacts," and other varieties of degenerations prognosticates both Angel's preliminary "anomie" and the Inuit and Cree people's looming displacement (Ingram 236). Emphasizing the interdependence of all entities in her essay "Creation," Hogan reiterates that "the face of land is our face, and that of all its creatures. To see whole is to see all the parts of the puzzle . . ." (97). Yet the scars on Angel's face can be seen as a sign of healing ruptures and wounds. As Bush, the first wife of Angel's father, points out, "Some people see scars and it is wounding they remember. To me they are proof of the fact that there is healing" (125). Such passages set the ground for the optimistically integrative and reconciliatory undertone of Hogan's novel, one that celebrates themes of resistance, healing, restoration, and compromise, and focuses on the potential for healing and repair, not on past losses and pains. In other words, she raises the question of how

Inuit and Cree communities can cope with loss and destruction of land, relationships, and tribal structures.

Mentally and physically ill, Hannah—who is characterized as "a storm looking for a place to rage" (67)—exemplifies the history of Inuit and Cree tribes and their landscape. Although, like Inuit and Cree land, Hannah's mutilated body is covered with signs of torture and abuse, Angel's growing attachment to her facilitates Angel's emotional and physical healing process from the damage perpetrated against her body and spirit; it also provides Angel with a sense of responsibility and political agency to action. Interpreting Hannah in light of Native American history, Laura Virginia Castor construes Hannah as mirroring the history and spirit of the landscape of home. Hannah thus becomes a site "where collective memories bridge the gap between past injustice and future hope for justice. Only when Angel sees this possibility is she able to act confidently in the protest against the dams" (163). This protest is part of resisting colonization and the loss of self-determination of Inuit and Cree people. Through Dora-Rouge, Hogan communicates her conviction that only with such protests can "conquered people get back their lives . . . She and others knew the protest against the dam and river diversions was their only hope. Those who protested were the ones who could still believe they might survive as people" (226). In an interview, Hogan posits, "Once people are victims, they have to struggle hard to politicize themselves and to be able to break the cycle, to be able somehow . . . to empower themselves once again, to get back their health and their wholeness" (*Winged Words* 81). The construction of the dam project, then, is reconfigured in the "geography" of Hannah's body which hosts a range of tribal tribulations.

Arriving at her mother's house, fearful and ambivalent Angel approaches the doorstep and draws a clear portrait of the boundary between the external landscape and her emotions:

> It was a shabby house, unpainted, with tarpaper over some of the windows. The door of her house had no lock. Where a lock had been was broken wood, as if the door had been jimmied. I stepped on the wooden box that served as a step, not knowing if I should knock or go inside. I was afraid now that I was at Hannah's . . . (241-42)

Noticeably, Hannah keeps no dividing lines between herself and the outside world, one that has tormented her and induced her to disfigure her daughter, both literally and psychologically. Castor proposes that when Angel enters her mother's house, "[b]oundaries between fear and security break down" (165). The darkness of the house's interior symbolizes shortage of conscious knowledge, "but in the representation of this house, the reader is also given clues about Angel's increasing knowledge of the conditions that shaped her mother through the physical characteristics of this place" (166).

In addition, at any critical juncture or turning point in the novel, a simultaneous natural or human-caused turbulence of the landscape occurs. Also, almost all the stories in the novel are marked by a reference to an environmental incident—whether it is natural like the eerie storm in which Angel was born or human-caused like the rising water that signifies the diversion of the river. More precisely, Hogan denotes the history of Angel's family and landscape with memorable environmental events. One example is when Dora-Rouge recounts the tragic story of Loretta, Hannah's equally vicious mother, who is too both a victim and victimizer as well. Dora-Rouge relates, "When Loretta

came here so suddenly . . . we had a drought and there was a windstorm; leaves blew about and the waves were high. . . . We needed rain in the worst of ways" (37-38). Explicating the source of Loretta's eccentricity and fierceness, Dora-Rouge states that

> She was from the Elk Islanders, the people who became so hungry that they ate the poisoned carcasses of deer that the settlers left out for the wolves. . . . Some said she was haunted. . . . Some people said that what came with her was a bad spirit. But the curse on that poor girl's life came from watching the desperate people of her tribe die . . . After that, when she was still a girl, she'd been taken and used by men who fed her and beat her and forced her. That was how one day she became the one who hurt other. It was passed down. (38-39)

Overall, Hogan's writing situates issues of environmental justice in Native American lands within the European conquest of the New World, one that plundered the land and harassed its indigenous inhabitants, as I have earlier suggested. For instance, the story of Angel's scarred face traces back to the onset of the European colonization that set into motion the historical remapping of people and places. The European mission of capitalist development motivated settlers to exponentially consume more land. Vandana Shiva argues that "maldevelopment" comprises a "continuation of the process of colonization" and terms this trend of environmental racism as a "postcolonial project" in a neocolonial age (2). She adds, development "became an extension of the project of wealth creation in modern Western patriarchy's economic vision, which was based on the exploitation or exclusion of women (of the West and the non-West), on the exploitation

and degradation of nature, and on the exploitation and erosion of other cultures" (*Staying* 2).

Here, Hogan grounds differences between Euro-American and Amerindian worldviews and lifestyles. Native Americans view animals (and even plant life and topographical entities such as mountains) as spiritual creatures that can be killed only to satisfy basic needs and, as a consequence, levied their toll upon the animal kingdom without impairing it. In contrast, Euro-American worldviews gradually conceptualize humans as separate and disconnected from other subjects and creatures; thus, the settlers' attitude toward animals as mere objects or commodities rendered many animals vulnerable to over-hunting for purposes of commercial exploitation and the hoarding of wealth. Dora-Rouge recounts that before the arrival of the settlers, there were multitudes of bears: "A bear could only be killed at a certain time of the year and that was for meat and medicine and fur. Even then, it was a rare thing when an Indian killed a bear" (45). Besides, when Angel goes to live with Bush, she finds that Bush keeps no mirrors in her house because, as Bush puts it, "mirrors have cost us our lives" (69). Hogan refers to the fur trade, fueled by the fashion for beaver hats that had, by the turn of the seventeenth century, already disrupted traditional Native American farming, hunting, and gathering: "There wasn't a single beaver that year. They [the settlers] had killed them all. And they'd just logged the last of the pine forests" (37). As a result, many healing plants vanished with the felled trees. Concurrently, one of the characters in the novel, Husk, points out that in trapping for fur rather than for meat, the Cree and Inuit tribes had broken a "covenant between animals and men. . . . They would care for one another. . . . This pact had been broken, forced by need and hunger" (35). According to Hogan, the

settlers saw wilderness as full of demons which can only be driven away by their God and science and by clearing these places: "Their legacy had been the removal of spirit from everything, from animals, trees, fishhooks, and hammers, all things the Indians had as allies" (180). The narrator adds,

> They [the settlers] destroyed all that could save them, the plants, the water. And Dora-Rouge said, "They were the ones who invented hell." For us, hell was cleared forests and killed animals. But for them, hell was this world in all its plentitude. That's why they cleared space to build a church on the mainland and sent for the pipe organ, as if a church would transform this world into a place with title and gold. (86)

In *Dwellings: A Spiritual History of the Living World*, Hogan argues that the violence of Western cultures against nature arises from the "broken covenant" between humans and the world that originates in abstraction, in the "abyss" between signifier and signified. In tribal oral traditions, however, she says, "an object and its name were not separated. One equaled the other" (52-53).

Grippingly, Hogan characterizes the unremitting European encroachment on Native American reserves in cannibalistic terms: "It was a story of people eating, as toothy and sharp and hungry as the cannibal clan was set to be—eating land, eating people, eating tomorrow" (302). Indeed, imperialism and capitalism see only profit, not life, and this drive justifies Hogan's use of cannibalistic imagery in depicting capitalism's (cannibalism's) sanctioning of unrestricted thirst for gain at the expense of the social and environmental integrity of Native American tribes. In the face of this fragmented and unbalanced postmodern and postcolonial world, Hogan provides a dynamic model for the

restoration and reintegration of wholeness and equilibrium. She designs a home for Angel that is based on inclusion, mutuality, and shifting parameters. Out of defeat, undecidability, fragmentation, and disorientation, she represents a reconstruction or a counter-fragmentation that emanates from reckoning with the past to understand and reconcile. Hence, she affirms durability, reciprocity, and family, which culminate in Angel's reclamation of her Native American identity. In so doing, Hogan debunks colonial stereotypes of indigenous land as unpopulated and meaningless, or as in desperate need of Euro-American "progress" and "civilization." Quite the opposite, Hogan's concentric plot—which is based on realities, not stereotyped or romanticized misrepresentations—portrays established and meaningful locales whose inhabitants identify with place as the originator and preserver of their individual and communal identity. For example, although she utilizes some elements of the bildungsroman genre,[21] Hogan, much like Silko, evades the idea of progress in a linear time scale. In *Dwellings*, Hogan remarks:

> The Western tradition of beliefs within a straight line of history leads to an apocalyptic end. And stories of the end, like those of the beginning, tell something of the people who created them. . . . Indian people must not be the only ones who remember the agreement with the land . . . We need to reach a hand back through time and a hand forward, stand at the zero point

[21] This genre of the bildungsroman—the story of the development or formation of a young man—is the most famous German contribution to the European novel. It dates back to Fredrich Von Blanckenburg's discussion of *Bildung* (growth or development) in a 1774 essay entitled "Essays on the Novel." In 1870 and 1906, Wilheim Dilthey constitutes this form in his pivotal treatment of Friedrich Schleiemacher and Goethe's Wilhelm Meister's *Lehrjahre*. The relationship among bildungsroman, nation, empire, race, and gender has been explored by many scholars since then.

> of creation to be certain that we do not create the absence of life, of any species . . . (93, 95)

Hogan's counter-discursive postures, actions, and writings thwart and transcend Euro-American dualistic thinking, reductive paradigms, and hegemonic apparatuses, and create a complex nonlinear narrative of environmental racism implicated in power relations, institutionalizations, and misconceptions. In keeping with Native American rituals, Hogan celebrates their distinctive nonlinear narrative. The cyclical quality of Hogan's narrative is reinforced in the process of Angel's maturation, who "was traveling backward in time toward myself at the same time I journeyed forward, like the new star astronomers found that traveled in two directions at once" (64). Signifying a reunion of self and place, Angel construes her journey as "a felt thing, that I was traveling toward myself like rain falling into a lake, going home to a place I'd lived, still inside my mother, returning to people I'd never met" (26). In the same way, Hannah's death marks a moment of realization or crux of the bildungsroman: At this moment, Angel acknowledges her position in her newly regained community. She candidly declares, "It was death that finally allowed me to know my mother, her body, the house of lament and sacrifice that it was. I was no longer a girl. I was a woman, full and alive" (250-51).

And yet, in the end, Angel attends her mother's death and participates in the final preparation of Hannah's body for burial. Paradoxically, the image of Hannah's death inspires growth, forgiveness, and empathy. In fact, it marks a critical moment of illumination—perhaps an epiphany—that stirs and accelerates Angel's mental capacity toward possibilities rather than premature closures. After washing Hannah's body, Bush and Angel lay the body on a newspaper "on words of war, obituaries, stories of carnage

and misery, and true stories that had been changed to lies" (253). Hannah's body becomes the literal manifestation of history: "Some of the words stuck to her body . . . but we did not wash them off; it was suitable skin" (253). Through Hannah's dismembered body, Angel better valorizes the space her ancestors occupied, given that the "windigo" Hannah is a victim of colonization. Hannah's demise, which signifies the end of Angel's pubescent journey, aids her in gaining a new liberation by accepting the past that Hannah symbolizes: "After that, I made up my mind to love in whatever ways I could" (251). Here, Angel goes from the bewildered and displaced to the buoyant and placed, grounded by the new life given to her. Interestingly, she receives and becomes a caretaker of Aurora (whose name means dawn), her mother's last child, as a half-sister to be loved and given a chance for life.

Only by engaging and salvaging history can healing take place. Without a doubt, making sense out of chaos is fundamental to Angel's healing process, though the scars are permanent. Hogan employs many techniques to elicit a relationship between women's bodies and a mapping of the land. As I have already noted, colonization is mapped within the bodies and houses of women, and the metaphor of the map is employed to describe women's scarred bodies. Besides, the correlation between scarred bodies and ravaged landscapes educes a remapping of history and space. The terrors of history and survival still mark the bodies of Loretta, Hannah, and Angel, signifying an awful and persistent history. Similar to indigenous land, these women have undergone waves of colonization in which their bodies were subjected to erasure and reduction: "What mattered, simply and powerfully, was knowing the current of water and living in the body where land spoke what a woman must do to survive" (204). Again, Hogan

moves away from any separation between humans and landscapes and highlights humans' need to occupy space—to make it a *place*—in order for time to be segmented into distinct epochs and periods. Scholars of place studies make crucial distinctions between "space" and "place." Clarifying these concepts, Cahalan defines space as a "territory that has little or no meaning to a person . . . whereas place consists of space that a person or a group of people has invested with meaning" ("Teaching Hometown Literature" 253).

While she begins her novel with the familiar archetype of the bildungsroman, Hogan sets it apart from the European version of the genre by stating in the very beginning of the novel that animals and landscapes have their own memories:

> I was seventeen when I returned to Adam's Rib on Tinselman's Ferry. It was the north county, the place where water was broken apart by land, land split open by water so that the maps showed places bound and, if you know the way in, boundless. The elders said it was where land and water had joined together in an ancient pact, now broken. The waterways on which I arrived had a history. (21)

In doing so, Hogan counteracts and even reverses widely held stereotypes or pre-conceived ideological or epistemological biases of Native Americans as either noble (adopting Western standards) or savage (retaining their traditional, supposedly crude way of life), complicating their representation as fully developed humans who can possess positive and negative qualities. Her counter-narrative also challenges the common notion that indigenous tribes and ways are vanishing, evanescent, and obsolete, and that Native American communities can never be revived. It is easy for a multiply

uprooted person like Angel to buy into this form of rhetoric, especially since she has had no direct contact with her tribe or family members. On another level, Angel must personally deconstruct the stereotype of the "savage Indian" because of the physical abuse inflicted upon her by her abusive, deranged mother. In order for Angel to unearth "home," retrieve her identity, and piece together the fragments of her past, she must confront and surmount these oblique images.

In addition, Hogan's focus on belonging *with* place is embodied in the return of the four female characters in *Solar Storms* to homelands from which they have been forcefully isolated. In this fashion, Hogan adopts an ecofeminist perspective on issues of environmental justice, underlining the ways in which women of color endure the ramifications of environmental racism upon their bodies, families, and overall communities and become subjects to various forms of injustice. She also underscores the pioneering role of these women in dissenting and rallying resistance against environmental racism. This eco-racism shatters families and poisons parent-child relationships, as it endangers people's means of sustenance. The four female characters are mobilized by their endless desire to patch up their families, communities, and environment to wholeness. The portrayal of these female characters' struggle for eco-justice accentuates the predominance of women in environmental justice movements, as systematic development is immediately linked to their marginalization in patriarchal societies. Moreover, by depicting the ways in which the four female characters are mobilized to join the Cree, Inuit, and Innu resistance to the James Bay project, *Solar Storms* ratifies historical facts of the preponderance of women in actual environmental activism and organizations.

Unquestionably, *Solar Storms* efficaciously subverts and redresses the oppressions of history within an extensive, fictionalized context of relations that situates North American history within the larger history of the world. Hogan's double-binding attachment to history arises from her awareness of the unique bonds between Native American and mainstream American history and media. History is not made up merely of annals and "facts"; it also encompasses narratives, prejudices, and erasures. For the non-mainstream or victimized party, history is what history or the media omits, distorts, or suppresses. In a sense, it is anti-historical, or history's subconscious. Thus, the turn toward and against history serves many conscious and unconscious purposes, such as reckoning with, redressing, healing, and voicing the marginal (subaltern) party. For example, the dams and diversions of rivers to the north were absent from mainstream attention: "They were a well-kept secret, passed along only by word-of-mouth" (*Solar Storms* 156). On the one hand, to completely overlook history is to reconcile the present and the future. On the other hand, to get ensnared in the past—to be incapable of moving beyond the baneful history—designates self-defeating and destructive impulses. As an environmental protest text, *Solar Storms* sheds light on the traditional concept of representation as the prerogative of the powerful and resourceful masters. There are those who represent and subsume and those who do not have much governance over their own bodies, let alone land or the act of representation. Hence, representation becomes a site where those who are being represented are erased and violated because of logocentric blindness or ethnocentric bias and because those who control the economy and have the weapons can impose their own version of history on others.

Ultimately, Angel, just like Tayo, the protagonist of Silko's *Ceremony*, emerges as a fully grown Native American community member conscious of the complexity of Native American history, sagacity, and tradition. Throughout her journey, the stories she is told contribute to her cultural formation, so she can surmount the constructed Western knowledge on which she was raised. From displacement, discontinuity, and stupefaction, Angel has become somebody who fights back "since the only possibility for survival has been resistance. Not to strike back has meant certain loss and death. To strike back has also meant loss and death, only with a fighting chance" (325). Eventually, Angel is no longer searching for self or home; rather, her life encompasses possibilities and propitious forms of knowledge. In adopting the form of a youthful protagonist who is colonized, racialized, and gendered, Hogan stresses the significance of race and gender in environmental justice. She outlines the ways in which mainstream culture and its processes of claiming, naming, and exploiting indigenous people have led to the disruption of Angel's life and that of her community. Optimistically, instead of closing, the narrative opens to a range of decolonizing possibilities in the moment of Angel's acceptance of the reality of her people's nature and culture and the fact that they are inseparable.

Hogan's fictitious community manifests the impact of colonization—fragmentation, loss, death, and destruction of communal land (commons) which is closely tied to the erosion of indigenous structural and social underpinnings. In *Earth Democracy*, Shiva rightly points out that "a privatized commons is no longer a commons, it is private property, either de facto or de jure. What has been called the tragedy of the commons is, in fact, the tragedy of privatization" (55). Hogan also concentrates tension

around the social construction of communities, the ability of the colonized to transcend fragmentation by systematic cohesiveness, and the ability to cohere across difference. With these premises, she creates a heterogeneous community that rests on collective memory and sacrosanct identification with space as place. She stimulates a rearticulation of identity and enables us to re-evaluate potential relationships across difference.

## III

Throughout her polemic writings and activism,[22] Arundhati Roy reveals that the environment is one of the many small yet momentous "things" neglected for a long time in India. To this end, she mobilizes and rallies people to demand their rights, calling on the accountability of individuals, communities, and nations to uphold and promote the rights of all human beings alike. Her social and environmentalist advocacy springs from her intense understanding of the magnitude of the ecosystem in the survival of subaltern groups, her fierce sense of justice, and her belief that every human life is of worth and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect. To her, the earth is a source of simplicity and fierceness. And her uniquely eclectic socio-political and environmentalist writing and activism place her among the sharpest, most provocative, controversial, and best-known critics of the dynamics of global capitalism and neoliberal globalization, and facilitate her breakthrough both at home and abroad. In her words, "The structure of capitalism is flawed. The motor that powers it cannot but vastly increase the disparity between the poor and the rich globally and within countries as well" (qtd. in Albert 4).

[22] Arundhati Roy, in fact, expresses her surprise at the term "writer-activist," which is frequently used to describe her. She argues that the writer should not be distinguished from the activist. She wonders: "Why am I called a 'a writer-activist' and why—even when it's used approvingly, admiringly—does that term make me flinch? See Roy, *Power Politics*, 10-11, 23-24.

Her writing—particularly her more recent articles, speeches, and interviews—offers a vital postcolonial environmentalist critique of injustice, and crosses the local borders of nation-state, gender, and caste hierarchies. In "How to Tell a Story to Change the World," Susan Comfort indicates that mega-dams and nuclear bombs have come under Roy's critical lenses, which "operate" on various fronts at the same time. One underscores the "loss of a sustainable way of life and ecological poverty on a local level, while another critiques the development state as an agent of capitalist expansion and bourgeois appropriation at the national level as well as in a neoliberal global context" (129-30).

Due to this multifaceted critique, Roy's essays have drawn plenty of hate mail, and she is often derided as an "anti-Hindu" and "anti-nationalist" who denigrates India with her "poisoned pen." In response to Roy's criticism of the Narmada dam project, David Jefferess reports, "dam supporters in Gujarat burned her novel . . . while other critics condemned her, a novelist, for daring to write on political issues" (157). Since the publication of her broadly acclaimed novel *The God of Small Things* (1997), for which she won the prestigious Booker Prize in 1997 and the Lannan Cultural Freedom Prize in 2002, Roy has largely abandoned fiction and began to lean more toward non-fiction and very short prose pieces. This transition started with the essays contained in *The Cost of Living* and her unflagging defense of subaltern peasants' and activists' struggle against the Narmada Valley Development Project.[23] Roy persists that she sees no difference between her fiction and nonfiction and that they should complement each

[23] Responding to a question by David Barsamian regarding this transition, Roy explains that it is only to people in the outside world, who got to know her after *The God of Small Things*, that it seems like a transition. In fact, "I'd written political essays before I wrote the novel."

other. In fact, her work, even her nonfiction prose narratives and "polemical" essays, is permeated with literary and figurative tropes and symbolism. She theorizes,

> In fact, I keep saying, fiction is the truest thing there ever was. Today's world of specialization is bizarre. Specialist and experts end up serving the links between things, isolating them, actually creating barriers that prevent ordinary people from understanding what's happening to them. I try to do the opposite: to create links, to join the dots, to tell politics like a story, to communicate it, to make it real. (*Checkbook* 10)

In 2001, she published *Power Politics*, a collection of essays that espouse interrelated social, political, and environmental questions, ones that have mattered to millions of people and to the present and future of humanity. Here, she argues against the corporatization of essential infrastructures, examining in particular the privatization of the power sector, which is at the top of the Bharatiya Janata Party-led government's agenda today. Two aptly titled collections—*War Talk* (2003) and *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire* (2004)—ensued. Each brilliantly written essay has represented a powerful intervention in a controversial arena. However, she states that no writer can dodge the glare of literature, and that she is not sacrificing fiction in order to do something else. She draws connections between the suffering of villagers after the submergence of their land and "the WTO, the IMF, and the World Bank" (10), which prioritize trade and commercial considerations over all other values. She announces that an empire spreads its tentacles either with "the cruise missile and the daisy cutter and so on," or with "the IMF checkbook" (*Checkbook* 1).

She explicates dams' social costs and their role in transforming the Indian landscape, pointing out that economic gains and losses accrue disproportionately to people living in the command areas. Those who bear the brunt of environmental devastation are not the ones who reap its "benefits." These inequities perpetuate divisions and most times antagonism among races and classes. Such inexorable transformations, exacerbating "chronic shortages" of land and water, widen social conflicts, "as different groups exercise competing claims on a dwindling source base" (2). According to Ramachandra Guha, "Most of these conflicts have pitted rich against poor: logging companies against hill villagers, dam builders against forest tribal communities, multinational deploying trawlers against traditional fisherfolk in small boats" (7). Roy's eclectic postures and moves have, in Gurleen Grewal's words, "ruffled so many feathers" (143) and infuriated many political and economic entities and institutions and made her a target of widespread ignominious descent from political powers. According to Comfort, "There are those who wish to silence her, if not through legal wrangling and intimidation, then by attempts at dismissing her as a hack who . . . lacks the technical expertise to write about big dams or nuclear bombs" (118). Those who dismiss her and take part in trivializing and pigeonholing her shrewd and fecund imagination and keen understanding of the configurations of the new world system and global politics construe her as goaded by anti-Hindu, anti-globalist, anti-nationalist, and anti-development bias.

For example, New York-based writer Kanchan Limaye states that Roy "throws development statistics at us like a manic pitcher hurling curve balls. Ultimately, *The Cost of Living* congeals into a verbal mishmash of mystical environmentalism, anti-development rhetoric, and small-is-beautiful musings" (2). Further, in his animosity-

pervaded essay "The Arun Shourie of the Left," Guha discredits Roy's arguments and writings on mega-dam construction as an unoriginal work of analysis exhibiting signs of self-absorption and arrogance: "As a piece of literary craftsmanship, it was self-indulgent and hyperbolic" (1). Besmirching Roy's reputation, Guha wages another diatribe on Roy's polemic against the nuclear tests in 1998 on the ground that a month before Roy "sat down to write her piece, 4,00,000 adults had marched through the streets of Calcutta in protest against the Pokharan blasts" (2). Oddly enough, he unduly recommends that Roy halt her political writing and stay within the confines of fiction, foregrounding a separation between literature and real-life politics. I completely disagree with such skeptical stances that have unjustifiably dismissed Roy's work as a hodgepodge of aberration representing the "ravings" of romantic novice and constituted her polemics as shutting out the possibility of a dialogue.

Attentive to how the crux of her argument might be hijacked and perverted both locally and globally, Roy keenly rejects any labels that try to commodify or package her and thereby diminish the reach of her sound analysis. In "Feminism and Ecology," Ynestra King postulates that women have been "culture's sacrifice to nature." Hence, some feminists have argued against the quixotic association of women with nature on the ground that this affiliation leads to marginalizing both parties—"the sacrificer and sacrificed"—accentuating the social dimension to traditional women's lives. Women's pioneering environmental activism has been ineptly identified as natural (intuitive), not as socially insightful (King 78). I am quite aware of the descriptive limitations and reductive potentials of such culturally and socially constructed associations between nature and women and will examine these risks in the next chapter.

Despite the euphoria surrounding development projects, the actual trajectory of inequities, structural rigidities, disproportionate patterns of wealth distributions, and gender, caste, and class cleavages has met complex social forces at all levels in India. The indigenous inhabitants, especially women and poor peasants, have not passively acquiesced to these dangerous transformations. Rather, the post-independence era witnessed the birth of a range of social and environmental movements. Of these struggles, the most notable and frequently cited is the Chipko (the Tree Hugging Movement), which instantly acquired fame, given its representation of a wide spectrum of forest-based and water-related conflicts. I will also expand on my analysis of Chipko in the next chapter.

Before scrutinizing Roy's writing and activism, let me sketch some historical and contextual background of the struggle against maldevelopment and global capitalism (neoliberal globalization) in India. In reality, post-independence India had to deal with a brutal colonial legacy of land pillage and economic fragmentation and overexploitation. Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha analyze India's population and its relationship to the environment in terms of three broad categories: "*omnivores, ecosystem people, and ecological refugees*" (4, italics in the original). Using terms coined by Raymond Dasmann, they enumerate that four-fifths of India's population consists of "ecosystem people," India's rural people—and one-third of the people comprise the "ecological refugees," millions of physically displaced peasants and tribal people in independent India. They are made homeless and landless by dams, deforestation, and mines, and thus can no longer make a living from their land. And one-six of India's population constitutes the "omnivores": big land owners, entrepreneurs, or urban workers who

capture and exploit distant resources (4-5). Ironically, the omnivores consume and dominate most resources and profit most from economic residues, whereas the other groups make up the casualties of modern "progress." To accomplish and secure this privilege, the elites (omnivores) have made a pact with those "favored by the state (industry rich farmers and city dwellers); those who decide on the size and scale of these favors (politicians); and those who implement their delivery (bureaucrats and technocrats)" (Gadgil and Guha 34). They contend that omnivores, in contrast to peasants, are more likely to embrace and benefit from elitist "environmentalist" initiatives, for they will yield them a surplus which they can accumulate as profit.

By and large, many environmentalists blame Jawaharlal Nehru, India's first prime minister following independence (1947–64), for having elided Gandhi's visions of an independent India, which was based on the vibrant and just village economies. Instead, Nehru took the path of state laissez-faire economic development, a route frequently held culpable for India's environmental, social, and economic crises and cleavages. As an unnamed activist puts it:

> Our forefathers who fought to get rid of the foreign yoke thought that our country would become a land of milk and honey once the British were driven out. But now we see our rulers joining hands with the monopolists to take away basic resources like land, water, and forests from the people who have traditionally used them for their livelihood. (qtd. in Guha and Martinez-Alier 15)

After independence, a pattern of unhelpful development and large-scale acquisition and takeover of land began for dams, industry, military, mines, parks, and other governmental

infrastructures. Such development blueprints are troublesome because they involve damming and diverting tens of rivers, which will lead to displacing the local inhabitants and inundating their commons. Among the thirty big dams planned for the Narmada, the Sardar Sarovar dam is the largest. Proponents of this multipurpose project—the central government, planners, and corporate capitalist companies—employed a deluding rhetoric and promised that, consistent with sustainable development, the project would provide portable water for almost forty million people, irrigate over six million hectares of land (mostly in Gujarat, some in Rajasthan), and secure hydroelectric power for the entire region (Rajagopal 358). Such discourse is often invoked to camouflage the underlying impulses or motives for building mega-dams and deem them as indispensable to meeting the infrastructural needs of many nations.

Still, the Narmada Dam Project has sparked criticism from a range of nonprofit organizations, journalists, academics, human rights and environmental activists, and, most significantly, the local "displacees." These groups, individuals, and organizations, from across and beyond India, allied to establish the Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) or Save Narmada Movement. In essence, the NBA has largely combined and orchestrated the efforts of all these categories and emerged as one of the most active nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) determined to protect the Narmada River. The popular NBA leader Medha Patkar has also sought to synthesize common denominators between struggles in the Narmada Valley and those of international protests against the IMF, WTO, and the World Bank in cities such as Mexico, Prague, and Seattle (Power 207). In his acceptance speech to the Right Livelihood Award, Patkar stated:

> If the vast majority of our population is to be fed and clothed, then a balanced vision with our own priorities in place of the Western models is a must. There is no other way but to redefine "modernity" and the goals of development, to widen it to a sustainable, just society based on harmonious, non-exploitative relationships between human beings and between people and nature. (qtd. in Power 207)

India under Nehru shifted gears toward large-scale economic "progress" and huge industrial enterprises; it embraced industrialization and an egalitarian economic system as the panacea for all India's ills. For this reason, a variety of multipurpose hydroelectric dams have been inaugurated. Nehru once regarded hydroelectric dams as the "temples of modern India,"[24] a statement that, as Roy points out in one of her lectures, made its way into "primary school textbooks in every Indian language. Big dams have become an article of faith inextricably linked with nationalism. To question their utility amounts almost to sedition" (qtd. in Bello). But, digging deeper, I see that Nehru made a U-turn, turning from an enthusiast for mega-dams into a harsh critic who called them "a disease of gigantism"[25] that India must abandon. Independent India's politicians and planners, Nehru in particular, believed that exhaustive industrial development would turn it into a wealthy country. As a result, the government backed and sponsored hydroelectric dam projects, constructed roads and railway lines to facilitate the movement of coal, and built

[24] This oft-quoted remark by Nehru is taken from his 1954 speech regarding the Bhakra-Nangal dam in Punjab. For the full text of the speech, see Jawaharlal Nehru, *Jawaharlal Nehru's Speeches*, vol. 3, 1953-57.

[25] For the full quotation, see Roy, *The Cost of Living* 82n.4. Gigantism as the condition of the modern positivist technocratic mind is well summed up by Paul Virilio's stark quip that these "enthusiasts for Progress" are but a "dangerous gang of dwarves smitten with gigantism," who in entertaining a naïve conception of the world have the "satisfaction of a stubbornly repeated infantile refusal." Put differently, they are plagued by the refusal to grow up. See Virilio 2.

a number of energy-intensive industrial schemes, including an aluminum smelter, a chemical plant, a cement plant, and steel mills (Khanna 82-85). Unfortunately, Nehru's policies not only went up in smoke, but also further institutionalized environmental and social inequities.

Nehru's overemphasis on heavy industry led to the neglect of agriculture and a set of policy decisions with serious negative consequences for India's poor, the majority of whom lived in the countryside. Gadgil and Guha observe that Nehru's policies of intensifying resource use and consumption continued the trends of the colonial period and "became the charge of a bureaucratic apparatus inherited from the British. This was an apparatus fashioned primarily to better organize the drain of resources from the Indian countryside" (*Ecology and Equity* 15). In this framework, the process of development goes side by side with the deprivation and enslavement of subaltern groups. Illuminating the responsibility of mega-dams for ecological degradation and social destitution, Bruce Rich analyzes the aftermath of the then-promising Rihand dam project that was inaugurated by Nehru. He believes that the politicians, planners, and financers neglected the people who live in the site of the dam and the very existence of the land, air, and water, except as abstract industrial inputs:

> The situation of thousands of the local inhabitants has degenerated from traditional poverty in what was a society based on subsistence agriculture thirty years ago to absolute destitution. Each time they were forced to move without compensation or rehabilitation, they become poorer . . . the productivity of the land has been destroyed . . . Many of the displaced live in unspeakable hovels and shacks on the fringes of the huge infrastructure

> project in the area . . . The world bank projects directly resulted in the forcible resettlements without economic rehabilitation of 23000 people. (*Managing the Earth* 40)

Indeed, displacement affects people in a variety of avenues: Some people are unjustly compensated, and the tribal inhabitants of the Narmada Valley who had no formal title of ownership were not offered any remuneration. For example, the pounding water of the Maheshwar dam will, according to Roy, submerge sixty villages in the plains of Madhya Pradesh. Roughly, one-third of the people are Kevats and Kahars—ancient communities of fishers and cultivators of the riverbank who possess no land—"but the river sustains them" (56). When the dam is erected, thousands of them will lose their only source of livelihood. Such landless groups will not be rehabilitated after the private takeover of their common property which denies cooperation, sharing, and self-regulation. In William Fisher's words, "People are also not compensated for assets more tangible than land: local markets, community resources, and social networks are undervalued" (32).

More recently, the global trends toward market economics have signaled the ascendancy of a pattern of neoliberal globalization paradigm. This shift in environmental and economic policies toward neoliberal globalization has, in reality, added insult to injury, and stimulated adverse effects on large segments of Indian society. To tell the truth, it has opened the country to transnational, remotely controlled institutions, such as the World Bank, the WTO, and the IMF, ones that impose the implementation of environmentally and even socially destructive domestic laws and regulations designed to augment elitist profit and facilitate trade. These transnational institutions, organizations,

and governments have cooperated with multinational firms to promote "free" (unrestricted) trade even at the expense of local economic development and policies that move communities, countries, and regions in the direction of greater self-reliance. To put it differently, these corporations operate with an open eye to profit and a blind eye to all other considerations.

They coerce all countries to open their markets to affluent multinational foundations and to abandon shielding and nurturing infant domestic industries. Accordingly, small farmers and businesses have to compete with gigantic agri-businesses and corporations. Roy fathoms the dehumanizing instruments of these out-of-control organizations that override our world and violate the right of local communities to manage their own economic transactions. According to her, they have been robbing people of their self-respect and dignity. Roy is committed to fighting any act of dehumanization, whether it is divesting people of their subsistence resources or waging wars in the name of freedom: "We were not just fighting against a dam. We were fighting for a philosophy. For a worldview" (*Power Politics* 82). In her forward to *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile,* Naomi Klein calls Roy a "great humanist" who, with her writing and her actions, wages a bloody war of words against whoever desecrates human dignity:

> I don't know how she comes up with those killer one-liners, but I am grateful. Each one is a gift, capable of transforming fear and confusion into courage and conviction. In Roy's hands, words are weapons—weapons of mass movement . . . Roy's essays are not propaganda . . . they are attempts to name our world as it is exactly, precisely, perfectly. (viii)

Evincing the travails that exist underneath large-scale events, Roy notes that "The Adivasis don't really matter. Their histories, their customs, their deities are dispensable. They must learn to sacrifice these things for the greater good of the nation (that has snatched from them everything they ever had)." Roy is critical not only of the West for forcefully disseminating corporate globalization all over the world and launching imperial wars, but also of previously colonized nations for "their complacency in the neoliberal project" (*Cost of Living* 121).

From an agricultural point of view, the plague of foreign imports catalyzes a colossal social dislocation of millions of rural people on a scale that only war approximates. To take one example, if free trade means that U. S. rice has a lower price than Indian rice, U. S.-produced rice will be imported into India, and those who produce rice in India may not only lose their land and livelihood, but also be forced to leave their communities in search of employment elsewhere. Under this system, hard-working laborers will be working slavishly for another person. Therefore, these neocolonial policies trigger a social, political, and familial stir among the natives. Claude Smadja refers to a kind of "elitist" complacency and imperialistic drive behind the idea of globalization which "has not run into a brick wall. Instead, today's financial crisis is the corollary of the complacency and arrogance of leaders in the developed countries who assumed that the world could be organized around a single model: their own" (67). This critique reveals the homogeneous assumption behind global capitalism, which acts in collusion with imperialism. Throughout the 1990s, IMF-derived structural programs were implemented in India, and in 1991, new economic policies were devised. This economic transformation aims to liberalize India's economy from all the "regulations"

and "obstacles" that have stifled economic growth. Comfort points out that "India's economic policies shifted quite dramatically in 1991 when, as a result of a balance-of-payments crisis, it sought an IMF loan and agreed to a Structural Adjustment Program that required the country to orient its economy toward export-led growth" (125).

Anxious about the vulnerabilities and the inequities of neoliberal globalization and privatization, grassroots action groups have been at the apogee of the battle, not only in India, but across the world. In his essay "Liberalization, State Patronage, and the New 'Inequity' in South Asia," Mustapha Kamal Pasha remarks that these groups "provided the most sustained and vocal opposition to neoliberal reforms, especially new environmentalist social movements" (79). In his view, neoliberal reforms have become wider in scope since 1995. In the case of India, the state is committed to furnishing the physical and social infrastructure to facilitate private capital accumulation. Once sheltered from excessive intrusions from the outside, agriculture is now subject to private investment from large agri-businesses. There have been always individuals and organizations that expose the murky side of new economic policies. The National Alliance for People's Movement (NAPM), under the leadership of Medha Patkar, seeks to forestall the marginalization of the majority of the population, the degradation of labor, and the destruction of the environment. Shiva conceptualizes the role of neoliberal globalization in pauperizing and displacing large segments of Indian society:

> Trade liberalization of agriculture was introduced in India in 1991 as part of a World Bank/IMF structural adjustment package. While the hectares of land under cotton cultivation had been decreasing in the 1970s and 1980s, in the first six years of World Bank/IMF-mandated reforms, the

> land under cotton cultivation increased by 1.7 million hectares. (*Stolen Harvest* 10)

Industrial, monolithic crops such as cotton, soybeans, legumes, jute, and tobacco started to displace food crops. Third-world countries are coerced into modifying their agricultural modes in accordance with the financial conditions of the World Bank, IMF, and WTO, which Shiva deciphers as "systematic weapons of terror against the poor and the Third World, to coercively transform what little they have into the property and markets of global corporations" (*India Divided* 61). Growing and exporting commodities under this transnational pressure, countries have lost their social integrity and biological diversity. Take, for example, soybeans which have substituted a variety of subsistence crops in India and culminated in the erosion of complex local food systems by diverting resources and changing ownership patterns. The takeover of the soybeans of the Indian market is a reification of the "imperialism on which globalization is built. One crop exported from a single country by one or two corporations replaced hundreds of foods and food producers, destroying biological and cultural diversity, and economic and political democracy" (*Stolen Harvest* 11).

Roy criticizes globalization and privatization for widening the gulf between the haves and the have-nots. These economic systems transfer productive public assets, such as land, forests, and water, from the community to private, profit-oriented corporations. In the case of India, these public assets constitute seventy percent of what the total Indian population rely on for their livelihood and sustenance. To delegate these assets to private companies is a dehumanizing process of "barbaric dispossession on a scale that has few parallels in history," to use Roy's words ("Shall We Leave it to the Experts" 1). For that

reason, larger economies can impose prices while smaller ones, by and large, suffer the consequences. Moreover, with no restrictions on international investment, firms will force countries to compete against one another. Each country and each community is pressured to lower wages, lower taxes on business, and relegate environmental regulations, if they are to attract and hold businesses. Communities can then be decimated if what they have specialized to produce can no longer be financially rewarding on the world market. Roy broaches the following trenchant questions:

> Is the corporatization and globalization of agriculture, water supply, electricity and essential commodities going to pull India out of the stagnant morass of poverty, illiteracy, and religious bigotry? Is globalization going to close the gap between the privileged and the underprivileged, between the upper castes and the lower castes, between the educated and the illiterate? Or is it going to give those who already have a centuries-old head start a friendly helping hand? (2)

The answer, of course, varies depending on who is affected by these forces, as groups such as the burgeoning middle class or the big businesses do benefit from corporatization and globalization, but at the expense of the villages and fields of rural India. For her, globalization is a remote-controlled, "mutant" form of colonialism.

After a visit to the Narmada Valley in Gujarat, to which she was drawn searching for stories, Roy has become dynamically and directly involved in the struggles of India's poor peasant adivasis against mega-dams, which have been at the core of the debate against "development." Roy even describes herself as a storyteller whose main métier is to tell the truth and give a voice and a place in history to people whose lives are in the

shadows, rather than the mainstream. The complications facing poor communities do require a reconfiguration of the inequities inherent within modernity. One of Roy's gravest battles is her unyielding campaign against the building of a series of dams across the rivers of India. These projects have displaced hoards of people, particularly the adivasis who have not only lost their land but source of revenue. Roy's thoroughly researched and polemical essay "The Greater Common Good" registers the failures and shortcomings of mega-dams on the lives and future of millions of people in India. Aghast at the havocs wrecked on the land of indigenous people by forces of global capitalism locally, Roy levels an expository assault on what she ironically terms as "the fruits of development," with regard to the Narmada Dam and dynamics of globalization operating both locally and globally. She unveils the subtle cruelties entailed in "development" which has continued to disseminate engendering the displacement and demise of millions of people—along with curbing freedom by allowing greater surveillance (41). Her writing punctures the theory that large-scale dams are requisite for development:

> Big Dams are to a Nation's "Development" what Nuclear Bombs are to its Military Arsenal. They're both weapons of mass destruction. They're both weapons Governments use to control their own people. Both Twentieth Century emblems that mark a point in time when human intelligence has outstripped its own instinct for survival. They're both malignant indications of civilization turning upon itself. They represent the severing of the link, not just the link—the *understanding*—between human beings and the planet they live on. (80-81, emphasis in original)

As a radical critic of this project, Roy, through her writing (which outlines the local people's protests against the dam) and polemical campaigns, endeavors to demystify these ill-measured proclamations.

Along with other opponents of the dam, Roy not only exposes the ethical and political failures and betrayals of the project toward the "Other," but she also detects and unmasks its technical flaws. This faulty project was challenged from the moment of its inception on the ground that it would do more harm than good to the local population and constitute an impending danger to the ecosystem. Roy incisively states that the project consumes more electricity than it produces. It cost ten times more "than was budgeted and submerged three times more land than the engineers said it would. About 70,000 people from 101 villages would be rendered homeless, but when they filled the reservoir (with no caveat to anybody), 162 villages were submerged" (35). Its high-tech deluge-warning and irrigation systems have had devastating effects on the very land the dam sought to protect and the very crop-yields they promised to increment. The astronomic cost of the project—heavily subsidized by the World Bank until its forced withdrawal in 1993—has helped push "the country into an economic bondage that it may never overcome" (35). Yet in "The Story of Narmada Bachao Andolan," Smita Narula stresses that the involvement of the World Bank helped transnationalize the project in various ways:

> First, it indicated international approval, bringing in several other foreign actors. Second, it internationalized resistance to the project. Third, the Bank's internal policies provided a standard against which to judge the project's performance with regard to involuntary resettlement. Despite the

> benefits of transnationalization, the Bank ignored shortcomings in the approval process to the point of violating its own policies concerning resettlement and environmental degradation. (356-57)

Not surprisingly, the people who have been displaced are mostly poor adivasis. The dam has done irreparable damage to their daily lives, their economic self-sufficiency, and their cultural and communal identity.

Roy criticizes the government's emblematic rationalization that the dam would restructure and redistribute resources and its economic benefits would be evenly delivered to the rich and poor alike, and was, therefore, worth the marginal human and natural price of its implementation. Central to the government claim is the notion that the benefits of mega-dams, which would allegedly accrue to millions of those living around the river, would outweigh any potential human or environmental sacrifices. Conversely, putting human rights at the axis of the debate and questioning and deconstructing the government figures and claims, Roy concludes that such purported economic gains should not prevail over equal human rights, repudiating the government's approach that aims to legitimize displacement under so-called "greater common good" or public interests promoted by the project. Roy ponders,

> Resettling 200,000 people in order to take (or pretend to take) drinking water to forty million—there's something very wrong with the scale of operations here. This is Fascist maths. It strangles stories. Bludgeons details. And manages to blind perfectly reasonable people with its spurious, shining vision. (58)

Although she was "caricatured" and dubbed by dam supporters as an "anti-development junkie or a proselytizer" and as a backward-looking, retrograde "rabble-rouser" for espousing this trend, she elucidated that the overt goals of the project never materialized. She attests to the failures of the dam, given the unfeasibility of achieving manifold, "mutually conflicting" purposes (34). In her estimation, "when the Sardar Sarovar Projects are complete and the scheme is fully functional, it will end up producing only 3 percent of the power that its planners say it will . . . [They] will end up consuming more electricity than they produce" (34). According to Balakrishnan Rajagopal, the Sardar Sarovar Projects "would alone potentially affect 25–40 million people, whereas the canal to be built would have displaced 68,000 households" (123). Another striking revelation relates to the fact that the dam irrigates as much land as it has submerged—"and only 5 percent of the area that its planners claimed it would irrigate" (*Cost of Living* 36).

On another related front, Roy disapproves of the decision of the Indian Supreme Court, which contemplated actions against the Narmada People's Movement (NBA) for flouting the court though it did not, at that time, impose any penalties. The NBA maintained that its activities did not constitute contempt, and that it was the state government who was in contempt by violating judicial orders with impunity. It filed contempt petitions against three state governments and the federal government for filing false information before the court regarding compliance with conditions relating to land procurement, rehabilitation, and resettlement, though it is unclear what came out of these petitions (Narula 377). The court has been on a vindictive course against critics, especially Medha Patkar and Arundhati Roy. In legal proceedings launched against

Patkar, Roy and Prashant Bhushan (the counsel for NBA) by certain advocates, the court passed strictures against Patkar and jailed Roy for obscenity for one day and fined her 2000.68 rupees (equivalent to about $42.7752). The immitigable circumstances of the proceedings left no doubt in the minds of anyone watching them, that the court felt very much on the defensive about its judgment in 2000 and wanted to quash any criticism through the device of contempt.

This move by the court is ironic, given that the court has used contempt powers in the past to criminalize officials in the Narmada Valley who failed to comply with its directions on prevention of handcuffing of under trial prisoners and police brutality, not to mention their brutality in stifling any eco-dissent. In a 1993 writ petition filed by a NGO from Madhya Pradesh, Khedut Mazdoor Chetna Sangath, a trade union of tribal people who were opposed to the Sardar Sarovar dam, the Supreme Court had criticized the non-compliance with previous court orders on handcuffing of under trial prisoners by the police and ordered a Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) enquiry. The NGO seeks to reassert and protect the collective customary rights of local communities over natural resources and even rejects individual compensation on the ground that it overlooks the community's right to natural resources—the collective rights of local communities, including poor and disadvantaged farmers and fishing communities, displaced laborers, and indigenous communities. To this end, it prioritizes local mobilization and eco-resistance as prerequisites for success. The police had abused the tribal people who were agitating against the dam. In a subsequent *suo motu* (a Latin legal term meaning "on its own motion") contempt action by the court in 1996 as a follow-up to this case, the court indicated non-compliance with its orders and demanded administrative action against

judicial and police officers. After 1997, the Court's approach to the Narmada Project shifted dramatically, and it has since then adopted an injudicious attitude towards critics of its judgment. Instead of undertaking a comprehensive review of the entire project, the Court decided in February 1999 to vacate the stay on construction work on the Sardar Sarovar dam and to limit itself to the questions of resettlement and rehabilitation. In *An Ordinary Person's Guide to Empire*, Roy responds,

> It is important to remember that our freedoms . . . were never given to us by any government; they have been wrested by us. If we do not use them, if we do not test them from time to time, they atrophy. If we do not guard them constantly, they will be taken away from us. If we do not demand more and more, we will be left with less and less. (17)

On a global level, Roy's dissent undoes the divide between the South and the North, eschewing polarizing environmental concerns into East and West or South and North. As Chaia Heller puts it, "Due to the global nature of advanced capitalism, there is a bit of the North in the South and a bit of the South in the North" (2). Roy has thus developed a unique perspective and surfaced as one of the most prominent intellectuals in the first decade of the twenty-first century. Reversing the travel flows and making an impact on American and global public, Roy takes up a special cultural and counter-hegemonic space; in her words, she is "a black woman from India speaking about America to an American audience" (qtd. in Klein ix). Exhibiting a deep awareness of the mechanics of power, Roy indicts global capitalism, jingoism (chauvinism), religious fundamentalism, the war on terror, the nation state, the World Bank, and the IMF on the ground that these institutions and ideologies ossify and limit our realities. In their "hand-

in-hand march toward the twenty-first century,"[26] these seemingly conflicting ideologies, in truth, energize and protect one another and thereby increase the disenfranchisement of typically marginalized minorities. She bravely exposes the hypocrisy of Indian elites who are selling the country out to multinational companies while they brag about nationalism.

As a fervent critic of the injustices of the new global system, Roy has traveled the world to speak against all kinds of injustice. She has participated in campaigns against global capitalism and against the proliferation of nuclear weapons in India and worldwide. Her essay "The End of Imagination"—a passionately argued, unilateral, anti-chauvinist, uncompromising moral protest against nuclear weapons in India and Pakistan—contains a sharp, poignant critique of the nuclear policies of the Indian government, above all the tests conducted in the late 1990s: "If protesting against having a nuclear bomb implanted in my brain is anti-Hindu and anti-national, then I secede. I hereby declare myself an independent, mobile republic. I am a citizen of the earth. I own no territory. I have no flag" (15). Roy tries to "bridge the gap between struggle and transcendence with an imaginative yet uncritical individualism, escaping from the authoritarianism of the nation-state and its institutions by declaring herself an 'independent mobile republic'" (Jani 56).

Strikingly, she visualizes the dismantling of the mega-dam and the nuclear bomb in war terms, extending the scope of both eco-resistance and imperialism. The peasants and activists resisting the dam are characterized as "small" heroes who fight "specific wars in specific ways" (12). She elaborates, "Who knows, perhaps that's what the twenty-first century has in store for us. The dismantling of the Big. Big bombs, big

[26] For more on this parallel, see Roy's documentary film *DAM/AGE*.

dams, big ideologies, big contradictions, big countries, big wars, big heroes, big mistakes" (*Cost of Living* 12). These "Bigs," or immense tyrannies, shift power away from communities and concentrate it in the hands of centralized governments and their corporate supervision, paving the way for international institutions like the World Bank and the IMF. In her eyes, "The distance between power and powerlessness, between those who take decisions and those who have to suffer those decisions, has increased enormously. It's a perilous journey for the poor—it's a pitfall filled to overflowing with lies, brutality, and injustice" (*Checkbook* 22). So the values guiding these choices are political and economic and are often made by people far-removed, both geographically and knowledgeably, from the development site, increasing the scope of injustice. Roy explicates that the job of writers such as her is to narrow this distance, "to bring power and decision-making closer to home." In Naomi Klein's words, "Our job, Roy tells us, is to narrow the distance, to bring power and decision-making closer to home . . . Our opponents hoard power, we disperse it" (xi).

## IV

By bringing Hogan's *Solar Storms* into dialogue with Roy's *The Cost of Living*, I have aimed to shed light on indigenous people's shared concerns due to forces of imperial expansion, privatization, maldevelopment, and global capitalism. Native American tribes have a lot in common with the Indian adivasis, and they are subjected to analogous ideologies of reduction and subsumption. These dynamics have triggered the devastating projects or conflicts of James Bay and the Narmada Valley. Though *Solar Storms* is a narrative (fiction) and *The Cost of Living* is a collection of essays (nonfiction),

parallels between them are myriad and compelling. Both texts expose the stench of uneven development and elucidate that race and class are still determining factors in environmental policies, implying that the James Bay and the Narmada Dam projects are selected for the positioning of these projects because they belong to traditionally disenfranchised communities. Both posit the possibility of healing the wounds of alienation and re-experiencing unity of self with the world. *Solar Storms* integrates living Amerindian history into mainstream North American history, trying to cure the wounds of conquest by debunking the rhetoric that perpetuates colonial ideologies and rewriting it form the point of view of the typically omitted. It is important to reiterate that Hogan's *Solar Storms* does not seek to replicate factual histories of James Bay; rather, it uses the events of James Bay as a skeleton for communicating larger and more complex realities about individual, cultural, and ecological survival. These can be recognized from the perspective of specific places and persons where empathy has been able to influence the reader's attitudes and thinking about the ways in which political, social, and cultural power operates in the larger world. Obviously, the novel's implied alliance between indigenous women and nature stems from their common history of abuse and objectification.

But unlike *Solar Storms*, which depicts environmental racism as mainly wrought by colonial or imperial conflicts between Native American tribes and Euro-American settlers, Roy's writing broadens the scope of environmental racism by tackling such neocolonial forms of oppression as the globalization of neoliberal economic doctrines. She grapples with the following questions: Who benefits from neoliberal policies? Who pays the highest cost? Roy's counter-stories, which contest dominant narratives, weave

the canvas of her political conventions and stance against multinational corporations and the Indian government for privatizing all public assets and laying them at the mercy of these elitist institutions. Her ceaseless effort to deepen and broaden consciousness of the dynamics of maldevelopment and globalization on the poor is outstanding and thoroughly researched. She does underscore their catastrophic effects and neocolonial drives. In Jefferess's words:

> Awareness of the conflict, and controversy regarding the ecological and social impacts of large dams more broadly, has been raised both inside and outside India due to her [Roy's] writings. As such dissent is apt to do, her role in raising the visibility of the campaign has also provoked 'even greater organization, mobilization, and violence by pro dam actors. (158)

The fate of the adivasis living around the Narmada River resembles the fate of Cree, Inuit, and Innu tribes who lived along the James Bay River and whose environment and lifestyles have been demolished by the project. Like Native American and many other indigenous communities, the adivasis must give up a subsistence and communal lifestyle for one controlled by wage labor and "free" global markets. Such dislocations and big "sacrifices" manifest the ethical and technical failures of the new global system and nation states. Roy's portrayal of the adivasi "oustees" resonates with Hogan's depiction of Native American tribes, and they both emphasize that indigenous groups encounter comparable quarrels of land pillage accompanied by social and cultural alienation, prioritizing nonviolent eco-resistance in order to cripple all these strictures. Like Vandana Shiva, Roy fittingly recommends benefiting from globalization in mobilizing

and gathering resistance: "In the present circumstances, I'd say that the only thing worth globalization is dissent. It's India's best export" (*Power Politics* 33).

To further my critical scrutiny of the repercussions of capitalist and imperialist impulses which foster solipsistic individualism that negates communal identity, I investigate, in my next chapter, Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps* and Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt*. By bringing these authors into dialogue, I intend to demonstrate the ways in which Devi and Munif embody displacement in terms of the imperial and capitalist disruptions endured by the indigenous people as a result of environmental devastation and its subsequent psychological and cultural alienation.

# CHAPTER 4

# WE ARE ALL IN THIS TOGETHER: MAHASWETA DEVI'S *IMAGINARY MAPS* AND ABDELRAHMAN MUNIF'S *CITIES OF SALT*

The personnel office had promised that the company would build houses for the workers so that each man might bring his family and return from work every night to his own house . . . but not a single house was built, and the workers remained huddled and cramped in the accursed barracks, which grew hotter and filthier every passing day.
—Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt* (594)

## I

In my previous chapters, I have explored the nefarious sides of environmental racism, which takes the form of conducting toxic coal-mining operations, positioning mega-dams, and carrying out nuclear tests on lands and waters that belong to historically and economically marginalized groups. These "developments" have displaced and dispossessed Kentucky farmers, Native American, and adivasi communities, for such projects devoured their means of nourishment. Masquerading under the misnomer of development, these projects have disastrous consequences on particular segments of a variety of societies: small farmers in the U. S., Native American populations in North America, and the "tribals"[27] or adivasis (oldest inhabitants) of India. I have also argued

[27] William Van Schendel and Ellen Bal trace the roots of the unassailed and widely accepted term of "tribals" to the British colonial administration in India. Since then, the word "tribal" has been introduced to and integrated into Indian lexicons. The term "tribal," which retains such false characteristics as primitivism, gaucheness, simplicity, and underdevelopment, becomes then a problematic stigma loaded

that the impoverishment of these groups is made possible under the mask of progress: These groups are often deluded by a "benevolent" form of rhetoric employed by neocolonial powers, mainstream media, and transnational corporations that seek to quell them and rob them of their most fundamental communal assets. In fact, the reductive subtexts of "maldevelopment" and privatization have wrought environmental devastation on minority groups on the North American continent and worldwide, and the capitalist multinational corporations have expanded the scope of environmental racism beyond national geo-political borders. In "Feminism and Ecology," Ynestra King observes that "the homogenizing of culture turns the world into a giant factory and facilitates authoritarian government." She adds, "In the name of helping people, the industrial countries export models of development that assume that the American way of life is the best way of life for everyone" (77).

In this chapter, I investigate the forest-centered and oil-centered extractive forms of maldevelopment in two fitting cultural productions: Mahasweta Devi's stories in *Imaginary Maps* (originally written in Bengali in 1989 and translated by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak into English in 1995) and Abdelrahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (translated from the 1984 Arabic original into English by Peter Theroux in 1987). Mahasweta Devi and Abdelrahman Munif are two third-world authors who are profoundly critical of the hegemony of transnational corporations, state-sponsored development, and global capitalism. Their writing negotiates the intersections between environmental deterioration and sociopolitical, class-based, and gender-based tensions.

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with reductive connotations. It creates a rift within Indian society, as it implies inferiority and savagery as opposed to the superiority and civilization of the mainstream. For a deeper overview of the troublesome references of this colonial construct, see Schendel and Bal, "Beyond the 'Tribal' Mind-set," 121-39 and also David Hardiman, *The Coming of the Devi: Adivasis Assertion in Western India*, 14-15.

Loaded with interwoven ecological and sociopolitical struggles, these texts aid me in extending my critical scrutiny of the repercussions of (neo)colonial development and privatization on the colonized people's ecosystems and lifestyles, paying ample attention to the ecological ramifications of neocolonial expropriation of communal land. Here, I endorse and build on Maria Mies's and Vandana Shiva's conception of "development" as a "post-colonial project, a choice for accepting a model in which the entire world remade itself on the model of the colonizing modern west" (*Staying* 1). Also, I discuss these texts' portrayal of the endemic problems inherent in such ideologies as global capitalism and imperialism and their ratification of a solipsistic individualism that negates communal unity and identity.

Thus, I explore these texts' representations of the intrinsic interconnectivities among constituencies of environmental degradation, racism, patriarchy, labor, and class. Hence, I problematize development as mainly driven by (neo)colonial impulses, as it here predominantly affects what Antonio Gramsci calls "subaltern classes" or communities within once-colonized regions: India and the Middle East. In her challenging essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Spivak renegotiates the representation of human subjectivity, acknowledging the role of power, authority, and naming in such representations. She defines the subalterns as those outside the colonial elite, including "the lowest strata of the rural gentry, impoverished landlords, rich peasants and upper middle class peasants" (8). Spivak contests the discursive constructions of poststructuralist thinkers such as Michel Foucault and Gilles Deleuze for unsettling the notion that humans are "sovereign objects" (1) endowed with choice and agency over their consciousness. As I discussed in my introductory chapter, poststructuralist thinkers,

Foucault in particular, argue that individuals' subjectivity is implicated in the shifting dynamics of power relations that intervene in their representation, formulation, transformation, and classification. I agree with Spivak that human relations and transactions should not be reduced to mere discursive hierarchies of power, knowledge, and language, but unfortunately this is what is happening in the new world order. Accordingly, the identities and the very existence of "subaltern classes" will be constructed, reduced, and written for them by a superior other, outside of themselves. Spivak juxtaposes the benevolent Western scholar trying to write about the experience of the subaltern to the "philanthropist" colonialist, for both contribute to silencing the subalterns by claiming to represent them.[28]

Because of their rich timber and oil resources and strategic locations, India and the Middle East have suffered waves of (neo)colonial hegemonies. Since the advent of European imperialism, they have been compelled to adhere to a capitalist system that privileges the West as a quintessential model of development, giving it the pretext to dominate the East and exploit its resources to the benefit of multinational corporations and a few elite members who monopolize the means of production in the third world. Arundhati Roy offers a succinct characterization of capitalism as a "light which shines brighter and brighter on a few people and the rest are in darkness, wiped out" (qtd. in Nixon).

More recently, scholars have started employing the term of a "North-South divide" of the globe to redress the socio-economic and political discrepancies between

[28] For a more comprehensive analysis of Spivak's complex, controversial, and famous question of whether or not the subaltern can speak and how the word subaltern is used to refer to various classes of people, see her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" 1-22 and her more recent essay "Moving Devi" in her book *Other Asias.*

the developed countries, known collectively as the North, and the developing countries of the South. Many third-world writers impute the plight of the indigenous people, especially women and the poor who derive their livelihood form communal land, to (neo)colonial development. Devi's *Imaginary Maps* and Munif's *Cities of Salt* are considered together in this chapter because of their focus on the affiliations between environmental racism and sociopolitical, class-based, patriarchal, and racial undertones, foregrounding power as a tangible divide between groups. Indeed, "The political collapse of industrial socialism places the future of the planet in the hands of a capitalist market economy united with other powerful forces—feudalism, patriarchy, colonialism, imperialism, militarism, and racism" (Mellor 38).

Both exemplify displacement in terms of the imperialist and capitalist disruptions endured by indigenous communities because of ecological devastation and its immediate and consequent psychological and cultural clutter. In company with Mahasweta Devi and Abdelrahman Munif, many scholars and writers—including Vandana Shiva, Gail Omvedt, Ramachandra Guha, Aurundhati Roy, Madhav Gadgil, and Nina Sibal—foreground environmental racism as a legacy of European colonialism that "has not diminished in the postcolonial context" (Platt 316). For instance, Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha argue that "British colonial rule marks a crucial watershed in the ecological history of India" (*This Fissured Land* 5). Concurrently, Vandana Shiva highlights the underlying correlations between environmental degradation wreaked by colonialism and patriarchy, proposing a binding link of reciprocal sustenance between indigenous populations, especially women, and the well-being of their environment. Not only do *Imaginary Maps* and *Cities of Salt* demystify unconstructive (neo)colonial

patterns of socioeconomic classifications, but also put forward alternative paradigms that reconceptualize, renegotiate, and transform these models toward an environmentally and socially just future, one that espouses the eco-resistance of indigenous people, particularly women, to a colonial legacy of feudalism and global capitalism. In short, these authors bring all these paradigms together in a complex dynamic tension, one that adheres to a many-sided critique of power configurations that might be identified with postcolonial ecofeminism and environmental justice.

On the one hand, Devi's stories dramatize the subtexts of a loss of access to basic necessities of human survival and stress the correlation between ecological and socioeconomic decline. They provide an ample space for social mobility and formulate alternative forms of eco-resistance. Most notably, Devi's stories usually challenge problematic "representations of decolonization" (Spivak 77), denoting that political independence has not improved the lives of India's adivasis by protecting their productive rights. Rather, their situation has been aggravated since political independence. Here, *Imaginary Maps* levels a trenchant critique of interrelated patriarchal and colonial violence through its metaphoric representation of imperialism and nationalism as a violation or rape. Gayatri Spivak posits that for the subaltern, and especially the subaltern woman, "'Empire' [imperialism or colonialism] and 'Nation' [independence] are interchangeable names, however hard it might be for us to imagine it" (*Outside* 78). Despite independence and all of the (mostly unenforced) laws devised to counteract inequalities in India, the trajectory of land privatization and systematic timber extraction the country assumed after independence still magnifies ecological and socioeconomic injustices. It has impaired the natural base of the survival economy of

large segments of Indian society, especially the adivasis ("tribals"). Shalini Randeria writes, "The entire problem of access to, and use of common property resources, has acquired a new urgency due to the policies of liberalization and privatization introduced by the Indian state under the directive of the IMF and the World Bank" (119).

Unquestionably, the supposed termination of colonialism, beginning in 1947, with the granting of independence to previously colonized countries, didn't automatically guarantee economic and political autonomy, given the extent to which the West still retains control over these nations. Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman maintain that this continued Western dominance, "located in flexible combinations of the economic, the political, the military, and the ideological (but with an over-riding economic purpose), was named *neocolonialism* by Marxists" (3, my emphasis). In line with this assertion, Devi and Shiva postulate that social and ecological inequities persist, or have even worsened, in India, despite independence. Shiva speculates that capitalist "development" has perpetuated an "internal form of colonialism"—colonization within the boundaries of metropolitan nation-state—through landlords, moneylenders, and contractors who cooperate with transnational corporations and the ruling elite to exploit women, the peasants, and nature. According to Shiva, "'Development' could not but entail destruction for women, nature, and subjugated cultures, which is why, throughout the Third World, women, peasants, and tribals are struggling for liberation from 'development' just as they earlier struggled for liberation from colonialism" (*Staying* 2). Through the stories of her adivasi women characters, Devi incisively brings to the fore those internally colonized subaltern communities, particularly women, who should be given their due recognition in the construction of Indian historiography and whose history

has been overlooked for such a long time. For this purpose, she inscribes a counter-discursive sociopolitical space that gives them agency, empowers, and integrates their voices to be heard. What's more, Devi's depiction of her warrior-like female characters links the struggle for environmental justice to gender-based and class-based oppressions.

Concomitantly, Munif's *Cities of Salt* offers a scathing critique of the many forms of injustice in environmental arrangements, calling attention to the paradoxical paradigms of hegemonic logic. It discloses the ways in which the collaboration between the (neo)colonial powers and the local elite has dismantled the ecosystems of the local inhabitants. This ecological collapse goes hand in hand with creating an exploited, toiling working class dependent on precarious wages. Munif portrays a relatively idealistic pre-petroleum, pre-colonial community in which humans exist in harmony with nature, and Devi indicates that pre-colonial adivasis enjoyed more rights and privileges than the postcolonial ones. Like Native Americans, the pre-colonial societies of India and the Middle East coexisted "in approximate equilibrium with their environment—dominated by 'local production for local use'" (Gadgil and Guha, *This Fissured Land* 39). They respected and identified with nature and often spread this principle of subsistence and deference through an oral tradition that fostered a symbiotic relationship with nature. Such communities have only "moderate levels of impact in transforming landscapes and bringing about gradual changes in the composition of biological communities" (39). Concurring with Shiva, Gadgil and Guha argue that "providing refugia (sacred groves, scared ponds, etc.) may then be the most easily perceived and most efficient way of guarding against source depletion" (*Fissured* 23). The significance of nature is embodied in a community's metaphysics, foundations and prohibitions, laws

and cultural myths, and ethics of right coonduct, which normally foster resource preservation and help to avoid ecological disasters. During the colonial period in India, the prodigal exploitation of forests was, according to Gadgil and Guha, the "most important aspect of the ecological encounter between Britain and India"—namely because Britain was in desperate need of teak, Sal, and deodars for its railroads and for building navy ships (*This Fissured Land* 5).

## II

To begin, Mahasweta Devi is a prolific writer and journalist and a persistent advocate for the ecological, sociopolitical, and economic well-being of the adivasis and the sources of their livelihood. Together with Arundhati Roy, Devi is one of only a few bold contemporary Indian writers who have truthfully and polemically represented the indigenous people of India and have chosen "tribals" as the principal subject of their work, though she is not a tribal herself. Devi eschews fetishizing or romanticizing the plight of these tribes because such misrepresentations divert readers' attention from adivasis' pressing problems: lack of access to natural resources, eviction from their land, and political and socioeconomic discrimination and deprivation. Instead, solicitous about the dangers of such subtle idealizations, Devi writes with acute empathy about their lifestyles and the causes of their affliction, coalescing efforts toward a more profound evaluation of the horizons of their ordeals. In general, Devi's writings, speeches, and interviews link human survival with the sustainability of their ecosystem and engage with spiky issues pertaining to the land rights of India's tribal communities, the low caste, and the bonded slaves, negotiating history from the standpoint of the regularly excluded.

When Devi met the adivasis of the Singhbhum region, they made one comment that stands out for its simplicity and stark truth: "When these forests disappear, we will also disappear" (qtd. in Wenzel 127). This unambiguous statement demonstrates that the travail of the fading forests is not merely an ecological impasse. It too pertains to the endurance of entire communities for whom the forest continues to be their home and source of livelihood.

Prior to Western interference in India, heterogeneous, disparate, and scattered adivasi communities were living in the hills and forests in isolation from mainstream India. According to Gabrielle Collu, the adivasis were "dispersed among approximately 420 different tribes living across India, belonging to different cultures, speaking various languages and dialects, engaging in diverse occupations (hunting, food-gathering, settled cultivation, bee keeping, unskilled labor), experiencing varying degrees of assimilation and acculturation" (45). Notwithstanding these disparities, these tribes were bound together by their common concepts of land and forests, which provided the sources of their livelihood and identity. The forests on which they survived were collectively owned, and nobody had the right to prevent others from hunting or cultivation, or even felling some trees to meet some minimal demands. Although these groups have been internally colonized and even discriminated against by mainstream Indians, they enjoyed autonomy and free access to the commons. However, with the advent of British colonial rule, they have lost all these rights. Enacting forest laws aiming to institute privatization and landlordism and as an elaborate system of resource extraction and allocation, British rule dispossessed the adivasis and denied them their customary ancestral rights to the forests, when the colonial agents and their local allies claimed control over culturally

drenched terrains belonging to the adivasis. British rule in India determined not only who was to have access to nature's wealth, but what patterns the biotic systems would take by the time India achieved its independence in 1947, after about two hundred years of colonization. Not only did the British convert vast areas of forests into farming land through "slash-and-burn" strategies to produce profitable revenues, but they also introduced the concept of private property of land in 1793, which differed significantly from pre-colonial days, during which land was held communally and a percentage of the produce remitted to the state (Barlas 32), deeply influencing India's power distributions.

Colonialism has also transformed the adivasis' nature-based economic transactions and thereby the basic underpinnings and foundations of their communities. Jagdish Chandra Jha remarks, "The barter economy was ruthlessly replaced by money economy which the tribals could not handle properly. The traditional divisions or distributions of tribal land were now replaced by a rigid landlord-tenant relationship" (87). These colonial policies have led to catastrophic ecological consequences and made most adivasis parasitic on cash crops for their sustenance. Before colonialism, commodification, privatization, and global capitalism, the adivasis enjoyed harmonious relationships with the forests, levying their toll upon nature to secure the basic necessities of life. Their considerate use of their natural resources has sustained their traditional way of life. On the contrary, motivated by a combination of economic and political interests, the British maintained close ties with the Indian bourgeoisie, landlords, contractors, and registrars and paved the way for them to acquire and retain a highly privileged niche in post-independence India. Hence, colonies were established to capitalize on land revenues, and a capitalist system apathetic about customary transactions was imposed.

Gabrielle Collu points out that the British colonial forest strategy, "meant to provide the necessary timber for shipbuilding and iron smelting, European forests having long been cut down, robbed the adivasis of an important source of livelihood" (47).

By and large, Devi's work is based on extensive research of historical events and topics of social, environmental, and gender-based concerns, documenting the illegal practices of "bondslavery" and the desperation of the landless. Devi observes that she has found authentic documentation to be the finest mode of exposing and counteracting the structures of injustice and exploitation:

> I have a reverence for materials collected from folklore, for they reveal how the common people have looked at an experience in the past and look at it now. . . . To capture the continuities between past and present held together in the folk imagination, I bring legends, mythical figures, and mythical happenings into a contemporary setting, and make an ironic use of these. (qtd. in Yarrow 156)

Hence, she recreates legendary luminaries and events and reintegrates them into current politics and subverts it. In the conversation between Devi and Gayatri Spivak that introduces *Imaginary Maps*, Devi declares that the "bonded labor system" is not an Indian social ill; rather, it was introduced by the British, who "created a new class, which took away tribal land and converted the tribals into debt-bonded slaves" (xii). Though it is illegal to practice the officially abrogated bonded labor in modern-day India, many "tribals" are still subjected to this form of "neoslavery." Projecting dynamic images of dislocation, starvation, and discrimination that disrupt any sense of complacency with the status quo, Devi's work grounds the intersecting lines between unbalanced timber

extraction and the continued manipulation of adivasi women. Vandana Shiva and Maria Mies theorize that the cumulative displacement of the planet's ecosystems, wrought by the double forces of colonialism and global capitalism, has "made homelessness a cultural characteristic of the late twentieth century" (*Ecofeminism* 98).

Any cursory appraisal of the compendiums of Devi's extended oeuvre will identify protest against injustice and celebration of struggles and mettle of women as predominant themes in her writing. For instance, her first published book, *The Queen of Jhansi*, portrays a fictional indomitable queen who holds out intrepidly against British domination in the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, fighting oppression. Several of her other early works, such as *Amrita Sanchay* (1964) and *Andhanmalik* (1967), are also set during British rule and focus on the aftermath of British domination of India. Further, Devi's 1977 *Rights of the Forest*, a meticulously researched novel on the lives and struggles of Birsa Munda and the famous Munda Rebellion against the British in the late nineteenth century, reflects the tumult of Munda tribal people against the local British authorities, the missionaries, and the Indian bourgeoisie. Susie Tharu and Ke Lalita attribute to this novel the unique style "associated with Devi's nature work, in which different registers and dialects of Bengali jostle each other in a text crowded with echoes and voices rarely heard in mainstream literature" (235). The publication of *Rights of the Forest* has actually established Devi's reputation as a leading novelist in Bengali and, with her work increasingly translated into other Indian languages, as one of India's foremost writers.

Her work, which the critic Manabendra Bandyopandhyay describes as "savage, fecund, and irresistible," also deals with the agrarian movements of the late sixties, which began in the Naxalbari region in North Bengal and quickly spread into other parts of

India. As Devi declared in an interview with Spivak, the Naxalite movement of the late sixties and early seventies has a great impact on her writing. She notes that this movement comprises the first key event that she felt "an urge and an obligation to document" (qtd. in Paul 118).[29]

In her introduction to *Womb of Fire*, Devi explains that the impetuses behind the eruption of the Naxalite movement linger unimproved, connoting that the mortification and abuse of the adivasis continue until today. She laments that "Rural India has the appearance of an enormous graveyard. A responsible writer, standing at a turning point in history, has to take a stand in defense of the exploited; otherwise, history would never forgive" (qtd. in N. Iyer 205). Because of her wide-ranging work, Devi has won many prizes and was commended for her "compassionate crusade through art and activism to claim for tribal peoples a just and honorable place in India's national life" (Paul 112).[30]

Devi is well-informed about the raison d'êtres that force the adivasis down into bonded slavery and the divisive impact of the (neo)colonial principle of "divide and conquer," frequently employed to keep them in their place. In fact, she promotes the unity of the adivasis as an effective apparatus to end the exponential cycle of heredity bond-slavery that will convert all the adivasis into bond-slaves. Given this awareness, Devi endeavors, throughout her writing and activism, to undo the divisions created among these tribes by colonialism and the passage of time. She carves a common ground that prioritizes strong bonds between various tribes, so that they can join hands, given

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[29] For a thorough analysis of the roots of this movement, see especially Asok Kumar Sarkar's *NGOS, The New Lexicon of Health Care*, 111-13.

[30] Devi won the Padma Vibhushan, the second highest civilian award from the government of India, in 2006; the Magsaysay Award, the Asian equivalent of the Nobel Prize, in 1997; and the Jnanpith Award, India's highest literary award, in 1996.

that, in the eyes of the government, they are all adivasis. Callous toward the adivasis, the Indian government, which has usurped the natural (or historical) rights of the adivasis over their communal resources, has repeatedly applied the colonial principle of "divide and conquer," forging "this disunity, so that you [adivasis] remain divided" (xvii). Rather than homogenize these heterogeneous groups, Devi gives them agency to consolidate their broad identities as "tribals" and abnegate the system that targets and stigmatizes them.

Attesting to these grievances, the first story of Devi's *Imaginary Maps*, "The Hunt," set in the village of Kuruda which is known for its giant Sal trees, exhibits the ramifications of leveling the Sal forests and the ensuing depletion of both resources and epistemologies embedded in these forests. The narrator explicates, "Once there were animals in the forests, life was wild, the hunt game had meaning. Now the forest is empty, life wasted and drained, the hunt game is meaningless" (12). Together with Tehsildar Singh, the city broker and exploiter of the tribal forest who represents the mainstream, the newly fledged post-independence bourgeois landowner Banwari continues the process of deforestation, which goes in one breath with patriarchal oppression. Given the maltreatment of the indigenous women and their forests, "The Hunt" presents an alternative form of competent resistance for both women and the forest under the siege of a feudal system initiated by the British and perpetrated by neoliberal global capitalism. For instance, alongside the British timber plantation in Kuruda, Mary Oraon, the self-assured and affable protagonist of the story, is the product of Anglo-Australian colonization in India: "Once upon a time, whites had *timber plantations* in Kuruda. They left gradually after Independence. Mary's mother looked after the

Dixon's bungalow and household. Dixon's son came back in 1959 and sold the house, the forest, everything else. He put Mary in Bhikni's womb before he left" (2, emphasis in original). Vandana Shiva proclaims that when the British colonized India, they primarily arrogated its forests:

> Ignorant of the wealth of knowledge of local people to sustainably manage the forests, they displaced local rights, local needs, and local knowledge and reduced this primary source of life into a timber mine. Women's subsistence economy based on the forest was replaced by the commercial economy of British colonialism. (*Staying* 61)

In a similar vein, the corrupt, Machiavellian outside contractor Tehsildar falsifies, cheats, and bribes in order to heap more profit from communal forests he has no right to cut down. As a symbol of a larger capitalist and patriarchal system, obnoxious and sexist Tehsildar fetishizes both Mary Oraon's body and the forest as commodities of commercial and sexual consumption. He chases, lusts after, and attempts to rape Mary, but she eventually succeeds in resisting his sexual advances and bypasses a potential rape—the nastiest crime in "tribal" culture. She also guards her relationship with Jalim, the Muslim man she *chooses* to marry. In fact, she maneuvers and takes advantage of the occasion of Jani Parab—a tribal hunting festival in which women are allowed to go hunting in the forest, drink, and dance—to capture Tehsildar and "make her biggest kill" (*Imaginary Maps* 17). This festival assists in Mary's metamorphosis from a potential victim into an enforcer of justice—from a prey into a "hunter." Devi elaborates that the tribal hunting festival in Bihar "used to be the Festival of Justice. After the hunt, the

elders would bring offenders to justice. They would not go to the police. In Santali language it was the Law-bir. Law is Law, and bir is the forest" (xviii).

Mary's affirmative and proactive reprisal against sexist arrangements, which subverts the foundations of patriarchy and contradicts the dominant stereotypes about the docility and submissiveness of female adivasis, has aroused much tribal opposition to the illegal deforestation that is robbing them of their basic resources without fair compensation. Interestingly, Mary subverts capitalist patriarchy through a tribal symbolic ceremony that "has been done in that area again and again" (xviii). However, the significance of Mary's act of resistance has allegorical dimensions that go beyond asserting her individual independence in both love and revenge on objectification and commercialization of the bodies of tribal women and tribal forest. Mary's fight for liberty correlates with and invokes adivasis' struggle for justice. In Devi's words, Mary "resurrected the real meaning of the annual hunting festival day by dealing out justice for a crime committed against the entire tribal society" (xviii). In essence, Tehsildar's attempts to violate Mary coincide with his overfelling of the forest; Tehsildar is portrayed as a "beast" that should receive an appropriate punishment for these vicious crimes. Here, Mary's story functions as a framework of the larger history of her village, one in which colonialism is portrayed as a metaphoric rape of both tribal people and their land. Clara Nubile construes "The Hunt" as "an allegory for the exploitation of tribal forests and for the issues of rape of tribal women by non-tribals. Tribal women are often harassed, molested, and even raped by policemen or other Indians" (98). When away from their communities, tribal women are demeaned and discriminated against, thereby becoming an easy target of brutal policemen who repeatedly victimize them.

Devi's second story, "Douloti the Bountiful," negotiates ecological degradation vis-à-vis the literal erosion of the tribal woman's body after years of bonded prostitution and convulsion, emphasizing that tribal women bear the burdens of dispossession in our current world system. Thus, the allegorization of "maldevelopment" and imperialism as "rape" is made more explicit as a result of the myriad images of bonded prostitution and slavery. Briefly, through the ordeals of its female protagonist Douloti, the daughter of a tribal bonded laborer, who is subjected to multifarious physical and psychological abuses, "Douloti" excavates imperative and much-neglected aspects of female tribal history in India. It draws strong parallels between two forms of interrelated oppressions. The first is class-based and revolves around male adivasis' enslavement as embedded in the story of Crook Nagesia, Douloti's father. The second—exemplified by the tragic tale of Douloti—is gender-based, and it foregrounds female bonded prostitution.

The misfortunes of Douloti and her father expose the oppression of caste, class, and gender in all their nakedness; they uncover the triple burden of these systems that banish the adivasis from modern India. On the one hand, Crook Nagesia is treated like an animal and is bound to till the land of his bourgeois arbiter in order to pay back debts he should not have owed in the first place: "Munabar Singh Chandela has put the axle of the carriage on the shoulders of a human being [Crook Nagesia] and is screaming his abuse, shaking his whip in the air. Ganori tries to lift the cart by the strength of his shoulders. Trying, he falls on his face. The axle sits hard on him" (34). On the other hand, female adivasis, such as Douloti, lose control not only over the sources of their livelihood, but also over their own bodies. When men fail to repay their debts, women pay them with their bodies "to quench the hunger of male flesh" (61). As commodities, the bodies of

these women become an apparatus for fulfilling their masters' sexual and economic cupidity. At this cutting edge, tribal women are caught in transactions that strip them of any sense of sovereignty or dignity, as their value is determined by their utility for prostitute owners and traders.

Both tribal forests and women are tainted by rape perpetrated by the capitalist usurers so as to repay the debts of men. In her preface to *Imaginary Maps*, Devi explicates that there are special areas in Hyderabad, India, where women are packaged and sold in the name of marriage: "Parents flock there because they are so poor they cannot give their daughters food and clothing. . . . Decolonization has not reached the poor. This is why these things happen. Women are just merchandise, commodities" (xx). Needless to say, these girls belong to bonded labor or *kamyia* households. Much like the *kamyias* who flock into Hyderabad's markets to get rid of their daughters, Douloti's father is bound to sell her to Paramananda Mishir, the neocolonial agent who possesses pecuniary and political power to turn adivasi women into bonded prostitutes, to repay a loan of 300 rupees he has borrowed from his master. To quote Spivak, "the only means of repaying a loan at extortionate rates of interest is heredity bond-slavery" (82). Like the story of Mary, the tale of Douloti renders the body of adivasi women and forest as an arena for all kinds of violation and struggle, a space for sociopolitical, economic, and patriarchal supremacy.

Here, Devi underscores the role of loans that the adivasis borrow from the moneylenders in order to secure rudimentary needs in hunting them, given the absence of governmental institutions and prophylactic laws for tribal people. These purposely and sometimes forcefully granted loans accumulate rapidly, thereby jeopardizing the adivasis

into bonded labor for generations. In reality, the adivasis are compelled to seek these loans because of their decreasing revenues resulting from deforestation and ever-escalating taxation. These nihilistic arrangements have accelerated and persisted to this day and have turned the adivasis into inexorable debt-slaves and landless agricultural workers or *kamiyas* for the bourgeoisie who dictate the economic structures of modern India. In Gadgil's and Guha's words, "Mixed forests were replaced by single-species stands of a handful of commercially valued trees, such as teak, sal, and deodar," divesting the adivasis of the forest yields on which they survive (*Ecology and Equity* 10).

Near the beginning of the story, Devi poses this question: By what strength does Chandela, the village's moneylender, force adivasis down into *kamiya* (proletariat or slavery)? The old *kamiya* women's response to this query takes the form of a song or poem, in line with their oral tribal cultural tradition:

By the strength of loans, by the strength of loans.
Two rupees ten rupees hundred rupees
Ten seers of wheat five of rice
He is king by the strength of loans
He is the government by the strength of loans. . . .
He has become the government by lending money
And we have become kamiyas
We will never be free. (22)

On a local level, the domestic moneylenders ransack the tribals through loans. On a global level, the IMF, World Bank, and WTO, which cater the interests of transnational corporations, dominate the world on the same basis. As the agents of the richest

countries on earth, particularly the U. S., the IMF and the World Bank channel loans to poor nations only provided that they privatize their economies and allow transnational corporations a free access to their raw materials, markets, and labor, forging a new kind of domestic slavery. Through incurring crippling and exponentially expanding debts that perpetrate hereditary bonded slavery, the third world will wind up surrendering all its assets and resources, given that these loans are usually offered to illegitimate, irresponsible regimes. In short, these loans generate an endless cycle of economic dependency and subsequently political, cultural, and social instability. Irrefutably, the local agents of capitalism are the outcome of a bigger international system of global capitalism, so both are part and parcel of the same materially driven institutions.

Given the hereditary or cyclical nature of these loans that place subaltern women at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder, Douloti has first "taken the yoke of Crooks' bondslavery on her shoulders" (73). Owing to this interminable debt, Douloti is not only forced down into bonded prostitution; she is also detached from the place to which she belongs. Douloti's compulsory partnership with Latia, her spiteful rapist, mimics the colonial relationship between India and Britain in the shadow of neocolonialism: Latia's physical and mental dismemberment of Douloti's body correlates with Britain's infringement on and rule over India. It can also be construed as a metaphor of capitalist disruption of the lands and cultures of the adivasis. Toward the end of the story, Douloti's battered body is pictured as dysfunctional and disfigured after long years of rape and assault: "The body hollow with tuberculosis, the sores of venereal disease all over her frame, oozing evil-smelling pus, the whores come to hospital only to die" (91).

As a rule, oppressors—be they moneylenders, landowners, colonialists, or rapists—employ an alluring rhetoric of liberation, development, and justice in a gesture to make foreign intervention and rape appear unobjectionable or even requisite. In this regard, Latia's rape of Douloti is committed under the façade of marriage; moneylenders' "bondslaving" of *kamiyas* is branded as development, and Britain's rule of India is essentialized as a "mission of civilization," of course, from a victimizer's point of view. For the wronged, rape (fake marriage in this case), bonded labor, and colonization encompass mortifying and unnatural conditions that trigger the resistance and aggregation of these trampled groups. The disfigurement of female adivasis is emblematic of the havocs wreaked on the ecosystem and the succeeding exhaustion of the tribal people's forest-based endowments, both through colonial policies and state-implemented development. Pining for possessions and power, the upper class and the ruling elite have converted an intricately biodiverse ecosystem into a monoculture for timber cut for capital. In Shiva's words, "the desacralization of nature entailed the violation of nature's integrity by violating the limits which had to be maintained for the resurgence and renewal of nature's life. . . [L]imits are recognized as inviolable and human action has to be *retrained* accordingly" ("Resources" 211, emphasis in original). To Shiva, "the transmutation of nature into a resource goes hand in hand with alienating the ancient rights of people to nature as a source of sustenance" (113).

In an overtly pessimistic tone, the death of Paramananda does not purge or even undermine the recurring mutilations of Douloti's body. By the same token, the ebb of British rule over India did not guarantee equality among the members of Indian society; rather, as I noted earlier, decolonization coincided with the rise of the neocolonial

bourgeoisie who proved more heavy-handed than the colonizers in enslaving and consuming the adivasis and their land. Paramananda, the embodiment of the British Empire, is succeeded as well by his son Baijnath, a more despicable moneylender who exemplifies the emerging gentility after independence.

This internal aggression meted out to India's adivasis by their fellow Indians prompts them, in the first place, to question the existence of India as an "independent" nation. In "*Frankenstein* and Devi's *Pterodactyl*," Spivak theorizes that "the worst production of poscoloniality [is] the Indian who uses the alibis of Development to exploit the tribals and destroy their life-system" (64). Corresponding to the Harrani proletariat who has lost all trust in their emirs in *Cities of Salt*, the adivasis refuse to be part of a prejudiced national system that continues the pillage of their natural endowments and human rights to the advantage of the upper class. Here, commemorating Indian independence, Mohan Srivastava, a local schoolmaster, has inscribed the map of sovereign "mother" India in the clay courtyard of the school, with the telos of "enlightening" his students about the political geography of India and Independence Day. When the schoolmaster returns the following day to the site of the map with his students, they glare, appalled and terror-stricken, at Douloti's blemished body:

> Filling the entire Indian peninsula from the oceans to the Himalayas, here lies bonded labor spread-eagled, kamiya-whore Douloti Nagesia's tormented corpse, putrefied with venereal disease, having vomited up all the blood in its desiccated lungs. Today, on the fifteenth of August, Douloti has left no room at all in the India of people like Mohan for

> planting the standard of the Independence flag. What will Mohan do now? Douloti is all over India. (93)

The fact that Douloti's ravaged corpse is stretched "all over India" awakens Indian society to the horrors committed in the name of nationalism and development and casts doubt on India's independence. Paradoxically, the map, which is conjectured as a pictogram of unity and celebration for independence, is, as a matter of fact, disgraced by Douloti's tormented body. Thus, it turns into a paragon of dejection and dishonor for India's tribal people whose position worsened in post-independence India. Further, this graphic illustration of Douloti's disfigured body engraved on the map of India functions as a reminder of the interlacing lines of patriarchy, colonialism, and nationalism and shows the extent to which the adivasis are othered and persecuted by these systems. The concept of having a map to embody the political unity and integrity of a country is, according to Graham Huggan, actually a colonial legacy as well. In his article "Decolonizing the Map," Huggan states,

> Physical (geographical) maps are shown to have operated effectively, but often restrictively or coercively, in the implementation of colonial policy . . . [The] rhetorical strategies implemented in the production of the map, such as the reinscription, enclosure and hierarchization of space, which provide an analogue for the acquisition, management and reinforcement of colonial power. (115)

Here, the map signifies the confinement of the colonized to artificially demarcated structures and borders. Douloti's marred body over the map of India designates her denunciation of any (neo)colonial pacts, so the last scene in "Douloti" can be deciphered

in terms of resistance. Spivak unravels Douloti's act as interrupting hegemonic national schemes, making "the agenda of nationalism impossible" (*Outside* 113).

Devi's third and longest story, "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha," concerns the experiments of Puran, a benevolent middle-class journalist who is challenged to understand and represent indigenous tribes when he cannot quite comprehend their language or their ontologies and doctrines. The acquaintance of Puran, the protagonist, with the adivasis evokes Devi's firsthand experience and unswerving alliance with these depleted tribes. Devi's direct contact with the adivasis triggers her fervent and unflinching commitment to publicize and ameliorate their quandary. She offers an insider's insight into their worldviews, one in which the non-adivasis are "the others."

Salvaging or establishing adivasis' identities, legitimacy, and voices, Devi's "Pterodactyl" constitutes the non-adivasi "other" as ignorant and indifferent to tribal ethos, thereby bringing the issue of representations into question. More precisely, Devi does not polarize tribal-mainstream variables into stringent, incompatible constituencies that essentialize their "other" as naturally inferior, minimizing their mutual interdependence and commonalities. Instead, she sheds immense light on the root causes of tribals' insecurity and unrest: the commercialization and privatization of their commons, eviction from their land, and subsumption or erasure by mainstream culture. The tribes that are not expelled from their land are forced to slavishly cultivate cash crops that substitute indigenous subsistence plants and animals. To pay the high taxes imposed on them or to keep up with the newly emerging institutions, peasants started to overcultivate and overcrop the land. In Madhay Gadgil's and Guha Ramachandra's words, "Mixed forests were replaced by single-species stands of a handful of

commercially valued trees, such as teak, Sal, and deodar" (*Ecology and Equity* 10). This new system dispossessed them of an inexhaustible, renewable supply of diverse biomass through heavy and uncontrolled demand for industrial and commercial wood, requiring the overfelling of trees.

Ironically, the asymmetrical liaison between the mainstream and the tribals is framed within colonial-like sacrileges and mechanisms. The tribal territories are linked to the rest of India by a British-initiated and government-completed transportation system. The development of this system has neither brought comfort to the adivasis; nor has it satisfied their minimal daily needs. On the contrary, this "neocolonial" project was implemented to facilitate the uneven deforestation for commercial timber, which has extremely disrupted the equilibrium of nature. If this trend continues, as Puran puts it, "this aggressive civilization will have to pay a terrible price" (196).

Much like "The Hunt" and "Douloti," "Pterodactyl" associates tribal people's socioeconomic and cultural penury with the distortion of their ecosystem. More significantly, Devi equates the loss of the commons to the systematic deletion of tribal people's "collective" identity, lifestyles, and sense of community. Clara Nubile argues, "Tribal people consider the land as an extension of the self and also as their mother. Land is very important for their burial cemetery, therefore, the loss of land is undoubtedly the loss of self" (103). "Pterodactyl" conjures images of a time when the land and forests of the adivasis were teeming with exuberance of all forms of life, only to bemoan their ensuing enclosure and overcutting that made them "vanish like dust before a storm" (119). The total attrition of the forests and land is further emphasized in the image of the extinct prehistoric pterodactyl, which denotes the level of marginalization the tribal

people are subjected to under the new world system. Here, the pterodactyl becomes an emblem of tribal lifestyles, which are dwindling under the onslaught of global capitalism. Puran's encounter with the pterodactyl is characterized by "mystery, incomprehension, and non-communication" (Savolainen 319).

"Douloti" and "Pterodactyl" establish Devi's gloomy vision of the irreconcilable tribal and non-tribal divisions, given the appalling denouement of Douloti and the extinction of the pterodactyl, symbols of tribals' fading ways. In this fashion, dialogue or compromise with either emblem becomes almost impossible. In Devi's words, "The tribals and the mainstream have always been parallel. There has never been a meeting point. The mainstream simply doesn't understand the parallel" (*Imaginary Maps* x). Evoking Wendell Berry's revisionary impulses of love and responsibility, Spivak suggests that love becomes the only feasible option to counteract this dearth of communication through what she calls "ethical singularity"—ethical responsibility and accountability for human and nonhuman entities.

During his stay in Pirtha, Puran concludes that the adivasis are besmirched and squandered for the sake of civilization and progress. Harisharan, a government official in the despoiled area of Pirtha, tells Puran: "We have not brought scientific health care to the tribals. If something happens beyond the limits of their knowledge, they think of mysterious reasons, divine rage, the witch's glance, and so on" (123). Much like Native American and Euro-American incongruent values and worldviews discussed in my preliminary body chapter and the bedouin and capitalist outlooks explored in the second half of this chapter, the adivasis and the ruling elite have contradicting perceptions of nature. Devi stresses that such disparities stem from their impulses and codes. On the

one hand, the adivasis rely on the forest as their source of supplies and security and levy their toll upon it to satisfy vital needs; the ruling class, on the other hand, denudes land to hoard wealth and power and capitalize on the sources of the adivasis.

Interestingly, whenever Devi struggles to convey the plight of the adivasis, to make it tangible to American and transnational readers, she compares their affliction to that of Native Americans, claiming that the tribals of India share a legacy of environmental racism with other indigenous communities around the world. In this respect, she transnationalizes the struggle of the adivasis and situates it within a larger context of colonial history, modern-day global capitalism, materialism, and corporatization. The ensuing text is revealing: "entire [Native American] tribes have been butchered. Their land has been taken away. . . I say to my American readers, see what has been done to them, you will understand what has been done to the Indian tribals" (*Imaginary Maps* xi). The Indian tribals are unable to defend their land, culture, and resources against bumptious contractors and government officials who see nothing in their forests but, in the words of Homi Bhabha, "unbounded, unpeopled possessions" (144). Devi identifies these tribals who are forced to relinquish their land and receive little or no remuneration as the "suffering spectators of the India that is traveling towards the twenty first century" (*Imaginary Maps* xi).

Devi's "Pterodactyl" exposes the absence of mutual and respectful interactions between tribal and non-tribal populations, which leads to irreconcilable differences between them. Unfortunately, they communicate only through a rigid system of transportation that not only forestall any genuine reconciliation between these groups, but also romanticizes and penetrates into tribal land and lifestyles. "Pterodactyl" shows that

politicians and reporters, even well-intentioned ones like journalist Puran, usually fail to convey the genuine reasons behind the plight of the adivasis to the public and to find solutions to the quandary of the tribal people of Pirtha. Puran concludes that any settlement should strive to bridge the chasm between both civilizations, so they should communicate and respect differences, as "their two worlds are different, after all" (159). Puran negotiates the angst of India's subaltern communities regarding the sacrilege of nature. Commenting on the unprecedented scale of devastation inherent in "modern civilization," Puran reports, "By comparison with the ancient civilizations, modern progress is much more barbaric at heart. We are defeated . . . We have slowly destroyed a continent in the name of civilization" (195). Modern civilization verges on materialistic views of land as a dead entity and thus indifferent to the agony of the other.

All in all, Devi's *Imaginary Maps* sketches the fight of adivasi women against colonialism, neocolonial development, global capitalism, and patriarchy. It serves as an avenue to the history and modern position of the Indian tribals, attesting to the failures of post-independence India in attending to their demands. In an interview with Archana Masih, Devi spells out that the adivasis are in need of free access to communal resources, education, healthcare, roads, "livable huts, and drinking water." In short, they require proper development, not "getting evicted from their land like anything." This contention designates that Devi is not a foe of development per se; but rather, she essentializes propitious development as one way to rectify the conditions of the adivasis. Therefore, she opposes neoliberal global capitalism for putting pressure on developing nations to halt their development projects, either in the name of protecting the *global* environment or in the name of freer trade. Such blueprints straddle and disregard national borders and

erode national sovereignty. Encumbering the development of the adivasis keeps them in their disadvantaged position, and the same principle applies to the relation between the North and the South. In *Radical Priorities*, Noam Chomsky questions the grounds the North has "to permit, let alone encourage, development in the south that would increase the demand for scarce sources and limit their own access to and control over them" (105). Walter Fernandes and S. Anothony Raj sum up the situation of India and its tribal populations:

> Modernization and economic development have thus continued the process initiated by the foreign colonialist, of further strengthening the already powerful. . . . Like the rich countries that use the global South only as a supplier of raw materials without giving it the opportunity, the upper classes in India also treat the tribals and other forest areas in India only as suppliers of raw materials for the enrichment of other classes. The people of these regions are treated only as a source of low priced raw material and cheap labor. (312)

In another model of influential eco-resistance, the Chipko Movement coordinated and systematized the efforts of indigenous women who came out of the Gandhian movement in Charwal hills to save village forests from logging for profitable use, rather than subsistence. This nonviolent campaign for land reform and forest protection energized women who wrapped their bodies around trees to stop bulldozers from cutting them. This movement quickly accomplished talismanic status in ecofeminist writings, and references to it are ubiquitous in ecofeminist books and anthologies. Many distinguished ecofeminists—including Joanna Macy, Patrick Murphy, Petra Kelly, Irene

Diamond, Gloria Orenstein, and Carolyn Merchant, Vandana Shiva, and Ynestra King—have written about the Chipko movement and lauded its historic impact on ecofeminism. For instance, in her essay "Feminism and Ecology," Ynestra King utilizes the Chipko to cement her hypothesis that "women have been at the forefront of every historical, political movement to reclaim the earth" (81). When the loggers were sent to cut trees in various places in India, one of the Chipko activists avowed, "Let them know they will not fell a single tree without the felling of us first. When the men raise their axes, we will embrace the trees to protect them" (qtd. in King 81). In a similar manner, campaigners against the James Bay Hydroelectric Project and the Narmada Dam Project refused to evacuate the affected villages and fields.

Vandana Shiva presents the story of the Chipko movement as a prototype of women reclaiming the "feminine principle" in resistance to patriarchal development. The Chipko becomes a symbolic canvas of a discourse about third-world women that paints and renders them as "natural environmentalists" or "ultimate ecofeminists," reducing them to the single image of an idealized peasant woman who is attached to "nature" through her daily, lived activities of food gathering and preparation, child-rearing, and support of village communities. It is important to consider the social subtexts of this troublesome representation of women's interaction with and advocacy of their environment.[31] Critics identify problems with Shiva's idealized relationship between indigenous women and environmental justice. According to these scholars, the circulation of a particular interpretation of the Chipko as an ecofeminist movement shows that it can be variously read as a peasant or populist movement, or as an environmental

[31] This emphasis on the existence of an intuitive association between women and nature reflects a racial essentialism designed to bypass the gender essentialism of claiming all women to be biologically in sympathy with nature.

movement that is not necessarily feminist. Melissa Leach notes that these images of women as "natural environmentalists" have influenced and informed environmental policies and practices.[32] Cecile Jackson warns against the emergence of an emphasis on women-centered environmental projects which tend to accede to traditional gender roles of women as natural and rarely involved women in decision-making processes.

This idealized correlation between third-world women and nature pigeonholes them as capable of performing only perfunctory tasks that have to do with farming. As I noted in my introductory chapter, these ideologies assume that only indigenous women are capable of finding solutions to our environmental dilemmas, reconstituting the dichotomy between the "rational" West and the "passionate" non-West, privileging the former. Also, this type of discourse is uncritical about the extent to which portrayals of third-world women as having shared constituencies about sustainable resources, for which they are inherently inclined to collectively mobilize or cooperate. This popularization of the notion of women, especially nonwhite ones, as natural environmentalists is arguably a product of the cultural ecofeminist tendency to embed this blatant biological determinism, homogenizing communities and neglecting the ways in which caste, gender, or ethnicity might actually inform people's use of natural resources as well as their interaction with modernity. More problematically, such normalizations—which assume an inherent desire on the part of women to perform land-related tasks and eschew social, political, and economic engagement—ossify and confine the roles they can play.

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[32] The conceptualization of third-world women as key agents of primary environmental care, users, and care-takers of the environment at the local level has informed policy and practice. Women were seen to have responsibilities which make them closely dependent on and give them distinct interests in natural resources, especially as sources of food and fuel. This, in turn, was deemed to give women deep environmental knowledge and experiential expertise.

III

Abdelrahman Munif is a prolific novelist, critic, and Marxist sociopolitical activist whose fiction and journalism shed light on the dynamics of the oil industry in the Arab World and on the bedouin communities and traditions that have been largely co-opted and even eradicated by oil-drilling, neoliberal capitalism, and land enclosure. Born in Amman, Jordan in 1933 into a trading family of Saudi origins, Munif obtained a Ph.D. in petroleum pricing and marketing from the University of Belgrade, a hub of the non-aligned movement. He started writing after he resigned his membership of the Baath Party[33] in Baghdad in 1965 in disapproval of the party's tyrannical practices. During his oil industry career, Munif served as an advisor in the Syrian oil industry and as an oil economist in Baghdad; he also edited the monthly periodical *Petroleum and Development* published in Baghdad. He wrote his first novel, *The Trees and the Assassination of Marzouq* (*Al-Ashjaar wa Igtiyaal Marzouq*, 1973), at the age of forty, when he resorted to literature as a more complex tool of resistance and modification. In Munif's words, "The defeat of 1967 pushed me toward the novel not as a means of escape but of confrontation" (qtd. in Hafez 47). In an interview with Iskandar Habash, Munif commented:

> My great gamble was in politics, but after I experimented with political activism, it became apparent that the available political methods were

[33] The Baath (also spelled Ba'ath or Ba'th translates as rebirth, resurrection, or revival) Party was founded in many Middle Eastern countries in the 1940s. The party sees in Pan-Arabism—the unity of all Arabic-speaking countries from the Atlantic Ocean to the Arabian Gulf—a strong base for a superpower, given the wealth and diversity of these states. Marxism and Socialism are mistakenly associated with the Baath Party, but, in reality, Baathists have suppressed and brutalized communists because of their disparities, especially regarding the distribution of wealth and power. Historically, when the Iraqi Baathist Party first assumed power, it persecuted thousands of Iraqi communists and managed to maneuver all of these so-called partners out of power. For more on the history and reality of the Baathist Party in the Middle East, see Amirahm, *The United States and the Middle East*, 266-70.

> insufficient and unsatisfactory. As a result, I started the search for a formula to connect with others and to express their concerns and the concerns of the historical period and the generation . . . substitute one tool with another.

Munif's heavily politicized *The Trees and the Assassination of Marzouq* features the story of two strangers who meet on a train in an *unnamed* Arab country. The first Ilyas has lost his gardens in a gamble and his wife in childbirth; therefore, he relinquishes his homeland and moves to the city in search of hired labor. There, he serves as a waiter, hotel worker, and street vender in hopes that a life with a better woman and more beautiful orchards is still feasible. However, his failure and ultimate demise embody a potent metaphor of the collapse of post-oil Arab communities that have sacrificed their integrity and way of life. The other fellow traveler Mansur is also deracinated, but because of political reasons—the Palestinian *nekbah* (catastrophe) of 1948. As an Arab intellectual endeavoring to salvage and reconstruct history based on the authority of the common people, not that of the elite, Mansur is critical of the Arab regimes that celebrated this "victory." In 1975, Munif published *East of the Mediterranean*, which revolves around torture and imprisonment, a recurrent theme in Arabic literature. The novel takes place in an *unnamed* Arab country where a corrupt tyrant arrests and persecutes all those challenging his policies and forces them to recant their political views. And in 1982, he and the renowned Palestinian writer Jabra Ibrahim Jabra co-authored a pioneering novel entitled *A World without Maps*, which traces the transformation of a tranquil fictional town with communal and tribal bonds into a

frenzied, metropolis-dominated urban hierarchy. This city, whose topographical features verge on Baghdad, has descended into cultural denudement and social uprootedness.

All in all, Munif produced a considerable range of work, including fifteen novels, interviews, and newspaper columns, but *Cities of Salt*—the longest novel in modern Arabic literature—established his reputation as one of the most gifted contemporary Arab authors, both locally and globally. Peter Theroux's faithful, sensitive, and excellent English translation of *Cities of Salt* has made it much more widely read, both in the Arab World and worldwide. Without a doubt, Theroux was faced with an extremely challenging task, given that Munif's prose is highly-wrought, sophisticated, and riddled with ambiguities and culturally specific idioms, presenting a formidable challenge to non-native speakers of Arabic. I read the novel in both Arabic and English and didn't come across any errors or mistranslations; rather, all the aphorisms and expressions are conveyed in plain, equivalent English, sacrificing nothing in readability.

Experienced in the industry and politics of petroleum—a knowledge vastly manifested in his fiction—Munif excavates the underlying insecurities instigated by petro-capitalism on the environmental, psychological, and sociopolitical configurations of post-oil Arab countries. As a result, covering "what in real time are the years form 1933 and 1953" (Hafez 56), Munif's epic masterpiece faithfully reproduces, more than any other novel written in the Arabic language, milestones and episodes in the history of the Arab world and the effects of oil on Arab societies, also more comprehensively and accurately than the work of all social scientists put together. *Cities of Salt* demarcates a long period of contemporary Arab history beginning in the twentieth century and uncovers the malevolence embedded in global capitalism on Arabs' cultural identity and

ecological well-being. In order to discern the dynamics of the past, present, and future of the contemporary Arab world, Munif speculated that one needs to study oil and that "Petrofiction"—a term coined by Amitav Ghosh to classify literature about the oil industry—provides the most potent instrument.

Although *Cities of Salt* is the most ambitious Arabic and even international work to deal with the history of oil, its tensions, and the subsequent drilling for it in the Arabian Gulf, it is certainly not the first work to do so. A number of Arab writers and scholars have expended substantial effort to elucidate the genuine motivations behind the American presence in the Middle East, as it is directly tied to oil and as it has shaped their perception of their identity, the new global order, and sense of security. In fact, Mahmoud Taimour's novel *Shamrock* (1958) marks the first effort of bringing to light the question of oil exploitation by Western corporations. The events of Taimour's *Shamrock* take place on a fictional island aptly named "Oil-land," and it shows that oil revenues are mostly channeled to transnational corporations and Western companies. It affirms that these corporations propagate Western standards and values, retain Western undertones, and interfere in Arabs' affairs. There are references to oil and the desert in other Arabic fictive texts, including Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's *In Search of Walid Masoud* and Ghassan Kanafani's *Men in the Sun*, but oil is not the cornerstone of these cultural productions.

In *Cities of Salt*, Munif weaves a heart-wrenching story of the metamorphosis of a whole society and the upheavals after the arrival of the American oil corporations in Wadi al-Uyoun (the valley of natural springs) and the subsequent decimation and exile of its oil-scarred community after the destruction of their ecosystem. At the outset, Munif links the bedouins' fluctuating demeanor, expectations, and beliefs to natural undulations,

which orient and shape their social, epistemological, and cultural perceptions. For instance, during the years of abundant water, Wadi al-Uyoun's people, who seem blithe and contented, would overexert their insistence that "all travelers stay there longer. . . Their generosity would reach the point of extravagance . . . but during the years of drought" (4), they become cantankerous and introverted. This parameter extends to transform customary Arab communities into "exploited and oppressed populations, and nomadic tribal rivalries into centralized police states" (Hafez 54). *Cities of Salt* also traces the monumental reconstruction and expansion of the port city of Harran (literally the scorching desert in Arabic), whose ancient courses and landmarks are reduced to rubles in order to make room for oil installations.

As a story of a people's displacement from their land, Munif's *Cities of Salt* chronicles the gradual and ultimately radical metamorphosis of both people and land caused by the tidal wave of oil and American domination, negotiating the complex social and political dimensions of modern Arab states and drawing a vivid picture of the realities of post-oil Arab society. The novel does not have a conventional protagonist; rather, its main character is the aggregate of the newly created working class and the Harrani community, who are part and parcel of the lower class. Issa Boullata explains that the absence of a central character in *Cities of Salt* is not "because the individual is irrelevant or insignificant, but because the aggregate of individuals calls for fictional attention and interest at this juncture of historical circumstance in Arabia."

Given that fact, the novel teems with characters who contribute to the progress of the plot and who perform a specific role and move from the foreground to the background or completely disappear afterward. Some minor and abruptly sketched

characters can be immediately forgotten after they disappear, while others have a crucial impact on the course of events. Some characters leave their imprint on the progress of the plot. Take, for example, Miteb al-Hathal (whose first name translates as the troublemaker), the community's ancestral patriarch who instinctively suspects the Americans and who, even after his exodus from Wadi al-Uyoun, remains a phantom, a prophetic, spectral figure appearing sporadically to strike terror into those collaborating with the Americans and multinational oil companies. Thus, it is conjectured that he is behind any act of resistance (terror from the Americans' standpoint). He is held responsible for setting fire to the Americans' tents in H2 and the eruption of a proletarian revolution after the dismissal of twenty-three of the company's workers and the assassination of Mufaddi al-Jeddan at the behest of Johar, the truculent commander of the Desert Army. Mufaddi is murdered because his threatening logic and ideology has nettled the Americans and the ruling elite who have become extremely oppressive of any contradicting views. In a parallel vein, Mufaddi al-Jeddan, Harran's only healer before the arrival of the capitalist doctor Subhi Almahmalji, embodies the forces of the old and has a key role in the novel, both before and after his death. His memory and specter assist in solidifying the community's self-identity and mobilize the lower class to confront torment and demand justice. Some protesters "swore" that "they saw a phantom shaped like a man flying above their heads, and it looked exactly like Mufaddi al-Jeddan" (616).

In this way, the novel becomes a harmonious panorama in which vignettes build up in a dramatic manner. However, the main characters share the common denominator of beginning a journey toward the unknown, a labyrinth or a maze. Although Miteb is

not a heroic figure, he poses as the most ambivalent and sophisticated character in the novel. On a whim, he defies the Americans' and their self-interested collaborators' philanthropic rhetoric of coming to Wadi al-Uyoun to look for water and bring wealth and prosperity to its people, enunciating that it is a self-serving act. He declares, "They certainly didn't come for water—they want something else . . . They said, 'Wait, just be patient and all of you will be rich!' But what do they want from us, and what does it concern them if we get rich or stay just as we are?" (29) The people of the wadi, especially Miteb, look askance at the foreigners' habits of going to "places no one dreamed of going" and collecting "unthinkable" items (30). They enquire "about dialects, about tribes and their disputes, about religion and sects, about the rocks, the winds, and the rainy season" (31). The Americans' declared intentions of coming to the desert to aide its people crumble at the threshold of real-life situations—the formation of a "rightless" class of workers and the devastation of the wadi's ecosystem. The most striking examples entail the wiping out of Wadi al-Uyoun and Harran and the enslavement of the local inhabitants because of the oil discovery.

Indubitably, the various colonial discourses share a number of characteristics and tend to be laden with such rhetorical ruses as bringing light, relief, democracy, and modernization to the colonized, making any protest against these marvelous concepts appear absurd. Belying the colonizers' evil purpose, this decoying form of rhetoric facilitates the implementation of the U. S.'s imperial policies behind the façade of helping the local inhabitants. Like Miteb, other central dissenters against "development" and capitalism—including Miteb's wife Wadha, the fortuneteller Najma al-Mithqal, Umm Khosh, Mufaddi al-Jaddan, Ibn Naffeh, and Khazna Al-hamad—voice their

apprehension and skepticism toward the Americans' ulterior motives, concurring that they want oil no matter what. These characters wind up exiled, incarcerated, murdered, or driven to madness because of their resistance to environmental and social injustice.

Moreover, the Americans' discourse essentializes materialism (capitalism) as a desirable principle while it relegates communal and sustainable modes to the realm of the problematic that must restructure and reshuffle in order to be acknowledged in the new world order. This demand conceals assimilative paradigms in which the lifestyles and ethos of the local inhabitants are made incompatible with the real motives of a "modern" colonizer. As an impediment to "development," the local inhabitants have to relocate, abandon their values, and consume the same colonial technologies for which they are not prepared. These social class stratifications originate from the locus of power (the Americans and their upper-class allies) to a weaker periphery (the lower class), institutionalizing inequalities as well as hierarchies of power relations. Alert that this seductive rhetoric aims to mesmerize the local people and impede any resistance or at least objection to the American intervention in the desert, Miteb seeks to dissuade the emir from paving the way for the Americans and to rally countervailing forces to defend the wadi. Ania Loomba defines colonialism "as the conquest and control of other people's land and goods" (8). In light of this commonsensical definition, the oil companies, with their ardent concern with seizing the oil-rich land, can only be seen as imperialist forces, playing a "midwifery" role at the birth of global capitalism.[34] Simply, without colonialism, the transition to capitalism could have never taken place. The present-day U. S. oscillates between colonialism and neocolonialism, which intersect.

[34] I object to and refrain from using euphemistic expressions such as "discoverers," "explorers," or "oil experts" to describe American capitalists in the Middle East; rather, I stress that this is another form of colonialism or imperialism using the alibis of development, democracy, and freedom.

That is to say, the U. S. resorts to military action if the "others" oppose its global dominance.

Munif satirizes the oxymoronic concept of *imposed* freedom or the human rights rhetoric that almost always accompanies global capitalism and the American adventures in the Middle East, one that is actually devised to sanction the luxury of certain groups to the detriment of others. More than ever before, the local inhabitants of Wadi al-Uyoun and Harran are dehumanized, objectified, foreclosed, and even rendered invisible to the colonizers whose prime concern is making profit irrespective to human and nonhuman wretchedness. In one of the most revealing scenes, Miteb

> moved and stopped and cursed and gazed at everything as though he would never see the place again . . . he flinched every time the Americans pointed back in his direction, thinking at first that they were pointing at him. Then, he realized that they were pointing instead to the land he was walking on; that he was no more than a landmark to them. (103)

Before the arrival of the oil companies, Miteb is a venerable tribal leader who enjoys a special status among his people, given his lineage as a member of a family famous for being the "fiercest worriers against the Turks; they had never slept in the same place twice and had turned the Sultan's Road into Hell on earth" (109). The invocation here is that as his forebears defended the oasis against the Turks, Miteb will strive to guard it against the Americans who are adamant about ransacking it in their oil frenzy.

Munif is one of a small number of Arab and even international writers who have dared to extensively and polemically discuss the underpinnings of the oil industry, the American presence in the Middle East, and "petro-despots." To a great extent, *Cities of*

*Salt* pays considerable attention to the environmental wreckage and oil extraction as tied to issues of neocolonialism, tyranny, and global capitalism, not to mention the traumatic communal transformation accompanied by the discovery of oil. After a visit to post-oil Wadi al-Uyoun, Miteb's son Fawaz laments that "There was no trace of the wadi he had left behind; none of the old things remained. Even the fresh breezes that used to blow at this time of year had become hot and searing in daytime" (Munif 135). The passage above reveals the extent to which the wadi is tainted and transformed that even the resuscitating "breezes" have become scorching and dry due to environmental impairment.

Using a comparable mechanism, cowing the Harranis who are too seen as a barrier to the process of oil drilling to sell their oil-rich land, Ibn Rashed's envoy petrifies and terrorizes them with much the same damage inflicted on Wadi al-Uyoun: "There isn't a single person or house left there—everyone had to leave. They were all scattered under the stars . . . Here, in Harran, some of the *workers* are originally from Wadi al-Uyoun" (253, my emphasis). Through deception and coercion, communal and private land has been usurped and concentrated in the hands of the Americans and a few elite people who fail to perceive any spiritual or cultural essence in land beyond its pecuniary value. Once more, Ibn Rashed, the Americans' local assistant and Miteb's antithesis, slyly orders one of his workers to apprise the Harranis that their communal land belongs to the government. It is the "government's privilege to take and give out land and that they couldn't eat or drink land" (252). Therefore, they had better surrender their land and receive some compensation, because their land will be ultimately annexed.

In addition to expounding the ramifications of flattening and altering the Eden-like oasis of Wadi al-Uyoun into an oil-metropolitan, *Cities of Salt* underlines the

consequences of living in Harran's degraded, disconnected environment. Echoing Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Devi's *Imaginary Maps*, Munif's *Cities of Salt* exposes what happens when the ecological and sociocultural systems necessary for the maintenance of human welfare "fall apart." In *Street Fighting Years*, Tariq Ali queried Munif about the meaning of the title of his masterpiece, and Munif clarified:

> Cities of salt means cities that offer no sustainable existence. When the waters come in, the first waves will dissolve the salt and reduce these great glass cities to dust. In antiquity, as you know, many cities simply disappeared. It is possible to see the downfall of cities that are not human. With no means of livelihood they won't survive. Look at us [Arabs] now and see how the West sees us. The 20th century is almost over, but when the West looks at us, all they see is oil and petrodollars. (58)

In essence, the forceful dispersal and displacement of the inhabitants of the wadi to Harran redefine their communal ties and their relationship with nature. Thus, *Cities of Salt* renders a trenchant critique of class oppression and offers an outstanding example of ecological refugees whose plight stems from imperial havocs wreaked on their ecosystem, which is replaced with "mud structures heaped up against one another" (395) and afterward "tall symmetrical buildings" that bear connection to the nature (Ali 57).

In contrast to the common stereotypes of bedouins as sinister harbingers of bloodshed and banditry with no sense of place, Munif epitomizes the inhabitants of Wadi al-Uyoun as deeply ingrained in place: "The al-Aoun clan, to which Jazi al-Hathal and his father Miteb before him had belonged, had been sown in this place like the palm trees" (10). On the one hand, they view the wadi as a sanctuary warranting pride, a place

that constitutes their identity and survival. On the other hand, they behold "money and possession with haughtiness and sometimes outright scorn" (Munif 8). In his classic tome *The Condition of the Working-Classes in England in 1844*, Friedrich Engels holds that for the working class, "money is worth only what it will buy, whereas for the bourgeois it has an especial inherent value, the value of a god, and makes the bourgeois the mean, low money-grabber that he is" (125). It should thus come as no surprise that, oblivious of the wadi's cultural and spiritual resources that have accumulated throughout history and infatuated only with the oil underground, outsiders deem indigenous land a commodity that can be owned by and sold to multiple owners.

Indeed, the fictional Arab communities, as portrayed by Munif, are altered from largely egalitarian bedouin communities governed by the laws of nature and the elders into a consumerist hybrid plutocracy or oligarchy in which voices contradicting the official rhetoric of the ruling elite are brutally silenced and freedom of expression is suffocated. Modernity celebrates individualism, pragmatism, commercialization, privatization, and labor. Yet, as I will explore in more detail later, it inadvertently generates a number of intriguing potentials for novel subjectivities, new associations, socioeconomic change, and an alternative modernity, as people consolidate and organize in opposition to oppression. To Hafez, the arrival of modernity in traditional societies in the Middle East is "inseparable from the proliferation of tyranny," and the oil riches are "evil feeding corruption, greed, and human weakness. We watch the crushing of the life of the desert, with its freedom, independence and dignity, under the wheels of a repellent juggernaut" (54). In pre-petroleum Wadi al-Uyoun, dialogue, not violence, is favored to

settle disputes among the people, and the common people and their emirs are required to convene when the emirs wrong.

The confiscation of these rights with the rise of capitalism demonstrates that systematic development inaugurates repressive, despotic modes of authority with the environment and its inhabitants, thereby curdling their liberal aspirations into disillusionment. In an interview during the Gulf War of 1990-1991, Munif complained that "oil becomes a damnation. In 20 or 30 years time, we shall discover that oil has been a real tragedy for the Arabs, and these giant cities built in the desert will find no one to live in them. . ." (qtd. in Nixon). Unlike the pre-colonial tribes featured in Devi's fiction, the pre-oil communities of Munif's *Cities of Salt* cannot be easily identified with a specific Arab state. Bedouin tribes constitute a high percentage in most Middle Eastern countries. Though these dispersed communities have a great many commonalities, they also have tensions and discrepancies, depending on where they live. Munif doesn't mention the name of the terrains contested in his novel, but there are many references to the Arabian Peninsula. Being a non-bedouin Arab, I find it difficult to pass any generalizations on the bedouin tribes of the Middle East, as they share a lot in common with non-bedouin communities. The word "bedouin" in Arabic refers to dessert-dwelling Arab ethnic groups that live a basic life on grazing sheep, goats, camels, and trade with other tribes and communities. *Cities of Salt* shows the devastating impact of capitalist modernity and technology on such communities. As Munif puts it, these "people were poor, but they were happy with the life they lived and praised it extravagantly" (8).

At the heart of *Cities of Salt* is the problematic alliance between the Americans and the local elite, whose mutual interests converge under the auspices of the new world

order. It then displays the struggle of the local inhabitants against their puppet political leaders as well as the avarice of oil companies wrought by the Americans, designating that these petroleum behemoths capitalize at the expense of the local inhabitants. Besides, the ruling elites pave the way for the American oil companies, which come for their own profit, to dominate and exploit the people and their environment. The rulers conspire to allow them a free hand in return for unimaginable wealth.

As a result of this multiple dilemma, the common people have to resist not only the invaders, but also the totalitarian political leaders who brought them and granted them the pretext to abuse the locals and rob them of the sources of their subsistence in the name of development. In "The Hidden Lives of Oil," Rob Nixon argues that the dominant story of petroleum links the U. S. "to the Middle East in a matrix of mutual, volatile dependencies." As a harsh critic of this lopsided, inequitable "relationship" between the U. S. and the oil countries of the Middle East, Munif anticipated that this neocolonial "partnership" will lead to wars and desperate acts of terror against U. S. interests in the Middle East. The most glaring example of the volatility of these bonds driven by oil gluttony between the U. S. and the Middle East is the rise and fall of Saddam Hussein, Iraq's infamous dictator whose political and economic aspirations obstructed the U. S.'s domination of Iraqi oil. Saddam's egregious human rights record was manipulated to justify the incursion into Iraq, distract public attention from the arcane motives behind the war, and ensure American dominance over the world's richest-known oil reserves in the Middle East. As a rule of thumb, Saddam's human rights record surfaced *only when* he posed a threat to multinational oil companies and stopped

cooperating with the imperial powers that, in the first place, helped build up his military and economic might.

These powers managed to keep his human rights abuses and misapplications off the media's agenda, but when he proved a formidable obstacle to the dissemination of neoliberal global capitalism, they revealed all his heinous crimes to the public. I am not, by any means, suggesting that Saddam was an angel, but there are more ruthless leaders whose human rights records are made absent from the media's reach, either because they are in line with Western policies or because the West is not interested in their oil-poor regions. By now, all of the Bush Administration's justifications of the war on Iraq have been invalidated. Another case I feel compelled to mention here is the blind eye that the West turns to Israel's unspeakable massacres of the Palestinian people with the U. S.'s unquestioning approbation and complicity. The list can be expanded, as there are many examples that I do not have enough space to address them all,[35] but one won't fail to pull the strings together and discern the double standards and injustices bedeviling the new world order that places unconditional demands on the "Other." Munif observed that the U. S., "obsessed with oil fever and the need to control it, has gone much too far in protecting regimes and individuals unworthy of protection" (qtd. in Nixon).

In its parallel juxtaposition of customary, pre-capitalist and post-capitalist Wadi al-Uyoun and Harran, *Cities of Salt* documents the shocks, ambivalences, and anarchies that gripped the inhabitants of these villages after the arrival of U. S. oil companies. It

[35] Examples of pragmatic rather than principled advocacy of democracy, human rights, and social justice are too many to list. The American imperialistic involvement in Latin America (Chile, Venezuela, Cuba, and Nicaragua), Asia, and the Arab-Islamic world are but a few. While Iran's and Syria's human right record makes news, that of other, more ruthful regimes is overlooked—of course, as long as these regimes conform with American policies and interests. Ironically, the CIA overthrew, in 1953, Iran's democratically elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh and replaced him with the Shah, a dictator. Also, the democratically elected Salvador Allende of Chile was overthrown by a brutal coup by pro-American General Augustto Pinochet.

laments the price paid in human and nonhuman lives for oil-hungry machines and tallies the cultural, epistemological, ideological, and class-based quarrels between the forces of the old and the forces of the new. Ammiel Alcalay explains that in *Cities of Salt*, we can see '"the march of progress' as the new usurps the old through the development of 'modern' institutions: traditional healers give way to quack doctors and hospitals; tribal henchmen to uninformed soldiers and armies; customs and justice are replaced by arbitrary decrees and rule of 'law"' (135). Yet this novel should not be read as a "threnody" for tradition, as Munif frequently critiqued unconstructive conventional practices, and he saw in productive development and modernization a vehicle to rid Arab countries of the yoke of foreign domination.

As such, he, much like Devi, did not oppose modernization, mineral wealth, development, and democracy; rather, he was critical of how these systems and concepts are obfuscated to further subdue the oppressed masses. Moreover, despite his largely idealistic portrayals of the pre-petroleum community of Wadi al-Uyoun, Munif acknowledges, especially at the beginning of the novel, the tremendously patriarchal structure of its families. He simultaneously exposes the heightened objectification[36] and exploitation of women in Western culture, reversing the negative stereotypes of misogyny that have been solely ascribed to Arabs by viewing patriarchy as a universal phenomenon. Western women are portrayed as targets of the male gaze, the embodiment of social codes within a context essentially androcentric and male privileging; they are reduced to sex objects whose purpose is to satisfy male sexual desire. The Arabs' shock

[36] In *The Sexual Politics of Meat*, Carol J. Adams defines objectification as that which "permits an oppressor to view another being as an object. The oppressor then violates this being by object-like treatment: e.g., the rape of women that denies women freedom to say no . . . This process allows fragmentation, or brutal dismemberment, and finally consumption" (47).

at the colonialists' objectification of women reached its climax "when the last boat came ashore with one man and seven women. The women were reclining around the bushy-bearded, hairy-chested man, who fondled, smacked and leaned over them one by one and put his arms around two at a time" (217). Munif's description of these women who are dehumanized and turned into fetishized objects through exaggerated cosmetics and styling allows for voyeurism and reveals the much pressure on them to view their bodies as packaged items. These women become the sensuous objects of male gaze by both Western and non-Western men. Ibn Rashed pejoratively says, "These women are like sheep—white and soft and naked, and nothing else" (226).

More to the point, Munif negotiates the characteristics of post-oil (postmodern) societies that exhibit patterns of discontinuity, complexity, chaos, "perspectivism," and fragmentation, illuminating the disarrays wrought by environmental and social racism. In one of the most poignant scenes in *Cities of Salt*, Munif delineates the butchery of the wadi by the mad machines in predatory terms:

> The tractors attacked the orchards like ravenous wolves, tearing up the trees and throwing them to the earth one after the other . . . After destroying the first grove of trees, the tractors turned to the next with the same bestial voracity and uprooted them. The trees shook violently and groaned before falling, cried for help, wailed, panicked, called out in helpless pain and then fell entreatingly to the ground. (106)

Here, the novel approximates the physical violence needed to transmute humans and nonhumans into commodities. Witnessing the preliminary stages of the wadi's "butchery" by the "maddened machines," powerless and defenseless Miteb gives an

anguished cry, mounts his Omani camel, and disappears into the hills. In *The Arabic Novel,* Roger Allen hypothesizes that Miteb's "disappearance and the intermittent reported sightings of him from the community become symbolic of the disappearance of an old way of life and of suspicions regarding the motivations of the foreign visitors" (93). In Hafez's words, *Cities of Salt* "can be read as a huge canvas of the brutalities of modernization and its devastation of customary ways of living" (54). The social change of the wadi's community is manifested in their reaction to Miteb al-Hathal's pathetic desertion. Shockingly, Miteb's departure is barely noticed in the shifting context of all matters: "Only a few people saw him leave. They were busy and afraid, watching the maddened machines uproot the trees and level the earth and topple everything . . ." (108).

After Miteb vamooses the wadi, his son Shaalan stays there to work for the American oil company and ask for compensation for the destruction of their natural supplies. Miteb's own family suffers from vicissitude because Shaalan's stay in the wadi indicates his acquiescence in the new status quo and prophesies more divisions among the inhabitants of the wadi. In this new era, he is christened "Company Shaalan" or "American Shaalan" instead of Shaalan the son of Miteb al-Hathal, to sever him from his origins and heroic roots. The narrator wonders, "How is it possible for people and places to change so entirely that they lose any connection with what they used to be?" (134) Also, the Americans give ancient places new names, calling the stations surrounding Harran H1, H2, and H3. The collective identity of the wadi's inhabitants has become more individualistic and pragmatic, where people no longer care for one another. Fawaz, Miteb's son, is dismayed at the mistreatment, fragmentation, and torment of the workers

in Wadi al-Uyoun: "It seemed to him that each of these men lived by himself without any connections to the others around him" (137).

Tantamount to the other subaltern communities depicted in the works covered in this dissertation, the inhabitants of Wadi al-Uyoun and Harran are deprived of any compensation for trampling their houses and palm orchards, draining their fountains and wells, and degrading their grazing land and ecosystem as a whole, though Ibn Rashed has evasively promised them better dwellings and big sums of money. In another instance, the oil company in Harran intractably refuses to pay any compensation for Mizban's death because, according to its manager, "the law is the law, and rules are rules," and because the company's legal department decrees that "the company is neither responsible nor liable, since the transfer of the workers to the company's responsibility was not effected until after the decease" (356).

After the impairment of its ecosystem and means of subsistence, Wadi al-Uyoun witnesses new confrontations based on the nature-culture binary oppositions instead of the communal holistic configuration that has the power of foiling divisions embedded in culture-nature determinisms. These struggles take place in urban settings that are structured by forces of class-based social splits, racism, and capitalism. Accordingly, *Cities of Salt* traces the rise of two belligerent classes; the change in mentality owing to new social and economic circumstances; and the arrival of profit-hungry contractors, doctors, big corporations, and transportation companies, along with capitalists such as Hassan Rizaie, Ibrahim al-Saad, and Mohieddin al-Naqib. At this turning point, the novel spotlights the conflict between the local inhabitants and the working class, on the one side, and the ruling elite, the newly affluent, and the Americans who embody the

institutions of the new, on the other. Contemplating the ecological and sociopolitical cleavages and wreckages accentuated by capitalism, Ibn Naffeh, Harran's religiously politicized leader who explicitly reviles anything associated with the Americans, sees in modernity and technology (the telescope and the radio, Rizaie's bribery to ingratiate himself with the emir) rivals to his religious authority. He pontificates on matters of grave importance and pronounces that the "Americans are the root of the problem, and what's happened now is nothing compared to what they have in store for us" (578).

Time and again, Munif declared that domestic and international injustices made for a fertile environment for the rise of fundamentalism and counter-violence, prognosticating a mounting sense of antagonism toward the West, especially among the ostracized. Amitav Ghosh remarks, "If the Spice Trade has any twentieth-century equivalent, it can only be the oil industry," with a major difference: the production of literature, as the "oil encounter has produced scarcely a single work of note" (75). Ghosh ascribes this scarcity of "petrofiction" to the entanglements of the oil industry and the political unrest to all parties involved. He argues that *Cities of Salt* details a confrontation between two fundamentally disparate worldviews. In the first, the emir sits in coffee-houses,

> where everybody had time for everyone else and no one was ever so ill that they needed remedies that were sold for money, and a universe in which Mr. Middleton of the oil company holds their livelihoods in his hands, where to the newly arrived Lebanese doctor Subhi al-Mahmilji charges huge fees for the smallest service, where the "petro-despot" emir

> spies on the townspeople with telescope and needs a cadre of secret police to tell him what they are thinking. (84)

The burgeoning complex, heterogeneous society is strictly divided into pyramid-shaped hierarchal structures. At the top of the pyramid is a small state-protected, property-holding class of ruling elite and aristocrats who literally own the means of production. At the very bottom lie the disenfranchised proletarians who are merely toiling machines in the service of the upper class. Overall, the recent "developments" (building a port and a pipeline), the rapid expansion of Harran, and the lately arising institutions demand a great deal of menial labor. To meet the demand for workers in the oil industry, the uprooted bedouins are coaxed with rewards into toiling for the Americans and the emir. This conversion of the local inhabitants into exploited laborers is facilitated after they are made to sell their land and camels—their means of transportation and source of living. This process of livelihood destruction and desperation has led to a growing supply of workers who were self-employed. Deprived of the constituents essential for their survival, the bankrupt, poverty-stricken shepherds, farmers, traders, and shopkeepers seek entry into the urban labor force to live on wages from the oil company. At any rate, their animals and plants cannot survive in this toxic environment, so they are placed in an irreversible situation.

In conjunction with converting the local inhabitants into travailing, sweating workers, there has been an influx of workers who never "hesitate to accept any work" and who feel "intimidated to the point of despair" (207). I find Engels's *Condition of the Working Classes in England in 1844* pertinently applicable to *Cities of Salt*, given these two books' focus on class struggles in degraded urban environments, albeit their different

cultural and historical contexts. Engels contends that before the rise of capitalism, these toiling workers "did not need to overwork; they did no more than they chose to do, and yet earned what they needed" (2). The workers in Harran have migrated from various neighboring and far-off places, permanently expanding the size of the working class, which has become, through the process of "proletarianization," subservient to the bourgeoisie. According to Engels, "the worker is, in law and in fact, the slave of the property-holding class, so effectually a slave that he is sold like a piece of goods, rises and falls in value like a commodity" (79). He also adds that "the proletariat has no other choice than that of either accepting the conditions which the bourgeoisie offers him, or of starving, of freezing to death, of sleeping naked" in the scorching desert (76).

Ultimately, the company builds a purely industrial, capitalist city populated only by workmen who are huddled and cramped in "barracks hastily constructed with wood and sheer metal" (290). The workers are told that these are provisional camps, and, in a short while, "the Arabs will have houses built for them just like the ones the Americans have" (291). As it happens, the workers' dwellings linger in the most depressing and filthy conditions, lack cleanliness and convenience, and are incompatible with family life. As Karl Marx puts it, "It is true that labour produces wonderful things for the rich—but for the worker it produces privation. It produces palaces—but for the worker, hovels. It produces beauty—but for the worker, deformity" (*Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* 88). Also, Harran's arid, polluted environment is suffocating to its long-time residents, but it is much unhealthier and disheartening to the later settlers; it filled their "chests with a strangling oppression from the very time of their arrival there" (244). The drastic ecological and atmospheric change in Harran has unpalatable effects

on the workers, especially the ones uprooted from Wadi al-Uyoun, who are not accustomed to such a harsh environment or drudgery: "The people accustomed in former years to the slow advent of the summer, heralding its own arrival with rising heat and humidity, were surprised by this summer's early assault" (374). After the company's complete obliteration of the ecosystem, Harran witnesses a drought, "searing winds, and tumultuous sand storms" that it has never seen before, mixed with dirt that almost covered the whole city.

Even the nights that are usually mild and soothing in their coolness have become grim and heavy this year. The workers are, in Engels's words, "drawn into the large cities where they breathe a poorer atmosphere than in the country; they are relegated to districts which . . . are worse ventilated than any others; they are deprived of all means of cleanliness" (97). Under such suppressive structures that split the world into knowers and objects of knowledge, and proletariat and bourgeoisie, and because of the stark disparity between the workers' living conditions and those of the Americans, the Harranis feel systematically plundered and divested of their autonomy, dignity, and humanity. Therefore, they demand a commendable position on the grid of power relations. The Americans live in air-conditioned enclaves erected behind barbed wires with gardens and swimming pools, while the Arabs, despite all the oil revenues, commerce, and abundance, are callously forced to live in broken, suffocating, and fetid hovels. This increasing sense of prejudice prompts the counter-resistance of these subordinated groups: Injustice and discrimination often backfire and engender protests.

What's worse under this hegemonic capitalist system—which deepens the chasm between local beneficiaries and the masses shattered and subdued by oil—is that workers

face the risk of layoff, loss of resources, and starvation. Basically, the oil company can dismiss its employees when machines take over or when they are no longer needed without any penalties or without endangering its revenues. Marx exposed the way a product becomes a "commodity" and then a "fetish." The manufacturing of a commodity, in Marx's view, comprises a process of blindness to the real producers, and I would also add the real raw material. As capitalism commodifies its products, it then objectifies its producers and even its consumers. The production process is no longer based on need, recognition, and usefulness. Rather, it focuses on the product and suppresses the laborer by giving him or her wages that do not correspond with the exorbitant price a product is sold for, but according to fixed predetermined wages, presupposing that the laborer has no right to control the product. These arrangements are sanctioned by dominant governments and global corporations that favor neoliberal policies and free-market solutions to global finance, trade, and poverty reduction. Receiving the news of his discharge from the company, one of the workers decries: "They just threw us out without giving us a reason, as if we had no rights" (586). The swelling unrest of the Harranis and their growing disgruntlement with the vulnerability of their position, along with their subjection to the most dreadful brutalities, have reached their pinnacle with the murder of Mufaddi al-Jeddan and the laying-off of twenty-three employees from the company after the pipeline between wadi al-Uyoun and Harran is completed: "When the news of Mufaddi's murder spread, their resentment rose to the surface; they felt unnecessarily, intolerably oppressed" (596). The murder of Mufaddi and the firing of twenty-three employees from the company after the pipeline is finished constitute the instantaneous impetus behind the workers' strike at the end of the novel.

Yet the workers' anger has accumulated through time, especially since they are subjected to the most repugnant physical and psychological abuses at the hands of the Americans and the emir's soldiers, who hurl imprecations at those who defy their "authority." Hence, they are placed in the most revolting position where they march through the town in protest against the Americans and their allies.

Grippingly, Mufaddi's death goes beyond an individual's death, as he is the most conspicuous epitome of the forces of the old and is a symbol of the strife of the lower class. Mufaddi "had never worked for money and did not hide his contempt for it, nor did he trade his services for favors. He got extremely angry when anyone offered to pay him, no matter how much or how little" (547). The workers' chagrin is further augmented by the interrogation, fingerprinting, and classification they are required to undergo earlier in the novel. Also, the tragic death of Mizban during his service to the company and the humiliation of his brother Hajem have provoked the workers to take action with little fear of reprisal or arrest. These incidents aside, the constant vituperating and flouting of the workers, embittering them with adversities by incarcerating them in newly created jails (establishing a surveillance culture), and forcing them to overwork drive them to revolt against the bourgeoisie. At this stage, rebellion becomes the only language the class that plunders them so mercilessly understands. In Nixon's words, "subjects had less and less to lose and soon began to lose all fear."

In response to the workers' rejection of the company's decision, Johar instantly resorts to violence, ordering his troops to scourge them severely and "Break their bones. Curse their grandfathers and have no mercy" (583). In hopes of curbing the revolution and mollifying the workers' conflated dissenting voices into one protest, Johar attempts

first to convince the workers who are not thrown out to not join the revolt, as it is not of their business. Still, the workers "smashed the gate, tore up the notices, and destroyed the bulletin board. . . . Juma tried to escape from them. . . . but they tied him to the cement gatepost and left him there after taking away the whip" (586), the symbol of authority over the working class. Fused into one voice and led by two of Miteb's sons, the protesters demand the reinstatement of the unduly fired workers and an investigation to find Mufaddi's murderer. The marchers' chants of resistance are loud and rhythmical:

Your blood, O Mufaddi, is not forgotten. . . .

Stone by stone, we constructed,

Inch by inch, we built the pipe. . . .

Our rights are everlasting, they are ours.

With our blood and sweat we will achieve them! (596-97)

Because they are consumed with sorrow and anger, the workers confront their oppressor. They question and refute the systems that cherish the bourgeoisie yet victimize them:

> Why did they have to live like this, while the Americans lived so differently? Why were they barred from going near an American house, even from looking at the swimming pool or standing for a moment in the shade of one of their trees? Why did the American shout at them, telling them to move, to leave the place immediately, expelling them like dogs? Juma never hesitated to lash out with his whip when he found the workers in "restricted areas.". . . The Americans were never satisfied with anything but constant work. (595)

Engels comments, “If any one wishes to see in how little space a human being can move, how little air-and such air!-he can breathe, how little of civilization he may share and yet live, it is only necessary to travel hither” (53).

As less and less of the old life remains and as cultural traditions are irretrievably subsumed, obliterated, or co-opted by hegemonic forces, a new sense of solidarity emerges among the workers who settle in Harran and configure a new home and community as a result of petro-capitalism. The “unhomed” workers, to borrow Homi Bhabha’s term, become aware of their oil-inflicted deficiency of rights, homelessness, and disadvantaged position, so they, as a group with largely common interests and experiences, start forming coalitions and coalesce to counterbalance this trend of injustice and baneful development. Hence, a more complex “hybrid” alternative tradition of modernity that critiques capitalist modernity becomes indispensable to a Marxist struggle claiming common impulses and a cause of action and resistance.

Manifold positions of resistance are generated in exigent circumstances of exploitation and displacement, and some are much more conservative and competent than others. Take, for example, the genuine empathy Miteb develops with Umm Khosh as a result of his own experience with losing power and social status, after the advent of the Americans. This association between Miteb and Umm Khosh stems from their shared silence and rejection of unsettling realities. Umm Khosh refuses to believe that her only son Khosh will never return to Wadi al-Uyoun, and Miteb resists the Americans’ intervention in the desert, though they are authorized by the emir. Of course, this is not the only motive behind his unbending eco-resistance to the Americans and their capitalist allies, but it is a prime factor. Miteb is the only one “who kept his old feelings toward

Umm Khosh or even grew more sympathetic to her. He made sure to be near her most of the time to protect her from harm, to keep the children away and to save her from the collapse. . .” (63). There are many references to this allegiance between Miteb and Umm Khosh, where Miteb’s “melancholy,” instigated by environmental and social racism, is linked to Umm Khosh’s grievances and lamentations at the unexplained evanescence of her only son. The people of the wadi reiterate that Miteb has “got just like Umm Khosh—you cannot reason with him” (58). Both share a sense of loss and belittlement driven by dissimilar, albeit interconnected, dynamic tensions: imperialist land usurpation and enclosure and loss of a dear family member.

Another model of mutual struggle against capitalist modernity is the alliance forged between the two hybrid truck drivers, Akoub and Raji Abu Aqlein, who obtain employment as a result of the emergence of petro-capitalism in Harran. Once sworn enemies and rivals, Akoub, a spectral figure in the novel, and irascible Raji formulate an alternative tradition of cooperation against a new adversary: multinational tycoons. When they first arrive in Harran, Raji hates and envies Akoub and regards him as his rival. In the early phase of petro-capitalism, there were a large number of small-size corporations and businesses competing with one another in the market. Alvin So states that “as capitalism developed, the number of capitalists has become smaller because of the inherent dynamics of concentration and centralization of capital” (24). First, the ever-expanding markets and the need of technology have induced corporations to boost their production. Conversely, the sheer competition in the market has plummeted many small businesses, such as Raji’s and Akoub’s that have become the target of takeover by Hassan Rizaie’s and Mohieddin al-Naqib’s corporations, into bankruptcy and liquidation

and hired labor. This process of capitalism leaves us with a largely dwindling rich class and an ever-expanding poor one, as the middle class completely evaporates. Essentially, as "corporations devour one another, there is a massive concentration of ownership in the hands of the bourgeoisie" (So 24).

Some other positions of resistance and consolidation include the unsuccessful partnership between Hajem and his uncle, referred to as "the old bedouin" throughout the novel, to oblige either Ibn Rashed, who skulks into every place for fear of being held accountable for Mizban's death, or the oil company to pay the due compensation for Mizban's death, with the latent sympathy of all the employees with their case. A more conservative pattern of resistance prompted by capitalist modernity integrates the vigorous solidarity among Khazna al-Hassan, Mufaddi's skillful assistant, Mufaddi, and Ibn Naffeh. As the embodiment of unswerving tradition and religious fundamentalism, these aggressive characters become aware of their insecure place on the grid of power and realize that their means of survival are devoured by forces of capitalist modernity, so they become much more conservative, totally rejecting and demonizing the forces of the new, even the positive aspects of modernity. In fact, Khazna and Ibn Naffeh use Mufaddi's death as a pretext for mobilizing resistance and igniting antagonism toward the Americans and their elite allies. Ibn Naffeh declares, "It was the Americans who killed Mufaddi—they're the whole reason, they are the root of the problem" (578). Still, the most pivotal and prominent coalition is the one formed between the company workers and the local Harranis, for they all feel systematically manipulated and reduced to objects of exploitation and domination.

Because of the booming petro-capitalism and the constructions of highways in Harran, the capitalist Hassan Rizaie brings eight huge trucks into Harran. Harassed and threatened with losing the source of their livelihood, Akoub and Raji consolidate and unite in order to become less susceptible to the pressures of the elite. Rizaie orders the drivers of the new trucks to do away with Raji and Akoub: "crash into them on the road, and they'll die God's death or end up slaves" (490). In order to nullify and devour Akoub's and Raji's small businesses, Rizaie's trucks and al-Naqib's buses "began to transport goods and passengers to and from Harran at no charge, or for a minimal fee" (491). There is a notorious, unethical competition between the two corporations: "Naqib stole Rizaie's passengers just as Rizaie had stolen the passengers and cargo business from Raji and Akoub" (496). Each seeks to remove those standing in his way and to take over their position. Tactically, when the Harranis accustom themselves to the new trucks and buses and when Akoub's and Raji's trucks no longer run, fees will double or even triple, and the working class will be crowded out by this competition.

When Akoub dies, the workers skip work to attend his burial: "They simply informed the personnel office that one of their colleagues had passed away, and that they had to attend his funeral. . . . Beyond this measure of solidarity, Ibn Zamel, Ibn Hathal, and every one of the other workers did what they could to express their love and respect for Akoub" (502). The workers demand better treatment and more advantages. Engels sums up this process as follows:

> If the centralization of population stimulates and develops the property-holding class, it forces the development of the workers yet more rapidly. The workers begin to feel as a class, as a whole; they begin to perceive

> that, though feeble as individuals, they form a power untied; their separation from the bourgeoisie, the development of views peculiar to the workers and corresponding to their position in life, is fostered, the consciousness of oppression awakens, and the workers attain social and political importance. (122)

Assuming that men are physically stronger than women, the company hires only men; thus, it creates and re-enforces a stringently applied division of labor between men and women. As I have noted earlier, colonization and "development" propagate patriarchal ideologies and hitherto have underdeveloped the colonized by perpetuating despotic regimes. This is why women play an ancillary role in or are completely absent from the parts marking the historic mission of the working class, which is composed only of men. While men in "modern" Harran, after the proliferation of the oil industry, are plunged into the ranks of the proletariat, women are confined to their houses to perform domestic, socially prescribed tasks such as looking after children at home.

On a different level, despite the oil revenue boom, the colossal monetary affluence is improperly shared between the few ruling elites and the economically disadvantaged, culturally diminished, and politically estranged. From this perspective, *Cities of Salt* embodies Munif's historiographic preoccupation, as it chronicles the devastation of Wadi al-Uyoun and the subsequent rise of Harran, which used to be a small town inhabited by a few fishermen. Munif debunks master historical narratives and elevates authentic Arab history and present to their rightful place. He employs cultural symbols of the sea and desert: In Arabic literature, the sea or the ship signifies foreign intervention or domination, as the colonial powers usually invade these regions through

the sea, while the desert embodies the native consciousness of the Arab. The narrator observes that "a group of Americans arrived by the *sea* road, and it appeared that they had been here several times before" (183, my emphasis). Interestingly, Fawaz describes the first Americans to arrive in Wadi al-Uyoun as "Franks," a word frequently employed to invoke memories of the Crusades and other Islamic-Christian Europe confrontations and designates that the Americans are impulsively envisioned as a theological, cultural, and social threat to the locals.

All in all, Munif fashions a uniquely "Arab" perspective of history and a narrative style difficult for Western readers who are neither inured to such a narrative style nor the novel's Quranic, non-Biblical discourse. Therefore, the English translation was largely denounced in North America. For example, John Updike acrimoniously dismissed Munif as a verdant writer too deficient in technical expertise to construct such a big project, discrediting his writing style as verging toward inconsistency and mishmash and "unfortunate, given the epic potential of his topic, that Mr. Munif appears to be *insufficiently westernized* to produce a narrative that feels much like what we call a novel" (qtd. in Alcalay 143, my emphasis). Noticeably, Updike idealized Western literature as the supreme product of civilization and openly disparaged those who don't conform to it, neglecting the fact that authors from various cultural paradigms tend to have different writing styles. As befits any ambitious author, Munif can be legitimately criticized for idealizing and largely romanticizing the bedouin past. He doesn't attend to the dynamic tensions within the bedouin society itself.[37] In addition, Munif overlooks the "positive" side of oil—the fact that it has been used as a "weapon" against the West

[37] Any simple research on the history of bedouins in the Middle East will concede to their many conflicts and internal tensions over water or grazing land. See, in particular, Losleben, *The Bedouin of the Middle East*.

to take a more moderate stance toward the travails of the Palestinian people. Nevertheless, these criticisms shouldn't be used to deter people from reading the novel, as Updike's charges do.

Though Munif's critiques and lamentations are Arab-centric in the sense that they bring into focus oil-driven mayhem in fictional Arabic states, this impulse is shared by other third-world authors. Consider, for example, Ken Saro-Wiwa, the Nigerian environmental and political activist and prolific writer who was detained and executed by the illegitimate regime of Sani Abacha because of his tireless resistance to state hegemony and global capitalist maldevelopment in Ogoniland, Nigeria. Like Munif, Saro-Wiwa emerged as one of the most vocal opponents of the oil companies' exploitation of the third world. Throughout his writing, journalism, speeches, and transnational activism, Saro-Wiwa exposed the complicity between transnational petroleum companies and the brutal repressions inflicted on local populations by undemocratic, oil-empowered regimes.[38] Similarly, Munif was exiled and stripped of his Saudi citizenship, and such incidents testify to the lack of work in this field.

Because of the complexity of the political terrain he negotiated and his scathing satire of Arab petro-despots, Munif was the subject of multiple modes of effacement, censorship, and banishment by some Arab regimes. Actually, he operated in a sociopolitical milieu substantially distinct from that of all the other authors discussed in this dissertation. Inveighing against the despotic regimes in some Arab states is synonymous with assassination, torture, and exile. In states in which democratic practices are not sanctioned or not existent at all, the consequences of speaking out can be

[38] For an historical analysis of multinational oil companies and Saro-Wiwa's dissent against their ecological and socioeconomic injustices, see especially McLuckie and McPhail, *Ken Saro-Wiwa: Writer and Political Activist.*

catastrophic. This looming risk explains Munif's multiple dislocations and the peripatetic life he led living in Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Iraq, and Syria and casts an inevitable shadow of censorship over his writing, validating his creation of fictional locales.

Munif leaves the novel hanging on a utopian note by fashioning an episode of unmistakable socialist triumph for the working class: "His Highness ordered the reinstatement of all workers to the company, and the company has acceded to his wishes" (626). The emir acquiesces to the workers' demands of reinstating the twenty-three dismissed workers and investigating the murder of Mufadi al-Jeddan. This sanguine ending proves Munif's firm belief in the power of the proletariat to deconstruct the status quo and enforce justice. Although the emir agrees to reinstate the dismissed workers, injustice and exploitation will persist, as the benefits of oil accrue disproportionately to domestic and international beneficiaries, and the hunger of capitalists and their local partners for profit will uphold injustice.

## IV

Although they deal with two different kinds of extractions and function in dissimilar contexts, Devi's *Imaginary Map*s and Munif's *Cities of Salt* underscore the interlocking systems of patriarchy, imperialism, classism, racism, and global capitalism in degrading both the ecosystem and socioeconomic status of the indigenous people. They show that ecofeminism and environmental justice are inseparable from other modes of injustice infesting the new world market, which is driven mainly by insatiable lust for wealth and hegemony at the cost of the indigenous people who are not given their equal share of the revenues of these extractions. Themes of androcentrism, ecological

degradation (oil mining and deforestation), and imperialism run through these texts and demonstrate that indigenous women are triply marginalized, as they grapple with the systems that devalue them owing to race, gender, and class, which together function as the glue that upholds oppressive systems unscathed.

While Devi's stories are devoted to disclosing the effects of global capitalism and noxious development on India's tribals, especially women, Munif's *Cities of Salt* is geared more toward neocolonial class-based struggles and ties them to environmental racism. Both works reveal that the benefits of the oil industry, unsustainable timber extraction, and the neoliberal global capitalism accrue disproportionately to neocolonial (Western) forces as well as few elite people in the third world. Thus, Devi and Munif are not opposed to sound development that helps the local people wisely extract and manage their resources to elevate their living standards, but they condemn toxic, uneven, capitalist development that depletes the commons of the indigenous people, resulting in dire socioeconomic and cultural ruptures. As I noted, Munif can be reasonably criticized for his idealistic, romanticized representation of the overwhelmingly patriarchal pre-colonial community of Wadi al-Uyoun, but Devi doesn't fall prey to such falsifications. Both texts reveal the role of global capitalism in exacerbating the circumstances of the indigenous peoples and subsuming their cultures and lifestyles. Global capitalism has pushed them off their land in order to make room for commercial products: Development becomes tantamount to failure, poverty, and social and ecological deterioration.

Not only do Devi and Munif publicize the pressing predicaments of the indigenous people and provide a dramatic space for them to be heard, but also present potent models of resistance. In "The Hunt," Devi emphasizes that tribal women should

take eradicating imperialist and patriarchal institutions into their hands. Mary Oraon murders Tehsildar, the symbol of neocolonial patriarchal hegemony in India. And Douloti uses her mutilated body as a tool of etching her uprootedness on the symbol of Indian unity and pride. "Pterodactyl" challenges assimilative, hegemonic plans that aim to further throttle and subsume the adivasis. Munif's *Cities of Salt* concludes with the working class revolting against the Americans and their local allies and demanding justice.

# CHAPTER 5

# CONCLUSION

In full accord with the interdisciplinary terrains of ecofeminism and environmental justice, the literary and theoretical texts reviewed in this dissertation have traversed the boundaries of nation, gender, ethnicity, and class.[39] I have demonstrated the ways in which the showcased texts disrupt power relations and subvert these superimposed separations in order to claim common denominators and junctions among human communities and interconnections with nature, underlying the fact that we exist in relation to human and more-than-human Others. The far-reaching scope of ecofeminism and environmental justice is problematic to many critics who view these theories as protean "mishmashes" lacking intellectual consistency and focus.[40] On the contrary, I argue that these approaches integrate valuable tools to forcefully address environmental crises. Building on these approaches, I propose that Western thought and predominantly dichotomous discourses and praxes—intertwined with systems of colonialism, anthropocentrism, androcentrism, jingoism, and racism—comprise the cornerstones of social injustice and the root sources of the unparalleled level of environmental degradation that the world is enduring. All systems of oppression verge on and

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[39] In response to the unprecedented global scale of ecological dilapidation, there are many environmental texts and films that function as bridges across race, gender, and class; thus lend themselves to ecofeminism and environmental justice; and therefore are deserving of further study. Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1959), Margret Atwood's *Surfacing* (1972), and Barbara Neely's *Blanche Cleans Up* (1998) are but few examples that extend the concern of the texts explored in this study and delineate more environmental struggles. In addition, several films and documentaries, including *The Dammed*, *Thunderheart*, *Avatar*, *Lemon Tree*, and *Whale Rider*, have presented ecological struggles to a wider public over the past several years, further probing the impact of race, class, gender, and political hurdles in environmental policies and arrangements.

[40] Some other theories, especially reader-response criticism, are truly "mishmashes" in the sense that they are not focused on a specific method to reading literary texts. The founders of reader response—including Louise Rosenblatt, Norman Holland, Stanley Fish, Wolfgang Iser, Hans-Robert Jauss, and Roland Barthes—have different approaches to reader response and did not call themselves "reader-response" critics.

perpetuate the logic of dualistic thinking—retaining notions of demonization and otherness and relegating traditional thought, women, nature, and indigenous communities to the realm of the irrational that should be subjugated and subdued. These divisions engender environmental devastation and other related social and political inequalities.

Ecofeminists have expanded the scope of these metaphysical dyads plaguing the discourses of dominance and hegemony to encompass the nature-culture rifts, and the presupposition encoded within these binaries, that culture (humans) can be sustained in isolation from the rest of nature (non-humans). Conversely, ecofeminist ontology insists that we are ingrained in a combination of cultural and natural matrices, and women's "exceptional" cosmological status provides a contact zone for this realization, not because women are intrinsically destined to identify with nature, but because of their "unique" (and culturally imposed) experience. Ecofeminists and environmental justice advocates hypothesize that such dichotomous classifications underscore the most disparaging and nullifying syndromes of sexism and racism. As I have already argued, such intersections between nature and culture necessitate a multifaceted critique of these discourses in conjunction with the ecological entanglements they trigger. According to David Harvey, "All environmental-ecological arguments . . . are arguments about society and, therefore, complex refractions of all sorts of struggles being waged in other realms" (*Justice, Nature* 372). This is what this study has chiefly endeavored to accomplish: to codify environmental struggles within social, gender-based, class-based, and political realities and operations, thus eschewing deep ecologists' "deficient" engagement with the causes and manifestations of the environmental turmoil. Indeed, misanthropic deep ecologists tend to overlook the human teleology in favor of the natural paradigm;

therefore, critics excoriate it because of its lack of commitment to political and social realms. It is far removed from "culture." In *Radical Ecology,* Carolyn Merchant points that deep ecologists "fail to recognize that the idea that all things in the biosphere have an equal right to exist is just as much of a projection of human sociopolitical categories onto nature as is the anthropocentrism they criticize" (102). On the other hand, ecofeminism and environmental justice, combined, are redeemed from such subordinations and eliminations, as they strike a balance between human and nonhuman entities.

Intriguingly, the six authors highlighted in this dissertation direct their energies to writing and protesting against environmental injustice and hegemonic relations. They articulate conspicuous environmental justice and ecofeminist convictions and anxieties and imagine and formulate compelling frames for deconstructing the ideals of Western-oriented modernization. Not only do they dramatize and problematize the interwoven socio-ecological struggles at hand, but also carve viable paths of resistance and allow readers to envision feasible alternatives to the existing trends of patriarchy, racism, and unsustainable "progress." In place of the damaging logic (or illogic) of materialism and global capitalism that retain patriarchal and imperial residues, Wendell Berry and Leslie Marmon Silko commend rethinking our ethos and ethic codes in order to undo self-other exclusions and reestablish ethical and spiritual interdependences and attachments, not only with other fellow humans, but also with the environment at large. Berry candidly declares that reviving traditional and communal axiology and practices can preserve the earth and its inhabitants against the avarice of coal-mining companies. Silko deprecates situating hazardous wastes and nuclear tests on terrains traditionally belonging to Native American communities, appealing to the power of Native American rituals and

ceremonies in healing the gap between nature and culture and minimizing the injurious repercussions of conforming to Eurocentric worldviews.

Linda Hogan and Arundhati Roy focus on the resistance of indigenous people, women in particular, to all systems of domination that, as I noted, overlap, as they all emanate from the same catalyst or will to power and hegemony. In spite of their drastic divergences, Hogan and Roy exemplify potent ecofeminist models of dissent and pinpoint the twin oppression of nature and women. Hogan's strategy for advancing her vision is fictional, through her four female characters, who embark on a ritual journey to reclaim severed bonds with their ancestral land, and Roy's eco-resistance (activism), her fiction, and even her "polemical" essays are profoundly literary and allegorical. In "The Hidden Life of Things," Susan Comfort argues that Roy's work is full of symbolism and allegorical figures that expand the scope of her eco-resistance and the reach of her work.[41] As I have explored in my last body chapter, Mahasweta Devi and Abdelrahman Munif locate their postcolonial, environmentalist critiques within a horizontal teleology of Indian and Middle Eastern history of colonialism and exploitation. They ascribe the rise of global capitalism as a neocolonial form of oppression to colonialism and imperialism, which have played an intermediary role in its emergence. Assuredly, global capitalism and imperialism operate along parallel lines and, despite their distinct apparatuses and forms of rhetoric, possess analogous ends and impulses. Both Devi and Munif provide stark cases delineating the colonizers' gluttony of the wealth and resources of the indigenous people and designate that colonialism is still alive despite its official termination. To clarify, before they abandoned their colonies, the colonizers installed a

[41] For more on the figurative nature of Roy's work and activism, see Comfort, "The Hidden Life of Things," 1-27.

new class of capitalist landlords, ruling elite, and contractors in affiliation with the West and in desperate need of its patronage. These domestic neocolonial classes, along with the Western-dominated international institutions of the IMF, the World Bank, and WTO, do the dirty work of colonialism and guarantee Western supremacy on the grid of power, irrespective of human and nonhuman health and aspirations.

I have paired these works in terms of specific industries of extraction and contamination, themes, and emphases. I chose not to organize them around gender-based, regional, ethnic, or cultural paradigms because I aspire to subvert and destabilize such restrictions in an era characterized, at least in theory, by a quest for dissolving such limitations. Needless to say, these demarcation lines, in contradiction to propositions by proponents of global capitalism, will never melt, as fusing them won't be feasible without violent imposition, erasure, and rupture. Hence, I acknowledge the persistence of such distinctions, but endeavor to look beyond them in favor of underscoring our commonalities and shared constituencies and linking them to the well-being of the environment.

In fact, I have also heeded cogent recommendations by Ursula Heise, Maria Mies, Vandana Shiva, Patrick D. Murphy, Lawrence Buell, and T. V. Reed that environmental studies ought to engage with theories of globalization and transnationalism and attend to the socioeconomic ruptures instigated by these systems. In "Toward an Environmental Justice Ecocriticism," Reed notes that "the center of concern needs to shift significantly for ecocriticism to truly reify the range of connections among culture, criticism, and the environment." He adds that isolating the environment from its "necessary interrelation

with society and culture has severely limited the appeal of environmental thought, to the determent of both the natural and social worlds" (146).

The six primary authors impute social injustice and economic deprivation to ecological deterioration and employ interrelated strategies of resistance to preserve the environment and boost readers' awareness of future apocalyptic corollaries, if the current trajectory of environmental maldevelopment persists. Although the texts put forth have dissimilar—both auspicious and inauspicious—outlooks, they identify and refute shared adversaries, such as the embeddedness of environmental disasters and cultural and political complexities in concepts of eurocentrism, androcentrism, imperialism, and racism. In order to expose the factors that have institutionalized male hegemony and domestic and "planetary" injustice and undercut any status-quo pretexts, the authors employ largely comparable strategies and techniques. For instance, Silko, Hogan, Devi, and Berry illuminate the injustices of classism, *sexism*, and racism entailed in the new world order by resurrecting and recapitulating ancient myths and investing them with modern significance and new possibilities. They all conclude that patriarchy and injustice are ineluctable outcomes of the Enlightenment's unquestioned belief in progress and the development for the benefit of the center of power and to the detriment of the periphery.

Some authors are more thorough in employing resistance than others. To prioritize, Roy's *The Cost of Living* should probably come first because of its quintessential pattern of disclosing the inequities inherent in the new world order, thanks to the author's vigorously and rigorously defended corroborations and "aggressive" and unyielding tone. Roy gives insight to the resistance of indigenous people, especially

women, to the destructive forces of global capitalism. She divulges the inconsistencies of global capitalism which has vowed equality and prosperity by shedding light on what is at stake in real-life situations and thus attesting to the direct antithesis. The other authors propose potent alternatives to capitalism and environmental degradation, but Roy is the most polemical, forceful one. These struggles and alternatives coming from various parts of the world substantiate the broad reach of capitalism that is not restricted to third-world counties and cement my assertion that environmental studies should bridge U. S. and third-world struggles, as they are caused by intertwined dynamic tensions. Although each author approaches the thorny subjects of injustice and patriarchy in a distinctive style, the ecofeminist and environmental underpinnings and nuances are blatant in all of them.[42]

I have defined and treated the concept of environmental racism as a neocolonial form of oppression functioning on equal terms with imperialism and patriarchy. The authors feature stark situations in which the poor, minority groups, women, indigenous communities, and third-world countries are predominantly affected by environmental devastation that has institutionalized and reinforced hierarchical structures. All the authors demonstrate that such subaltern classes or categories are deprived in consequence of capitalist and (neo)colonialist denudement and erosion of their ecosystems and means

[42] Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* is a classic novel that would also reward further analysis of the kind that I have advanced here, because it raises momentous postcolonial, ecological, and sociopolitical concerns wrought not only by colonial institutions but also caused by the rigidities of the Ibo tradition. Specifically, it documents the role of colonialism and global capitalism in introducing to the fictional town of Umuofia concepts of privatization, individualism, commodification, and materialism that have transformed the traditional, agricultural, and somehow egalitarian Ibo society. Interestingly, the people of pre-colonial Umuofia are judged by how deferential of land they are, not by what they possess. As a revisionist novel, *Things Fall Apart* aims to debunk colonial stereotypes and discourses that depict Africa as a dark and steamy jungle landscape saturated with images of cannibalistic and uncivilized people. Thus, unlike the African society in *Heart of Darkness*, which is portrayed as having developed no culture, the African society in *Things Fall Apart* has sophisticated sociocultural and ecological systems.

of subsistence by transnational corporations that tend to collaborate with the few local ruling elite. Roy, Devi, and Munif bring to light the complicity and complacency of the ruling elite in India and the Middle East with neocolonial institutions maneuvering under the cloak of global capitalism. They refute global capitalism's alluring form of rhetoric that easily crumbles at the threshold of lived realities they unearth. They underline that most third-world countries are oppressed on a global scale and dominated by foreign powers, but the internal cruelty inflicted on them by the ruling elite is even worse, given the camouflage of this plunder under such dogmas as nationalism or progress. Munif's *Cities of Salt* is the environmentalist text with the most forcefully postcolonialist emphasis, for it traces Americans' arrival and subsequent exploitation of oil-rich Wadi al-Uyoun and reveals the fissures and hierarchies that the community experiences because of oil-hungry colonialism. Indeed, environmental studies cannot be complete without addressing (neo)colonial, socioeconomic, and cultural dynamics—and literature, with its sympathetic imagination, offers a catharsis without which fictionalizing or drawing attention to a tragedy would be worthless.

From a different perspective, the itinerary that this dissertation has pursued proffers insights into the contradictions between indigenous cosmologies embodied in collective rights and communal identity and the norms of global capitalism and Western-style modernization callous toward evenly shared and environmentally friendly esthetics and ontologies. Despite their denunciation of the doctrines, configurations, and manifestations of capitalist modernity, the authors examined here do not unquestioningly divorce modernity and espouse tradition. Rather, they are critical of all systems of oppression, whether originating in stifling traditions or in reductive modernity, and thus

oppose reverting to or co-opting patriarchal traditional practices to counteract capitalist modernity. Besides, it is unfeasible for postcolonial nations to regress to an entirely rudimentary lifestyle, as their epistemologies, impulses, needs, and ecosystems have already radically changed. For example, both Roy and Devi are critical of the caste system that existed prior to Western intervention in India; the values of this caste structure are still held strongly in Indian society.

In my four years of undergraduate studies in Jordan, I didn't encounter a single course addressing environmental studies from a gender-based or racial point of view. The few professors whose courses touched upon environmental issues tended to single out nature as a romanticized, pristine wilderness in favor of ratifying holistic (ecological and sociopolitical) views of the natural environment. These professors usually idealized Western literature as the paramount artifact of civilization and did not permit any authentic appraisal of its nuances, creating in people minimum potential for opposition or criticism. To the best of my knowledge, I am the first Jordanian student to develop a full-scale study connecting environmental studies to questions of race, class, and gender. I feel compelled, in the future, to adopt a holistic approach to environmental studies, one that strikes a balance among all its dynamic tensions, underpinnings, and impulses. Most of my students—Jordanian and American—fail to decipher the destructive facets of "development," as they are unconsciously trained to picture "development" only as a positive end regardless of the means.

To illustrate the difficulty of the terrain that environmentalists negotiate, one day before the spring break of 2010, I was sitting in the computer lab of IUP's Eberly College of Business, working on my dissertation. One of my best friends approached me and

gently inquired about the gist of my dissertation. Excited, I started explaining to him that I focus on authors from far-flung parts of the world who attend to common ecological and social grievances impelled by global capitalism and systematic development. To my chagrin, he started laughing and described my argument as untenable and "unrealistic," telling me that "development can never bring damage to anybody." I told him the story of the Narmada Dam and how the adivasis have been pushed off their land to secure water to other, more privileged groups. He said that the tribals of India should make sacrifices for their fellow citizens and that the Indian government compensates them for their loss, but they are trying to make trouble because of their "hidden socialist agendas." At that point, I realized how thorny is our task of challenging and undermining the status quo, not to mention engaging with texts exemplifying the interrelated scopes of ecological degradation and other forms of injustice.[43] Needless to say, such widely held views guarantee the domination of the upper class over the subaltern masses by sacrificing their well-being to the benefit of the mainstream.

At this time, my hometown of Irbid in the northern part of Jordan is witnessing an unprecedented level of toxic development, which is taking over farming land and destroying people's means of survival. The local people rejoice in modernization and so-called development, but fall short of perceiving the problematic rifts and tensions they

[43] To mention other authors and works that would reward such analysis, Margaret Atwood's *Surfacing* offers a classic ecofeminist narrative in which the female protagonist undergoes a metamorphosis when she returns home with her lover and another couple in search of her missing father. At the outset, the woman has a vision that the Canadian locales of her childhood will be wiped out; this revelation gradually decodes into her oppression as a woman. Barbara Neely's *Blanche Cleans Up* fictionalizes a real case of environmental racism in which African American children are singly poisoned by lead industry in Boston. The novel characterizes family-based and communal resistance to environmental racism. Several films and texts—fiction and nonfiction—have interwoven environmental racism and tied it to the struggle of women and minorities for a cleaner, safer, and more sustainable environment. These cultural productions, among others, would reward comparison and contrast, as they provide a wide range of classic and more recent examples of works in need of further examination in the ways that I have more closely discussed the six authors in my previous chapters.

create. Here, I feel there is a pressing need that we, third-world teachers and scholars, introduce to our curricula environmental texts that involve readers in a myriad of sociopolitical, cultural, and allegorical significations and weave a tapestry for them to unravel the real causes and ramifications of environmental degradation.

Ecofeminism and environmental justice are best equipped to connect literature to what is at stake on the ground. To quote David Harvey, environmental justice advances "a discourse radically at odds with the standard view and ecological modernization" and which "has proven far less amenable to corporate or governmental cooptation." Indeed, its unequivocal discourse is teemed with resistance that, by putting inequalities at the forefront of the environmental agenda, "directly challenges the dominant discourse" (*Justice, Nature* 385). In Munif's words, "the mission of literature is to increase awareness and receptiveness in an attempt to create cases for renaissance and revival" (qtd. in Jiad). In comparison to postcolonial studies or feminism, ecofeminism and environmental justice are relatively emerging fields of study. However, there is a mounting interest in them and in their application to literature in wide-ranging spheres of the world. The treatments of the fundamental bonds between environmental breakdown and socioeconomic and gender–based inequalities are gaining more ground owing to the global environmental crisis, the epidemic of addiction, and "glocal" resisting voices to the discourses that pigeonhole the world in essentialist terms. Environmental degradation is indivisible from other socioeconomic and political imbalances, and environmental studies should lay more emphasis on the root causes and consequences of environmental devastation. I have chosen to examine the intersections of these dynamic tensions and stress that they cause one another. Truly, environmental degradation brings all other

kinds of deprivations, especially in places where the local people rely on land, fish, forests, and hunting to secure their basic necessities.

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