

Agency, Development & Displacement an Introduction to Post-Colonial Ecocriticism

Sorena Zandi¹, *Behzad Barekat²

1. M.A. in English Literature, Guilan University, Iran

2. Associate Professor, Department of English Language and Literature, Guilan University

(Received: 21.03.2022

Accepted: 23.05.2022)

عاملیت، توسعه و جابجایی: مقدمه‌ای بر زیست‌بوم‌شناختی پسااستعماری

سورنا زندی^۱، * بهزاد برکت^۲

۱. کارشناسی ارشد ادبیات انگلیسی، دانشگاه گیلان

۲. دانشیار، گروه ادبیات و زبان انگلیسی، دانشگاه گیلان

پذیرش: ۱۴۰۱/۰۳/۰۴

(دریافت: ۱۴۰۱/۰۵/۰۱)

Abstract

This article aims to describe and analyze Post-Colonial Ecocriticism as a field of study into the state of both human and non-human entities in an act of colonization. As such three of its most important concepts, Agency, Development and Displacement, are discussed to facilitate the understanding of this approach for the readers. Non-human agency advocates against a human-centric agency and for a dynamic relationship between human and non-human agency instead. As often witnessed in the aftermath of natural disasters such as an earthquake, natural events are unpredictable and not all in control of human beings. Then it can be stated that humans are not the only active agents in the environment but that instead we need to study the dynamic relationship between human and non-human agencies. The second concept, Development, is a bridge between colonialism and non-human agency, which entails the process of changing an environment in course of monopolizing certain products in a colonized country. Such changes usually have negative effects on the natives' lives, such as losing their jobs, homes and impoverishment. This then leads to their displacement, seeking a new area where they can find new resources to survive and build their lives around. This is then a chained set of events as explained in the article, from the promise of a development that is in truth monopolizing one or more products, to the displacement of the natives from their homes and their struggle to survive.

Keywords: Environment, Post-colonial Ecocriticism, Agency, Development, Displacement.

چکیده

هدف مقاله حاضر پرداختن به محیط‌زیست با «رویکرد زیست‌بوم‌شناختی پسا استعماری» به‌مثابه یک حوزه مطالعاتی است. مقاله با تأکید بر وضعیت موجودات زنده از جمله انسان و غیر انسان در دوران استعمار، سه مبحث اصلی زیست‌بوم‌شناختی پسااستعماری، شامل «عاملیت»، «توسعه» و «جابجایی» را توصیف و مورد تحلیل قرار داده است. در مبحث عاملیت این نکته مورد تأیید قرار گرفته است که هرگونه تغییری در محیط، نقش تأثیرگذاری در زندگی تمامی موجودات زنده ایفا می‌کند. همان‌گونه که در رخدادهای طبیعی مانند زلزله قابل مشاهده است، طبیعت پدیده‌ای قابل پیش‌بینی و تحت کنترل انسان نیست، بدین معنا که «انسان» تنها عامل فعال در محیط‌زیست محسوب نمی‌شود، از این‌رو مطالعه رابطه میان عاملیت انسان و عاملیت دیگر عناصر موجود در طبیعت امری ضروری و الزامی است. توسعه به‌عنوان پلی میان عاملیت (به‌خصوص غیرانسانی) و استعمارگری، مبحث دوم مطالعه را به خود اختصاص داده است. اهمیت توسعه متأثر از بررسی تغییرات محیطی ناشی از انحصاری کردن منابع در کشور استعمار شده توسط کشور استعمارگر است. تغییراتی که به‌طور معمول به تأثیرات منفی مانند شیوع فقر، بیکاری و بی‌خانمانی برای ساکنان بومی منجر می‌گردد. پیامد ناگزیر چنین تغییراتی، جابه‌جایی ناخواسته افراد بومی برای یافتن منابع جدید برای ادامه حیات است. در نهایت، این مقاله توجه خوانندگان را به ارتباط زنجیروار این سه مبحث که شامل اثرات منفی انحصاری کردن منابع به بهانه توسعه پایدار و جابه‌جایی بومیان، جلب می‌نماید.

واژه‌های کلیدی: محیط‌زیست، زیست‌بوم‌شناسی، پسا استعمارگری، عاملیت، توسعه، جابه‌جایی.

Introduction

It is a known fact that humanity's actions have damaged the environment and earth system irreversibly. Deforestation has damaged the biodiversity as different species are being severely polluted or are displaced from their homes (Olagunju, 2015). The industrial revolution through actions such as coal burning has caused a massive pollution to our environment, both effecting humans and animals (Hanlon, 2020). Another detrimental product of humanity is E-waste, which means the discarded electrical devices that can pollute the environment if not disposed correctly, harming the environment because they cannot decompose in nature by themselves (Robinson, 2009). All these actions have affected the environment at a local scale but at the same time spreading its detrimental effects on a larger scale, causing issues such as global warming that is threatening the lives of all entities in the world (Houghton, 2005). This is why a new epoch of looking at nature with all these damages already done needed to be created, and scientists have called it "Anthropocene". No longer the definitions of nature and environment that we had during the Romanticism can apply. Nature is no longer a wilderness, pristine from human influence that can be used as a tool of self-discovery. Anthropocene is the epoch in which dynamic relationship between human and non-human entities are now being re-established. Then with the new epoch starting, the old one, "Holocene" epoch that lasted almost 12000 years with its stable climate is now over. This new epoch, Anthropocene started in 1950 with the first nuclear bomb tests however some argue that it can be traced back to the invention of steam engine in 1784.

But how can literature (and Ecocriticism) play an integral role in saving the environment? Literature has more freedom than a scientific journal to explore the prejudice, cultural background and the everyday habits of humans when it comes to their engagement with environmental questions. Then Literature can start public discussions about environmental issues as it is able to make a meaningful connection between its readers and scientific facts, translating scientific data and abstractions

into a more tangible data for the public. This is how literature benefits both sides of this issue, firstly to study the relationship between humanity and their environment, and secondly to raise awareness about issues such as global warming (Buell, 2009).

One of the most potent approaches in the Green Studies is Post-Colonial Ecocriticism. In this article three of its main concepts, Agency, Development and Displacement, will be explored for the readers so it may pave the way for further studies on the subject. Agency' refers to the dynamic relationship that exists between human and non-human species in the environment (Parish and Hall, 2020). This relationship is even more apparent when it is studied alongside with the concept of 'Development' and its effects on both humans and environment. Development studies the tension between the greedy ambitions of colonizers and natives' attempts at survival, as the colonizers peruse their political and economic agendas through taking control of the native's resources (Lankina and Getachew, 2021). 'Displacement' is one of the side-effects of such a development, effecting natives' both physically and psychologically, often forced to move away from their homes and take refuge elsewhere (Becker, 2022).

As such this article aims to describe and analyze Post-Colonial Ecocriticism as a field of study into the state of both human and non-human entities in an act of colonization. To facilitate the understanding of this approach for the readers, three of its most important concepts, Agency, Development and Displacement, are discussed in the following sections.

Literature Review

The studies mentioned below are a collection of Ecocritical researches related to the topics of both literature and post-colonialism, starting with two introductory books about the basis of Ecocriticism and Post-Colonial Ecocriticism followed by articles and books about the three subjects of studies in this article, Agency, Development and Displacement.

Timothy Clark's "*The Value of Ecocriticism*" explains and expands on many of

the fundamentals of ecocriticism. He explores the topics of time and place scales and the complexity of environmental issues such as global warming on such scales. In short Clark's book (2019) serves as a stepping stone to the topics of Ecocriticism, introducing the basis on which Ecocriticism studies are grounded on and explores its goals and purposes. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's "*Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*" explores some of the main issues that postcolonial ecocriticism has been tackling in the last few decades, providing examples of such issues based on variety of Australian and African novels. They also explain the necessity of merging the studies of Ecocriticism and Post-Colonialism as the latter focuses mainly on humans, whereas lands, other non-human entities and in general the environment can also be colonized and effected by its consequences. They argue that effects of colonialism on the environment is mostly detrimental, and it can result in displacement of not only humans, but other living beings as well. Merging these two subjects is not farfetched as Ecocriticism has always been a cultural decolonialisation of the older norms of defining nature, humans and their relationship. Similar to Postcolonial studies, Ecocriticism also aims to depict the clash of western modernization against local cultures and traditions.

On the subject of agency (and Materialism), '*New Materialisms: Ontology, Agency and Politics*' by Diana Coole and Samantha Frost (2010) explains the theories of Material Ecocriticism followed by an analysis of a series of articles authored by the new wave of researchers who are looking at agency in a different shape and view which include matter in the discussion of agency. As '*New Materialisms*' provides a philosophical view of agency, and introduces the new wave of researchers who are working on the subject, '*Material Ecocriticism*' by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (2014) studies the subject of agency, providing a philosophical basis on the subject as well as its implications in literature and Ecocriticism. They offer Material Ecocriticism as a new way of studying language, reality, humanity and non-human entities. This subject allows literary critics to study narratives and stories through the agency of material forces and highlight their important

role in shaping meaning out of the world. They also juxtapose non-human agency with human agency and explore the dynamic relationship between the two which is an important topic of discussion in this article as well. Another important article in the topic of agency is Linda Nash's (2005) '*The Agency of Nature or the Nature of Agency?*' in which she explores the historical background of agency. Going back to the nineteenth century at which time scholars had assigned the attributes of agency to the European male elites who directly had a say in the political, economic and social agenda of the time. She continues by pin-pointing another milestone in the understanding of agency, dating back to the philosophical debates of after World War 2 in which agency was assigned to every human beings including women and slaves. After an exploration of the definition of agency throughout history, she explains how environment in general, does not only complicate human action but that it is in fact through interaction with the world around them that humanity stores a collage of experiences using which they are able to make decisions and 'act'. And lastly "*Human and Non-human Agencies in the Anthropocene*" by Durbeck, G et al (2015) explains why the dynamic relations between human and non-human agencies are important to study in the new epoch of Anthropocene, and then they provide an analysis of various texts that use non-human agencies as their main subjects, such as mountain, seas, rivers and slugs to further explain their reasoning.

In the domain of Development, Arturo Escobar's '*Encountering Development*' serves as a great reference for the explanation of different kinds of development and its global presence in both the history and current time. In his book, Escobar deconstruct development by telling a story of a dream that turns into a nightmare, as an allegory to explain the false promise of the first world countries regarding development and exposing its true intentions. Throughout the history he encounters the same interactions called development in which the backward Third World countries had to be guided into the progress of modernity, a task that could only be achieved by the wise white men from the west as the experts of development.

In the discussions of Displacement, '*Risks*

and Rights: The Causes, Consequences, and Challenges of Development-Induced Displacement' by W.C. Robinson (2003) firstly studies the connection between Development and Displacement, and how the former can be a cause of the latter. Secondly, Robinson defines and explains different kinds of Displacement, from refugees who are forced to leave their country and internally displaced people who are psychologically and physically displaced even though they are still inhabiting within the borders of their native countries. The dissertation "*Nature and Displacement: An Ecocritical Approach to Five Works by Marie Darrieussecq*" by Rizy, K (2015) analyses 5 works by the French author Darrieussecq in order to highlight the social and environmental injustices in the current ecological crisis. They argue that these 5 works provide a good example for the dynamic relation between humans and non-human entities as each are about a main character that goes through displacement which is used as a technique to avoid the common narrator protagonist. The dissertation goes through both physical and psychological displacement separately and then in connection with one another for both human and non-human agencies.

Following paragraphs introduce two examples of studying novels through the lens of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism and the application of Agency, Development and Displacement. Hopefully such an introduction would facilitate the understanding of this approach in a more practical manner for the readers.

Sami Chisty's (2021) '*Revisiting Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" through the lens of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism*' provides a different review of "Shooting an Elephant" in which it attempts to break away from the usual studies of imperialism and its effects on the colonized and the colonizers for the favor of focusing more on the depiction of animals and their state in a colonized country. This article successfully creates a connection between both human and non-human entities, in which studying the state of both becomes necessary, instead of ignoring animals as most other studies have done before.

Juan Chen's (2021) "*An Ecological Elegy under Colonial Violence: The Counter-Pastoral*

Narrative and Ecocriticism in Doris Lessing's The Grass Is Singing' attempts to trace the impact of colonial violence in the text through the lens of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism. Chen draws a connection between the control of environment, domination over native people and the struggle over geographical space to depict the mutual reinforcement of one on the other. This article claims that Lessing's novel is a depiction of the dehumanization of human beings as well as destruction of the natural world and analyzes the inter-connection of both travesties in the novel.

Post-Colonial Ecocriticism is often criticized in their attributing a sort of fantastical and idealized pastoral life to the colonized countries which is destroyed by the act of colonization. This western idea of a pastoral life and its destruction by the colonizers helps these activists to defend indigenous people against acts of colonizing but it runs the risk of ignoring natives' own complex traditions and histories. Donna Haraway (2013) in her book '*Primate Visions*' warns about the "cannibalistic western logic that readily constructs other cultural possibilities as resources for western needs and actions" that addresses the environmental activists who represent the effects of colonization on native entities from a western point of view, through a western dream of harmony with nature.

In the same manner, Post-Colonial Ecocriticism because of its roots to the topics of colonialism also could mislead the researchers to ignore the inner-running and inner-power relations of the natives among themselves, as it might only blame the colonizers for the destruction of natives' culture, tradition, economy and nature without accounting for those natives in charge, and the elites in possession of cultural and economic power. Jyotirmaya Tripathy (2015) in his article '*Indian Environmentalism: Discourse, Politics and Fragments*' puts forward the idea that in an attempt for development, environmental destructions such as destroying forests is allowed by the local elites for the goal of modernization and 'catching-up' to the western values. As a result of this observation, then the works of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism must aim its studies not only at the colonizers but the

natives' as well.

Clark (2019) observes that a crisis of authority in an Anthropocene context also adds another layer of dilemma to Post-Colonial Ecocriticism. He claims that such a crisis presents itself more clearly when it comes to the critics' attempts to defend native's traditions and beliefs which 'they could never themselves take literally'. This means that local traditions, beliefs and religions are often defended by the Post-Colonial critics in terms of global environmental sciences and in relation to European understandings of nature and capitalism. Then such traditional beliefs undergo a sort of 'metamorphosis', which are affirmed by the critics but deriving such affirmation from authorities outside the local (p. 145-146).

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Three terms chosen to be introduced in this article are some of the most important concepts in the Post-Colonial Ecocriticism approach. Before discussing the approach however, the context on which its basis is constructed in, must be explored first. Anthropocene as a term, was created at first as a geological term to account for the start of a new epoch in which all the older understandings of our earth-system has to be re-defined. But the scales of these environmental changes cannot be limited to only geology, which is why Ecocriticism uses the term as a geological, historical and political term. However, that, humanity played an integral role in these environmental changes, there are also a number of material causality that reinforced these changes. By looking at nature as what is lost, what it used to be in the past, or to blame humanity for its sole reason of deterioration, we are making the nature to be "the other". Instead we should discuss human and non-human entities as one, living on earth together and then discuss what is best for both, even though they might have different needs. The problem with Anthropocene is that it is a complex topic with a large scale in both time and place, so it is best to be used a loose term to account for the plurality of its cultural and political questions. (Clark, 2019, p. 22)

It is in the context of Anthropocene and this new found understanding of the earth-system

that Ecocriticism can explore its objectives. Ecocriticism is a political stance against the oppressions of economic systems and governments against nature, and it works on the belief that such unjust actions that are usually mentioned to have been taken against human beings in the history of mankind are also taken towards our environment as well. Eco critics see their work as a kind of activism, believing that changing the cultural values of the world results in saving the environment. This is however based on the belief that we live in a society that political and social changes can happen through public debates and tools like literature and its criticism. Then ecocriticism besides supporting the debates on environment also support this system of public debate that can host the talks about environmental issues. Eco critics try to highlight questions about environment and its crisis and how they are represented in literature and culture (Clark, 2019, p. 5). Then it can be summarized that Ecocriticism is a theoretical science, which invites its critics to view literature from an earth-centered point of view. However, to apply such concepts, Ecocriticism needs other fields of study, to create interdisciplinary subjects such as 'Post-Colonial Ecocriticism'. At its base, Eco-criticism has always been a cultural de-colonialization of the older norms of defining nature, human and their relationship. Works of ecocriticism, either be it novels or eco poetry, usually depict the clash of western modernization against local culture and resistance. Post-colonial ecocriticism then does not have to go far from the basis of ecocriticism, but it highlights even more the environmental injustice, "environmentalism of the poor" and people losing their cultural norms and economical means of living as a consequence of losing their natural habitat, like forests and wetlands (Clark, 2019, p. 138).

Post-colonial ecocriticism also helps issues such as global warming that are inherently complex both in the scale of time and place, as it provides a ground for the struggle of the environmental justice and its potential for cultural differences in rebuilding bio-regional models of sustainability. It also allows for a new way of thinking about both human and non-human entities and their relationship. Post-colonial ecocriticism considers both the text and its criticism as worldly, a mode of

engagement that may not lead to direct action but to raise awareness about the global issues (Chakrabarty, 2012). One of such issues is understanding that nature does not always align itself with the humanities economic and political interests. For example, climate changes prove that the world is far from being under control of humans and that it is in fact indifferent to human interests. It is important then to consider and study the environmental issues caused by colonization at the same time as its effects on humans. When a country is colonized, or after the colonizers have left the area, it is not only the humans that are affected by such changes, but the environment and non-human entities as well. In this context, following examples of studies about the relationship between human and non-human entities can clarify the subject further. Firstly, 'Ecological Imperialism' which considers the effects of colonialism on both humanity and the environment. The Australian Eco-feminist Val Plumwood argues that all factors of eco-imperialism go back to the philosophy of "reason centered culture", which once helped the European imperialism but now is proving difficult to sustain due its damage to earth resources. This philosophy looks at non-human entities as other, being external to human needs and therefor dispensable or in service to humanity (Plumwood, 2012, p. 4-5). 'Environmental Racism' coined by Deane Curtin, defines as "*the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other*" (Curtin, 2005, p. 145). This concept categorizes two groups of people and culture, one that thinks and lives in harmony with nature, and the other whose culture and traditions damages the environment around them. Both however are generalized by race and their view towards nature. This can then be used to conceive them as the "other" that creates an opening for colonization and for the colonizers to benefit from their natural resources or dumping their wastes in native's living habitat.

Ecocriticism and Post-Colonial Ecocriticism work best when they are not entangled much with philosophical debates. Reason being that the main work of an

environmental activist is to raise awareness of environmental issues, in a manner that is understood in a context of day-to-day issue for its readers. The more complex and distant to the reader's daily lives our discussions are, the more difficult it gets to actually see positive results in the society. When it comes to the scale of some of these issues, even Anthropocene itself, through the time and place scales, it is already very difficult to convey the dangers of global issues like over population and global warming to the normal readers. Then the approach of every eco critical essay needs to be direct, doing its best to convey these global issues both as simple as possible and easily relatable, so we can have a slight hope of raising awareness on such issues and their causes.

1. Post-Colonial Ecocriticism

This section will be divided to three different mini-sections, each tasked with introducing one of the subjects, Agency, Development and Displacement. These three concepts have been chosen among other definitions because of their chained relationship, each being important in relation to the other ones while having their own unique importance in the discussions of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism. These three can be used in exploring the circumstances in a process of colonization (or neo-colonization), from the reasons for the invasion to its effects on the natives. It is important to note that even though displacement is argued in this article to be a consequence of development, by no means it is the only effect of development on the natives. However, exploring both physical and psychological displacement can account for the devastating effects of colonization and development.

1.1. Agency

Non-human agency is part of a movement called 'Turn to Things' in which the critics and authors highlight the agency of non-human entities, such as poppy, ivory and oil to emphasize the importance of their agency in the narrative of earth and environment. Novels concerned with the issues like climate change need this new mode of representing the agency of non-human entities, which also contains a change to the centrality of human agency. Turn to Things in the context of the new epoch of

Anthropocene provides this change for literature, as its subject is not solely based on humanity but in fact it pays attention to both human and non-human agency and the dynamic relation between them. This is also where literature helps the movement and its purpose, since novels and poems have the ability to centralize landscape, climate, infrastructure, machines, technology alongside humans (Clark, 2019, p. 91).

Literature's task to represent this elusive concepts of non-human agency however is not an easy one since it causes a dilemma in the discussion of language, as how a non-human subjectivity can be represented in language? (Clark, 2019, p. 81) Anthropomorphism can be helpful, but it creates a new problem in that it might ignore the individuality of different modes of their characteristics. Ascribing human qualities to non-humans might make them more relatable for the readers, but it ignores their own modes of living and therefor wrongly understood. Another, more prominent, way to represent the non-human entities is through Genre-fiction or Science-fiction. Science fiction possesses the liberty to show-case different agencies of non-human entities, be it in the form of a new technology or a natural event like the rising ocean. It can also show us a view of a scientifically possible future, a damaged future in fact where the lives of all living beings are endangered. Not only environmental issues can be portrayed in a science fiction but the Anthropocene itself with all its complexities in the time-place scale can be better understood as a science fiction trope (Heise, 2016, p.173). Although genre fiction can evoke non-human agency, it could lack the ability to doing the cultural work needed for such a change in our perceptions. As *'it cannot therefor do the cultural work of making it matter as a formal and existential problem'* (Clark, 2019, p. 104) since most see and perceive the genre as a mere escapist entertainment.

Then the solution is not to limit the subject to any sort of a specific genre, the main effort has to do with novel and literature as a whole, in that they have to try to not be reliant on specific events and absolute individual agents. An example of this would be works such as Hitchcock's 24hour psycho, a silent slow-motion film, providing the depiction of humans

as physical and material beings, similar to the non-human entities (Clark, 2019, p. 104).

Anthropocene puts forward a paradox in our reasoning with regard to non-human agency, which can work as a trope to no longer ignoring the importance and presence of non-human agency in our lives. Firstly, we consider human agency so vast as a geological force with a global impact. Secondly, this global force however lacks a sense of collective and coordinated outcome. Thirdly, human actions on their own are influenced and even caused by cultural and material factors. Then we can conclude that such agencies and actions are a part of an interaction with the material world (Durbeck et al, 2015, p. 118). We cannot look at the world as influenced exclusively by human agency, impacting and controlling environmental factors, when in actuality humanity is living in an interactive relationship with such non-human forces like weather that we have no exclusive control over. Then this relationship is not one sided, it is not in control of humanity to reshape to their will.

The problem in the human-centered reasoning is that we look at agency through will and rationality, in that we only assign agency if these two attributes also can be designated to a subject. In the history of human-centered philosophy, agency had been defined by the capability of making choices which could only be assigned to human agency. However, when humans make a decision and choose to act in a certain way, it is influenced by the cultural and environmental factors. Then we cannot separate the influence of non-human agency with such definition that originally excluded the same non-human agencies (Durbeck et al, 2015, p. 121). Things on their own have their unique histories, sometimes even completely dependent from human influences but usually in interaction with humans as another agency in the environment. Non-human agency has the capability of changing the environment and influencing human interactions, therefor it cannot be simply ignored as an "other" to the human agency. Then what material ecocriticism is aiming for is a dynamic relationship with both human and non-human agency, not emphasizing any above the other, both at the center of causality. (Iovino et al, 2014, p. 174).

Since the concept of non-human agency is relatively new, in the following paragraphs, an

example of a novel highlighting this concept will be provided for the readers. To start the discussion, a little bit of background history on the matter is appropriate to provide the context for the novel. Europeans (Post-1492) expanded their colonization to acquire strategic bases, raw materials and markets. At the time of the colonization in Africa, words like 'African', 'cannibals' and 'slaves' became not only interchangeable but metonymic. Slowly same process was applied to elephants and its metonyms, 'ivory' and 'meat'. Therefore millions of elephants were slaughtered to provide for the greed of Europeans, Arabs and Africans (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 165). Below is a summary of the analysis of the novel 'White Bone' done by Huggan and Tiffin (2015) which serves as an example of an animal-centered novel in the discussion of non-human agencies.

The novel 'White Bone' (1998) by Barbara Gowdy show-cases the human and animal dichotomy that explores the same issues of racism and slavery by Europeans against the colonized but replacing them with humans (colonizers) and elephants (colonized) respectively. The problem she faces when writing this novel is portraying animals (elephants in this case) as main characters which usually is only been done in children books. Therefore the author has to convince her readers against the tendency of reading animals as substitute and metaphors for humans. She attempts this through telling the story from the elephants' point of view as the story follows their journey across a drought-stricken landscape, in search of a relic called 'white bone' which supposedly guides its holders to the 'safe place' away from the human hunters. The elephants in the story view humans as savages, lacking any understandable language therefore flipping the animal and human dichotomy. The elephants themselves are depicted with a language, consciousness, cultural complexities, memory, ritual and religion. She also relegates humans to the side as they are invisible genocidal beings, offstage, but destructively self-seeking nonetheless (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 168).

Another strategy she employs is giving the elephants a religion as they worship a "she"

since the society is matriarchal. Although there are similarities with Christianity, Elephants religion does not have a clergy or a church. It is simply based on the need to construct a higher power. Their quest is also not a pilgrimage but a quest to find a land with no violent humans around to hunt them: *'In The White Bone, we are encouraged throughout to empathize with the elephants through their very recognizable individual traits, both good and bad – their social solidarity, their mental complexities and emotions – with such empathy effectively counteracting any ingrained tendency we might have to 'other' elephants in the text* (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 172).

1.2. Development

Development is an ambiguous term; this ambiguity is caused by the intention behind its planning. To ease this ambiguity, two different intentions of development needs to be explained.

Development can be used by capitalism, as a tool to strengthen their hold on the rest of the world, both economic and political. For the colonized to accept or pursue such a development, they get involved in the capitalist system of economy and politics that in most cases lead to the destruction of their environment, tradition and culture. Such an agenda, to peruse a development such as the one explained above usually results in cultural, political and economic authority of the west over the colonized (Escobar, 2011, p.242). This type of development works on the basis that the western values are the right one to manage the world, which in return treats the values of the colonized as required to be changed. Because of this view, this capitalism system sees both culture and people as numbers that they can change to be in a higher value, meaning better. But what is 'better'? This development implies the backwardness of the poor (Third World) countries of the world, meaning that they need to replace their ways for a better 'western' valued society (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. ۳۲). The reality behind this process is however that through such development, the locals are not in fact enriched at all and are only left with a false promise of a better western life. What this development achieves is in fact a

monopolization of the production of local materials, as well as the right to export the capital and therefor creating even a wider economical gap between countries.

Development however can also have another deep meaning and intention which is to create a new way of life, a simple life where a spiritual and cultural well-being is rated more important than the material growth. This is the task of the researchers in Post-Colonial Ecocriticism to come up with a solution to distinguish between the two development. To recognize and make aware of the first kind, and to peruse the second type. After all the whole field is based on the belief that social justice is closely tied with environmental justice and you cannot achieve one without the other: *'post-development theorists argue, by 'a colonial mentality stamped by [the] overvaluation of industrial societies and a [corresponding] devaluation of subsistence-based communities', which often work with different sets of social and ecological principles, and which tend – in very general terms – to formulate a view of the world that privileges simple living, and in which spiritual and socio-cultural wellbeing is accorded greater importance than material growth* (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 33).

These post-development theorists and post-colonial eco-critic theorists do not however completely oppose the first kind of development, in that they do not deny for example the need for the advanced science and technology of the west in the betterment of environment and other countries. But this creates a difficult task for these theorists, because a developed sustainable theory to preserve nature can still be a ruse by Capitalism to keep control of the land and resources of the poor. In this sense, then it is actually not the environment that needs protecting, but that saving some aspects of the environment is actually to protect the capitalist economy as an environmental degradation harms their market as well. Then as a solution, they propose that this sustainability and development needs to come from the self-monitoring of these poor or third world countries, or from a distinctive non-commodified relationship with nature (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 34).

Post-colonial ecocriticism criticizes the western development but at the same time

advocates for an alternative kind of development based on the communities of the natives, a kind of development untethered from the neoliberal principles of market expansion and economic growth. These critics also are pre-planning for when this system of capitalism crashes causing global catastrophes of social, political and environmental scale. However, these imagined catastrophes of a possible future can bring about innovation and creativity, to help create a new vision for human societies and understanding humanity itself. It is also difficult to separate some of the main global issues from capitalism, for example it is difficult to pin-point an exact cause for 'global warming' in a time-place scale because it is caused by different institutions and individuals across time and place. Post-Colonial critics however focus on how global warming is used by Capitalism to enforce the boundaries of rich and poor. Capitalism uses this excuse to create an urgency and as a result be able to have a sort of planetary management, all the while using the alibi of managing global warming to strengthen and in some cases advance their hold on resources globally. It is a job of these critics to be able to separate the actual issue from it being used as an alibi, albeit a very difficult task (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 81).

Issues like global warming force post-colonialism critics to both look at the future, to the survival of humanity and planet as well as looking in the history of slavery and colonialism as a cause for the global warming. At this time, both are required to be able to come up with solutions for the problems at hand.

1.3. Displacement

Displacement is an important issue in the Post-Colonial studies, as it studies the state of both colonized and the colonizers, and their relationship with their environment. Displacement can be categorized in two related definitions; First one a 'Physical Displacement', where a group of living creatures, be it animals or humans are displaced physically with force by some other living being or for natural reasons such as lack of resources to survive. The second type, a 'Psychological Displacement' that includes in itself other concepts such as 'Entitlement and Belonging', in which one loses a sense of at

homeness even though still living in the same place. This loss can be caused by many factors; Development and Capitalism are examples of such factors which are explained in the previous section. It could also be caused due to an environmental change, such as global warming that might cause a complete weather shift. The roots of psychological displacement however can be argued to always stem from an unnatural separation of humanity from nature, creating a sort of boundary between the species.

The issue of displacement however does not only effect humans, but their environment and other living beings like animals as well. There exist three interactions between humanity and animals when it comes to displacement. The first one comes from the language before any actual physical interaction. When it comes to the brutality against other humans, it comes easy to compare those humans to animals as we say, 'they were treated like animals' or 'Do not treat them like animals'. This deep ideological and unconscious way of viewing such actions socially accepted against animals but not humans creates a barrier between species in which animals are regarded as the "other", therefore justifying the cruelty against animals. This is a flaw in our language that unconsciously or even consciously at times we put humanity above animals, therefore regarding the existence of other living creates as to be exploited to our will.

Second interaction is when humans have to fight against animals for resources and survivability. When humans are displaced from their original home, they are moved to a new area where they now have to fight against the native animals of that area for resources such as food. They could even start to have a resentment towards the existence of a certain group of animals, that leads them to hunt and kill them simply because of that hatred. Third interaction is in the clash of opinion about a certain species of animals between the colonizers and the colonized which may lead to the deterioration of animals' state of safety and sustainability in the area. For example, certain animals may be sacred to the natives but might not mean the same thing to the new colonizers (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 154).

Two important topics in the discussion of

displacement will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Firstly, Entitlement and Belonging which are the concepts mostly related to psychological displacement and Pastoral which is a topic in the physical displacement discussing the state of a pastoral life before development and colonization.

2. Entitlement and Belonging

'Entitlement' and 'Belonging' are two different concepts related to owning a land. Entitlement is basically the legal right to own a land, so for example the colonizers could buy or take a land from the natives and own them legally (Entitlement), but they might never possess the emotional feeling of at homeness and belonging in that land (Belonging). This lack of feeling at homeness creates a sense of 'White Settler Anxiety' which is an emotional crisis of belonging that is firstly caused by split cultural values and secondly the fact that simply owning a land legally does not evoke the feelings of belonging and at homeness. White settler anxiety proves that the right to live in a land does not change a land to home on its own, as entitlement is much more or sometimes much less, than the emotional possession of a placed and belonging (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 99).

Belonging in turn, is the feeling of at homeness, solely a psychological and physically state of being comfortable where one is living. Of course this still can be through anxieties of its own, depending on where one lives, but still feeling comfortable to deal with them. The task of post-colonialism is then to establish a link between the loss of entitlement due to colonization and the loss of belonging that leads to both emotional and physical displacement of the natives. When this sense of belonging is evaporated and replaced by entitlement, the land and the country becomes a tradable commodity, a source of profit and the structural inequalities caused by the capitalism and colonialism continue to grow.

Displacement then can be defined as the loss of this sense of belonging. This sense of a loss can still occur even when you legally own the rights to a land (entitlement) but still losing this emotional attachment and belonging to where you live. One of the main reasons behind this emotional shift can be the changes in the

environment, like destroying a jungle nearby to create space for a new mall, or forcefully changing a pastoral lifestyle into a capitalistic economic system in the name of Development in which natives have to change their traditional lifestyles or be displaced from their homes. This feeling of displacement does not only effect humans however, with other living creatures around humans also being effected either directly or indirectly. A simple example of this could be the ever growing cities due to overpopulation and all the capitalistic development of malls and houses that further advances the boundaries of humans into the land of animals. All the forests destroyed and the animals that now have to either move away from the area or get used to living with humans as their neighbors. Neighbors who due to a lack of awareness about such issues are afraid of these animals and kill them.

Entitlement even if legally claimed is always likely to be questioned; postcolonial writers challenge entitlement through alternative modalities of belonging and ecological understandings of the relationship between human beings and the environment around them including other creatures who occupy the same space as them (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 135).

3. Pastoral

A definition of what Pastoral means is very complex and elusive, but its main attribute is through the harmony they have created to live alongside animals, with both groups benefiting from the relationship. Animals provide products such as milk, meat and labor while humans provide protection, food and health care for the animals. This way of living has in most cases proven to be more productive than simply hunting the animals however less productive than farming. The relation between humans and animals in this mode of life also allows for them to not waste any material, such as grass that humans cannot digest themselves, are fed to the animals that produce milk and meat, products that humans can then digest. (Mark Sutton et al, 2014, p.245). This dynamic relation between human beings and animals is lost in our city lives today, often leading to exploitation of animals, even to such extreme measures that the lives of animals start to have meaning in relation to only being products for

human beings. In short, Pastoralism is a form of agriculture in which human beings obtain their primary resources from one or a few domesticated animal species. These species are always herbivores such as cattle and similar animals. Plant cultivation could also be a component of pastoralism. (Mark Sutton et al, 2014, p. 245).

Pastoral however is a complex concept to define, because of how it has been used by different people with different intentions. G Huggan and H Tiffin have argued four points as to why Pastoral as a mode of living is of interest to a post-colonial critic and why it should be paid more attention to in their studies (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 99)

1. Pastoral can be a tool for the bourgeois ideology. It represents a simple life when in fact their lives are actually complex. They use this concept to reveal certain truth in their so called simple lives that is applicable and relevant to the bourgeois lives.
2. While pastoral in these ideologies work as a critique of social injustices, or demand a change, it hardly ever can be a catalyst to social changes.
3. Pastoral is a western construct that cannot be easily constructed in the same fashion in a non-western culture as they often are directly against their value systems.
4. Pastoral has a utopian side, that writers often turn to for an alternative of the world they are living in. It can be both a retreat to the past or to a better and new future.

Pastoral then can be viewed, either as the wild pastoral lives of the colonized, undefined, unformed and wild (Colonizers' ideology) or by reviewing the life before colonization, in which the western forces are intruders, and the natives are viewed as free and spontaneous people unbound by the capitalist urges of the west.

Conclusion

Post-Colonial Ecocriticism is simply an attempt to highlight the importance of studying both human and non-human entities involved in a process of colonization as well as their relationship and interactions in the world. As such researchers in this field hope to break the

boundaries created by the western ideology between human and non-human entities, as it believes even though they sometimes might have different functions in the world but none should be valued less than the other.

In this article, three of the main concepts in Post-Colonial Ecocriticism, Agency, Development and Displacement are introduced in an attempt to expose their relationship for the readers, and highlighting the importance of all three for a better understanding of colonization and its effect on both the environment and human-beings. These three concepts have been chosen because of their chained relationship to one another, in that colonizers broach the idea of Development with the goal of extracting a valuable resource from the colonized country. This is where the importance of discussion on both non-human entities as in the resources important to the colonizers and the process of development to benefit from such an entity comes to light. There are three reasons as to why colonizers would allow themselves to occupy a land either directly or indirectly. Firstly, the self-accorded right that they can and should colonize a country, usually with a religious or righteous alibi to save the natives, secondly, the perceived inability of the natives to use the land in the eyes of the colonizers and thirdly completely ignoring the existence of the natives and seeing the land as empty. Using any

or all of these reasoning, the colonizers turn a whole colonized city or country into a big factory, to produce and export products, using the natives as workers to further their political and economic agenda. As such the natives (who are not useful and/or are detrimental in the efficiency of extracting maximum profits from the land) are forced to move away from their homes (Displacement) either directly by the colonizers or by their own decision due to a new lack of job and sustainability in the area (Huggan and Tiffin, 2015, p. 137).

The goal of this article is simply to introduce Post-Colonial Ecocriticism as a valid field of study in both the history and current state of the relationship between an act of colonization and environment. We cannot simply hope to save our environment by fixing a single issue, as the causes to the environmental destruction we are facing today are actually spread out in many events globally, both in time and place. In a study such as this article, we can only hope that it opens a door for more public discussions to spread the awareness about both the history and a possible solution to not repeat the past. Public discussion about environmental issues is maybe one of the most important tasks of any Ecocritic's publication, as such the topics mentioned in this thesis are not heavily entangled with philosophical (complicated) mazes.

REFERENCES

- Becker, S. O. (2022). "Forced displacement in history: Some recent research". *Australian Economic History Review*. 62(1), 2-25.
- Buell, L. (2005). *The future of environmental criticism: Environmental crisis and literary imagination*. 1st ed., Wiley-Blackwell,
- Chakrabarty, D. (2012). "Postcolonial studies and the challenge of climate change. *New Literary History*", 43(1), 1-18. doi:10.1353/nlh.2012.0007.
- Chen, J., & Hwangbo, K. (2021). "An Ecological Elegy under Colonial Violence: The Counter-Pastoral Narrative and Ecocriticism in Doris Lessing's *The Grass Is Singing*". *Studies in English Language & Literature*, 47(3), 99-119.
- Chisty, S. (2021). Revisiting Orwell's "Shooting an Elephant" through the Lens of Post-Colonial Ecocriticism. *Litinfinitive Journal*, 3(2), 42-50.
- Clark, T. (2015). *Ecocriticism on the edge: The Anthropocene as a threshold concept*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Clark, T. (2019). *The value of ecocriticism*. Cambridge University Press.
- Coole, D., & Frost, S. (2010). "Introducing the new materialisms". *New materialisms: Ontology, agency, and politics*, 19(1), 1-43.
- Curtin, D. (2005). *Environmental ethics for a postcolonial world*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers.
- Dürbeck, G., Schaumann, C., & Sullivan, H. I. (2015). Human and Non-Human Agencies in the Anthropocene.
- Escobar, A. (2011). *Encountering development*. Princeton University Press.

- Gowdy, B. (1999). *The White Bone: A Novel*. Macmillan.
- Hanlon, W. W. (2020). "Coal smoke, city growth, and the costs of the industrial revolution". *The Economic Journal*, 130(626), 462-488.
- Haraway, D. J. (2013). *Primate visions: Gender, race, and nature in the world of modern science*. Routledge.
- Heise, U. K. (2016). *Imagining extinction*. University of Chicago Press.
- Houghton, J. (2005). Global warming. *Reports on progress in physics*, 68(6), 1343.
- Huggan, G., & Tiffin, H. (2015). *Postcolonial ecocriticism: Literature, animals, environment*. Routledge.
- Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann. (2014). *Material Ecocriticism*. Illustrated, Indiana University Press, 2014.
- Lankina, T., & Getachew, L. (2021). "Mission or empire, word or sword? The human capital legacy in postcolonial democratic development." In *Critical Readings in the History of Christian Mission* (pp. 887-921). Brill.
- Nash, L. (2005). "The agency of nature or the nature of agency?" *Environmental History*, 10(1), 67-69.
- Olagunju, T. E. (2015). "Impacts of human-induced deforestation, forest degradation and fragmentation on food security". *New York Science Journal*, 8(1), 10.
- Parish, A. and Hall, K. (2022). "Agency". In *The International Encyclopedia of Linguistic Anthropology*, J. Stanlaw (Ed.). <https://doi.org/10.1002/9781118786093.iela0008>
- Plumwood, V. (2002). *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*. Routledge.
- Rizy, K. M. (2015). *Nature and displacement: an ecocritical approach to five works by Marie Darrieussecq* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Georgia).
- Robinson, B. H. (2009). "E-waste: an assessment of global production and environmental impacts". *Science of the total environment*, 408(2), 183-191.
- Robinson, W. C. (2003). *Risks and rights: The causes, consequences, and challenges of development-induced displacement* "(Vol. 18). Washington DC: The Brookings Institution.
- Sutton, M., & Anderson, E. (2013). *Introduction to Cultural Ecology*. Third, AltaMira Press.
- Tripathy, Jyotirmaya 2015. *Indian Environmentalism: Discourse, Politics and Fragments*. Journal of Social Sciences – Sri Lanka, Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Kelaniya, Sri Lanka. 07 (02): pp 87-104.

پژوهشگاه علوم انسانی و مطالعات فرهنگی
پرتال جامع علوم انسانی



COPYRIGHTS

© 2022 by the authors. Licensee PNU, Tehran, Iran. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY4.0) (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0>)