Colonial/Postcolonial Ecologies and the Wilderness Myth in Australian and Canadian Literature

Submitted by Yahia Hakami
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I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that any material that has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University has been acknowledged.

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A PhD journey is often described as arduous, complex, and sometimes even as a potential obstacle to a healthy life. I have pondered for years to find words that could surpass these descriptions and adequately convey the challenges I have experienced. The only thing I can say is that I am thankful to my god that I did not pass away when angina struck me because of stress, anxiety, and depression I felt during my own PhD journey.

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Abstract

This thesis explores representations of the wilderness myth in Australian and Canadian writings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The wilderness myth, or the notion that there is such a thing as a "pristine" territory empty of humans, is a foundational concept in Australian and Canadian settler histories, where it has been used to establish a legal fiction of *terra nullius* to justify the taking of land from the Indigenous inhabitants. Focusing on poetry, fiction and non-fictional prose, this thesis engages with Postcolonial Studies and Ecocriticism to argue that its chosen literary works both uphold and resist the binary logic of Nature/Culture. The thesis also explores the ways the writings of early, colonial conservationists perpetuate the use of the wilderness myth to legitimise the marginalisation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples.

The thesis comprises three main chapters. Chapter One addresses nineteenth-century literature and visual culture, examining Susanna Moodie's guide to Canadian settler life, *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), alongside the late-nineteenth century poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott and the early twentieth-century painting of Emily Carr. It explores a tension between the desire to romanticise the wilderness and an economic drive to realise its untapped resources. Chapter Two reads Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993), exploring the wilderness myth in relation to the Australian Outback. The chapter argues that eco-cosmological/eco-theological perspectives can be linked to the representation of Indigenous peoples and their relationship with the land in Australian novels. Chapter Three turns to Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), reading these novels with relation to ecofeminist criticism. These novels explore the relationships between the wilderness myth and patriarchal power. The chapter argues that while *Oryx and Crake* skilfully demonstrates the dangers of the myth of the wilderness, *Away* often accepts settler ideologies without critique. Throughout, the

thesis thus attends to the ways in which literature works to either perpetuate or dismantle and move beyond the wilderness myth.

This thesis concludes that some nineteenth and twentieth-century writings are widely hailed as ecocritical in their challenge of colonial visions and framing of ecology. They strive to establish better relationships between humans and ecology, however, in doing so they commonly perpetuate the marginalisation of Indigenous people. Analysing the representations of settlers' views of ecology in these writings, the thesis ultimately argues that the wilderness myth still maintains a strong grasp over some academic scholarship and literature by and about settlers. Moreover, the writings of conservationists especially sometimes appropriate rational dualisms (such as Culture/Nature), which directly or indirectly contribute to the marginalisation of Indigenous Australians and Canadians. Through its postcolonial readings of literature, this thesis makes a crucial intervention in ecocriticism by challenging the myth of the wilderness and its continued influence in Western thought.

Introduction

What makes an imaginary, "pristine" natural world—a wilderness empty of humans—such a compelling setting for Western writers? This thesis presents an examination of the wilderness myth in literature and the myth's impact on Western interpretation and understanding of nature. As Greg Garrard writes, "the idea of wilderness, signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization," is a colonial ideology (66). In summation, the wilderness myth serves settlers who want to see Nature as a refuge from European or Western civilisation. This thesis is primarily concerned with a colonial ideology that has been taken up by some environmentalist discourses. The myth leads to Nature being treating as a frontier to be penetrated and exploited for economic ends; as we will see, this exploitative ideology brings with it the sense that the wilderness will disappear as it is increasingly settled.

This study considers the ways the wilderness myth is manifested in literature, exploring how postcolonial ecological research reveals the interconnectedness of the concept of the wilderness with oppression, colonialism and imperialism. It also deals with the extent to which this literature can find space for voices, histories, stories and conceptions of people and societies immersed in struggles for postcolonial liberation. Among their main obstacles are the philosophical and cultural dichotomies embedded in the minds of most Western colonisers. This project analyses literary works and occasional works of art, including Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), the late-nineteenth century poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, and the early twentieth-century painting of Emily Carr; Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993); and Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003). What binds this literature together, I argue, is that it can be read with regard to the ways settlers try to "civilise" the natural world. While Western settlers maintained that there is such a thing as

"pristine" nature, in actuality, this is a myth that perpetuates the exclusion of Indigenous people.

The chronological organisation of this thesis reflects a deliberate strategy in tracing the evolving narrative of settlers' interactions with the wilderness over time. Chapter one strategically analyses a diverse range of texts, including travel nonfiction, poetry, and painting. This selection allows for a comprehensive examination of the historical progression in settlers' perspectives on nature. The choice of three generically different texts in this chapter aligns with the intention to capture the multifaceted nature of settler narratives and representations. Conversely, chapters two and three concentrate on novels. This deliberate shift in genre serves a dual purpose. Firstly, novels provide a more extended and nuanced exploration of characters, plotlines, and socio-cultural contexts, enabling a deeper engagement with the complexities of settler-nature relationships. Secondly, the choice of novels in these chapters aligns with the theoretical frameworks that emphasise the importance of narrative and storytelling in shaping cultural perceptions. Novels, with their immersive storytelling capacities, offer a rich platform for delving into the psychological and emotional dimensions of settlers' attempts to "civilize" the natural world. Thus, the chronological progression and genre selection are methodically crafted to align with the evolving historical narrative and theoretical emphasis of each chapter, contributing to a more nuanced and comprehensive analysis of the overarching themes.

Theoretical Framework

Central to this thesis is a critique of the wilderness myth. At the heart of the myth, particularly as understood by nineteenth-century European colonisers, is the belief that "wilderness" signified land and nature that was unused. Settlers believed that New World landscapes should be prized as free and separate from human culture and civilisation and that landscapes should be preserved, a sentiment that was nicely captured by the U.S. 1964

Wilderness Act: the wilderness is described as a place “where man himself is a visitor who does not remain” (“Wilderness Act”). Wilderness in this sense carries the promise of a renewed, genuine relationship between humans and the Earth, a relationship that is almost sacred. The appeal to protect the Earth’s wild regions has been prevalent in the minds of at least some European settlers; as they claimed lands, they also created the notion of wilderness to conserve specific habitats and species of nature where humans could replenish themselves in a variety of ways (Garrard 67). This Nature/Culture binary lay at the heart of settler ideology, one that could be manipulated in such a way as to justify the exploitation rather than the preservation of the wilderness.

The wilderness myth is the fundamental concept of this thesis. It refers to the Western representation of wilderness as a wild, uncivilised, and isolated piece of land. The origins of such understanding of wilderness can be traced to the pre-colonial and colonial times of pre-modern Europe of the late Middle Ages. During this time, the colonial forces of Britain, the Netherlands, Spain and France set out to claim unexplored regions of the world in the name of their respective countries and monarchs. As the European empires grew in size and power, an image of hitherto unexplored lands as “no-man’s-lands” ready to be claimed was gradually taking shape. This set the foundation of the binary relation between the civilised and the uncivilised, nature and culture, inhabited and uninhabited, colonial and Indigenous. During the 17th and 18th centuries, the gap between these concepts was further expanded as the dominant Western countries (particularly Britain and France) went through a significant intellectual, cultural, and industrial transformation. As the societies experienced such pivotal changes, their colonial ambitions grew even larger, so unsanctioned and often violent forms of global occupation became all the more frequent. Although throughout history colonialism takes different shapes and a variety of justifications are provided for it, one thing remained essentially unaltered –the wilderness myth.

European settlers drew on the myth of the wilderness to justify their desire to use resources and possess land occupied by Indigenous people in the 18th and 19th centuries. Settlers wrote about wilderness to excuse their own actions and to claim it through both physical possession and their rhetoric. The wilderness is a main character in literary texts; as Garrard writes, "if pastoral is the distinctive Old World construction of nature, suited to long-settled and domesticated landscapes, wilderness fits the settler experience in the New Worlds—particularly the United States, Canada and Australia—with their apparently untamed landscapes and the sharp distinction between the forces of culture and nature" (Garrard 76).

The idea of wilderness as a strictly localised and hostile environment is based on the colonial prejudice about uncivilised areas of the world that should be "pacified" and "made useful" by Western (mainly European) colonisers. This prejudice comes from the problem that many ecological scholars have recognised. It amounts to the view that the abovementioned Western notion of wilderness was largely constructed due to misuse of Indigenous peoples' reverence for the land and all life on it, which is a vital part of their biocentric view. As will be explained, scholars including Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan even argue that the false conception of the Indigenous world has altered the notion of wilderness in the minds of a significant number of Indigenous peoples themselves. It is not a rare occasion anymore that they perceive their own native, "pristine" land as a harsh, hostile, and barren wilderness where life is all but impossible. Such a view might be attributed to the ubiquitous influence of Western globalisation. As this thesis attempts to show, focusing on the Canadian and Australian settler landscape writing, the concept of wilderness, as employed by those with imperialist aspirations, involves taking and exploiting "apparently untamed landscapes" (Garrard 76), an act that often harms the Indigenous people and culture that already resided there.

Western philosophers have long claimed the benefits of taming and possessing nature; however, this taming has proven destructive to Nature and human life alike. While contemplating the space of the forest—which is represented as a kind of wilderness—Robert Pogue Harrison mentions that Western thinkers, from Descartes on, have maintained that

> there can be no question of the forest as a consecrated place of oracular disclosures; as a place of strange or monstrous or enchanting epiphanies; as the imaginary site of lyric nostalgias and erotic errancy; as a natural sanctuary where wild animals may dwell in security far from the havoc of humanity going about the business of looking after its 'interests.' There can be only the claims of human mastery and possession of nature—the reduction of forests to utility. (121)

This possession of forest (nature) for utilisation (of scientific revolutions) is challenged by the postcolonial ecological research that shows how this possession has led to the destruction of both forest and Indigenous societies. This destruction occurs instead of life flourishment, contrary to the expectations of Westerners.

This thesis makes the claim that the wilderness myth serves as a convenient tool for colonialism and capitalism by providing a rationale for settlers to lay claim to untamed lands. This myth presents an idealised vision of a "pristine" natural environment devoid of human presence, creating the illusion that this untouched space is available for appropriation in the name of "civilization." Consequently, colonisers seize these lands, asserting that their actions will enable them to "civilize" and develop new cities, all under the banner of human advancement. This acquisition is driven by greed, as it grants them access to valuable natural resources that can be exploited for their personal financial interests. However, it is important to recognise that Indigenous communities often inhabit these lands that colonisers covet. The wilderness myth erroneously convinces colonisers that they can claim these territories without causing harm to other human populations. In reality, Indigenous communities possess

knowledge of sustainable resource management, preventing over-exploitation. Once their communities are displaced by settlers, the land suffers from degradation and devastation.

Also crucial for this thesis is the concept of "the more-than-human world," a concept coined by David Abram (21), which speaks of nature with an overarching sense of fullness, as something that embraces humans' audacious creativity and culture, thereby exceeding them. In an interview by the Garrison Institute co-founder and ecologist, Jonathan Rose, with philosopher David Abram, Abram mentions that when he started writing his first book, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* (2017), he found himself increasingly frustrated by the paucity of English vocabulary, namely, the lack of proper ways, terms, and phrases for speaking of nature. Abram points to the issue with the term "nature" itself, which almost instantly forces juxtaposition with "culture." Such relation, he explains, leads to a distorted view of the world and humanity's position as part of it. He tried to write about human nature to state that humans are both nature *and* non-human nature. However, he feels there is still a divide similar to a fence between human nature on one side and non-human nature on the other. In an attempt to overcome this divide, Abram wrote about the meaning of nature as the wild, breathing, animate earth that contains the humans whose culture, technology, and creativity are held within and permeated by the animate earth. More interestingly, for Abram, the breathing animate earth or nature which encompasses everything also, in that sense, exceeds humans. In other words, nature is always more than just humans. Therefore, Abram claims that there is the human world, and then there is the more-than-human world. The latter not only includes but also exceeds the human. Abram argues:

> Caught up in a mass of abstractions, our attention hypnotized by a host of human-made technologies that only reflect us back to ourselves, it is all too easy for us to forget our carnal inherence in a more-than-human matrix of

> sensations and sensibilities. Our bodies have formed themselves in delicate reciprocity with the manifold textures, sounds, and shapes of an animate earth — our eyes have evolved in subtle interaction with other eyes, as our ears are attuned by their very structure to the howling of wolves and the honking of geese. To shut ourselves off from these other voices, to continue by our lifestyles to condemn these other sensibilities to the oblivion of extinction, is to rob our own senses of their integrity, and to rob our minds of their coherence. We are human only in contact, and conviviality, with what is not human. (Abram 22)

Abram draws attention precisely to what is lost because of the way in which settler/colonizing logic is bound up with a human/nature divide. According to Abram, we have become unaware and disconnected from the living earth. This has had unfortunate and often devastating results for the sustainability of the planet. Abram's argument focuses on how the human mind became disconnected from its natural surroundings, segregating humans from other lifeforms on the globe, such as animals and plants. Beginning with the introduction of the abstract alphabet, according to Abram's central point, this disconnect was widened. Humans are profoundly embedded in the earth and established in a place in Indigenous and oral traditions, which mark the beginning of humanity. At this time, language was a sensual and physiological experience. The way we learn to speak a language as children or our personification of natural surroundings, such as a babbling brook, are both examples of such connections. The abstract logical mind, as exemplified by Western philosophy, began to eclipse the speaking world around us.

In *Myths of Wilderness in Contemporary Narratives: Environmental Postcolonialism in Australia and Canada* (2012), Kylie Crane proposes a model that helps understand the varieties of the wilderness myth. She examines the literature of wilderness by the settlers of

Australia and Canada, relying on Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* to represent the three types of settler stages in the nature of the New World. Crane's book specifically examines "post-settler" narratives of wilderness and place (7). In this study, "post-settler" describes narratives and perspectives based on settler-colony mythologies (7). The first group of settlers seek their freedom from the unjust laws of their previous homelands, looking for a chance to establish a new identity, devoid of all injustices and laws of their previous culture. This typology is based on Thoreau's argument that humans are essentially good until their minds are infused with cultural prejudices (28). A second group of settlers believe that life in nature comes with certain, potentially unpleasant, demands, such as killing animals for food and overcoming nature's dangers. Settlers thus see themselves apart from and superior to nature. Finally, in the third stage, as settler societies establish themselves, they end up creating cultural laws that codify and sustain dichotomies between Man and Nature or Culture and Nature. Such tensions define the basis of the settler exploitation of nature.

The phrases that Crane often employs in conjunction with wilderness are "into the wilderness," "colonizing the wilderness," and "utilizing the wilderness" (62). Each phrase indicates the settlers' colonial framings, visions, and concepts of Nature and reflects their materialist and exploitative tendencies towards nature. Crane's "into the wilderness" stresses the theme of solitude, and she employs this theme to analyse the way in which settlers established their relation with nature in the colonised realm. Crane points out that this movement "into" the wilderness "must be seen as predicated on the identity factors" (24). By these factors Crane means classism, religious beliefs, gender, and others that caused the persecution of the settlers in their own homelands. As portrayed by "into the wilderness" writings, the settlers began their journey in order to escape the oppression they faced in their homelands. However, the solitude they found in nature often turns out to be a cursed—even evil—prison, an "Eden after the fall" (24). The settlers, apparently, escaped from one curse

only to settle in another. However, after surviving both their homelands' oppression and the dangers of the colonised bushes, "into the wildness" settlers often transformed themselves into tyrants: from the powerless to the powerful, from the judged to the judge.

Crane explains this transformation as central to a second type of settler literature, "colonising the wilderness." This follows because the settlers have achieved their purpose in the "into the wilderness" phase. Crane argues that this transformation is represented in those wilderness writings that show how the settlers subdued and shaped their newfound landscapes:

> Whereas the typical into the wilderness text will go to lengths to frame wilderness in terms of solitude, the colonizing the wilderness text will instead foreground the establishment of civilization. Furthermore, the into the wilderness text often suggests a temporary sojourn, whereas the colonizing the wilderness text suggests more permanent settlement. (25)

The settlers' moving into the wilderness in order to save their oppressed identity can therefore be considered a temporary sojourn. By this designation Crane aims to symbolise the short-lived pretext for the ultimate goal, that of permanent settlement—as seen in the texts of "into the wilderness"—in which the settlers are not only seeking to preserve their identity but also to colonise nature.

The third phrase in Crane's model, "utilizing the wilderness writings," describes what settlers did after "colonising the wilderness." This type of literature involves "the use or exploitation of resources (natural, mineral) in wilderness areas" (Crane 27) and indicates that the concept of nature is not only useful for human survival, but also justifies their mostly exploitative actions. The literature of this phase also sheds light on how the settlers established their new visions. For example, Crane mentions the way they created Nature as an epistemology "entailed by living in it and using it" (28). She points out that the texts of this

type represent a "contradistinction to the into the wilderness type" (29). The settlers' understanding of nature in terms of its "usefulness" in the writings of "utilizing the wilderness" contradicts the settlers' claim—represented in the texts of "into the wilderness"—that they understood nature as an escape from society. Crane also emphasises that "[t]his usefulness is predicated on an understanding that wilderness exists, but is here coupled with the assumption that its value must, or at least can, be understood in terms of this usefulness" (28). Consequently, Crane views the solitude that nature provides to the settlers in escaping oppression as the genesis of its exploitation. As the settlers overcame the hardships of nature, they then formed new understandings and beliefs about nature, which Crane describes as "the roughing-it-on-your-own-experience" (28). This understanding transforms nature into a resource to be exploited. Thus, "it is the solitude leading to salvation experience" of nature (Crane 28).

This thesis draws upon such past research, taking a postcolonial approach to literature and considers the ways literature both depends upon and erases Indigenous culture. In *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, DeLoughrey and Handley view the process in which a colony altered and matured under colonialism as "naturalization" of colonisers in the landscape of colonies (24). Naturalised colony refers to how "geography has been and still is radically altered by colonialism, including resource use, stewardship, and sovereignty—issues that have been crucial to independence movements and their constitutive literatures" (Deloughrey and Handley 24). These discussions about the way in which the settlers utilise the empty spaces of nature to establish new ecological visions resonate with the arguments of the Indian historian Ramachandra Guha. In his essay "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique", Guha argues that the non-Western "pristine" nature is the "tabula rasa" upon which to inscribe the agency of the western ecological visions and epistemologies (such as Culture/Nature binary) (71). By

"tabula rasa" Guha means the settler ideology that these lands are somehow beyond global history – that nothing was happening in them of any human importance – before the arrival of European/White settlers. In their essay "Against Authenticity: Global Knowledges and Postcolonial Ecocriticism," Cilano and DeLoughrey emphasise Guha's point while arguing that Western settlers ignored or tried to eradicate Indigenous methodologies and religious traditions. These are "positioned as the spiritual and emotional counter to the destructive secular rationality of the west" (71). According to Guha, Western "ecologists rely on the Indigenous methodologies to argue for the universality of their position" (Cilano and DeLoughrey 77). Guha highlights the risk of accepting the universal ecological position by deep ecologists, which would make the Indigenous biocentrism reflect "a lack of concern with inequalities *within* human society" (Cilano and DeLoughrey 72). In other words, framing Indigenous life as a contrast to society further supports the Nature/Culture binary in a way that harms Indigenous peoples' claims to humanity. Settlers strove to treat Indigenous culture as a foil to "society" and as something that should be replaced by settlement.

This thesis agrees with Cilano and Deloughrey's argument that settlers make a paternalistic attempt at giving pledges to Indigenous people; it extends their argument by suggesting that settler mindsets subversively reinforce a Culture/Nature binary while further subjugating Indigenous people and harming their land. Discussing the deep ecologist Arne Næss's response to Guha's warning, Cilano and DeLoughrey claim that Næss "concedes the importance of Guha's critique" (72). He agrees about the need for trust in the Western deep ecology movement for the sake of economic and environmental progress in Indigenous countries (73). Cilano and Deloughrey claim that this "paternalistic trust us" call would replicate the history of the colonial inequalities and ignore the ongoing exploitation of the more-than-human environments (72). Most importantly, Cilano and DeLoughrey's critique of the call of "trust us" contribute to Guha's warning about Western settlers potentially shaping

their own understanding of the Indigenous environment. (73). This resonates with Crane's argument that Western settlers established new ecological visions and epistemologies in Indigenous worlds because concepts of Nature enabled them to escape from their urban homeland to an area they perceived as isolated from the rest of the world.

This thesis supports the arguments of Cilano and DeLoughrey, who perform a critical examination of universal ecological stances and make assertions regarding the complex interplay between ecocriticism, postcolonialism, and the inadvertent perpetuation of historical power dynamics. Cilano and DeLoughrey use this discussion of Guha and Næss as the foundation for their main argument about "the limitations of deep ecology" (79). They respond to the current impasse in which postcolonial and ecocritical approaches "have contributed to their mutual unintelligibility" (79). The universal and global stances, trusted by the proponents of ecocriticism, make these proponents "blind" to the "naturalization of a western white [settler] subject in his claims to a new environmental and epistemological territory" (Cilano and DeLoughrey 73). These universal ecological stances are used by the western deep ecologists to justify the role of the Western settlers in framing the new understandings and visions of the undeveloped ecologies in the third-world nations. Cilano and DeLoughrey argue that the "ecocritical turn to originary nature can naturalize […] Europeans in the landscape, often resulting in a powerful ontological claim that erases white complicity in the expansion of empire, not to mention ongoing indigenous presence" (74). Cilano and DeLoughrey contend that the embrace of an ecocritical focus on primordial nature has the potential to normalise the presence of Europeans within the geographic and conceptual landscape, frequently yielding a potent ontological assertion that overlooks both the implicated involvement of white settlers in imperial expansion and the enduring existence of Indigenous communities (74).

Consequently, postcolonial critics—who challenge the influence of settlers by fashioning new understandings of ecologies in the Indigenous landscapes—challenge Eurocentric views of the environment and advocate for a universal ecological position. Cilano and DeLoughrey align with the perspectives of the postcolonial ecologist, Graham Huggan, who claims that postcolonial ecocriticism has "effectively renewed, rather than belatedly discovered, its commitment to the environment, reiterating its insistence on the inseparability of current crises of ecological mismanagement from historical legacies of imperialistic exploitation and authoritarian abuse" (74). This thesis takes up this argument and performs postcolonial readings to challenge settler ideologies.

Western settlers' effects on Indigenous societies are typically oppressive and destructive, including their attitudes to religious traditions and the ecological sustainability of the Indigenous world. Cilano and DeLoughrey indicate that one of the main tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism is to expose the negative effects of Western naturalisation in Indigenous landscapes. In a renewed postcolonial ecocritical position that challenges Western naturalisation, Graham Huggan argues that naturalisation and "ecological citizenship [require] commitments to human, as well as wider ecological justice" (157). Postcolonial ecocritics, such as Huggan, claim to have contributed to Indigenous nations' biocentrism, which is constructed by Indigenous religious traditions. Graham Huggan's perspective introduces the concept of ecological citizenship and its connection to wider ecological and human justice. This underscores the intricate and interconnected nature of justice concerns, pushing for a comprehensive approach that considers both environmental and social aspects. Recognising this historical reality is essential to acknowledge the injustices faced by Indigenous communities, helping to foster understanding and a commitment to rectifying past injustices.

In their insightful work *Global Ecologies and the Environmental Humanities*, scholars Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Jill Didur, and Anthony Carrigan delve into landscape narratives within colonised and underdeveloped contexts, notably Bangladesh, revealing the intricate connections between history, ecology, and postcolonial politics. According to them, "the history of globalisation and imperialism is integral to understanding contemporary environmental issues" and "identifying possibilities for imaginative recuperation that are compatible with anticolonial politics" (2). They argue that certain postcolonial readings of the environment reveal the hidden truths of exploitation beyond the "colonial framings of ecology" (18). In particular, the authors examine how postcolonial readings of colonised settings might challenge the Western colonisers' imperial conceptions of ecology, such as the pervading concept of wilderness that became a lens through which the Indigenous world is observed. Through their exploration, DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan shed light on the transformative potential of postcolonial environmental interpretations, dismantling conventional colonial framings and emphasising the importance of recognising the intertwined legacies of globalisation, imperialism, and environmental discourse.

Awe and appreciation for the natural world's intrinsic value are common spiritual foundations of eco-cosmologies. Berry expresses a similar point of view in stating that "we are not a collection of objects that happen to be related; we are a communion of subjects that share a common origin and destiny" (Berry, 25). This is evidenced by the fact that many Indigenous societies have long considered themselves to be stewards of the land, charged with protecting and preserving it for future generations. As the eco-theologian Brian Swimme notes: "The natural world is not a resource for us to exploit, but a community of beings to which we belong" (Swimme, 2). On the other hand, pre-industrial, especially Native American, lifestyles tend to associate spirituality with the natural world and its cycles. This is evident in the manner that the seasonal shift or the movement of animals has been revered as

a sacred event in the spiritual lives of many Indigenous communities. Notwithstanding these distinctions, eco-cosmology and pre-industrial lifestyles share several crucial parallels. For instance, both perspectives value a well-balanced and harmonious connection with nature. This is reflected in the words of the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, who claims, "we have not inherited the Earth from our ancestors; we have borrowed it from our children" (Macy, 18). The desire to live in peace with one another and the natural environment is a central tenet of both worldviews, as is the significance of community and connectivity.

DeLoughrey, Didur and Carrigan's discussion is important for understanding the symbolism explored in the literature analysed in this thesis. As will be discussed in the next section, literature uses characterisation and narrative shifts to demonstrate settlers' adherence to a myth of wilderness as pristine and conquerable. On the one hand, the Western settlers' prejudices, such as the idea of the so-called wilderness as a hostile and uncivilised world, are often forced upon the colonised peoples. On the other hand, Indigenous outlooks, which are based on the Indigenous beliefs and practices, are often distorted by Western thinkers and used for exploitative purpose.

Often, Indigenous knowledge about the environment is treated as separate and inferior to the knowledge produced by Western ecologists, who take a scientific method to study of the environment; this thesis challenges such framings. Guha, demonstrates that Western ecologists are framed as holding different knowledge than Indigenous religious beliefs and traditions. Guha also argues that ecologists have appropriated Indigenous traditions to further scientific methods:

> I have indicated that this appropriation of [Indigenous] traditions is in part dictated by the need to construct an authentic lineage and in part a desire to present deep ecology as a universalistic philosophy. […..] Many agricultural communities do have a sophisticated knowledge of the natural environment that may equal (and sometimes

> surpass) codified "scientific" knowledge; yet, the elaboration of such traditional ecological knowledge (in both material and spiritual contexts) can hardly be said to rest on a mystical affinity with nature of a deep ecological kind. Nor is such knowledge infallible; as the archaeological record powerfully suggests, modern Western man has no monopoly on ecological disasters. (3)

Guha also adds the following to further support his argument: "In a brilliant article, the Chicago historian Ronald Inden points out that this romantic and essentially positive view of the East is a mirror image of the scientific and essentially pejorative view normally upheld by Western scholars" (4). Western scholars and settlers both struggle to accept the idea that Westerners cannot control and shape the natural world according to their desires, but ultimately greed and the desire for power will go before a fall. Literary works including *Voss* (as I will explain later) narrate the hubris of settlers in assuming that the romantic view of Nature as a "tabula rasa" to be altered by settlers will always go well and not cause any harm to human and natural life.

To build upon Guha's argument, this thesis suggests that modern Western science should not have any monopoly on understandings of ecology and that Indigenous representation of the human being and this world must be valued more greatly. The history of Western thinking, however, combined with colonial dominance by Western imperialist states, showcase a different image, one of establishing monopolies by forcing one's own worldview and values upon others. Some researchers have dealt with the history of anthropology to uncover the roots of such unjustified actions. In writings about the landscape of colonised nations, Huggan and Tiffin, in their chapter "Zoocriticism and the Postcolonial", examine the position of a human perceived by others as an animal. They discuss how dominant cultures have perceived human beings as "animals" throughout history. Human extermination and the slave trade have been based on the idea that some people are "animals," an issue that

develops when humans and animals are pitted against one another in a battle for "decreasing resources" (Huggan and Tiffin 136). Huggan and Tiffin tackle this issue with a question that represents this attitude: "Why worry about animals when children are starving, or when other people are still being killed, raped and abused"? In response, these authors return to the premise of their debate: Abuse will continue to persist if the destruction of others—who are depicted or classified as non-human—is considered "ethically acceptable". Connecting this issue with the wilderness idea in particular, Huggan and Tiffin refer to Indonesian texts to illustrate how this idea forces the nation's Indigenous peoples to compete with animals in a race for diminishing resources. This wilderness-based exploitation has led to human-and-human, human-and-animal, and animal-and-animal indiscriminate killings and dislocation, as well as economic devastation. Moreover, it has created "either/or" situations in terms of land and resource shortage or degradation (Huggan and Tiffin 138). They demonstrate that the destruction of Indigenous culture also often coincides with the destruction of a natural ecology that keeps all humans, including Western settlers, alive.

The wilderness myth is not merely flawed as a concept; it has brought about real, material, verifiable tragedies that harm both humans and animals and especially hurt Indigenous life. Huggan and Tiffin reveal how the wilderness myth enabled colonisers to design "game parks." They reveal how these "game parks" were to gain profits from tourists at the expense of humans and animals killing each other (Huggan and Tiffin 136-137), indicating the connection between the wilderness idea and profit-gaining. Such a connection further points to inhuman, oppressive parallels, such as slavery, drugs and prostitution, a likely possibility in dehumanised, totalitarian societies with little respect for nature and life. This constitutes an extreme example of some of the horrors humans face if the wilderness myth is not re-examined.

Settlers have used the wilderness myth to excuse their greedy desire to transform the natural world and gain profit. Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett, in *The Caribbean: Aesthetics, World-Ecology, Politics* consider the possibility of connecting the seemingly contradictory concepts: capitalism and nature. This idea is based on their belief that "everything from the microbiome and the body to the world empires and the global markets is the relationship between humans and the rest of nature" (8). Therefore, arguing that capitalism is itself a world ecology, they conclude that "what counts as ecological criticism is radically transformed" (8). According to them, it is necessary to have in mind "the operations of high finance as a way of organizing nature" (Campbell and Niblett 8). This reminds us that as this thesis explores the wilderness myth and its significance, issues of economic power will often be at play. In essence, Campbell and Niblett's exploration underscores the inextricable link between human activities driven by economic motives and the intricate web of natural systems. Their assertion encourages an expanded viewpoint that encompasses not only the ecological repercussions of such activities but also the structural forces that perpetuate them. Consequently, within the framework of this thesis dissecting the wilderness myth and its multifaceted significance, the intricate interplay between narratives of untamed landscapes and the mechanisms of financial and legal control emerges as a central thread, necessitating a comprehensive analysis of both historical narratives and contemporary power dynamics.

Another concept important for this thesis—especially the final chapter—is ecofeminism. Ecofeminism represents the inclination in origins, experience, religious practice, literary works, morality, and metaphysics between the dominance of nature and female subordination. Ecofeminism considers female connection to nature and biodiversity. The concept of ecofeminism arose in response to an increasing consciousness of the relationships between women and nature. In 1975, French philosopher Françoise d'Eaubonne

invented ecofeminism, urging women to lead an environmental breakthrough to redeem the biosphere (*Le Féminisme Ou La Mort*). This illustrates women's ability to make important achievements to end environmental upheaval. The term gained popularity because of its use in anti-environmental demonstrations. This environmental rebellion would entail new gender-based relationships between men and women, humanity and nature.

Matriarchal systems differ greatly from patriarchy's dominator model of hierarchy and oppression. In her article "The Gaia Tradition and the Partnership Future: An Ecofeminist Manifesto," Riane Eisler discusses pre-patriarchal history, when prehistoric societies did not have "the dominator model" of hierarchy and oppression. Eisler explains that the absence of this model was due to these pre-patriarchal societies worshipping a goddess known as the Great Mother, "the giver of life and creator of us all" (24). The Great Mother created the non-dominant, matriarchal model for these societies. In this model, women and "feminine values" such as caring, compassion, and non-violence are not inferior to "masculine" and violent values. Eisler argues that these peaceful societies achieved through their feminine values the "human connection to nonhuman nature" (23). To illustrate this connection, Eisler cites some Goddess-worshipping ancestors, where spirituality and nature were one, such as Catal Huyuk in Turkey, Old Europe in the Balkans and Greece. Moreover, "one of the most ancient Chinese legends comes to us from the *Tao Te Ching*, which tells of a time when the *yin* or feminine principle was not yet subservient to the male principle or *yang*, a time when the wisdom of the mother was still honoured above all" (26). In sharp contrast to "'traditional' patriarchal religious" (28) teachings, women of these ancestors did not only have important public positions, such as shamans, wise women, and often as heads of matrilineal clans, but were also considered as merciful and fair priestesses, whose spiritual outlooks create and nurture all forms of life. Patriarchy perpetually sought to

prevent the ontological matriarchy from maintaining the journey of feminine bonding, communion, and harmony with nature.

The devastating impact of soil, water, and resource depletion, especially in colonized nations, disproportionately affects women, particularly those with caregiving responsibilities. These women, often serving as both caregivers and providers, suffer from limited access to clean water, arable land for farming, and forests for essential resources like wood for cooking and heating. This is an argument established by the spiritual ecofeminist, Rosemary Radford Ruether, one of the most famous Christian feminist theologians (Scholp 11). Her book *Women Healing Earth; Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion* (2002) is one of her most comprehensive contributions to this ecofeminist theological movement. Ruether explains that the bodily experiences of giving life (pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding) connect the human and natural worlds together in an overt way. Ruether has drawn parallels between holding and breastfeeding a baby to Gaia's divine earth, with her assistance of her millions of interconnected life forms. Ruether's early works focused mostly on the freedom of oppressed social groups, but she also became interested in the significance of the environment in religious worldviews. Ruether does not only discuss how both nature and women have been underestimated, but also talks about how the two are spiritually connected. The key to this change is the ecofeminist perspective of the more-than-human environments and all of creation as an ecosystem which operates as a conjoined "organism with all of the parts interconnected and interdependent" (Ruether 7-11).

The ecofeminist concept of "anti-dualism" is crucial for an argument against the wilderness myth, which relies on many dualisms. As the Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood argues, "dualisms are not just freefloating systems of ideas; they are closely associated with domination and accumulation, and are their major cultural expressions and justifications" (42). Consequently, Plumwood establishes the concept of "anti-dualism" as an

ecofeminist demand. To support her argument, Plumwood describes several of these dualisms, such as Culture/Nature, male/female, master/slave, reason/emotion and reason/nature. She then goes on to explain how these dualisms contain certain characteristics that give power to the "superior" masculine coloniser rather than the "inferior" colonised woman or the more-than-human environments. One of these dualisms, that is of primary concern in this work, is the self/other dynamic that supports the rationality of the Western and economic domination over nature. The self/other dualism, Plumwood argues, causes an *instrumentalism*, contrast to "a non-hierarchical concept of difference implies recognising the other as a centre of needs, value and striving on its own account, a being whose ends and needs are independent of the self and to be respected" (Plumwood 60). Thereupon, the persecuted *other*, after being the centre of needs for the *self*, starts seeking for its needs independently of the self who persecuted and weakened it. Building on that, Plumwood creates the theory of what she calls the *Relational Self*. Greta Gaard mentions that this Relational Self is based on the feminist ideology in which:

> children are socialized to construct a specific sense of self based on their gender: whereas boys observe a difference between themselves and their mothers, girls observe a continuity. Boys learn to base their fundamental sense of self on this perception of difference and separation (the autonomous self) whereas girls learn to base their self-identity on the perception of continuity and their relationships to others (the relational self). (14)

The Relational Self will create, as Plumwood believes, a non-instrumentalism in which the "needs and interests of humans and nonhumans are not separated but interdependent. The needs and interests of self and others are interrelated and simultaneously taken into account" (Lam 303). Plumwood adds that the Relational Self "treats[s] at least the general goals of the other's wellbeing, ends or telos as among our own [self's] primary ends" (155). Based on

these feminist arguments, women's bodily experiences in matriarchal systems challenge a Self/Other dualism. When this Self/Other dualism is challenged by women, Plumwood's emphasis on the Relational Self demonstrates a non-instrumentalist situation in which the needs and interests of humans (self) and nature (other) are connected and interdependent.

When a certain group of people benefits from the wilderness, another group is negatively affected. In other words, no group of people can get rich from the wilderness, except by impoverishing another group of people. Scholars agree that the wilderness myth simultaneously helps settlers and harms Indigenous peoples. According to ecofeminist scholar Plumwood in *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, the notion of wilderness creates opposing dualisms in which one part oppresses the other part within the same duality. Through the wilderness, impoverished groups including natives, women, blacks, labourers, are oppressed by the other side of the same duality—settlers, whites, higher-classes of people and rulers (2). Plumwood implies that the notion of wilderness enforces this oppression because it is based on the same dualist way of thinking, as discussed above in the Human/Nature binary (the Western idea of wilderness).

Further, this disconnectedness of Human and Nature, brought about by settlers who employ dualist thinking to tame and overcome the wilderness's hostility, becomes a "conceptual map" for settlers to re-use their cultural dualist thinking to overcome and dominate any kind of hostility or challenge made by these impoverished groups that have been made inferior. Plumwood states that the Western ideologies, including the notion of wilderness, have "the logic of dualism [which] yields a common conceptual framework which structures otherwise different categories of oppression" (3). She adds further that dualism's "conceptual structure of domination reappears in very different inferiorised groups: as we have seen, it marks women, nature, 'primitive' people, slaves, animals, manual labourers, 'savages', people of colour—all supposedly 'closer to the animals'" (29).

Postcolonial ecological research not only challenges the Western notion of wilderness, but also reveals the falsity of its root, which is the Western dualist way of thinking and Culture/Nature binary. Some scholars, such as Elizabeth DeLoughrey, have marvelled at how the "pristine" nature—in its separation from humans and their activities—is transformed into the rubbish dump of industrial viruses and diseases, which do not only destroy the pristine spaces but also contribute to the devastation of the entire civilisation (101). This reminds us that dualisms are harmful to humans because they impact the ways we interact with ecology and hinder our own access to resources; moreover, the myth of the wilderness is perpetuated in literature that further demonstrates the falseness of dualistic thinking.

Studying literary works by settlers and the descendants of settlers provides valuable insights into thinking beyond binary frameworks. By delving into these texts, scholars can better understand the complexities and nuances of colonial experiences, shedding light on the limitations of rigid dualist thinking. This literary exploration encourages us to recognise that such binary distinctions, like Culture/Nature, not only impact ecological relationships but also have profound consequences on human societies, highlighting the need for more critical interpretations of the myths of the wilderness.

The Wilderness Myth and Its Literary Representations

Literary Approach

This thesis considers how different literary genres by or about settlers represent the wilderness, and include or exclude Indigenous knowledge. The scholar of literature and ecocriticism Janet M. Wilson argues: "[L]etters and diaries [show] how the mimetic representational forms of travel writing – close to memoir and reportage – exist alongside imaginative modes such as fantasy and fable, sometimes interpenetrating them" (7). Many of the works of literature that will be examined thus blend fact with fantasy, as representations

of the wilderness and the conceptualisations of it that are rooted deeply in white settlers' imaginations drive experiments with form.

This thesis builds upon the idea that new approaches can be taken to literary analysis that melds with postcolonial studies and ecocritism. Chris Campbell and Michael Niblett argue that an "interrogation of the established modes of enquiry of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism is symptomatic of a wider sense of crisis in literary studies, a crisis that has prompted, over the last decade or so, calls to rethink longstanding categories of literary analysis" (8). The literary canon must be expanded to include global perspectives that push past notions of a distinction between "humans and the rest of nature." Campbell and Niblett assert:

> world literature must equally be understood as the literature of the capitalist world-ecology. Or, to put it another way, the world-ecology will *necessarily* be discernible in any modern literary work, since this too – in the form of the transformations in relations between human and biophysical natures through which the modern world-system has developed – exists as the matrix within which all modern literature takes shape. Our contention is that this world-ecology perspective provides a new range of critical optics on literary production that build on, yet move beyond, those currently prevalent in postcolonial ecocriticism. (8)

In summary, shifting attention to issues in postcolonial ecocriticism such as the wilderness myth opens up new optics on literature that features settings of the wilderness.

This thesis's analysis of literature will also draw upon the ideas of Janet M. Wilson. Wilson analyses white settler societies, arguing that literature about these societies features:

> cultural encounter and exchange, revised relations to the homeland catalysed by new identity formations in the hostland; it employs striking images of

> selfhood and is often generically innovative, bordering on forms of life writing. In summary, although the work of these writers does not constitute a literary tradition, collectively it inflects the national imaginary with multiple outsider perspectives and perceptions of difference, implying a challenge to the monocultural and largely male oriented nationalism (3).

Wilson's analysis of literature within white settler societies significantly reveals the complexity of colonial experiences, emphasising the creative use of literature to challenge dominant narratives. Her insights underscore the transformative potential of literature in broadening our understanding of settler communities and their impact on national identity. This thesis will build on this idea, demonstrating that the "national imagery" of Canada and Australia is impacted by the ways authors and artists understand the wilderness myth and either concede to it or try to contest it. Within the literature's representations can be found understandings of the treatment of Indigenous people that signal a subversive awareness of the ways the wilderness myth is harming Indigenous people through its observance of a Nature/Culture dualism.

One symbol that will often appear in the analysis of literature in these chapters is the land itself; this will include the hostility of animal life, open spaces, clustered trees, and wide skies. As will be demonstrated, Indigenous people cannot always overtly resist the settlers' attempts to take over the wilderness; however, the land often seems to become a character in these texts and it conveys feelings of dread, anger, and fear that push against settler ideologies. For example, in *Voss,* the novel personifies the land as a leader who satirically admires the settlers' presence: "The land was celebrating their important presence with green grass that stroked the horses' bellies, or lay down beneath them in green swathes", until "the eyes of the men became sated with the green of those parklands" (White 355). The novel's description of the settlers as "important" according to the land seems like a subtle mockery of

the settlers' self-importance as they tried to claim the green land of the Outback of Australia. Such passages use literary devices such as personification and tone to draw attention to the land and its reactions to the settlers who hold onto ideas related to the wilderness myth.

Chapter One: Settlerism in the Wilderness: Colonising Canada in 19th-Century Prose, Poetry and Painting

Chapter one explores the ecological visions and epistemologies of the myth of the wilderness developed by European settlers. Settlers' establishment of the idea of unspoiled landscapes indicates that such landscapes themselves are altered and gradually spoiled according to European framings of ecology. Forcing one's worldview and values upon others allows colonisers to not only maintain their wrong representations of the Indigenous world, but also to extend it beyond the limits of their own world, using the wilderness myth to construct false representations of Culture/Nature that extend colonisers' power without recourse. Thus, the chapter critiques models of colonisation and capitalism that harm both natural ecology and Indigenous life through greed and misuse of resources.

The reasons and effects of such misconduct is vividly portrayed in 19th-century visual culture and literature, especially Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), the late 19th-century poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, and the early 20th-century painting of Emily Carr. The chapter focuses on works about Canada, where settler ideologies developed against the backdrop of dangerous survival situations. The chapter will move in chronological order, demonstrating that the objects of study will lay the foundation for this thesis and open up the fundamental tension regarding the preservation and exploitation of the wilderness. Moodie's book is squarely in the tradition of the wilderness myth as she describes Canada as having "salubrious climate, […] fertile soil, commercial advantages, [and] great water privileges" (Moodie 157), while Scott's poetry clearly establishes a useful and practical philosophy that would enable possession and control of nature for the advancement of civilised society. And

finally, Emily Carr's 1935 painting, "Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky," challenges the representation of wilderness as an uninhabited piece of land that should be used to one's own advantage and reveals the imperial violence and environmental depredation that underpins the settlers' professed goal of developing the Indigenous lands according to their own Western understanding and material needs.

Chapter One's approach to 19th-century texts and artwork involves observing an overlap between fiction, poetry, art, and life writing. Representing European settlers' transformation from survivors for the purpose of escaping religion oppression, Moodie shows how religious values and opinions can be forced upon others, whose religious beliefs may be quite different from those of the oppressors. Moodie's text serves an educational purpose, warning readers about the dangers of settling Canada; it also captures her own vision of the ways Indigenous people are mistreated by settlers.

Moodie's text warns about the dangers of settlers to the lives of Indigenous people; meanwhile, while Scott's poetry attempts to inhabit the mindset of Indigenous people, it is also inhabited by Scott's own settler ideologies. The chapter then explores the tension formed between settler and Indigenous cultures. The poetry makes an attempt to reconcile different religious beliefs of European settlers and Indigenous people. This attempt is based on the idea that it is possible to establish a harmonious relationship between the two differing cultures, at least in regard to fundamental religious principles. This suggests that Scott optimistically believed that something could enable European colonists to exploit resources of the Indigenous world without harming it. The chapter connects this exploitation with the "paternalistic trust us" call of the wilderness myth which, according to Cilano and Deloughrey, would perpetuate colonial injustices and neglect the continuous exploitation of non-human surroundings (72).

The chapter finally turns to Emily Carr's painting *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1935) which reveals that there is little harmony in the Western exploitation of the Indigenous world's resources. In fact, forcing their own religion, way of life, and abstract constructions (such as the wilderness myth) upon Indigenous people, as Carr indicates, Western oppressors have distorted the very essence of the Indigenous world. Carr's artwork captures Carr's perspective on the hostland that she sees; her impressions of the natural world evoke both the hostland's impact on her art and her own Christian beliefs as both old and new are united in the image.

Thus, Chapter One considers representations of the wilderness and Indigenous people, demonstrating that white artists and authors try to counter the wilderness myth but often struggle to escape it. As Wilson writes, "With its dialectic between the known and familiar and the foreign and strange," literary writing by white settlers "creates new spaces, opening up national perspectives through reshaping connections to the wider world" (3). This chapter expands upon this idea by bringing together texts and art that open new understandings of the wilderness myth and its persistence in settlers' philosophies.

Chapter Two: Eco-Cosmology and the Wilderness Myth in Australian Novels

Chapter two focuses on two particular works of literature set in Australia, where depictions of the wilderness have been especially vivid, written in the mid to late 20th century. Patrick White and David Malouf explore the relations between the Western representations of the Indigenous world and the native Indigenous attitudes toward that representation. Chapter Two interprets White's *Voss* (1957) and Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993) with regard to the wilderness myth as it finds fictional form in the Australian Outback. These works intricately depict the relationship between the Australian Indigenous lands, often referred to as the "Outback," and the Indigenous people (commonly termed as "Aborigines" who I will refer to as Indigenous people). This chapter asserts that the novels

Voss and *Remembering Babylon* take up profound postcolonial critiques that challenge the wilderness myth. The focal point of this exploration lies in dissecting the "wilderness myth" and how it serves as a foundation for the colonising settlers' pursuit of their colonial ambitions. In doing so, these settlers inflict considerable harm upon both the Indigenous people and their lands, endangering their existence.

The chapter commences by delving into the adverse impact of the "wilderness" concept on Australia's ecosystems, revealing how Indigenous peoples suffered due to Western notions of untouched nature and due to settlers' capitalist greed. It illustrates how the settlers harnessed the notion of wilderness to control Indigenous people's reliance on their natural surroundings for essential necessities such as sustenance, water, and spiritual refuge. These settlers, often depicted as modern capitalists, view nature as external to their society—something to exploit for economic gain. This utilitarian perspective treats the world as an object to be exploited, reflecting a colonial attitude that disregards humanity's interconnection with the more-than-human world. In *Voss*, the narrative follows an explorer's expedition into the 19th-century Australian outback, delving into the intricate dynamics between humanity and the natural environment, and the inherent conflict between civilisation and untamed wilderness. Conversely, *Remembering Babylon* narrates the tale of a young British shipwreck survivor, integrated into an Indigenous community in the outback. This novel explores themes of self-identity, belonging, and the intricate dynamics between Indigenous Australians and colonisers. Both novels use personification of the Indigenous land to delve into the depiction of the Australian outback as a rugged and perilous realm, while also delving into the significance of Indigenous peoples in relation to the land.

The second chapter's primary focus centres on the interplay between eco-cosmological/eco-theological viewpoints and their connection to the portrayal of Indigenous communities and their rapport with the landscape. Deep ecology draws attention to the ways

these novels represent the dangers of adhering to the myth of the wilderness, which threatens human and natural ecology. According to principles from deep ecology, "the survival of any part is dependent upon the well-being of the whole" (Drengson 101). Deep ecologists such as Alan Drengson criticise the narrative of human supremacy and point to the fact that Indigenous people often under-exploited their "environment and retained a sustainable society for thousands of years, as evidence that human societies are not necessarily destructive by nature" (Drengson 102). This sustained environment has been destroyed in White's *Voss*, as the Australian Indigenous people explore their Outback to understand how their world is devastated by the European settlers who exploited it. The Indigenous people's exploration inspired them to understand that the settlers have over exploited the environment and do not understand how to live sustainably. Like *Voss*, Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* depicts the Outback as a primary teacher and the main reference point for the Indigenous people in their quiet resistance to the European settlers, for the land often teaches a lesson to the settlers by refusing to be tamed.

At the heart of these novels, and the central focus of this chapter, lies the thematic examination of abstract dualisms that underpin the Western colonists' perceptions of the Indigenous world. These mental constructs give rise to rational binaries such as the Nature/Culture dichotomy, leading to numerous misconceptions about Indigenous communities and their territories. Among these misconceptions, a prominent one involves characterizing Indigenous lands as remote wildernesses, rich with resources that demand urgent colonisation, despite being inhospitable to so-called civilised societies. This chapter finds that the dualism of Nature/Culture is sustained in part because novels about the effects of colonization and settlement often convey ideas of "othering" in the literary representation of Indigenous people. As Wilson argues of literature about white settlers, "writing either as travellers or about the effects of travel, […] responses to geographical dislocation and their

construction of themselves as 'other' to their place of origin constitute a significant but divergent strand of the national literary tradition" (2). A literary tradition in these Australian novels emerges wherein settlers represent themselves as completely different and more "civilised" than the Indigenous people of the Outback. This representation is created by literary descriptions that demonstrate the settlers' perspectives against Indigenous peoples.

Through textual evidence, the chapter underscores the novels' portrayal of the negative repercussions of the settlers' view of the wilderness , revealing how Indigenous dependency on their environment was compromised for the settlers' economic gain. It explores how settlers capitalise on resources while viewing the Indigenous realm as an exploitable source, a perspective that poses a threat to both Indigenous societies and their surroundings. The chapter's analysis exposes the settlers' manipulation of nature for their benefit, contrasting it with the Indigenous worldview that respects the symbiotic relationship between humans and the environment. This juxtaposition challenges the settlers' economic exploitation and highlights the Indigenous resistance efforts that range from active defiance to passive retreat into the wild. The novels *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* ultimately scrutinize the tension between Indigenous eco-cosmological strategies and settlers' wilderness ideology, showcasing the Indigenous people's use of their sacred connection with the natural world as a means of resistance. However, this resistance proves insufficient to thwart the settlers' encroachment, leading to a disheartening cycle of colonisation and retreat.

Chapter Three: Ecofeminism and the Wilderness Myth in Canadian Feminist Writings

Chapter Three shifts back to Canada, moving chronologically to the late 20th and early 21st centuries. It analyses Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), with relation to ecofeminist perspectives on women's bodily experiences and resistance to patriarchal systems. The chapter explores the way the wilderness myth relates both to patriarchal power and the capacity of ecofeminism to challenge such power.

The chapter reads *Away* as a novel that challenges patriarchy through ecocritical models but problematically relies on Western, Eurocentric notions; the novel thereby perpetuates some notions of Indigenous passivity and disempowerment. *Away* draws upon magical realism to explore the themes of loss, grief, and the connection between humans and nature in a narrative of Irish immigration to Canada. *Away* tells the story of three generations of women in a Canadian family and their connection to the land. The chapter examines how Urquhart's novel engages with ecofeminist perspectives and criticises patriarchal power. Significantly, this chapter concludes that while Urquhart's *Away* is widely hailed as an ecofeminist challenge of settler colonialism, it also articulates the ecofeminist perspectives by at best sidelining and at worst actively and explicitly appropriating Indigenous tropes of marginalisation. Analysing the representation of settler colonialism in the novel, the chapter argues that *Away* represents a Western, Eurocentric version of ecofeminism that treats Indigenous people as valuable only when they are helpful to Celtic women who are on magical journeys towards self-actualisation. In the novel, some settler women rename some places that were named by Indigenous people, eliminate Canada's past, and create for it a new history. The myth of the wilderness thus inspires some of these women in the novel to see ownership as crucial for their inhabitancy of Canadian land.

The chapter takes a different approach to *Oryx and Crake*, a dystopian novel that explores the consequences of unchecked technological development and the destruction of the natural world. It is fascinating to place *Away* in conversation with *Oryx and Crake* because these two novels both criticise patriarchal efforts to seize the wilderness, and yet take different approaches to Indigeneity. Like *Away*, Atwood's novel engages with ecofeminist perspectives; it further criticises patriarchal power through its representation of the wilderness and its relationship to technology. *Oryx and Crake* engages with issues of gender and power, particularly through the character of Crake and his vision of a world devoid of

emotion and gender. It is understood from postcolonial ecological research that the wilderness myth began and progressed during the Scientific Revolution; this makes Atwood's *Onyx and Crake* especially interesting to study as it is a work of speculative fiction. The novel shows that Crake, a scientist, destroyed most of humanity by spreading a terrible virus and then re-populated the earth with his Crakers by modelling these genetically-modified humans after Oryx, a woman he mostly valued for her submissiveness. The Crakers are analogous to Indigenous people, an analogy that is made apparent in the novel.

This chapter argues that unlike *Away, Oryx and Crake* deeply ponders the ways both women and Indigenous people are harmed by the greedy patriarchal desire to claim and control the wilderness. It does so by putting the abusive treatment of Oryx and the Crakers on overt display. This chapter makes a crucial observation, for it demonstrates that although two ecofeminist novels can have many similarities—they use magical or speculative fantasies to criticise the ways the patriarchal settler adherence to the myth of the wilderness—they nevertheless can take diverse stances that either implicitly marginalise Indigenous people further or draw attention to Indigenous people's marginalisation.

Neither novel fully centres Indigenous knowledge; as argued in the conclusion, this thesis begins a necessary conversation about how one can read the ways literature written by or about settlers and their descendants takes diverse methods to represent and challenge the myth of the wilderness. This conversation could next be extended by a project that centres the works of Indigenous thinkers.

Scholarly Interventions

This thesis builds upon the above theories to argue that more-than-human environments and Nature are not separate from civilisation, as argued by some environmental activists mentioned in Cronon's "The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature." As Cronon points out:

> In 1989 the journalist Bill McKibben published a book entitled *The End of Nature*, in which he argued that the prospect of global climate change as a result of unintentional human manipulation of the atmosphere means that nature as we once knew it no longer exists. (29)….We and our children will henceforth live in a biosphere completely altered by our own activity, a planet in which the human and the natural can no longer be distinguished, because the one has overwhelmed the other. In McKibben's view, nature has died, and we are responsible for killing it. "The planet," he declares, "is utterly different now." (30) But such a perspective is possible only if we accept the wilderness premise that nature, to be natural, must also be pristine—remote from humanity and untouched by our common past.

As Cronon makes clear, too many thinkers like McKibben envision a "pristine" nature devoid of human (especially Indigenous) life. They maintain core tenets of the myth of the wilderness and uphold dualisms that troublingly erase Indigenous people.

This thesis intervenes in some still-perpetuated ideologies that are associated with the wilderness myth: the framing of Indigenous knowledge as secondary to Western scientific understandings of the environment; the framing of a binary of Nature/Culture that treats Indigenous people as uncivilised inconveniences in a natural space that can be exploited for financial gain; and literary representations of wilderness that treat Indigenous people as secondary to the heroic settlers that displace them. Close readings of literature will reveal that although many authors are critical of the myth of the wilderness, they incidentally also uphold some of these ideas.

The conservation movement tends not to critique the wilderness myth nor deconstruct the Culture/Nature binary – rather, this movement can be seen to keep it in place precisely because conservationists wish to keep humans separated off from Nature. Conservation ethics

are a set of principles that provide guidance on how resources should be used, distributed, developed and safeguarded. Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee discusses these pre-industrial models in "A Memento Mori to the Earth", published in *Time Magazine* (1970). The article remarks how the United States government outlined the intrinsic value of 'unspoilt' and "pristine" nature as a conservationist ethic in 1961. Several years later, however, the United States government proposed the construction of an industrial machine, "a hot oil pipeline from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, to Valdez", threatening the ecosystem of a wild part of the Alaskan tundra (Mukherjee 21). The US government saw this project as signalling a shift from the frontier ethic of unbridled plunder and towards an acceptance of the fact that "even urbanized, affluent, mobile societies are interdependent with the fragile, life-sustaining systems of the air, the water, the land" (Mukherjee 21). Building on this contradiction, Mukherjee asks "how was the conservationist ethic to be squared with the developmental imperative that oversaw the building of oil pipelines in Alaska and oil refineries in Honolulu?" (Mukherjee 21). This question by Mukherjee implies a paradigm for the above-discussed Culture/Nature binary by which the flourishing of life is but a false promise of the contemporary Western philosophy. Through this binary, Nature was separated from the human Culture and civilisation.

A critique of some conservationist methods is necessary because these movements use the wilderness myth and Nature/Culture dualisms in problematic ways that fail to integrate human life with the natural world in a way that does less harm to Indigenous culture and the ecology of the global landscape. This wilderness myth has led to the abuse and possession of nature by the European industrial and scientific revolutions. These revolutions are exemplified by the industrial machine and the hot oil pipeline, whose destructive outcomes are underscored by Mukherjee. This industrial machine and its destructive outcomes demonstrate the imperialist prejudice that sees nature as unspoilt, pristine, and separated from

the so-called values of civilisation, which is but a false promise of progress. Mukherjee further discusses this question in reference to Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. In Leopold's view, the conservationist ethic of the US government supports rather than challenges the fundamentals of contemporary capitalism and industrialisation. As a replacement for this hopeless conservationism, Leopold proposes the "model of the heroic pioneer-farmer existing in small, isolated 'self-regulating' communities" (Mukherjee 24). Mukherjee argues that the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss borrowed heavily from Leopold's ideas. As part of his "deep ecology" movement, Næss advocated for a greater awareness of the Indigenous spiritual interconnectedness of all living and non-living things in a whole, relational sphere of existence. Building on this premise, he developed a seven-point plan claiming that "the flourishing of human and non-human life [...] is independent of their usefulness for narrow human purposes; and the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a significant decrease in human population. Such a decrease is necessary for human existence to flourish" (Næss, qtd in Mukherjee 25). The non-interference of foreigners conforms with Næss's idea of the required decrease in human population which would ensure an effective interaction within more-than-human environments.

Reading literature allows this thesis to discuss the way in which particular kinds of power relations – such as those between coloniser and colonised, or Culture and Nature – are represented in the literary texts. Literary texts represent the wilderness and white settlers' attempts to "civilise" the natural world, demonstrating that settlers think that settling the wilderness is a positive and constructive act. Many postcolonial ecological scholars view this assumption as a fabrication. They posit that such conception of wilderness is a myth aimed not at establishing social justice, environmental stewardship and conservation, but at energising imperialism's exploitative goals whose sole purpose is attaining political power and economic gain. This, in turn, either seriously damaged or destroyed the colonised

nations' human and more-than-human environments, and ruptured harmonious relationships between the two.

A key role of postcolonial critics should thus be to encourage new understandings of ecologies in Indigenous landscapes. Suffice to say, Eurocentric misconceptions found among the proponents of ecocriticism should be rejected. In view of this, Huggan claims that the current crisis in ecology is inseparable from "imperialistic exploitation and authoritarian abuse" (74). This calls for a renewal of postcolonial ecocriticism. His plea for the renewal should be ascribed to the failure of the Western outlook which did not recognise that the eco-sustainability and justice in the Indigenous world are assured only by the local Indigenous peoples who peacefully inhabit their own respective lands. According to Cilano and DeLoughrey, the renewed position called for by Huggan is a sensible, suitable, and much needed ecological stance in contemporary postcolonial ecocriticism. The renewed position raises awareness of the rather bleak legacy of the imperialist colonisers of the past. In the effort to "civilise" the "uncivilised" parts of the world, they have spoiled much of the Indigenous world, pushing the Indigenous peoples into the margins of poverty and starvations, or forcing them to accept ideas and values that are inappropriate for their beliefs, traditions, and way of life.

The Indigenous world should cease to be the victim of the imperialist battle for resources. Again, this cold and perverse logic that resources should be taken at any cost has its roots in the wilderness myth constructed by Western colonisers. This widespread misconception has, in their own view, given conservationists the mandate to make use of the "uncivilised" parts of the world for the sake of humanity. As Chris Campbell argues

> racial orders and racism can be seen as environmental history. As Moore observes, '"race" and "ecology" are not independent processes that just happened to interact; they made each other' (2011, 52). Thus, in seeing 'race' and 'ecology' as mutually

> constitutive, and in understanding that race relations emerge through the transformation of human and extra-human natures, we are better able to tie those moments of the scripting of racial mastery. (110)

Discussion of ecology should thus not take place without discussion of race. Yet many ecologists have neglected to attend to Indigeneity or treat Indigenous people as more than a footnote in ecological history. Settler ideologies have twisted the traditions and beliefs of Indigenous cultures. Literary texts expose the wilderness myth as problematic by both representing it and challenging it, as I next shall demonstrate.

Chapter One: Settlerism in the Wilderness: Colonising Canada in 19th-Century Prose, Poetry and Painting

This chapter delves into the ways European settlers relied upon the myth of the wilderness while performing the settling of "pristine" landscapes. The establishment of the notion of untouched landscapes signifies a paradox, as these landscapes are themselves altered and progressively marred according to European ecological perspectives. The concept of wilderness, characterised as a confined and antagonistic environment, stems from colonial biases about uncivilised regions that demanded "taming" and exploitation by Western (predominantly European) colonisers.

This chapter is divided into three sections. The first examines Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* (1852), while the second and the third deal with Duncan Campbell Scott's poems (late 19th century) and Emily Carr's painting *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1935), respectively. A special focus is given to the wilderness myth throughout the chapter as the lens through which Western colonisers perceive the Indigenous world. My readings will demonstrate that aspects of the wilderness myth, such as the Nature/Culture binary, emerge in the analysed works as settlers grapple with their own notion of "pristine" nature, a notion that falls apart upon greater scrutiny.

Biases about "uncivilised" landscapes arise from a problematic observation recognised by ecological scholars, namely that the Western perception of wilderness largely arose through misappropriation of Indigenous peoples' reverence for the land and its living entities, a cornerstone of their biocentric worldview. Scholars including DeLoughrey, Didur, and Carrigan go further to argue that this distorted portrayal of the Indigenous world has even affected how numerous Indigenous communities perceive their own ancestral lands, often viewing their previously revered and harmonious territories as desolate and inhospitable wilderness due to the pervasive impact of Western globalisation (7). Yet, this widespread

ideology poses not only a threat to Indigenous lands but also to the ostensibly civilised Western world. This chapter, focusing on Canadian settler landscape literature, demonstrates that the very concept of wilderness, as manipulated by imperialistic interests, inherently perpetuates this ideology concerning the Indigenous worldview.

Literature and art sometimes feature inaccurate depictions of the Indigenous world and exploit the wilderness myth to fabricate erroneous representations of the Culture/Nature relationship that reinforce colonisers' dominance. This misconduct's causes and consequences are vividly depicted in 19th-century visual culture and literature, as exemplified by Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852), Duncan Campbell Scott's late 19th-century poetry, and Emily Carr's early 20th-century paintings. Moodie's portrayal of European settlers' transformation from religiously oppressed survivors exemplifies how religious convictions and perspectives can be forcibly imposed on others with divergent beliefs. Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry endeavors to reconcile the disparate religious views of European settlers and Indigenous communities, envisioning a harmonious coexistence rooted in shared fundamental spiritual principles, ultimately facilitating the exploitation of Indigenous resources without causing harm. This engagement links this exploitation with the wilderness myth's call for "paternalistic trust," as elucidated by Cilano and DeLoughrey, which not only perpetuates colonial injustices but also disregards the ongoing exploitation of the non-human environment (72). Emily Carr's painting "*Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky*" (1935) exposes the disharmony inherent in the Western appropriation of Indigenous resources. This painting reveals that the imposition of Western religion, lifestyle, and constructs, such as the wilderness myth, has distorted the very essence of the Indigenous world.

Through understanding of the so-called civilised framings of ecology, the European settlers gained confidence that they could reshape the wild Indigenous nature into a

productive and progressive settlement of the future. This optimistic image prevails in the works studied in this chapter. The European civilised framings of ecology are presented as the best means to enhance the environment for the benefit of all (Bentley 756). Such transformation of the land conforms with Crane's "utilizing the wilderness" type, according to which the only value of the wilderness is its usefulness. Thus, this chapter criticises the ways the wilderness myth persists even in stories that also try to challenge it, largely because the wilderness myth can seem positive and optimistic even when it causes harm to the human and natural worlds, and especially to Indigenous cultures.

Section I: Survival in the Wilderness in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush*

Moodie's work is an account and simultaneously a guide to the immigrant settler life in the Canadian wilderness during the mid-19th century. She begins by describing how she and her family settled in difficult places, indicating that these places are shunned by the Canadian Indigenous people due to their "impenetrable" nature, which makes them feel as though they have been banished (Moodie 76). Unlike the Indigenous people of Canada, Moodie and the other settlers overcame these difficulties and created a settlement for themselves, away from the lands they left behind. Among else, the account served as a guide on how to deal with the Indigenous nature's hostilities. The settlers' experience in the Indigenous nature particularly influenced low-class European settlers by helping them understand that the impenetrability, dangers, and other difficulties of the landscape can be overcome, and that the Indigenous environments can be transformed and used for human benefit. Scholar Corinne Bigot argues that Moodie "went native" with her text, which allows "the voice of the First Nations Canadians to be heard, albeit on a small scale. Simultaneously, the [text] also inscribe[s] their empowerment" (100). In contrast to Bigot's claim, this chapter argues that Moodie shows a typical Western attitude towards the uninhabited wilderness, treating it as the land that can be used by the advanced Western civilisations.

Roughing It in The Bush emphasises the difficulties faced by women and the physical labour that was often required in a new environment (Ballstadt 33). Her account informs other potential immigrants about the challenges that await in such environment. In her article "Did they go native? Representations of first encounters and personal interrelations with First Nations Canadians in the writings of Susanna Moodie and Catharine Parr Traill," Corinne Bigot claims that both Moodie and her sister, Catharine Parr Traill "were looking for subjects that might appeal to their British audience who were keen on anecdotes from the New World" (100). These anecdotes portray the Canadian wilderness as an unforgiving area that can, however, be transformed to suit the settlers' way of life and dreams of prosperity. This argument is supported by Françoise Le Jeune, who added that Moodie needed to show to European immigrants that British Columbia is the promised land for fulfilling a 'Bourgeois Dream' in terms of social status and political influence (160). As labour-class immigrants themselves, Moodie's family suffered the hardships of poverty, hunger and other misfortunes due to almost eight years of exile in the Indigenous lands of Western Canada. Moodie aimed her writing at lower-class immigrants, similar to her own family background, and warned of the difficulties faced especially by women.

Moodie describes Canada as having "salubrious climate, […] fertile soil, commercial advantages, [and] great water privileges" (Moodie 157). She also observes how the settlers "carefully concealed the toil and hardship to be endured in order to secure these advantages" (Moodie 157). This account indicates a settler mindset that maintained that the Indigenous people avoided certain parts of their own land, leaving them uninhabited due to geographical or other difficulties associated with it. Already it becomes clear that the reasons Moodie provides are Eurocentric. Either for a lack of understanding or sheer disregard, the author does not consider either religious beliefs or cultural features of the Indigenous people of Canada. Otherwise, she and the other settlers might understand that these people regard the

vast landscape as spiritual sanctuary. Her initial description of the Indigenous nature they encountered merely emphasises their hostility, due to which the Indigenous people failed to take the advantages of the nature. Such an account indicates a common Western misconception or ignorance of Indigenous peoples' religious reverence for the land and all life on it. This is typical of the wilderness myth and the Nature/Culture binary associated with it.

As explained in the introduction, colonisation of the wilderness typically is pursued in three stages; first, settlers seek their freedom from the unjust laws of their previous homelands; then, they decide to set themselves apart from and superior to Nature and destroy its threats; finally, as settler societies establish themselves, they create cultural laws that codify and sustain dichotomies between Man and Nature or Culture and Nature (Crane 7). This three-pronged approach to settling wilderness can be seen in the space of Moodie's book. So too do we see sustained dichotomies that perpetuate the harm done by the wilderness myth.

A. Into the Wilderness: A Space of Independence and Survival

One of the often-quoted reasons for the European immigrations in the 19th century was the desire for freedom. Lands such as those of Western Canada were perceived as wild, uninhabited, and perfect for attaining freedom. The wilderness myth sustains an imperial/settler imaginary – the idea that maintains these lands are there to be settled and exploited by Europeans.

The historian Frederick Jackson Turner cites independence as the main aim of the European immigration to the wilderness. Cronon summarises Turner's thesis: "European immigrants, in moving to the wild unsettled lands of the frontier, shed the trappings of civilization, rediscovered their primitive racial energies, reinvented direct democratic institutions, and thereby reinfused themselves with a vigour, an independence, and a

creativity" (Cronon 13). In line with this way of thinking, Moodie introduces the wilderness as the land of freedom and independence from the oppression suffered by the immigrants. She points out that the untamed wilderness inspired the settlers to fight for their independence (175). For her, Canada is a "glorious country" that allows working-class individuals to advance into the more affluent classes (Moodie 172). This is clearly stated in her introduction to the 1871 edition of *Roughing It in the Bush*:

> Men are allowed in this country a freedom enjoyed by few of the more polished countries in Europe; freedom in religion, politics and speech; freedom to select their own friends and to visit with whom they please, without consulting the Mrs Grundys of society; and they can lead a more independent social life than in the mother country, because less restricted by the conventional prejudices that govern older communities. (531)

Françoise Le Jeune emphasises the strong desire for freedom and prosperity visible in this passage: "Mrs Moodie conveys to her readers about Canada and its social prospects for penniless educated genteel families. The personal narrative of her new life as an emigrant in the New World can be read as a religious and spiritual quest for a better world, while leaving behind a money-driven Old World" (137). Similarly, Edward Dahl states that one of the reasons "for the settlers' positive attitude to wilderness is the various kinds of freedom that so many of them find" (31). Moreover, Dahl believes that freedom was the key theme for the majority of the settler writers in that era. It is as if the wilderness itself radiates freedom, which flows "naturally from life in the wilderness" and magnifies the writers' "love for wilderness" (38). The concept of freedom is frequently mentioned in Moodie's account as inspiring the settlers to pursue independence of the oppression they experienced prior to settling. In light of the cited arguments, it is clear that freedom is the main reason behind the great European immigrations of the 19th century. There is no reason to believe that the settlers

used freedom as mere justification for conquering the Indigenous lands. Rather, they saw freedom as the ultimate goal.

Moodie's constant references to freedom suggest her hope that immigrants could find prosperity in their new home. The representations of immigrants as "industrious" and eager to achieve prosperity in the new environment explains their passion to create the new settlement. Life in the new settlement would provide independence and allow them to pursue other goals, such as financial prosperity, social status, and overall progress of society. Writing about the immigrants, Moodie reflects that even manual labourers "retain their natural manners, and remain true to the dignity of their humanity [...], for vulgarity consists in presumptuously affecting to be what we are not, and in claiming distinctions which we do not deserve, and which no one else would admit" (Moodie 157). Correspondingly, "the farmer, in his home spun, may possess the real essentials which make the gentleman - good feeling, and respect for the feelings of others; the homely dress, weather - beaten face and hard hands could not deprive him of the honest independence and genial benevolence he derived from nature" (Moodie 157). This emphasis on "the well-mannered gentleman" confirms Moodie's honest goals in achieving freedom without hidden desires to conquer Indigenous lands.

Moodie represents the wilderness as the land that inspires freedom and prosperity. It is the land that allows one to attain personal "integrity" while erasing all "distinctions" that had corrupted the public opinion in their homelands. This renewed integrity allows the settlers to reinvent themselves in both material and spiritual terms. She credited the wilderness for enabling "the independent in soul [to] rise above the seeming disgrace of poverty, and hold fast their integrity, in defiance of the world and its selfish and unwise maxims" (Moodie 156). She perceived the Canadian wilderness as affecting all the settlers, not just a few individuals. It is "indeed, an El Dorado—a land flowing with milk and honey; for they [the settlers] soon obtain that independence which the poor gentleman struggles in vain to realise by his own

labour in the woods" (148). Moodie also states that people were able to attain independence easier because they were willing to work, despite the difficult beginnings (149). As can be seen, Moodie assigns important qualities to the wilderness. The majority of them originate from the settlers' desire to attain freedom from oppression. Moodie is not explicitly advocating conquest; however, the wilderness myth is working to conceal the colonial conquest that is taking place in Moodie's writing as First Nation peoples are being driven off their lands.

Religious independence is another form of freedom that was recovered by the settlers in the wilderness. Dahl states that they owed their attraction to the Canadian wilderness largely to the fact that Canada allowed religious freedom (Dahl 28). Accordingly, Moodie conveys that the settlers were able to practice their religion in the wilderness with relative ease (Moodie 116). Unlike Dahl, however, she explains that the religious independence they enjoyed was due to the beauty of the wilderness. Beauty is one of the frequently mentioned concepts by Moodie in relation to the wilderness, which she connects to divinity. For example, she states that the nation was covered in vast beauty, which presents an aura of God, who was adorned in nature (Moodie 116). She indicates that inside the lonely wilderness, the human soul is closer to God (Moodie 123). At times she uses the words "God" and "nature" synonymously, whereas she most often relates the beauty of the wilderness with the beauty of God. For her, worshipping the wilderness is equal to worshipping God. For example, she notices the presence of God in the landscape along a lake's edge, exclaiming: "God is here!" "Dost thou not catch the reflection of his glory in this picture of Nature's own painting, while the harmony that surrounds his throne is faintly echoed by the warm balmy wind that stirs the lofty branches of the woods...?" (Moodie 131). In these elevated descriptions of the divine in relation to nature, Moodie is nearer to the Indigenous people's relation to God in nature. In

addition, in her poem “Where is religion found?” Moodie describes the close relation between religion and wilderness:

> It is not ‘mid the busy scenes of life,
> Where careworn mortals crowd along the way;
> That leads to gain - shunning the light of day....
> Short-sighted man! - go seek the mountain’s brow,
> And cast thy raptured eye o’er hill and dale...
> And Nature’s works shall teach thee how to pray (128)

These lines describe settlers’ the old communities as crowded (“the busy scenes of life”), opposing them to the lonely Canadian wilderness. The busy scenes of life invoke a crowded civic society in all its complexity. The noise of the crowd makes it impossible to hear and feel the presence of divinity in nature, whereas the peaceful wilderness enables that. Thus, the “short-sighted man” would do well to visit “the mountain”, by which she means the wilderness in its magnificent vastness. In such an environment, a man would learn how to “pray” and understand the nature better. The verses expressing that also convey the strong opposition between life in the city and life in the wilderness. The latter calls for a spiritual awakening, so Moodie invites the spiritually oppressed Europeans to emigrate to Canada in search for religious and other freedoms.

The concept of freedom has a profound significance for Moodie. She calls it a “higher motive” possessed by the “high-souled” children of the nation (141 Moodie). It allowed those who “were freemen, high-spirited and energetic fellows, who feared neither man nor wild beast, and trusted to their own strong arms to conquer all difficulties, while they could discern the light of freedom and independence glimmering through the dark woods before them” (Moodie 150). Moodie also writes of freedom in the sense of open space: “Every tree that falls beneath the axe opens a wider prospect, and encourages the settler to persevere in

his efforts to attain independence" (Moodie 151). Meanwhile, those gathered in the country away from the forests, are "*workers,* not *dreamers* - who have already realised Solomon's pithy proverb, 'All labour is profit'; and their industry has imbued them with a spirit of independence which cannot fail to make them a free and enlightened people" (160). Moodie used Solomon's proverb to describe the settler workers' attitudes towards clearing in the wilderness, which facilitated their spiritual and civil education, making them "enlightened". Her description points to a dynamic interrelationship between material (physical labour, body) and spiritual (mental, emotional) improvement. In view of this, Moodie suggests that the hardships associated with wilderness should be seen as its natural part, and not something that makes it hostile. This dynamic interrelationship between the civilised European settlers and the wilderness not only alters their view of wilderness, but also helps them reshape their civic culture in order to adjust to life in such an environment. Taken together, this indicates Moodie's concern to demonstrate that the initial hostilities of the wilderness can be overcome.

In *Roughing It in the Bush*, Moodie emphasises the positive relation between the civilised man and the wilderness. However, that relation still includes the coloniser and the colonised (in this case, the civilised man and the wilderness). In other words, settling in the wilderness entails reshaping that wilderness according to the coloniser's desire. As Herke put it, by "moving from the bush to the clearing Moodie has also transformed: from the powerless to an agent of power, from the judged to the judge" (Herke 85). Herke's argument shows that in clearing the wilderness Moodie and settlers become agents of power. This is the necessary step in the process of settling in the wilderness. As much as Moodie implies the first necessity of adjusting to the wilderness, that ultimately means taking control of it. All of this shows how the settlers gradually ascended from the oppressed victims to the agents of power, who eventually themselves became the colonising force over the Indigenous people in

Canada. In this transformation, the settlers reinstituted the wilderness myth in their treatment of Indigenous nature and more-than-human environments. The question still remains, however: could such outcome be avoided, or is the wilderness myth so pervasive we cannot expect it to be thoroughly challenged in this case?

Aside from being a guide for the new settlers, Moodie's book provided an important insight about the Canadian lands. The book conceptualises the wilderness as a space that empowered the oppressed European settlers, enabling them to preside over the Canadian land and its people. Moodie advised the new settlers to be "humble, dependent on the great republic, [to] wait patiently, loyally, lovingly upon the illustrious parent from whom [they] sprang." She states that "in the fulness of time she will proclaim your childhood past, and bid you stand up in your own strength, a free Canadian people" (169). Moodie's advice taught the younger generations of settlers patriotism and political self-importance, which eventually unwittingly turned them into colonisers. The subsequent increase in settlers' numbers and the expansion of their settlement brought about occasional competition with the Indigenous people of Canada during and after the years of Moodie's immigration.

The transformation of the oppressed settlers to aspiring colonisers did not happen all of a sudden. One of the crucial reasons for that concerns the way the Indigenous nature and its inhabitants are represented in *Roughing It in the Bush*. Therefore, Moodie's account of life in the wilderness is more than a guide for the new settlers. With its vivid descriptions and insights about the new environment, it creates an image of the Indigenous world that affects the settlers' actions. An important issue to analyse when considering the wilderness myth is the way in which settler writers represent Indigenous peoples. The following section will therefore consider the ways Moodie's narrative characterises Indigenous people and their cultures.

B. Representations of Indigenous People

Moodie was initially dissatisfied with the new country, although she eventually becomes a part of it. She struggled to get used to the weather during the winter and summer seasons (Shields 7). In particular, she distrusted the "arrogant" Americans who had immigrated there during the military conflict of 1812; in contrast, she enjoyed the company of Indigenous people. She particularly disliked the Britons who "were flattering their national prejudices with the most depreciating remarks on England and the English people" (Moodie 279). An example of this is the following part of a dialogue in which an English officer voices his prejudices:

> I never in my life saw a pretty English woman among all that I have seen in New York. [……] They are odious creatures. The beauty for which they were once renowned has vanished with the last generation. Our modern English girls are decided barbarians. It is impossible to meet with a pretty English woman now-a-days. I have made a vow to cut them altogether and if ever I commit such a foolish thing as matrimony, to take to myself an American wife. (Moodie 280)

According to her account, Moodie disliked numerous people she met, finding English women "odious."

However, her representations of the Indigenous people are overwhelmingly positive (Shields 7). She particularly emphasises the moral values of the Indigenous people and their attachment to their native land. As opposed to a widespread prejudice that Indigenous people of wilderness are uncivilised barbarians, Moodie writes that "the Indian is also one of evolution's aristocrats - he rarely speaks or said anything disagreeable or filthy. In terms of sensitivity of emotion or natural politeness, the nasty, ignorant barbarians that make up the excess of overpopulated European nations lag well below the [Indian] man" (Moodie 120). This framing constructs a clear contrast between badly-behaved European people and Indigenous people.

Moodie notes that many settlers treated the Indigenous people badly. Moodie laments: "It is a melancholy truth, and deeply to be lamented, that the vicinity of European settlers has always produced a very demoralising effect upon the Indians" (125). She makes it clear that the Indigenous lands were under Western dominance. Hence, Carole Gerson argues that the representation of the Indigenous people in Moodie's account "is inevitably contained within an Imperial frame of reference" (14). According to Gerson, Moodie's representation of the Indigenous people shows them as subjected to domination, exploitation, and oppression. In her account of life in the wilderness, Moodie does not advise any such actions. They were done by the European settlers that are criticised by Moodie, such as the generations of settlers who colonised Canada in the past. Moodie heavily criticises "Christians" who impose immoral behaviour on the Indigenous people. She states, "The Indians are often made a prey of and cheated by the unprincipled settlers, who think it no crime to overreach a red-skin" (123). She also relates:

> I asked [the Indigenous man] if his people ever swore, or used profane language towards the Deity. The man regarded me with a sort of stern horror, as he replied, 'Indian, till after he knew your people, never swore—no bad word in Indian.' […] Oh, what a reproof to Christian men! I felt abashed, and degraded in the eyes of this poor savage—who, ignorant as he was in many respects, yet possessed that first great attribute of the soul, a deep reverence for the Supreme Being. How inferior were thousands of my countrymen to him in this important point. (188)

Thus, Moodie draws on her own Christian traditions to challenge the other settlers who not only teach Indigenous people to swear, but also give Indigenous people reason to swear. As Moodie relates, she is shocked to discover that "the native Canadians, the European settlers, and the lower order of Americans" "borrowed" money and land (198). She writes: "Many of

the latter had spied out the goodness of the land, and *borrowed* various portions of it, without so much as asking leave of the absentee owners. Unfortunately, our new home was surrounded by these odious squatters, whom we found as ignorant as savages, without their courtesy and kindness" (198, original italics). Thus, Moodie frames settlers as worse than Indigenous people and more "savage" because they take Indigenous land.

Moodie explains how settlers harmed Indigenous peoples. Economic exploitation is one of many aspects of colonial oppression by which the settlers exercised their dominance over the Indigenous people of Canada. Being financially weaker than the settlers, the Indigenous people often fell into large debts with the European merchants. Another reason for this was their lack of experience in financial matters, which was exploited by cunning merchants. An example of such type of people was a high-class European, Mr Q, whom Moodie describes as a hard-hearted money-grabber with a bad personality, who would extend credit to local farmers in order to buy high-end retail products (Moodie 235). As a proviso, he would demand mortgages on their farms and then threatened the farmers to foreclose them. She relates her own encounter with this greedy settler:

> Unfortunately, as it turned out, I made a bargain with Mr. Q— [….] It is possible that Q— foresaw what actually happened; or, more probably, he thought he could employ his money better in land speculations. [….] for several years I never received a penny for my shares. At last, the steamer was sold, and I only received about a fourth part of my original stock. (235)

Indigenous people were not the only ones who faced the cruel greed of European settlers; even Moodie was negatively harmed by greed for land and money displayed by settlers like Mr. Q.

Religious oppression is also mentioned by Moodie as another aspect of the Indigenous people's subjugation at the hands of the European settlers. Upon coming to their lands, the

settlers noticed that the Indigenous communities freely practiced their religion. However, this religious freedom had long been threatened by earlier generations of European colonisers with their attempts to convert the Indigenous people to Christianity. This is particularly evident in Moodie's account of old Thomas:

> Old Thomas was a very ambitious man in his way. He took into his head that he had received a call from Heaven to convert the heathen in the wilderness; and every Sunday he held a meeting in our loggers' shanty, for the purpose of awakening sinners, and bringing over 'Injun pagans' to the true faith. His method of accomplishing this object was very ingenious. He got his wife, Peggy […] to read aloud to him a text from the Bible, until he knew it by heart; and he had, as he said truly, 'a good remembrancer,' and never heard a striking sermon but he retained the most important passages, and retailed them second-hand to his bush audience. (Moodie 103)

Other examples of religious oppression were mentioned in *Roughing It in the Bush*. For example, the European Monaghan insists on holding Sunday meetings at his shanty in order to convert the Canadian pagans. Moodie's sister, Mrs Traill, notices that some Methodist ministers attempted to convert Indigenous people's families (Peterman 83).

All these forms of oppression by the European colonisers point to a conflicting relationship between the settlers and the Indigenous people of Canada. Prior to the arrival of the Europeans, the Indigenous people enjoyed a comparatively free life. Moodie emphasises wilderness as the place of solitude and escape from oppression and hard conditions of life in Britain. But the immigrants did not only escape from their previous life. They also ended up searching for their identity. They went so far as to try to "collect" Indigenous songs. As Moodie relates: "my husband was anxious to collect some of the native Indian airs, as they all sing well, and have a fine ear for music, but all his efforts proved abortive" (124). The settlers

wanted to form a relationship with the Indigenous people and learn their songs, possibly because they yearned to find a new language for their new homes and new identities.

The settlers further acted in accordance with the wilderness myth, particularly the Nature/Culture binary, in that they saw the Indigenous land as the perfect place for building a settlement, even at the cost of eradicating the cultural identity of Indigenous people. They maintain the wilderness myth and the idea of a land that has remained outside of historical progress, determining that its putatively "savage" inhabitants lack the capacity to dominate Nature in the way that the settlers believe they can.

The Indigenous people had a different experience. The only life they knew was the free life. The sudden arrival of the foreign people, however, would change that. As presented in *Roughing It in the Bush*, they were at first tolerant of the newcomers, teaching them how to live in the wilderness. For example, Moodie gratefully relates the tale of how she came to access dandelion coffee: "To persons residing in the bush, and to whom tea and coffee are very expensive articles of luxury, the knowledge of this valuable property of a plant scattered so abundantly through their fields, would prove highly beneficial. For years we used no other article; and my Indian friends who frequented the house gladly adopted the root, and made me show them the whole process of manufacturing it into coffee" (134). As she gratefully shows ways that settlers learned from Indigenous people, Moodie suggests the Indigenous people prove to be more civilised than the economically advanced settlers.

Moodie's representation of the Indigenous people's qualities, such as comfort, trust, and cooperation comes from her own subjective viewpoint. It should not be generalised as the Western view of the Indigenous people. However, Moodie is well positioned to state her judgment, for she had seen the relation between the Indigenous people and their environments. In addition, she was able to compare the other settlers and the Indigenous people and emphasise their differences. Her critical view of the colonising aspirations that

hurt the Indigenous people resonates with Lawson's arguments. Lawson argues in his essay "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject," that white settlers are "the very type of the non-unified subject and the very distillation of colonial power; the place where the operations of colonial power as negotiation are most intensely visible" (Lawson 22). According to Lawson, settlers replicate the identity of the imperial coloniser by bringing their own ideology, beliefs, and understandings to the new community in a foreign country (21). Even Moodie's families and their fellow immigrants' experiences in the wilderness reflect the colonial method of strengthening the settlers' authority for securing their dominance. The desire for authority among colonisers is an important feature of the wilderness myth. The topic is discussed in more detail in the third chapter of this thesis, which examines Jane Urquhart's *Away* that is about European settlers who also emigrate to Canada in search of identity and prosperity. In *Away* as in Moodie's text, the colonisers express a clear desire for authority that they back using the concepts of the wilderness myth—including the idea that settlers bring positive "civilisation" to Indigenous lands.

To conclude, Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* represents the settlers' experience in taking advantage of the Canadian wilderness to escape from oppression in their homelands. Moreover, the book represents the Indigenous people as becoming slowly more comfortable with the European settlers' independence, as demonstrated by individual acts of hospitality on their part.

Moodie seems to believe the Indigenous people are fond of her and her settler family: when embarking on a move, she relates:

> "I loved the lonely lake, with its magnificent belt of dark pines sighing in the breeze; the cedar-swamp, the summer home of my dark Indian friends; [….] A poor labourer stood in the doorway of the deserted house, holding my noble water-dog, Rover, in a string. The poor fellow gave a joyous bark as my eyes fell upon him. [….] 'He and the

> Indians at least feel grieved for our departure,' I thought. Love is so scarce in this world that we ought to prize it, however lowly the source from whence it flows." (198)

This passage suggests Moodie's fondness for the Indigenous people as well as her hope that they care for her too. At the same time, however, it seems that Moodie associates the Indigenous people with animals like dogs, demonstrating her stereotypical views of the Indigenous people. Moodie may have chosen to include such demonstrations of hospitality and comfort because she too hopes to perpetuate the idea that ultimately, Indigenous people would be content to live alongside settlers—a notion rooted in the wilderness myth. The idea represented in texts like Moodie's—that Canadian Indigenous people showed hospitality to the European settler subjects at the middle of the nineteenth century—is later represented in texts as a source of regret for the Indigenous people at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries. Moodie's text contributes to an early mode of representation of Indigenous people that simultaneously critiques aspects of settler authority and cruelty towards Indigenous people and at the same time perpetuates notions of Indigenous acceptance of settlers that is rooted in the wilderness myth.

The next section of this chapter demonstrates that Duncan Campbell Scott's Confederation poems feature the idea that Indigenous people regretted ever showing basic kindness or hospitality to settlers. Scott's poems suggest that this regret arose due to the progress of the settlers' colonial and civilised framings of ecology, which sought to "mature" the Indigenous lands with their own European settler worldviews by which they hoped to achieve religious freedom.

Section II: Settlers' Transformation from Survivors into Colonisers of the Wilderness in Duncan Campbell Scott's Confederation Poems

Duncan Campbell Scott (1862–1947), the son of an English settler minister and a Scottish mother, was a former Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs within the colonial administration. His poetry "elicited renewed interest as a critical insight into the attitudes and bias of a man who claimed to be the champion of the Canadian Indian" (Grant 24). His perspective on the Indigenous people and colonised Canada is reflected in his letters: "I spent day after day without seeing a living thing—except the Indians and my own party. [...] The landscape for the most part was desolate beyond compare, loneliness seven times distilled—a country never to be the home of any happy people" (Bourinot 29). Such a passage demonstrates that Scott learned a great deal about "Indians" because he spent so much time with them; moreover, while he might not necessarily have disliked these Indigenous people, he certainly denigrates their home, seeing it as a lonely and desolate space.

His poems are the primary source of insight into his perspectives on the Canadian Indigenous people. They show "his moralizing tendencies and stress the progressive evolution towards a better life" (Grant 24) for both Canadian Indigenous people and European settlers. As a Canadian with European parents, Scott sympathises with the mixed blood resulting from intermarriages between the Canadian Indigenous people and white Europeans, as shown in his verse. Glen Clever argues that Scott's sympathies were "caught between [the Indigenous] heritage and the hope of future generations to be absorbed in a civilized white society" (42). Expressing the undisturbed beauty of Indigenous nature, Scott's poems contemplate the ways the settlers pressured the Indigenous people and took then transformed the land. According to Crane, this settler idea is part of the wilderness myth that ultimately amounts to exploitation of the environment. Scott's poetry represents the idea that settlers should change the land as necessary for the development of both humans and the

environment. Influenced by the rational philosophy of Descartes, who believed that "There can be only the claims of human mastery and possession of nature—the reduction of forests to utility" (Harrison 121), Scott proposes a philosophy that would enable possession and control of nature for the advancement of civilised society. The poems refer to utilising the natural resources at the settlers' disposal. This is a clear example of the wilderness myth, which is at the foundation of the settlers' ecological vision.

However, some literary critics have asserted that Scott's attempts to assimilate the Canadian Indigenous people and his effort to reduce the European superiority over them contain contradictions. For example, "Most have argued that a contradiction exists between Scott's portrayal of Native people in his poetry, and his advocacy of assimilation in his official capacity as the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs" (Lisa 1). Scott's official position as the administrator for the Department of Indian Affairs, according to Robert L. McDougall, was essentially a job, an "outer life" that permitted him little or no expression of his genuine thoughts, whereas the poetry he composed was a more accurate portrayal of his "inner existence" (99). Many critics of Scott's poetry believe that these two sides of his life are at odds with one another. According to Stan Dragland, it is "difficult to reconcile the official Scott with the poet we know from the Indian poetry" (180). From a broader perspective, Scott was distrusted by the Indigenous people because he "inherited a policy that was born of British tradition, influenced by Anglo-Saxon colonial attitudes, and shaped by the Canadian experience" (Grant 36). These literary critics argue that the conflict between the Indigenous people and European settlers, for which Scott suggests some solutions in his poems, had remained unchanged.

In view of this state of affairs, this section examines Duncan Campbell Scott's Confederation poems at the turn of the 20th century. The aim is to reveal how these poems—in their sympathies towards the Indigenous people in Canada—embrace the wilderness myth

by persuading the Indigenous people to accept Western culture as having the potential to forge the Indigenous world into a world of prosperity (Bentley 756). These ideas are founded upon the concept of wilderness as a resource to exploit. By looking at the concept of "pristine" nature through such lens, the poems reflect how the wilderness myth was supported and critiqued. They further indicate that one of the reasons for such development was religious freedom.

Through his poems, Scott provides his insight into the relationship between religion and the Indigenous world. He makes a case for blending the religion of the Indigenous people with the Christianity of the European settlers, which is based on his belief that Christianity will have a positive impact on the Indigenous world of Canada. In addition, the settlers' views of ecology, particularly the wilderness myth, are presented in Scott's poems as influences that will improve the Indigenous world and thereby turn it into a perfect environment. By contrast, the religion and customs of the Indigenous people retards the growth of their world progress due to the Indigenous people's "savagery" (the non-civilised state), which exhaust the Indigenous more-than-human world's resources, thus hampering the envisioned Western progress. Scott displays an interest in Indigenous peoples and their way of life, coupled with a drive to civilise these peoples; but Scott is not convinced how Indigenous peoples will respond to this mission, and seems to regret his own certainty that civilisation and religion are the best way forewords, because if "civilising" Indigenous people is successful, they will essentially be eradicated.

Scott's poem "The Onondaga Madonna" (1898) is a lyrical description of a native Onandaga, a "woman of a weird and waning race" (Line 2), who stands motionless in the face of the annihilation of her race. With his Western racial prejudices for Indigenous people, Scott speaks of the woman's "pagan passion" that "burns and glows" (Line 4), suggesting that she is prone to fits of passion and lust that are connected to her faithlessness. The fiery

volcano of the woman's nature is further emphasised with the image of her blood, that "thrills with war and wildness in her veins" (Line 6). The final stanza provides a paradoxical image of the woman's baby, a powerful symbol of life, but in this case is "the latest promise of her nation's doom" (Line 10). In spite of the impending doom, the baby "clings and lies, the primal warrior gleaming from his eyes" (Lines 11, 12). The poem thus plays out the idea of a primal savagery that Scott indicates will not be able to survive in modern, colonised Canada.

The powerful images of the poem reflect Scott's view of the Indigenous people, that rests on the wilderness myth. At face value, it is characterised by an evident dualism of life and death, struggle and loss, but actually implies the opposition between the coloniser and the colonised. In this opposition the colonised (the Indigenous man/woman) does not stand a chance at maintaining its cultural (and even racial) identity in the face of the pervading dominance of the West. The only chance for the colonised is to accept its subjugated position and fall into the current of the Western culture, religion, and tradition. But the Indigenous people, as Scott's poem suggests, would not give up as the burning blood of a warrior flows within their veins. Scott treats this as a complex problem for the Indigenous people and suggested a blend of the two cultures (Western and the Indigenous). His aim is to open the Indigenous people's eyes to the importance of what Bentley calls "harmonious blending" between the two different cultures (756). In his insistence upon this cultural blending, Scott maintains the Nature/Culture binary, which is typical of Western thinking. Namely, he sees Indigenous nature as opposed to Western culture, the latter being potentially capable of transforming Indigenous savagery into a civilised society; or at least, transforming it to some extent. An aspect of Indigenous savagery is the intense passions of Indigenous people, voiced by a verse that says, "all her pagan passion burns and glows" (Line 4). According to the Western enlightened discourse, fiery passions obstruct and fog the cold and calculated logic of reason. Regardless, Scott thought that the cultural blending was the only way. In his

article, “Shadows in the Soul: Racial Haunting in the Poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott”, Bentley showed that Scott aims towards “the ‘harmonious blending’ of the Indigenous and European races in North America” (756). Numerous colonial commentators saw this “as ‘the great solution of the Indian question as regards the civilised tribes, which with the rising generation will do away with prejudice, and establish peace and good will between the Whites and Indians’” (756).

Scott’s poetry hints that settlers continued with their colonial behaviours to erase the future life of Indigenous people. The woman in Scott’s poem does not believe that a solution is possible through connecting with her oppressors. However, the weakness of her position in comparison to the colonisers prevents her from finding the solution on her own. She and her baby are ready to struggle until they are exterminated. But this struggle, as Scott suggests, can be avoided. The title, “The Onondaga Madonna” (1898), is a clear Biblical reference that suggests her baby is the future of her people; yet their future is unclear, as so many settlers are trying to convince them to follow a new way of life.

Scott’s Onondaga Madonna implies that the pagan tradition of Indigenous people had a past in which fathers were instilling values in the hearts of their children. But the arrival of European settlers disrupted these practices, leading to the “fathers’ woes” (Line 12), their great sorrow or distress at their inability to continue with their traditional practices. It can be argued that this disruption is caused by the settlers’ clinging to the wilderness myth, which is characterised by religious colonial oppression. The poem refers to the mixing of blood, which symbolises the alliance and marriage not only between human beings of different races but between cultures from different places. In the poem, the woman realises that when her people’s blood was mingled with that of the settlers, it was as if it were “mingled with her ancient foes” (Line 5). Scott uses religious symbolism such as blood to convey the message that the future holds no promise of any improvement for Indigenous people unless harmony is

restored. The poem simultaneously warns that destruction is unavoidable if Indigenous people continue to resist their colonisers, who are much more powerful than them, and will ensure their doom. At the end of the poem, the poet foresees the grim future for the next generation of Indigenous people, although he does not suggest re-establishing the harmony directly. With the general message of doom, the poet indicates that the Indigenous people will have to accept and welcome the settlers in order to safeguard their race and cultural identity. This need for acceptance is embodied in "her baby [who] clings" (Line 11) to that future harmony to avoid further conflict with the powerful enemy and the ultimate loss.

If Scott's "The Onondaga Madonna" emphasises the tension between Indigenous and European cultures and the desire to connect them, his poem "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" (1905) takes the argument further by underscoring the positive impact of harmony on the Indigenous world of Canada. The poem's title combines the words "hymns" with "lake," which may point to the binary of culture and nature as well as the spiritual and the natural. The idea of night also suggests something ethereal, while the non-English name of the lake perhaps indicates a willingness to acknowledge Indigenous culture. One of its main themes is syncretism, by which I mean the amalgamation of the aspects of both cultures. The idea of syncretism can be contrasted with those critics who suggest Scott believed that Western culture is superior to Indigenous culture: "Believing that all aspects of Native culture belonged to the past, Scott viewed Native religions, traditions, and customs as meaningless and irrelevant rituals which had persisted from an earlier age of 'savage' glory, and served only as a form of entertainment for 'low white men'" (Salem-Wiseman 4). Salem-Wiseman rightly observes that Scott has some problematic modes of representing an earlier age of "savage" glory. However, Scott's poem "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" does not present the superiority of European religious or other traditions over the old traditions of Indigenous people in Canada. Most importantly, this poem shows the potential impact of this syncretism

on civilising the Indigenous world of Canada. It is reflected in the multi-faceted language, religion, and traditions that gradually absorbs the identity of Indigenous people. Scott's representations are not perfect, but he did not ignore Indigenous traditions; rather, he envisioned an embrace of multiple traditions in the future.

Scott's "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" refers to the religious songs (hymns) which are part of the tradition brought by the settlers when they first entered the wilderness of Canada. He begins by presenting the sacred value of the hymns that enriched the old Indigenous world, which implies peace, cultural flourishing, and deep spirituality,

> While our canoe, that floats dumb in the bursting thunder,
> Gathers her voice in the quiet and thrills and whispers,
> Presses her prow in the star-gleam, and all her ripple
> Lapses in blackness. (Lines 9–12)

The canoe's silence evokes both danger ("thrills") and peace ("star-gleam") in a quiet setting that suggests the wilderness as empty, full of "lapses." The next passage ends with the startling lines: "hunted the savage":

> Sing we the sacred ancient hymns of the churches,
> Chanted first in old-world nooks of the desert,
> While in the wild, pellucid Nipigon reaches
> Hunted the savage. (Lines 13–17)

The words in these passages suggest death and darkness: "lapses"; "the dark mainland and island," (Line 1); "dead water," (Line 3) and "the bursting thunder" (Line 9) all suggest something to do with endings or death. The poem follows with the stretches of the lake Nipigon, which indicates the arrival of another religious tradition, after which "rises the hymn of triumph and courage and comfort" (Line 16). While there seems to be a great deal of

darkness in the setting, the "savage" who hunts seems to occupy a space of "courage and comfort" that demonstrates a contrast of light which floods any darkness.

The poem captures a union of multiple traditions through its literary representation. Bentley explains it in the following way:

> Duncan Campbell Scott (1862–1947) in the central stanzas of 'Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon' (1905) presents an instance of the blending of European and Native in the Canadian wilderness near the beginning of the twentieth century. […] Literary and ideological presences charged with the Victorian colonizing impulse and tradition haunt its every line: the perception of the event that it describes as a meeting of 'ages' conjures levels and degrees of civilization; the 'faith' that brood[s] in [its] darkness' is imbued with the Spirit that "sat […] brooding on the vast Abyss" in the opening invocation in *Paradise Lost*; and hovering over the poem as a whole is the entire tradition of Christian proselyting within the European imperial project. (752–753)

This proselytism—the attempt to convert people from one religious tradition to another—was established by the colonists who brought a religious tradition to be "married with the long-drawn Ojibwa," which was an "uncouth and mournful" Indigenous religious tradition (Lines 24 and 25). Therefore, the singing of European hymns on a body of water with an Indigenous name instils this lake (which symbolises the Indigenous more-than-human world) with the spirituality which is the blend of an old (Indigenous) religious tradition with a European tradition of the new age.

The poem seems to suggest that one can forge traditions into a single religious tradition in which "rises the hymn of triumph and courage and comfort":

> Now have the ages met in the Northern midnight,
>
> And on the lonely, loon-haunted Nipigon reaches

Rises the hymn of triumph and courage and comfort,

Adeste Fideles. (Lines 19–22)

The last lines of "Night Hymns" indicate the poet's optimistic view of the ability of this religious merging: "All wild nature stirs with the infinite, tender" (Line 34). In general, Scott's "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon" represents Western Christian proselyting efforts. The main idea of this project is to question the supposed positive impact of civilising the underdeveloped Indigenous world of Canada. The European settlers justify this act by claiming that the Indigenous world lapsed into savagery due to a long period of underdevelopment. These settlers' civilised approaches to ecology, as implied in Scott's next poem "The Half-Breed Girl," are able to utilise the Indigenous more-than-human world's resources in a way that does not harm their sustainability.

The settler propensity to treat the Canadian wilderness in terms of a resource that can be exploited and profited upon is reflected in Scott's other poem, "The Half-Breed Girl" (1906). "The Half-Breed Girl" is about a girl who is the offspring of parents of different races, in this case the daughter of a European father and an Indigenous mother. This poem's "central character is a Native woman who, like many of Scott's Native characters, is torn between two cultures and two belief systems" (Lisa 5). A diverse set of principles constitutes her personality as well as the different religious traditions of both Indigenous people and settlers. Rather than seeing this as the unhappy outcome of miscegenation, the poet suggests that this is a blessing because of the harmonious mixing of the two races, cultures, and religions. Scott presents this racial and cultural mixture as enabling a unique insight into two diverse spiritualities, traditions, and customs. But these are not quite balanced, according to the poet's view. The advantages of the "civilised" characteristics only compensate for the disadvantages of the "savage" characteristics she inherited from her Indigenous forefathers (Cullingham 83). "The Half-Breed Girl" reveals the poet's belief "that the Native peoples

needed contact with white society […] in order to develop the great natural intelligence of the race and to fit the Indian for civilized life in his own environment" (Salem 14). With this contact, exemplified by the religious and cultural merging in "Night Hymns on Lake Nipigon," the transformation of the Indigenous world of Canada into a civilised world of the West is not only achievable but also desirable. This goes to show that the Western settlers never perceived the wilderness as valued sanctuary. Therefore, they could never fully comprehend the spiritual value of wilderness for Indigenous people.

Consequently, the poem presents how the settlers' "civilised" constructions of the Indigenous world are becoming a dream in this girl's mind, which becomes a reality in the Canadian landscape. However, at the same time, the girl's mind reveals to us that the idea of Indigenous savagery, formed by the Western understanding of the Indigenous world, is becoming anachronistic. Thus, this poem presents the girl as unable to reconcile the civilised culture of the West with her savage Indigenous culture. As Cullingham put it, "The Half-Breed Girl"

> has deservedly attracted the attention of some of the leading critics of Scott's poetry. It puts into opposition the 'civilized' traits the girl has from [her] Scottish side with the 'savage' elements of her Indian forebears. The poem reveals that Scott shared a racial ideology with the majority of Canada's elite during this period. The ideology created the structuring assumption of the poem: that a 'half-breed' girl's soul must be the site of racial conflict. Her Scottish ancestry echoes in her soul bespeaking a civilized world that can only exist in conflict with her Indian background and lifestyle of netting fish and living in bush camps. (83)

The poet depicts the difficult conditions in the Indigenous world where she settled, representing her unwillingness to continue living there. In such a world, "she wakes in the stifling wigwam, where the air is heavy and wild" (Lines 29, 30). This imagery conjures up a

gloomy Indigenous world where the conditions are almost unbearable. Above her, “she sees the stars turn slowly” (Line 33). They are a sacred and spiritual symbol of numerous religions of the world, and of guidance and protection. Therefore, the stars seen by the girl symbolise how she sees and understands the religious traditions of the Indigenous people. She feels that the guidance and protection of the Indigenous religious traditions, manifested as stars in the sky, turn slowly over her world, whereas the earthbound environment immediately around her is bereft of such aid. The author continues describing how the girl observes the slow-moving stars “through the smoke of the dying embers” (Line 35). Since embers may be understood as a metaphor for something that is fading, these may be the last embers of a dying protection of the Indigenous traditions, which she observes in the fading stars above her. With this Scott tells us that the last light of the Indigenous world is fading, about to be overshadowed by the bright light of the West. This tells us that the connection with the “wild” is waning away—a warning that the wilderness myth is harming Indigenous people beyond repair.

The waning protection of the Indigenous world is replaced in the poem by the protection of the blended religious traditions of the West and Indigenous people. This blending is symbolically evoked in the way the female protagonist “strips the nets of fish [in which] the smell of the dripping net-twine gives to her heart a wish” (Lines 14 and 15). The sparkle and “mist on the moor” represent the longing to awaken her inner self, to nurture the potential of transformation. She also discovers “kindness” (Lines 24 and 25), which inspires her to strive to be better by not only keeping her family’s long-preserved Scottish name but also improving the region of her Indigenous family. This transformation in Scott’s poem is achieved through the settlers’ religious perspective, which fits into Crane’s “utilizing the wilderness” type in which the Indigenous nature’s value lies in its usefulness, and humans must exploit it in order to prosper. The girl wants to achieve her dream of civilising the Indigenous world in keeping with her white father’s “heritage of an age-long life” (Line 27),

in which the white fathers transformed Indigenous worlds "of yore" into "rock-built cities" (Lines 21, 22). Contrary to the Indigenous beliefs of protection realised only within the mystical blend of matter and spirit, the Western view of this concept, as suggested by Scott's poetry, is only a rock-built world. Scott adduces that the Europeans' past habitation in any wild area helped in the protection of the Indigenous world, rendering it ever more suitable until it became a permanent world for civilised humans to live in and utilise. While in Crane's "utilising the wilderness" type, the settlers' aim is the exploitation of the Indigenous world, Scott's poems present the settlers as viewing the utilisation of the Indigenous world as necessary for the sustainable development of the civilised world. Scott's poems thus advocate for the kind of exploitation that Crane criticises.

That said, Scott's poem "A Scene at Lake Manitou," also questions the wilderness myth by expressing anxiety about what will happen if Indigenous resources are depleted. In "A Scene at Lake Manitou" (1935), the female protagonist, "Widow Frederick / Whose Indian name means Stormy Sky" (Lines 25 and 26), is another Indigenous character introduced by Scott to highlight the gap between two cultures and two belief systems, namely the Indigenous peoples' and the European settlers'. In this poem, Widow Frederick expresses her family's struggle in the wilderness due to the English settlers, called "the loafing Indians" (Line 95). The widow first laments the waste of resources that the settlers encourage; then, she expresses her terror that her son will die as a consequence of settlers' dislike of Indigenous traditions such as hunting; finally, she destroys Western technology to convey her desire to connect her own Indigenous traditions to Christian religious traditions without the critical gaze of the settler. The European colonisers behave, according to Scott, in a "savage" way of (over)consuming the wilderness's resources. This poem thus challenges the wilderness myth, which suggests that the natural world provides abundant resources free to all who work to claim them. It advocates for a union of European and Indigenous traditions

through religious appeals, which are largely rooted in Scott's penchant for Christian religious traditions.

The Widow Frederick implies that the Indigenous adults and children are the victims of "savagery." The traders force them to follow these ways in order to gather the wilderness's resources: "Indian girls were gathering the hay / Half labour and half play" (Lines 1, 2). The poem suggests that the settlers encourage the (over)consumption of the wilderness's resources until this wilderness becomes "nearly deserted, for the women had gone / berry-picking at dawn" (Lines 20, 21). These are just two of numerous symbolic lines through which the poem depicts the wasted energies of the Indigenous adults and children, as well as the overconsumption or potential depletion of the wilderness's resources because of the colonisers' mistreatment of the Indigenous world. Rather than living in harmony with their nature, the Indigenous peoples are exploited in order to extract resources unsustainably from the environment.

The poem continues to critique the wilderness myth as the female protagonist expresses her concerns about her son Matanack, who, like the children mentioned above, is struggling in the wilderness's hardships:

> Was watching her son Matanack
> In the sunlight die,
> As she had watched his father die in the sunlight.
> Worn out with watching,
> She gazed at the far-off islands
> That seemed in a mirage to float
> Moored in the sultry air.
> She had ceased to hear the breath in Matanack's throat
> Or the joy of the children gathering the hay.

Death, so near, had taken all sound from the day. (Lines 27–36)

She first watches her husband perish of an unnamed illness; however, mentioning that his death occurred under the sunlight ascribes his death to the hard toil in the wilderness. Therefore, she expects her son's death is imminent if the same labouring in the wilderness continues under the same dreadful conditions. In addition, Widow Frederick sings:

For Matanack four years old;

Triumphant at last!

She had taught him how and where

To lay the rabbit snare,

And how to set

Under the ice, the net,

The habits of shy wild things

Of the forest and marsh;

To his inherited store

She had added all her lore. (Lines 45–54).

The verses indicate that she puts part of the blame on herself because she taught her child Matanack one of the family traditions, hunting. She describes how her son is skilled at the hunting in the wilderness by referring to the "two silver-foxes over his shoulder" (Line 65), proving he is "a hunter crafty and bold" (Line 56). Also, Widow Frederick's opinion of this Indigenous tradition is that they are "the habits of shy wild thing" (Line 51). Widow Frederick is thus concerned that her son's participation in Indigenous traditions will hurt him because the colonisers are powerful and dangerous. She believes that her son's skills at hunting will destroy "his life with its useless cunning" (Line 58). This implies that he will most certainly be further exploited by the Western and Indigenous traders aiming to benefit from the resources obtained in the hunt. Therefore, his mother suspects that the son will meet

the same destiny as his father. In order to stop this from happening to her son, she must do something “to save him, to keep him forever!” (Line 77).

The widow must resist the oppressive and exploitative ways of the Western colonists, in particular (over)consumption of the Indigenous world’s resources for satisfying the greed of the traders. To resist this, the mother destroys symbols of Western technology: “First of them all, her gramophone / She hurled like a stone” (Lines 101, 102). The gramophone can be taken as a symbol for the inevitable social transformation that occurs upon reaching adulthood. The gramophone, the destruction of which should save the child from meeting his death in the wilderness, represents the importance of changing many traditional understandings of ecology, taught by their culture, in the minds of the young Indigenous generation. A tension emerges because colonising modernity, along with its technologies, is understood to destroy the connection between Indigenous peoples and their land.

Scott’s poem uses religion to try to encourage readers to sympathise with the Indigenous character. Apart from destroying objects, this mother “has attempted to propitiate ‘the Powers of the Earth and Air, / The Powers of the Water’ (Lines 88 and 89) by rejecting the possessions that she has accumulated by participating in the [traders’] economy” (Bentley 764). These powers of earth, water, and air are propitiated by the mother after “she had prayed to their Jesus” and “called on Mary / To save [her son], to keep him forever!” (Lines 78, 79 and 80). This representation of religious acts points to the mother’s Christianity, which coexists in her mind along with her Indigenous religion (earth, water, and air). Again, this reflects Scott’s idea of ideal symbiosis of the Western religion and culture and those of the Indigenous people. Thus, Scott highlights the role of the European settlers’ religious tradition (Christianity) in saving Indigenous nature. More accurately, this trope of the Christian propitiation is used by Scott to argue for the role of Christianity in making the Indigenous people abandon their primitive ways of life, especially hunting and gathering for the traders’

sake, who only care about exploiting the wilderness's resources. Therefore, Scott ultimately provides a romanticised vision of the wilderness, situating it within the abstract realm of Christianity. The mother's resistance to colonial exploitation is at the same time a plea for the Indigenous people not to abandon their religious traditions. Therefore, Scott does not reject the Indigenous "savage" religious customs and beliefs. However, he firmly believes they must be blended with Christianity, so as to improve the primitive culture and possibly transform it into a civilised culture of the West.

This suggests a tension at the heart of Scott's work: is such a transformation possible? Through this civilised construction of wilderness, humans both preserve and exploit the Indigenous nature and more-than-human world in order to improve their conditions of life. As mentioned in the introduction, Abram wrote *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-Than-Human World* to explore the concept of Nature. Abram points to the issue with the term "nature" itself, which almost instantly forces juxtaposition with "culture." The settler ideology is bound up with the Man versus Nature binary; moreover, these poems open up an Indigenous understanding of a "more-than-human world" as Abram defines it. The mother's perspective signals an Indigenous awareness and appreciation of humanity's connections with and dependency upon the more-than-human world by resisting those who threaten her son by deeming him too-Indigenous due to his close connection to the hunt. The mother's acts of resistance in the poem challenge the loafing Indigenous and colonial traders who threaten her son and force her to work in the wilderness and gather resources for them.

With this, Scott emphasises the Indigenous people's "primitive" view of the wilderness, which for the Western mind is uncivilised, barbaric, and savage. These representations in Scott's poems emphasise the role of the European settlers in ensuring the prosperous future claims of their settlement in the Canadian lands. A similar idea was brought

up by Cilano and DeLoughrey, who describe the process by which colonisers claim the new environment and then alter it according to their own view of Indigenous nature and the more-than-human world. This allows them to force their so-called civilised ideas of ecology upon the colonised Indigenous people. This is represented in the poems as originating from one of the European settlers' identity factors, such as their religious traditions. The way this is presented in Scott's poems echoes Cilano and DeLoughrey's emphasis on Guha's argument, according to which settlers ignore or resent Indigenous religion, culture, environment, and traditions. In Scott's poetry, this is exemplified by the stereotypical representations of the primitive and even savage views of the Indigenous people and their culture. This represents the biocentric view emphasised by Guha, that allows Western settlers to "replicate the history of the colonial inequalities" by attempting to create an essentially Western environment that would assimilate the remaining Indigenous population, without attempting to understand their culture, religion, or tradition (Cilano and Deloughrey 72). Scott rehearses racist discourse concerning the Indigenous peoples. At the same time, Scott opens up the possibility that the Indigenous relations with the land speak to a spiritual and sustainable appreciation of humanity's position in the world. Scott can be understood to problematise a colonial settler ideology rooted in the wilderness myth that views Nature simply as a resource to be plundered for material gain.

Section III: Challenges to Settlers' Civilised Construction of Wilderness in Emily Carr's Painting *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky*

Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky, 1935, oil on canvas, Vancouver Art Gallery (Fig. 5)

Emily Carr's painting, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1935) challenges the representation of the wilderness as an uninhabited piece of land that should be used to settlers' own advantage. The painting reveals the imperial violence and environmental depredation that underpins the settlers' professed goal of developing Nature according to their own Western understanding and material needs. It shows Nature which is threatened by the European settlers' economic activities. In *Unsettling Encounters,* Gerta Moray argues that Carr's work "takes on its full significance only when it is seen as a conscious intervention in Native-settler relations" (83). The painting emphasises that Europe's notion of progress involves destroying the once-sustainable Indigenous environment to make it into a Western "civilised" settlement. Carr's art criticises the wilderness myth by challenging settler greed and the desire to "civilise" the land; however, it also falls in line with some aspects of the

wilderness myth because it treats Nature as separate from Human life—including Indigenous human life.

Emily Carr (1871–1945) was born in Victoria, British Columbia the year British Columbia joined Canada. She was the second youngest of nine children born to English parents. As a member of the legendary Group of Seven, a group of Canadian landscape painters, Carr played an important role in establishing modern art in Canada (Moray 80). After travelling to Paris in 1910 to learn about postimpressionism and fauvism, she returned to Canada with a modernist interest in the essentials of non-European art (Moray 81). She achieved fame with her paintings of Canada, which express the problematic history of colonialisation (Crosby 276). These paintings attempt to counter the wilderness myth; however, they also perpetuate the wilderness myth by resorting to Christian (settler) imagery and by maintaining the idea that Nature is better off without humans—an idea that counterintuitively perpetuates the wilderness myth by enforcing harmful dualisms that neglect Indigenous peoples' differing understanding of humanity as united with nature.

Carr usually expresses her opposition to colonisation in images of a vast, alluring and threatening wilderness (Moray 71). As argued by Gerta Moray in her article "Emily Carr and the Traffic in Native Images", her criticism was at its highest during the time when urban industrial Europe reaped the wealth of global imperialism in the late nineteenth century. At this time, Indigenous Canadian peoples were impacted in devastating ways by the European settlers, leading Indigenous people to be classified as "vanishing races" (Moray 72). In *Objects and Others: Essays on Museums and Material Culture*, George W. Stocking points out that the term "vanishing races" reflects how Europeans collected and classified the artefacts that represent Indigenous identities. Various colonial settlers took these artefacts for their imperial museums as scientific specimens or ethnographic exotica. In addition, these artefacts were thought by Europeans to represent uncivilised Indigenous identities on the

verge of extinction (Stocking 81). These non-European vanishing races inspire Carr to defend "the context and meanings of Native cultural traditions that were being modified by the introduction of Euro-Canadian industrial goods and political pressures" (Moray 73).

In one of her landscape books, *Hundreds and Thousands*, Carr states that her aim was "to paint so simply that the common ordinary people would understand and see something of God" (147). Her religious and spiritual goals are mentioned in her autobiography, which shows that Carr's love for the beauty of the wilderness took "her into realms of bliss, experiences that were from the beginning part of an innately religious nature" (Shadbolt 66). Doris Shadbolt argues that Carr was attracted to the spirituality of Native traditions because she saw them as "a manifestation of […] joy of living things" (15). Due to that attraction, Carr's *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* (1935) is considered one of her "most incandescently spiritual paintings" (56 Hirst). Susan Crean claims that this image is a paradigm of "devastation in the forest" of Canadian lands (338). Other opinions contradict this by arguing that the painting indicates "a pure state of joyous identification with all nature" (Shadbolt 122).

In view of these conflicting judgments, *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* requires careful interpretation. Considering Carr's anti-colonial leanings, it is most likely that the image, at least in part, symbolises devastation of the Canadian Indigenous lands at the hands of the colonists (Crean 338). This interpretation is partially motivated by the title of the painting, which seems to echo Indigenous names which often refer to the natural world (for example, a Lakota chief's name was Touch the Clouds). With this assessment, the painting not only criticises the colonial exploitation of Canada but also exposes the falsity of the settlers' supposedly productive transformation of the Indigenous world, manifested as the forceful transformation of that world into a progressive world of modern civilisation. As will be demonstrated later on, Carr's painting depicts the ways the European settlers harmed

Indigenous environments—and the Indigenous way of living with nature and not above it in what Moray calls “creative harmony” (Moray 83).

According to another interpretation, the painting depicts the natural world in its “pristine” state, resting upon the rejection of Indigenous religion, culture, and tradition, and envisioning a land untainted by colonisation (Shadbolt 66). This lens shows that the Indigenous world progressed in its own state in the past by keeping the wilderness “impenetrable to humans” (Willis 99). Carr shows this by depicting the wilderness as large, empty, and uninhabited, which is discussed by Gerta Moray. She noticed that Carr’s works rarely depict the Canadian landscape as full of Indigenous peoples. Still, her works as a whole “presented a flagrant contradiction to the invader-settler community’s edict that they were occupying a *terra nullius*” (Moray 84). The way she achieves this is also explored in the paragraphs to follow.

Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky contains several elements that attract attention. These are the sky that appears to be shining with light on all the earth, the Douglas fir trees towering defiantly up to the sky, with no leaves lower to the ground. There are small Douglas fir trees with beautiful, colourful leaves.

The sky takes up the largest portion of the painting. Ruth Gowers has designated it as “the subject of this famous painting”, which represents “the light and freedom” (86). The sky provides numerous benefits for the land, such as the light (depicted by the dominant white colour), the wind (displayed by the leaning position of some trees), and the rain (alluded to by the gathering clouds). It can be seen as the creator and nurturer of the land and everything that is a part of it. This is evident in the small Douglas fir trees that are covered with bright, beautiful leaves. These trees abound with mixed colours, such as blue, green, and brown. They are described by Goodman and Stephen as “strips of undulating colour” (176). The painting also shows how these undulating colours are reflected in the soil around the trees.

Therefore, the entire landscape seems to display the perfect harmony between the land and the sky, with all the living world of nature that belongs to them. The marked discrepancy between the trees gives the impression of an anomaly and oddity, especially when observing the tall trees, whose colours are more distinct. More importantly, these trees do not have the bright, beautiful leaves that adorn the other trees. Their long trunks reach high above, bringing their crowns into the heavens. It is as if their rise to the sky is a plea for the entirety of nature to be restored, although they will ultimately be cut down like the forests of the Indigenous world. The entire landscape is portrayed as clear and spacious, not appearing to conceal anything. Yet the painting is replete with symbolism, not immediately visible to the naked eye.

The sky may provide a hint of Carr's religious outlook. It supplies the trees with the elements for growth and a bright appearance that is reflected in the soil, enriching the whole landscape with brightness. In this sense, the sky gives life and thus symbolises the relationship with God. In this relation to their creator, the trees are infused with spirituality that makes them even stronger. They might be connected to the Indigenous human beings who were nourished by the spiritual energy of their religious traditions in order to persevere and make their land fruitful. Lizbeth Goodman and Stephen Regan, in their article "*Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky*: Emily Carr's Double Approach to First Nations Canadian Landscapes and Images in Her Painting and Writing", discuss how the tree in Carr's paintings represents Indigenous culture:

> As a way into a more specific cultural and historical understanding of Carr's late paintings, we might consider the unusual anthropomorphic instincts with which Carr approaches the forest. There is evidence that she considered the smaller trees as 'forest children' and the larger trees 'matrons', while the loggers felling the trees were dubbed 'executioners' (Tippett, 1996). Distinctions of this kind appear in her

> description of 'little round umbrella trees, spindly runts who grew up under forest giants that have been reduced to timber long since' (Shadbolt, 1987, p. 138). Carr's perceptions of trees 'reduced to timber' were not merely nostalgic or sentimental, but based on first hand experience of a remorseless colonial economic process. In this respect, the title '*Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky'*, invites further inspection. As an economic commodity, the tall Douglas Fir that dominates the canvas is deemed of little value, but in terms of the surviving ecology and the unifying spirit Carr apprehended in Native culture, it has inestimable value. (176)

These tall Douglas fir trees, once the colonisers cut them down, become pale and incapable of making the surrounding soil bright and appropriate for cultivation. The pale trees in Carr's painting indicate the European settlers' destruction of the Indigenous culture, which is strengthened by the relation with God. After this colonial destruction, the Indigenous cultures, embodied in the tall, pale trees, appear dead or dying, so the Indigenous peoples turn to the sky (God) as their only remaining lifeline. It is the status of Indigenous cultures that are trying to restore their spiritual relationship in order to restore their past glory and power, as well as their productive nature. However, this spirituality has been ruined by the tyranny of the colonisers, who have eradicated them for their own selfish goals, which is represented by the trees in Carr's painting that have been cut and cleared. As Margaret Hirst claims, the trees' ascension to the sky in Carr's image is like Jesus Christ's ascension after his death in order to renew his life, a revived life in the Heaven:

> Certainly, the title echoes the life of Christ, scorned by mankind, but beloved of God. The foremost and tallest tree, reminiscent of the ascension of Christ, seems about to be released from earthly bonds, to ascend in majestic triumph, while the aura and rays of the sky, in corresponding descent through the mountains, embrace the entire landscape. A small dab of dark paint high in the tree hints at the crossbeam of a

> crucifix, which, in combination with two lesser tall trees, suggests the triple crucifixion of Calvary. The scene reflects words from *The Sadhu* which resonated with Carr: 'the glorious Christ with the waves coming out of Him was seen here, there and everywhere.' As a Christian representation, *Scorned* draws the viewer into a vision of union with God through the agency of Christ, reflecting Carr's Christocentric faith. (56–57)

This quote indicates that Carr aimed to highlight the role Christianity for the regrowth of wilderness after its destruction by the white colonisers. The ascension of the long trees into the sky is likened by Hirst to the ascension of Christ, which can be understood as God's help for these trees, their rescue from the white settlers' exploitation that had prevented their regrowth, but also as the Christian rebirth after death. Viewed in this light, Carr's painting sets the wilderness in the realm of Christianity, detaching it from any material locality. Carr is said to have appreciated an Indigenous spiritual connection to the Canadian land. However, she is understood to have depicted this land by superimposing over it a Christian frame of reference. This is problematic because the realm of Christian heaven is a colonial concept; Carr seems to be suggesting that only Western colonisers have the frame of reference to understand the beauty of Indigenous life.

Such an interpretation may spark a heated debate. Hirst's quote implies that Christianity—brought to Canadian wilderness by European settlers and combined with the religious traditions of the Indigenous people, as emphasised in Scott's poems—is shown in Carr's painting as offering support to the Indigenous people to revive the wilderness following the exploitation by the same settlers who also brought their religion (Christianity) and used it to justify their civilised ecology. As she is of white ancestry, Carr has no intention of criticising the Christianity that became blended with the religious traditions of the Indigenous people. Like Scott, she supports this religious fusion as beneficial for the

Indigenous world. Gerta Moray, in her article “Wilderness, Modernity and Aboriginality in the Paintings of Emily Carr”, mentions that Carr’s paintings “emphasized both a religious syncretism acknowledging the validity of all religious faiths and the power of geometric forms as signifiers of transcendental harmony” (61). However, Carr differs from Scott in that she admits that the white settlers have used Christianity with its virtues—the sacrifice, tolerance, and unconditional love— to justify their putatively civilised but manifestly exploitative ideologies in Canadian lands. Moray argues that “in observing Native transculturation Carr concluded that the acceptance of Christianity had not deprived Native peoples of their distinctive values” (61). With this acceptance, “the moral force of aboriginal traditions would be revalued” (61) through communication with Christianity. Moray adds that Carr’s paintings “portray an idiosyncratic, hybrid Native Christianity that preserved Native traditional views of time and of nature” (61). *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* implies that Christianity is not to be blamed for the destruction of the Canadian wilderness by the white settlers, who had claimed that Christianity would improve Canadian wilderness. Many settler writers, such as Scott, called for the aforementioned religious syncretism. Even though the settlers claimed that they accomplished this, many Indigenous beliefs survive and still to this day reject Christianity (as Frédéric Laugrand argues in “”Embracing Christianity, Rejecting Western Individualism?” [33]). The idea of a single religion accepted by all is fabricated; as such, it brought about the eradication of the Indigenous religious traditions, that ultimately resulted in a lack of environmental protection. Therefore, Carr’s work could be understood as aiming to clarify the truth of Christianity had it not been misused by the settlers for their own benefit. Such misuse of Christianity ultimately contributed to the creation of the wilderness myth. So while Carr challenges the ways the wilderness myth contributes to the wreckage of Indigenous land, she simultaneously supports the wilderness myth by bringing in iconography of Christianity and its morals.

The outcome of the wilderness myth is illustrated by Carr in the destruction of wilderness for the purpose of building the urban industrial society of European settlers. For this purpose, they have destroyed the environments of creative harmony that Indigenous peoples enjoyed before the advent of contemporary industrial nations (Moray 83). This representation in Carr's painting resonates with Mukherjee's discussion, mentioned in the introduction, that reveals the following consequence beyond the human being expelled from natural areas (as the result of the wilderness myth): the replacement of non-mechanised labour with mechanised labour that contaminates and destroys the Indigenous world. In this replacement, the mechanical cutting down of trees by the European settlers in order to prepare the land for urbanisation makes regrowth impossible. This is suggested by the appearance of the cut trees in the painting, which appear as shrivelled, pale and unable to grow again. In her book *Artist Emily Carr and the Spirit of the Land: A Jungian Portrait*, Phyllis Marie Jensen Carr provides a description of the cut trees in her painting. She described them as "screamers", referring to the screams of agony and pain. This description is quoted in Jensen's book:

> There is a torn and splintered ridge across the stumps I call the 'screamers'. These are the unsawed last bits, the cry of the tree's heart, wrenching and tearing apart just before she gives that sway and the dreadful groan of falling, that dreadful pause while her executioners step back with their saws and axes resting and watching. It's a horrible sight to see a tree felled, even now, though the stumps are grey and rotting. As you pass among them you see their screamers sticking up out of their own tombstones, as it were. They are their own tombstones and their own mourners. (Carr; quoted in Jensen 132)

Jensen comments on Carr's description to explain the reason for her sadness about these trees: "Emily Carr painted *Scorned as Timber* [to indicate] an era when loggers could choose

what they cut rather than the mechanical clear-cuts of everything" (145). This loggers' way of choosing what they want to cut echoes Mukherjee's term "non-mechanised labour." Jensen's explanation means that the Indigenous loggers, in the era before the arrival of the settlers with their mechanical clear-cuts, used to choose ways of cutting the trees that allowed regrowth of new ones, unlike the industrial clear-cuts that rendered the stumps grey, rotting, and unable to regrow. In Carr's image, there are also stumps of cut trees that do not appear to be grey and rotting because they were cut by the Indigenous people in an appropriate way to enable regrowth. Tucker mentions that the grey, rotting stumps in Carr's painting "draw attention to industrial logging", while the young trees "draw attention to rebirth of trees" because their stumps were not cut by the industrial mechanical clear-cuts (376). Therefore, the ascension of the long trees into the sky in *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky*—likened by Margaret Hirst to the ascension of Christ—can be understood as relating to the European settlers' use of the wilderness myth (hostile nature), whereby the trees were cut for the industrial purpose that prevented regrowth. The wilderness myth encouraged settlers to believe the resources were so great that their activities could continue; they thought of God's provisions, and therefore neglected to think about sustainability.

The Indigenous way of cutting down trees is not the only method portrayed in Carr's painting as enabling the trees' regrowth. She also sheds light on the Indigenous peoples' dependence on their traditional knowledge about how to treat the Indigenous world's nature, including trees, with care and to ensure regeneration. This is expressed by Carr's portrayal of a Canadian wilderness which is empty of the Indigenous peoples. In *Handbook of Religion and Ecology*, Mary Evelyn Tucker discusses the theme of regeneration in Carr's painting. She states that "while Carr mourned the loss of the old growth trees, she was also hopeful that the trees would regenerate" (378). In addition, Tucker quotes Carr's words that point to regeneration: "There is nothing so strong as growing […] Man can pattern it and change its

variety and shape, but leave it for even a short time and off it goes back to its own, swamping and swallowing man's puny intentions. No killing or stamping down can destroy it. Life is in the soil" (Carr 301). This regeneration would consequently restore the wilderness. Carr perceived the destructive, unsustainable way in which settler colonialism ravaged Canadian resources. She perceived that the wilderness myth was an ideology that worked to conceal environmental depredation that ultimately hurt settlers and severely hurt Indigenous people.

Carr seems to believe that Nature does not include humans nor does it need to include humans—an idea that props up the wilderness myth by perpetuating a Human/Nature binary. Maria Tippett mentions that the purpose of impenetrability in Carr's painting suggests that the wilderness (spiritual sanctuary) and its woods are in "an emotional need for solitude, a deeply religious feeling that God was to be found among His forest spires, and a desire to create a unique statement" (136). Tucker also discusses Carr's goal of creating the solitude and impenetrability of the forest: "That Carr's forest is impenetrable to humans does in a way indicate that she had believed in or advocated for nature that does not include humans, a dominant theme in the American land conservation movement at all the time, which advocated for wilderness that did not permit human habitation" (377). Carr's wilderness finds no room for humans, whether they are settlers or Indigenous. The living nature of the wilderness should be left intact or treated in such a way that enables regrowth.

Considering Carr's advocacy for regeneration, we can understand why Moray wants to believe that Carr's representations of the uninhabited Canadian landscape challenge the invader-settlers' argument that they were inhabiting a *terra nullius* (84). However, the absence of humans in Carr's images of nature suggests that Carr does not fully imagine a future with Indigenous people returned to their land. The possibility of the Indigenous regeneration for the purpose of their ultimate return to their land begs another question: Would they really be able to come back to their lands with their identity unaltered? The

notion of "into the wilderness" mentioned in introducing Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* perhaps answers this question. The colonisers, as Moodie's book implies, claim that they colonise the lands uninhabited by the Indigenous people and were able to overcome the dangers and challenges of these lands until they transformed their very nature, allowing for new (colonial) settlements. The settlers use the argument of *terra nullius* to imply that the Indigenous people left the wilderness due to their inability to utilise it properly. The *terra nullius* trope asserts there are no people who have a prior right to the land before the settlers. This justification, resulting from the wilderness myth, was common in colonial discourse. It was also innocently used in Moodie's book to show the European colonisers eventually need to colonise Canada lest the whole Indigenous world should remain isolated and unused. While it may be tempting to think that Carr painted the natural world as empty to envision a space that Indigenous people could someday return to, it is more likely that Carr imagined Nature as a "pristine" space that no humans should inhabit. This is in line with the wilderness myth, demonstrating that even conservation-focused artists cannot always escape from the myths that tend to harm Indigenous life.

Conclusion of Chapter One

This chapter examined the wilderness myth in Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush*, the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, and the painting of Emily Carr. The analysis has shown different aspects of the wilderness myth in the works of these authors. While all three writers vary in their depiction of Canada, however, the chapter has demonstrated how the ideas and practices of settler colonialism revolved around a capacity to efface from view Indigenous claims to the land that was rightfully theirs.

Susanna Moodie's *Roughing It in the Bush* is an account of the settler life in the wilderness and a guide for the upcoming settlers. Presenting Canadan nature and ecology, the author marvels at its living world of nature to the point of sensing a divine presence contained

within it. Nevertheless, despite this evident delight for the wilderness, Moodie believes that such environment is an ideal place for a permanent settlement of the immigrants who might have experienced some form of political, economic and/or social oppression in their native worlds. Although she is critical of certain settlers' mistreatment of the Indigenous peoples and their environments, Moodie is certain that well-mannered settlers are capable of properly treating the environment, leaving it intact and capable of supporting continual settler growth. This standpoint reflects the core colonising imperative that rests at the heart of the wilderness myth.

The poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott showed an ambivalent attitude to the Canadian land. Like Moodie, Scott is amazed by the richness of the Canadian lands but is, at the same time, aware of the pervading colonial influence. This influence is portrayed in his poems as the unstoppable force that is bound to establish its dominance over Canada to the point of exterminating the Indigenous people. Therefore, he sees only one solution to this ethical problem: the merging of the two cultures into a single culture, represented by both Western settlers and the Indigenous people. The issue with this solution is the remaining Western dominance which will ultimately destroy the Indigenous identity. The wilderness myth in this case introduces the Culture/Nature binary, according to which the Western culture is imposed upon the wild, Indigenous nature for the purpose of civilising the Indigenous world.

Emily Carr's *Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky* provides an image of a seemingly simple landscape, dominated by the towering trees that reach for the sky. The painting is replete with contrasting objects (colossal vs. small trees, desolate land vs. grassland), which inspire various interpretations, ranging from fierce postcolonial criticism to the celebration of Indigenous perseverance in the face of industrialisation. Further, Carr's Christianity, which is implied in the painting as the only solution to the impending annihilation of the Indigenous lands, is illustrated by the sky-high trees that appear to reach for the heavens. These trees

either symbolise the reborn Christ ascending to heaven after death or the Indigenous people whose only hope is to turn towards the Christian God, who may not be the divinity they would be willing to pray to. Carr attempts to challenge the settling of wilderness and the notion that the wilderness is a “pristine” state to be dominated by construction and urbanisation. However, her painting reinforces certain ideas of the wilderness myth, especially the dualism that sets Humans apart from Nature. This demonstrates how difficult it is for many artists and writers to critique the wilderness myth and yet not uphold its ideologies in the process.

Chapter Two: Eco-Cosmology and the Wilderness Myth in Australian Novels

This chapter examines the novels *Voss* (1957) by Patrick White and *Remembering Babylon* (1993) by David Malouf. Both novels portray the relationship between Australian Indigenous lands, the "Outback," and Indigenous people, who were often called "Aborigines." This thesis will mainly use the term "Indigenous" rather than "Aboriginal" in keeping with the assertion that "Aboriginal" has racist connotations from Australia's colonial past in an effort to challenge that racism (Joseph para. 2). In particular, the chapter explores how the wilderness myth represents the basis on which the colonising settlers pursue their own colonial goals. In doing so, they inflict substantial damage to Indigenous people and their land, threatening to eradicate both. This chapter will contribute to literary scholarship by demonstrating the capacity of postcolonial literature works to critique settler ideology and by demonstrating that even literature that critiques settler ideology can nevertheless be seen to rehearse aspects of the wilderness myth.

Patrick White's *Voss* establishes a unique relation between the colonial explorer, Voss, and the Indigenous nature of Australia. Voss sets out to cross the continent with his expedition in hope of finding treasures. Instead of that, he soon discovers the wonders of the Indigenous world of the Australian Outback. After many challenges throughout the journey, the expedition ultimately fails and Voss is killed by the local Indigenous people, having placed his trust in them and even adding a few of them to his expedition. His death is the result of a complex relationship between the Western colonists and Indigenous people. Although Voss felt a deep sympathy for the local Indigenous people, he was still an invading colonist in their eyes. As such, he could never get rid of the opposition between the civilised white colonists and Indigenous savages of the Outback – the dualist perspective undergirding enlightened Western reason. On this basis, the settlers have constructed a discourse of the wilderness, according to which the whole Indigenous world is savage and dangerous, but

replete with untapped resources. As such, it is badly in need of "civilisation" or a complete transformation in accordance with Western cultural values. This postcolonial perspective reveals the sustained criticism of the wilderness myth that Patrick White depicted through *Voss*. Through the main character's unfortunate destiny, White has exposed the disastrous impact of the Western dualist view of Indigenous people and their world. In this sense, the key message of the novel, I argue, is to raise a collective awareness about the impact of this discourse on Indigenous communities. As much as Voss sought to establish the connection between Indigenous people and the colonists, he was still an individual who took up an impossible task of fixing a centuries-old cultural misconception of a global magnitude. Unable to see the futility of such an attempt, he ultimately met his demise.

Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* elucidates the relation between the colonist settlers and Indigenous people from a completely different perspective. The protagonist Gemmy is a stranded colonial boy who is saved and raised by Indigenous people. Upon his return to a colonial settlement, he is perceived as a spy for the Indigenous people, and is eventually banished by the colonists. By way of this portrayal, the novel raises important issues centring on identity. Simultaneously, the author raises doubts about lasting abstract notions, such as "civilisation" and "culture". Last but not least, the novel puts the Nature/Culture binary to the test. Being neither Western nor Indigenous or belonging to both at same time, the character of Gemmy defies the very notion of identity. As such, he is the living embodiment of ambiguity, fear, and doubt for the settlers, just like the mysterious frontier of the Outback, which they dub the "Absolute Dark." As another abstract creation stemming from the wilderness myth, the frontier becomes an unknown place of dread for the settlers, which in truth is their own imagination. Still, they live in constant fear of Indigenous people and are overprotective of their settlements. By portraying the colonial settlements and the ever-present dread of Indigenous people, David Malouf exposes another negative feature of the myth of the

wilderness. The myth worsens relationships between settlers and Indigenous people because the settlers treat Indigenous people as problems to be eradicated as the settlers take over the supposedly-"pristine" land. This causes violence between Indigenous people and settlers, as Malouf expresses through literary form.

Among the main themes of the novels, and also the key discussion topic in this chapter, is that of the abstract dualisms on which basis Western colonists form their judgements about the Indigenous world. The outcomes of this particular mindset are rational binaries, such as the Nature/Culture binary, that create numerous misconceptions about Indigenous people and their land. The most common misconception of this kind is that Indigenous lands are isolated wildernesses which, although inhospitable to so-called civilised communities, are also replete with resources that demand the urgent colonisation of Indigenous lands. The novels themselves serve as both vessels and mirrors for the intricate dynamics underpinning Western colonisation's impact on Indigenous cultures. By weaving these themes into the fabric of the novels, the authors shed light on the interplay between abstract philosophical constructs and their tangible, often detrimental, repercussions on the Indigenous world. In doing so, the novels act as thought-provoking conduits, inviting readers to engage with the profound complexities of historical fictions and their enduring echoes in the present day.

This chapter begins by discussing the negative impact of the concept of "wilderness" on Australian more-than-human environments, and demonstrates that Indigenous peoples suffered from Western notions of "pristine nature." The chapter demonstrates how the novels represent the ways the settlers employed the wilderness idea to constrain the Indigenous people's dependence on nature and more-than-human environments for their basic needs. These basic needs include food, water, and a spiritual sanctuary that provides escape from colonial industrialisation and urbanisation. The settlers' understanding of "pristine nature"

reflects the way they leveraged the natural benefits of Society-Nature and ecology for their own industrial and financial goals, amounting to economic growth. The settler characters consider Nature as something external to their society, something to be dominated and profited upon. The chapter focuses on this utilitarian understanding of the world as plain wilderness, i.e., an object to be exploited. The characters frugally economised and are still economising (managing economically) the world's capacities for their own selfish purposes under the guise of development and progress. Through the examples of such economical ideas and actions in the novels, the energies of both the human world and the natural world do not work in cohesion but are opposed. In other words, humanity's enmeshment within the more-than-human world is disregarded in settler mindsets in the novels.

Most crucially, the chapter debates whether the eco-cosmological mode of the Indigenous people grants them the power to resist and reveal the exploitative and damaging impacts of the colonial constructions of Indigenous life. The "plain wilderness," the deceptive construct of wilderness, by the settlers is challenged in the novels in the way the Indigenous people are depicted as perceiving how the settlers' ways are endangering the world to the point of extinction. The novels reveal that the Indigenous people are at times forced to move to the margins and swamps of the wilderness that is the Outback. This moving away from the settlers is an attempt to resist the oppressing industrial dispossession and exploitation by the colonists. By doing so, the Indigenous people rely on the spiritual haven of their sacred more-than-human world, which is the Outback's swamps.

The chapter concludes that *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* connect the consequences of the Indigenous people's eco-cosmological strategy of resistance with the settlers' success in their concept of wilderness. The Indigenous characters are represented as clinging to their more-than-human world for the purpose of resistance. The Indigenous peoples' more-than-human world (comprising swamps, animals, insects, plants) cooperates with them in a both

physical and spiritual sense, resisting industrial exploitation. Unfortunately, this Indigenous resistance, as it appears in *Remembering Babylon*, is not enough to stop the lumbering machine of industrialisation which brings extinction. This story of extinction puts the blame on the colonists for forcing the Indigenous people to use their only means of resistance—the eco-cosmological strategy (Circle of life). The chapter underscores the Indigenous people's forced return to their eco-cosmologies, which results in the settler opportunity to remake the wilderness into a new world guided by their own view of the more-than-human world as wilderness. The settlers' success is represented in their effective dealing with the more-than-human world of the Indigenous people and in their transformation of non-civilised areas into so-called urban and civilised areas. Finally, the chapter ends with a comparison of the Indigenous characters' post-apocalyptic conditions of life due to their disconnection from their more-than-human world, a connection with which ultimately becomes impossible.

As the chapter will demonstrate with textual evidence, both *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* present the negative impacts of the settlers' idea of wilderness. They demonstrate how the wilderness myth even constrained the Indigenous people's dependence on ecology for basic needs, such as food and water. Instead, nature was abused by the settlers who capitalised on its resources. As the chapter will demonstrate, several settler characters perceive Indigenous nature as an isolated area with resources to fuel the growth of their settlements. In other words, it is viewed as an untapped source of resources whose only purpose is exploitation. This colonial perspective refers to how the characters economised the Indigenous world's capacities for the purposes of economic exploration and development. Through these examples, the settlers ascertain their own Western cultural identity, while subjugating Indigenous identity. In doing so, they reverse the workings of the Outback, which forms the environment, and form the environment themselves for their own utilitarian purpose (Moore 3). Their idea, which at face value seems justified, is to enrich nature with

human actions. It reflects Moore's concept of "green thought," according to which nature needs humanity in order to thrive (5). The settlers' attitude to the Indigenous more-than-human world in the novels seems to be consistent with Moore's "green thought". However, this idea is deceptive and threatens to ruin Indigenous peoples and their more-than-human world. The novels challenge this idea by showing how the Indigenous people react to the settlers' treatment of their world. This reaction sometimes takes extreme and violent forms (as in *Voss*), and at other times it can take the form of passive retreat into wilderness (as in *Remembering Babylon*). The Indigenous people's resistance may vary depending on the degree of threat that they perceive.

Voss and *Remembering Babylon* explore the Indigenous people's eco-cosmological resistance to the settlers' idea of wilderness. The Indigenous characters are represented as using their own Indigenous more-than-human world for resistance purposes. Their Indigenous world, with its swamps, animals, insects, and plants spiritually and physically cooperates with them to protect them from the colonial invasion, dispossession, and exploitation. This Indigenous land's resistance, as depicted in through the personification of the land in *Remembering Babylon*, is not enough to ensure the permanent safety of the Indigenous world from the threats posed by the colonisers. Their only means of resistance is an eco-cosmological strategy which reduces them to retreating into swamps and other secluded areas of their world. The Indigenous people are forced to return to what is left of their lands, while the settlers are free to alter and reshape the wilderness they have occupied into a new world of their own design. Both novels use vivid imagery of land and ecology to demonstrate that the Indigenous people possess knowledge of Nature that the settlers selfishly destroy or minimize.

Literary ecocritical scholar J. M. Wilson writes about white settler literature and the ways it grapples with themes such as nationality and belonging:

> [W]ork that has been written in transit, as well as from places outside the nation, crosses generic boundaries, destabilises constructions of gender, and interrupts relationships of filiation and belonging. It intersects with mainstream images of the nation through introducing tropes of travel and estrangement. […] The writers' explorations of home and homeland through metaphor and imagination represent both a counterpoint to and reframing of national articulations of belonging: they introduce new myths of home and nation […] and reinvigorate older ones about the ancestral homeland. (17)

This quotation highlights the profound significance of white settler literature in challenging established notions of nationality and belonging. It underscores how literature written in transit or from external perspectives can transcend conventional genre boundaries and introduce innovative narratives that reshape the concepts of home and nation. This literary exploration not only offers a counterpoint to prevailing national narratives but also revives and reimagines traditional myths about ancestral homelands, illustrating the transformative power of literature in redefining cultural identities. This chapter considers the ways metaphor and imagination give the authors a way to express the confusion the settlers experience as they try to build a new home and are met with conflict and destruction. The settlers' dreams of establishing a new home, often driven by the myth of "pristine" wilderness that gives them the idea that they can take up Nature and use it for profit and gain, are often thwarted in these novels by Indigenous land and Indigenous people who try to defend their own homelands.

Literary works studied in this thesis not only traverse generic boundaries but also challenge established notions of gender, lineage, and attachment. By weaving narratives of travel and estrangement into the fabric of the nation's mainstream imagery, these writers introduce disruptive elements that compel readers to confront the complexities of identity and affiliation. In this context, metaphors and imaginative constructs such as the personification

of the land and the characterisation of settlers as flawed serve as vehicles to navigate the disorientation experienced by settlers attempting to construct a new sense of home amidst conflict and devastation. While the settlers' aspirations to establish a new home hinge on an idealised perception of untouched wilderness, fueling their belief in the exploitation of nature for personal gain, these aspirations are repeatedly foiled within the novels by the resolute presence of Indigenous lands and Indigenous peoples. The juxtaposition of these divergent visions of home serves to not only offer a counterpoint to conventional national narratives but also to rejuvenate Indigenous myths linked to homeland connections. This chapter thus echoes Wilson's premise by examining how the deployment of metaphor and imagination empowers authors to articulate the confusion felt by settlers striving to forge a new existence, one persistently challenged by Indigenous rights and assertions over their own ancestral territories.

This chapter is divided into two main sections, each of which explores a wide range of themes presented in the novels that are in one way or another connected with the Western dualist rational mindset and the wilderness myth at its core. Recognising and understanding this specific topic entails an equally specific reading of the novels in question.

Section I: The Wilderness Myth, the Frontier, and Cultural Identity in *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon*

This section addresses the instances of Indigenous exploitation in the Outback and how the novels challenge colonial ideologies. The section then moves to discuss another theme represented in both novels. This is the settlers' reaction to Indigenous relationships with land, which is seen in the way *Remembering Babylon* represents "the frontier" – the concept derived from the wilderness myth. Similarly, the of the frontier meaning points to a land far removed from civilisation, full of untamed beasts and untrammelled nature. Such understanding leads to the astonishing transformation or eradication of the Australian

Outback. *Voss* reflects Indigenous peoples' reactions to their exploitation by the colonists. Here the Australian Outback becomes the colonial frontier where the settlers assert their cultural supremacy. They believe that the wilderness is a wide and localised space that should be civilised, and its resources used. This is against the Indigenous view of their native land as an infinite space with a strong spiritual connection to the living world.

Central to this chapter's discussion is the question of how the Indigenous eco-cosmological approach empowers the novels to unveil the destructive consequences of colonial constructs. The novels challenge the settlers' deceptive portrayal of wilderness, depicting Indigenous individuals as recognising the perilous impact of the settlers' actions on the world's survival. The Indigenous characters are sometimes compelled to withdraw to the fringes of the Outback's wilderness. They rely on their sacred more-than-human world for spiritual solace and escape from industrial exploitation.

The chapter argues that *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* both represent the ways the myth of the wilderness harms both Indigenous people and settlers, for settlers often pay for the damage they do to the land they see as wilderness they can claim for themselves. Indigenous characters are shown to connect to their more-than-human world as a form of resistance, collaborating with it to thwart industrial exploitation. This "resistance" might be best described as a passive resistance, one that involves retreat rather than direct confrontation. No solution to colonisation is offered by these novels; rather, in *Voss,* Jack, an Indigenous man, kills Voss, the protagonist; in *Remembering Babylon,* the native landscape is unable to defend itself from settlement. The novels do not envision a hopeful Indigenous future but rather mainly portend tragedy for Indigenous people. Whether through murder or escape to the native landscape, the Indigenous resistance cannot halt the march of industrialization that leads to extinction. The chapter highlights the forced return of Indigenous peoples to their eco-cosmologies, as settlers reshape the wilderness according to

their worldview. Ultimately, this transformation results in the Indigenous characters' post-apocalyptic existence, severed from their connection to the more-than-human world. The novels demonstrate that the myth of the wilderness motivates settlers who harm the more-than-human world as well as Indigenous people.

The concept of frontier, as defined by Frederick Jackson Turner, is not a geographical location but the meeting point between two opposing and conflicting ways of thinking (i.e., civilised and uncivilised; qtd. in Cronon 13). The idea of frontier is "more peculiarly American though it too had its European antecedents and parallels" (Cronon 10). The colonists used the image of the frontier to reshape the wilderness in their own image. They added to this image the Western values and symbols that it carries to this day. In other words, "European immigrants, in moving to the wild unsettled lands of the frontier, shed the trappings of civilization, rediscovered their primitive racial energies, reinvented direct democratic institutions, and thereby reinfused themselves with a vigor, an independence, and a creativity" (Cronon 13). In *Remembering Babylon*, such a frontier is represented in the settlers' closed but divided areas, established near the wilderness. Such division presents the colonised establishment as isolated civilised settlements, as opposed to the open, intact Indigenous community of the frontier. J.M. Wilson has considered the "construction of the white settler subjectivity" in Australia, arguing that "whiteness has traditionally been positioned as a marker of power in the white Australia myth" (1). The setting of the Australian Outback, a frontier where whiteness has played a role as a marker of power, is an important aspect of both novels.

Apart from frontier, spirituality is an important eco-cosmological notion in the novels. It refers to the inner link between the Indigenous people and their land, which is used time and again in the novel as a contrast to the settlers' colonial dominance. As viewed by both the settlers and the Indigenous people in *Remembering Babylon*, the idea of wilderness allows the

settlers to fulfill their Western identity and combine their powers against the supposedly uncivilised Indigenous culture. Drawn by the spiritual connection, the Indigenous people retreat to the free lands of their Outback, where they live in cohesion with the more-than-human environment. This enables them to safeguard their traditions and cultural identity. Both novels emphasise the importance of this spiritual relationship for Indigenous people. They present spirituality as the key guide for the Indigenous resistance to marginalisation and exploitation by the colonising settlers. For example, this passage suggests the Indigenous peoples' spiritual connection with the land:

> The [Indigenous people] had brought Gemmy something, though it wasn't a stone … the silence between them as they sat, all three, and faced one another, became a conversation of another kind; and the space between them, three feet of baked earth where ants in their other life scurried about carrying bits of bark and other broken stuff in the excited scent of a new and foreign presence, expanded and became the tract of land up there under the flight of air and the stars of the night sky, that was the tribe's home territory, with its pools and creeks and underground sources of water, its rock ridges and scrub, its edible fruits and berries and flocks of birds and other creatures, all alive in their names and the stories that contained their spirit, for a man to walk into and print with the spirit of his feet and the invisible impact of his breath. (Malouf 117)

These Biblical metaphors (referring to the spirit of the animals and spirit of a man's feet) subtly reinforce the idea that the settlers need to acknowledge this prior ownership of the land, and so emphasise that the Indigenous people were willing to share this land; however, their feeling was not shared by the settlers. The human merges with this living landscape, imprinting it not only physically but also spiritually with the "spirit of his feet" and the

“invisible impact of his breath.” The passage beautifully captures the transformative nature of cultural exchange, illustrating Gemmy's integration into the Indigenous culture, where he becomes a part of the tribe’s stories, spirits, and the interconnected web of life within the land. This reflects David Abram’s idea of the “more-than-human” world as the land that forms a single living unity with all organisms within it.

In this chapter, the concept of eco-cosmology assumes additional pivotal significance as it elucidates the underlying dynamics of the wilderness myth and its role in shaping the objectives of colonial settlers. Eco-cosmology is a branch of eco-theology that is concerned with the relationship between ecology and religion. The term was coined by the theologian Thomas Berry in his 1988 book, *The Dream of the Earth*. Eco-cosmologists examine the possibility of a harmony between life and the Indigenous world, and how to use spirituality as a means for ecological awareness. The exploration of this concept is crucial in comprehending the intricate interplay between ecological and religious aspects. By delving into the discourse of eco-cosmology, the chapter establishes a framework for understanding the potential alignment between ecological principles and Indigenous perspectives, thereby fostering a discourse that integrates spirituality as a catalyst for heightened ecological consciousness.

In *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*, George Sessions argues that eco-cosmology involves “a sacred sense of the earth and all its inhabitants” that establishes harmony with the Indigenous societies, honouring their lives and values (158). According to Sessions, the advent of philosophical thinking in Europe, beginning in ancient Greece, meant an end to such mythological traditions. For example, Aristotle “proposed instead an Earth-centred finite universe wherein humans, by virtue of their rationality, were differentiated from, and seen as superior to, animals and plants” (Sessions 159). This rational view of the world set the foundations of dualisms in Western philosophy, that severely hampered the idea

of unity in connection with the human being and his or her connection to nature. This was the beginning of man's alienation from what Westerners called "pristine nature." "Pristine nature" idealises a version of "nature" that exists beyond humanity; it suggests a false Edenic belief in the idea that once humanity existed in harmony with nature. Western thought has been characterised by such an account of "nature."

Scholars such as Berry emphasise the importance of new human/nature understandings and recognise the value of Indigenous knowledge. In the same essay, Berry emphasises an active connection between humans and the biosphere: "In this universal disturbance of the biosphere by human agents, the human being now finds that the harm done to the natural world is returning to threaten the human species itself. [...] When the soil, the air, and the water have been extensively poisoned, human needs cannot be fulfilled" (qtd. in Sessions 11). In *Australian Aborigines and the Definition of Place*, Amos Rapoport sheds light on the Indigenous relationship to the land. He mentions that their relationship to "objects and sites, and the country generally, is more one of identification than ownership although there are elements of the latter" (43). With this view in mind, considering the detrimental effects of imperialism, Berry proposes that humans must first acknowledge the existence of the all-encompassing nature of life, or the community of all living species. The protection of this community must be the first priority of both current and future generations. As the first step towards this ambitious goal, Berry proposes a new legal system within "human-earth communities" to combat the threat: "To achieve a viable human-earth community, a new legal system must take as its primary task to articulate the conditions for the integral functioning of the earth process, with special reference to a mutually enhancing human-earth relationship" (Berry, qtd. in Sessions 13). Resistance to the destructive influences of Western imperialism must begin by raising awareness not only of the existential

threat to Indigenous communities and societies, but also to the epistemological value of the Indigenous world. With this in mind, Berry adds the following:

> The earth would also be our primary teacher of sciences, especially the biological sciences, and of industry and economics. It would teach us a system in which we would create a minimum of entropy, a system in which there is no unusable or unfruitful junk. Only in such an integral system is the future viability of the human assured. Much more could be said about the function of the natural world as educator, but this may be sufficient to suggest the context for an education that would be available to everyone from the beginning to the end of life, when the earth that brought us into being draws us back into itself to experience the deepest of all mysteries. (qtd. in Sessions 15)

The imperative of countering the deleterious impacts of Western imperialism necessitates a dual-pronged approach that acknowledges the knowledge produced by Indigenous culture. Berry's assertion underscores the foundational role of the Earth as a pedagogical agent, particularly in disciplines encompassing biological sciences, industry, and economics. This paradigm advocates for a holistic system characterised by minimal entropy and the absence of wasteful remnants, thereby safeguarding the sustainable trajectory of humanity.

Patrick White's *Voss* and David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* contain a similar emphasis on the ways the Indigenous people's connection to ecological cycles are disrupted by European colonisers. They have disconnected the Australian Indigenous People world from their homeland. In *Voss*, the Indigenous people, whom Voss and Malouf commonly refer to as "Aborigines," explore their Outback to understand how their world is devastated by the European settlers who exploited it, thereby disconnecting it from them. The "Aborigines'' learned that their forced detachment from their world is the reason for their miserable marginalisation. Conforming with Berry's idea, *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* depict the

Outback as a primary teacher and the main reference point for the Indigenous Peoples in their resistance to the European settlers. This representation is similar to Janik's analysis of D. H. Lawrence's belief that Indigenous Americans viewed foreign exploitation with "an awareness of the interrelatedness of all life, and of all living things with their environments" (qtd. in Sessions 105). Janik ascribes Lawrence's belief to his appreciation for the Indigenous people's "insistence upon the spiritual vitality of all matter" (qtd. in Sessions 106). In this sense, Sessions concludes that nature is sacred (327).

The critics who employed the idea of "a sacred sense of the earth" in this essay are treated in this chapter as a branch of eco-critical writers. These writers agree with post-colonialism in challenging the ideologies and dualisms by which Western settlers colonised Indigenous lands and kept the more-than-human world separate from the human world. To relate some ecocritical studies with their postcolonial characteristics, DeLoughrey and Handley address a variety of environmental perspectives in their book *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*. They "consider the important developments of eco-theology, which has been centrally concerned with the ethical and ecological implications of reading, interpreting, and transmitting foundational stories. [Eco-theology] draws its inspiration from ancient thinkers, indigenous and non-Western traditions, and from foundational sacred texts of the major world religions" (15).

In their *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, DeLoughrey and Handley explain how the environmental and economic destruction of Haiti is represented in Le Grace's painting "Haiti's Elusive Paradise" by the ways in which the work "encodes sacred epistemologies of place" (31). DeLoughrey and Handley also comment on how Le Grace represents "the garden as a hybrid space of nature and culture, historicizing the ways in which European colonialism and industrialization configured utopian narratives of floral abundance in a dystopian era of slavery and exploitation" (32). The painting's garden

suggests that for Indigenous people, nature is a place where they can achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and their connection to the land. It implies that people who work in the garden can experience personal growth and fulfilment by engaging with the more-than-human environments, which help them gain a sense of purpose and self-realisation. The garden is often associated with farming and agriculture, with many Indigenous people working in remote locations, tending to livestock and crops in a challenging environment. These Indigenous people may face isolation, extreme weather conditions, and other obstacles that require resilience, adaptability, and resourcefulness to overcome. However, through their work and interaction with the natural world, they can attain greater self-understanding and personal growth. The garden offers a unique opportunity for people to connect with the land and the environment, which can lead to a deeper appreciation of nature and a more profound sense of belonging. By working closely with the land, Indigenous people can gain a better understanding of the ecosystem and their role in it, leading to a profound sense of self-fulfilment. Overall, the garden highlights the importance of the Outback to Indigenous people and how it can be the source of spiritual growth and replenishment, helping them to achieve a deep understanding of themselves and their connection to the environment. This relates to the novels discussed in this chapter, for within the novels Indigenous peoples achieve a deeper understanding of themselves and their connection to the land despite outside influences. However, as analysis of the settler garden in *Voss* will show, some gardens incorporate so many European influences that they clash distinctively with Indigenous understandings of nature. So while a garden can become a symbol for the survival of Indigenous people in colonised lands, gardens can also suggest the attempts made by European settlers to tame the wilderness.

DeLoughrey and Handley are concerned with the manner in which ecological cosmology (and by extension, deep ecology) places a greater value on a pre-industrial way of

life and, by extension, asks for a global population reset to pre-industrial models. In his chapter “From Earth Day to Earth Summits: Trajectories and Debates”, Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee also discusses these pre-industrial models in “A Memento Mori to the Earth”, published in *Time Magazine* (1970). The article remarks how the United States government outlined the intrinsic value of “unspoilt” and “pristine” nature as a conservationist ethic in 1961. Conservation ethics are a set of principles that provide guidance on how resources should be used, distributed, developed and safeguarded. Several years later, however, the United States government proposed the construction of an industrial machine, “a hot oil pipeline from Prudhoe Bay, Alaska, to Valdez”, threatening the ecosystem of a wild part of the Alaskan tundra (Mukherjee 21). The US government saw this project as signalling a shift from the frontier ethic of unbridled plunder and towards an acceptance of the fact that “even urbanized, affluent, mobile societies are interdependent with the fragile, life-sustaining systems of the air, the water, the land” (Mukherjee 21). Building on this contradiction, Mukherjee asks “how was the conservationist ethic to be squared with the developmental imperative that oversaw the building of oil pipelines in Alaska and oil refineries in Honolulu?” This question by Mukherjee implies a paradigm for the above-discussed Culture/Nature binary by which the flourishing of life is but a false promise of the contemporary Western philosophy. Through this binary, nature was separated from the human culture and civilisation. This separation has led to the abuse and possession of nature by the European industrial and scientific revolutions. These revolutions are exemplified by the industrial machine and the hot oil pipeline, whose destructive outcomes are underscored by Mukherjee. This industrial machine and its destructive outcomes are emphasised by Mukherjee because they demonstrate the imperialist prejudice that sees nature as unspoilt, “pristine,” and separated from the so-called values of civilisation, which is but a false

promise of progress. This demonstrates that myths of "pristine nature" are still maintained in the present day.

Mukherjee further discusses this issue in reference to Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. In Leopold's view, the conservationist ethic of the US government supports rather than challenges the fundamentals of contemporary capitalism and industrialisation. As a replacement for this hopeless conservationism, Leopold proposes the "model of the heroic pioneer-farmer existing in small, isolated 'self-regulating' communities" (Mukherjee 24). Mukherjee argues that the Norwegian philosopher Arne Næss borrowed heavily from Leopold's ideas. As part of his "deep ecology" movement, Næss advocated for a greater awareness of the Indigenous spiritual interconnectedness of all living and non-living things in a whole, relational sphere of existence. Building on this premise, he developed a seven-point plan claiming that "the flourishing of human and non-human life [...] is independent of their usefulness for narrow human purposes; and the flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a significant decrease in human population. Such a decrease is necessary for human existence to flourish" (Næss, qtd in Mukherjee 25). Mukherjee speculates, "But supposing that human beings achieve such a state of consciousness, how are they to practise what Næss preaches in his final proposition—"those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes?'" (25). In this sense, "deep ecology" reverts to Leopold's paradigm of the heroic pioneer-farmer ("non-mechanized labour") settler who inhabits small, isolated, "self-regulating" societies. Based on this, Mukherjee considers that the Indigenous person who works in a self-reliant and "self-regulating" society could reduce the detrimental impact of settlers on Alaska's ecology caused by "mechanised labour." In other words, Indigenous peoples' interaction with the land is necessary for the land to recover from settlers' destruction.

It could be concluded that Mukherjee is concerned about the way in which deep-ecological thinking privileges pre-industrial existence and, by extension, calls for human life on earth to be returned to pre-industrial population levels (ecological cosmology). These modes of existence contrast the culture-nature dualism developed by Westerners as a base of their wilderness idea. The emphasis on the interconnectedness between man and nature, as Næss asserts, is exemplified by the pioneer-farmer ("non-mechanized labour") who interacts with nature without any mechanical and industrial machine. Such a machine separates humans and nature both physically and spiritually, and as such it is needless for interaction with nature.

By relying on Leopold's work, Mukherjee criticises the colonial rulers of "places of the earth, such as the 'Middle East', which were exemplary sites of human failure" (20). These rulers used the Western dualist mindset to prevent the Indigenous peoples in self-regulating societies, from remaining independent and isolated in their lands, where they interacted with their native environment, such as soil and trees, with their own hands (non-mechanised labour). This implies the importance of understanding that there is something beyond the human absence from nature as represented in literature. As implied in Mukherjee's analysis of Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*, the replacement of non-mechanised labour with mechanised labour—as one of the wilderness construction's consequences—did not only contaminate and destroy the more-than-human environment, but it also led to the persecution of the Indigenous people, who, due to the proliferation of mechanical machines, lost both a source of income and their spiritual interaction with the more-than-human world. Mukherjee's criticism indicates the importance of the relationship between nature and Indigenous people, who do not require machines to interact with the land. Industrial machines, we realise, harm both the natural ecology through pollution and other

damages and also harm Indigenous people who have long served as stewards of the land without depleting natural resources.

The human-nature relationship is a fundamental point of divergence between these two differing attitudes towards the world. Eco-cosmology is a worldview that places humanity within the natural world rather than above it. Berry expresses a similar point of view in stating that "we are not a collection of objects that happen to be related; we are a communion of subjects that share a common origin and destiny" (Berry, 25). Humans were seen as unique and even elevated to godlike status in many pre-industrial societies. This is evidenced by the fact that many Indigenous societies have long considered themselves to be stewards of the land, charged with protecting and preserving it for future generations. The two worldviews also differ significantly in their understanding of spirituality. Awe and appreciation for the natural world's intrinsic value are common spiritual foundations of eco-cosmologies. As the eco-theologian Brian Swimme notes: "The natural world is not a resource for us to exploit, but a community of beings to which we belong" (Swimme, 2). Pre-industrial, especially Native American, lifestyles tend to associate spirituality with the natural world and its cycles (Circle of Life). This is evident in the manner that the seasonal shift or the movement of animals has been revered as a sacred event in the spiritual lives of many Indigenous communities. Notwithstanding these distinctions, eco-cosmology and pre-industrial lifestyles share several crucial parallels. For instance, both perspectives value a well-balanced and harmonious connection with nature. This is reflected in the words of the eco-philosopher Joanna Macy, according to whom "we have not inherited the Earth from our ancestors; we have borrowed it from our children" (Macy, 18). The desire to live in peace with one another and the natural environment is a central tenet of both worldviews, as is the significance of community and connectivity. In conclusion, there are variations in spirituality

between humans and the natural world that emerge from a comparison between eco-cosmology and pre-industrial ways of life.

As I will next demonstrate, these concepts of eco-cosmology and the wilderness myth directly relate to the novels at hand. Both *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* connect the consequences of Indigenous eco-cosmological strategies of resistance with the settlers' success of their concept of "wilderness."

A. Forms of Indigenous Resistance in *Voss*

Patrick White's *Voss* centres on the main character, Johann Ulrich Voss, who assembles a party of several men with the aim of crossing the Australian continent in 1845. Their expedition ultimately fails and almost all members, including Voss, perish. Through the relationships between the characters, their actions, passions, and thoughts White explores the complexities of the Western experience of the Indigenous more-than-human world as well as the Indigenous reaction to colonial dominance.

Voss displays a clear example of a foundation established on a false Western premise of the wilderness myth. The settlers modify their own identity by absorbing Indigenous cultural traditions, but only to the extent that their British culture still takes precedence. In *Voss*, the

> settlers establish their identity as Australians by emphasizing communion with the native landscape and by appropriating a form of authenticity centred on the land, against the perceived effete ignorance of the imperial metropolis, even though the structures through which they understand their enterprise of settlement (the pastoral primary among them) are themselves borrowed from British discourses on the relationship between human settlement and nature. (Boccardi 273)

This quotation emphasises that the settlers made efforts to establish their Australian identity by emphasising a deep connection with the native landscape and adopting an authenticity

centered on their relationship with the land. However, there is a paradox as these identity-building strategies, notably the pastoral tradition, are themselves borrowed from British discourses, highlighting the complex nature of colonial identity negotiation.

The term "pastoral" "refers to any representation of the countryside or life in the countryside that emphasises its beautiful and pleasurable aspects" (Little para. 1). The pastoral tradition in literature flourished in the Renaissance, then during and after the Romantic period in England, the "pastoral lost its distinctly shepherdly focus and merged with a broader category of nature writing" (para. 1). Now, many scholars consider the pastoral to be

> a capacious category that includes many different attitudes toward rural people and rural life, even the realism of labor and exile. Despite this variety, pastoral is recognizable for the feelings it hopes to generate in its readers about rural life: the delight that the senses take in nature, the sadness at the loss of people and places, and the intense crushes of adolescence (Little para. 1).

In *Voss,* the settlers struggle to unite their British identities with the natural world of the Australian Outback, in part because they envision an empty, pastoral land and fail to recognize that Indigenous people are already present in the Outback.

This form of establishing the settler cultural identity on the Australian continent is historically rooted. In his article "Settling the Land," Richard Waterhouse points out that the Australian land governments in the 19th century were energised by an idea of society "as a land of small-scale farmers" (54). This idea was modelled on an English history composed of "village and rural communities" (Waterhouse 55). Britain had by that time already been transformed by the industrial revolution. Waterhouse's mention of the Australian lands being supported by this transformative English idea of economic improvement is contradicted by

Richard White's description of "the Australian reality" (34). In *Inventing Australia*, White argues that

> Australia's economy, and British interest in the colonies, was to be based on big sheep-runs, mining and large cities. Nor was Australia to be an extension of rural England: Australia's connection was with industrial England, providing wool for its factories and markets for its goods. These hard realities were ignored. Rather the romantic visions were an imaginative response to industrialisation in England. (34)

White means that by establishing a pastoral system of reference brought from the settlers' "home", the otherness of the land, its strange flora and fauna, its challenging weather patterns, and frequently terrible circumstances, are discursively elided (35). Hence, as represented in *Voss*, not only was domesticity envisioned as establishing a settlement in the Australian Outback and controlling it, but the discourse that motivated such images originated in England. The differences between the Australian city, for example Rhine Towers in *Voss*, and the Outback are not as dramatic as they might initially seem. White also emphasises that the reality of the British interest in Australia was purely economic. Idealistic British settings created by the settlers in their Australian homes, as portrayed in *Voss*, were but an illusion and possibly a romantic escape from the harsh reality of industrialisation (35). This is an important point in the Western view of the Indigenous world in Australia, which draws a parallel to *Voss*'s dual representation of Indigenous people: through Voss's mystical lens and through the colonial settlers' lens.

The novel opens with the meeting between Voss and a young orphaned woman, Laura Trevelyan. They meet for the first time at the house of Laura's uncle and Voss's expedition patron, Mr Bonner. With this scene, White sets up a contrasting image, reminiscent of the opposition between the Western civilisation and the Indigenous world. With torn pant hems, Voss appears unfit for the extravagant house abounding with numerous details of rich

bourgeois domesticity (White 10, 11). One of the first issues introduced by White is Laura's relationship towards Australia. With her Australian and English cultural background, she appears uncertain as to which of these she should consider her own. Her home appears to be Australia but only due to a "lack of any other" (White 11). Thus, her cultural orientation as a settler is distinguished by mixed emotions; she realises that Australia is not Britain, but she still remains there and has a vague feeling that it is home. Laura and Voss later become attached to each other through letters, maintaining a close relationship. While portraying this relationship between the main characters in the novel, White also points to a specific form of Indigenous resistance. Throughout the course of the novel, Voss is significantly influenced by the Indigenous lands that he explores. He gradually perceives the close connection between the land and Indigenous people and is dazzled by it.

Voss, on a journey into the desert, is highly aware of the Indigenous peoples' presence: "Anonymous individuals were watching him from behind trees as well as from the corners of the rich room. He suspected their blank faces. All that was external to himself, he mistrusted, and was happiest in silence" (White 17). In the future, however, external circumstances, especially the impact of the Indigenous people teach him who he really is.

In this sense, Indigenous land influences the Western explorer by slowing down his progress; it almost becomes a character that distracts and confuses the explorers. Another defence mechanism of the Outback comes in the form of numerous difficulties that the expedition experiences. These include crossing a drought-plagued desert and traversing waterlogged plains, until the explorers retreat to a cave where they are forced to remain for weeks until the heavy rains settle. We also learn:

> It was the valley itself which drew Voss. ….This was for the moment pure gold. The purple stream of evening flowing at its base almost drowned Voss. Snatches of memory racing through him made it seem the more intolerable

> that he might not finally sink, but would rise as from other drownings on the same calamitous raft. (White 123-24)

Though the natural world is beautiful, it seems to almost drown Voss, who is overwhelmed by the novel's rich description of splendor. The geographical and other obstacles that impede traveling and exploration are used by White to paint the image of a harsh, hostile, and deadly environment of the Indigenous world. This constitutes the natural shield of the Indigenous world presented in the novel. The wilderness myth is perpetuated in White's portrayal of the Indigenous world as deadly and unforgiving – a wilderness that the Western explorers and settlers strive to overcome and conquer. Apart from the geographical obstacles, members of the expedition are divided between those who wanted to continue the expedition and those who thought they should give it up and return home. By this conflicting situation, White emphasises how often Western explorers underestimate the Indigenous world with all its dangers, which they are ill-prepared to face.

The complexity of the main character Voss is also developed through his reactions to the Indigenous land's resistance to occupation. We see his opinions change after he faces natural disasters. Initially, he is confident about colonising the Australian land in search for wealth and power. Gradually, however, he abandons the idea of colonisation and becomes sympathetic with the Australian Outback. He begins to see it as a land of great beauty, worthy of exploration, understanding, and admiration. In this, he differs significantly from the colonists' views of ecology in the novel that are founded on the wilderness myth, which itself is founded upon Nature/Culture, uncivilised/civilised binaries. Therefore, he insists on keeping the expedition active and influences some of his companions who seek treasure. One of his companions, Le Mesurier, asks in frustration: "Can you tell me if you are coming to this damned country for any particular purpose?" (White 36). However, Voss is sure of his intention to "cross the continent from one end to the other [and] to know it with [his] heart"

(White 36). By introducing such an emphatic change of heart in Voss, White emphasises the alluring, magical aura of the Indigenous more-than-human world that dazzles the Western explorer. The novel thus creates a personified, reactive land that bewitches and enthrals the settlers with its scale and variability. The Indigenous land, however, acts in such a way to discourage an explorer's desire for occupation. With his heartfelt sympathy for the Indigenous world and intuitive insight for the Indigenous people, Voss is an antithesis to the other settlers, who only care about their exploitative goals. Throughout the novel, Voss seeks to win Indigenous sympathy, although the purpose of this is not openly articulated in the novel. He arguably wishes to establish a form of spiritual unity with the Indigenous people himself, for he wishes "to know [the continent] with [his] heart," which would necessarily include the Indigenous people and their knowledge of the land. However, the novel tells us with Voss's death that any attempt to reconcile the colonists with the Indigenous people – by understanding each other's needs and differences and live in harmony – is doomed to failure.

The landscape in the novel plays a significant role in emphasising the differences between the colonists and Indigenous people. As soon as the expedition has made its way from Newcastle to Rhine Towers, vivid pastoral images are depicted, characterised as pastoral by the emotions they evoke. For example, the city of Rhine Towers, where the wealthy white landowner Mr. Sanderson holds a large estate, is described as "a gentle, healing landscape" and is encircled by "small holdings" reminiscent of a traditional English village and has "a sense of home-coming" (White 124, 127). "Home-coming" is nostalgic, and characterises Rhine Towers. A herd of cattle, "being brought to the fold by a youthful shepherd" (White 127–128), supplements the pastoral scene. The expedition's members meet "rosy children" in "homespun frocks" with "an aura of timelessness" (White 125). The image of their mothers, who "run out […] dashing the suds from their arms or returning to its brown bodice the big breast that had been giving suck" (White 126), represents female motherly

experience and procreation, core aspects of a pastoral landscape. Their fathers talk "with some intelligence of weather, flocks, or crops" (White 125), which points to their English habits and traits. This peculiar image of the pastoral setting and the settlers who inhabit it alludes to Voss's desire for a spiritual unity of the Western settlers and Indigenous people, which is not possible under the circumstances described in the novel. Through descriptions of a peaceful, English, pastoral landscape, the novel suggests that the characters desire to find peace with the land. However, the Outback is undeniably different from the pastoral, emotionally-evocative land English settlers are familiar with, as everything from the weather and flora and fauna differ greatly; moreover, no matter how hard the characters pretend that Indigenous people are not present, the Indigenous people were the first stewards of the Australian lands.

Even though his attempts at reconciliation are doomed to failure, Voss displays many generous and inclusive qualities. For example, he takes two more companions for his expedition, who are black Indigenous people. Voss takes them on despite Mr Boyle's racist warning that he "cannot recommend these blacks as infallible guides and reliable companions" (White 181). Mr Boyle is one of Voss's financial backers who assists the expedition not only with money but also by providing helpful recommendations. Still, Voss takes these men regardless even of the fact that Dugald, the elder of the two, speaks only "a little English" (White 131). Notwithstanding the linguistic barrier, Voss convinces Mr Boyle that he wants "to communicate without knowledge of the language" (White 181). What underlies his decision is his deep feeling of empathy and compassion, which he turns into methods of communication. Once again, Voss insists that mutual understanding between the settlers and the Indigenous people is possible and necessary. This is expressed in his choice of the Indigenous people as his companions not to guide him through the Australian Outback, but rather to explore the emotions of empathy and compassion as the guiding lights for deep

spiritual understanding of the Indigenous world. In other words, Voss seeks to learn from them about the Indigenous people's spiritual relation to the Outback. As stated by Conti, "White's vision of Indigenous spirituality is central to the novel's redemptive design" (Conti 45). This spiritual link between the Outback and the Indigenous people is also evident in Jackie's interpretation of the sacred meaning of a cave painting. Jackie smiles as he attempts this because he "could not explain his instincts" (White 292). Despite Jackie's lack of sufficient English, Voss still understands the point:

> "Men gone away all dead", Jackie explained. "All over", he waved his arm. "By rock. By Tree. No more men", he said . . . "No more nothink . . . Wind blow big, night him white, this time these feller dead men. They come out. Usfellar no see. They everywhere". So that the walls of the cave were twanging with the whispers of the tangled kites. The souls of men were only waiting to come out. "Now I understand", said Voss gravely. He did. To his fingertips. He felt immensely happy. (White 293)

The men in the painting symbolise the souls that have been tortured by the European colonisers. The painting holds special power in the novel, as Conti argues: "For White, the intuitive wisdom of Aboriginal myth [...] can only be accessed by poetry and art, [which] opens a path to spiritual insight all but closed to Western rationalism" (Conti 37). With this insight, Conti points to the core of the issue. Western rationalism, responsible for the prevalent dualisms in the history of Western thought, ultimately produces and perpetuates the Nature/Culture binary and the wilderness myth. This is the cause of the misguided Western approach to the Indigenous world, which is the reason Voss's expedition ultimately fails.

Throughout its storyline, *Voss* portrays the unique spirituality of the Indigenous world that mesmerises the explorers. That spirituality is reflected in both people and inanimate objects of the environment. As Conti describes it, the novel's "hallucinatory prose transforms the desert interior of the Australian continent into a numinous landscape where even 'the

souls of rocks' [White 204] are worthy of consideration" (Conti 31). For example, in the novel Voss describes how mineral forms, for example, are "an everlasting source of wonder" (White 37) in language that evokes the almost spiritual power of stone. White describes the Outback as a mystical source of Indigenous knowledge and traditions, where there is no room for colonial prejudices of any kind. Resisting corrupting colonial influences, the Indigenous people maintained their traditional practices, eventually finding ways to safeguard their cultural identity, even if only temporarily. Indigenous spirituality is further emphasised in *Voss* by the resourcefulness and strength of the Indigenous people. They refuse to succumb to Western exploitation of their land and, in doing so, reject notions of the wilderness which separate the Indigenous people from the Outback. The Indigenous people recognise the danger of the idea of the wilderness in the ways in which it threatens to disconnect them from their native land. As a European settler himself, even Voss becomes aware of the vanity of exploitation as soon as he has learned something of Indigenous culture. He also derives this knowledge from his observations of domesticity and pastoralism of the Australian lands, which are derived from England. Vivid pastoral images that he observes radiate Indigenous spirituality that connects the people and the land. This spirituality influences Voss to abandon his initial goals of exploitation. Such mystical influence of the Indigenous land is often emphasised in the novel. However, as the storyline develops, it becomes obvious that Voss' efforts to comprehend Indigineity do not make him Indigenous. His Indigenous companions reject his sympathetic views, interpreting them as a forceful attempt to reconciliate and possibly unify the two different cultures. At the end of his expedition, Voss must accept the insurmountable difficulties of his "attempts to establish understanding and sympathy between the native mind and [that of the settlers]" (White 365).). Malouf strategically asserts the unknowability of the minds of the Indigenous people because this challenges the notion that

Indigenous people are either easy to understand or impenetrable—concepts that both objectify Indigenous thinking.

Voss strives to collaborate with Indigenous people and treat them with equality. This is represented in the way he communicates with Dugald and Jackie during the expedition. His new convictions inspire him to share his knowledge about Indigenous people to Laura and the settlers. He explains that a vital part of the Indigenous people's identity is their spiritual connection with the Outback. Voss attempts to win the trust of the two "Aborigines" in his expedition. Therefore, he "put his hand in his pocket and offered Jackie a clasp-knife that he was carrying. Jackie, however, would not receive the knife, except by the hand of his mentor, and then was shivering with awful joy as he stood staring at the knife on his own palm" (White 183). With this act Voss would like to show that he understands and honours Indigenous peoples' identity. Giving up his only weapon despite all the dangers that are looming, he hopes to establish a strong foundation of mutual trust, cooperation, and respect with his Indigenous companions. But Voss is alone in this desire to establish such foundation. At some point, the convict Judd exclaims that he "cannot find [his] big prismatic compass in the wooden frame," suspecting that the Indigenous "blacks would thieve any mortal thing" (White 194). Voss reacts angrily to such an accusation and defends Dugald and Jackie, so "the incident was closed, if not to his positive advantage, to the detriment of some human being" (White 195). Again, Voss insists that it is possible for the settlers and Indigenous people to find a mutual understanding. He is deluded by the belief that the two cultures could understand each other if there were no racial and other prejudices. The core of the issue, however, is in rational dualisms, such as Culture/Nature, which marginalise Indigenous people by making the colonisers supreme rulers of the wilderness. Voss's actions towards his Indigenous companions show that he is ready to traverse the dualisms embedded in the wilderness myth by giving away the objects (knife and compass) which symbolise Western

power and conquest by which the colonisers preside over Indigenous people. But this ultimately proves to be of little significance in the novel.

Through his benevolent actions, Voss intends to prove that he understands Indigenous identity. This is exemplified in the consistent encouragement that he provides to the whole group in order to keep them motivated and in high spirits. He constantly urges them to go on, displaying his leadership skills. Nevertheless, he shows a different reaction when Jackie informs him that Dugald is sick and cannot continue on their journey. In contrast to his treatment of the white settlers, he refuses to force Dugald to continue and maintains his sympathy for the two Indigenous people, even though he cannot be sure whether they are honest or not. In addition, Voss's visionary drive to explore the possibility of the mutual sympathy between Indigenous people and the settlers reaches its highest point. This is exemplified in the case of stolen cattle, which were donated by Mr Boyle and Mr Sanderson to feed the explorers. Voss's party is surrounded on numerous occasions by bands of Indigenous people during their passage through the desert. These Indigenous people, abetted by Dugald and Jackie, are suspected by all the members, except Voss, of stealing the cattle. The suspicion seems justified due to the expedition's isolation in the Outback and the fact that they were surrounded by no one else except the Indigenous people. However, Voss insists on justifying the Indigenous people by claiming that "we cannot accuse the natives on no evidence" (White 362). As such, Voss is portrayed as the character who wants to overcome Western prejudices towards Indigenous people. Nevertheless, the novel registers the ways in which the wilderness myths remains unimpregnable, for Voss is often awed by the natural world "in this disturbing country" where "you will be burnt up most likely, you will have the flesh torn from your bones, you will be tortured probably in many horrible and primitive ways, but you will realize that genius of which you sometimes suspect you are possessed, and of which you will not tell me you are afraid" (31). This harrowing description from the novel

marks a moment in which Voss realized how little he understood land that Indigenous people understood thoroughly.

Another instance of Voss' protective attitude towards Indigenous people is when one of the members of the expedition is killed by the surrounding Indigenous people. When another member wants to use a gun to protect the group, Voss forbids "any man to fire, to make matters worse by shooting at this people" (White 365). This further confirms his determination to be on friendly terms with Indigenous people, as Platz argues, in order to understand them better, particularly their connection with the land (Platz 175). Voss is eager to mend the relations between the Indigenous people and the settlers by encouraging Dugald and Jackie to return the kindness to their white companions. Voss is obsessed with establishing an understanding between the cultures. He goes to such extremes as to even justify murder and theft by the Indigenous people. These extreme acts could be interpreted as the author's intention to show the bitterness of Indigenous people in the face of their oppression. It is an extreme form of defence by the Indigenous people. Even though this bitterness results in extreme forms of retaliation, the author implies that such actions are understandable in light of the colonial violence towards Indigenous communities in Australia.

B. Indigenous Metaphysics

After discussing the actions of Voss, one must wonder how the author represents the connection between the Indigenous people and the Outback. White's novel presents Voss as someone whose view is atypical as compared to that of other colonisers. By providing Voss with such an altered outlook, White presents the Outback as a metaphysical space, which determines the Indigenous way of thinking. As Conti suggests, "the goal of Voss's expedition is not geographical but metaphysical" (Conti 10). Voss firmly believes in the metaphysical relationship between the Outback and its inhabitants. His explorative goals are, therefore, likewise metaphysical, which he openly confirms to the colonist Mr Pringle, saying that his

consideration of the Outback as “great areas of sand is a purely metaphysical one” (White 67).

This metaphysical understanding is distinct from the established rational dualism of Culture and Nature. According to metaphysics, the essence of Nature has little to do with its outward appearance, let alone its resources, which is the only aspect of Indigenous land colonists tend to see. As opposed to Western dualisms, metaphysical understanding values the spirit of Indigenous land, which gives life to plants, animals, and people. Therefore, both matter and spirit form a single unity. The novel shows that Western colonists need to understand wilderness in such a way in order to make any sense of it. For example, the novel shows us that the explorers were amazed by the land where there “predominated the great tongue of blue water, the brooding, indigenous trees, and sky clutching at all” (109). This image of a sky holding together a landscape marked by “indigenous” trees reminds the characters of the importance of maintaining bonds to each other and to the land.

To this end, the character of Voss is transformed into an Indigenous-like personality. By way of such characterisation, White’s novel shows the metaphysical effect of Indigenous land on a Western mind. The novel reveals the ways in which the metaphysical Outback adds to the Indigenous mind of Dugald and Jackie. Their connection to the land is so deep that they cannot bear the colonising invaders’ presence on the land, saying that the colonisers will “blow the world up” (250). Hence, they are even doubtful of Voss’ good intention towards them, their people, and especially the land. The writer attempts to show, via Voss’s actions, the role of metaphysics in a relationship between Indigenous people and their land. According to a typical Western understanding, the Outback is no more than a pristine wilderness with resources to be exploited.

Voss explores the desert in order to deepen his metaphysical understanding of the Outback. In his portrayal of this character, White’s novel sets Indigenous wisdom in contrast

to Western mindset. As Coni explains, “For White, the intuitive wisdom of Aboriginal myth opens a path to spiritual insight all but closed to Western rationalism” (Coni 37). Still, Voss ponders the idea of reconciliation, which is best reflected in his willingness even to sacrifice himself for this purpose. In so doing, he exposes the wilderness myth as a false Western construct and ideal. However, he eventually remains loyal to the colonists. After their Outback experience, he discloses to Laura and the white people the Indigenous people’s plans, including their resistance to colonisation. He is eventually caught up in the dangers of these plans, which ends with his murder by the Indigenous people. However, the metaphysics of the Outback still absorb Voss’s personality. Hence, Laura paints a curious comparison between him and the Outback:

> “You are so vast and ugly,” Laura Trevelyan was repeating the words; “I can imagine some desert, with rocks, rocks of prejudice, and, yes, even hatred. You are so isolated. That is why you are fascinated by the prospect of desert places, in which you will find your own situation taken for granted, or more than that, exalted... But most flattering, I think, when you experience it, is the hatred, or even the mere irritation of weaker characters.” (White 94)

The Western mind necessarily equates the wilderness with something utterly negative. For example, in the final stages of the expedition, one his companions, Le Mesurier, replies to Voss that he was taught “to expect damnation” in the Outback (White 384). This answer invokes the Christian image of eternal punishment in Hell, which the settlers equate to the Outback. Voss, on the other hand, rejects this abstraction of the Western mind. He endures various sufferings in the wilderness as a form of redemption, whether to unify the opposed cultures or to warn his compatriots of the Indigenous threat to resist and destroy the colonial oppressors. Voss’s sacrifice to the Outback can be interpreted as his final plea to the European settlers, and an acknowledgement that the mutual sympathy and trust between the Indigenous

people and the European settlers cannot be achieved. This means that as long as the European settler colonisers' oppressive and exploitative treatment of Indigenous people continues, sympathy and trust between the Indigenous people and the European settlers is impossible.

The ending of the novel suggests that reconciliation is impossible – a terrible indictment of the history of conflict between Indigenous people and European settlers during the 19th century in Australia. This history of conflict is discussed by Henry Reynolds in *The Other Side of the Frontier: Aboriginal Resistance to the European Invasion of Australia*, which mentions examples of failed reconciliation between Indigenous communities and the colonisers. Colonists and Indigenous people were opposed on numerous issues, such as women's rights, priority of leadership for skilful young or wise old people, and unwilling wage labourers. Reynolds points out that "almost every district settled during the nineteenth century had a history of conflict between local clans and encroaching settlers" (Reynolds 61). Voss's death means that these deep historical issues cannot be overcome by insistence on reconciliation. Voss at first thinks of the Indigenous people as his servants, granted to him by the land. They then become his killers when they lead the expedition deep into the desert and rob them. Jacky, Voss's favorite Indigenous person of the group, kills Voss. Because Voss tried but could not succeed in embodying an Indigenous way of respecting the land, he was practically sacrificed to the land by the Indigenous people. Obviously, Voss treads the sacred Indigenous pathway that he had no right to step upon.

Indigenous metaphysics takes shape in Voss's obsession with the idea of reconciliation. He has little patience for weak characters who are unwilling or unable to work towards a stable relationship. In this sense one should understand Laura's reproach, who told him "That anybody possessed of your contempt for human frailty should make so unequivocal a proposition to one so well endowed with that same frailty!" (White 198). Voss is even against the Indigenous people who retaliate with nothing but malice and hatred

against those who have dispossessed them of their land in the Outback. He attempts to explain to Laura that non-violent means, such as understanding, tolerance, and sympathy are the key requirements for harmony. This requires contesting the wilderness myth and stopping the oppressive and exploitative actions towards the Indigenous civilisation in which the myth is bound up. The malice of the Indigenous people is best revealed in his Indigenous companion, Jackie, whose disobedience is primarily based on his fear of Voss and his white companions. Jackie rejects Voss's orders due to his fear of possible harm to the Indigenous people (White 388). Voss fails to persuade Jackie that the white settlers and Indigenous people are necessary and complementary to each other and that he is "a friend of the blackfellow" (White 388). Again, Voss's insistence based on a superficial idea of Indigenous identity cannot erase centuries of colonial oppression.

Voss's attempt to reconcile the oppressors and the oppressed fails, and day after day, Voss's impending demise becomes clearer. The novel draws on real events to set the stage for a tragic conclusion; as Deb Narayan Bandopadhyay argues, "White's character Voss is based on the true record of Ludwig Leichhardt's journey though Australia leading to his death in the desert in 1844" (128). As Wilson argues, many stories about white settlers and travel writings blend genres together: "[L]etters and diaries [show] how the mimetic representational forms of travel writing – close to memoir and reportage – exist alongside imaginative modes such as fantasy and fable, sometimes interpenetrating them" (7). *Voss,* a story about white settlers, is no exception. White was seemingly inspired by real events, but he crafts a fictional story that uses literary conventions such as the theme of a character's hubris to drive the plot. Voss's belief in his mission is arguably hubristic, leading to his downfall. The novel's deadly ending not only demonstrates his failure to initiate cross-cultural understanding and reconciliation, but also exemplifies the Indigenous people's historical resolve to resist those who have violently dispossessed their land. The Outback is only the physical locality of their

oppression. The subjugation they are suffering is metaphysical too since their identity, culture, freedom of thought and speech are also oppressed. One final incident ultimately seals Voss's failure. It takes place when he attempts to send the ill Dugald back to Rhine Towers, providing him with a healthy horse. On his way back, Dugald remembers that Voss has given him some letters to deliver to Laura, Mr Sanderson and Mr Boyle. Dugald takes the letters from his pocket, thinking: "These papers contained the thoughts of which the whites wished to be rid [of…] the sad thoughts, the bad, the thoughts that were too heavy, or in any way hurtful" for the Indigenous people (White 234). Knowing that they were penned by Voss, he tears them into small pieces and throws them into the lake (White 234).

White depicts Indigenous metaphysics through a vivid description of the Outback. The Outback gives the settlers an illusion of a warm welcome and hypnotises Voss with its beauty, which is one of the Indigenous land's defence mechanisms. With its quiet and peaceful landscapes, the Outback lulls and deceives the settlers into feeling comfortable and safe. This is evident when the settlers lie down in the green with "wizened stomachs" to sing songs and "eat dreams" (White 356). The idea that dreams can be eaten suggests that the land has taken root in the settlers' imaginations, as the novel creates a vision of land so compelling that the visions it inspires become physical and edible. Another passage in the novel personifies the land as a leader who admires the settlers' presence: "The land was celebrating their important presence with green grass that stroked the horses' bellies, or lay down beneath them in green swathes", until "the eyes of the men became sated with the green of those parklands" (White 355). As Conti argues, here, the "land proves to be the graveyard of […] illusions, unyielding in its opposition to the utopian strivings of the Romantic will. Here, however, it flatters to deceive" (42). Thus, Voss understands that all of this "paradise may well prove to be mirage" (White 199). The Indigenous Jackie contributes to this effect due to his spiritual relationship with the Outback. He extends the overall deception by assuring Voss

and the others that the death poem sung by the Indigenous people surrounding them is a welcome song: “Into this season of grass, game and songs burst other signs of victorious life. In a patch of scrub stood a native, singing, stamping, and gesticulating with a spear […] Three or four companions were grouped about the singer in the bower of the scrub, but the others were more diffident, or else they lacked the gift to express their joy” (White 254). It is as if the whole of landscape, together with the Indigenous people, are teeming with life that simply refuses to succumb to any external subjugation. Ultimately, this spelled the downfall of Voss. No amount of sympathy towards the Indigenous people could convince them of his good intentions because nothing can abolish the fact that he is an outsider who has invaded the Indigenous land, seeking to colonise it.

The event portraying Voss’s death has a deep symbolic connection with the wilderness myth. Voss gave his knife as a present to Jackie in an attempt to create a foundation of trust, cooperation, and respect between the settlers and Indigenous people. When the opportunity presents itself, Jackie takes “a bone-handled clasp-knife given him by Mr Voss” and quickly stabs him “between the windpipe and the muscular part of the throat” (White 298). Jackie poured all Indigenous hatred for the settlers into his murder of Voss. He “was stabbing, and sawing, and cutting, and breaking, with all of his increasing, but confused manhood, above all, breaking” (White 298). On a larger scale, this act symbolises the swift retaliation of Indigenous people to the unsanctioned dispossession of their land. In this sense, Voss simply returned to the Indigenous people something that was theirs in the first place. This may be seen to symbolise the fallacy of the wilderness myth, on whose basis colonisers seek to subjugate others supposedly for the latter’s own well-being. The Indigenous people’s lack of trust implies that they have seen through the mythologies of the wilderness established by the settlers and will not tolerate them further. The message of the novel is, among others, that

even though the myth of the wilderness purports a vision of a "pristine" Nature empty of humans, Indigenous people cannot be easily erased from their homelands.

C. Aspects of the Wilderness Myth in White's *Voss*

The wilderness myth is represented in *Voss* from a variety of aspects, such as the colourful portrayal of the Outback, the relationship between Voss and Laura, and the expedition. Voss discovered and was dazzled by the physical beauty of the Outback. This allowed him to perceive the metaphysical significance of the Outback, which he attempted to explain to Laura. His relationship with her underscores an important anti-colonial point established in this novel. Voss is unable to convey his experience of the Outback to his fellow white companions and settlers. Instead, through a spiritual communion with Laura, he communicates the feelings of his unique experience of the Outback, putting it into direct opposition with colonialism. By depicting these subtle relations, White emphasises the gap between the world and the myths of the wilderness. The significance of the former is purely spiritual and difficult to comprehend for the non-native invaders. Even Voss struggles to comprehend its full meaning, let alone explain it to his compatriots. The full experience of the Outback's spiritual significance, its unique metaphysics, is available only to the native Indigenous people, who are portrayed as at one with the land. Furthermore, this land is not a strictly defined locality as the colonisers perceive it through the lens of the wilderness myth. The land is not enclosed, but rather unbounded both physically and metaphysically. In Laura's civilised garden, the European settlers' exclusive, ethnocentric, and civilised perspectives are represented. These perspectives impose the European "science" to "exorcise the spirit of the place" (White 120).

As suggested above, in literature, a garden might not only represent the physical enclosure of the land, but also a particular colonial mindset. It symbolises a closed system of thought (Western science) which, by way of rigorous analyses, exorcises the Indigenous

spirit. The garden marks the border between the civilised and Indigenous world, which reflects the duality of the wilderness myth. Both the settler and the Indigenous characters meet at this border. Those who dare cross it, like Voss, eventually meet their own demise. The settler colonisers established this boundary, marking the definite line between the two worlds. In other words, it divides the settlers' "civilised" world from the Indigenous world. After moving past this point, the trespassers must respect the thoughts and attitudes of the other. The excision of the "uncivilised" Indigenous culture is further implied by the undertones of secrecy and insulation attached to the garden. It is a place filled with "darkness and leaves" that screen "the most intimate forms, the most secret thoughts" (White 174). The author makes the garden a cypher for the settler colonisers' impervious thoughts; it underlines how the colonisers' attitudes are guarded and concealed from outsiders. The Indigenous characters' thoughts are shut off from the garden; they cannot intrude in this place upon which colonialism has been imposed. The garden is a symbolic site of "celebration" for what "others did not know" (White 122), a place in which the imperial vision is celebrated and recreated. Indeed, the garden is described as "merged with the thoughts of the passers-by" (White 121), as having therefore a representative function. Mr. Bonner's white colonial group uses the garden as a sanctuary for "secret life" (White 125). Therefore, the garden, which is controlled by the civilised European colonisers, is the place where Laura receives the message of Voss's defeat in the Outback. Voss suffers a defeat despite being initially supported by the settlers to overcome the dangers of the Outback. It is significant that this controlled garden, which represents the settlers' attmepts to marshall the wilderness of the Outback, is the setting in which Laura learns that Voss has been defeated. The novel uses natural imagery to illuminate the ways the myth of the wilderness creates a cycle of violence that harms Indigenous life.

The spirituality of the Indigenous people is emphasised through its incongruence with the wilderness myth. Clinging to the idea of the wilderness myth, the colonisers justified their actions by claiming that the colonisation of Indigenous land is necessary. Underpinned by a Nature/Culture binary, the colonisers view it as the uncivilised land, inhospitable and even threatening to people. Such an outlook shows a deep misunderstanding of any Indigenous culture that inhabits such "non-civilised" lands. In this sense, the Outback can be seen as the main setting in which settlers perpetuate the myth of the wilderness. The settlers who inhabited Indigenous lands are deluded by the idea that their "wealth had begun to make them acceptable" (White 113). The wilderness myth is in part underpinned by the idea that material wellbeing is sufficient for a civilised life. The settlers discover that the notion that wealth will bring them civilisation and therefore happiness is false; towards the end of the novel, they learn that "pure happiness…must await the final crumbling…becoming an endlessness, blowing at last, indivisible, indistinguishable, over the brown earth" (White 231). Such an outlook, that happiness cannot be found until the final "crumbling" of life, is in stark contrast to the spirituality of the Indigenous people, upon which basis they never took seriously Voss's attempts to bring about reconciliation between the two cultures.

The novel suggests that the reason why Voss was eventually rejected and killed is this huge cultural gap that cannot be overcome by a Western mindset nor by mythologised notions of the wilderness. Mariadele Boccardi has commented about this cultural gap presented in the novel by the settlers' actions and cultural traits:

> Whatever Voss's conception of his journey as an individual endeavour, it is from the start co-opted for the pre-emptive consumption of the settlers: as the narrator points out, Voss 'was already more of a statue than a man [...] for he would satisfy their longing to perch something on a column, in a square or gardens, as a memorial to their own achievement' (White 109). While the official representatives of the Empire

> are presented ironically by the omniscient narrator — not least by stressing their incongruous Englishness — they are also necessary to enshrine the discursive significance of the expedition beyond its practical aims. (Boccardi 267)

Regardless of Voss' purely explorative aims with the expedition, the expedition eventually turns out to be beneficial to its Western patrons. As far as the latter are concerned, the only goal of the expedition is to discover and colonise other Indigenous lands for the purpose of expanding the settler civilisation on the continent. Their ultimate aim is "to become self-supporting" (White 301). Through such portrayal of the settlers' attitudes towards the Indigenous land, White emphasised the Western misinterpretation of Indigenous spirituality. Voss was only beginning to feel its nature, but he was far from fully comprehending it. His rushed decisions and insistence on reconciliation without realising the magnitude of the issue ultimately leads him to his death. As this chapter delves into David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*, it will further explore how the dualist mindset of settler societies shapes their perceptions of the frontier and impacts their identity, shedding light on the enduring legacy of colonial thought patterns in literature and history.

D. The Wilderness Myth and Identity in David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*

The established settler societies in *Remembering Babylon* reflect the dualist mindset of the colonists. They see their own settlements as civilised safe havens, while the frontier is full of dangers and threatening to the settlements' survival. The settlers are constantly afraid of the roaming Indigenous tribes that they feel are threat to the settlements. Therefore, each settler family is heavily dependent on their neighbours for protection and provisions to survive. The Indigenous threat in *Remembering Babylon* gives rise to the Western concept of illegal immigration, according to which Indigenous people are forbidden to cross the border of the civilised world. The settlers' isolated settlements and wild areas are therefore created with a dividing barrier between the two lands with the intention to stop illegal immigration.

In her book *The Ecological Other*, Sarah Jaquette Ray describes a similar modern-day situation in North America in terms of environmental security. She claims that illegal Indigenous immigrants from Mexico are not just perceived as "threats to the nation and to American 'blood and soil,' but threats to a very modern view of the 'nation-as-ecosystem'" (139).

Remembering Babylon opens with Gemmy, who was originally from England, was cast ashore in northern Australia and was rescued by the Indigenous people, then comes into the world of the settlers again for the first time after 16 years. He is met by settlers with doubt and prejudice because of the Indigenous language and habits he acquired. In some senses the narrative follows colonial tropes of "going native." In their eyes, Gemmy has become Indigenous rather than European. He manages to make a few friends in the settlement but speaks limited English because of the many years he spent with the Indigenous people. Gemmy is taken in by the McIvor family, whereupon the father gradually grows to like him despite his initial reluctance. He seems to be loved by the family, and the oldest daughter Janet develops a strong bond with him. Moreover, Lachlan, who is the adopted cousin, starts respecting Gemmy and acts as his protector. Mr Frazer notices that Gemmy's knowledge is valuable to his garden and they tend to various plants and fruits in the area. With the help of Gemmy, he is shown what fruits are edible and the uses different crops have. However, several other settlers do not like Gemmy because of his associations with "the native," and view him as a "white black," and thus a threat to their settlement. Keeping him under close observation, they notice a meeting that takes place between Gemmy and some of the Indigenous people and conclude that he is a spy. The outcome of this is a strained relationship between the McIvors and other settlers, especially Jock, who protects Gemmy. However, he believes that the papers that are used to record the story about how he entered the village should be returned to him because they contain his magic. Being far away from his

Indigenous home makes him feel weak and that his energy is slipping away. Eventually, he receives the papers that he believes belong to him and returns to the bush. Contemplating for a while what to do with him, the community finally decides to beat him up and chase him away. By describing Gemmy's cultural development and relationship with both Indigenous people and the British settlers, Malouf emphasises the Indigenous connection with their land and the settlers' inability to comprehend it.

Identity is one of the core themes of *Remembering Babylon*. The European settlers of the inward-looking community are afraid of Gemmy due to their fear of losing their identity. Part of the reason for this is that they live in close proximity to the Indigenous wilderness and dread the potential contact with the "non-civilised" world. For example, in an early moment in the novel a white person describes Gemmy as a creature "flapping towards them out of a world over there" (Malouf 2-3) a phrase that evokes the movement of a bird or beast from another plane of existence. Therefore, Gemmy is taken to Mrs Hutchence, who lives in an isolated white settlement nearby. However, this does not guarantee any safety for him because the communities are close to each other for the purpose of being secure from the Indigenous people. In order to protect themselves from outsiders and safekeep their identity, the white settlers have devised several rules. According to one of them, the communities must support each other with food, resources, and medicine whenever necessary. The purpose of this rule is to avoid seeking help from strangers, especially outsiders, who are to be distrusted. Such xenophobia strongly emphasises the settlers' constant fear of the unknown. Being isolated and small has intensified the feeling of a tight social cohesion as opposed to xenophilia, or accepting strangers into their circle. Still, the novel emphasises the adaptability and survival of the white settlers in the Indigenous world. Such a depiction of the isolated community is similar to *Voss*'s representation of the garden which is a border between the civilised and uncivilised world, but also symbol of the consolidated strength of the settlers.

The settlers' fear of the wilderness stems from the Culture/Nature binary, which is at the core of their view of Indigenous world.

The British community is shaken by Gemmy's return. Jock, a beloved community member, is disliked because of his sympathy for Gemmy. He tries to persuade his group that Gemmy does not deserve their suspicion, much to their dismay. He realizes that Gemmy is isolated, a horrible fate. We read in the novel of Jock's amazement at Gemmy's solitude: "It was as if [Jock] had seen the world till now, not through his own eyes, out of some singular self, but through the eyes of a fellow who was always in company, even when he was alone; a sociable self, wrapped always in a communal warmth that protected it from dark matters and all the blinding lights of things, but also from the knowledge that there was a place out there where the self might stand alone (Malouf 106-107). Despite the settlers' love for Jock, their overwhelming fear of the Indigenous people forces them to decry him for supporting someone outside the community, as Jock too begins to be separated from "communal warmth." This action reflects the degree of fear they feel, which is further emphasised by keeping the community isolated and small. Fear allows them to form a unity, the strength of which is then directed towards the Indigenous people. The fences have an important symbolic role in the novel. In the opening of the novel, the children play a game near a fence. The novel relates that the children come across "something extraordinary" (Malouf 1) as from across the fence the boy Lanchan can see only a "thing" that "was not even, maybe, human" (Malouf 2). Such fences are more than simple boundaries between the communities. They are the border between the two worlds the novel presents: the Western and the Indigenous. They divide the two opposed identities. As such, they are indispensable for maintaining peace and stability with communities.

Unsanctioned crossing of the borders means disrupting the very foundation of the settler existence. Gemmy, therefore, is a direct threat to these foundations. Barney Mason,

Jock's neighbour and closest friend, embodies the settlers' treatment of boundaries. "Barney, in his anxious way, was forever out there pacing the line and looking for signs of trespass" (Malouf 109). The line is not to be passed by the Indigenous characters without permission. Whoever exceeds these limits is considered to be an illegal "trespasser" in the town and should be banished or killed. The novel's representation of illegal trespassing parallels Sarah Jaquette Ray's observation in *The Ecological Other*. She stated that when strangers passed the settlements' boundaries, they were treated as illegal immigrants. Ironically, the white settlers were, effectively, the original illegal immigrants who invaded and settled upon the Indigenous lands belonging to others. However, as Ray explains, according to the white settlers' justifications, these boundaries prevented the Indigenous people from destroying or damaging the resources of America. According to this logic, the wilderness embodied in its indigenous peoples threatened the settler project to extract its value.

F. Challenging the Binarism of the Wilderness Myth in *Remembering Babylon*

In *Remembering Babylon*, Europeans and Indigenous people initially represent a binary. In *Voss,* Indigenous land and people become almost one entity; the settlers, land, and Indigenous people thus become an unbalanced trifecta, and eventually the Indigenous land and people overwhelm the power of the white settlers. Meanwhile, a binary appears in many different ways in *Remembering Babylon*, emphasising the supposedly "civilised" white community and the "savage" Indigenous community, the colonisers and the colonised. Obviously, these differing ways of thinking represent the views of the colonisers. The settlers see themselves as civilised whereas the Indigenous people are savage and uncivilised in their eyes.

The novel works to deconstruct these binaries. They are introduced in the opening scene of the novel in which the children are playing. The initial description of the land just outside the settlement is indicative of the binary. The land resembles "the abode of everything savage and fearsome, and since it lay so far beyond experience, not just their own but their

parents' too, of nightmares, rumours, superstitions and all that belonged to the Absolute Dark" (Malouf 2). The dreadful nightmare land of the unknown is only "beyond the no-man's-land of the swamp" at their settlement's edge (Malouf 2). In other words, it is right next to the settlers. This means that the "Absolute Dark" is surrounding the Europeans (with the ocean on the other side); it is a realm occupied by "the blacks", who are a symbolic extension of the Absolute Dark.

Describing the Absolute Dark, the author emphasises the opposition between light and dark, Nature and Culture. He contrasts the open Indigenous communities to the apparently enlightened settlements. The contrast is reminiscent of the one between the Middle Ages (the so-called "Dark Ages") and the Enlightenment. It sets up the conflict between the two different worldviews. As mentioned above, Gemmy does not belong unequivocally to one world or the other; he may even be said to belong to both at once. Therefore, he defies the binary. At some point he is described as a "black-white feller" (Malouf 35). This description embodies both the dualism of dark and light, and positions Gemmy as a hybrid subject. The opposition of the "dark" and the "light" communities reflects the wilderness myth, according to which the wilderness is vast unknown, and threatening, just like darkness. This idea led the European colonisers to arrogantly claim, as *Remembering Babylon* suggests, that their identity and community are civilised in contrast to the "uncivilised" identity and community of Indigenous people.

This contrast is also evident in how Gemmy challenges the binary of self and other (Sempruch 42), which is given in the opening sequence of the novel. He is described as "more like a heat struck mirage a thing of substance, elongated and airily indistinct" (Malouf 2). Gemmy is described as a "thing", not a person. He is a false vision, a "mirage", which is without "substance." All of these descriptors imply that Gemmy does not even resemble a human being. Indeed, the same characterisation is reflected in his first utterance, when he

introduced himself as “a B-b-british object” (Malouf 3). All of these examples reinforce the distinction between the civilised Europeans and the uncivilised Indigenous peoples. Gemmy is a British *subject*, but he sees himself as an object in that he is being threatened, which he continues to be throughout the novel. Gemmy’s broken English reinforces the contrast. Furthermore, it suggests for the settlers an unsettling truth – that any one of them could be reduced to a seemingly savage state, which is an example of anxiety captured in the Scottish farmer’s line: “Could you lose it? Not just language but it. It” (Malouf 40). This exposes the Western conceptions of identity, nationality and civilisation as fragile constructs rather than stable, immutable truths. Therefore, the very foundation of reason is seriously undermined, so the wilderness myth is left on unstable ground.

Remembering Babylon offers a postcolonial racial critique of white settler’ xenophobic attitudes towards the Indigenous people. The novel represents how such attitudes towards the Indigenous people were informed by the settlers’ perception of the Indigenous people as aggressive and threatening. Moreover, the novel portrays how hatred and fear make the settlers biased and ignorant. A white farmhand sees the protagonist, Gemmy, speaking with two Indigenous men. He informs his boss about it and lies to him, saying that they gave Gemmy a stone. The settlers then flee, terrified of the people purely because they are Indigenous. They imagine the growing threat from a stranger because the stone signifies a violent weapon from their perspective. Following this event, the settlers consider it necessary to reshape the Outback into a civilised European settlement. Nature and the Outback, therefore, represent the hostile “other” side of the environment in accordance with the wilderness myth. They are the “Absolute Dark”, which, in this condition, is perceived to be a constant threat to “civilised,” settler communities. This polarised view of nature stems from the settlers’ xenophobic mindset. For them, Gemmy threatens boundaries between civilised and other, and thus should not be allowed to return to any European community. This idea is

captured in Gemmy's death scene: "It involved a 'dispersal' six years before by a group of cattlemen and two native troopers, too slight an affair to be called a massacre, and no newspaper had got hold of it" (Malouf 196). The term "dispersal" is, of course, a euphemism for murder. The Indigenous people are subsequently murdered. Yet, as the novel ironically points out, this murder is "too slight an affair to be called a massacre" (Malouf 233) and too insignificant to be newsworthy. The Indigenous characters thus are depicted as violent savages who need to be exterminated.

In response, *Remembering Babylon*'s postcolonial racial criticism of the whites' xenophobia towards Indigenous people can be understood as an ecological critique that highlights the colonial construction of the frontier as a (wilderness) myth that aims at exterminating anything that threats civilisation, including, if necessary, Indigenous people. Representing the settlers' attempts to remove the Indigenous characters through a landscape narrative demonstrates the author's aim of condemning the colonisers' deceptive environmental ideologies constituted in the wilderness myth, and employed as a means to dispossess the Indigenous people of Australia. Thus, the colonial environmental ideology is used by the settlers not only to dispose of the Indigenous characters but also to harness the Outback. Western colonisers sanction their actions of altering or removing the Indigenous culture, identity, and environment on the basis of its being uncivilised, barbaric, and savage. Gemmy's death illustrates the violent dangers of the wilderness myth, for his murder marks the erasure of Indigenous culture from the novel's environment.

At first, the Europeans are reserved in their actions. They seek to gain information. They "fished about, first one, then another, in a casual way, for what they wanted to know" (Malouf 63). They obtain logistical information on the whereabouts of the tribes, their meeting places, and their numbers. This information helps the settlers devise their plans for "dispersal." Malouf often employs ironic twists when portraying these actions for the purpose

of critique. For example, the colonisers engage into these acts of spying to collect information, yet they consider Gemmy a spy. In so doing, the novel endeavours to debunk the Western dualist mindset along with the wilderness myth. We can see another such example when Gemmy explains tribal culture to the settlers. In the course of explaining, "he fell back on the native word, the only one that could express it," at which point the eyes of his listeners "went hard, as if the mere existence of a language they did not know was a provocation, a way of making them helpless" (Malouf 58). This dialogue exposes the futility of the settlers' obsession with protective isolation. With all their insistence on securing and maintaining isolation, they are made "helpless" by an Indigenous word with which they are unfamiliar. In other words, they felt helpless when confronted by an unknown spirituality, manifested here in language. This linguistic primacy suggests a connection between the Indigenous people and the Indigenous world, which is not known to the Europeans. It also suggests that quelling the Indigenous people's culture, religion, and tradition on the basis of Western prejudices is both harmful and destructive for the Indigenous people and their land. In this way, the settlers are represented as rupturing a connection known to indigenous peoples between social and ecological knowledge. This rupture echoes the concept of eco-cosmology in ecocriticism, which suggests that life exists in balance of people, animals, and nature. This balance is disrupted by the settler colonisers who, for the sake of their colonial aims, have disconnected the Indigenous land from its inhabitants.

The separation of the social and ecological domain is an important theme in *Remembering Babylon*. It is indicated by the descriptions of the "tribe's home territory" within the Indigenous world – in "flocks of birds and other creatures, all alive in their names and the stories that contained their spirit, for a man to walk into and print with the spirit of his feet and the invisible impact of his breath" (Malouf 117). Again, linguistic images, such as "all alive in their names", are crucial for understanding that language breathes vitality into

ideas. Words are powerful spiritual connectors between the Indigenous people and their world. The settlers, on the other hand, alienate themselves from the landscape by seeing it as hostile until it is "made habitable." Mr Frazer recognises that this settler ideology is flawed:

> We have been wrong to see this continent as hostile and infelicitous, so that only by the fiercest stoicism, a supreme resolution and force of will, and by felling; clearing, sowing with the seeds we have brought with us, and by importing sheep, cattle, rabbits, even the very birds of the air, can it be shaped and made habitable. It is habitable already. (Malouf 129)

This passage questions the assumption of power of the Western colonists, who, in their "supreme resolution", wish to dominate the Outback in order to render it isolated—settlements that rest upon the wilderness myth. The settlers, as this passage implies, try to clear the way by razing the existing wilderness to the ground so that they can create a new environment. The concepts of "clearing" and "felling" foreshadow the extermination that is to come, namely, the extermination of the Indigenous peoples and their lands. Frazer's passage reflects his shift in perspective, advocating for a more harmonious and cooperative relationship with the environment, acknowledging its inherent suitability for human life. It challenges the notion of conquering and reshaping the land through forceful measures, proposing a more nuanced understanding of the environment's inherent liveability.

The wild and primal chaos that radiates from the Outback is physically embodied. For the settlers, Indigenous people often represent nothing more but darkness and savagery, whereas, in truth, they form a spiritual union with their land. As described in the following section, the gap between the Indigenous people and their land is caused by the settlers' misguided idea of the Indigenous more-than-human world—their own Western ecology with the wilderness myth at its centre.

Section II: The Negative Impacts of the Wilderness Myth on the Australian Outback

Now that the summaries of the novels *Voss* (1957) and *Remembering Babylon* (1993) have been presented, this section will delve further into the ways the narratives relate to the wilderness myth and grapple with its meanings.

The novels describe the relationship between Indigenous people and the Outback lands, which "might be considered prototypical wilderness spaces" (Crane 90). As Platz argues, the "Outback setting of Australia therefore is understood as a location of self-understanding and self-realization" (Platz 175). In his book *Patrick White*, Simon During argues that White's novels depict the Indigenous people as the people who feel that injustice has been done to them mostly through their perceived affinity with nature: "The notion that Indigenous peoples belong more to nature than to humanity has helped discount their prior claims to the country" (During 31). For During, the Outback "is spiritualised in *Voss* as an abyss that swallows the colonial project rather than supports it with an image of *terra nullius*" (qtd. in Conti 46). Through coming to understand their exploitation, the Indigenous characters spend time in the natural environments that comprise their home. Indigenous knowledge attests to the ways in which the wilderness "has long been a site of environmental practices and a marker of environmental virtue" (Ray 13). Consequently, the Indigenous characters in the novels reflect that deprivation of access to this "environmental virtue," which renders the Indigenous mind unaware of the full extent of the damage caused by colonial exploitation. *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* demonstrate the close relationship between the Outback and Indigenous people as they reveal some of the dangers associated with settler efforts to civilise the wilderness.

The wilderness myth is the foundation of the settlers' treatment of the Australian Outback in *Voss*. It includes a genuine misunderstanding of the Indigenous world and Indigenous people, which is the reason for Voss's failed attempt at unification. The novel portrays the impact of the wilderness myth on the Outback in various ways. For example, the

settlers strive to impose the Western approach on the Indigenous people in order to improve their settlements. It consists of collecting and utilising natural resources for the benefit of economic progress. Perceiving the Western settlers as the colonising threat, the Indigenous people reject their treatment of the land. Indigenous resistance to such attempts should be viewed as an ecological idea that challenges the Western reduction of the Indigenous more-than-human world to an exploitation site. The settlers strive to convince the Indigenous people that their ways are correct, despite the harm done to the land. This is in accordance with Reynolds' comment that "the separation of Aborigines from the means of subsistence and production was the most difficult because it was hard to convince the Aborigines that they were working for their own benefit and not for white settlers" (Reynolds 144). Once they had violently taken away their lands, it was unlikely that the settlers would convince the Indigenous people that their ultimate cause was good. Moreover, on the basis of the constructions of indigeneity embedded within the Nature/Culture binary, the settlers are able to generate profit while simultaneously increasing the Indigenous people's poverty. Driven by economic enterprise, the settlers' deceptive ways and methods reflects the most insidious aspect of the wilderness myth, which includes careful diplomacy and distancing from violent control when dealing with Indigenous people. In *Voss* this insidious aspect is portrayed by the colonisers' use of influential settlers to convince the Indigenous people of their honorable goals.

The wilderness myth has another important harmful aspect in *Voss*. Plagued by homesickness, the settlers have transformed the Indigenous Australian lands into farming lands reminiscent of English pastures. They also build homes in such a way as to recreate the architecture of England. For example, as Boccardi argues, "Sanderson's home, a fully built 'edifice, in colour a faded yellow ochre, with white-washed posts and window-frames', reproduces the architecture, social dynamics, and values of the landed gentry in England—the

very class, that is, which in the home country was losing out to the economic power of the industrial cities" (Boccardi 270). In Sanderson's town, "little children ran clattering and calling over the stone floors, maids came with loaves of yellow bread and stiffly laundered napkins, and dogs were whining and pointing at the smells of baking meats" (White 130–1). The "fire of ironbark", a real fire spreading a "clear, golden light" (White 131) evokes memories of the homeland and imagined domesticity in the foreign country. Visualised representations of prosperity are the necessary components of a colonial settlement. Hence, the economically prosperous town is "conveyed most vividly to the minds of [Sanderson's] audience" (White 135). By employing simple yet vivid images of these domesticated settings, the novel depicts the environmental aspect of the wilderness myth. On its basis the settlers construct settlements according to their own cultural identity, thereby altering Indigenous lands and extirpating the Indigenous cultural identity. Such representations further emphasise the utilitarian goals of the European colonisers and the economic aspect of the wilderness myth that aims to enhance economic efficiency at the expense of Indigenous nature.

By portraying such exploitative aspects of the wilderness myth, the novel challenges historical Western justifications of colonisation, which are civilisation and prosperity. Chris Campbell describes "the 'cannibal appetite' of capitalist imperialism" (10), arguing that colonial history is littered with the desire to claim land and resources for material gain. This appetite for riches is cannibalistic because capitalist imperialism results in the self-harming destruction of resources. The novel exposes one of the main challenges of the Western economy, namely, the lack of resources. With a growing awareness of the scarcity of natural and more-than-human resources, Western empires have urgently sought to colonise unexplored portions of the world. The idea of the wilderness myth, with its binary view of civilisation and wilderness, Culture and Nature, is ideal for this purpose. The novel suggests that the wilderness myth, as observed by postcolonial ecological scholars, is used to prevent

Indigenous peoples from using the resources of their own land, causing shortages in basic necessities, such as food and water (Huggan and Tiffin 138). Even though the Indigenous characters' experiences in the Outback occurred before colonisation in *Voss*, the garden in the novel stands as the embodiment of the wilderness myth and Western power and control.

The treatment of Indigenous resources in *Voss* displays the settlers' attitude towards the Indigenous people. It comes down to exploiting the resources of the Outback for purely economic purposes. Therefore, the Indigenous people are forced to either look for scattered remains or to beg their colonial masters for sustenance. The Indigenous people, naturally, feel the unfairness of their impoverished status, and they display their poverty to the settlers to make an impact and to assert their continued existence on the land. In the novel, Boyle "proposed to Voss that they should spend the morning inspecting the sheep and goats he had selected for use of the expedition" (White183). When Voss and Boyle are inspecting the livestock, there is a gathering of Indigenous people around Boyle's properties. These Indigenous people want to claim their poverty. This scene describes the miserable position of the Indigenous people in which "black women were standing, and little, red-haired boys with toy spears. Over the skins of the natives, the smoke played, and through. A yellowish woman, of spreading breasts, sat giving suck to a puppy" (White 184). Mr Boyle describes these in a derogatory way as "dirty beggars" (White 184). This and other similar representations of the Indigenous people emphasise their lowly status as colonised and enslaved victims of the European oppressors. Although Voss is aware of the misfortunes endured by the Indigenous people, he is still powerless to stop the oppression. In order to justify the violent taking of resources from Indigenous people, Mr. Boyle claims that the settlers' economic benefit is far more important than the immediate needs of the Indigenous people. This reflects the fundamental aspect of the wilderness myth, which is to provide whatever means are available to make the civilisation flourish, even if that means unjustly harming others. These means

are, naturally, the resources of the Indigenous more-than-human world. The selfishness of this goal is implied by Voss's response that "it is almost always impossible to convince other men of one's own necessities" (White 185). Such statements testify to the ultimate driver behind the wilderness myth: greed. The most detrimental aspect of greed is its debilitating effect on the Indigenous world, emphasised by Huggan and Tiffin in their article, "Green Postcolonialism". Taking up a firm ecocritical position, they claim that colonisers' development projects stifle the environmental perspective of Indigenous people. Furthermore, the authors observe that racism and injustice go hand in hand when taking advantage of Indigenous lands and resources. Huggan and Tiffin point out that Western colonisers' goals are exclusively profit-oriented, which renders their justifications meaningless and brings about dispossession and marginalisation of the Indigenous people from their native lands. Exploitation by Voss's circle of friends represents an instance of this dynamic. In the light of these insights, the novel ironises the existential question: Is Western civilisation so valuable that the Indigenous civilisation should be sacrificed for its prosperity?

The novel tackles this question by representing sacrifice as arguably its most important theme. Voss makes a sacrifice by going to the desert; he also unconditionally trusts the Indigenous people, and his character answers the above question by demonstrating that no, Western civilisation is not so valuable that Indigenous civilisation should ever be sacrificed. Rather, the best white settlers are willing to sacrifice themselves while holding onto kindness towards Indigenous people. The other settlers are willing to go as far as to make major sacrifices to support the colonial exploration of the Outback for their own economic gains. The settlers, except Voss, are depicted in the novel as not caring in the least for the Indigenous more-than-human environment as such. All they are interested in are the resources that will make their colonial masters and themselves prosperous.

The material aspect of the wilderness myth is evident in *Voss*. All the members of the expedition, except Voss, are motivated by profit. They primarily seek to discover the Outback's wealth. The most important character to voice this purpose is Mr Palfreyman, a white explorer with knowledge of and interest in Indigenous nature. His only priority is financial accumulation. Voss discovers that Mr Palfreyman is keenly interested in this goal as they "were standing on a little, actual, rustic bridge in the Botanic Gardens" (White 51). This encounter convinces Voss that Mr Palfreyman intends to take with him all valuable plants and animals of the wilderness. He sees in them the colonial spoils of victory to which any settler is entitled. As such, they stand as living symbols of colonial supremacy over the Indigenous world. The settlers are amazed by certain properties of Indigenous plants, which they perceive as useful. For example, before the expedition starts, Voss "was fascinated in particular by a species of lily which swallows flies. With such instinctive neatness and cleanliness to dispose of those detestable pests" (White 14). Such useful properties of the indigenous flora and fauna are highly valued and sought by the settlers. Ironically, Voss says to Mr Palfreyman: '"I do not doubt you will have every opportunity, Mr Palfreyman, to further your patron's interests, in virgin country" (White 51). He is aware of this character's colonial desire to own and utilise Indigenous nature in a way he sees appropriate. This shows the exceedingly selfish treatment of the Outback by the colonising settlers, even if their purpose is supposedly nothing but exploration.

The brutality and carefree behaviour of Western colonisers in treating the wilderness emphasises the self-importance of the colonists. This becomes obvious when "Mr. Palfreyman was distressed" at his mate, Turner, who captures a bird that he wants to eat to satisfy his hunger. Turner reacts to Mr Palfreyman's dismay by crying: "Do not tell me you never killed a bird!" to which the latter replies: "I have killed many, to my knowledge […] and could be responsible for much that I do not realize" (White 354). Mr Palfreyman is an

ornithologist, and though his profession has led him to kill birds, he is somewhat hypocritically disgusted by the act of killing a bird to eat it when there are other foods accessible. His interest in the indigenous wildlife is at odds with Turner's hunger and intent to satisfy his hunger. This clearly demonstrates another aspect of the wilderness myth, according to which the wilderness is an isolated hunting ground for colonisers, who are encouraged to use it for their own satisfaction. The novel thus satirises the colonial arguments which justify taking over Indigenous lands for the benefit of all. Similarly, Mr Sanderson believes that Western accomplishments in the Outback are looked upon as theft by the Indigenous people, hence his comment that "'achievements differ in different men'" (White 140). Therefore, colonial exploitations of the wilderness for the purpose of achievement shows how the wilderness idea enables deceptive pledges and assurances. In this way, White challenges certain subtle aspects of the wilderness myth that often go unnoticed or unchallenged in ecocriticism.

The key idea behind the wilderness myth is that Indigenous land is wild and, as such, should be reshaped so as to be useful. This idea is often questioned in *Voss* through certain events and, more often, through dialogues. In some of these dialogues the characters (usually the settlers) refer to the argument of claiming the wilderness for the sake of Western development. Towards the end of *Voss*, at the moment of Voss's death, Judd, a criminal, notes: "his blood ran out upon the dry earth, which drank it up immediately" (480). This comment of Judd's demonstrates a layered criticism of Voss as a settler and shows that the Indigenous and European cultures have only connected in death. Judd adds: "Voss left his mark on the country. The blacks talk about him to this day. He is still there. He is there in the country, and he always will be" (538). The colonising power succeeds, White suggests, but only because Voss died and became part of the land. Such dialogues in the novel suggest that colonisation always ends in violence. This radical postcolonial criticism implicit in the novel

renders useless all colonial arguments about taming the wilderness for the benefit of all, which resonates with Cronon's argument that the word "wilderness," as often used in colonial discourse, refers to a land that is abandoned, savage, barren, and hostile (Cronon 9). These representations of Indigenous land constitute the wilderness myth that is the backbone of the colonial mission.

The Indigenous peoples' rejection of the settlers' general stereotyping of the Indigenous world is symbolised in the explorers' compass, which they stole. The compass marks the colonisers' attempt to redefine and civilise the Indigenous land in terms of a "Eurocentric epistemic articulation." This is elaborated upon by Bandopadhyay in the following terms:

> The two races of people are socio-politically counterpointed. There is an increasing accumulation of hatred, suspicion, and distrust that seems to annihilate the ancestral purity of the aboriginal territory. Voss and his party seek to explore the land, thereby trying to re-define the ancestral land in terms of a Eurocentric epistemic articulation governed by mapping and cartography. For instance, the Indigenous people are supposed to have stolen the compass. Is it a protest against the Eurocentric project of mapping the land? (Bandopadhyay 130).

The Eurocentric project of mapping the land reveals the settlers' attempts to reshape the Indigenous people's nature according to their European ecological mindset. For this purpose, the settlers created the boundaries that prevented the Indigenous people from encroaching upon the lands they had settled. At the end of the expedition, the Indigenous Jackie cooperates with his compatriots, who surround the expedition, to steal the sheep and eat them until the settlers are left without food in the Outback.

A. The Relation Between Indigenous People and the Outback

The Indigenous people in the novel are largely perceived by the settlers as uncivilised. This includes Gemmy, who is treated as a "stand-in" for Indigeneity due to his background (Abler 168). The novel stresses the fierce reaction of the Indigenous people to the exploitation of their world by the white settlers, who justify this by the ever-growing need for profit. Indigenous resistance is shown most clearly in the novel when an Indigenous man disposes of the main character. Voss's death sends a powerful message about Indigenous resilience but also about what they consider sacred, which is the relationship between the natives and the land. This resonates with Garrard's idea of the intimate connection between the Indigenous people and their immediate environment (Garrard 67).

The Indigenous people's treatment of their environment is also represented in *Remembering Babylon*. This is revealed in Janet's incident with bees at Mrs Hutchence's house, located in an isolated settlement, which is a reflection of the desecrated Indigenous culture. Once Janet completes her routine and takes out her defensive gear, a swarm of bees suddenly sets upon her, covering her skin and blocking her vision. She manages to remain calm, knowing that the bees would not bite her. When they eventually fly away leaving Janet unscathed, she feels that her skin is somehow renewed.

This scene demonstrates Janet's awareness of the bees and showcases her wise decision to remain calm. As a settler, Janet was able to understand the bees and avoid conflict and harm. Any aggressive move or action on her part would have caused retaliation from the bees. This scene can be read as evidence of Janet's acceptance of the more-than-human world in ways that are inspired by the Indigenous people. Jo Jones argues that the novel explores the different traumas of Indigenous Australians and the white settlers. For Jones, this fusion "suggests that experiences of trauma and suffering are transferable and can be merged to strengthen the bonds between all who have suffered" (76). Jones argues that this "complex act of substitution of trauma . . . creates a transcendent connection between settler, indigenous

culture and place in a way that seems to oversimplify the similarities and differences between Indigenous and settler experiences of trauma" (77). While the novel focuses on settlers' perspectives, it also opens up the opportunity to consider the ways that settlers learn from Indigenous people even as their displacement directly worsens their traumas. Janet's awareness of the more-than-human world and her calm treatment of it suggests the novel's exploration of the ways settler, Indigenous, and animal worlds interact.

Remembering Babylon, like *Voss*, features other settler characters who show deeper understanding of the Indigenous people and their more-than-human world. For example, Mr Frazer, through his conversations with Gemmy, understands Indigenous people's relationship with their environment. He realises the importance of Indigenous knowledge of their world, not only in terms of conserving the environment, but also fostering the sacred relationship between the land and its native inhabitants. In fact, the entire novel is "consciousness of place [and an Indigenous] connection to nature [that] might be perceived as Romantic" (Moisander 13). This insight indicates that Western settlers might be capable of understanding Indigenous people better. However, if this works at the level of the individual alone, then the possibility of cross-cultural connections is remote. The novel seems to confirm this in Voss's death. As long as there are those in power who devise, finance, and support exploitative imperial goals, the actions of a few individuals who think differently will make only a negligible difference.

The relationship between Indigenous people and the land is emphasised in a variety of ways in *Remembering Babylon*. For example, when Gemmy joins the Indigenous settlement, he becomes aware of the home territory of the tribe together with its other creatures and flocks of birds, its berries and edible fruits, its scrub and rock ridges, as well as its underground water sources plus creeks and pools (Malouf 107). In addition, ants are described as doing what they do best—busily working in cohesion to safeguard the colony and the environment. The depiction of ants figures the condition of the Indigenous people,

who are similarly willing to sacrifice for the good of both people and the land. Here we find an eco-cosmological perspective that indicates the importance of the unified spirituality of all living beings in the Indigenous world. The ants are selfless and aware that the colony and land mean life. Their sole focus is survival and making the best use of their immediate environment, not growing at the expense of others. This idea is understood by Mr Frazer, who shares it with his colony governor. However, the governor rejects it, emphasising instead colonial priorities and necessities that contradict the perspectives of Indigenous people. This is similar to *Voss*'s depiction of colonial priorities while disregarding the relationship between Indigenous people and their land. Time and again, in both novels, influential people among the settlers are shown as caring only for the empire and colonial expansion. Therefore, they seek to remove "every vestige of the native; for ringbarking and clearing and reducing it to what would make it, at last, just a bit like home" (Malouf 8), thus demonstrating both their claim to the land and their lack of any sense of belonging there.

Remembering Babylon represents the attempts of settlers to pastoralise their settlements: "The settlers have a utilitarian view of land and a wish to pastoralize it" (Malouf 16). At the beginning of the novel, the settlers demonstrate their interests in profit-generating and colonial expansion. This is evident in the image of the environment where white children are playing. This natural environment represents the settlers' immediate contact with the Indigenous world. To the settlers, they envision that the children are located in two settings: one is in the mid-nineteenth century in an enclosure halfway along the coast of Queensland, and the other is in a Russian forest where wolves are hunted. Lachlan also transplants the idealised nature of his former home in the imaginations of the colonial dwelling (Archer-Lean 12). Lachlan, together with his less enthusiastic cousins, imagines an ant-filled clay-packed forest in Europe. His dominion over nature is an idealistic search for nature that was lost as he subordinates natural things to his needs. Therefore, he transforms nature into a

romanticised equilibrium of his European environment (Archer-Lean 8). Jock McIvor also goes through instances of reminiscence in the novel, which indicates his sense of amazement at the material nature available to the human senses:

> Wading through the waist-high grass, he was surprised to see all the tips beaded with green, as if some new growth had come into the world that till now he had never seen or heard of. When he looked closer it was hundreds of wee bright insects, each the size of his little fingernail, metallic, iridescent, and the discovery of them, the new light they brought to the scene, was a lightness in him—that was what surprised him—like a form of knowledge he had broken through to. It was unnameable, which disturbed him, but was also exhilarating; for a moment he was entirely happy (Malouf 108).

The settlers' neglect of the Indigenous world for the sake of their so-called civilised world in the form of isolated settlements represents their fear of the Indigenous world, which they see as unknown, uncivilised, and dangerous, as determined by the wilderness myth. The wilderness myth allows the settlers to employ their "civilised" notion of the Indigenous world and to claim its resources. Not recognising or caring for the Indigenous connection with the land, the settlers attempt to create an illusion of their homeland in their isolated settlements, thereby imposing their own cultural identity upon Indigenous people. This is conveyed in *Remembering Babylon*'s theme of pastoralism. The visions of pastoral nature represented by settler characters in the novel conceal apocalyptic images of the obliterated connection between Indigenous people and their native land, which ultimately foreshadows the death and decay of the colonised environment. Even the title of the novel, *Remembering Babylon,* suggests apocalypse; Babylon, a pastoral utopia, has been replaced and is now only to be remembered.

B. The Frontier: Limiting the Indigenous Eco-Cosmological Strategy of Resistance

Remembering Babylon shows significant damage done to Europeans' farming caused by "ant trails." Ants infuriate the settlers by endangering their agricultural produce. For this reason, the settlers brought predator insects and pathogens to exterminate the native pests. These European predator insects and animals are often mentioned in the novel. In his book *Ecological Imperialism*, Alfred Crosby states that no "native predators, parasites, or pathogens adapted to preying on pests existed in the new lands," such as Australia (205). Similarly, *Remembering Babylon* expresses the settlers' view of Gemmy as a native pest who is a threat to their settlements. Examining "Malouf's use of the nonhuman animal", Archer noticed that "*Remembering Babylon*'s use of animalian representation is […] a critique of the colonial and racist conflation of Indigenous peoples with animals" (9). This colonial equalling of Indigenous people with insects reflects the Western mindset that often perceives the external world in terms of dualisms.

A Western dualist mindset is unequipped to make sound judgments regarding Indigenous people, land, and animals, the novel suggests. In *Remembering Babylon*, animals are often seen as wild and savage because they come from the wilderness. This view is contrasted and criticised in the novel by way of seemingly unimportant details. For example, Janet is described as someone who "would become expert beyond anything Mrs Hutchence might have dreamed of at the bee business. She would know all the breeds and crossbreeds, and create one or two new ones—actually bring them into being, whole swarms that the earth had never known till she called them. She would devote her life to these creatures" (Malouf 140). The novel includes such characters who "devote" themselves to native fauna because this complicates a simplistic view that treats only Indigenous people as capable of having positive relationships with the more-than-human world. Janet becomes a figure of hope or even a role model for readers to admire within the settler community.

However, due to the overarching mistreatment of the Outback, the settlers consistently face Indigenous peoples' anger. The abuse of Gemmy signifies one moment when settlers mistreat a person who was raised as Indigenous. After contemplating Mrs Hutchence's household, he remembers the miserable moments of his childhood life and the violence he endured at the hands of Willet. Willet is a white rat-catcher who stands as a symbol of the horrible and abusive European faunal predators, and who treats Gemmy as a servant (Malouf 109). In response to this abuse, Gemmy sets fire to his room in Willet's house, which may be a symbol of the Indigenous people's spiritual resistance to the powerful adversary. Animals, such as native ants, also become symbols for the ways the land itself challenges the settlers. When the ants are first presented as dwelling in Indigenous locations, they are shown as helpful in preserving the environment, while being completely harmless to Indigenous people and other Indigenous animals surrounding them. They also do no harm to agriculture.

Voss also emphasises the Indigenous species' role as destructive pests for settler colonies, such as the domesticated garden and town of the colonial Mr Bonner. This is evident in how the native "scrub […] still stood along the road before the town" (White 26) of Mr Bonner, and even in his well-maintained and organised garden, "the science of horticulture had failed to exorcise the spirit of the place" so that "the wands and fronds of native things intruded still" (White 156). The repetition of the term "still" to describe the ways Indigenous pests harm Mr Bonner's town and well-tended garden illustrates the Indigenous opposition to both European acts of (1) domestication—depicted as the settlements or gardens structured according to the European taste—and (2) pastoralism, shown as the European domesticated Indigenous world brought by the settlers from their home country, who recreate pastoral images according to the same thoughts and attitudes used in their European homes. This representation of the resistance of indigenous animals explains why the settlers in *Remembering Babylon* brought their European species to prey on

the Indigenous creatures, which were pests to them. This act demonstrates that the wilderness myth, on the basis of which the settlers create their isolated settlements, limits the Indigenous people's physical and spiritual resistance.

To understand how Indigenous people can be spiritually empowered by the Indigenous world, we should ask: how were they able to render these native species harmless instead of pestilent? As Næss argues, Indigenous societies are able to rediscover their archetypal connection with the environment, its flora and fauna. He writes that a "significant decrease in human population" "is necessary for human existence to flourish" (Næss, qtd in Mukherjee 25). For the Indigenous people, the tree represents the organic unity of the universe, particularly the Indigenous world in its integral state. That means any harm done to the tree will be felt by the entire organism. The spiritual connection is at the same time a powerful shield and a method for strong opposition to any invasion and devastation of the environment. From this stems a deep aversion to such behaviour. It is an instinct just as strong as the survival instinct. For Indigenous people, the thriving of human life and more-than-human worlds is a collaboration that necessitates an awareness of the spiritual potential of the natural world.

C. Eco-cosmology in *Remembering Babylon* and *Voss*

Eco-cosmological representations in *Remembering Babylon* and *Voss* draw attention to the profound significance of environmental and spiritual knowledge, both of which the Indigenous communities deploy in defence in defence of their culture and society.

This is reflected in the way in which the Indigenous characters reap the benefits of the swamp. As unique environments, swamps are "extraordinarily reproductive and regenerative, the water that trickles through them carries with it decaying material which continuously leaves a fertile sediment and brings nutrients downstream" (Howarth 521). It has already been mentioned in this chapter that the settlers consider the area in which the Indigenous

characters live as the “Absolute Dark”, “the abode of everything savage and fearsome” (Malouf 2). In this sense, the swamp is among the most powerfully concentrated locations of such “darkness” in *Remembering Babylon*, because it is the gathering place of Indigenous people and other Indigenous beings. As Moisander notes, swamps take on broader meanings figuring forms of resistance and insurgence towards the coloniser: “Swamps have postcolonial significance since they have been a refuge for slaves and indigenous people escaping from the colonial powers” (Moisander 18). Many swamps in Australia were centres of connectedness for Indigenous people. They enabled them to unify and attempt to preserve some of their traditions (Reynolds 91). The integration of Indigenous species in the swamps shows the environmental and spiritual value of the swamp, which became a reservoir for many Indigenous birds, such as scrub turkeys, bronze-wings, topknots, fruit pigeons and “a dozen varieties of duck” (Malouf 52). This interaction indicates one of the most important benefits of swamps and wetlands in general. It enables Indigenous species to exist in a biotic community of organisms that flock together and mutually interact within a single environment. Fumiki Takahashi argues that this interaction between species becomes “analogous to crops, which have developed defence mechanisms in the biotic community against [foreign organisms] by means of natural enemies and provided immunity in a total system” (1). In view of this, it becomes clear why native ants and other Indigenous life forms are not viewed as pests; rather, they are considered part of the landscape. This intermingling of the Indigenous species in swamps indicates the importance of the connection between the Indigenous environment and all life in it. The connection is both physical and spiritual; as such, it provides a safe haven for Indigenous people, allowing them to resist invasions and preserve their own tradition. Such safe havens resonate with Cronon’s idea of “sublime landscapes”, which are “rare places on earth” where Indigenous people may preserve their cultural identity and even “glimpse the face of God” (Cronon 10).

Relating the foregoing analysis to the ecocritical notion of the cosmological, the swamp is often represented in postcolonial fictions as having the attribute of consciousness. For example, Alice Whitford discusses how Alan Moore's *Swamp Thing* creates a personified swamp that is able to perceive with its own eyes the human domination and destruction of the global environment. Whitford claims that by putting the environment's own perspective inside the human mind, all the violence, control and marginalisation suffered by the environment becomes apparent to humans (60). The first section of this chapter discussed how the Outback generates mirages to manifest its deceptive nature, which enables the Indigenous people to feign innocence and seemingly welcome the settlers, a tactic that enables them to preserve their land. This is portrayed in the Indigenous people's spiritual relationship with the Outback. *Voss*'s descriptions of wetlands such as swamps, marshes and bogs are a trope for this deceptive nature. The following is one of these scenes in which the swamp zone of the Outback is depicted as an illusory space that welcomes the settlers, while actually inspiring the Indigenous people to resist:

> So love and anticipation inspired the cavalcade as it passed through the green country, still practically a swamp. The passionate cries of birds exploded wonderfully overhead. The muscular forms of cool, smooth, flesh-coloured trees rose up before the advancing horsemen. Yet the men themselves, for all their freedom and their joyful songs, only remotely suggested flesh. By this time, it is true, their stock of provisions was inadequate, but an abundant supply of game had arrived to celebrate the good season. The men did take advantage of this, to catch and eat, only never more than was necessary to prolong life, for deprivation and distance had lessened their desire for food. It was foreign to their wizened stomachs. They preferred to eat dreams, but did not grow fat on these, quite the reverse. (White 253)

The Indigenous character Jackie reflects how the swamp is understood by the natives. Voss notices Jackie's silence and unhappiness whenever the colonists celebrate the landscape's beauty around the swamp. After thinking about Jackie's constant unhappiness, Voss realises that he is communicating intuitively with his Indigenous people who are surrounding the expedition (White 253). At that point the resistance by Jackie and his people to the expedition's white explorers starts by way of attacks. Thus, the swamp and other Outback spaces should be understood as the source of Jackie's courage to resist and retaliate, all of which is related to the eco-cosmological argument in support of the environment's spirituality.

The Indigenous people in *Voss* utilise the Outback's zones, such as swamps, in the same way the Indigenous people in *Remembering Babylon* inhabit the same zones with their fellow Indigenous creatures. *Remembering Babylon* not only represents the swamp as a refuge for the Indigenous people and a source of their resistance, but also as a starting point for learning about Indigenous people's identity, culture and tradition. *Remembering Babylon*'s second chapter recounts the memories of how Gemmy survived death before the children found him. At that point he appeared to them rather like a creature from the swamp: "Big-eyed children who found him washed up at low tide in their bay, stood with one foot set upon the other and clenched their brows. What was it? A sea-creature of a kind they had never seen before from the depths beyond the reef? A spirit, a feeble one, come back from the dead and only half reborn?" (Malouf 21). In addition to depicting the swamp as Gemmy's entry point to the Indigenous world, this passage also calls Gemmy "a sea- creature". This shows that the Indigenous identity, culture and knowledge delivered by Gemmy to the settlers have their source in the outback, such as swamps. Gemmy's years of experience with Indigenous people in their refuge convey the knowledge, traditions and, more importantly, marginalisation of Indigenous people by the settlers. Lessons of Gemmy's years of experience are almost learnt

and understood by some settlers, as represented in Gemmy's relationship with Mr Frazer and Janet. Therefore, the Outback's swamps to which the Indigenous people were pushed are one of the most important sources of their values, which Gemmy learns about. In this way, Gemmy becomes enriched with Indigenous values as he comes to understand their true identity, reflected in their close connection with the environment.

The representations of swamps discussed above as biotic communities of native life and Indigenous resistance can be connected to an important idea emphasised by Reynolds. Reynolds argues that Indigenous people's refusal to share their lands with settlers was one of the reasons that led the Indigenous people to move to swamp refuges, while being empowered to resist European settlers in the process. That shift between Indigenous people and white settlers in Australia happened in a period around the historical settings of *Voss* (1845) and *Remembering Babylon* (1860):

> A large party of blacks marched up to a recently established station and ordered the Europeans to be off 'as it was their ground'. [....] Aborigines pushed into the marginal country–mountains, swamps, waterless neighbourhoods. Patterns of seasonal migration broke down, areas remaining free of Europeans were over utilized and eventually depleted of both flora and fauna. (180)

Consequently, in addition to the aforementioned native biotic community, the establishment of some isolated, marginal stations by the Indigenous characters in *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon*, such as swamps, creates ecological competition between the settler-imported Indigenous species (such as animals and plants) and the native Indigenous ones. Ecological competition presents harmful conflict between two organisms or entities for resources, such as food, water, shelter, light and territory within an environment. The ecological competition represented in these two novels echoes Huggan's and Tiffin's postcolonial ecological argument referenced in the introduction to this thesis, about how the wilderness myth enabled

colonisers to persist in their exploitative and oppressive practices at the expense of human and animal inhabitants, resulting in indiscriminate killing, dislocation and dispossession. They argue that colonial wilderness-based exploitation resulted in the slaughter and displacement of Indigenous people and animals, as well as economic destruction. It has also produced circumstances that lead to the exclusive "either/or" binary in terms of shortage or degradation of land and resources (138). In *Remembering Babylon*, settler-imported fauna and flora matures and grows in the isolated settlements of the settlers. The novel also shows that the separation between the settler-imported and the native fauna and flora is the reason the species become hostile to one another (ecological competition), which leads to the extinction of native species. An example of this can be seen in Archer-Lean's argument in his article "David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* as a Reconsideration of Pastoral Idealisation." Archer-Lean argues that Malouf uses Gemmy as a "zoomorphic animal embodiment" to critique the colonial domination of native species (10). The two stages of Gemmy's experience symbolically represent the ecological competition between the settler-imported, and the native, fauna and flora. The first takes place when Gemmy enters the Indigenous world in the "Absolute Dark" locations, namely swamps, where he is perceived by the Indigenous people as a "sea calf . . . [with] the white worm of his prick" (Malouf 23) and is "pale worm-like" crawling towards them (23). As argued by Archer-Lean, the Indigenous people believed the European community sent Gemmy to them as corruption and poison (10): a "niggling worm" (Malouf 161), the one who would cause persistent annoyance, discomfort, or anxiety. Thus, Gemmy as a niggling worm, an animal that sneaks its way into the digestive tracts of larger animals, may be interpreted as representative of the insidious corruption of the Indigenous world by the West and the settlers who came from there. The second takes place when Gemmy returns to the world of whites, where "all the events of his life [with Aborigines] had been curled up in him like an old-man carpet snake"

(21). This vivid comparison implies the limitation of the Western culture, imposed on Gemmy, which reflects Robert Pogue Harrison's argument about the Western aim of claiming possession of everything Indigenous, reducing it to either utility or dust (Harrison 121). The comparison of Gemmy's time with Indigenous people to a snake that is indigenous to Australia further links him to the fauna of the Indigenous land.

Consequently, the questions arise: If the settlers did not dispossess the Indigenous people's lands, would the Indigenous people be forced to live in the swamps to compete with their antagonists? If the settlers did not take the Indigenous people's lands, would the Indigenous people still resist by competing with the settler-imported biodiversity and culture, a competition that ended with the destruction of the Indigenous world? In *Remembering Babylon*, Indigenous people resist the settlers by retreating to the "Absolute Dark" along with the native animal and plant species. This is exemplified by the novel's rendering of eco-cosmological notions of resistance in which the ants become pests in the settler community that lay waste to the colonial agriculture and return to the swamp, their native place. Then, the novel portrays the settlers' neglect of the Indigenous people's environment by importing their European species, such as wolves, insects, and soils. This implies that the Indigenous people are considered by the settlers as hostile species, existing on the "other" side of the civilised world. Thus, both the Indigenous people and their world of Absolute Dark, in accordance with Harrison's insight, must be dominated, removed, and exterminated. The neglect of the Indigenous people and their environment by the European settlers reaches an extreme level with Gemmy's murder and the news of the "dispersal" and "massacre" of the Indigenous people and their Outback (Malouf 233). This is not to suggest that the Indigenous people had no right to resist their dispossession; it intends, rather, to explore the damaging results of the Europeans' dispossession by way of their neglect or total annihilation of the Indigenous world.

The topic of ecological competition, as treated in *Remembering Babylon*, could be the reason for the Indigenous people's suffering as their "food became scarcer and available in less and less variety" around the time of the setting of the two novels. Reynolds points to this scarcity as one of the consequences of the Indigenous people's retreat to isolated marginal stations close to the swamp margins of the Australian Outback, away from the colonists. Similarly, in accordance with the wilderness myth, Malouf shows how settlers believed that the swamp is the embodiment of everything savage and dreadful. Because of this, anything that comes from Indigenous swamps is treated by the settlers with xenophobic and racist behaviour, as Gemmy discovered. Likewise, the European-imported species further suppress any Indigenous species from the swamp; once again, the European settlers claim, invade, and wreck Indigenous environments. Gemmy's first appearance in the colonial settlement is described at the beginning of the novel as "brolga-like." The comparison is to the native bird, the brolga: the novel hints at the spirituality of the Indigenous world, which almost came as a shock to Gemmy. He "scurried forward on all fours, scrabbled among the beaks and claws, and with the maddened birds flying at his arms, and buffeting and pecking, scrambled for cover, then crammed the wet mass into his mouth. The taste of it, the strangeness, the familiarity, dizzied him" (Malouf 31). However, at the peak of their aggression towards Gemmy, the settlers harass the house of the McIvors, where Gemmy has stayed hidden, destroying fences and even slitting the throats of the geese in the garden of the house. This frenzied slaughter of the birds forces Gemmy to leave the settlement forever, all of which foreshadows the same violence endured by the native brolga to which Gemmy was compared. Furthermore, in an ironic twist, the furious settlers succumb to the kind of savagery they associate with Indigenous people anywhere. The only reason for this reckless behaviour is that Gemmy came from the Indigenous areas of the swamps. Similarly, the native Outback species coming from the same area also foreshadows the same unfair and harmful treatment

by the settlers. As stated above, the novel ends with the news of Gemmy's death in a massacre. The settlers' desire to banish the Indigenous people from their native habitat of the swamps signals the imminent extinction of the native species—the consequence of the settlers' failure to recognise Indigenous culture as meaningful in its own right.

The novel's epigraph, reflecting some of the main themes, emphasises the scarcity of Indigenous resources as a burning issue in postcolonial studies. Scarcity is either alluded to or openly referred to in many places in the book, not least in its epigraphs, one of which quotes the apocalyptic "Song Last Day." They are the lines of a poem by John Clare, which is quoted in the novel:

> Strange shapes and void afflict the soul
> And shadow to the eye
> A world on fire while smoke seas roll
> And lightnings rend the sky
> The moon shall be as blood the sun
> Black as a thunder cloud
> The stars shall turn to blue and dun
> And heaven by darkness bowed
> Shall make sun dark and give no day
> When stars like skys shall be
> When heaven and earth shall pass away
> Wilt thou Remember me

According to Moisander, violence done to both white settler society and the Indigenous world was a concern of Clare at the time of the Enlightenment and the French Revolution, leading him to be designated by many critics, such as Terry Gifford, as a post-pastoral, anti-pastoral and apocalyptic poet (8). Clare's "doomsday tone is as much linked to human death as to the

destruction of the planet" (Moisander 8). In addition, Clare's references to problems of the "soul" and "eye" are part of the comprehensive postcolonial critique voiced by Malouf, which laments the way in which the heart and soul of the Indigenous world were altered and suppressed by a foreign invasion.

First, the author makes it clear that the invasion of the Indigenous world, referenced by Malouf through Clare's post-pastoral verses, comes in the form of European domestication and pastoralism. This means it can be concealed under the guise of an idealised pastoral life leading to many damaging outcomes, such as the ecological xenophobia discussed above, which resulted in a hostile attitude towards the Indigenous world, eventually ending in the destruction of the latter. Second, the death of heaven and earth is meant by Malouf to be the end of the entire Australian world, with all life in it. This apocalyptic outcome is alluded to by the poem's mention of smoke, soot, and smog darkening the sky. The novel, therefore, sends an emphatic message about the brutal invasion and gradual extermination of the Indigenous world, under the guise of noble Western attempts to civilise, tame and harness the wilderness.

Remembering Babylon's ending with the post-pastoral, anti-pastoral and apocalyptic "Song Last Day" that announce or warn about the impending death of Indigenous world reflects Malouf's postcolonial criticism. Ironically, he ascribes to the settlers the very same attributes they often attach to Indigenous people, such as that they are isolated, dreadful, and threatening. It is as if the Western prejudice towards Indigenous people is turned against the settlers themselves. Based on this, the novel presents comprehensive and emphatic criticism of the wilderness myth. Malouf primarily criticises the frontier settlers who built the isolated settlements, yet his penetrating wit reaches to the very heart of the wilderness myth. In this sense one is to understand and interpret the novel-ending verses that spell the apocalyptic destination for Indigenous people and their world. This powerful message resonates with

DeLoughrey's insight, mentioned in the introduction to the thesis, of how the colonial construction of the wilderness myth transformed the Indigenous zones into post-apocalyptic, wasted environments.

Conclusion of Chapter Two

This chapter explored the themes of colonisation, Indigenous dispossession and marginalisation, and colonial treatment of Indigenous people and their more-than-human environments in the novels *Voss* (1957) and *Remembering Babylon* (1993). Both novels lay a particular emphasis on the socio-spiritual connection between the Indigenous people and their land. Colonial invasions of the Indigenous land, however, irreparably damaged this connection. Notwithstanding this devastating imperial impact, however, *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* depict a variety of Indigenous defence mechanisms for the purpose of safekeeping their peoples' cultural identity.

Through the vivid tapestry of narrative plot, the novels bring the land to life to show that the Indigenous land will staunchly defend the Indigenous people's culture against the encroachment of colonial forces. The literary narratives illuminate the indomitable spirit of Indigenous peoples striving to navigate the tumultuous tides of colonialism while safeguarding their connections to the land that shaped their existence. In doing so, these novels not only serve as moving records of historical struggles but also as poignant expressions of resilience in the face of cultural upheaval. Further, symbolism such as the actions of the land itself (and the weather and animals that impact it) and the characterisation of settler characters as hubristic help to develop the novels' methods, which ultimately reveal the dangers of letting the myth of the wilderness as a "pristine," safe space go unchallenged.

Both *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* demonstrate the flaws of the wilderness myth. The full extent of the criticism is visible only through postcolonial analysis. Both novels provide radical, Indigenous alternatives to the dualist rational mindset typically characterising

Western colonists. Critics might usefully turn to postcolonial fiction. Under the guise of powerful symbolic images, these works of fiction are invaluable, and have the potential to catalyse meaningful explorations and challenges to the myth of the wilderness.

Chapter Three: Ecofeminism and the Wilderness Myth in Canadian Feminist Writings

Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003) are both novels that defy genre boundaries and offer a riveting exploration of the wilderness myth, unveiling its harmful effects on women within patriarchal settler ideologies. *Away* blends historical fiction and magical realism, while *Oryx and Crake* is speculative fiction that draws on the adventure tale; notwithstanding these generic differences, they both warn of past and future perils while highlighting the myth's danger to women, often entangled with the subjugation of Indigenous communities.

This chapter begins with an examination of theoretical perspectives on ecofeminism and the wilderness myth. While chapters one and two largely drew upon the literature review provided in the introduction, this chapter weaves in additional theories that have been established in ecofeminism. Socialist feminist and ecofeminist scholars reject dualistic thinking, asserting that embracing feminine embodiment opens up fresh perspectives on the traditional body/mind divide. They argue for a more integrated understanding that transcends binary distinctions. This chapter will consider these arguments alongside postcolonial theories that demonstrate that patriarchal violence harms women as well as Indigenous people and the environment.

The chapter then reads *Away* and *Oryx and Crake* from a postcolonial perspective. A particular focus is the way that the portrayal of the myth of the wilderness in these two novels enables a critique of patriarchal power. But the chapter also argues that in *Away* especially, this critique inadvertently reinforces rather than resists settlerist ideology. Despite its ecofeminist perspective and attempts to align the female voice within the novels with that of Indigenous cultures, the novel risks rehearsing the wilderness myth and thus overwriting Indigenous voices and inscriptions on the land. The postcolonial critique set in motion in the chapter helps to ameliorate this problem. It is crucial to critique ecofeminism when it thus

reveals its Eurocentric/Western-centric tendencies; this chapter will therefore draw largely from postcolonial scholars like DeLoughrey who likewise observe the issues that arise when ecofeminism uncritically accepts Western settler ideologies. When analysing *Oryx and Crake,* the chapter asserts that this novel brings Indigeneity into the plot in interesting ways that reveal how much the myth of the wilderness harms both women and Indigenous people. Both novels do mainly represent Indigenous people as secondary or supporting characters in their novels; the novels focus on white characters (Mary/Moira and Snowman, respectively), rather than Indigenous characters. However, although Indigenous people are not treated in *Oryx and Crake* as main characters it nevertheless takes a fascinating and convincing postcolonial perspective by reimagining Western visions of the wilderness, portraying it not as pastoral or peaceful, but as a dystopian landscape. .The chapter puts these novels in conversation with each other to consider varied ecofeminist depictions of the wilderness and the harm done by the myths that surround it.

Both *Away* and *Oryx and Crake* provide fertile ground for considering literary representations of the wilderness myth, and for a number of reasons. First, both demonstrate the ways women, in particular, are harmed by patriarchal settler ideologies. The characters of Mary/Moira and Oryx from *Away* and *Oryx and Crake* respectively face circumstances created by long legacies of settlers who harm the environment and displace or subjugate Indigenous people. Second, the novels both defy genre boundaries. *Away* is a work of historical fiction melded with a work of magical realism. The way it relates both plausible historical events and mythological stories demonstrates how important myths are for humans' perceptions of reality. This connects to my argument that the wilderness myth shapes cultural norms. *Oryx and Crake* is a work of dystopian, speculative fiction that references works of adventure and historical fiction—most notably, Daniel Defoe's colonialist fable, *Robinson Crusoe*, first published in 1719. So while *Away* draws on myths from the past, *Oryx and*

Crake warns of the dangers of the future. Both novels highlight dangers of the wilderness myth, especially in the ways the myth harms women. At the same time, whilst settler women in the novels are at times aligned with the subjugation of Indigenous people, they are inadvertently rendered complicit in Indigenous people's displacement.

Away tells the story of three generations of women in a Canadian family and their connection to the land. The novel explores themes of loss, grief, and the connection between humans and nature. Through its ecocritical perspective, Urquhart's novel critiques patriarchal power through the representation of the wilderness. *Away* not only explores the demise of the matriarchy by exploring the survival of Irish European settlers who settled in Canada and tried to form new identities; it also proposes solutions by examining pre-patriarchal history, comparing the status of women in Ireland before and after the domination of the patriarchy. The female characters of Urquhart's fiction return to the pre-patriarchal "otherworld" (their matriarchal past), when the more-than-human world flourished. Then they journey back to the real world of the patriarchal present to re-establish their matriarchal community separate from men, whilst trying to save the more-than-human world from devastation. *Away* vividly portrays the delicate balancing act required to maintain a connection to one's past in a new homeland, while also raising postcolonial inquiries into the influence of nationalism. Further, the novel serves as an allegorical commentary on the degradation of the environment brought about by contemporary capitalist society, demonstrating the adaptability of historical fiction as a genre and simultaneously critiquing the myth of the wilderness. However, as I hope to show, *Away*, in its endeavour to challenge the patriarchal order, risks overwriting Indigenous knowledge systems and culture, and in the process institutes similar power structures the novel sets out to challenge.

Oryx and Crake is a dystopian novel that explores the consequences of unchecked technological development and the destruction of the natural world. The novel also engages

with issues of gender and power, particularly through the character of Crake and his vision of a genderless world devoid of emotion. The chapter analyses how Atwood's novel exposes patriarchal power through its representation of the relationship between notions of wilderness and technology. *Oryx and Crake* shares many of the feminist standpoints present in *Away.* Margaret Atwood (b. 1939), one of Canada's most renowned and impactful modern writers, has written many works of fiction concerning questions of national identity and nationalist mythology. She is among the first contemporary Canadian novelists to advocate the women-nature connection from a feminist and environmentalist standpoint (Academique 33). In this novel, the female characters do not hold any positions of power or influence. They are treated by men according to the tenets of the patriarchy. Here, men are empowered by exploiting women's procreative capacity. In this way, they strive to maintain their dominant and oppressive masculine values. Portraying the destruction of the more-than-human world in such a way, Atwood challenges both patriarchy and capitalism by showing how, always already intertwined, they wreck the land, women's lives, and Indigenous lives. The interaction of patriarchy and capitalism perpetuates pre-existing gender discrimination, as men, who already hold power in pre-capitalist society, find it easier to amass wealth within capitalism by maintaining continuous domination and control over women's labor. In *Oryx and Crake,* the fictional humans known as the Crakers serve as analogies for Indigenous people. The novel should therefore be read with regard to the wilderness myth. While up until this point, the thesis has read the wilderness as a hostile but also fundamentally natural, sublime space, Atwood treats the wilderness as a dystopia that is only reached when humans destroy civilisation.

Several critics have commented upon the critique of the wilderness myth in these two novels. For example, examining *Away*, Wang noticed clear manifestations of the wilderness myth, reflected in the "onomastic takeover of territory" along with the "territorial claim and

geographical transformation" (Wang 188). The wilderness myth perpetuates colonialist discourses on the colonisation of land: that tapping into the natural resources of the wilderness can serve to improve civilisation or make it a non-hostile territory and inhabitable. Kylie Crane reaches a similar conclusion in her commentary on *Oryx and Crake*. Crane states: "I read *Oryx and Crake* as postulating the end of a pure nature in the sense that is often associated with wilderness" (157). This chapter develops Crane's reading of the novel, which "does not seek so much to claim that wilderness is the best (or worst) understanding of nature, but instead to trace the ways in which it has been influential to the conception of nature in the novel, and also the ways in which it is subverted or deconstructed" (158). Both novels treat the wilderness as influential to the understanding of nature and reflect the ways the mythical power of the wilderness that struggles to oppose the colonial power of patriarchy. As I will go on to argue, *Away* sometimes fails overtly to challenge a Nature/Culture binary, while *Oryx and Crake* shows the devastating consequences of failing to challenge the wilderness myth.

Canadian literature often houses specific symbols, as Atwood herself argues. In *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature,* Atwood claims that

> the central symbol for Canada—and this is based on numerous instances of its occurrence in both English-and French-Canadian literature—is undoubtedly Survival, *la Survivance*….it is a multifaceted and adaptable idea. For early explorers and settlers, it meant bare survival in the face of 'hostile' elements and/or natives: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive. (16)

Atwood's passage rightly notes the centrality of the theme of survival to much Canadian literature. This applies to many texts analysed in Chapter One; for example, Moodie's *Roughing it in the Bush,* which treats survival as a central theme. Atwood also argues that there is a tension in Canadian literature between treating Nature as Mother Nature, a

benevolent female figure, and a violent destroyer of men (23). Survival and femininity are linked in many Canadian texts, which struggle to imagine a world of gender equality and ecological harmony.

Atwood's emphasis upon "bare survival in the face of 'hostile' elements and/or natives: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive" (16) helps foreground this chapter's concern with ecofeminist tendencies in fiction. This passage echoes a central tenet of the myth of the wilderness that was developed by mainly male settlers, writers, and philosophers: that facing the wilderness and settling it requires dominating the dangers, including the "elements and/or natives." The myth of the wilderness often paints "natives" as an unwanted part of Canada, mostly treating them as a source of danger for the true Canadians—the settlers. This also demonstrates that many Canadian writers occasionally struggle to imagine a future in which Indigenous life is welcomed into a positive relationship between human Culture and the ecology of Nature. This chapter will thus probe the persistence of a Culture/Nature or Human/Nature dualism in these two women's literary works, taking a postcolonial stance to expand upon ecofeminist critiques.

Section 1: Literature Review of Ecofeminist Criticism on the Wilderness Myth

Storytellers, theorists, social activists, and more have long contended with metaphors linking women's bodies to the natural world. The term "Mother Earth" has existed for centuries. Starhawk, a Wiccan priestess, social activist, and psychotherapist from the United States, argues that women realise that human beings are one with nonhuman beings in a way that men cannot perceive (Tong 252). Starhawk clarifies this connection in her verse:

Out of the bone, ash

Out of the ash, pain

Out of the pain, the swelling

Out of the swelling, the opening

Out of the opening, the labor

Out of the labor, the birth

Out of the birth,

the turning wheel the turning tide. (from "The Last Story" 86)

Starhawk represents birth, life, childbirth, and death as cyclical to support her argument that women have an inherent connection to the natural world. Starhawk's argument threatens to generalise all women; nevertheless, metaphors of women's connection to the natural world are useful points of inquiry as studying them permits deeper questioning of the ways patriarchy and settler destruction of the natural world are linked.

Many socialist feminist and ecofeminist scholars challenge dualistic thinking, arguing that feminine embodiment allows new ways of thinking about body/mind dualisms. Women's capacity to create a connection between humans and the more-than-human, ecofeminists like Iris Marion Young (163) have argued, is due to the absence, in matriarchal societies, of the desire to dominate. Young, an American political theorist and socialist feminist, argued that feminine embodiment challenges dualisms and borders. The experience of pregnancy, according to Young, undoes the assumption of a single subject, as well as the commonly accepted borders of inside/outside: "I experience my insides as the space of another, yet my own body" (163). Young challenges the notion of a singular, isolated subject, asserting that the act of pregnancy disrupts the established boundaries of internal and external. The maternal body becomes a conduit for a dual existence, both within and beyond oneself. This blurring of traditional borders reflects the transformative journey of motherhood, which extends far beyond the confines of individuality. Similarly, Carol Bigwood demonstrates how pregnancy and the mothering body defy the commonly held dichotomy self/other: "[a] woman is inhabited by a growing sentience that is not truly other to herself" (59). Resonating with Young, Bigwood's assertion that a woman becomes inhabited by a "growing sentience

that is not truly other to herself" encapsulates the notion that the life burgeoning within a woman's body is not an entirely distinct entity but rather an extension of her own being. This challenges the dichotomy of self and other by highlighting the symbiotic relationship between the pregnant body and the nascent life it nurtures. Such arguments collectively unveil a philosophical exploration of the maternal experience. They underscore how pregnancy transcends conventional boundaries, ushering in a state where the lines between self and other blur, and where the maternal body becomes a focal point of complex interconnectedness.

The Australian ecofeminist Val Plumwood explores the concept of "anti-dualism" as a principle of ecofeminism. She argues that "dualisms are not just freefloating systems of ideas; they are closely associated with domination and accumulation, and are their major cultural expressions and justifications" (42). To support her argument, Plumwood describes several of these dualisms, such as Culture/Nature, male/female, master/slave, reason/emotion and reason/nature. She then goes on to explain how these dualisms contain certain characteristics that give power to the "superior" masculine coloniser rather than the "inferior" colonised woman or the more-than-human environments. One of these dualisms, which is of primary concern in this work, is the self/other dynamic that supports the rationality of the Western and capitalist domination over nature. The self/other dualism, Plumwood argues, causes an instrumentalism in contrast to "a non-hierarchical concept of difference that implies recognising the other as a centre of needs, value and striving on its own account, a being whose ends and needs are independent of the self and to be respected" (Plumwood 60).

Breaking down a Self/Other dualism is important for ecocritical challenges to conceptions of the wilderness, for too often patriarchal settlers frame settler as "Self" and Nature as "Other," thereby failing to recognise the interconnectedness between them. Moreover, the persecuted other, after being the centre of needs of the self, starts seeking its needs independently of the self by which it has been persecuted and threatened. Building on

this, Plumwood describes the notion of the relational self, developed by Greta Gaard (14), and significantly connects the concept to ecofeminism. Gaard notes that the relational self is based on the processes of socialisation in society in which:

> children are socialized to construct a specific sense of self based on their gender: whereas boys observe a difference between themselves and their mothers, girls observe a continuity. Boys learn to base their fundamental sense of self on this perception of difference and separation (the autonomous self) whereas girls learn to base their self-identity on the perception of continuity and their relationships to others (the relational self). (14)

The relational self will create a non-instrumentalism in which, Lam argues, the "needs and interests of humans and nonhumans are not separated but interdependent. The needs and interests of self and others are interrelated and simultaneously taken into account" (Lam 303). Plumwood suggests that the Relational Self "treats[s] at least the general goals of the other's wellbeing, ends or telos as among our own [self's] primary ends" (155). This concept is grounded in the understanding of the dangers of dualist thinking in Western thought.

Thus, social theorists and ecofeminists show how women's bodily experiences in matriarchal systems can be thought to challenge a self/other dualism. When this self/other dualism is challenged, the relational self creates a non-instrumentalist situation in which the needs and interests of humans (self) and nature (other) are connected and interdependent. Such anti-dualist thinking inflects both *Away* and *Oryx and Crake*. Both depict white characters who find new or renewed relationships with the natural world despite the threats of patriarchy, which poisons and wrecks the earth.

Allegories of colonisation are crucial for these novelists, as I will next discuss. In *Allegories of the Anthropocene*, DeLoughrey focuses on the relationship between literature and an ecologically unsustainable modern world-system. She asks, "What kinds of narratives

help us navigate an ecological crisis that is understood as local and planetary, as historical and anticipatory" (3)? As the primary focus of her strategy, she contends that allegory is a "revitalised reinvented" (4) mode of representation that is best positioned to describe this "moment of planetary climate crisis" (5). DeLoughrey "pursues 'allegoric tendency' in literary and visual representations of the Anthropocene rather than a singular rigid form that is applied across contexts" (9). While many representations of the Anthropocene suggest a singular mode of examination—a colonial mode—DeLoughrey reminds us that there are diverse ways of analysing the Anthropocene and that ecological crises appear different from different perspectives. In addition, she accuses the environmental humanities of reinforcing the historical privilege accorded to the Global North and a corresponding omission of the Global South's peoples, voices, writings and artistic expressions. The inability to engage in dialogue about "postcolonial and Indigenous perspectives has shaped Anthropocene discourse to claim the *novelty* of crisis rather than being attentive to the historical *continuity* of dispossession and disaster caused by empire" (2). DeLoughrey adds that "turning to Indigenous and postcolonial island writers and artists, we can see that the catastrophic ruptures to social and ecological systems have already been experienced through the violent processes of empire" (7). We see this in the novels discussed in this chapter, for the destruction of Indigenous names, culture, and land is crucial to much of their plots.

The modern Anthropocene is a shift away from the imperial idea of wilderness, which is a zone outside the human, because it makes manifest that the more-than-human environments are deeply entangled in modernity. In her third chapter, "Globalization, and States of Waste", DeLoughrey examines the fictions of several Caribbean artists and writers, discussing how "the key concepts of twentieth-century globalization such as scale, technology, politics, speed, urbanization, modernity, militarism, and time/space compression are materialized in the stratigraphic record of the Anthropocene" (99). There has been an

explosion of plastic and chemical waste in our oceans, largely thanks to a shift towards a disposable economy. Analysing the allegory of waste, DeLoughrey indicates that nature has been anthropomorphised by the by-products of human activity, principally globalised capitalism (101). This chimes with Plumwood's "hyper-separation" structure, which she deploys to lay bare Western dualisms, and which is the structure of dominance that drives western binaries. It elevates one aspect of the binary while demoting the other to an inferior status. Key to the argument set out in this thesis, as Deborah Rose points out, Plumwood's term demonstrates "how nature was backgrounded vis-a-vis the human, and thus relegated to a role that allowed usefulness without requiring moral considerability" (Rose 94). As we can see from DeLoughrey, the state of human absence from nature does not rescue nature from human activities: supposedly untouched, "pristine" nature becomes the rubbish dump of civilisation's by-products. DeLoughrey's ecocritical deconstruction of "the wilderness" resists the human/nature binary logic imposed within Western thought. The myth of the wilderness portrays the wilderness as a scary, threatening place beyond the borders of civilisation and as a place of exile. "Wilderness" is thus not a "natural" or "material" space; rather, it is an ideology or discourse that is the product of the Nature/Society binary.

Ecofeminists challenge the ways patriarchy controls and harms both women and the natural world. In understanding the human/nature dynamic, which is always already exploitative in DeLoughrey's analysis of wilderness discourse, it is important to recognise that the settlers' use of this construction indicates their position within the patriarchal systems by which they ruled the Indigenous peoples' communities, leading to the Indigenous peoples being oppressed and othered. Vance argues that the management of "pristine" nature in the settler societies of America serves dominance-based political structures rather than environmentalist ideals. The "pristine nature programme" is founded on the rationalist principle of "nature controlling" (Vance 61). Vance then moves on to say that through the

fundamental principles of ecofeminism, which "hold that the patriarchal domination of women runs parallel to the patriarchal domination of nature" (Warren, qtd in Vance 63), there is a tendency to believe that constructions of the wilderness occur as forms of patriarchal dominance:

> committed to natural diversity and biocentrism some environmental activists may be, the ultimate authority to create wilderness is in the hands of Congress and the President--the same people who have willingly authorized nuclear waste dumps, destruction of old-growth forests, diversion and damming of rivers, draining of wetlands, and countless other environmental abuses. Either this is inconsistency on a massive scale, or else--as I argue--wilderness protection is somehow an integral part of the overall scheme of domination. Ecofeminists have been largely silent on the issue of wilderness in the United States, preferring to focus on problems that appear more immediate and pressing. Insofar as we have considered wilderness at all, it has usually been in the context of the so-called Third World, where wilderness set-asides have displaced traditional populations or have severely impeded basic sustenance activities, usually those carried on by women. (Vance 64)

Vance is influenced by Plumwood, who challenges the dualist thinking used to justify colonisation. Human/nature dualism, Plumwood argues, causes what she calls an instrumentalism that "completes the colonialist project by objectifying the Other as a means to the centre's ends. Wilderness exists not for itself but for the recreational, scientific, life support, aesthetic, and spiritual needs of humans" (Vance 68). Thus, Plumwood's criticism of instrumentalism replicates DeLoughrey's depiction of nature as becoming the rubbish dump (other) of Westerners' activity. Plumwood proposes substituting the human/nature exploitive dynamic with an ecofeminist ecological self or non-instrumentalism, whereby the human is characterised by caregiving roles and interdependence with nature. In addition, she contends

that this interdependence, with its non-instrumentalism by which the women's bodily experiences exist, can rebuild and recreate respect and care in human interactions with more-than-human environments and "pristine" nature (Vance 69).

Ecofeminists challenge the idea that the domination of the land is to make the othered Nature an entity by which human life can flourish. DeLoughrey's productive postcolonial reading of the wilderness idea indicates that using nature as the rubbish dump of civilisation's by-products – primarily a consequence of capitalism – threatens the stability of human society. This resonates with Rebecca Raglon's argument that more-than-human environments are marked and harmed by human intervention, not by human presence. Raglon deploys the term "post-natural wilderness" in which more-than-human environments and nature generally become wastelands. This strategy "looks at reserves (often toxic) from which the human presence has been excluded" (Raglon 4). According to Raglon, "a final transformation of a contemporary understanding of 'wilderness' comes with the final category of the post-natural wilderness reserve […,] dangerous areas where humans are excluded. And it is human exclusion from these areas that makes them wilderness reserves" (4). Anne McClintock argues in a broader sense that colonial ideologies have particular "threshold zones" that turn into "abject zones" (27). These zones and the abjected, colonised peoples inhabiting them are vigorously controlled because abject peoples are those that industrial colonialism, with its roots in capitalism, refuses but still cannot live without (McClintock 27).

Many of the ecocritical scholars cited above thus attribute a space of sanctuary to nature, which, in turn, they show is nurtured by the relational social systems and caregiving cherished by women and Indigenous peoples. Within Indigenous communities, Nature is perceived as a spiritual entity. This harmonious relationship between humankind and nature has been hindered by colonialism (in general) and Western dualist thought of human/nature division (in particular) associated with it on which the wilderness concept has been

established. Colonial interference has transformed nature's spiritual energy into physical exhaustion; non-mechanised modes of human/nature interactions have been replaced by colonialist notions of modernity by which Nature is harnessed as resource.

Thus, postcolonial critics such as DeLoughrey rightly argue that patriarchy has harmed both the natural world and women, because patriarchal ideals of domination are ultimately harmful to natural as well as human life. Whilst the novels I analyse in this chapter largely reflect ecofeminist philosophies, as I argue in this chapter, taking a postcolonial reading to these two novels sheds light upon the reasons it continues to be crucial to challenge the pervasive myth of the wilderness, for this myth especially harms women due to its foundations in patriarchal capitalism.

Section 2: Matriarchy as a Completely Eradicated and Eliminated Societal System in Jane Urquhart's *Away*

Jane Urquhart's historical fiction *Away* (1993) is an enthralling transgenerational story, written in poetic language. It revolves around a young Irish mother named Mary, who is temporarily taken "away" by the fairies, returns prior to the great Irish famine, then goes "away" again after emigrating and the birth of her second child. The essence of this novel is accurately summed up by Kulperger: "*Away* maps out the abstract dematerialisation of mothers within a widespread patriarchal cult of white matriarchy, and offers a form of feminist and transcultural nostalgia, staged as an ethical remembrance that resists patriarchal imperialism" (Kulperger 229).

The focus of the initial section of this chapter is the radical spiritual feminist perspective portrayed in *Away*. The novel seeks to renew matriarchal communities in order to restore peaceful equilibrium with the more-than-human world. I show how the feminist perspective presented in the novel challenges the myth of the wilderness created by British imperialism to justify the occupation of the Canadian Indigenous lands. Exploring the female

settler characters in *Away* reveals how the British colonisers used this myth. The female settlers migrate from Ireland to Canada, where they seek to renew the matriarchal identity of their motherland. They want to implement changes that eradicate the identity of the more-than-human world. However, these settlers are challenged by the Indigenous people, who condemn their actions towards the Indigenous natural world of Canada. Whereas the settlers justify their reforms as necessary for stopping their own oppression at the hands of others, the Indigenous people experience it as an attack on their culture. This conflict depicts what Kylie Crane calls "colonizing the wilderness texts":

> In most colonizing the wilderness texts, it will be possible to discern a tendency to place such rights under erasure: Wilderness continues to exist, although it may already be inhabited by peoples. The logic implied by colonization constructs these peoples as the uncivilized, the barbaric. As the inclusion of the word "colonizing" in the name of this type indicates, these texts suggest not a meeting of peoples but rather the imposition of a particular world order onto another. (26)

Because the women of the novel flee Ireland to Canada, in many ways the novel is a work of "refugee" literature, for it demonstrates that some settlers are marginalised as they are escaping a precarious situation. Janet M. Wilson discusses refugee writing, arguing that a novel about refugees can be more than a mere "testimonial genre of autobiographical writing associated with the refugee narrative" and that "recognition of the literary scale and merit of…stories of resistance and survival argues for their emphatic political impact in the public sphere as they open up new horizons of expectation for readers" ("Feats of Survival," 105). Wilson's analysis of refugee novels applies to *Away,* for the novel uses narratives of resistance and survival to bring new attention to the struggles of refugees who, in this novel, are also nonetheless settlers inhabiting foreign lands.

The novel delves into the intricate narrative of Canadian settler identity and Indigenous women's spiritual connections to the land. This literary work embraces a blend of historical fiction and magical realism, as magic becomes an aspect of the novel's realism because it goes unquestioned alongside references to real historical moments. As Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris observe, "magic realism is a mode suited to exploring — and transgressing — boundaries, whether the boundaries are ontological, political, geographical, or generic. Magical realism often facilitates the fusion, or coexistence, of possible worlds, spaces, systems that would be irreconcilable in other modes of fiction" (5-6). Magic realism can be used "to foreground, as do the more blatantly dialogic and metafictional historical novels, the relationship between literary discourse and the writing of history" (Wyile 4). In *Away* Urquhart raises crucial questions "about realism in the historical novel and about the tension between historical consciousness, popular belief, and political and cultural nationalism" (Wyile 4).

While the novel authentically portrays aspects of life in both Ireland and Canada, it seamlessly integrates elements of enchantment and mysticism. Within its pages, Urquhart skillfully addresses the complexities of colonisation, shedding light on how easily those who were once colonised can themselves become colonisers. The novel employs a sophisticated narrative structure that illustrates the interplay between past and present, highlighting the dynamic interactions between Indigenous communities and newcomers. It also artfully weaves together the threads of Celtic mythology and Indigenous lore, inviting readers to explore the multifaceted concept of "home" and what it means to be "away." While historical novels typically thrive on a foundation of detailed, realistic, and socio-political contexts, *Away* includes extraordinary, magical occurrences, consistently marked by a supernatural presence. The realism of the novel is therefore supplemented by magic elements that are treated as real.

Magic realism usefully tests readers' understanding of reality and boundaries between truth and fiction; this makes the novel especially fit for including and questioning myths such as the wilderness myth. The novel includes lyrical prose and poetic structure. The narrative juxtaposes the conventional history of colonisation with the poetic, magical, and recurring elements often associated with mythology. One way it includes mythology is by anchoring itself within an oral narrative framework. As Esther O'Malley approaches the end of her life, her final gesture involves the act of "imbuing form into one hundred and forty years" (21) through the recollection of the family tale passed down to her by her grandmother, Eileen. Esther's retelling of the narrative centers around the stories of her great-grandmother Mary and her grandmother Eileen. Oral histories are noted for contributing to a culture's mythology; many Indigenous Canadian myths are often recounted orally ("Native American Oral Traditions"). Thus, the novel's form contributes to its connection to myths and their significance.

Concepts such as settler women's experiences of national identity are also developed—and more particularly in this case, settler women's understandings of Canadian national identity. Nationalism is a significant topic in the Canadian feminist novels of the late 19th and the early 20th centuries. In his essay, "Postcolonial Theory and the 'Settler' Subject," Alan Lawson described the white settlers as "the very type of the non-unified subject and the very distillation of colonial power; the place where the operations of colonial power as negotiation are most intensely visible" (Lawson 29). According to Lawson, settlers replicate the identity of the imperial coloniser by bringing their own ideology, beliefs, and understandings to the new community in a foreign country (29). Upon relocating to a foreign nation, settlers commonly assimilate the ideological tenets and cultural paradigms espoused by their colonial forebears who originally settled the land. Their endeavours manifest as a form of replication, characterised by mimicry. While the settlers fall short of absolute

embodiment of the original colonisers' identity, their actions, like that of their forebears, still harm the local ecological landscape and Indigenous societal fabric.

Lawson cites cases in which the settler struggles to find personal identity (29); for example, this occurs when former colonies develop national identities to differentiate themselves from imperial Europe. The Indigenous subject's identity is in this case again eradicated, "especially when national identity is rooted in a constructed and performed affinity with the natural landscape, and also rooted in a generalised portrayal of the land as empty and ready for settlement" (Pinard 10). Indeed, as the analysis of the numerous landscape narratives in this thesis shows, national settler identity is rooted in the settlers' own understanding of "pristine" nature and an isolated, natural landscape, which they (imperiously) impose upon the Indigenous people. In this sense, settlers' national identity "replaces the indigenous and in doing so conceals its participation in colonisation" (Lawson 30).

Female settlers manage especially complicated power dynamics as they first escape, then sometimes mimic male authority. Lawson argues that female settlers were subjected to authority in their homeland; therefore, they mimic this same authority from which they escaped:

> If we put that double inscription of authority and authenticity together with the notion that the cultures of the Second World are both colonising and colonised, we can see that there are always two kinds of authority and always two kinds of authenticity that the settler subject is con/signed to desire and disavow. The settler subject is signed, then, in a language of authority and in a language of resistance. The settler subject enunciates the authority that is in colonial discourse on behalf of the imperial enterprise that he—and sometimes she—represents. The settler subject represents, but

> also mimics, the authentic imperial culture from which he—and, more problematically, she—is separated. (35)

This passage delves into analysis of the complex dynamics within the context of female settlers and their national identity. The assertion that settlers' identification with their new national identity serves to "replace" the Indigenous presence while simultaneously concealing their complicity in the colonisation process offers a critical lens through which to examine the layered intricacies of identity and power. Female settlers, who themselves might have experienced subjugation in their previous homeland, assume a role of authority upon arriving in their new environment. This paradoxical shift from being subjected to authority to wielding it can be seen as an attempt to transcend their previous subordinate status.

This interplay reflects the complexities of the female settler's position as both representative and imitator of the colonial forces at play. By weaving these intricate threads together, Lawson articulates the dual roles that female settlers occupy within the colonial framework. They become purveyors of the colonial discourse and carriers of the culture they have distanced themselves from. This multifaceted engagement with authority and authenticity deepens our understanding of the psychological and social dynamics of settler colonialism, highlighting the complex interplay of power and identity within the colonial context.

The Canadian settler women portrayed in *Away* are involved in nation-building missionary work. Through their suffrage campaigns, as Joan Sangster argues, they "fought for new definitions of citizenship" (Sangster 257). For instance, Sangster explains how Canadian feminists "often embraced nationalist narratives, looking for pioneers, heroines, and role models" (256). In so doing, they often "assumed a popular form, such as the many accounts of intrepid white women explorers and travellers" (256). Lawson emphasises that immigrant white women are "colonial subjects", since they lived in white colonial homelands

and were subjected to control. Settler women are both settlers and subjects; they often accept the male coloniser's representation of the Indigenous world. They struggled to form a new national identity and to balance their old subjugation and their new position of power as settlers in a new land.

As stated above, Mary is a female settler in *Away* who comes to Canada to attempt to renew her matriarchal identity that had been subjugated by the patriarchy in her homeland. Numerous names of Indigenous localities in the foreign country (such as Canada) were changed from Indigenous to Irish; for example, Chuncall Lake is now called "Moira Lake." (177). Women such as Mary aim to bring themselves in harmony with the matriarchal identity; so, they establish a relation between women and nature, which is separate from the authority of the oppressors. This "suggests a return to [their homeland] roots" (Robitaillie 168), which reflects what Crane described as the imposition of a particular white root onto the soil. The newly formed national identity of the female settlers is rooted in their old homeland, while simultaneously they force their own ideas onto the Indigenous people. The settlement of Canada meets no major opposition in the novel, even though the Irish people threaten to displace the Indigenous people purely because of their presence in Canada. Exodus Crow and his people also unexplainably vanish from the plot, and from the characters' memories; he is appropriately named "Exodus" because he is never intended to be a permanent character. The novel thus incidentally erases Indigenous life by replacing it with Irish heritage. *Away* portrays female settlers who are free from the patriarchal domination of their homeland, whilst at the same time reproduce colonising behaviour in imposing their own culture on the foreign Indigenous land they have come to inhabit. What we discover in the novel is a tension for characters such as Mary, who wants to connect to her own Celtic past and appreciate the Indigenous myths she learns about in Canada and yet is participating in a system of colonisation that overtly harms Indigenous people.

The novel includes a double setting, introducing first Rathlin Island, on the northern side of Ireland, and ending in Ontario, Canada. One day, as she was walking by a seashore, Mary encounters a dying sailor whom she believes to have come from another land. In a mysterious way, this causes a change of her name: "She recognised, immediately, that he came from an otherworld island, assumed that he had emerged from the water to look for her, and knew that her name had changed, in an instant, from Mary to Moira" (Urquhart 8). This passage demonstrates the magical realist qualities of the novel, for of course it is highly implausible that a dying man would have come from a different "otherworld" land. From this moment, Mary's personality changes and she falls in love. She "looked at her own live arms, her long legs, and then at the still limbs of the young man. Her heart was full to bursting. Everything about him was hers now, all hers forever" (Urquhart 15). She spends a great deal of time wandering along the coastline, speaking to no one but herself. Upon seeing her gone for a while, her community considers her lost for good. At this point, the narrative outlines the haven of the female characters of three generations: Mary, Eileen, and the latter's granddaughter, Esther. From the narrator's perspective, these characters are considered "away." The author employs this word to tackle the issues of belonging and identity.

Later, however, Mary is brought back to resume her life, and here the novel shows the connection to the natural world that Mary discovers during her pregnancies. She soon marries a schoolteacher called Brian, with whom she has her first child, Liam. Mary's return marks an evident change in her personality, making her intimately attached to Ireland's Celtic past. This is reflected in her pregnancy, which shows how the bodily experience of motherhood (pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding) foreshadows a woman's connection to the more-than-human world. "The presence of the child in her body tied her to the earth, the cottage, the water; she knitted small jackets and sewed small shirts, the shape of her thoughts changing with the shape of her torso" (Urquhart 35). The phrase "tied her to the earth"

suggests a profound and almost spiritual connection between the expectant mother and her environment. The child growing inside her symbolises her rootedness to the natural world, emphasising the physical and emotional ties that bind her to the earth. “The shape of her thoughts changing with the shape of her torso” underscores how pregnancy is not only a physical transformation but also a mental and emotional one. As her body changes to accommodate the growing child, her thoughts, priorities, and perspectives also shift. This reflects the adaptability and resilience of the human experience during significant life events. Overall, the passage captures the intricate interplay between the physical, emotional, and environmental aspects of pregnancy. It portrays the expectant mother’s sense of connection to the world around her and her willingness to adapt to the changes that come with impending motherhood. Due to the terrible famine, the family emigrates to Canada, where they have their second child, Eileen. Mary again accepts her bodily changes during the pregnancy with great excitement: “That summer, during the final months of her pregnancy, Mary experienced an attack of energy so intense, a surge of such pleasurable strength, that she began to savour industry. Various new tools made their way to their cabin and became intimate companions—extensions of her new, vibrant body” (Urquhart 109). This emphasis on her “surge of” “pleasurable strength” makes clear that pregnancy, for Mary, is a greater blessing than it is a trial. The passage continues: “She loved her largeness, her presence filling every space she occupied. Even the forest seemed to be comfortable with her confidence as she strode among its trees or searched the bark of maples for the lungwort that she used instead of yeast to make her bread rise” (Urquhart 109). Mary takes pride in her physical condition during her pregnancy, reveling in her larger size and the way it fills the spaces she occupies. This suggests a sense of self-assuredness and contentment with her body. Mary’s newfound confidence extends to her interactions with the natural world. She feels at ease in the forest,

whether she's walking among the trees or foraging for ingredients for her bread. This connection with nature reflects her harmonious relationship with her surroundings.

Being "spirited away" to the otherworld is a Celtic myth known since the Middle Ages; this myth is crucial for the next stages of the novel's plot. In her book *Otherworlds: Fantasy and History in Medieval Literature,* Aisling Byrne studies the use of this myth in the Celtic literature of medieval Britain and Ireland. According to Byrne, those who are "spirited away" to the otherworld gain access to what has been forbidden, recover what has been destroyed, and understand what has been fabricated in the real world. "The otherworld account holds up a mirror to the narrative world and introduces an extra perspective from which to view reality" (Byrne 10). The otherworld, therefore, provides a new perspective by which one understands the hidden truths of reality, allowing one to "return to [the real world] with a greater degree of understanding" (Byrne 11). The otherworld also "allows for a wide range of behaviours that sit uneasily in the actual world" (Byrne 30). Byrne claims that in the otherworld one may engage freely in behaviours that are otherwise forbidden in the real world, such as sexual freedom (Byrne 30). She goes on to explain how the otherworld myth may serve as a writer's lens for treating themes such as gender and authority. For example, "it is common to find otherworld narratives concerned with the interest and challenges of difference" between males and females (31).

By escaping to the otherworld, Mary challenges the patriarchal society described in the novel as a paradisiacal landscape. In this instance, the novel reproduces the paradise discourse analysed in Sharae Deckard's research on the relationship between notions of paradise and capitalist exploitation, including colonisation and empire. In *Paradise Discourse, Imperialism, and Globalization: Exploiting Eden,* Deckard demonstrates how paradise begins as a topos that motivates European exploration and colonisation.
The concept of paradise transforms into an ideological myth that rationalizes imperial

exploitation; subsequently, it evolves into a literary motif employed by modern writers to scrutinize neocolonial circumstances in the era of globalization. She defines "paradise discourse" as discourse that lends itself to "the destructive dynamics of plantation, tourism, and global capital" (10), but gestures to how "the utopian dimensions of the paradise myth might be reclaimed to promote cultural resistance" (11). Deckard contends that the paradise myth is the result of a value-laden discussion regarding earnings, workforce, and the manipulation of funds. The discussion, concerning both social and environmental contexts, emerges in reaction to changing environments and rhetorical viewpoints. Byrne similarly notes that in the otherworld "spaces often feature beautiful gardens, fountains, fruitful trees, refined bird song, a beautiful palace, or a pavilion" (33). Based on this perspective, Mary may be seen as wishing to visit the otherworld to understand that when women are not subjugated, the more-than-human world flourishes. Then she goes back to her real world to rectify female subjugation, which leads to the recovery of the damaged landscape.

Away portrays the history of an oppressive life in the native Irish communities on Rathlin Island around 1840, during the infamous potato famine. According to Peter Gray's article, "Was the Great Irish Famine a Colonial Famine?", the potato famine, which was the worst in Europe throughout the nineteenth century, was more than just a natural calamity. Its hardships were made worse by the British government's insufficient relief efforts. Britain's response to the famine was largely based on a system of workhouses, which were not designed to deal with a catastrophe of such a scale. The Great Famine created a profound and lasting suspicion of the British Empire. Many Irish believed that the famine was made much worse by the actions of the British colonisers. Those communities, embodied by Mary's Celtic family and tribe in Urquhart's *Away*, reflect how British colonisation negatively impacts agricultural productivity to the extent that "Ireland reaches its lowest ebb and is almost destroyed by famine and disease" (Birch 117).

The devastating famine depicted in *Away* implies a past state of the lands when they were green, productive, and fruitful. With this description, Urquhart praises the Celtic natives' treatment of the more-than-human world and criticises the exploitation of the native more-than-human world by colonial, and especially patriarchal, systems of power, which had almost led to the complete destruction of this world. Urquhart mourns the destruction of the past Celtic cultures and their treatment of the land, criticising colonialism. The novel "recurrently refers to the 'curse of the mines' (12), a 'desecration of landscape for profit'" (Robitaille, 156), pointing at the colonial domination over Irish land for financial gain. The novel alludes to the desecration of landscape by observing how the Irish "lost their potatoes" (Urquhart 78). The schoolmaster, Brian, recognises that "they have some corn but there is hardship among them," and "Mary [also] sensed that the soil was inert; asleep in a way that it never had been before" (Urquhart 59, 81). The devastation is shown in images of "the leaves [that] turn black [with a] rotten smell", the "harvest [that] was partly ruined" and "non-existent" in the present time of the novel (Urquhart 65). This language focuses on ruin, rot, and sleep, suggesting that not only is the landscape polluted, it is also barren, as its reproductive powers have waned.

Away represents the opposite of this environmental destruction through the appearance of Mary's daemon-lover, the dead sailor, "who comes to her [and takes her to] the otherworld of Ireland's green heroic past" (Birch 117). According to Birch, Mary visits the otherworld because she needs "to survive the hardships of her life which do little to fulfil her dreamy romantic nature" (117). Robitaille underscores the "curse of mines," which symbolises the colonial destruction of the landscape by machines. This leads to "the curse of awayness" for nearly all the female protagonists in *Away.* Thus, Mary's escape to the otherworld is a journey to the native past of green Ireland. She is thus linked to Indigeneity through the novel, which suggests that settler women should turn to Indigenous knowledge of

a mythological past to escape the horrors of modern environmental destruction. Even though Mary is a settler, she also has roots in a non-colonising culture; the same can be said about many settlers, for if you go far enough back in time, all colonising nations eventually seem like settled or colonised nations. The novel sends Mary to the otherworld so that she can reconnect to a pre-colonial world; that does not, however, mean that she becomes an immediate ally to the Indigenous people of Canada.

The journey instantly changes Mary's name "to Moira" (Urquhart 8), which "is not so much a change of identity than a return to her Irish roots, through what could be deemed as Urquhart's postcolonialism […] Mary's other name suggests a return to her roots in reaction against colonialism" (Robitaille 168). Three questions arise here: what is the relationship between Mary's survival of colonialism and her return to the otherworld of Ireland's green past? What is the significance of Mary's name changing to Moira? And what is the importance of the name Moira in the novel? In an interview, Urquhart stated that the name has particular significance in the book: "The word Moira was not just another name for one of my characters, but […] it was a word that had resonance, and that was working on several levels. It had a profound meaning in an ancient classical language, and it had a meaning in the new landscape, the landscape of the new world" (Ferri 151). The name "Moira" may point to the knowledge that Mary will bring back from the otherworld and safekeep. In classical Greek, Moira is one of the mother goddesses who determine human destinies, with the ability to change a bad fate into a good fate. As Birch points out, Moira is "goddess as creator and preserver" (116). Therefore, this ancient name indicates that Mary has not only acquired knowledge from a mother goddess, but perhaps even a power to change the destiny of her people and their land. After listing all the O'Malley female characters at the beginning of the novel, Urquhart emphasises the spiritual connection between the family name and its fate: "That is the way it was for the women of this family. It was part of their destiny" (3).

The first chapter of *Away* describes the natives of Rathlin Island and their affliction by the potato famine. By becoming Moira, Mary has been given a task to change her people's misfortune by restoring the green environment of the Celtic past. Anne Compton argues that "Mary is the mythic figure of renewal […]. The past is not returned to; it is recreated" (139). Therefore, her "name-change [signifies] the metamorphosis" of landscape (136). Given that Moira is a creator goddess, the landscape flourishes. This is because "cultures [such as the Celtic] that worshipped the Goddess instead of God, cultures in which the feminine was valued, were peaceful cultures in which human connections to nonhuman nature was understood" (Warren 23). Acquiring the new name allows Mary to remind her people of Ireland's green past when they believed in the Goddess. Birch states that Urquhart's "novel *Away* exemplifies an Irish female peasant consciousness who rediscovers mythic Ireland and seeks to preserve such myth" (115). In Moira's image, women can create life and make it flourish, symbolising the state of life characterised by belief in a goddess. The name Moira implies how "women's relationship to nature is privileged over men's relationship to nature, according to spiritual ecofeminists" (Tong 252). *Away* describes what the feminine relationship to nature looks like. The goddess Moira is protective and supportive, in contrast to the greedy and exploitative Crake in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, who is notably male and is discussed in the third section of this chapter. Mary/Moira creates a relationship in which human beings are one with the more-than-human world. Mary's deep relationship with nature empowers her to experience humanity and spirituality simultaneously. Her trip to the otherworld leads her to understand the meaning of Ireland's green Celtic past. Implying that the destiny of the Irish is in women's hands, Urquhart also illustrates that the Celtic past depends on the work and labour (both literal and referring to maternal labour) of women. The novel thus links Irish identity to feminine identity while underscoring the desire of female settlers to find a new home in a new land.

Mary's experience of renewal is understood by the colonised Irish natives. To learn more about her revelatory experience, her husband and Father Quinn, a priest, spend many days talking about it. At one point, Brian asks Father Quinn the following question: "Can't you understand that there is a kind of beauty that is universal and cannot be caused by association? Singular beauty […]. You associate it with nothing" (Urquhart 51). The priest answers: "That is heresy!", and goes on to explain that beauty, understood as such, "is sensuality and selfish gratification!" (Urquhart 51). This conversation about Mary's experience contains implicit postcolonial criticism. Singular beauty indicates the colonial striving to perfection, during which the more-than-human-world is harmed. This could be viewed as the human self's pursuit of its own interests at the expense of the other (namely, the more-than-human-world), without any care. Father Quinn understands that Mary's experience includes an associated beauty. Such beauty implies an intimate relationship with nature (on a divine, spiritual level) and has nothing to do with the materialist goals of civilisation. This form of beauty is reflected in Mary's otherworldly rediscovery of the relation with the green Celtic past. Brian and Father Quinn understand Mary as a woman who "raises [their] consciousness to the fears which [they] hold for the natural environment and which [they] are in danger of losing" (Birch 119).

Later, Brian and Father Quinn attempt to bring Mary back to the real world so that she could share the knowledge from the otherworld. In this part of the novel, the word *ruined* is frequently used to describe the miserable state of landscape due to colonial maltreatment. For example, the "harvest was ruined" (Urquhart 51) is used to describe the relation of the colonised and oppressed Irish natives and nature. Their harvest will not recover from ruin if they disregard Mary's rediscovery of the relation with her Irish past. Brian, who embodies the reactions of the natives toward Mary's situation, spends days and nights contemplating the remains of the destroyed or decayed landscapes on Rathlin Island. Ann Laura Stoler discusses

the destructive repercussions of colonial expansion both abroad and at home in her introduction to *Imperial Debris*. She examines colonialism's aftermath, focusing on the ruins left behind at both the centre and the periphery. These ruins refer to "privileged sites of reflection—of pensive rumination; portrayed as enchanted, desolate spaces, [...] ruins provide a favoured image of a vanished past, what is beyond repair and in decay, thrown into aesthetic relief by nature's tangled growth" (Stoler 9). For contemporary inhabitants of these colonised places, the ruins are not only "monumental 'leftovers' or relics", but also "what people are left with", the "aftershocks of imperial assault" (Stoler 9). These "aftershocks" are both material ruins and "the social afterlife of structures, sensibilities, and things." In other words, they are both tangible and intangible entities residing in "the corroded hollows of landscapes, in the gutted infrastructures of segregated cityscapes and in the microecologies of matter and mind" (Stoler 9). In *Away*, Brian starts to realise that such ruin will lead to his demise and that of his people. He suddenly sees himself as part of the ruined environment: "The rain began. He stood utterly still under the downpour with his head bowed and his fists clenched. There was nothing for it. He was a ruined man" (Urquhart 55). The cure for this state, he believes, depends on Mary's rediscovery of the relation with the Celtic Irish past. Therefore, reacting against the colonial destruction of the Irish landscape, Brian decides that "he would […] marry her" (Urquhart 55). Through this marriage, Urquhart marks the Irish people's attempt to bring Mary back into their ordinary lives. While trying to convince Mary to marry him, Brian confides a crucial sentiment to her: "'Without me you would starve and freeze and your stories would remain untold'" (Urquhart 56). These stories refer to Mary's rediscovery of the green Celtic past in which women's bodily experiences of childbirth created an interconnection between humans and nature. Brian wants this to be told to their countrymen. He knows that if Mary remains in the otherworld, her people will not attain this precious knowledge, while their reunion will enable them to learn from her stories.

The British colonisers also learned about Mary's experience. Their representative, Osbert, an established landlord in Ireland, undergoes a kind of awakening under the influence of Mary's "awayness." He admits that "'it's a shame" that they "can't record her experiences'" (Urquhart 46). In the narrative, Mary's relationship with her Anglo-Irish landlord, Osbert Sedgewick, unfolds as a complex interplay between nature, exploitation, and personal growth. Osbert, as a fervent naturalist and a landlord, initially symbolises a well-intentioned yet exploitative connection with his tenants and a lack of awareness regarding the Irish peasantry's struggles. Osbert's encounter with Mary becomes haunting, prompting him to abandon his exploitative collecting. Motivated by Mary's profound impact, Osbert intervenes in the family's destiny, ensuring their inclusion in the list of those emigrating to Canada during the famine. He recognizes a unique "light" in Mary that must be preserved. Mary's influence leaves an indelible mark on Osbert, to the extent that he eventually follows the family to Canada. Through these encounters, the narrative weaves together the personal and historical, blending the harsh reality of the famine's sociopolitical backdrop with the mystical and archetypal elements of Mary's journey, portraying a magical realism inherent in the storytelling.

After his meeting with Mary, Osbert spends three months thinking about what she had to share. Then he decides to insert Mary's name and those of her family among the list of the Irish emigrants to North America. At this point, Urquhart provokes many profound questions regarding Osbert's action. "'There's this light in her, you see,'" Osbert said to his brother about Mary, "'and it must not be put out. I can't explain it, but I know that it must not go out, must be kept, somehow, though I'm not certain at all that it will shine as well across the ocean as it does here. Nevertheless,'" he added assertively, "'I will not stand by and see it fade'" (Urquhart 122).

Understanding the relationship between Mary and Osbert suggests the complex reasons behind Irish immigration. The main hints are provided in their only conversation, which occurs while Osbert is capturing research specimens:

> "I will capture some specimens for you [Mary]," announced Osbert, generosity rising in him like a tide, "and you may take them home with you and watch them there [...] for a while." The woman did not answer but rose, instead, to her feet. Then she shook her head. "Why would I take this world apart so that it could never be again?" she asked, looking down at Osbert at the tidepool. "If I could go into this world I would go and come away again and leave it all undisturbed—the small caves, the beautiful creatures. I would take none of that away with me." (Urquhart 91)

The question here is why would Osbert, after this conversation, insist on forcing Mary's emigration to Canada? His insistence is even more puzzling if we consider his brother's disagreement about her decision to emigrate. His brother Granville "was becoming annoyed. 'Why not the whole country? Why [Mary's husband] in particular? Besides, he is a good tenant, we should keep him'" (Urquhart 121).

To analyse what leads Osbert to send Mary to North America, attention should be given to his lengthy contemplation of Mary's use of the word *undisturbed*. Mary informs Osbert that, in order to preserve the beautiful creatures and sea specimens from extinction, one should keep them undisturbed. This affects Osbert, who stops capturing the beautiful creatures for almost three months, which annoys his brother Granville. Osbert replies to Granville that he understands from Mary's word that "everything in the tidepools was connected, and that to remove life from them would be like tearing gold out of the earth" (Urquhart 92). This statement is uttered following Mary's return from the otherworld and after she articulates her understanding of the Celtic past, when the Celtic women cared for

and rescued many creatures and species. It was a culture that would never prioritise human interests over the more-than-human world's values, in contrast to Osbert's world that encourages killing and dissecting creatures for the purpose of scientific research. The tidepools are described as a connected place. Thus, Osbert understands that Mary wants to cast the past Celtic world as tidepools in which the interconnectedness between humans and the more-than-human world depends on mutual care, with humans giving nature what it needs and vice versa. The essential factor in Mary's fostering the culture of interconnectedness between the human world (*self*) and the more-than-human world (*other*) is her pregnancy. Creating new life enabled her to overcome the self-other dichotomy, where the self is remote from the other. Furthermore, after the conversation with Mary, Osbert realises that colonialism, particularly its patriarchal systems, has disturbed the balance between the human world and the more-than-human world, transforming humans into self-centred exploiters. The phrase "tearing gold out of the earth" (Urquhart 92) shows Osbert's realisation that the colonial machine represented by him and his kin has ruined the earth, which is no longer productive and fruitful. When Mary challenges Osbert's collection of natural specimens from tidal pools, he is visibly affected by her words; they form a friendship that challenges simplistic ways of analysing the tension between wanting to possess land and the desire to leave the land be.

Osbert thus learns from Mary's rediscovery of the Celtic feminine culture and its significance. Mary is then sent off to Canada, as Birch argues, "to preserve the Celtic culture for Osbert Sedgewick, the eccentric Irish laird who finances the O'Malley's voyage to the New World, and senses Mary's mystic mission" (Birch 117). Eventually, Osbert makes up his mind to further pursue his goal of Irish expansion. His remark that Mary has a "'subtle light'" which should not be allowed to fade indicates his desire to exploit in some way the green Celtic past that she rediscovered. And for this reason, he eventually convinces her to

emigrate. In this sense, *Away* portrays Irish immigration to North America as a continued survival for Irish people that depends on the depletion of the more-than-human world's resources in Canada.

After Mary and her family move to Canada, *Away* describes the development of the wilderness in Canada by Mary and her fellow Irish settlers Before emigrating, during their discussion about seaweed, Mary criticises Osbert for collecting sea creatures for research that only serves human interests and that will cause the collapse of the more-than-human world. When Osbert sees that she has a large quantity of seaweed in her hand, he asks her, "'Why *do* you have such a large quantity?'" (Urquhart 86). This is because she knows "that this man had been blind to them, her people" and their past culture. She explains that the Celtic women "had gathered seaweed along the coast" many centuries ago in specific seasons in order "to make the plants grow properly" (Urquhart 86). Mary shows him a completely different purpose for collecting sea specimens. Still, he fails to grasp the deep meaning of her reply. So, he takes the specimens home "to observe and study [...] and to draw" for the sake of the research. On the other hand, Mary and her people safeguard the proper growth and nutrition of plants and soil. She and her husband Brian claim that they know "how to gather seaweed like the women on Rathlin" (Urquhart 71). This indicates that the Celtic women of the past are the source of this protective treatment of nature.

Mary voices her argument in the manner of the Indigenous peoples in Canada, following her arrival in this country. This provides a foundation for the proper care of soils and plants. Mary's son Liam remembers his mother's teachings when seeking "the forward momentum of change and growth" (Urquhart 209). He recalls that "it was she who had told him how a field could be created, over a period of years, by the patient application of seaweed on dry rock" (Urquhart 204). Mary's daughter Eileen also feels "comfortable, almost happy, occupied with [...] gathering" seaweed as the Celtic women had done in the past.

Eileen stands “at the edges of limestone shelves [where] seaweed moved in the water like long green hair” (Urquhart 281). Comparing the seaweed to long green hair is one of Urquhart’s emphatic analogies in the novel. The colour green symbolises nature, life, and growth—in this case, the growth of nature in Canada. This example is emblematic of how Mary, before finding eternal rest, “plants” her way of serving both the human world and the more-than-human world. She knows that life flourishes when soil and plants are deeply cared for. Mary spreads “spirits in earth, trees, and water” (Birch 119) to foster the spiritual connection between Canadian nature and humans. This “mythological Celtic landscape is what Mary takes with her and leaves behind when she departs for the New World” (Wang 185). It is also what she leaves behind after her death in Canada.

Celtic women’s relationship with nature fosters the growth of Canada’s landscapes and the natural world is contrasted with the actions of men in the novel. After his father’s death, Liam becomes a landlord and businessman, owning the lands cultivated by Irish families. He then sells these lands to a gold prospector, who happens to be Osbert, who followed the Irish communities he had sent to Canada. This context illustrates that Osbert did not give up his career after his conversation with Mary in Ireland. Still, he realised that she “was the only one of them that had the real poetry [...] because she was ‘away’” (Urquhart 152). Osbert continues, “I never heard any of her poems but I knew she had them. She showed me a tidepool once and I never forgot. She changed something in me. I wasn’t in love with her but she changed something in me” (Urquhart 152). Osbert retells his initial exploitation in Ireland, how he took over the green lands that had been cultivated by Celtic women and used them for his own colonial gain. Then he simply expanded his business in North America by recolonising the new lands to satisfy his never-ending imperialist greed. Osbert’s arrival agitates Eileen, who “spent the night in the tree, unwilling to enter the cabin where the man who had owned her parents sat drinking, believing that should she make the

concession to return she might, somehow, declare herself to be his tenant" (Urquhart 218, 220). Thus, Eileen, a woman, is distraught by the behavior of Osbert, a man. The novel thus highlights such moments in which men are tied to a colonial mission while settler women are focused on Celtic myth from the past and yearn to avoid colonial attitudes. Though Osbert grew as a character and person thanks to his encounter with Mary at the tide pools, he still works as a landlord as women in the novel are the primary catalysts of anti-colonial behavior and practice.

A. The Irish Natives and the Canadian Indigenous People: New Conflicts

The development of lands in Canada in the novel by the immigrant Celtic women led by Mary catalysed notions of a Canadian femininity closely bound up with nationalist mythology. In the novel, we see that colonisation is subtly hidden behind overt nationality that replaces Indigenous culture. This echoes what Lawson suggests: "The national is what replaces the indigenous and in doing so conceals its participation in colonisation" (Lawson 35). Mary and Eileen become settler-nationalists who strive to make Canada their new home. Mary's identification with the past Celtic culture shows how she, as a female settler, unwittingly assumes a coloniser's role that erases Canada's Indigenous identities. Her mystical emotion of interconnectedness—the essential part of her Celtic identity—now becomes an idea that is forced upon the native land and culture of Canada.

The novel incorporates Indigenous beliefs and magical plot elements that emphasise Mary's understanding of the power possessed by the natural landscape. In her conversation with Osbert, Mary said that "there had been places so barren that fields had to be created over time, out of living materials: dung and seaweed and the spines of recently eaten fish. It was the grass that grew in the sea that made the best soil" (Urquhart 81). Vivid imagery conveys the myths and magics believed about the land, which is represented as having magical qualities in the novel. Mary draws upon this vivid imagery while she criticises Osbert for

caring only about his own gain and not the land. Similarly, Mary notices that the Indigenous people of Canada use sea specimens for their own interest, causing damage to nature. While living close to a lake, Mary notices that the Indigenous man Exodus and his people avoid fishing there, due to the rumours surrounding the lake. According to them, the lake was home to violent "flesh-eating fish" that attack anyone who tries to capture them (Urquhart 177). However, Exodus convinces Mary that this is not true and that the fish are peaceful. He explains that the locals invented the rumour so that it would become "custom to fish elsewhere" (Urquhart 177). Mary makes a point that the surplus of fish in the lake is not good for nature. She insists on taking advantage of the fish spines. "She did not fear the fish of the lake and had somehow managed to catch them," (Urquhart 178) ignoring all the rumours she heard about the dangers in those lakes. Thus, the novel includes a moment when Mary dismisses the Indigenous' people's beliefs, suggesting that Mary sees her knowledge of nature as superior to Indigenous knowledge.

The novel's characterisations of Exodus and Mary further underlines a tense relationship between Celtic settlers and Indigenous Canadians. Although they share a history of being colonised, collaboration between the Celtic settlers and the Indigenous Canadians is portrayed as fraught. Exodus then watches how Mary makes "a small hut of sticks and pine boughs, outside of which there were the remains of some fish bones and fish heads" (Urquhart 178). This action suggests that she wants the fish to be treated and used differently in the new environment. Hence, she would like to teach the people that fish bones can be used to nurture the fields, which resembles her criticism of Osbert. She seems to enjoy that Chuncall Lake's name was changed to Moira Lake, replacing the "indigenous legend with her Celtic culture" (Wang 187). Exodus and Mary are close friends who show great respect for each others' belief systems. For example, Mary confides in Exodus about her people's history: "After [Mary] had been in the forest for several winters she told [Exodus] dark

things; about the time […] of the lost language and the empty villages and how the people who once sang were now silent, how the people who once danced were now still" (184). Exodus expresses his discontent with the Irish immigrants' renaming their lake after their Celtic goddess. His rejection of the new name is also the rejection of the Celtic identity that appears to be replacing the Indigenous Canadian cultural identity.

This renaming foreshadows what Kylie Crane calls "colonising the wilderness." The wilderness is already inhabited. The settlers justify their actions with a desire to rescue the wilderness from—in their view–the Indigenous people's mistreatment. In Urquhart's *Away,* colonising occurs when the Indigenous identity is replaced with the Celtic cultural identity in the renaming of the lake. The immigrant wave of the Irish settlers gradually leads to the imposition of the Celtic culture on the local Indigenous land, its history, and people. Exodus' objection to the renaming of the lake implies that, here, nature was already imprinted by the cultural practices of the Indigenous tribes such as the Iroquois and Algonquins, who first inhabited the land. The remnants of native Canadian culture are visible when the Irish immigrants first arrived at the new land and saw "men in narrow boats on the lake dressed in the skins of animals, their hair long like a woman's." Liam is surprised that the land is not uninhabited, as they had heard. Brian describes the Indigenous people a "company of hunters from a village somewhere at the western end of the lake. They are called Algonquins, or sometimes Ojibway" (Urquhart 151). The Irish immigrants begin to perceive the Indigenous Canadian wilderness as mistreated and uncivilised. They inhabit "a region where nothing at all was constructed and everything was engaged in haphazard growth," existing "under the outstretched arms of massive fir trees," "not being able to determine the direction from which they had come" (Urquhart 149). The Irish settlers begin to impose their own Celtic culture onto the native people and their environment. This illustrates a specific brand of colonial dominance which occurs via non-violent methods.

B. Representations of the Wilderness Myth in Jane Urquhart's *Away*

Urquhart's *Away* represents attempts to revive the feminine identity oppressed by Osbert. His actions rely primarily on the Western understanding of the wilderness myth. Therefore, he completely disregards the Indigenous spirit of the local population. Likewise, Brian seems to recognise that the Indigenous peoples are imagined to be, as scholar Terry Goldie phrases it, "the timeless people of the timeless land" (Goldie 162). Instructing his Indigenous students, Brian emphasises "the influence of landscape" and "the stories of the old sorrows," concluding that the Indigenous peoples have been "divested of power, far from their native soil" (Urquhart 167). For him, Indigenous land is not an isolated zone with stories of its own past but is intimately connected to every other land and its native inhabitants. He understands his own role as a settler, so he teaches his students the inevitable fate of their landscape under colonial control, including loss of cultural identity and dispossession from the land. A clear example of the ways Indigenous culture is erased is the renaming of Chuncall Lake to Moira Lake, an act which forcefully supplants the Indigenous culture of Canada with a Celtic cultural identity.

This attack on Indigenous Canadian culture symbolises the colonisation of culture on a greater scale. It reflects the colonisers' ecological visions that are embedded within the wilderness myth. Another example of this is Liam's control of the lands, summed up by Wang: "If the name of Moira indicates Mary's onomastic takeover of territory, this haunting landscape launches Liam's project of territorial claim and geographical transformation" (188). More than any other character in the novel, Liam is responsible for altering the Indigenous lands of Canada. His actions directly reflect the lessons of his mother, Mary, who taught him how to take care of the fields. The Canadian Shield dampens his hopes of transforming the environment via agriculture, forcing him to abandon his first farmstead. But his travels through the Ontario forests cure him of his fear of the natural world and strengthen

his desire to cultivate things (Urquhart 197). Haunting scenery near the Great Lake compels Liam to purchase the Seaman's Inn, built by the Indigenous locals. Shortly thereafter he begins his goal of claiming the territory and transforming the landscape by floating the inn 25 miles to his newly purchased farm, which he named Loughbreeze Beach (Urquhart 263). He then evicts all skunks from the farm and succeeds in transforming "half-Ojibway Molly" into his "bloodline" (Urquhart 266). Like the Irish lords of his parents, Liam revives the colonial spirit by recreating "the pastoral landscape of the British Isles," thereby reshaping the physical features of the occupied zone (Urquhart 135). The Indigenous inhabitants have either been driven out or assimilated in this process. Liam's lands are eventually bought by Osbert. This act further emphasises a colonialist dynamic in the novel that leads to Indigenous people's displacement.

The magic elements that Urquhart brings into the novel tend to negatively impact the settlers. Literary scholar Herb Wyile argues that "To a degree *Away* provides…historical verisimilitude and context, but the narrative is also filled with remarkable, magical episodes and events, and is marked throughout by the presence of the supernatural" (4). Urquhart uses magical episodes to threaten the settlers who try to own the land and displace Indigenous people. After Osbert's purchase, the novel describes a landscape where "everything about it was to be new, clear; a landscape distanced by an ocean from the zones of terror. A sweeping territory, free of wounds, belonging to all, owned by no one" (Urquhart 337–8). Upon seeing such a utopic landscape, Eileen remembers "a dialogue with a blue-black bird" who told her "there were no lords of the land" (Urquhart 338). As Wyile asserts, "Here Celtic mythology, in which the Sidhe often take the form of birds, merges with the trickster tradition so important in Ojibway and other native cultures, giving the novel a conspicuous dash of the syncretism that is such an important feature of Latin American magic realism" (16). Thus, a convergence of cultural elements not only adds depth to the magical realist aspects of the

narrative but also underscores the novel's exploration of diverse cultural traditions and their interplay within the story. The dialogue occurs after Osbert's arrival that makes Eileen angry and sad. Her remembering this dialogue is in direct opposition to Osbert's actions in Canada, including his purchase of Liam's lands. The messages delivered in a magical, mythical way from both land and crow assert that "there were no lords of the land" and thereby challenge settler ideologies.

Indigenous people are displaced and oppressed in the novel, especially by Liam and other men who claim land for themselves. Eileen cultivates more-than-human relationships with birds and Indigenous people, including Old Crane, to delve into a magical power tied to an old mythology. Urquhart crafts a narrative that is not only richly lyrical and steeped in historical detail but also emphasises the significance of retaining an awareness of the past, as well as an appreciation for the mythic patterns through which history is transmitted to us. The novel brings the magical and supernatural in as part of its realism, thereby giving credence to Indigenous myth and belief systems in ways that settler thinking usually fails to do. The novel challenges the notion that history and myth are easily distinguishable; moreover, through its exploration of immigration, particularly the contrasting experiences of Eileen and Liam, *Away* vividly portrays the delicate balancing act required to maintain a connection to one's past in a new homeland, while also raising postcolonial inquiries into migration, identity, power dynamics, and the influence of nationalism. Furthermore, the novel serves as an allegorical commentary on contemporary capitalist society's environmental degradation, showcasing the potency and adaptability of historical fiction as a genre and simultaneously criticising the myth of the wilderness.

Section III: Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

Oryx and Crake (2003) takes place in an imaginary, post-apocalyptic community in which there is an "absence of official time. Nobody nowhere knows what time it is" (Atwood

3). The loss of time—a system of organising capital production—signals to the readers that this is a dystopian world beyond modern science.

In the novel, Snowman (also known as Jimmy, in flashbacks to the time before the virus destroyed most of humanity) recounts some events of his life before he arrived in the dystopian world of the Crakers. Describing these events, he blames the capitalist abuse of technological advancements for the current state of the society. We eventually learn that Crake, Snowman/Jimmy's friend, created the genetically modified "Crakers" to be perfect, unblemished versions of humans. Their creation is also linked to the global pandemic that ultimately destroys humanity. Crake releases a deadly virus to kill the human population in order to allow his Crakers to flourish, making sure that he and Jimmy are immune to this virus. Jimmy tries to kill Crake but accidentally kills an unconscious Oryx. Jimmy then shoots Crake and becomes "Snowman," determined to fulfil his promise to Oryx and Crake that he would take care of the Crakers. The novel thus begins with Snowman realising that his watch no longer works; his last remaining fragment of technology is broken, and so too are his ties to his past self, including his old name. The novel depicts a realm in which women's values have become suppressed by scientific research and capitalism and escapism for the greater good of society. The ruination of the world depicted by Atwood is the result of the capitalist greed of those who controlled it. The source of their power came from the scientific corporations that they owned. Their operations are not used to benefit the lives of the inhabitants, but to enhance colonial control. This, in turn, enabled them to exploit whatever they could from the environment and its oppressed subjects. Exploitation of the natural energy and reproduction of marginalised women has a single purpose: to fuel technological growth. Such exploitative actions maximise profits, resulting in a slavish and oppressed society with little hope of restoration.

The novel presents readers with a unique challenge as it blurs the boundaries of time, blurring the usual distinctions between fictional settings and the contemporary real world. It belongs to the genre of dystopian speculative fiction, which takes existing elements and boldly projects them into the future, drawing from ongoing cultural, political, or scientific developments to imagine potentially catastrophic consequences. Speculative fiction delves into the repercussions of emerging technologies, serving as a cautionary tale set in a futuristic context that evokes both a sense of recognition and an eerie strangeness within the depicted worlds. Speculative fiction is especially capable of criticising the wilderness myth because it presents a twist on reality that tells us what might happen if colonisers continue down a dangerous path. *Oryx and Crake* makes clear that if humans continue to insist on the dominance of humans over nature, then the consequences will be catastrophic, especially for women and Indigenous people (including Indigenous women) and the land where humans make their homes.

Atwood's novel draws on enough realism to frighten readers into realising the true harm of real technologies, even though the novel is speculative fiction. For example, the novel resonates with the warnings of ecofeminist Vandana Shiva. Shiva writes of the dangers of patriarchy and capitalism for nature and women, saying, "the scientific revolution was to have rolled back the boundaries of ignorance" (47). Instead, as Shiva argues "a tradition of knowledge that has viewed nature and women only as a resource, and nature's limits as constraints, has created unprecedented man-made ignorance — an ignorance which is becoming a new source of threat to life on this planet" (48). Atwood's novel takes up this idea of "ignorance" that threatens life on the planet. Shiva goes on to criticise scientists who alter seeds until they can no longer grow without human planting and nurturing. She argues: "colonization of the seed reflects the patterns of colonization of women's bodies. Profits and power become intimately linked to invasion into all biological organisms" (Shiva 47-48). In

Atwood's novel, as will be argued, women's bodies, like Oryx's, are treated as objects to be colonised, and viruses ("biological organisms") take over the world. In view of this, *Oryx and Crake* shows how the dystopian society rests upon the capitalists' use of modern technologies for sustaining resources.

The novel uses an analogy to connect to a famous adventure novel from the eighteenth century: *Robinson Crusoe.* The first pages of the novel *Oryx and Crake* depict the protagonist, Snowman, sitting in a tree on a beach contemplating "the natives"—in this case the posthuman innocents known as Crakers (5, 41). This is a parallel to the opening of *Robinson Crusoe.* As Heather J. Hicks points out, "Later, in scene after scene, the Crakers are depicted in language that satirizes the racist conception of indigenous peoples who were colonized across the globe" (27). The novel's opening words about the absence of official time also invokes the Robinson Crusoe myth in which time is key. Robinson Crusoe manages his time by carving out his identity as a modern (colonising) and self-made subject. By alluding to *Robinson Crusoe,* Atwood layers her dystopian speculative fiction with works of literature that celebrated the adventures of colonisers. The novel thereby lays bare the colonising forces at work in the wilderness myth, exposing it as discourse.

At the beginning of the novel, the readers are introduced to the protagonist Snowman, who appears as the last human in the dystopian society. We learn: "nobody nowhere knows what time it is" (3). The words "nobody" and "nowhere" emphatically reflect Snowman's isolation after the apocalypse. We learn that Snowman is perched on a tree, and describes the sunrise: "a rosy, deadly glow. Strange how that colour still seems tender" (5). "Still" indicates that some disaster has occurred, as does the juxtaposition of "tender" with "deadly." His immediate surroundings lack in food and water, revealing the annihilation of the more-than-human world. The whole dystopian world presented in the novel is virtually dehumanised. Only the Crakers accompany Snowman. They are human-like creatures who possess artificial

intelligence, but they cannot communicate with Snowman or express emotions as humans would.

The character of Crake reflects the capitalist-imperialist mindset when he notices that the proliferation of humans, who consumed animals and plants, might threaten the energy and reproduction of the more-than-human world's resources. Seeing that the resources will diminish due to the rise in population, Crake employs his commercial savvy to generate profit, which is reflected in his statement that "*homo sapiens* doesn't seem able to cut himself off at the supply end" (Atwood 139). Using science and technology, he protects these supply lines, ensuring their sustained profitability as commercial goods. One invention, called ChickieNobs, enhances the growth of chickens leading to "a three-week improvement on the most efficient low-light, high-density chicken farming operations so far devised" (Atwood 203). This technology enables exploiting the more-than-human world's resources, commodifying them. Therefore, the resources can no longer be regrown naturally, culminating ultimately in the destruction of the more-than-human world.

A. Representations of the Wilderness Myth in Margret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*

In Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, both women and the more-than-human world are exploited, as the novel takes a clear stance against the settler ideologies, including the myth of the wilderness, that treat people and nature as mere resources to be used for the sake of scientific "progress." Examining some Caribbean narratives, DeLoughrey explores the self-other dynamic, concluding that the "self" of patriarchal society is civilisation, whereas the nature is "other" (*Allegories of the Anthropocene*, 18). In this sense, nature is detached from civilisation. This relation is reflected in Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*, where the self-other dualism is reflected in the destruction of the more-than-human world and the subsequent creation of the dystopian world. In other words, the creators of such a world see nature as fuel for firing up the industrial machinery of the capitalist system. The relationship between this

form of exploitation and the wilderness myth is evident if we keep in mind that the civilisation-nature dualism is inherent in the latter.

The dystopian world of *Oryx and Crake* echoes the idea of "instrumentalism," by which capitalists use nature as an instrument for increasing profit and enhancing civilisation. Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* represents this relation in the separation of the civilised areas and the biotechnological companies (the "Compounds") from the "pleeblands," the diseased and poor areas. Furthermore, this spatial separation in the novel resonates with DeLoughrey's depiction of Indigenous nature as a landfill site for the by-products of capitalist civilisation. Jimmy's pre-dystopian world features the separation of the Compounds and the pleeblands. This separation conjures up the images of dualism common in both utopian and dystopian fiction, such as the dualism of civilisation and nature (Martín 175). Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* is a vividly dystopian portrayal of the results of such dualism.

The pleeblands are represented through Jimmy's interactions with these areas. His first encounter with them is during his visit to his school. He initially sees them through the window of a bullet train. When he first visits the pleeblands, they have a great impact on him: "Jimmy spent a lot of the three-hour trip looking out the window at the pleeblands they were passing through. Rows of dingy houses; apartment buildings with tiny balconies, laundry strung on the railings; factories with smoke coming out of the chimneys; gravel pits. A huge pile of garbage, next to what he supposed was a high-heat incinerator […]" (Atwood 239). Jimmy carefully observes various features of the pleeblands, including the modest housing, factories emitting smoke, and gravel pits. These details paint a picture of an industrial and less affluent environment, and suggest that the world was becoming polluted by garbage and smoke. The novel continues: "He glimpsed a couple of trailer parks, and wondered what it was like to live in one of them: just thinking about it made him slightly dizzy, as he imagined a desert might, or the sea. Everything in the pleeblands seemed so boundless, so porous, so

penetrable, so wide-open" (Atwood 239). Jimmy's curiosity is piqued when he spots trailer parks, and he envisions what life might be like in such a different setting. The notion makes him feel slightly disoriented, emphasising the stark contrast between his world and the pleeblands. The words "porous" and "penetrable" capture Jimmy's perception of the pleeblands as boundless and open, in stark contrast to his more controlled and enclosed existence. The pleeblands appear as a symbol of unpredictability in his eyes. The word "porous" especially suggests a sponge; the pleeblands are the opposite of the imagined space of "pristine" nature, because they act as a landfill that absorbs toxins produced as by-products of settler mindsets.

At one point Jimmy is joined by Crake in the pleeblands to "have a good time," visiting bars and brothels. The whole environment of the pleeblands is described as contagious and toxic: "Before setting out, Crake had stuck a needle in Jimmy's arm—an all-purpose, short-term vaccine he'd cooked himself. The pleeblands, he said, were a giant Petri dish: a lot of guck and contagious plasm got spread around there" (Atwood 346). This passage emphasises Crake's supposed brilliance; he is capable of creating ("cooking") a vaccine himself. Further, the quotation highlights the "guck and contagious plasm" that "got spread around" in the pleeblands. The passive voice of "got spread around" removes a subject to be blamed for the pollution; this ties into the novel's suggestion that the social norm is to avoid blaming those who caused the pollution in the first place. These immunisations protect Jimmy from being infected by the JUVE virus, which is "hand-selected by Crake and subsequently eliminated, and was then cysted in the BlyssPluss product" (Atwood 413). Despite this protection, the dangers of the pleeblands become part of a dualism that pits the civilised life of the compounds against the external wilderness of the pleeblands. Still, there is an important connection between them in the sense that the pleeblands provide the backdrop against which the compounds are constantly observing and reshaping themselves. This

relation implies that the pleeblands are part of the compounds and together they represented a single world. Thematically, they are divided into two opposite lands of civilisation and non-civilisation. The particular attitude of the inhabitants of the compounds towards the pleeblands reflects another important consequence of this dualism.

Oryx and Crake depicts how the members of the compounds see the pleeblands—which represent a wilderness separate from civilisation—as dangerous. The pleeblands are a constant threat to the security of the compounds. As Crake's virus spreads, no one attempts to enter the compounds. The ordinary citizen seems more committed to an uprising: "Nobody else buzzed the outer door, nobody tried to break in. The Rejoov folks must have got the message. As for the staff, once they'd realized the guards were gone they must have rushed outside and made a beeline for the outer gate. For what they'd confused with freedom" (Atwood 403). In a fundamentally reversible rationale, the compounds—which are clean and well organised—are most likely to guarantee protection and survival. The representation of the pleeblands as being a threat to the safety of the compounds reflects the supposed threat of nature to civilisation, within the economy of the wilderness myth. However, civilisation becomes a threat to itself with its misunderstanding and mistreatment of nature.

Atwood's postcolonial criticism exposes detrimental and exploitative aspects of the imperialist dystopian world. The male dominance in it is challenged by a feminist image of the matriarchal society that has been replaced by the unforgiving patriarchal system that rules the societies of Canada with an iron fist. In addition, Atwood's postcolonial criticism may be connected with the wilderness myth, which is the foundation of the ruling dystopian regime The novel functions as a dystopian version of the wilderness myth, demonstrating what happens if people try to return to a "pristine" natural world. We learn that Crake is obsessed with creating "perfect" humans that can survive a global virus. In fact, Crake even creates a compound, the RejoovenEsense Compound, and shows it to Jimmy. Jimmy finds that the

compound is “sparkling clean, landscaped, ecologically *pristine*, and very expensive” (291, my emphasis). Crake, obsessed with the “pristine,” destroys the world with a virus and fills the world with his Crakers, designed to be perfect, peaceful and environmentally friendly humans. The Crakers seem to be akin to white people’s flawed representations of Indigenous people; they even eat leaves and grass, as though they are more environmentally friendly kinds of people (345). As Kerskens suggests, the Crakers are ideal humans only according to a colonialist paradigm: “The Crakers’ natural candour, their state of dependence, turns them into a powerful metaphor of the colonised subject” (Kerskens 437). Often, white settlers glorified Indigenous people as unspoilt and tied to the land; these representations are flawed because they painted a mythological vision of Indigeneity that is disconnected from reality and place Indigenous people into a state of dependency once they are introduced to coloniser’s tools and technologies. Moreover, this mythologising of Indigenous realities tends to establish the notion that Indigenous people are from the past only and have no more influence today—a view that threatens current Indigenous culture.

The Crakers—whom Crake designed to be “environmentally-friendly”—replace all other human life in the novel; Atwood thus creates a novel in which the myth of the wilderness, which glorifies “pristine” nature, truly does destroy all modern human life so that only those analogous to the Indigenous people—the Crakers—survive. While this may seem like a fantastical triumph for the Crakers (and for the Indigenous people they represent), the novel is so filled with tragedy and death that this ending can hardly be considered happy. Humans focused on unethical technological advancement who destroy the world with environmental toxicity and pollution need to learn to let Indigenous people, who might better understand how to protect the land and its resources, take the lead. The novel represents the Crakers as analogous to Indigenous people who are free of a colonised world. In doing so, the novel demonstrates that ecofeminism must recognise Indigenous knowledge and challenge

the myth of the wilderness that posits that it is possible to "return" to a "pristine" or "perfect" co-existence with nature without resorting to extreme violence and death.

B. The Separation of Women and the More-than-human World in *Oryx and Crake*

Men abuse the resources of the world in *Oryx and Crake,* demonstrating the novel's critique of the myth of the wilderness. Moreover, in the novel, women are represented as spiritually depleted life forms, powerless and even unaware of their abuse by men. They are treated as resources—objects, just like the resources of a wilderness—that are harmed by the patriarchal mindset that insists that all resources should be exploited for the purposes of human "progress."

Snowman's memories include female characters who are oppressed by men. Here *Oryx and Crake* portrays adolescent women who grow up in a degrading environment that reduces them to mere objects of sexual pleasure. As Martin argues, "It becomes clear the world depicted in *Oryx and Crake* is a completely phallogocentric one that it is obsessed with satisfying masculine sexual appetites, at the same time as satiating mankind's scientific and technical lust" (Martin 179). Martin's argument supports Mary Daly's idea of phallocentric necrophilia, according to which women freely give up their bodies to men. In so doing, their bodily experience is severely exploited by men for the self-centred purpose of pleasure. *Oryx and Crake* follows the oppressed female protagonist Oryx (an Asian child sex worker), who mesmerises Crake and Snowman with her soulful eyes. Over time, Crake discovers and hires her, while Snowman adores her. Oryx becomes a symbol of the apocalyptic plight of women under conditions of patriarchal capitalism.

Women are represented as completely unconscious of the abuse they perpetually endure, for they have so long been treated only as objects useful to patriarchal "progress." In "The Mother of All Apocalypses in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," Heather Hicks

examines “how Atwood’s characterization of Oryx complicates the superficial association of whoredom with apocalypse”:

> Without attempting to close down a variety of readings of this open signifier, [she] want[s] to suggest that Atwood’s inclusion of Oryx also figures as part of the larger postcolonial narrative that conspicuously frames the novel and gestures to the global effects of the ostensibly private psychological dynamics of abjection that she is exploring. Atwood constructs Oryx in part as a means of critiquing Revelation’s insidious role in scripting the colonial enterprise, including its current legacy of human trafficking. (41)

Women, as Hicks demonstrates, do not resist male oppression in the novel. Through the character of Oryx, Atwood examines the patriarchal gender structure that keeps women under continued oppression.

The subjugation of women goes hand in hand with the destruction of the more-than-human world in the dystopian world of *Oryx and Crake*. The oppressed position of women in Atwood’s novel reflects the mind/body dualism emphasised by Elizabeth Grosz. In her book *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism,* Grosz notes that “the body provides a point of mediation between what is perceived as purely internal and accessible only to the subject and what is external and publicly observable” (20-21). As such, the body has the potential to facilitate a rethink of all those binary pairs associated with the mind/body dualism, including self/other and Culture/Nature. Hence, the body can be deconstructed. Grosz thinks that dominant conceptions of the body are a legacy of the mind/body dualism, or the belief that “there are two distinct, mutually exclusive and mutually exhaustive substances, mind and body, each of which inhabits its own self-contained sphere” (6). Grosz illustrates how this dualism has built the body as the “other” of the mind:

> Dichotomous thinking necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms so that one becomes the privileged term and the other its suppressed, subordinated, negative counterpart. The subordinated term is merely the negation or denial, the absence or privation of the primary term, its fall from grace; the primary term defines itself by expelling its other and in this process establishes its own boundaries and borders to create an identity for itself. Body is thus what is not mind [...] It is what the mind must expel in order to retain its 'integrity.' It is implicitly unruly, disruptive, in need of direction and judgment, merely incidental to the defining characteristics of mind, reason, or personal identity through its opposition to consciousness, to the psyche and other privileged terms within philosophical thought. (3)

This mind-body dualism has been combined with several other dichotomies that, according to Grosz, can be used interchangeably. For example, the contrast between sets, such as self/other and Culture/Nature, is frequently shaped by the mind/body opposition. In addition, Grosz mentions that the analysis of mind/body dualism is essential to feminist discourse. This dualism constructs "the social devaluing of the body that goes hand in hand with the oppression of women" (10). The term "body" itself becomes dangerous because it includes detachment from the mind, making it a mere object of male abuse. Simultaneously, the mind is also viewed as an isolated entity. In this sense, Oryx, who endured sexual abuse, considers that act as disconnected from any ethical precepts. Therefore, she insists on justifying the actions of her masters. Interpreted in this sense, Atwood provides a clear example of the mind/body dualism's detrimental effect, accurately depicted in the character of Oryx. Commenting on the position of Oryx in the novel, Tong states that "women must work hard to stop the patriarchal forces of necrophilia—that is, of death" (Tong 248). With this insight, Tong implies dire consequences: namely, that the patriarchal maltreatment of women ultimately brings them to their death, announcing the imminent doom of civilisation.

In *Survival: A Thematic Guide to Canadian Literature*, Margaret Atwood states that for the early explorers, the main theme of settlers' writings was survival, specifically, "bare survival in the face of 'hostile' elements: carving out a place and a way of keeping alive" (41). Kylie Crane borrows Atwood's point about survival to prove that the landscape narratives of many colonised nations have represented pristine nature as a place where humans stereotyped such nature as their sanctuary and security from the oppression of society "in terms of race, gender, and class" (4). However, as soon as the settlers' inhabitation became exploitation of the colonised nations' nature, the notion of "pristine" nature as sanctuary has lost all sense. This goes beyond Atwood's idea that bare survival entailed colonising nature. As soon as the early settlers carved out a place for themselves, they began to exploit nature for the sake of industrial expansion and progress. This indicates that the Enlightenment ideas of Western progress in the form of economic, industrial, and colonial expansion are clearly reflected in the early colonisers' relationship towards their earliest habitats.

Theoretical perspectives offer new ways of looking at the novel's female protagonist Oryx. Crane draws on Plumwood's explanation of "non-instrumentalism" in the chapter "Future Natures in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake*," from her book *Myths of Wilderness in Contemporary Narratives: Environmental Postcolonialism in Australia and Canada.* Crane represents an ecofeminist challenge to exploited societies' patriarchal systems, asserting that patriarchy leads to nature's destruction in the post-apocalyptic and wasted world by marginalising women who protect natural spaces. Crane describes the novel's female protagonist Oryx's oppression and marginalisation:

> Oryx's role as the subaltern woman draws a number of parallels to the exploration of nature present in *Oryx and Crake*. There are certain parallels, indeed reciprocal reinforcements, the interdependency I argue is implicit in dualistic thought, of the

> categories ‘woman’ and ‘natural’ in the text. Oryx, in my reading, is a placeholder for those without biography: Her existence references and is referenced by the existence of the other—ostensibly controlled ‘other’—nature. (172)

This is Crane’s way of introducing the novel’s parallel between woman and nature and defines the novel’s self/other or human/nature exploitive dynamic by which Crane explains the human—and specifically the manly—exploitation of the othered nature. This exploitation concludes with the transformation of the othered nature into a post-apocalyptic, destroyed and wasted world. Her explanation aims to provide reasons why this post-apocalyptic nature becomes “a world of threat” at the end of the novel; there is nothing except the biotechnological tools that have destroyed nature and the biotechnological remnants that threaten anyone who tries to visit nature’s post-apocalyptic and wasted zones (Crane 173). Crane supports her ecofeminist argument—of how humans transform nature into post-apocalyptic and wasted zones—by examining many characters in *Oryx and Crake* whose spatial understanding of the world have been altered by the inclusionary and exclusionary nature of the human/nature divide. These characters represent some examples in which viruses and diseases are made and sent by the people of civilisation to nature, causing the post-apocalyptic environment, as represented in the novel. Thus, Crane’s examination simulates DeLoughrey’s depiction of the construction of the wilderness and its human/nature exploitive dynamic by which pristine nature is served as the rubbish dump for humankind’s by-products in civilisation. By this, nature becomes “a world of threat” after its being spoiled by Western “culture,” typically the cultural excesses of an imperial, industrial, capitalist, and anthropocentric world. It is no longer a nature that has not been despoiled by any culture of humans; no longer a location where non-Westerners can find the last bastion of a natural zone free from the all-too-human sickness of civilisation. Nor is it the location where survivors can

find spiritual sanctuary from their cultures' excesses and oppressions, as Cronon describes Nature's past before settlers' experiences.

The protagonist Oryx embodies the novel's characterisation of female subjugation as a woman who, like the natural world, is abused by men who seek scientific discovery. She exhibits behaviour that provokes many questions about her characterisation. For example, she seemingly perceives no difference between actions based on free will and those that are forced. Therefore, she does not feel it necessary to resist the abuse of men and to fight for basic rights. She found Snowman's hatred of Jack surprising, even though the latter engaged her in child pornography. In addition to this, Jack even made her his sexual partner in return for giving her English lessons. Oryx justifies this by reminding Jimmy (Snowman in the dystopian world) that they had also been sexual partners. Jimmy argues that their relationship was not against Oryx's will, while Jack forces such a relationship upon her. When Jimmy brings up her will, she laughingly asks, "'What is my will?'" (Atwood 166). Such a reaction indicates that she was raised in a patriarchal society in which men held dominance over women, dramatically limiting or altogether preventing their own free will. This explains Oryx's lack of understanding of the meaning of will. For reasons of poverty, her mother sold her to a businessman, "Uncle En," who saw ways of taking advantage of her looks for the sake of profit, so he assigned her to sell flowers to men. After that, she was used as a physical bait to lure the tourists in search of bodily pleasures. She is portrayed as a "docile" and "obedient" slave who "did as she was told" (Atwood 38). Her youthful innocence and purity have been corrupted by men's lust for profit and pleasure: "she had a general idea of what else the man might want—the other children already knew about such things and discussed them freely" (Atwood 153). Her very childhood was robbed from her as she was made to become a resource to be enjoyed by men whose greed and lust go unchecked in the world of the novel.

Oryx's mistreatment at the hands of a patriarchal system is not only implied by her ignorance of free will. She is described as a girl with feelings and attitudes that may be seen as strange, unreasonable, and illogical. She is a pacifist who does not feel any resentment towards her male oppressors. Scholars Irshad and Banerji argue that,

> Where on the one side Oryx is calm and composed when she narrates her past life in bits and pieces without exhibiting any emotional or aggressive behaviour Jimmy gives vent to his pent up anger by abusing her exploiters. He is even shocked to listen to 'bad words' (Atwood 158) from Oryx, of which 'she had a large supply'. She even tried to conceal the acrid aspects of her life, 'to protect him, from the image of herself in the past. She liked to keep only the bright side of herself turned towards him. She liked to shine' (Atwood 158). [….] Jimmy abuses uncle En for what he did with Oryx, she absolves him from the position of oppressor and tells Jimmy that she even, cried when she heard of his death, 'I cried when I heard... too much' (Atwood 159). (Irshad and Banerji 592)

The quote illustrates Oryx's inclination to protect Jimmy by concealing the harsh realities of her past, maintaining a positive façade. Her desire to present only the brighter side of herself reflects her struggle to maintain a sense of self while she grapples with abuse. Oryx's act of forgiving Jimmy and her tears upon learning of his death reveal her capacity for empathy and emotional complexity; however, these tears also demonstrate the ways women in the novel are driven past the brink of safety and comfort in almost all of their social interactions within the narrative.

Snowman's memories of the period before the apocalypse highlight a specific day of Oryx's oppression and the ways her oppression is treated as similar to the destruction of the environment in the novel. While watching television, Jimmy notices a channel showing past coverage of an incident that had happened many years before in San Francisco, where Oryx

had grown up. Many girls were locked in garages and held as sexual slaves. When the police discovered this, they caught the culprits and released the girls. Oryx was among them, and her interview was seen on the television. During the interview, she is peaceful and friendly, expressing no hard feelings toward the men who held her captive. Reminding her of this event, Jimmy asks her if she really had no negative feelings for the culprits after this experience. Her affirmative reply provokes Jimmy's astonishment and anger, showing her lack of awareness for the injustice that was done to her. She even claims that one of the men had been kind to her and his wife was a "very spiritual person," which, she admits, motivated her for future life (Atwood 372). Jimmy sharply responds that she is wrong to think that. Oryx's feelings of gratitude toward her oppressors demonstrate that patriarchal society has taught her to devalue herself in the face of the superior male master for whom she should not dare have negative feelings. Oryx's continued treatment as an object with no feelings connects to the novel's representation of a dystopian environment in which women, like the environment, are stripped bare, decimated by patriarchal greed.

Through Oryx's characterisation, the novel depicts perceptions of the inferiority of women raised in patriarchal societies that are evident in contemporary society and that normalise oppression. The novel uses Oryx's plight to deliver the message that "women must work hard to stop the patriarchal forces of necrophilia—that is, of death" (Tong 248). Oryx is represented in 'necrophiliac' relationships that she accepts due to her unawareness of any oppression. She appears as one of the women who "have been seduced into cooperating with the 'phallocentric' system of 'necrophilia'; [who] have become men's 'fembots,' permitting themselves to be drained of their life forces" (Tong 248). These "fembots" are objectified women who are portrayed as perfect slaves to male desire and cruelty. Oryx is presented as a "fembot" due to her total obedience and lack of freedom of thought—the traits she acquired in a patriarchal society. Atwood's representation of Oryx, and her use of a "fembot"

archetype, shows one way in which women can grow up when their past lives are ruled and controlled by men within patriarchal societies. It is not only possible to read Oryx "as a feminised, exotic other, but also as a non-identity, excluded from subjectivity, reduced to a product, perhaps a product of the West" (Crane 172). Women such as Oryx are controlled just as the land is, and are objectified as resources for men to abuse.

The novel's critique of patriarchal societies also indicates that women will be oppressed in such societies for attempting to defend the natural world and challenge the myth of the wilderness. This is symbolised in the novel by Jimmy's mother, Sharon. She is a revolutionary microbiologist who perceives human greed as the root of the world's end. The compounds' engineering of human and animal DNA for the purpose of generating a source of available organs is rejected and criticised by Jimmy's mother (Atwood 63). She objects to the biotechnologists' claim that human neocortex tissue can be grown in pigeons and used to treat stroke in patients: "That's all we need. More people with the brains of pigs" (Atwood 64). She openly opposes the compounds' technological developments that wreak havoc while depleting natural resources. As a result, she leaves her job in disgust and then sinks into depression. Eventually, she leaves the compounds and her family to join the protests in the pleeblands, where she is killed. We learn this in narrative memories as Jimmy thinks back to his mother's work and the way she was hunted by the deadly CorpSeCorps corporate security services. Sharon's fate indicates the futility of women's resistance in dystopian environments and the lethal danger of the polluted, non-civilised land.

By depicting a world in which women are reduced to "fembots" or are killed, Atwood's novel presents an ecofeminist critique of the subjugation of women by men and where the more-than-human world is also adversely impacted. In "Wilderness Survival: Future Natures in Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake,*" Crane argues that "Oryx's role as the subaltern woman draws a number of parallels to the exploration of nature present in *Oryx and*

Crake. There are certain parallels, indeed reciprocal reinforcements, and the interdependency is implicit in dualistic thought, of the categories of 'woman' and 'natural' in the text" (172). Crake confesses that men, who in the novel are in charge of advanced scientific and technical corporations, control nature. They "are more responsible for the destruction of the planet than women" (Martin 180). Consequently, as Martin notes, "only a woman can teach new beings; however, it cannot be just any woman; it must be one who has suffered the worst torments and who has transformed from a slave into a sort of Nietzschean super-woman" (Martin 180). In this novel, "science is associated and believed to represent a masculine domain and intelligence, whereas art along with femininity is marginalised and suppressed" (Irshad & Banerji 589). Despite the fact that women have complete access to scientific research, as the novel represents through Oryx's participation in Crake's corporations, gender hierarchies persist (Capperdoni 53). The ways in which women's knowledge and values may improve scientific research and foster the growth of the more-than-human world are disregarded. Instead, their knowledge is used by male dominated corporations in the novel to create destructive inventions, such as the Pigoon, a transgenic pig created to grow human-tissue organs for transplantation. This is shown by Ramona, a girlfriend of Jimmy's father. His father works for the scientific and capitalist corporations as a scientist. The narrative records that "Ramona the lab tech from OrganInc made the move with [Jimmy's father to the NooSkins Compound]; she was part of the deal because she was an invaluable asset, said Jimmy's father; she was his right-hand man. ("Joke," he would say to Jimmy, to show that he knew Ramona wasn't really a man. But Jimmy knew that anyway.)" (Atwood 59).

In *Oryx and Crake*, the narrative illustrates the destructive outcomes for women and the natural world stemming from men's unrestrained scientific ambitions. As Alban argues, men in the novel assume god-like roles to combat environmental destruction. Alban argues that *Oryx and Crake* shows

> the devastating effects of the unbridled, scientific power or hubris of men as they play god in attempting to contravene against devastation of the environment according to their own lights, whether reengineering humanity according to their own design, or taking drastic action to ensure the survival of the ecosystem, both of these in a desperate attempt to counteract the results of [capitalist] corporate greed which has virtually destroyed the ecosystem. (Alban 85)

When men take control of valuable knowledge and women's connection to a more-than-human world, the world faces disastrous consequences. The apocalyptic events of this story are presented in two-time frames by Atwood. Firstly, the past depicts the global ecological and climatic damage wrought by rapaciously capitalist corporations, casting a veil over Jimmy's boyhood. After a cataclysmic mass death, Snowman/Jimmy is practically the single survivor. While imprisoned, he gazes back in disbelief at his own role in the catastrophe, even as he is caught in the aftermath. Thinking about his role in the environmental destruction, Snowman remembers the oppression of Oryx and other women. By remembering this it occurs to him that had the oppression of women been prevented, the destruction of the more-than-human world would not have had occurred. From the perspective of ecological feminism, the extreme situation of women (as dead fembots in necrophiliac relationships) in *Oryx and Crake* deprives the more-than-human world of a close and positive relationship with women. The novel's central message here is that the patriarchal system has failed.

The novel draws upon Indigenous imagery, largely through its representation of the pleeblands and the Crakers; it does so in a way that draws attention to the mutual suffering of women, Indigenous people, and land at the hands of patriarchal corruption. In her book *Women Healing Earth; Third World Women on Ecology, Feminism, and Religion* (2002), a comprehensive contribution to this ecofeminist theological movement, Ruether notes that women's childbearing experiences hold profound meaning in the

Indigenous world and that both must be valued more highly. As she suggests, re-establishing the matriarchal society would mean restoring the Indigenous world too. Atwood's critique of the patriarchy and men like Crake who attempt to gain power demonstrates that women, Indigenous people, and Indigenous women together are harmed by pollution and environmental disasters. The novel thus treats the wilderness as a dystopia that is only reached when humans destroy civilisation, and this dystopia is especially tragic for the humans who are innocent bystanders in a patriarchal system.

Atwood's novel suggests that the restoration of the natural world might be the only way to avoid looming threats: of genetic modification, manufactured pandemics, and other signals of dystopia. Significantly, as mentioned above, the novel directly addresses Indigenous people. The character of Jimmy (the protagonist, a survivor of the man-made pandemic) is also known as Snowman—a name that directly connects him to a person's influence on nature, since a snowman is human-made. The name also resembles names of Indigenous people such as "Snowjack" ("Afraid of Bear"). Snowman imparts the tale of their origin to the Crakers, explaining that they are the offspring of Crake, while animals are the children of Oryx. Snowman diligently upholds internal coherence in his narratives, and the Crakers wholeheartedly embrace his stories. Fascinatingly, while Snowman is trying to communicate with the Crakers, he thinks about Indigenous people. He randomly says "Star light, star bright" to himself and the Craker children are confused by the words (96). Throughout the novel, Snowman "hears" books in his head—books from before the dystopian time. This time, the interaction leads Snowman to think about Indigenous people.

> When dealing with indigenous peoples, says the book in his head—a more modern book…late twentieth century, the voice a confident female's—you must attempt to respect their traditions and confine your explanations to simple concepts that can be understood within the contexts of their belief

> systems. Some earnest aid worker in a khaki jungle outfit, with netting under the arms and a hundred pockets. Condescending self-righteous cow, thinks she's got all the answers. He'd known girls like that at college. If she were here she'd need a whole new take on indigenous. (97)

This direct reference to Indigenous people is significant because it demonstrates that Atwood is critical of the "late twentieth century" "earnest aid worker" who believed that "simple" explanations would allow settlers and Indigenous people to understand one another. This passage, which appears in an early chapter, sets the stage for the novel's theme of representing the Crakers as Indigenous people with no knowledge of a colonised world.

The novel demonstrates the flaws of the wilderness myth by suggesting that the myth of "pristine" nature and a return to a perfect natural world is the cause of the dystopia. Crake uses Oryx as the "mother" and models his new breed of human, the Crakers, on himself and Oryx. These Crakers are the only ones, besides Jimmy/Snowman, to survive the viral pandemic that destroys other humans. Crake has the goal of wiping out humanity and returning to a "pristine" wilderness; as the novel makes abundantly clear, his goal leads to a dystopia in which everyone suffers due to the still-present toxins that capitalist colonisers have poured into the environment. As mentioned above, Atwood's novel directly addresses Indigenous people through its representation of the Crakers. Snowman uses his memories of a book to decide how to "deal" with the Indigenous people. Snowman dismisses this advice, realising that it is unhelpful. The Crakers do not need "simple" concepts; rather, they need Snowman's guidance as they survive a world that had been destroyed. Snowman criticises his memory of the author of the book, calling her "some earnest aid worker in a khaki jungle outfit, with netting under the arms and a hundred pockets. Condescending self-righteous cow, thinks she's got all the answers. He'd known girls like that at college. If she were here she'd need a whole new take on indigenous" (97). These lines demonstrate that the novel is

committed to criticising a certain kind of ecofeminist: a woman who thinks "she's got all the answers" who fails to understand Indigenous knowledge but instead thinks Indigenous people require "simple" answers. This passage also shows that Snowman, though the protagonist of the novel, is hardly a hero with regards to his treatment of women. Calling the author a "self-righteous cow," he patronizes her views. However, his thought that "if she were here she'd need a whole new take on indigenous" is probably true; the woman writer in his head would be shocked by the behavior of the Crakers, who are of course not truly Indigenous (since they are the fabricated fantasy of Crake). By inserting the Crakers into the novel as Indigenous-like characters, Atwood draws narrative attention to the ways Indigenous people (or Indigenous-like people) are used by people in power such as Crake who seek to control or reshape the world. This directly relates to the wilderness myth, which suggests that settlers trying to shape civilisation to change the natural ecology and even displace Indigenous people for their own benefit.

Oryx's lack of resistance to oppression leads Crake to create a similar mentality in the Crakers, who symbolise Indigenous people through their hyper-emphasised connections to nature. Kerskens connects the Crakers to a colonialist paradigm: "The Crakers' natural candour, their state of dependence, turns them into a powerful metaphor of the colonised subject" (Kerskens 437). *Oryx and Crake* draws attention to the ways the Crakers are colonised and brought to a dependent, submissive state under capitalism. Apart from Jimmy, Crake also listens to the stories of Oryx's mistreatment and oppression. Unlike Jimmy, Crake is not angry or surprised at her lack of hostility but tries to benefit from it. In view of Oryx's experiences, Crake thinks of turning the colonised subjects into fembots who will not resist capitalist exploitation and oppression. Crake, therefore, invites the Crakers to take the place of both lower-class people and the more-than-human world. They are genetically engineered to be a mix of human and nonhuman creatures who are programmed to worship Crake as

deity. They have no notion of violence and oppression. Samrat Laska, in his article "Genetic Engineering in the Age of Anthropocene/Capitalocene and Beyond: An Ecocritical Study of *Oryx and Crake*," describes how those Crakers are created:

> Crake developed them as a kind of posthumans—genetically better human-like creatures without the imperfection of the human beings. These genetically programmed creatures are beautiful, docile, non-hierarchical, and uniformly healthy as they are resistant to microbe attack. J. Brooks Bouson advances that 'with their altered ancient primate brains, the Crakers lack the destructive features of racism, hierarchy and territoriality' (qtd. In Evans 144). As they are herbivorous and capable of recycling the food, they can ensure environmental sustainability. They don't understand the concepts of war and rape; in the post-Anthropocene world they (apparently) recreate an idyllic space where environment is revered and communal healing is practised. But, as Wilson reminds us, 'these advantages exist because of genetic pre-programming and thus makes the Crakers seem less free than the human beings who precede them' (50)." (138)

Laska stresses that the Crakers are free from negative traits like racism and hierarchy due to their genetically altered brains, creating an idealised world devoid of such destructive features. However, Laska in the quote above also points out a contradiction in their freedom, as the genetic pre-programming that grants them these advantages also limits their true autonomy compared to human beings.

By inventing these creatures, Crake shows his skills in profit-making and proves that he does not concern himself much with the well-being of women like Oryx or the Crakers themselves. He aims to decrease the population of both humans and the more-than-human world so as to rescue the world from overpopulation, damaged ecosystems, and the high cost of living. In this novel, nonhuman creatures have no ability to defend themselves from the

problematic surge of the human population. They can only accept Crake's capitalist propositions, which was one of the missions of his team in the school of Watson-Crick. Crake says that "as a species, we're in deep trouble, worse than anyone's saying […] Demand for resources has exceeded supply for decades in marginal geopolitical areas, hence the famines and droughts; but very soon, demand is going to exceed supply for everyone" (Atwood 347). Indeed, Crake's opinion echoes what Michael Watts argues in his article "Black Acts" regarding Malthusianism: that the tropics are inherently less productive in annual food crops, due to their hot climates and, therefore, population growth may lead to endemic malnutrition (Watts 135). The Crakers' population decreases when needed because their procreation is controlled. Their lack of awareness makes them unable to realise the danger of this situation. Both male and female Crakers enjoy and do not resist Crake's thoughts, considering his control beneficial.

As this thesis has demonstrated, the wilderness myth promotes the idea that the wilderness contains vast resources that settlers can and should take and use for purposes of advancing civilisation. As *Oryx and Crake* demonstrates, this myth can obscure the abuse of resources—including women's capacity for reproduction. Crakers are unable to procreate naturally, and their only means of procreating is to resort to technologies that transform their energy into what Vandana Shiva described as non-renewable energy and commodities used for profit. Snowman narrates the extraordinary situation of the Craker women. To renew their energy, they must depend on technology to attract men. Concerning this process, the novel suggests that a woman's "condition will be obvious to all from the bright-blue colour of her buttocks and abdomen" (Atwood 193). The female Crakers are unable to use this technology except "once every three years" (Atwood 194). When "the female becomes pregnant, her blue colouring fades" (Atwood 194).

If interpreted metaphorically, Atwood's novel is here educating the reader on the false promises of capitalism. The renewal technology invites readers to question the wilderness myth because it exaggerates the treatment of women as objects for reproduction that occurs when male settlers treat women like resources. The novel illustrates that this artificial method of female reproduction, which has replaced the natural one, neither protects against overpopulation nor stops prostitution, the sexual abuse of children, pimps, sex slaves, sexual violence or rape (Atwood 194). Instead, it weakens the women's energy and their ability to procreate, forcing them to repurchase this technology. The technology that exploits women's energy and turns it into a commodity will ultimately bring about death to the Crakers. By introducing such technologies, Atwood's novel judges Crake's thoughts as destructive rather than beneficial. The Crakers' lack of understanding and lack of resistance is noticed by Snowman, who considers them "the children of Oryx," making the identification of Oryx with the Crakers explicit. Naming the Crakers Oryx's children is Atwood's hint to make us think about the similarity of their oppression and lack of resistance. Thus, the Crakers, like the women in the novel, are treated as a resource, one that is overused because of the characters' adherence to the myth that the abuse of resources can be justified in the name of progress.

Oryx and Crake focuses on power and patriarchal efforts to control capital and women's bodies. The novel's reminders about Oryx's subjugated position resonate with Tong's claim: "before the establishment of patriarchy, there existed an original matriarchy. In [this matriarchal] world, women flourished. They controlled their own lives, bonded with each other and with the non-human world of animals and nature, and lived both freely and happily" (Tong 247). Male-dominated systems of science and pollution destroy the earth and eradicate women's close connection with the human world and the more-than-human world.

Consequently, the enslaved women and the controlled Crakers languish while the men rule in ways that lead to a dystopian world.

Conclusion of Chapter Three

The analysis of Jane Urquhart's *Away* and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* from an ecofeminist perspective sheds light on the interplay between the wilderness myth, patriarchal power, and the potential of feminism to challenge such power. *Away* portrays the connection between the three generations of women in a Canadian family and their relationship with the land, exploring themes of loss, grief, and the supposed intrinsic bond between humans and nature. Through its ecofeminist perspective on the wilderness, the novel critiques patriarchal power. In contrast, *Oryx and Crake* presents a dystopian narrative that delves into the consequences of unbridled technological advancement founded upon the ruins of the natural world. It also tackles the issues of gender and power through the character of Crake and his vision of an emotionless, genderless world; this analysis permits greater reflection on the ways a critique of the Nature/Culture binary should be supplemented by additional critique of a body/mind binary. Laura Wright reads the novel as a postcolonial text by thinking through the colonisation of Canada (3). As she demonstrates, within the context of the postcolonial studies, Atwood devises an understanding of the ecofeminist that cannot exist without women's disruption of a body/mind binary. Thus, Atwood's novel engages with ecofeminist perspectives and criticism of patriarchal power as it reveals the ways the myth of the wilderness impacts women, who are treated as resources to be abused by colonial greed.

It is important to acknowledge that, while Urquhart's *Away* has been widely praised as an ecofeminist challenge to settler ideologies, it also reflects an ecofeminist perspective on women's bodily experiences that, at times, either marginalises or appropriates Indigenous tropes of marginalisation. The representation of settler feminism in this novel reveals that novels that take an ecofeminist perspective on women's bodily experiences do not

consistently criticise the wilderness myth. Instead, this novel occasionally embraces various forms of settler emplacement and feminism that replicate or appropriate the Culture/Nature binary, perpetuating the marginalisation and dispossession of Indigenous Canadians within the wilderness discourse. *Away* involves renaming and reshaping Indigenous Canadian landscapes according to the caregivers' own will. Such actions result in erasing Indigenous histories and imposing new narratives, thereby perpetuating the wilderness myth's role in ownership and culture of the Canadian Indigenous nature and more-than-human environments. This aspect of the wilderness myth is particularly detrimental because it is easily concealed under the guise of caregiving. As shown by the character of Mary in *Away*, the caregiver may have the best intentions and even be able to morally justify her actions. Still, such actions may culturally or socially affect the Indigenous environment in a negative way by distorting or altogether erasing its identity. The new culture created in that way is still plagued by the influence of the wilderness myth because its creation results from the Indigenous culture's destruction. And the justification for that is paved with good intentions, which implies that supplanting the Indigenous culture with another one is more appropriate in the mind of the caregiver.

Meanwhile, Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* demonstrates that the wilderness is not a "pristine" fantasy; rather, the vision that settlers have of the wilderness can only be achieved through dystopian global changes, such as the unleashing of a virus to destroy humanity and the unethical creation of Indigenous-like humans who are submissive and struggle to think for themselves. In light of these observations, it is crucial to examine critically ecofeminist perspectives in postcolonial literature and their relationship to settler ideologies and Indigenous experiences. Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake* especially suggests to us that we must be more critical of the notion that seeking a "pristine" natural world is a good or productive idea, an idea that often implies the erasure of Indigenous cultures. Crake may have

succeeded in producing genetically-modified humans who can survive on grass—the Crakers, analogous to Indigenous people—but that does not mean the novel is a utopian one. By recognising the complexities and potential pitfalls of ecofeminist perspectives, we can strive for a more inclusive and nuanced discourse that actively challenges the mechanisms of marginalisation and dispossession perpetuated within the wilderness myth. This process entails fostering dialogue, acknowledging and amplifying Indigenous voices, and re-evaluating the roles and responsibilities of settler feminism in relation to the environment and gender dynamics within literary forms. Only through such critical engagement can we hope to navigate the complexities of ecofeminism and contribute to a more equitable and inclusive understanding of the relationship between humans, nature, and power.

Conclusion of Thesis

This thesis examines representations of the wilderness myth in selected works of Australian and Canadian literature and art of the 19th and 20th centuries. The works selected for this purpose are the memoir *Roughing it in the Bush* (1852) by Susanna Moodie, the poetry of Duncan Campbell Scott, the painting of Emily Carr, and the novels *Voss* (1957) by Patrick White, *Remembering Babylon* (1993) by David Malouf, *Away* (1993) by Jane Urquhart, and *Oryx and Crake* (2003) by Margaret Atwood. The literature studied, written by authors who can be defined as settler colonists or descendants of settler colonists, is variously engaged with the wilderness myth. The wilderness myth, underpinned by a Nature/Culture logic, centres on the notion that there is such a thing as a "pristine" territory empty of humans that must be claimed and conquered for the benefit of colonisers who aim to "civilise" the world. As the thesis has demonstrated, the myth is a foundational concept in Australian and Canadian settler histories and is often used to justify the displacement of Indigenous people. Focusing on poetry, fiction and non-fictional prose, this thesis took a postcolonial approach to argue that its chosen literary works both uphold and resist the binary logic of Nature/Culture that underpins the wilderness myth. The thesis further argues that some literary authors and early colonial conservationists may inadvertently perpetuate the wilderness myth in ways that contribute towards legitimising the marginalisation and dispossession of Indigenous peoples. At times writers attempt to acknowledge and even give voice to Indigenous perspectives that disrupt settler ideology; but at other times literary writings have served explicitly or implicitly to promote the idea that lands beyond Europe are also somehow outside human history. This thesis has transformed significantly since its early beginnings; while first the focus fell upon ways postcolonial critics might unintentionally or purposefully uphold the wilderness myth, the project eventually came to reflect the ways postcolonial criticism can usefully challenge the ways the wilderness myth is upheld in some literary

works that simultaneously challenge aspects of colonialisation. This transformation demonstrates the complexity and nuance of postcolonial literary critique.

The fact that the wilderness myth pervades even today demonstrates how much work postcolonial critics have yet to do. The analysis of the selected works in this thesis has shown that settler cultures struggle and contradict themselves in their treatment of the wilderness myth. While the myth of the wilderness has influenced and inspired literary writers attempting to convey the lives of settlers and the challenges they face, this literature can indirectly marginalise the remaining Indigenous people of Australia and Canada.

The ecocritics and postcolonial critics who have inspired this thesis have made great strides towards challenging the dualisms that continue to shape criticism and literature alike. Garrard has pointed out "the sharp distinction" between culture and nature among US, Canadian, and Australian settlers as the reason for the colonial imbalance (Garrard 76). Plumwood has emphasised the opposing dualisms inherent in the wilderness myth, particularly between the frequently oppressed groups (such as the Indigenous populations of women, African-Americans, labourers) and the economically prosperous white settlers. According to Plumwood, the dualism of humans and nature is the main reason for this conflicting relation (Plumwood 2). Robert Pogue Harrison examined the wilderness myth from the perspective of postcolonial ecology. He maintains that ever since Descartes, writing in the 17th century, Western colonisers have perceived nature as a closed sanctuary of wild animals, which they sought to possess for their own benefit (Harrison 121). Elizabeth Deloughrey has discovered that the wide gap between Indigenous nature and civilisation eventually transformed the former into a human dump that threatens all life (DeLoughrey 101). This thesis draws upon these scholars and argues that, by attending more closely to the myth of the wilderness as represented in literature, we can better recognise the ways that dualism still shapes the thinking of settlers and the descendants of settlers. By recognising the

power of that dualism reinforced by the myth of the wilderness, we can better challenge it, and realise that settler ideologies too often erase Indigenous knowledge.

As Chapter One demonstrated, *Roughing it in the Bush*, Duncan Campbell Scott's poetry, and the painting of Emily Carr from the 19th century create a highly romanticised vision of the wilderness myth. These artists create a vision of a "pristine" natural world. Such detachment from reality also shelters the wilderness myth from critical thinking, allowing it to exist with its many limitations, without being challenged. Susanna Moodie wrote *Roughing it In the Bush* as a realistic account of the Canadian settler life. Here we encounter an extended version of the wilderness myth, the existence of which is perpetuated by European settlers who migrated over to Canada. A similar attempt at recreating settler culture is provided in Jane Urquhart's novel *Away*. These examples of recreating the settler culture invariably lead to a cultural conflict between the settlers and the Indigenous population. The conflict in which one culture forces itself upon another is a form of cultural colonialism, which is another aspect of the wilderness myth. Chapter One thus explores a tension between the desire to romanticise the wilderness and an economic drive to realise its untapped resources.

Examining Susanna Moodie's work, the chapter illustrates how European settlers transformed from religious oppression survivors to oppressors themselves, imposing their beliefs on others, particularly Indigenous communities. Moodie's text serves as a cautionary tale about the perils of settling Canada while highlighting the mistreatment of Indigenous people by settlers. This tension between settler and Indigenous cultures is further explored through Scott's poetry, which attempts to bridge religious differences and foster harmonious coexistence. However, the chapter connects this optimism to the perpetuation of colonial injustices and environmental exploitation under the wilderness myth's influence. Emily Carr's artwork, "Scorned as Timber, Beloved of the Sky," underscores the disharmony in the

Western exploitation of ecology, revealing how Western oppressors have distorted appreciation of the land. Ultimately, Chapter One sheds light on the struggle of white artists and authors to counter the wilderness myth's influence while navigating its persistent presence in settler philosophies, contributing to a broader understanding of this complex narrative.

Chapter Two reads Patrick White's *Voss* (1957) and David Malouf's *Remembering Babylon* (1993), exploring the wilderness myth in relation to the Australian Outback. The chapter argues that eco-cosmological/eco-theological perspectives can be linked to the representation of Indigenous peoples and their relationship with the land in Australian novels. The novels *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon*, by Patrick White and David Malouf, respectively, portray the aboriginal world of Australia that is disconnected from its Indigenous more-than-human environments. With vivid descriptions and accuracy of detail, *Voss* depicts the devastation of the Indigenous world at the hands of the European settlers, whose only concern is exploitation of that world. The fullness of the devastation becomes real and vivid in the minds of the "Aborigines," who thereby gain a profound impression of what caused their displacement and marginalisation. Identity, belonging, and the relation between Indigenous Australians and its colonisers are the main themes of Malouf's *Remembering Babylon*. The relationship between the colonisers and the colonised in this novel is presented in the story of a young British castaway whom the Indigenous outback community adopts and teaches its own way of life. That does not diminish the fact, however, that the colonists' exploitation of the Indigenous world has brought about its downfall. Both *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon* introduce an important relation between the Indigenous people and their land. In light of this relation, the Indigenous people are represented as essentially one with the land based on their own spiritual experience of the landscape they inhabit. These books represent Indigenous people as free of the narrow confines of the

material world, perceiving themselves and the earth as a single all-encompassing whole. The novels explore how Indigenous people attempt to resist any forced attempts to accept Western settler culture and safekeep their own Indigenous cultural identity.

The second chapter opens by delving into the detrimental impact of the "wilderness" concept on Australia's ecosystems, shedding light on how Indigenous communities suffered as a result of Western perceptions of untouched nature. It illustrates how settlers harnessed the notion of wilderness to exert control over Indigenous people's reliance on the natural environment for essential necessities such as sustenance, water, and spiritual refuge. These settlers, often portrayed as modern capitalists, viewed nature as an external resource to exploit for economic gain, reflecting a colonial attitude that disregarded the interconnectedness of humanity and the natural world. In works like *Voss* and *Remembering Babylon*, the narratives explore the intricate dynamics between humanity and the Australian outback, highlighting the constructed conflict between civilisation and the untamed wilderness. Both novels personify Indigenous land, depicting the Australian outback as rugged and perilous, while also exploring the significance of Indigenous peoples in relation to the land.

Finally, the second chapter shifts its focus to the interplay between eco-cosmological/eco-theological perspectives and their portrayal of Indigenous communities and their relationship with the landscape. Deep ecology principles illuminate the novels' representation of the perils associated with embracing the wilderness myth, which endangers both human and natural ecology. Deep ecologists like Alan Drengson critique the narrative of human supremacy, citing Indigenous societies' sustainable practices over thousands of years as evidence that human societies need not be inherently destructive. This ties in with this thesis's argument that the myth of the wilderness sustains capitalists who destroy the natural ecology for financial gain. In these novels, the Australian Indigenous people's exploration

reveals the devastating impact of European settlers who exploited the environment without understanding sustainability. The Outback becomes a powerful teacher, resisting attempts at taming it and teaching valuable lessons to both settlers and Indigenous people.

Chapter Three turns to Jane Urquhart's *Away* (1993) and Margaret Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* (2003), performing a postcolonial reading of these novels with relation to ecofeminist criticism. The chapter demonstrates that *Away* portrays settler women taking inspiration from Indigenous relationships with the land. In the novel, a young expatriate mother, following a mystical experience, attempts to recreate the Indigenous world of her native homeland. In so doing she not only alters the identity of the foreign (Canadian) culture, but also supplants it with that of her own (Irish) culture. Reproducing a key feature of the wilderness myth, this struggle to uphold one's national and cultural heritage forcefully imposes one's values upon the other. Urquhart's novel therefore unveils the concealed aspect of the wilderness myth that enables the eradication of one's cultural identity through non-violent means. She subtly depicts the ability of settler feminism to establish and maintain its own cultural foothold even at the expense of another, if necessary. In view of this, *Away* contains another layer of interpretation, according to which it reveals a potentially harmful aspect of ecofeminism – the overwriting of Indigenous knowledge.

The chapter demonstrates that the radical side of ecofeminism is shown in Margaret Atwood's novel *Oryx and Crake*. Through its dystopian lens, Atwood's novel scrutinises the oppressed position of women in an exploitative world of masculine capitalist dominance. The post-apocalyptic setting allows Atwood's novel to emphasise the extreme aspects of gender inequalities that speak not only to the future Atwood imagines, but also to our present-day world. One such aspect is the distorted female identity manifested in the slavishly obedient personality of Oryx, the titular female protagonist of the novel. Moulded by the unforgiving social environment of dystopian masculinity, Oryx has lost any sense of fundamental human

rights. She lives the dehumanised life of the sexual slave, ready to comply to masculine demands at every turn. As such, she symbolises egregiously oppressed women, especially victims of human trafficking and sexual slavery, reflected in her unconditional acceptance of the most degrading and humiliating roles. The novel captures the perpetual plight of humanity that has plunged into its own demise, which the novel suggests is a consequence of the fraught relationships between humans and an industrialised, dystopian, patriarchal society.

These novels explore the relationship between the wilderness myth and patriarchal power. Throughout, the thesis attends to the ways in which literature works to either perpetuate or dismantle and move beyond the wilderness myth. Reading Jane Urquhart's novel *Away* through the lens of ecofeminism reveals how Urquhart challenges the wilderness myth. Proponents of ecofeminism, such as Eisler, Ruether, and Daly, emphasise the role of women in restoring the connection between people and nature. Their key argument relies on biological determinism, according to which the unique body experience of mothers (pregnancy, birth, child raising) is inseparable from nature (the soil itself, the flora and fauna, etc.). These critics understand femininity in terms of biologically determined motherhood. They do not acknowledge Indigenous people as they assert women's seeming connection to the land. In particular, this chapter argues that while Urquhart's *Away* is praised for criticising settler ideologies, it perpetuates what I call "settler feminism" by erasing Indigenous knowledge. Analysing the representation of ecofeminism in this novel, the chapter argues that an ecofeminist perspective does not necessarily take on a sustained criticism of the myth of the wilderness. Settler women rename some places of Canadian nature, eliminate its past, and create for it a new history, taking away Indigenous knowledge and continuing to uphold the myth of the wilderness as an idea of settlement and recreation. As a result, Urquhart's ecofeminist perspectives do not provide a sustained criticism of the myth of the wilderness,

instead problematically allowing some of its aspects to go unchallenged. A postcolonial feminist reading of the novel helps us draw greater attention to the ways Indigenous Canadians are marginalised and dispossessed within tropes of the wilderness and the ways this marginalisation is perpetuated by the novel. A resolution for Western-centric aspects of ecofeminism would be to turn to postcolonial studies; as DeLoughrey has demonstrated, a postcolonial approach challenges ecofeminism's tendency to privilege white and Western modes of thinking.

Moreover, this thesis's reading of Atwood's *Oryx and Crake* reveals that the novel performs a thoughtful criticism of the myth of the wilderness; though the novel does not make Indigenous people main characters, it nevertheless contains significant moments that challenge the ways patriarchy and the patriarchal desire to control and subdue the wilderness harms women, Indigenous people, and the natural world. The chapter asserts that reading the novel reveals that the critique of a Nature/Culture binary should be supplemented by additional critique of a body/mind binary. In the novel, Western colonial forces of oppression have transformed the environment into a post-apocalyptic dystopia, because Crake selfishly released a destructive virus to wipe out humanity. He treats Oryx as an object to use to create a new human race. Such is the external context that has shaped Oryx's personality, determining her humiliating position in the Western world of the future. Crake uses Oryx as the "mother" of the submissive Indigenous-esque Crakers; thus, the novel criticises the ways Crake tries to create a "pristine" world by unleashing a virus, killing all humans except for the submissive Crakers. Atwood's novel engages with ecofeminist perspectives and criticism of patriarchal power as it reveals the ways the myth of the wilderness impacts women, who are treated as resources to be abused by colonial greed. The chapter thus demonstrates ways in which novels can be read to support or critique masculinist settler logic; it further enables us to reveal how the wilderness myth harms the natural world as well as Indigenous peoples.

In addition to her strong feminist standpoint, Atwood is an outspoken environmentalist. This side of her social activism is reflected in novels like *Oryx and Crake*. The novel portrays an industrialised community in which life is gradually drained away by a pervading capitalist greed. The role of capitalism here is to support technological advancements for the overall progress of society. This progress, however, does not mean improving the environment, or human life, let alone the position of women. It is primarily oriented towards scientifically engineered accumulation at the expense of the environment and women. In other words, *Oryx and Crake* depicts a world in which both women and the land have become precious resources from which to fuel the modern world of industry and technology. In the novel, women, Indigenous-like people (the Crakers), and the land are victims of the relentless capitalist machinery; the novel thus criticises patriarchal modes of destruction that harm everyone, but especially women, Indigenous people, and the land that Indigenous people cultivate. The novel makes clear that the wilderness myth and the people who cling to it threaten peace and could bring about a dystopian reality.

With a focus on postcolonial critique within Canada and Australia, these three chapters delve into the examination of representations of the wilderness myth. It specifically focuses on Canada and Australia because, as Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge assert in "What Was Postcolonialism?" it is worthwhile to place focus upon the "internal colonialism" that exists within Australian and Canadian societies: on a continuing history of oppression of their respective indigenous peoples that seriously damages both countries' claims to postcolonial status (376). A longer study could also focus on the wilderness myth in the United States, New Zealand, and beyond; this study drew on scholarship such as Mishra and Hodge's to continue the dialogue around Australia and Canadian treatment of Indigenous peoples and literary representations of the myth of the wilderness.

The thesis concludes that certain writings from the nineteenth, twentieth, and twenty-first centuries, often lauded for their ecocritical engagement, indeed challenge colonial perspectives and ecological framings. By closely analysing how these texts depict the viewpoints of settlers, however, the thesis asserts that the wilderness myth maintains a significant hold on literature authored by or about settlers. Furthermore, it is noted that some theorists, at times, adopt and employ rational dualisms like Culture/Nature, which can, whether directly or indirectly, contribute to the marginalisation of Indigenous communities in Australia and Canada. It is imperative to persistently question the enduring myth that portrays the wilderness as an untouched realm distinct from human influence and culture. The three chapters all emphasise that the Indigenous world should no longer fall victim to the imperialist competition for resources, which is underpinned by a cold and morally twisted belief that resources must be extracted at any cost—a belief that finds its origins in the wilderness myth fabricated by Western colonisers. This myth has, in settlers' perspectives, granted early colonial conservationists the authority to exploit the so-called "uncivilized" regions of the world in the name of humanity. As Jason W. Moore notes, "race" and "ecology" are intertwined processes that shape each other, highlighting the interplay between human and non-human aspects of nature in the emergence of racial power dynamics (quoted in Campbell, 110). Therefore, discussions of ecology should invariably incorporate discussions of race.

Like any research with a strictly defined textual corpus, this thesis is not without certain limitations. The most obvious one is the limit of the works under study. This research has examined the notion of the wilderness myth within a strictly defined scope of works. The works chosen for this purpose belong to literature and art from the 19th to 21st centuries. An additional study could certainly explore the representations of the wilderness myth in literature of the United States, where settlers purposefully mourned the loss of the "pristine"

natural world and Indigenous people in order to avoid taking blame for having destroyed natural ecology and Indigenous life (Gerson). Additionally, further studies could focus upon the texts and poems of early conservationists; for example, John Muir, United States conservationist, wrote poems that could be said to glorify a past natural world empty of all humans. As has been argued, this vision of a natural world free of humans rehearses the wilderness myth by establishing a Nature/Culture dualism that erases Indigenous life.

A future study could extend the work begun with this thesis by focusing on Indigenous literatures. As can be seen, this thesis focused on literature by settlers and the descendants of settlers in order to begin this inquiry into the diverse ways the wilderness myth is represented, critiqued, or goes unchallenged in texts. Indigenous Canadian literature boasts a rich tapestry of voices, including notable authors such as Thomas King, Cherie Dimaline, and Katherena Vermette, to name a few. Thomas King's humorous narratives explore Indigenous identity in "The Art of Indigenous Knowledge." Cherie Dimaline addresses cultural preservation and resilience in dystopian settings in *The Marrow Thieves*; this work would be interesting to contrast with Atwood's dystopian novel. Katherena Vermette's work sheds light on the lives of Indigenous women in urban contexts. These authors collectively contribute to a vibrant literary landscape that offers profound insights into Indigenous cultures.

Australia's literary landscape is also enriched by the contributions of several notable Indigenous authors. Kim Scott, a Noongar writer, explores Indigenous identity and colonisation's impact in works like *That Deadman Dance*. Anita Heiss, of Wiradjuri heritage, addresses issues of identity and racism in both fiction and non-fiction. Tara June Winch, of Wiradjuri heritage, received acclaim for *The Yield*, which delves into Indigenous language and culture. These authors collectively amplify Indigenous voices, history, and culture in Australian literature. It would be fascinating to consider how their writings differ from the

writings of the descendants of settlers, White and Malouf. While descendants of settlers may empathise with the loss of Indigenous knowledge and protest the continued power of the myth of the wilderness; Indigenous writers can provide authentic accounts of their experiences and the experiences of their forebears.

If the myth is subscribed to, then Indigenous people's culture and knowledges are too often deemed part of an erased past. However, as writings by settlers and the descendants of settlers demonstrate, Indigenous people and their culture remain and influence the imaginations of settler authors. Thus, a further study could extend the claims made in this thesis by exploring the ways Indigenous writers implicitly contest the wilderness myth or write differently about the relationship between humans and the land.

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