

## Introduction

I think of globalization like a light which shines brighter and brighter on a few people and the rest are in darkness, wiped out. They simply can't be seen. Once you get used to not seeing something, then, slowly, it's no longer possible to see it.

—Arundhati Roy

I think the economic logic behind dumping a load of toxic waste in the lowest-wage country is impeccable and we should face up to that. . . . I've always thought that countries in Africa are vastly under polluted; their air quality is probably vastly inefficiently low compared to Los Angeles. . . . Just between you and me, shouldn't the World Bank be encouraging more migration of the dirty industries to the Least Developed Countries?

—Lawrence Summers, confidential World Bank memo,  
December 12, 1991

When Lawrence Summers, then president of the World Bank, advocated that the bank develop a scheme to export rich nation garbage, toxic waste, and heavily polluting industries to Africa, he did so in the calm voice of global managerial reasoning.<sup>1</sup> Such a scheme, Summers elaborated, would help correct an inefficient global imbalance in toxicity. Underlying his plan is an overlooked but crucial subsidiary benefit that he

outlined: offloading rich-nation toxins onto the world's poorest continent would help ease the growing pressure from rich-nation environmentalists who were campaigning against garbage dumps and industrial effluent that they condemned as health threats and found aesthetically offensive. Summers thus rationalized his poison-redistribution ethic as offering a double gain: it would benefit the United States and Europe economically, while helping appease the rising discontent of rich-nation environmentalists. Summers' arguments assumed a direct link between aesthetically unsightly waste and Africa as an out-of-sight continent, a place remote from green activists' terrain of concern. In Summers' win-win scenario for the global North, the African recipients of his plan were triply discounted: discounted as political agents, discounted as long-term casualties of what I call in this book "slow violence," and discounted as cultures possessing environmental practices and concerns of their own. I begin with Summers' extraordinary proposal because it captures the strategic and representational challenges posed by slow violence as it impacts the environments—and the environmentalism—of the poor.

Three primary concerns animate this book, chief among them my conviction that we urgently need to rethink—politically, imaginatively, and theoretically—what I call "slow violence." By slow violence I mean a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all. Violence is customarily conceived as an event or action that is immediate in time, explosive and spectacular in space, and as erupting into instant sensational visibility. We need, I believe, to engage a different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales. In so doing, we also need to engage the representational, narrative, and strategic challenges posed by the relative invisibility of slow violence. Climate change, the thawing cryosphere, toxic drift, biomagnification, deforestation, the radioactive aftermaths of wars, acidifying oceans, and a host of other slowly unfolding environmental catastrophes present formidable representational obstacles that can hinder our efforts to mobilize and act decisively. The long dyings—the staggered and staggeringly discounted casualties, both human and ecological that result from war's toxic aftermaths or

climate change—are underrepresented in strategic planning as well as in human memory.

Had Summers advocated invading Africa with weapons of mass destruction, his proposal would have fallen under conventional definitions of violence and been perceived as a military or even an imperial invasion. Advocating invading countries with mass forms of slow-motion toxicity, however, requires rethinking our accepted assumptions of violence to include slow violence. Such a rethinking requires that we complicate conventional assumptions about violence as a highly visible act that is newsworthy because it is event focused, time bound, and body bound. We need to account for how the temporal dispersion of slow violence affects the way we perceive and respond to a variety of social afflictions—from domestic abuse to posttraumatic stress and, in particular, environmental calamities. A major challenge is representational: how to devise arresting stories, images, and symbols adequate to the pervasive but elusive violence of delayed effects. Crucially, slow violence is often not just attritional but also exponential, operating as a major threat multiplier; it can fuel long-term, proliferating conflicts in situations where the conditions for sustaining life become increasingly but gradually degraded.

Politically and emotionally, different kinds of disaster possess unequal heft. Falling bodies, burning towers, exploding heads, avalanches, volcanoes, and tsunamis have a visceral, eye-catching and page-turning power that tales of slow violence, unfolding over years, decades, even centuries, cannot match. Stories of toxic buildup, massing greenhouse gases, and accelerated species loss due to ravaged habitats are all cataclysmic, but they are scientifically convoluted cataclysms in which casualties are postponed, often for generations. In an age when the media venerate the spectacular, when public policy is shaped primarily around perceived immediate need, a central question is strategic and representational: how can we convert into image and narrative the disasters that are slow moving and long in the making, disasters that are anonymous and that star nobody, disasters that are attritional and of indifferent interest to the sensation-driven technologies of our image-world? How can we turn the long emergencies of slow violence into stories dramatic enough to rouse public sentiment and warrant political intervention, these emergencies whose repercussions have given rise to some of the most critical challenges of our time?

This book's second, related focus concerns the environmentalism of the poor, for it is those people lacking resources who are the principal casualties of slow violence. Their unseen poverty is compounded by the invisibility of the slow violence that permeates so many of their lives. Our media bias toward spectacular violence exacerbates the vulnerability of ecosystems treated as disposable by turbo-capitalism while simultaneously exacerbating the vulnerability of those whom Kevin Bale, in another context, has called "disposable people."<sup>2</sup> It is against such conjoined ecological and human disposability that we have witnessed a resurgent environmentalism of the poor, particularly (though not exclusively) across the so-called global South. So a central issue that emerges is strategic: if the neoliberal era has intensified assaults on resources, it has also intensified resistance, whether through isolated site-specific struggles or through activism that has reached across national boundaries in an effort to build translocal alliances.

"The poor" is a compendious category subject to almost infinite local variation as well as to fracture along fault lines of ethnicity, gender, race, class, region, religion, and generation. Confronted with the militarization of both commerce and development, impoverished communities are often assailed by coercion and bribery that test their cohesive resilience. How much control will, say, a poor hardwood forest community have over the mix of subsistence and market strategies it deploys in attempts at adaptive survival? How will that community negotiate competing definitions of its own poverty and long-term wealth when the guns, the bulldozers, and the moneymen arrive? Such communities typically have to patch together threadbare improvised alliances against vastly superior military, corporate, and media forces. As such, impoverished resource rebels can seldom afford to be single-issue activists: their green commitments are seamed through with other economic and cultural causes as they experience environmental threat not as a planetary abstraction but as a set of inhabited risks, some imminent, others obscurely long term.

The status of environmental activism among the poor in the global South has shifted significantly in recent years. Where green or environmental discourses were once frequently regarded with skepticism as neocolonial, Western impositions inimical to the resource priorities of the poor in the global South, such attitudes have been tempered by the gathering visibility and credibility of environmental justice movements that have pushed

back against an antihuman environmentalism that too often sought (under the banner of universalism) to impose green agendas dominated by rich nations and Western NGOs. Among those who inhabit the frontlines of the global resource wars, suspicions that environmentalism is another guise of what Andrew Ross calls “planetary management” have not, of course, been wholly allayed.<sup>3</sup> But those suspicions have eased somewhat as the spectrum of what counts as environmentalism has broadened. Western activists are now more prone to recognize, engage, and learn from resource insurrections among the global poor that might previously have been discounted as not properly environmental.<sup>4</sup> Indeed, I believe that the fate of environmentalism—and more decisively, the character of the biosphere itself—will be shaped significantly in decades to come by the tension between what Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier have called “full-stomach” and “empty-belly” environmentalism.<sup>5</sup>

The challenge of visibility that links slow violence to the environmentalism of the poor connects directly to this book’s third circulating concern—the complex, often vexed figure of the environmental writer-activist. In the chapters that follow I address not just literary but more broadly rhetorical and visual challenges posed by slow violence; however, I place particular emphasis on combative writers who have deployed their imaginative agility and worldly ardor to help amplify the media-marginalized causes of the environmentally dispossessed. I have sought to stress those places where writers and social movements, often in complicated tandem, have strategized against attritional disasters that afflict embattled communities. The writers I engage are geographically wide ranging—from various parts of the African continent, from the Middle East, India, the Caribbean, the United States, and Britain—and work across a variety of forms. Figures like Wangari Maathai, Arundhati Roy, Indra Sinha, Ken Saro-Wiwa, Abdulrahman Munif, Njabulo Ndebele, Nadine Gordimer, Jamaica Kincaid, Rachel Carson, and June Jordan are alive to the inhabited impact of corrosive transnational forces, including petro-imperialism, the megadam industry, outsourced toxicity, neocolonial tourism, antihuman conservation practices, corporate and environmental deregulation, and the militarization of commerce, forces that disproportionately jeopardize the livelihoods, prospects, and memory banks of the global poor. Among the writers I consider, some have testified in relative isolation, some have helped instigate movements

for environmental justice, and yet others, in aligning themselves with pre-existing movements, have given imaginative definition to the issues at stake while enhancing the public visibility of the cause.

Relations between movements and writers are often fraught and frictional, not least because such movements themselves are susceptible to fracture from both external and internal pressures.<sup>6</sup> That said, the writers I consider are enraged by injustices they wish to see redressed, injustices they believe they can help expose, silences they can help dismantle through testimonial protest, rhetorical inventiveness, and counterhistories in the face of formidable odds. Most are restless, versatile writers ready to pit their energies against what Edward Said called “the normalized quiet of unseen power.”<sup>7</sup> This normalized quiet is of particular pertinence to the hushed havoc and injurious invisibility that trail slow violence.

### Slow Violence

In this book, I have sought to address our inattention to calamities that are slow and long lasting, calamities that patiently dispense their devastation while remaining outside our flickering attention spans—and outside the purview of a spectacle-driven corporate media. The insidious workings of slow violence derive largely from the unequal attention given to spectacular and unspectacular time. In an age that venerates instant spectacle, slow violence is deficient in the recognizable special effects that fill movie theaters and boost ratings on TV. Chemical and radiological violence, for example, is driven inward, somatized into cellular dramas of mutation that—particularly in the bodies of the poor—remain largely unobserved, undiagnosed, and untreated. From a narrative perspective, such invisible, mutagenic theater is slow paced and open ended, eluding the tidy closure, the containment, imposed by the visual orthodoxies of victory and defeat.

Let me ground this point by referring, in conjunction, to Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* and Frantz Fanon’s *The Wretched of the Earth*. In 1962 *Silent Spring* jolted a broad international public into an awareness of the protracted, cryptic, and indiscriminate casualties inflicted by dichlorodiphenyltrichloroethane (DDT). Yet, just one year earlier, Fanon, in the opening pages of *Wretched of the Earth*, had comfortably invoked DDT as an affirmative metaphor for anticolonial violence: he called for a DDT-filled spray gun to be

wielded as a weapon against the “parasites” spread by the colonials’ Christian church.<sup>8</sup> Fanon’s drama of decolonization is, of course, studded with the overt weaponry whereby subjugation is maintained (“by dint of a great array of bayonets and cannons”) or overthrown (“by the searing bullets and bloodstained knives”) after “a murderous and decisive struggle between the two protagonists.”<sup>9</sup> Yet his temporal vision of violence—and of what Aimé Césaire called “the rendezvous of victory”—was uncomplicated by the concerns that an as-yet inchoate environmental justice movement (catalyzed in part by *Silent Spring*) would raise about lopsided risks that permeate the land long term, blurring the clean lines between defeat and victory, between colonial dispossession and official national self-determination.<sup>10</sup> We can certainly read Fanon, in his concern with land as property and as fount of native dignity, retrospectively with an environmental eye. But our theories of violence today must be informed by a science unavailable to Fanon, a science that addresses environmentally embedded violence that is often difficult to source, oppose, and once set in motion, to reverse.

Attritional catastrophes that overspill clear boundaries in time and space are marked above all by displacements—temporal, geographical, rhetorical, and technological displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and in retrospect, the human and environmental costs. Such displacements smooth the way for amnesia, as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them, places that ordinarily pass unmourned in the corporate media. Places like the Marshall Islands, subjected between 1948 and 1958 to sixty-seven American atmospheric nuclear “tests,” the largest of them equal in force to 1,000 Hiroshima-sized bombs. In 1956 the Atomic Energy Commission declared the Marshall Islands “by far the most contaminated place in the world,” a condition that would compromise independence in the long term, despite the islands’ formal ascent in 1979 into the ranks of self-governing nations.<sup>11</sup> The island republic was still in part governed by an irradiated past: well into the 1980s its history of nuclear colonialism, long forgotten by the colonizers, was still delivering into the world “jellyfish babies”—headless, eyeless, limbless human infants who would live for just a few hours.<sup>12</sup>

If, as Said notes, struggles over geography are never reducible to armed struggle but have a profound symbolic and narrative component as well, and if, as Michael Watts insists, we must attend to the “violent geographies

of fast capitalism,” we need to supplement both these injunctions with a deeper understanding of the slow violence of delayed effects that structures so many of our most consequential forgettings.<sup>13</sup> Violence, above all environmental violence, needs to be seen—and deeply considered—as a contest not only over space, or bodies, or labor, or resources, but also over time. We need to bear in mind Faulkner’s dictum that “the past is never dead. It’s not even past.” His words resonate with particular force across landscapes permeated by slow violence, landscapes of temporal overflow that elude rhetorical cleanup operations with their sanitary beginnings and endings.<sup>14</sup>

Kwame Anthony Appiah famously asked, “Is the ‘Post-’ in ‘Postcolonial’ the ‘Post-’ in ‘Postmodern’?” As environmentalists we might ask similarly searching questions of the “post” in postindustrial, post–Cold War, and postconflict.<sup>15</sup> For if the past of slow violence is never past, so too the post is never fully post: industrial particulates and effluents live on in the environmental elements we inhabit and in our very bodies, which epidemiologically and ecologically are never our simple contemporaries.<sup>16</sup> Something similar applies to so-called postconflict societies whose leaders may annually commemorate, as marked on the calendar, the official cessation of hostilities, while ongoing intergenerational slow violence (inflicted by, say, unexploded landmines or carcinogens from an arms dump) may continue hostilities by other means.

Ours is an age of onrushing turbo-capitalism, wherein the present feels more abbreviated than it used to—at least for the world’s privileged classes who live surrounded by technological time-savers that often compound the sensation of not having enough time. Consequently, one of the most pressing challenges of our age is how to adjust our rapidly eroding attention spans to the slow erosions of environmental justice. If, under neoliberalism, the gulf between enclaved rich and outcast poor has become ever more pronounced, ours is also an era of enclaved time wherein for many speed has become a self-justifying, propulsive ethic that renders “uneventful” violence (to those who live remote from its attritional lethality) a weak claimant on our time. The attosecond pace of our age, with its restless technologies of infinite promise and infinite disappointment, prompts us to keep flicking and clicking distractedly in an insatiable—and often insensate—quest for quicker sensation.

The oxymoronic notion of slow violence poses a number of challenges: scientific, legal, political, and representational. In the long arc between the



emergence of slow violence and its delayed effects, both the causes and the memory of catastrophe readily fade from view as the casualties incurred typically pass untallied and unremembered. Such discounting in turn makes it far more difficult to secure effective legal measures for prevention, restitution, and redress. Casualties from slow violence are, moreover, out of sync not only with our narrative and media expectations but also with the swift seasons of electoral change. Politicians routinely adopt a “last in, first out” stance toward environmental issues, admitting them when times are flush, dumping them as soon as times get tight. Because preventative or remedial environmental legislation typically targets slow violence, it cannot deliver dependable electoral cycle results, even though those results may ultimately be life saving. Relative to bankable pocketbook actions—there’ll be a tax rebate check in the mail next August—environmental payouts seem to lurk on a distant horizon. Many politicians—and indeed many voters—routinely treat environmental action as critical yet not urgent. And so generation after generation of two- or four-year cycle politicians add to the pileup of deferrable actions deferred. With rare exceptions, in the domain of slow violence “yes, but not now, not yet” becomes the *modus operandi*.

How can leaders be goaded to avert catastrophe when the political rewards of their actions will not accrue to them but will be reaped on someone else’s watch decades, even centuries, from now? How can environmental activists and storytellers work to counter the potent political, corporate, and even scientific forces invested in immediate self-interest, procrastination, and dissembling? We see such dissembling at work, for instance, in the afterword to Michael Crichton’s 2004 environmental conspiracy novel, *State of Fear*, wherein he argued that we needed twenty more years of data gathering on climate change before any policy decisions could be ventured.<sup>17</sup> Although the National Academy of Sciences had assured former president George W. Bush that humans were indeed causing the earth to warm, Bush shopped around for views that accorded with his own skepticism and found them in a private meeting with Crichton, whom he described as “an expert scientist.”

To address the challenges of slow violence is to confront the dilemma Rachel Carson faced almost half a century ago as she sought to dramatize what she eloquently called “death by indirection.”<sup>18</sup> Carson’s subjects were biomagnification and toxic drift, forms of oblique, slow-acting violence that,

like climate change, pose formidable imaginative difficulties for writers and activists alike. In struggling to give shape to amorphous menace, both Carson and reviewers of *Silent Spring* resorted to a narrative vocabulary: one reviewer portrayed the book as exposing “the new, unplotted and mysterious dangers we insist upon creating all around us,”<sup>19</sup> while Carson herself wrote of “a shadow that is no less ominous because it is formless and obscure.”<sup>20</sup> To confront slow violence requires, then, that we plot and give figurative shape to formless threats whose fatal repercussions are dispersed across space and time. The representational challenges are acute, requiring creative ways of drawing public attention to catastrophic acts that are low in instant spectacle but high in long-term effects. To intervene representationally entails devising iconic symbols that embody amorphous calamities as well as narrative forms that infuse those symbols with dramatic urgency.

### Slow Violence and Structural Violence

Seven years after Rachel Carson turned our attention to the lethal mechanisms of “death by indirection,” Johan Galtung, the influential Norwegian mathematician and sociologist, coined the term “indirect or structural violence.”<sup>21</sup> Galtung’s theory of structural violence is pertinent here because some of his concerns overlap with the concerns that animate this book, while others help throw into relief the rather different features I have sought to highlight by introducing the term “slow violence.” Structural violence, for Galtung, stands in opposition to the more familiar personal violence that dominates our conceptions of what counts as violence per se.<sup>22</sup> Galtung was concerned, as I am, with widening the field of what constitutes violence. He sought to foreground the vast structures that can give rise to acts of personal violence and constitute forms of violence in and of themselves. Such structural violence may range from the unequal morbidity that results from a commodified health care system, to racism itself. What I share with Galtung’s line of thought is a concern with social justice, hidden agency, and certain forms of violence that are imperceptible.

In these terms, for example, we can recognize that the structural violence embodied by a neoliberal order of austerity measures, structural adjustment, rampant deregulation, corporate megamergers, and a widening gulf between rich and poor is a form of covert violence in its own right

that is often a catalyst for more recognizably overt violence. For an expressly environmental example of structural violence, one might cite Wangari Maathai's insistence that the systemic burdens of national debt to the IMF and World Bank borne by many so-called developing nations constitute a major impediment to environmental sustainability.<sup>23</sup> So, too, feminist earth scientist Jill Schneiderman, one of our finest thinkers about environmental time, has written about the way in which environmental degradation may "masquerade as inevitable."<sup>24</sup>

For all the continuing pertinence of the theory of structural violence and for all the modifications the theory has undergone, the notion bears the impress of its genesis during the high era of structuralist thinking that tended toward a static determinism. We see this, for example, in Galtung's insistence that "structural violence is silent, it does not show—it is essentially static, it is the tranquil waters."<sup>25</sup> In contrast to the static connotations of structural violence, I have sought, through the notion of slow violence, to foreground questions of time, movement, and change, however gradual. The explicitly temporal emphasis of slow violence allows us to keep front and center the representational challenges and imaginative dilemmas posed not just by imperceptible violence but by imperceptible change whereby violence is decoupled from its original causes by the workings of time. Time becomes an actor in complicated ways, not least because the temporal templates of our spectacle-driven, 24/7 media life have shifted massively since Galtung first advanced his theory of structural violence some forty years ago. To talk about slow violence, then, is to engage directly with our contemporary politics of speed.

Simply put, structural violence is a theory that entails rethinking different notions of causation and agency with respect to violent effects. Slow violence, by contrast, might well include forms of structural violence, but has a wider descriptive range in calling attention, not simply to questions of agency, but to broader, more complex descriptive categories of violence enacted slowly over time. The shift in the relationship between human agency and time is most dramatically evident in our enhanced understanding of the accelerated changes occurring at two scalar extremes—in the life-sustaining circuits of planetary biophysics and in the wired brain's neural circuitry. The idea of structural violence predated both sophisticated contemporary ice-core sampling methods and the emergence of cyber

technology. My concept of slow violence thus seeks to respond both to recent, radical changes in our geological perception and our changing technological experiences of time.

Let me address the geological aspect first. In 2000, Paul Crutzen, the Nobel Prize-winning atmospheric chemist, introduced the term “the Anthropocene Age” (which he dated to James Watt’s invention of the steam engine). Through the notion of “the Anthropocene Age,” Crutzen sought to theorize an unprecedented epochal effect: the massive impact by the human species, from the industrial era onward, on our planet’s life systems, an impact that, as his term suggests, is geomorphic, equal in force and in long-term implications to a major geological event.<sup>26</sup> Crutzen’s attempt to capture the epochal scale of human activity’s impact on the planet was followed by Will Steffen’s elaboration, in conjunction with Crutzen and John McNeill, of what they dubbed the Great Acceleration, a second stage of the Anthropocene Age that they dated to the mid-twentieth century. Writing in 2007, Steffen et al. noted how “nearly three-quarters of the anthropogenically driven rise in CO<sub>2</sub> concentration has occurred since 1950 (from about 310 to 380 ppm), and about half of the total rise (48 ppm) has occurred in just the last 30 years.”<sup>27</sup> The Australian environmental historian Libby Robin has put the case succinctly: “We have recently entered a new geological epoch, the Anthropocene. There is now considerable evidence that humanity has altered the biophysical systems of Earth, not just the carbon cycle . . . but also the nitrogen cycle and ultimately the atmosphere and climate of the whole globe.”<sup>28</sup> What, then, are the consequences for our experience of time of this newfound recognition that we have inadvertently, through our unprecedented biophysical species power, inaugurated an Anthropocene Age and are now engaged in (and subject to) the hurtling changes of the Great Acceleration?

Over the past two decades, this high-speed planetary modification has been accompanied (at least for those increasing billions who have access to the Internet) by rapid modifications to the human cortex. It is difficult, but necessary, to consider simultaneously a geologically-paced plasticity, however relatively rapid, and the plasticity of brain circuits reprogrammed by a digital world that threatens to “info-whelm” us into a state of perpetual distraction. If an awareness of the Great Acceleration is (to put it mildly) unevenly distributed, the experience of accelerated connectivity (and the paradoxical disconnects that can accompany it) is increasingly widespread.

In an age of degraded attention spans it becomes doubly difficult yet increasingly urgent that we focus on the toll exacted, over time, by the slow violence of ecological degradation. We live, writes Cory Doctorow, in an era when the electronic screen has become an “ecosystem of interruption technologies.”<sup>29</sup> Or as former Microsoft executive Linda Stone puts it, we now live in an age of “continuous partial attention.”<sup>30</sup> Fast is faster than it used to be, and story units have become concomitantly shorter. In this cultural milieu of digitally speeded up time, and foreshortened narrative, the intergenerational aftermath becomes a harder sell. So to render slow violence visible entails, among other things, redefining speed: we see such efforts in talk of accelerated species loss, rapid climate change, and in attempts to recast “glacial”—once a dead metaphor for “slow”—as a rousing, iconic image of unacceptably fast loss.

Efforts to make forms of slow violence more urgently visible suffered a setback in the United States in the aftermath of 9/11, which reinforced a spectacular, immediately sensational, and instantly hyper-visible image of what constitutes a violent threat. The fiery spectacle of the collapsing towers was burned into the national psyche as *the* definitive image of violence, setting back by years attempts to rally public sentiment against climate change, a threat that is incremental, exponential, and far less sensorially visible. Condoleezza Rice’s strategic fantasy of a mushroom cloud looming over America if the United States failed to invade Iraq gave further visual definition to cataclysmic violence as something explosive and instantaneous, a recognizably cinematic, immediately sensational, pyrotechnic event.

The representational bias against slow violence has, furthermore, a critically dangerous impact on what counts as a casualty in the first place. Casualties of slow violence—human and environmental—are the casualties most likely not to be seen, not to be counted. Casualties of slow violence become light-weight, disposable casualties, with dire consequences for the ways wars are remembered, which in turn has dire consequences for the projected casualties from future wars. We can observe this bias at work in the way wars, whose lethal repercussions spread across space and time, are tidily bookended in the historical record. Thus, for instance, a 2003 *New York Times* editorial on Vietnam declared that “during our dozen years there, the U.S. killed and helped kill at least 1.5 million people.”<sup>31</sup> But that simple phrase “during our dozen years there” shrinks the toll, foreshortening the ongoing

slow-motion slaughter: hundreds of thousands survived the official war years, only to slowly lose their lives later to Agent Orange. In a 2002 study, the environmental scientist Arnold Schecter recorded dioxin levels in the bloodstreams of Bien Hoa residents at 135 times the levels of Hanoi's inhabitants, who lived far north of the spraying.<sup>32</sup> The afflicted include thousands of children born decades after the war's end. More than thirty years after the last spray run, Agent Orange continues to wreak havoc as, through biomagnification, dioxins build up in the fatty tissues of pivotal foods such as duck and fish and pass from the natural world into the cooking pot and from there to ensuing human generations. An Institute of Medicine committee has by now linked seventeen medical conditions to Agent Orange; indeed, as recently as 2009 it uncovered fresh evidence that exposure to the chemical increases the likelihood of developing Parkinson's disease and ischemic heart disease.<sup>33</sup> Under such circumstances, wherein long-term risks continue to emerge, to bookend a war's casualties with the phrase "during our dozen years there" is misleading: that small, seemingly innocent phrase is a powerful reminder of how our rhetorical conventions for bracketing violence routinely ignore ongoing, belated casualties.

### Slow Violence and Strategies of Representation: Writer-Activism

How do we bring home—and bring emotionally to life—threats that take time to wreak their havoc, threats that never materialize in one spectacular, explosive, cinematic scene? *Apprehension* is a critical word here, a crossover term that draws together the domains of perception, emotion, and action. To engage slow violence is to confront layered predicaments of apprehension: to apprehend—to arrest, or at least mitigate—often imperceptible threats requires rendering them apprehensible to the senses through the work of scientific and imaginative testimony. An influential lineage of environmental thought gives primacy to immediate sensory apprehension, to sight above all, as foundational for any environmental ethics of place. George Perkins Marsh, the mid-nineteenth-century environmental pioneer, argued in *Man and Nature* that "the power most important to cultivate, and, at the same time, hardest to acquire, is that of seeing what is before him."<sup>34</sup> Aldo Leopold similarly insisted that "we can be ethical only toward what we can see."<sup>35</sup> But

what happens when we are unsighted, when what extends before us—in the space and time that we most deeply inhabit—remains invisible? How, indeed, are we to act ethically toward human and biotic communities that lie beyond our sensory ken? What then, in the fullest sense of the phrase, is the place of seeing in the world that we now inhabit? What, moreover, is the place of the other senses? How do we both make slow violence visible yet also challenge the privileging of the visible?

Such questions have profound consequences for the apprehension of slow violence, whether on a cellular or a transnational scale. Planetary consciousness (a notion that has undergone a host of theoretical formulations) becomes pertinent here, perhaps most usefully in the sense in which Mary Louise Pratt elaborates it, linking questions of power and perspective, keeping front and center the often latent, often invisible violence in the view. Who gets to see, and from where? When and how does such empowered seeing become normative? And what perspectives—not least those of the poor or women or the colonized—do hegemonic sight conventions of visibility obscure? Pratt's formulation of planetary consciousness remains invaluable because it allows us to connect forms of apprehension to forms of imperial violence.<sup>36</sup>

Against this backdrop, I want to introduce the third central concern of this book. Alongside slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor, the chapters that follow are critically concerned with the political, imaginative, and strategic role of environmental writer-activists. Writer-activists can help us apprehend threats imaginatively that remain imperceptible to the senses, either because they are geographically remote, too vast or too minute in scale, or are played out across a time span that exceeds the instance of observation or even the physiological life of the human observer. In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the immediate senses. Writing can challenge perceptual habits that downplay the damage slow violence inflicts and bring into imaginative focus apprehensions that elude sensory corroboration. The narrative imaginings of writer-activists may thus offer us a different kind of witnessing: of sights unseen.

To allay states of apprehension—trepidations, forebodings, shadows cast by the invisible—entails facing the challenge, at once imaginative and

scientific, of giving the unapparent a materiality upon which we can act. Yet poor communities, often disproportionately exposed to the force fields of slow violence—be they military residues or imported e-waste or the rising tides of climate change—are the communities least likely to attract sustained scientific inquiry into causes, effects, and potential redress. Such poor communities are abandoned to sporadic science at best and usually no science at all; they are also disproportionately subjected to involuntary pharmaceutical experiments. Indeed, when such communities raise concerns, they often become targets of well-funded antisience by forces that have a legal or commercial interest in manufacturing and disseminating doubt.<sup>37</sup> Such embattled communities, beset by officially unacknowledged hazards, must find ways to broadcast their inhabited fears, their lived sense of a corroded environment, within the broader global struggles over apprehension. It is here that writers, filmmakers, and digital activists may play a mediating role in helping counter the layered invisibility that results from insidious threats, from temporal protractedness, and from the fact that the afflicted are people whose quality of life—and often whose very existence—is of indifferent interest to the corporate media.

To address violence discounted by dominant structures of apprehension is necessarily to engage the culturally variable issue of *who counts as a witness*. Contests over what counts as violence are intimately entangled with conflicts over who bears the social authority of witness, which entails much more than simply seeing or not seeing. The entangled politics of spectacle and witnessing have implications that stretch well beyond environmental slow violence. In domestic abuse, for instance, violence may be life threatening but slow, bloodless, and brutal in ways that are not always immediately fatal: a broken nose constitutes a different order of evidence from food or access to medical treatment or human company withheld over an extended period. A locked door can be a weapon. Doors for women are often long-term, nonlethal weapons that leave no telltale bloody trail; doors don't bear witness to a single, decisive blow. In many cultures, moreover, rape isn't defined as rape if it is inflicted by a husband. And in some societies, a rape isn't rape unless three adult men are present to witness it. As the journalistic chestnut has it, "if it bleeds, it leads." And as a corollary, if it's bloodless, slow-motion violence, the story is more likely to be buried, particularly if it's relayed by people whose witnessing authority is culturally discounted.



## The Environmentalism of the Poor and Displacement in Place

In the global resource wars, the environmentalism of the poor is frequently triggered when an official landscape is forcibly imposed on a vernacular one.<sup>38</sup> A vernacular landscape is shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features. A vernacular landscape, although neither monolithic nor undisputed, is integral to the socioenvironmental dynamics of community rather than being wholly externalized—treated as out there, as a separate nonrenewable resource. By contrast, an official landscape—whether governmental, NGO, corporate, or some combination of those—is typically oblivious to such earlier maps; instead, it writes the land in a bureaucratic, externalizing, and extraction-driven manner that is often pitilessly instrumental. Lawrence Summers' scheme to export rich-nation garbage and toxicity to Africa, for example, stands as a grandiose (though hardly exceptional) instance of a highly rationalized official landscape that, whether in terms of elite capture of resources or toxic disposal, has often been projected onto ecosystems inhabited by those whom Annu Jalais, in an Indian context, calls “dispensable citizens.”<sup>39</sup>

I would argue, then, that the exponential upsurge in indigenous resource rebellions across the globe during the high age of neoliberalism has resulted largely from a clash of temporal perspectives between the short-termers who arrive (with their official landscape maps) to extract, despoil, and depart and the long-termers who must live inside the ecological aftermath and must therefore weigh wealth differently in time's scales. In the pages that follow, I will highlight and explore resource rebellions against developer-dispossessors who descend from other time zones to impose on habitable environments unsustainable calculations about what constitutes the duration of human gain. Change is a cultural constant but the pace of change is not. Hence the temporal contests over how to sustain, regenerate, exhaust, or obliterate the landscape as resource become critical. More than material wealth is here at stake: imposed official landscapes typically discount spiritualized vernacular landscapes, severing webs of accumulated cultural meaning and treating the landscape as if it were uninhabited by the living, the unborn, and the animate deceased.

The ensuing losses are consistent with John Berger's lament over capitalism's disdain for interdependencies by foreshortening our sense of time, thereby rendering the deceased immaterial:

The living reduce the dead to those who have lived; yet the dead already include the living in their own great collective. . . . Until the dehumanization of society by capitalism, all the living awaited the experience of the dead. It was their ultimate future. By themselves the living were incomplete. Thus living and dead were interdependent. Always. Only a uniquely modern form of egoism has broken this interdependence. With disastrous results for the living, who now think of the dead as the *eliminated*.<sup>40</sup>

Hence, one should add, our perspective on environmental asset stripping should include among assets stripped the mingled presence in the landscape of multiple generations, with all the hindsight and foresight that entails.

Against this backdrop, I consider in this book what can be called the temporalities of place. Place is a temporal attainment that must be constantly renegotiated in the face of changes that arrive from without and within, some benign, others potentially ruinous. To engage the temporal displacements involved in slow violence against the poor thus requires that we rethink questions of physical displacement as well. In the chapters that follow, I track the socioenvironmental fallout from developmental agendas whose primary beneficiaries live elsewhere; as when, for example, oasis dwellers in the Persian Gulf get trucked off to unknown destinations so that American petroleum engineers and their sheik collaborators can develop their "finds." Or when a megadam arises and (whether erected in the name of some dictatorial edict, the free market, structural adjustment, national development, or far-off urban or industrial need) displaces and disperses those who had developed through their vernacular landscapes their own adaptable, if always imperfect and vulnerable, relation to riverine possibility.

Paradoxically, those forcibly removed by development include conservation refugees. Too often in the global South, conservation, driven by powerful transnational nature NGOs, combines an antidevelopmental rhetoric with the development of finite resources for the touristic few, thereby depleting vital resources for long-term residents. (I explore this paradox

more fully in Chapter 6: Stranger in the Eco-village: Race, Tourism, and Environmental Time.)

In much of what follows, I address the resistance mounted by impoverished communities who have been involuntarily moved out of their knowledge; I address as well the powers—transnational, national, and local—behind such forced removals. My angle of vision is largely through writers who have affiliated themselves with social movements that seek to stave off one of two ruinous prospects: either the threatened community capitulates and is scattered (across refugee camps, placeless “relocation” sites, desperate favelas, and unwelcoming foreign lands), or the community refuses to move but, as its world is undermined, effectively becomes a community of refugees in place. What I wish to stress here, then, are not just those communities that are involuntarily (and often militarily) relocated to less hospitable environs, but also those affected by what I call displacement without moving. In other words, I want to propose a more radical notion of displacement, one that, instead of referring solely to the movement of people from their places of belonging, refers rather to the loss of the land and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable.

For if environmental protest has frequently been incited by the threat of forced removal, it has also been incited by the threat of displacement without moving. Such a threat entails being simultaneously immobilized and moved out of one’s living knowledge as one’s place loses its life-sustaining features. What does it mean for people declared disposable by some “new” economy to find themselves existing out of place in place as, against the odds, they seek to slow the ecological assaults on inhabitable possibility? What does it mean for subsistence communities to discover they are goners with nowhere to go, that their once-sustaining landscapes have been gutted of their capacity to sustain by an externalizing, instrumental logic? The desperate entrapments, the claustral options that result have galvanized environmental justice insurrections, in the global South and beyond.

I would like to ground this point in Stephanie Black’s superb documentary *Life and Debt*. The film can be interpreted as dramatizing the way neoliberal policies impose displacement without moving (or stationary displacement) on Jamaican communities, a process intimately connected to the long-term socioenvironmental damage inflicted on the island by slow violence. *Life and*

*Debt* adapts to a Jamaican context Kincaid's Antiguan polemic against tourism and against the neocolonial politics of unequal freedom of movement. This is a film about arrivals, departures, and those unable either to arrive or depart. Yet the most consequential arrival is the hardest to depict: the advent of the "free market" in the form of IMF structural adjustment, rendered visible by planes disgorging federally subsidized American milk, onions, and potatoes at prices that destroy unsubsidized Jamaican farmers whose operations were small scale but intergenerational. To compensate for the resultant agricultural collapse and the rising debt that follows from importing more subsidized American food, Jamaica must increase its dependence on tourists who, disgorged from sleek jets, are then immured in dedicated pleasure zones. Black's film sets up an implicit link between the visiting tourists' structured getaways and the structural adjustment visited upon the locals from which there is no getaway. We see guard dogs being trained to segregate mobile pleasure-seekers from trapped, angry locals forced to live their dislocated lives in place. Here, in capsule form, we witness one industry that has thrived under neoliberalism: the security industry, which has flourished on the insecurities wrought by structural adjustment, by the "opening up" of markets, and by the erosion of long-term relations to the land through the annexation—and carting off—of the very conditions of life.

Security has become one of neoliberalism's signature growth industries, exemplified by the international boom in gated communities, as walls have spread like kudzu, and the marketplace in barriers has literally soared, from Los Angeles to Sao Paolo; from Johannesburg to Jakarta; from Lagos, Lima, and Mexico City to Karachi. Ironically, as neoliberal policy makers have pushed to bring down barriers to "free trade," those same policies have resulted in the erection of ever higher barriers segregating inordinate wealth from inordinate poverty. Neoliberalism's proliferating walls concretize a short-term psychology of denial: the delusion that we can survive long term in a world whose resources are increasingly unshared. The wall, read in terms of neoliberalism and environmental slow violence, materializes temporal as well as spatial denial through a literal concretizing of out of sight out of mind.

Neoliberal assaults on inhabited environments have of course met with variable success. Whether the target is an immobile resource such as forests, a mobile resource such as water, or a fugitive resource such as wildlife, the

environment itself is not a predictably quiescent victim.<sup>41</sup> Resistance may assume not just human forms but also arise from an unanticipated recalcitrance on the part of a targeted resource, which may prove harder to commodify and profitably remove or manage than corporate moguls foresaw. We have witnessed as much, for example, in the largely unsuccessful attempts to privatize water: if 20 percent of the world's largest cities now have privatized water systems, such efforts have sometimes experienced reversals—as in Bolivia, for instance—through a mixture of human resistance, topographical impediments, and obstacles to social engineering.

That said, we need to be cautious about romanticizing the noncompliance that may inhere in a targeted resource: relative to the accelerated plunder involved, say, in the “second scramble” for Africa—as American, Australian, Chinese, European, and South African corporations cash in on resource-rich, regulation-poor, war-fractured societies—the resistance posed by nature itself should not be overstated.<sup>42</sup> The recent turn within environmental studies toward celebrating the creative resilience of ecosystems can be readily hijacked by politicians, lobbyists, and corporations who oppose regulatory controls and strive to minimize pollution liability. Co-opting the “nature-and-time-will-heal” argument has become integral to attempts to privatize profits while externalizing risk and cleanup, both of which can be delegated to “nature’s business.”

This was dramatically illustrated by the Deepwater Horizon disaster—in the laxity that contributed to the blowout and in the aftermath. Big Oil and government agencies both invoked natural resilience as an advance strategy for minimizing oversight. Before the blowout, the Minerals Management Service of the U.S. Interior Department had concluded that “spills in deep water are not likely to affect listed birds. . . . Deepwater spills would either be transported away from coastal habitats or prevented, for the most part, from reaching coastal habitats by natural weathering processes.”<sup>43</sup> Even after the disaster, this line of reasoning persisted. Oil industry apologist Rep. Don Young (R-AK), testifying at congressional hearings on the blowout, knew exactly how to mine this “natural agency” logic: the Deepwater Horizon spill was “not an environmental disaster,” he declared. “I will say that again and again because it is a natural phenomenon. Oil has seeped into this ocean for centuries, will continue to do it. . . . We will lose some birds, we will lose some fixed sea-life, but overall it will recover.”<sup>44</sup> BP

spokesman John Curry likewise explained how industrious microbes would cleanse the oil from the gulf: “Nature,” he concluded sanguinely, “has a way of helping the situation.”<sup>45</sup> BP representatives repeatedly invoked the capacity of marine life to metabolize hydrocarbons and the dispersing powers of microbial degradation. But in conscripting nature as a volunteer clean up crew, BP and its Washington allies downplayed the way ravenous microbes, in consuming oxygen, thereby starved other organisms and exacerbated expanding oceanic dead zones.<sup>46</sup> What will be the long-term cascade effect of the slow violence, the mass die-offs, of phytoplankton at the food chain base? It is far too early to tell.

In short, the very environment that high-risk, deep-water drilling endangered was conscripted by industry through a kind of natural outsourcing. And so Big Oil’s invocation of nature’s healing powers needs to be recognized as part of a broader strategy of image management and liability limitation by greenwashing. Natural agency can indeed take unexpected, sometimes heartening forms, but we should be alert to the ways corporate colossi and governments can hijack that logic to grant themselves advance or retrospective absolution. Crucially, for my arguments about slow violence, the time frames of damage assessment and potential recovery are wildly out of sync. The deep-time thinking that celebrates natural healing is strategically disastrous if it provides political cover for reckless corporate short-termism.<sup>47</sup>

### Writer-Activists and Representational Power

The environmentalism of the poor is frequently catalyzed by resource imperialism inflicted on the global South to maintain the unsustainable consumer appetites of rich-country citizens and, increasingly, of the urban middle classes in the global South itself. The outsourcing of environmental crisis, whether through rapid or slow violence, has a particularly profound impact on the world’s ecosystem people—those hundreds of millions who depend for their livelihood on modest resource catchment areas at the opposite extreme from the planetary resource catchment areas plundered by the wealthy—the wealthy whom Gadgil and Guha have dubbed “resource omnivores.”<sup>48</sup> The writer-activists I engage in this book share a desire to give human definition to such outsourced suffering, a desire to lay bare the

dissociational dynamics whereby, for example, a rich-country conservation ethic is uncoupled from environmental devastation, externalized abroad, in which it is implicated. Correspondingly, we witness in these writers a desire to give life and dimension to the strategies—oppositional, affirmative, and yes, often desperate and fractured—that emerge from those who bear the brunt of the planet’s ecological crises.

The writer-activists I discuss in these pages who engage the environmentalism of the poor are a heterogeneous cast. Some, like Wangari Maathai and Ken Saro-Wiwa, helped launch environmental movements and assumed within them the role of *porte-parole*. They also became iconic figureheads and ultimately (in a phrase that expresses a contradictory tension) autobiographers of collective movements. Others, like Arundhati Roy and Indra Sinha, affiliated themselves with well-established struggles, helping amplify causes marginalized by the corporate media. Roy also served as a transnational go-between, connecting a specific struggle against the Sardar Sarovar Dam with international campaigns against megadams and, beyond that, with the antiglobalization movement itself. For Roy, Sinha, Maathai, and Saro-Wiwa, the extra visibility they afforded the environmentalism of the poor entailed, crucially, the development of rhetorical alliances that opened up connective avenues between environmental justice and other rights discourses: women’s rights, minority rights, tribal rights, property rights, the right to freedom of speech and assembly, and the right to enhanced economic self-sufficiency.

Sometimes a writer-activist’s authority becomes, in their home country, a lightning rod for controversy in ways quite different from the controversies their writings stir abroad. Roy’s polemical essays in support of the movement opposing the Sardar Sarovar Dam on India’s Narmada River are a case in point: her testimony reached a vast international audience and enhanced the visibility of marginalized rural communities who mobilized against megadams, expressly in the Narmada Valley but more broadly across the global South. On the one hand, the *New York Times* refused to publish Roy (and other dissident public intellectuals, such as Edward Said and Noam Chomsky) presumably because her antiglobalization essays were ideologically unsettling. On the other hand, Indian opinion about her interventions split between those who lauded her for putting her celebrity in the service of the poor and those who lambasted her for behaving in a self-serving

manner. An Anglophone Indian writer like Roy, whose national and international audiences are both substantial, faces particular challenges in trying to reconcile disjunctive audiences: rhetorical strategies, tonal inflections, and informational background that engage an international audience risk estranging a national one and vice versa. How different the situation is for a socioenvironmental writer like Derek Walcott from a small society that comprises an infinitesimal fraction of his audience; even after he was awarded the Nobel Prize, Walcott's books were nowhere to be found on sale in his natal St. Lucia.

But what of writer-activists operating in circumstances where no viable movement existed to challenge the imperially buttressed forces of crony capitalism, where campaigns for environmental justice took shape before the term itself existed and where such campaigns assumed the forms of at best spasmodic protest? One such activist was Abdelrahman Munif who, by shuttling across a broad spread of fictional and nonfictional forms, gave imaginative definition to the long view of the resource wars that have afflicted the Persian Gulf. His writings speak in defense of socioenvironmental memory itself—above all, the suppressed memory of the uprisings (which peaked in the 1940s and 1950s) against American petro-imperialism in partnership with an emergent petro-despotism. By the mid-1980s, when Munif's *Cities of Salt* appeared, that dissident lineage protesting the petro-state's union-busting, racist labor practices had been brutally quashed. Yet Munif was able to give imaginative and political definition to the memory of social protest while foreshadowing, with uncanny prescience, how the crushed campaigns for dignity and rights would become dangerously diverted into an anti-imperial religious fundamentalism.

In turning to the Caribbean and South Africa, I revisit the question of the writer-activist's role in fortifying embattled socioenvironmental memory. Jamaica Kincaid, June Jordan, Njabulo Ndebele, and Nadine Gordimer found themselves writing into the headwinds of an international nature industry propelled by a romanticized colonial history and by neocolonial fantasy. All four writers draw to the surface inconvenient questions about long-term ecologies of social injustice that cannot be colorfully blended into touristic boilerplate. In writing against a violent and violating invisibility they engage the contradictions that permeate the marketplace in idealized natural retreats—a marketplace premised on a retreat from



socioenvironmental memory itself. At stake is the way suppressed histories of land theft, forced removal, slavery, and coercive labor achieve their most concentrated form in the figure of the spectral servant, whose obligatory self-effacement smoothes the tourist's path toward immersion in an unsullied nature rich in pure moment, in serendipitous immediacy.

The anticolonial energies that inform the essays I discuss by Kincaid, Ndebele, and Jordan are complicated by painfully riven reflections on representational authority. When you have ascended economically as a black woman or man into the middle classes, where do you stand in relation to those whose plight you depict and whose service, as a tourist, you depend on? Where do you belong in the historically sanitized, colonially hued international marketplace in environmental relaxation? In writing about tourism, poverty, and clashing cultures of nature, Kincaid, Ndebele, and Jordan all attempt to negotiate, through memoir and polemic, the minefields of race, class, and gender that confront them on entering a realm of nature industry tourism clearly not designed for them yet to which they can afford class access.

Many of the writers I consider in this book, as well as the three figures whom I acknowledge in my preface—Edward Said, Rachel Carson, and Ramachandra Guha—exemplify in their work the versatile possibilities of politically engaged nonfiction. For one of the enduring passions that informs this book is the special allure that nonfiction possesses for me as a writer, scholar, reader, and teacher. I am drawn to nonfiction's robust adaptability, imaginative and political, as well as to its information-carrying capacity and its aura of the real.<sup>49</sup> Yet a tenacious tendency remains to marginalize nonfiction, to treat it as at best supplementary to "real literature" like the novel or poetry rather than taking seriously its adaptive rhetorical capacities, the chameleon powers that make it such an indispensable resource for creative activism. Indeed, a particular joy of teaching transnational environmental literatures is the vigorous, varied writing on offer from within nonfiction's broad domain—memoirs, essays, public science writing, polemics, travel literature, graphic memoirs, manifestos, and investigative journalism. Some of the writers I consider in the chapters that follow work principally in nonfiction forms, others in fiction, while most of them shuttle strategically and instinctively between the two. At a time when the memoir, in particular, has come under fire for self-absorption,

we would do well to remember that the “if-it’s-me-it-must-be-interesting” memoir is not the only type. The most effective memoirists, not least environmental ones, find ways to draw on the form’s intimate energies while also offering the reader a social depth of field.

Much has been written about the literary right to represent, some of it significant work, some overly elaborate. Clearly power, including representational power, often works at an exaggerated remove. The writers I engage have ascended not just into the literate but into the publishing classes, thereby creating some inevitable distance from the bulk of the impoverished people about whom they write. Yet in the scheme of things, this hardly seems to me the most suspect kind of distance. Relative to the invisibility that threatens the marginalized poor and the environments they depend on, the bridge-work such writer-activists undertake offers a mostly honorable counter to the distancing rhetoric of neoliberal “free market” resource development, a rhetoric that displaces onto future generations—above all through slow violence—the human and ecological costs of such “development.”

The interplay between representational authority and displacement matters at a biographical level as well.<sup>50</sup> Most of the writers I discuss—Maathai, Saro-Wiwa, Munif, Kincaid, Jordan, Ndebele, Naipaul, Carson, Richard Rodriguez, Nadine Gordimer, and James Baldwin—were the first in their families to attend college.<sup>51</sup> From the contradictions of sudden class displacement—often compounded by transgressed expectations that attend gender, race, sexuality, or immigrant status—a certain type of public intellectual may arise, someone who has to negotiate the vexing terrain of unfamiliar—and unfamiliar—privilege fraught with an anxious sense of collective responsibility. The public role such figures assume is often animated both by an expressive anger and by the fear that their novel, precarious privilege is temporary or illusory—that one misstep may plunge them back into a viscerally remembered familial indigence. What frequently appears, then, is a quest to improvise community, both literal and imaginative, to help counter the isolation that comes from feeling economically, professionally, and psychologically unsheltered by precedent. These tendencies inflect the socioenvironmental and creative sensibilities that distinguish many of the writers in this book. Having extricated themselves improbably from impoverished circumstances—and then seeing their work published in the *New Yorker*, or on being awarded a Ph.D. or even the

Nobel Prize—they stand above the immediate environmental struggles of the poor yet remain bonded through memory (and through their own vertiginous anxieties) to the straitened circumstances from which they or their families recently emerged. Hence, as go-betweens, such writers are at the very least intimate, highly motivated translators.

The challenges of translating across chasms of class, race, gender, and nation is thus viscerally connected to memories of self-translation across dauntingly wide divides, as Tsitsi Dangarembga's bildungsroman set in colonial Rhodesia, *Nervous Conditions*, illustrates so well. The thirteen-year-old rural heroine, Tambu, is granted the unexpected chance to acquire an education when her brother dies and a beneficent uncle decides to divert the money he had committed to his nephew's schooling to his niece instead.<sup>52</sup> In approaching the mission school where she hopes to reinvent herself, the first signal to Tambu of the distance she must travel finds expression through divergent cultures of nature:

The smooth, stoneless drive ran between squat, robust conifers on one side and a blaze of canna lilies burning scarlet and amber on the other. Plants like that belonged to the cities. They had belonged to the pages of my language reader, to the yards of Ben and Betty's uncle in town. Now, having seen it for myself because of my Babamukur's kindness, I too could think of planting things for merrier reasons than the chore of keeping breath in the body. I wrote it down in my head: I would ask Maiguru for some bulbs and plant a bed of those gay lilies on the homestead in front of the house. Our home would answer well to being cheered up by such lovely flowers. Bright and cheery, they had been planted for joy. What a strange idea that was. It was a liberation, the first of many that followed from my transition to the mission.<sup>53</sup>

Tambu, on the brink of being educated toward middle-class possibility, experiences the garden as a portal into her imminent self-translation, as an ornate reminder of the gap she must leap. Emerging from her uncle's car as (to use her word) a "peasant," she cannot yet see this garden, exotically exempt from human need, as ordinary: it belongs to books, to the wealthy,

to those at liberty to treat the earth as an aesthetic canvas.<sup>54</sup> This indigent rural girl thus stands on the threshold of a divided self: she will be admitted to this garden aesthetic and learn to love it, but always with a double vision. She will belong forever to two earths: this second soil of luxurious self-expression but always just beneath it her childhood soil, fraught with survival's urgent chores.

A contortionist concern with representational authority can distract us from the fortitude required by those rare writers who, having escaped familial poverty, can convey an experientially rooted environmentalism that straddles immense divides. It is no coincidence that Jamaica Kincaid alights on Dangarembga's garden descriptions to contrast them with those gardens, lush with assumed access, that she encounters in Henry James.<sup>55</sup> One senses Kincaid looking on as an outsider at James's easy familiarity with dominant upper-class European conventions of horticultural depiction. By creating an alliance with Dangarembga's character, by choosing her as an imaginative coconspirator, Kincaid, the naturalized Caribbean American, denatures James's gardens which, for all their literary floral familiarity, are just that: the kinds of gardens that prevail in a literature written predominantly by those remote from the soil perspectives of the laboring poor.

This recognition scene between an Antiguan-American essayist and a fictional Zimbabwean character speaks to the politics of the unforeseeable imaginative connection, to the far-off, serendipitous chance find that becomes an exhortation.<sup>56</sup> The scene speaks, more broadly, to the unpredictable dynamics of cross-cultural translation that attend the creative circuits of globalization from below, in literature and other cultural forms. We see this process at work in the way activists like Saro-Wiwa, Maathai, Chico Mendes, and Mahatma Gandhi have assumed an allegorical potency for geographically distant struggles. For example, on the tenth anniversary of Saro-Wiwa's execution, anti-Shell activists in County Mayo, a region of Ireland's historically impoverished west, unveiled a vast mural of Saro-Wiwa whom they had adopted posthumously as the iconic transnational figurehead of their local struggle against Shell. The mural displayed a Saro-Wiwa poem translated into Gaelic and the names of the Ogoni Eight executed alongside Saro-Wiwa—that in an Irish community enraged by the imprisonment of the so-called Rossport Five, activists who had nonviolently protested Shell's plans to build a refinery close to their homes. Spill-prone pipelines were to

link the inland refinery to offshore drilling sites, thereby jeopardizing the health and livelihood of a fishing and farming community dependent, as in the Niger Delta, on fragile intertidal ecosystems.<sup>57</sup>

Anna Tsing observes similarly how in post-Suharto Indonesia, the Chico Mendes story became for grassroots activists a malleable, inspirational precedent reformulated for local need. So too the largely female tree-huggers who had energized India's Chipko movement entered into Indonesian environmental parlance as a story of gendered resistance to forest stripping by globalizing corporate forces.<sup>58</sup> Even before the Internet and cell phones became widespread, such circulating allegories were aided by traveling environmentalists and by writer-activists—like Vandana Shiva, whose eco-feminist reading of the Chipko movement inflected its

[To view this image, refer to  
the print version of this title.]

*Figure 1* Mural of Ken Saro-Wiwa in County Mayo, Ireland, for a campaign by Irish activists against Shell. Some of his poetry (translated into Gaelic) is displayed, as well as the names of the eight other Ogoni activists executed on November 10, 1995, by Nigerian military personnel. Reproduced by permission of Wikimedia Commons.

circulation among antiglobalization environmental movements, as well as among NGOs, thereby helping reshape the character of international funding and debate.

Such precedents—whether through iconic figureheads or entire social movements—offer resources of hope in the unequal battle to apprehend, to stave off, or at least retard the slow violence inflicted by globalizing forces. Such precedents help us engage, in all their complexity, the politics of the visible and the invisible, as environmental justice movements—and the writer-activists aligned with them—strategize to shift the balance of visibility both in the urgent present and over the long haul, pushing back against the forces of temporal inattention that compound injustices of class, gender, race, and region.

### The Environmental Humanities and the Edge Effect

Field biologists have devised the term “ecotone” to characterize the border zones between adjacent communities of vegetation where (as between, say, grasslands and wetlands) life forms that ordinarily require discrete conditions meet and interact. Ecotones may thereby open up new configurations of possibility (and for some species, introduce new threats) as the transitional areas create so-called edge effects. In university life, we are witnessing an upsurge in these edge effects as interpenetrating fields proliferate at the borders between once separate disciplines, at times creating new dynamic combinations while also, depending on one’s perspective, inflicting casualties through habitat fragmentation. In the scholarly ecotone, as in the biological, one may detect an elevated concentration in the sheer variety of life-forms, but at the expense of less-adaptable, specialist species.

How adaptable will the humanities prove in a less specialist environment? In particular, what kinds of connective corridors toward other disciplines can scholars creatively navigate in an intellectual milieu where habitat fracture is becoming increasingly pervasive? Certainly, the environmental humanities are entering a dynamic phase, as the long-established field of environmental history has in recent years encountered the ecocritical terrain of literary studies. We seem to be at a crucial turning point in the contribution literary scholars can make to the ecological humanities and, beyond that, to environmental studies at large.

Critical choices now confront us as scholars and writers reaching out to other fields as we try to consolidate transformative possibilities emerging at the edges of the humanities, the social sciences, and the natural sciences. Influential environmental literary critics, like Lawrence Buell, Wai Chee Dimock, and Ursula Heise have begun to forge innovative connections between literary environmentalism and the sciences around, for example, chaos theory and the premises underlying restoration ecology.<sup>59</sup> What remains less developed, however, are the energizing interdisciplinary possibilities, the unrealized creative bridgework, between environmental literary studies and the social sciences.<sup>60</sup> Such possibilities are overdue for recognition and, to that end, in the chapters that follow I have attempted to strengthen such links.

In so doing, I have drawn on environmental scholarship by anthropologists, geographers, political scientists, and sociologists like Fernando Coronil, Al Gedicks, Ramachandra Guha, Adriana Petryna, Anna Tsing, and Michael Watts. I have drawn inspiration, too, from the writings of leading progressive public intellectuals of our age: John Berger, Mike Davis, Eduardo Galeano, Naomi Klein, George Monbiot, and Rebecca Solnit among them, all of whom have engaged, with ambitious communicative intent, transnational questions arising from the borderlands between empire, neo-liberalism, environmentalism, and social justice. I have thereby sought, first, to widen the interdisciplinary avenues available to us and, second, to keep alive a sense of the hugely varied public registers that writers can marshal to testify on issues of world urgency.

When literary studies becomes uncoupled from worldly concerns, we frequently witness, alongside an excessive regard for ahistoric philosophy, an accompanying historically indifferent formalism that treats the study of aesthetics as the literary scholar's definitive calling. Questions of social change and power become projected onto questions of form so that formal categories such as rupture, irony, and bricolage assume an inflated agency through what Anne McClintock has called "a fetishism of form:"

The question is whether it is sufficient to locate agency in the internal fissures of discourse. [This] runs the risk of what can be called a fetishism of form: the projection of historical agency onto formal abstractions that are anthropomorphized and given a life of their own. Here abstractions become historical actors;

discourse desires, dreams and does the work of colonialism while also ensuring its demise. In the process, social relations between humans appear to metamorphize into structural relations between forms—through a formalist fetishism that effectively elides the messier questions of historical change and social activism.<sup>61</sup>

These concerns have a direct bearing on the relationship between literary forms, forms of socioenvironmental change, and environmental activism. Crucially, how do we as environmental scholars keep questions of political agency and historical change central in order to connect specialist knowledge to broader public worlds in which environmental policy takes shape and within which resistance movements arise? In this book, I have underscored those places where writers, by drawing on literature's testimonial and imaginative capacities, have engaged nonliterary forces for social change. Rather than displacing social agency onto anthropomorphized, idealized forms, I argue that any interest in form must be bound to questions of affiliation, including affiliation between writers and movements for environmental justice.

In addressing slow violence, the environmentalism of the poor, and the role of writer-activists, I have thus sought to integrate reflections on empire, foreign policy, and resistance with questions about aesthetic strategy. It is sometimes argued that ecocriticism's singular contribution to environmental studies ought to be centered on the aesthetic—that an attentiveness to form is the environmental literary scholar's proper bailiwick.<sup>62</sup> But there is a risk in this if the aesthetic gets walled off as a specialist domain, severed from the broader sociopolitical environmental contexts that animate the forms in question. The more exacting challenge, it seems to me, is how to articulate these vital aesthetic concerns to socioenvironmental transformation. Clearly, genre study remains a pertinent component of our inquiries into the complex interface between aesthetic forms and forms of socioenvironmental change. As Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell have argued succinctly: "the importance of affect in environmental writing highlights the function of genre as a point of transit—a kind of switch mechanism—in the reversible hierarchy between the local and the global."<sup>63</sup> Indeed, some of the most powerful transnational environmental writing, from Sinha and Roy to Munif and Saro-Wiwa, has arisen at those transit points where genre inventively mediates foreign policy, nation-state violence, and local resource rebellions.



## Postcolonialism and Superpower Parochialism

The most conceptually ambitious and influential figures within the ecocritical turn have been Buell and Heise, who deserve special credit for the reach and rigor of their innovative work, which has powerfully reshaped the priorities of literary studies and the environmental humanities more broadly. Buell and Heise are both Americanists by expertise and inclination. My background, and hence my approach, is somewhat different; my training is in postcolonial studies and, as such, the ‘elsewheres’ that fringe their work constitute my intellectual foreground.<sup>64</sup>

From a postcolonial perspective, the most startling feature of environmental literary studies has been its reluctance to engage the environmental repercussions of American foreign policy, particularly in relation to contemporary imperial practices. To be sure, this failing is not restricted to literary studies but has dogged the environmental humanities more broadly. Ramachandra Guha, while applauding the groundbreaking work by American environmental historians, has lamented their tardiness in exploring the transnational fallout of American environmental practices. Similarly, Robert Vitalis, the preeminent historian of U.S.-Saudi petro-politics, has expressed regret that “the U.S. historical profession has not as yet produced any significant tradition of scholarship in American interventionism that is comparable to the ‘new social histories’ of European imperialism.”<sup>65</sup> Indeed, if as Greg Garrard noted in 2004, “the relationship between globalisation and ecocriticism has barely been broached,” one should stress that the ecocritical silence around U.S. foreign policy has been especially resounding.<sup>66</sup> Why is it—as I explore in my final chapter—that in American environmental literary studies, transcendental approaches have typically trumped transnational ones?

There are signs that the environmental humanities are beginning to make some tentative headway toward incorporating the impact of U.S. imperialism on the poor in the global South—Vitalis’s book *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (2008) is an outstanding instance, as are powerful recent essays by Elizabeth DeLoughrey on the literatures associated with American nuclear colonialism in the Pacific, Susie O’Brien on Native food security, colonialism, and environmental heritage along the U.S.-Mexican border, and Pablo Mukherjee’s groundbreaking materialist

work on Indian environmental literatures.<sup>67</sup> Yet despite such vitally important initiatives, the environmental humanities in the United States remain skewed toward nation-bound scholarship that is at best tangentially international and, even then, seldom engages the environmental fallout of U.S. foreign policy head on. What's at stake is not just disciplinary parochialism but, more broadly, what one might call superpower parochialism, that is, a combination of American insularity and America's power as the preeminent empire of the neoliberal age to rupture the lives and ecosystems of non-Americans, especially the poor, who may live at a geographical remove but who remain intimately vulnerable to the force fields of U.S. foreign policy.

To be sure, the U.S. empire has historically been a variable force, one that is not monolithic but subject to ever-changing internal fracture. The U.S., moreover, has long been—and is increasingly—globalized itself with all the attendant insecurities and inequities that result. However, to argue that the United States is subject to globalization—through, for example, blowback from climate change—does not belie the disproportionate impact that U.S. global ambitions and policies have exerted over socioenvironmental landscapes internationally.

Ecocritics—and literary scholars more broadly—faced with the challenges of thinking through vast differences in spatial and temporal scale commonly frame their analyses in terms of interpenetrating global and local forces. In such analyses cosmopolitanism—as a mode of being linked to particular aesthetic strategies—does much of the bridgework between extremes of scale. What critics have subjected to far less scrutiny is the role of the national-imperial as a mediating force with vast repercussions, above all, for those billions whom Mike Davis calls “the global residuum.”<sup>68</sup> Davis's image is a suggestive one, summoning to mind the remaindered humans, the compacted leavings on whom neoliberalism's inequities bear down most heavily. Yet those leavings, despite their aggregated dehumanization in the corporate media, remain animate and often resistant in unexpected ways; indeed, it is from such leavings that grassroots antiglobalization and the environmentalism of the poor have drawn nourishment.<sup>69</sup>

As American writers, scholars, and environmentalists, how can we attend more imaginatively to the outsourced conflicts inflamed by our unsustainable consumerism, by our military adventurism and unsurpassed arms industry, and by the global environmental fallout over the past three

decades of American-led neoliberal economic policies? (The immense environmental toll of militarism is particularly burdensome: in 2009, U.S. military expenditure was 46.5 percent of the global total and exceeded by 10 percent the expenditure of the next fourteen highest-ranked countries combined.)<sup>70</sup> How, moreover, can we engage the impact of our outsized consumerism and militarism on the life prospects of people who are elsewhere not just geographically but elsewhere in time, as slow violence seeps long term into ecologies—rural and urban—on which the global poor must depend for generations to come? How, in other words, can we rethink the standard formulation of neoliberalism as internalizing profits and externalizing risks not just in spatial but in temporal terms as well, so that we recognize the full force with which the externalized risks are outsourced to the unborn?

It is a pervasive condition of empires that they affect great swathes of the planet without the empire's populace being aware of that impact—indeed, without being aware that many of the affected places even exist. How many Americans are aware of the continuing socioenvironmental fallout from U.S. militarism and foreign policy decisions made three or four decades ago in, say, Angola or Laos? How many could even place those nation-states on a map? The imperial gap between foreign policy power and on-the-street awareness calls to mind George Lamming's shock, on arriving in Britain in the early 1950s, that most Londoners he met had never heard of his native Barbados and lumped together all Caribbean immigrants as "Jamaicans."<sup>71</sup>

What I call superpower parochialism has been shaped by the myth of American exceptionalism and by a long-standing indifference—in the U.S. educational system and national media—to the foreign, especially foreign history, even when it is deeply enmeshed with U.S. interests. Thus, when considering the representational challenges posed by transnational slow violence, we need to ask what role American indifference to foreign history has played in camouflaging lasting environmental damage inflicted elsewhere. If all empires create acute disparities between global power and global knowledge, how has America's perception of itself as a young, forward-thrusting nation that claims to flourish by looking ahead rather than behind exacerbated the difficulty of socioenvironmental answerability for ongoing slow violence?<sup>72</sup>

Profiting from the asymmetrical relations between a domestically regulated environment and unregulated environments abroad is of course not

unique to America. But since World War II, the United States has wielded an unequalled power to bend the global regulatory climate in its favor. As William Finnegan notes regarding the Washington Consensus, “while we make the world safe for multinational corporations, it is by no means clear that they intend to return the favor.”<sup>73</sup> The unreturned favor weighs especially heavily on impoverished communities in the global South who must stake their claims to environmental justice in the face of the Bretton Woods institutions (the World Bank, the IMF), the World Trade Organization, and the G8 (now G20) over which the United States has exercised disproportionate influence. That influence has been exercised, as well, through muscular conservation NGOs (the Nature Conservancy, the World Wildlife Fund, and Conservation International prominent among them) that have a long history of disregarding local human relations to the environment in order to implement American- and European-style conservation agendas. Clearly, the beneficiaries of such power asymmetries are not just American but transnational corporations, NGOs, and governments from across the North’s rich nations, often working hand-in-fist with authoritarian regimes.

Yet within these resource wars, image, idiom, and narrative are themselves powerful, if unpredictable, resources that regardless of origins can help advance the environmentalism of the poor. As I note in the chapters on Ken Saro-Wiwa and Wangari Maathai, the discourse of environmental justice, borrowed largely from the West (and often through personal exposure to America), is frequently blended with local discursive traditions and, in these melded forms, adaptively redeployed as a strategic resource. Such transnational meldings may prove unstable, but they have become significant forces in the unequal battles waged by the poor as they strive to be seen and heard on an international stage. These hybridized discourses can help afford socioenvironmental struggles an emblematic significance that strengthens their claim on rich-nation media that might otherwise dismiss them as obscurely local conflicts. International attention, in turn, can help afford such movements some protective visibility within their own nation-states (although a backlash of violence may also result). Among those whom Al Gedicks has dubbed global resource rebels, the hybridized, traveling discourse of environmental justice has proven critical in forging both South-South alliances and South-North alliances, not least among those who find

themselves pitted against analogous threats—be they giant hydroelectric dams, for example, or toxic tailings.<sup>74</sup>

Moreover, the development of strategic rhetorical common ground, however fragile, has proven critical in attempts to move beyond knee-jerk oppositions counterposing misanthropic rich eco-colonialists against third worlders assumed to be hostile to a narrowly defined environmentalism. By laying claim to the mobile rhetoric of environmental justice, the dispossessed may enhance their prospects of becoming visible, audible agents of globalization from below. It is in the quest for such transnational visibility and audibility that writer-activists may play a critically enabling role.

In cautioning against a narrowing of literary studies that pulls back from the wider world, we need to recognize the radical energies that traditions of postcolonial engagement at their best have encouraged. Debates over the merits and demerits of the term postcolonial are by now quite extended; no value is to be gained from rehearsing them.<sup>75</sup> That said, postcolonial studies at its most incisive remains, it seems to me, an invaluable critical presence in an era of resurgent imperialism, an era in which—sometimes through outright, unregulated plunder, sometimes under camouflage of developmental agendas—a neoliberal order has widened, with ruinous environmental repercussions, the gulf between the expanding classes of the super-rich and our planet's 3 billion ultrapoor. Indeed, the official and informal militarization of resource extraction as well as paramilitary conservation practices in the global South continue to spark or inflame broader conflicts. Such environmentally intensified conflicts become indissociable from the eroded prospects, under neoliberalism, of maintaining sustainable livelihoods, often under marginal conditions. Gargantuan transnational corporations like BP, ExxonMobil, Shell, Freeport McMoran, and Walmart have wised up to the kudos they can gain from greenwashing in the countries of the rich, through high-minded advertisement campaigns, through strategic donations to NGOs and universities, by buying out or intimidating scientists who might testify against the slow violence of their practices, and through rarified talk about being fine stewards of our delicate planet. Meanwhile, back on planet Earth, they persist with their profitable devastation of relatively impoverished, less regulated societies—societies that have little visibility and recognition value in the rich-country corporate media. Such assaults on the livelihoods of the poor are given extra muscle by industry lobbyists

who, while greenwashing with one hand, campaign with the other hand to further skew the terms of trade, weakening whatever frail environmental, labor, and human rights, and economic regulations stand between them and a “freer” market. In short, the oil majors and allied transnational corporations are potent, active players in manufacturing the icons and stories that shape popular perception of environmental science and policy.

Against this backdrop, I am leery of the widespread assumption that everything postcolonial studies has enabled can always be assimilated, without loss, to the more ambitious, more contemporary-sounding global studies. The notion of the straight swap—midsized postcolonial for supersized global—is too often accompanied by a blunting of the adversarial edge, the oppositional incisiveness, that has distinguished postcolonial work at its most forceful. World literature studies has become a rich, dynamic field too diverse to characterize simply, but I do feel some concern about how the categorical turn, in literary studies, to world literature often ends up deflecting attention away from the anti-imperial concerns that a materialist postcolonial studies foregrounded. To be sure, we need scholarship and teaching that can address, in transnational terms, territories beyond postcolonialism’s conventional reach. But in so doing we should be watchful that surface geographical gains are not marred by political retreat, that neoliberal acts of violence, for example—especially slow violence—are not hastily euphemized as “global flows.” In the classroom and beyond, we need to challenge globalization’s gung ho cheerleaders. Indeed, the most scintillating work by antiglobalization public intellectuals—Mike Davis, Naomi Klein, Amitava Kumar, Andrew Ross, and Arundhati Roy among them—carries forward postcolonialism’s critical energies while moving beyond the field’s geographical and analytical limitations.

Among the decisive challenges such critical initiatives face is that of scale: how can we imaginatively and strategically render visible vast force fields of interconnectedness against the attenuating effects of temporal and geographical distance? This is a crucial challenge if we are to generate any sustained understanding of the transnational, intergenerational fallout from slow violence. The task of thinking on such a geographical scale—let alone a temporal one—can seem overwhelming. Indeed, Wendell Berry has warned against the potentially debilitating effects of such large-scale approaches: “The adjective ‘planetary’ describes a problem in such a way that it cannot

be solved . . . The problems, if we describe them accurately, are all private and small.”<sup>76</sup> I would argue, however, that although advocating personal environmental responsibility is essential, to shrink solutions to the level of the private and the small is evasive, even if it does constructively enhance one’s sense of agency. Planetary problems—and transnational, national, and regional ones—cannot simply be resolved by the aggregated actions of responsible individuals. Institutional actions (and institutionalized inaction) have a profound impact on environmental outcomes, most blatantly in relation to climate change, which no collectivized ethical behavior can combat without backing from well-implemented transnational accords.

### Slow Violence and the Production of Doubt

The forces of inaction have deep pockets. Environmental activists face well-funded, well-organized interests that invest heavily in manufacturing and sustaining a culture of doubt around the science of slow violence, thereby postponing policies that would help rein in the long-term impacts of climate change in particular. A coalition of Big Oil, Big Coal, and Big Tobacco, led by ExxonMobil and Phillip Morris, has amassed an army of doubt-disseminators: lobbyists, political consultants, media plutocrats like Rupert Murdoch, right-wing think tanks, fake citizens’ groups on Facebook, scholarly reviewers of climate science written by non climate scientists, pseudo-scientific websites, university departments endowed to demonstrate conclusions friendly to Big Oil, Big Coal, and Big Tobacco and to sponsor uncertainty around climate change and, in the case of tobacco, uncertainty about the carcinogenic risks of second hand smoke.<sup>77</sup>

Despite the overwhelming, virtually unanimous, consensus among climate scientists that climate change is happening, is human-induced, is accelerating, and will have catastrophic consequences for human and much nonhuman life on earth, all the misnamed ‘denialists’ need do is keep ensuring that, in the public’s mind, the jury remains permanently out, so that irresolution rules. This is the point underscored by a leaked memo from political consultant, Frank Luntz distributed to Republican activists during George W. Bush’s presidency: “Should the public come to believe that the scientific issues are settled, their views about global warming will change accordingly. Therefore, you need to continue to make the lack of scientific



certainty a primary issue in the debate.”<sup>78</sup> Or, to cite another memo: “Doubt is our product since it is the best means of competing with the ‘body of fact’ that exists in the mind of the general public. It is also the means of establishing a controversy.”<sup>79</sup> Controversy, in turn, plays into the media’s standard for-and-against formula for debate, even if that binary skews the consensus radically; even if, as in the case of anthropogenic climate change, 3,000 climate scientists confirm that it is happening and none deny it. The against position thus typically devolves to a right-wing activist with no peer-reviewed climate change publications.

In “Concerning Violence,” the opening chapter of *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon writes of the role played under capitalism by an army of cultural “bewilderers.”<sup>80</sup> The spread of slow violence in our own times has been exacerbated by a lavishly funded army of new bewilderers, those doubt producers and doubt disseminators whose job it is to maintain populist levels of uncertainty sufficient to guarantee inaction. We thus need to recognize that slow violence involves more than a perceptual problem created by the gap between destructive policies or practices and their deferred, invisible consequences. For in addition, slow violence provides prevaricative cover for the forces that have the most to profit from inaction: under cover of deferred consequences, these energetic new bewilderers literally buy time. For the new bewilderers, led by Big Oil and Big Coal, doubt is more than a state of mind—it’s a bankable product. In this context, we should acknowledge the role played by a raft of public science writers who are writer-activists in their own way, figures like James Hoggan, Elizabeth Kolbert, Naomi Oreskes, Erik Conway, Andrew Rowell, Tim Flannery, David Michaels, and the incomparable George Monbiot who have followed the money and worked industriously to render visible the clandestine networks that finance doubt.<sup>81</sup>

### Of Vampire Squids and Resource Rebels

In 2009, amidst the global economic crash, Matt Taibbi memorably depicted Goldman Sachs as a “great vampire squid wrapped around the face of humanity, relentlessly jamming its blood funnel into anything that smells like money.”<sup>82</sup> Within a year his deepwater image of life-sucking avarice would seem an uncanny foreshadowing of petroleum giant BP.



Indeed, Taibbi's vampire squid achieved such popular resonance, I would suggest, because it gave emotional definition to an age, over and above the tentacular reach of any specific transnational corporation. An era of imperial overreach has brought to crisis a Washington Consensus ideology premised on globalizing the "free market" through militarization, privatization, deregulation, optional corporate self-policing, the undertaxation of the super wealthy, ever-more arcane financial practices, and a widening divide separating the gated über-rich from the unhoused ultrapoor within and between nations.

Together these practices have heightened capitalism's innate tendency to abstract in order to extract, intensifying the distancing mechanisms that make the sources of environmental violence harder to track and multinational environmental answerability harder to impose. Such distancing mechanisms include the rhetorical gulf between development as a grand planetary dream premised on growth-driven consumption and its socio-environmental fallout; the geographical distance between market forces as, to an almost occult degree, production has become disaggregated from consumption; and the temporal distance between short-lived actions and long-lived consequences, as gradual casualties are spread across a protracted aftermath, during which the memory and the body count of slow violence are diffused—and defused—by time.

Yet memory loss is unevenly inhabited. Whether through sustained activism or more sporadic protests, resource rebels and the environmentally disenfranchised have mobilized repeatedly against memory loss, refusing to see their long-term livelihoods abstracted into oblivion, be it through state violence, transnational corporate rapacity, or some combination of the two. The resource rebels who rise up (or dig in for the long haul) express ambitions that may be difficult to achieve but, in the scheme of things, are typically not grand: some shelter from the uncertainties of hunger; some basic honoring of established patterns of agroforestry, fishing, hunting, planting, and harvesting; access to clean water; some prospects for their children; some respect for the cultural (and therefore environmental) presence of the guiding dead. And, if one accepts as a given that traditions are always mutable, resource rebels seek some active participation in the speed and character of cultural change. Failing all that, the rebels may seek compensation directed not at the nation at large (always an unequal abstraction) but at

those most intimately affected by the defacement of the living land by the boardrooms of faceless profiteers.

The fraught issue of compensation connects directly with the infrastructural failures of the state: insurrectionary anger is repeatedly stoked when a community experiences technological modernization as extractive theft without service delivery. Under such circumstances, visible reminders of theft through modernity's infrastructural invasions—by oil pipelines or massive hydroelectric dams or toxic tailings from mines—foment rage at life-threatening environmental degradation combined with the state's failure to provide life-enabling public works.<sup>83</sup> Often, as a community contends with attritional assaults on its ecological networks, it isn't granted equitable access (or any access at all) to modernity's basic infrastructural networks—piped clean water, a sewage system, an electric grid, a public transport grid, or schools—utilities that might open up alternatives to destitution. Such communities, ecologically dispossessed without being empowered via infrastructure, are ripe for revolt. Like those Niger Delta villages where children for decades had no access to electricity for studying at night, while above their communities Shell's gas flares created toxic nocturnal illumination. Too dark for education, too bright for sleep: modernity's false dawn.

Writers who align themselves with resource rebellions may help render decipherable the illegible distance between a far-off neoliberal ideology and its long-lasting local fallout. Such writers may serve as *portes-paroles* in an economic order premised on acute inequities in portability—of commodities, factories, jobs, people, and the environment itself. Writer-activists may thereby help expose injustices arising from the global freedom of movement afforded powerful corporations and the Bretton Woods institutions, while swathes of humanity are so ecologically undermined that they are abandoned to the plight of the stationary displaced. Whether as part-instigators or as amplifiers, writer-activists can strive to advance the causes of those who confront turbo-capitalism's assaults on the resources that shape their survival. In confrontations between such typically unequal forces, determined hope is mixed with what John Berger, in the spirit of Antonio Gramsci, has called "undefeated despair."<sup>84</sup>

While honoring the writer's role, I wish to do so without glamorizing it. This role requires incessant compromise and incessant reinvention, particularly given the rapid changes in the technological and geopolitical climate

in which writers must act. I should note here that the events I engage in this book are clustered in the period from the early 1980s through the late-1990s—in what one might call neoliberalism’s near present.<sup>85</sup> From the beginnings of the Reagan-Thatcher era through the Bhopal disaster, the collapse of communism and apartheid, the first Gulf War, the rise of the Save the Narmada Movement in India, the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal, Delta’s Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People in Nigeria, Kenya’s Green Belt Movement, to Acción Ecológica in the Ecuadorian Amazon, the purview of *Slow Violence* predates two particularly significant environmental developments. First, the full-blown ascent of Chinese authoritarian capitalism, ushering in the Chimerican age as, through entangled rivalry, mutual dependence, and mutual mistrust, an emboldened China has joined an overstretched America as a global force in annexing—and carting off—the very conditions of life. We see this dramatically, for instance, in the 3-million-acre swathe of equatorial forest in the Democratic Republic of Congo that China has bought for a pittance to log and, once logged, has dedicated to monocultural palm oil production, thereby displacing and immiserating the forest’s inhabitants. This is all integral to the second scramble for Africa, as the continent’s resource maps are redrawn and its riches carved up among Chinese, American, European, Australian, and South African corporations typically working in cahoots with unelected officials or regional brigands. Africa may contain some of the most acute cases of such rampant disregard for socioenvironmental survival in the Chimerican age, but it is far from alone.

Alongside this geopolitical shift we are witnessing the most profound changes in centuries to the technological climate within which writer-activists must operate. In the era on which I focus, “text” was not yet a standard verb. Since then, proliferating nonprint platforms, an upsurge in new media networks, and digital immediacy have transformed the technological milieu within which oppression is inflicted and dissidence expressed—and within which speed is experienced. Among the writers I consider, Indra Sinha is by a long measure the most digitally attuned. His Bhopal novel, *Animal’s People*, straddles two eras, as he reconfigures a cold-war event for a twenty-first century obsessed with virtual networks and biopolitics. Triggered by the 1984 Union Carbide disaster and the environmental justice movement that rose from its ashes, Sinha’s 2007 fiction can be read as an experiment in linking the protest novel to digitally networked dissent.<sup>86</sup> Indeed, the public life

of *Animal's People* as a novel has been powerfully shaped by Sinha's mobile, multimedia approach: on his blog and Web site, for example, he mixes non-fictional testimony from Bhopal survivors with a sardonic visual-and-verbal fantasia of a poisoned city trying to rebrand itself as a tourist paradise.

If the quarter-century lag between the Union Carbide explosion and *Animal People's* appearance marks a shift from predigital to digital activism, the lag also allows Sinha to challenge the conventions of what constitutes a catastrophic event. For the explosion itself plays a relatively minor role in the novel; instead, Sinha focuses on the less obviously eventful aftermath, the slow violence that, by the novel's end, comes to be recognized as the event itself, a violence that has yet to run its course. It is to this novel and Bhopal that I now turn.

## Notes

### Preface

1. Edward Said, "Worldly Humanism v. the Empire-Builders," *Counterpunch*, August 4, 2003, 5. I am grateful to Anthony Vital and Hans-Georg Erney for drawing my attention to this essay in their editorial "Postcolonial Studies and Ecocriticism," *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 13 (2007): 6. One can also detect hints of an incipient environmental awareness in Said's meditations on the politics of land in *Culture and Imperialism* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 75. For some insightful reflections on Said's potential relationship to environmental thought, see Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley's introduction to their forthcoming volume, *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).
2. Said, "Secular Criticism," *The World, the Text, and the Critic* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 3.
3. Said's relationship to postcolonial studies was an uneasy one, given that he viewed his work as more anti-imperial than postcolonial—particularly when the latter field became increasingly associated with poststructuralist methodologies. That said, Said is widely viewed as a foundational figure for postcolonial studies.
4. Ramachandra Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume? Environmentalism in India and the United States* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2006), 20.
5. *Ibid.*, 1.
6. *Ibid.*, 20.
7. Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (1989): 71–83.

From their different vantage points, Murray Boochkin and Andrew Ross were also prescient figures in this dismantling.

8. Guha discusses the emergence of these terms in several places. See, for example, *How Much Should a Person Consume?* 214, 233; and Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, 2000), 98–124. A particularly decisive text for deepening and applying some of these core terms is Joan Martinez-Alier's *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of the Ecological Conflicts and Valuation* (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003).
9. Guha, *How Much Should a Person Consume?* 1.
10. Guha, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press; Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989).

### Introduction

1. Philip Arestis, “Furor on Memo at World Bank,” *New York Times*, February 7, 1992. For insightful commentary on Summers’ proposal, see also Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010)
2. Kevin Bale, *Disposable People: New Slavery in the Global Economy* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).
3. Andrew Ross, *Strange Weather: Culture, Science and Technology in the Age of Limits* (New York: Verso, 1991), 207–212.
4. The term “West” is inevitably shorthand. The environmentalism of the poor within North America and Europe, although not the focus of this book, helped goad affluent environmentalists in the global North to diversify their vision of what counts as environmentalism and to recognize—in the present and retrospectively—third-world-generated activism as a vital force and potential ally in the global resource wars. That said, as I indicate in my penultimate chapter on the ecological threats posed by so-called precision warfare, it is often very difficult to articulate as a single narrative of risk the threat slow violence poses to the health of troops conscripted from the rich-nation poor and the threat to the even more impoverished people who inhabit war zones long term, war zones that are overwhelmingly located in the global South. The very difficulty of integrating such conjoined (if unequal) threats is symptomatic of the layered invisibility that defines slow violence. The poor, of course, are hardly restricted to the global South, but they are dramatically, disproportionately concentrated there.
5. Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism. Essays North and South* (London: Earthscan, 1997), 12.

6. Arundhati Roy has expressed some unease toward the very notion of the writer-activist. Yet her concerns—that the term makes activist writers sound exceptional, that it risks institutionalizing them as experts, and risks narrowing our perception of both writers and activists—need to be taken with a grain of salt, as an exercise in self-protectiveness and false modesty, given her ineluctably institutionalized role in the media as professional (albeit dissident professional) go-between. The fact is only a tiny minority of writers assume an overtly activist public role and that minority—especially when they shuttle between the novel or poetry on the one hand and engaged nonfiction on the other—are routinely skittish, insisting on their imaginative autonomy from ideological obligation while also declaring their political commitments. Such balancing acts between avowal and disavowal surface in the writings of Albert Camus, Jean-Paul Sartre, James Baldwin, Langston Hughes, Wole Soyinka, Derek Walcott, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, Carolyn Forché, Joseph Brodsky, Paul Muldoon, Mahmoud Darwish, and Nadine Gordimer to name but a few. For Roy’s take on writer-activism, see *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: HarperCollins, 2002), 186–187.
7. Edward Said, “The Public Role of Writers and Intellectuals,” *The Nation*, September 17, 2001, 10.
8. Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington (1963; repr., New York: Grove, 1968), 42.
9. *Ibid.*, 36–37.
10. If historically Fanon was in no position to write about the slow violence of inequitably distributed environmental threats, he was, of course, alive to the psychological seepage of colonial values that could sustain neocolonialism. Furthermore, in “Colonial War and Mental Disorders” he is attuned to the slow violence that results from colonial “pacification,” the psychological effects far outlasting specific acts of discernible violence. See *ibid.*, 249–316.
11. Quoted in Stephanie Cooke, *In Mortal Hands: A Cautionary History of the Nuclear Age* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2009), 168.
12. Zohr de Ishtar, *Daughters of the Pacific* (Melbourne: Spinifex Press, 1994), 24. In the nuclear exceptionalism upheld by mainstream Japanese memory, amnesia persists about Micronesian and Polynesian casualties of what were, in terms of the environmental and epidemiological *longue durée*, effectively American and French nuclear attacks.
13. Edward W. Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1992), 17; Michael J. Watts, *Struggles over Geography: Violence, Freedom, and Development at the Millennium* (Hettner Lectures no. 3, University of Heidelberg, Department of Geography, 2000), 8.
14. Faulkner’s oft-misquoted remark appears in *Requiem for a Nun* (1951; repr., New York: Routledge, 1987), 17.

15. Anne McClintock, Aamir Mufti, and Ella Shohat, eds., *Dangerous Liaisons* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 420–444.
16. For an astute examination of the impact of particulate residues on the timelines of environmental thinking—as well as on Victorian literary genres—see Jesse Oak Taylor’s dissertation, “‘A Sky of Our Manufacture’: Literature, Modernity and the London Fog from Dickens to Conrad” (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin-Madison, 2009).
17. Michael Crichton, *State of Fear* (New York: Avon, 2004), 626.
18. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 32.
19. Eric Sevareid, “An Explosive Book,” *Washington D.C. Star*, October 9, 1962, 3.
20. Carson, *Silent Spring*, 238.
21. Johan Galtung, “Violence, Peace, and Peace Research,” *Journal of Peace Research* 6 (1969): 167–191.
22. This is not the place for a full assessment of Galtung’s prodigious writings about peace and violence. At a later point in his thinking, for instance, Galtung complicated his theory of structural violence by introducing the notion of cultural violence.
23. Wangari Maathai, *The Challenge for Africa* (New York: Pantheon, 2009), 83ff.
24. Jill S. Schneiderman, “Buddhist Living in the Anthropocene” (unpublished essay, 2010), 7. I am especially grateful to Schneiderman for a rich set of exchanges—including a comparison between Galtung’s ideas and my own—in response to a talk I gave at Vassar College in 2008.
25. *Ibid.*, 173.
26. In an indicative convergence of the tectonic shifts in geological thinking about speed and media technologies of speed, one notes that Crutzen first advanced his idea of the Anthropocene Age on his blog rather than going through the slower medium of a peer-reviewed academic journal (“The Anthropocene,” <http://www.mpch-mainz.mpg.de/~air/anthropocene/>).
27. Will Steffen, Paul J. Crutzen, and John R. McNeill, “The Anthropocene: Are Humans Now Overwhelming the Great Forces of Nature?” *Ambio* 36 (2007): 618.
28. Libby Robin, “The Eco-humanities as Literature: A New Genre?” *Australian Literary Studies* 23 (2008): 290.
29. Cory Doctorow, “Writing in the Age of Distraction,” *Locus Magazine*, January 7, 2009, <http://www.locusmag.com/Features/2009/01/cory-doctorow-writing-in-age-of.html>.
30. Quoted in Thomas Friedman, “The Age of Interruption,” *New York Times*, July 5, 2006, A27.
31. “Vietnam in Retrospect,” *New York Times*, March 23, 2003, A25.
32. Arnold Schecter et al., “Agent Orange and the Vietnamese: The Persistence of Elevated Dioxin Levels in Human Tissues,” *American Journal of Public Health* 85 (1995): 516–522.



33. Janie Lorber, "Defoliant May Be Tied to New List of Illnesses," *New York Times*, July 25, 2009, A8.
34. George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature*, ed. David Lowenthal (1864; repr., Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2003), 15.
35. Leopold's address at the June 1934 dedication of the University of Wisconsin Arboretum, quoted in Scott Russell Sanders, "Speaking for the Land: Aldo Leopold as a Writer," author's personal Web site, [http://www.scottrussellsanders.com/SRS%20entries/SRS\\_on\\_Leopold.htm](http://www.scottrussellsanders.com/SRS%20entries/SRS_on_Leopold.htm). Leopold was inconsistent on this point, sometimes emphasizing an ethics of sensory immediacy grounded in local knowledge and sometimes emphasizing an intergenerational ethics less rooted in the moment or in a visible locale.
36. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 15–37.
37. See especially David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product. How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008); Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt. How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010); and James Hoggan, *Climate Cover-Up. The Crusade to Deny Global Warming* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009).
38. Here I am invoking John Brinckerhoff Jackson's distinction outlined in *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984). For a fine, nuanced interpretation of Jackson's insights in the context of American Indian literatures, see Joni Adamson, *American Indian Literature, Environmental Justice, and Ecocriticism: The Middle Place* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 2001), 90–92. The term "landscape" is of course a contentious one that has a vexed aesthetic and political history. It has been critiqued for implying an external stance toward the land rather than an immersion in place.
39. Annu Jalais, *Forest of Tigers: People, Politics and Environment in the Sundarban* (New Delhi: Routledge, 2010), 11.
40. John Berger, "Twelve Theses on the Economy of the Dead," in *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 4–5.
41. Although some of my conclusions about the viability of neoliberalism as an analytic tool are antithetical to hers, my thinking here was informed by a lecture by Karen Bakker, "The Limits of Neoliberal Nature" (Yi-Fu Tuan Lecture, University of Wisconsin, October 23, 2009).
42. Michael Pollan's *The Botany of Desire* (New York: Random House, 2001) mounts the argument that certain plants (species of apples, marijuana, and potatoes among them) have used humans to their advantage.
43. Robert Campbell, "Special Report: Deepwater Spills and Short Attention Spans," Reuters, June 14, 2010.

44. “Don Young: Gulf Oil Spill ‘Not an Environmental Disaster,’” *Huffington Post*, June 6, 2010.
45. John Curry, quoted in Naomi Klein, “Gulf Oil Spill: A Hole in the World,” *Guardian*, June 19, 2010, 7.
46. On the creation of dead zones, see congressional testimony by University of Georgia biogeochemist, Samantha Joye. [http://www.nsf.gov/news/special\\_reports/science\\_nation/hiddenoilplumes.jsp](http://www.nsf.gov/news/special_reports/science_nation/hiddenoilplumes.jsp)
47. We should distinguish categorically between an attentiveness to deep time environmental changes and the hokiness of deep ecology, a movement permeated by misanthropy and at best indifferent, at worst hostile, to the environmentalism of the poor.
48. On resource omnivores, see especially Madhav Gadgil and Ramachandra Guha, *Ecology and Equity: The Use and Abuse of Nature in Contemporary India* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 177–178.
49. I completed my undergraduate degree—as a double major in English literature and African languages—without ever being required to read a single work of nonfiction, which was roundly disparaged as nonliterary. The days when professors viewed the novel and poetry as the imagination’s soaring peaks and nonfiction as the valley of the shadow of death may be over, but nonfiction is still widely treated in literature departments as at best a subsidiary form.
50. I am aware that so-called biographical criticism has fallen out of favor. Yet it seems to me that biographical context often remains invaluable, especially (though not exclusively) when one is considering nonfiction.
51. Neither of Gordimer’s immigrant parents went to university, and she herself never completed a degree.
52. Tambu is not given a last name in the novel.
53. Tsitsi Dangarembga, *Nervous Conditions* (London: Women’s Press, 1988), 64.
54. *Ibid.*, 58.
55. Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden (Book)* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1999), 115.
56. Wai Chee Dimock remains the finest literary scholar on the subject of the unexpected imaginative connection that speaks across geographical and historical divides.
57. [https://www.indymedia.ie/article/72983?author\\_name=T&condense\\_comments=false&userlanguage=ga&save\\_prefs=true](https://www.indymedia.ie/article/72983?author_name=T&condense_comments=false&userlanguage=ga&save_prefs=true). Irish activists also host an annual Ken Saro-Wiwa Memorial Seminar on resource struggles against the abuses of natural resources by corporate giants.
58. For a brilliant analysis of the way allegorical translation may inform environmental struggles cross-culturally, see Anna Lowenhaupt Tsing, *Friction: An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 227–238.

59. On the integration of scientific theories into the environmental humanities and social sciences, see especially William M. Adams, “When Nature Won’t Stay Still: Conservation, Equilibrium and Control,” in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-colonial Era*, ed. William M. Adams and Martin Muligan (London: Earthscan, 2001), 220–246.
60. Within the general ecocritical indifference to social scientific scholarship, the most notable exception is the work on risk by the German sociologist, Ulrich Beck, which is receiving increasing attention. Among contemporary ecocritics, Pablo Mukherjee stands out as someone who has drawn creatively on disciplines that bridge the humanities and social sciences, most notably cultural geography and cultural anthropology.
61. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 63. If ambivalence, irony, rupture, and hybridity are so pervasive, McClintock asks, how do the dominant powers become dominant in the first place; and how is power won and lost? What guarantees that some forms of power become dominant while others are subverted? Are the internal fissures in form and discourse just waiting to rupture from within, or is it the role of the critic (in an act of extreme professional self-regard) to facilitate such ruptures?
62. Ursula Heise, “Afterword,” in *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narratives*, ed. Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt (Athens: University of Georgia Press, forthcoming).
63. Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, eds., *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007), 12. For an excellent example of such cross-border genre thinking, see Rachel Adams, “At the Borders of American Crime Fiction,” in Dimock and Buell, *Shades of the Planet*, 249–273.
64. In the final chapter of this book, I elaborate on the implications of the belated engagement between postcolonial and ecocriticism, an engagement that has recently been energized from a variety of quarters.
65. Robert Vitalis, “Black Gold, White Crude: An Essay on American Exceptionalism, Hierarchy, and Hegemony in the Gulf,” *Diplomatic History* 26 (Spring 2002): 187.
66. Greg Garrard, *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 178.
67. Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (New York: Verso, 2008); Elizabeth DeLoughrey, “Heliotropes: Pacific Radiations and Wars of Light,” in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Susie O’Brien, “Survival Strategies for Global Times,” *Interventions* 9 (2007): 83–98. DeLoughrey is particularly incisive on the transnational somatic, political, and imaginative fallout of American, British, and French

- nuclear colonialism. For a rich engagement with transnational environmental literatures, see also *Postcolonial Ecologies*, ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
68. Mike Davis, *Planet of the Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006), 72.
69. On grassroots globalization, see especially Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels* (Boston: South End Press, 2001); Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization, and the World System*, ed. Anthony D. King (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1997), 1–21; and Arjun Appadurai, “Grassroots Globalization and the Research Imagination,” in *Globalization*, ed. Arjun Appadurai (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2001), 1–29.
70. Anup Shah, “World Military Spending,” Global Issues Web site, <http://www.globalissues.org/article/75/world-militaryspendingInContextUSMilitarySpendingVersusRestoftheWorld>.
71. George Lamming, *The Pleasures of Exile* (1960; repr., Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), 17.
72. Clearly, the problems of transnational answerability are not unique to the United States, but (until China’s recent ascent) have assumed their most consequential form in relation to U.S. and Soviet military and economic foreign policy during the post–World War II era.
73. William Finnegan, “The Economics of Empire: Notes on the Washington Consensus,” *Harper’s*, May 1, 2003, 54.
74. Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels* (Boston: South End Press, 2001). For a superb analysis of successful South–North alliances as well as the challenges they face, see Ashley Dawson, “Introduction: New Enclosures” (in a special issue he edited on Imperial Ecologies). *New Formations* 69 (2010), 8–22.
75. Anne McClintock, Ella Shohat, and Fernando Coronil, in particular, have put forward cogent arguments for the limitations of the term.
76. Wendell Berry, “Word and Flesh,” in *What are People For?* (New York: North Point Press, 1990), 198.
77. For an economical, yet textured account of this alliance of doubt purveyors, see especially George Monbiot, *Heat. How to Stop the Planet From Burning* (Cambridge, Mass.: South End Press, 2007), 20–42.
78. Frank Luntz, “The Environment: A Cleaner, Safer, Healthier America” at [http://reports.ewg.org/files/LuntzResearch\\_environment.pdf](http://reports.ewg.org/files/LuntzResearch_environment.pdf). Quoted Monbiot, *Heat*, 27.
79. This memo was put out by the tobacco company Brown and Williamson. As Monbiot documents, the tobacco industry and the oil majors have worked with the same public relations firm to generate similar strategies for disseminating doubt about the scientific consensus on, respectively, the health risks of smoking and the human causes of climate change. See anon, “Smoking and Health Proposal,” Brown and Williamson document no. 680561778-1786 at <http://legacy>

- .library.ucsf.edu/tid/nvs40foo/pdf;jsessionid=E0544FD253BBD9968FB57B01E63F9F6B.tobacco04. Quoted David Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product. How Industry's Assault on Science Threatens Your Health* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 11.
80. Fanon, 38.
81. James Hoggan, *Climate Cover-Up. The Crusade to Deny Global Warming* (Vancouver: Greystone Books, 2009); Elizabeth Kolbert, *Field Notes from a Catastrophe: Man, Nature, and Climate Change* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2006); Naomi Oreskes and Erik M. Conway, *Merchants of Doubt. How a Handful of Scientists Obscured the Truth on Issues from Tobacco Smoke to Global Warming* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2010); Andrew Rowell, *Green Backlash. Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996); Tim Flannery, *The Weather Makers: How Man is Changing the Climate and What it Means for Life on Earth* (New York: Grove, 2001); Michaels, *Doubt is Their Product*; and Monbiot, *Heat*.
82. Matt Taibbi, "Taibbi's Takedown of 'Vampire Squid' Goldman Sachs," *Rolling Stone*, April 5, 2010, [http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/28816321/inside\\_the\\_great\\_american\\_bubble\\_machine](http://www.rollingstone.com/politics/story/28816321/inside_the_great_american_bubble_machine).
83. For a brilliant inquiry into the neglected field of public works in postcolonial literature, see Michael Rubenstein, *Public Works: Infrastructure, Irish Modernism, and the Postcolonial* (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2010). Although his focus is Irish Modernism, Rubenstein's rich conceptual insights can be productively adapted to postcolonial literary studies at large.
84. Berger, "Undefeated Despair," 25.
85. Although the historical focus of Munif's novels *Cities of Salt* and *The Trench* stretches as far back as the 1930s, his perspective on the fallout from Saudi-U.S. petro-relations remains inflected by the geopolitics of the early to mid-1980s, when Munif was writing those two volumes of his oil quintet.
86. Sinha came to activism relatively late. He was (in his own words) an "accidental activist" whose commitments were triggered by two ad campaigns he devised for Amnesty International. Those campaigns raised funds for communities afflicted by two epochal acts of violence against the poor: Saddam Hussein's 1988 gas attacks on the Kurds and Union Carbide's 1984 gassing of Bhopal as a result of cost-cutting infrastructural neglect. Arguably, Sinha's professional training in the image world of advertising left him better equipped than most writer-activists of his generation to adapt his skills to the digital era.

### i. Slow Violence, Neoliberalism, and the Environmental Picaresque

1. Raymond Williams, *Writing in Society* (London: Verso, 1983), 238.
2. Quoted in Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: Reassertions of Space in Critical Social Theory* (London: Verso, 1989), 22.

3. Raymond Williams, *Resources of Hope* (London: Verso, 1989), 115. Sinha has insisted that although *Animal's People* is fictional, every major event that happens in the novel occurred in Bhopal.
4. Like a number of picaresque novels, *Animal's People* simulates orality, in this case the technological orality of a series of tapes the narrator makes for a foreign "Jarnalis" in an effort to record (but retain command over) his story. Sinha also adapts another widespread feature of the picaresque, the readerly aside, addressed here to the anonymous "Eyes," suggestive of reader-as-voyeuristic-outsider. This strategy concentrates a core dilemma that the protagonist shares with Khaufpur's poor: a desire to be recognized by the world at large, to break free from invisibility, but a horror at the dehumanizing vertical dynamics of pity that such recognition typically entails.
5. In Don DeLillo's *White Noise* (New York: Penguin, 1998) we witness a shift toward a different mode of biological citizenship in the wake of an "airborne toxic event" ( 117). When Jack Gladney, a professor of Hitler studies, attempts to assess his survival prospects, a health technician responds with a battery of ambiguous computerized statistics: "It's what we call a massive data-base tally. Gladney, J. A. K. I punch in the name, the substance, the exposure time and then I tap into your computer history. Your genetics, your personals, your medicals, your psychologicals, your police-and-hospitals. It comes back pulsing stars. This doesn't mean anything is going to happen to you as such, at least not today or tomorrow. It just means you are the sum total of your data" (ibid., 141). Ironically, the toxic invasion of Gladney's body occasions a second invasion, of his privacy by the state. His sense of self is technologized—statistically expanded and humanly reduced—without him gaining, in exchange, any greater surety as to his survival prospects.
6. For the most detailed accounts of this widespread American argument, see T. R. Chouham, *Bhopal: The Inside Story* (New York: Apex, 1994); and Larry Everest, *Behind the Poison Cloud: Union Carbide's Bhopal Massacre* (Chicago: Banner, 1986).
7. Indra Sinha, "The Commonwealth Writers' Prize: A Dedication," <http://www.indrasinha.com/blog?p=38>.
8. William Finnegan, "The Economics of Empire: Notes on the Washington Consensus," *Harper's*, May 1, 2003, 41; Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007), 163.
9. Adriana Petryna, *Life Exposed: Biological Citizens after Chernobyl* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2002), 1.
10. For a powerful, intimate account of the impact of the Chernobyl disaster on Belarus, see Hope Burwell, "Jeremiad for Belarus," in *The Future of Nature*, ed. Barry Lopez (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2007), 78–90.

11. According to Petryna, by 2001, 50 percent of Ukraine's population was living below the poverty line (*Life Exposed*, 93).
12. Petryna notes that "present-day processes of recompense . . . were entangled with new patterns of inequality that themselves presented the most immediate issues of social injustice. The very framing of 'injury' now entailed the social and health costs associated with state and market transformations and emerging inequalities" (*Life Exposed*, 218).
13. *Ibid.*, 78.
14. *Ibid.*, 35.
15. Lorna Siggins, "Cúirt Takes Capitalism to Task on Climate Change," *Irish Times*, April 28, 2008, 12; Everest, *Behind the Poison Cloud*, 17.
16. Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (London: Simon, 2007), 230. The forces playing for time include both Union Carbide leaders and certain high-ranking Indian government officials who are leery of alienating a prominent global corporation that they hope will continue to invest in India.
17. Eavan Boland, "Desolation Angel," *Village Voice*, February 6, 1996, SS11.
18. Anthony Lane, "Big Kills," *New Yorker*, June 30, 2000, 87.
19. Sinha had been struggling to find a satisfying voice and perspective for his novel "when a friend showed me some photographs from Bhopal. There was one of a young lad of about 19 who was on all fours because his back was so badly twisted, but he had a sort of cheeky look about him. And just seeing that, it was as if the character of *Animal* just leapt fully fledged into my head" ("The Accidental Activist," 11).
20. Sinha, *Animal's People*, 23.
21. *Ibid.*, 78.
22. Petryna, *Life Exposed*, 30.
23. *Ibid.*, 30.
24. *Ibid.*, 3.
25. As *Animal* notes: "I was born a few days before that night, which no one wants to remember, but nobody can forget" (Sinha, *Animal's People*, 1). A preoccupation with making visible that which has been kept invisible and suppressed—not least the afflicted, forgotten poor themselves—recurs in the picaresque from the genre's beginnings.
26. The gold standard for literary discussions of toxic discourse remains the opening chapter of Lawrence Buell's *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 30–54.
27. Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection*, trans. L. S. Roudiez (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), 5.
28. *Ibid.*, 12.

29. For a fuller account of the economic context of the picaresque in the Spanish Golden Age, see *The Picaresque: A Symposium on the Rogue's Tale*, ed. Carmen Benito-Vessels and Michael Zappala (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1994); Giancarlo Maiorino, "Introduction: Renaissance Marginalities," in *The Picaresque: Tradition and Displacement*, ed. Giancarlo Maiorino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), xi–xxviii; and Giancarlo Maiorino, "Picaresque Econopoetics: At the Watershed of Living Standards," in *The Picaresque*, 1–39.
30. Michel Serres, *The Parasite* (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1982), 14.
31. In keeping with the picaresque fixation with sharp twists of fate, the novel achieves a comic resolution through marriage and sudden wealth, as Animal reveals that he has amassed enough secret savings to buy another member of the underclass, the prostitute Anjali, from her pimp and marry her.
32. *Animal's People* blends the picaresque with, among other genres, the zombie story, which is set in motion by the novel's opening words—"I was once human. So I'm told"—and culminating in Animal's drug-addled wanderings among hallucinations of the living dead. This calls to mind the Chernobyl worker who depicts himself as one of the "living dead": "Our memory is gone. You forget everything—we walk like corpses" (Sinha, *Animal's People*, 1, 3).
33. Maiorino, "Picaresque Econopoetics," xi.
34. Animal refuses, to the end, a surgical resolution to his penumbral, buckled status. He has his rationales. But by implication, at least, he has seen enough of humanity not to mistake an upright posture for a stance of moral rectitude. Sinha's strategy here is reminiscent of Günter Grass's in *The Tin Drum*, where his magic realist narrator of historical catastrophe, Oskar Matzerath, opts out of the "progress" narrative of childhood to adulthood and clings in protest to his diminutive stature. Both books somatize the antihumanist strains that permeate them: Animal's and Oskar's bodies give physical testament to a conviction that, paradoxically, inhumanity ranks high among humanity's defining characteristics.
35. Sinha, *Animal's People*, 9.
36. *Ibid.*, 185.
37. *Ibid.*, 1, 214. Animal's Catholic adoptive mother (who after the disaster can only speak and comprehend French) also develops a tendency to babble apocalyptic portents that draw heavily on the Book of Revelation.
38. *Ibid.*, 366.
39. Mike Davis, *Planet of the Slums* (New York: Verso, 2006), 206.
40. Michael Eric Dyson, *Come Hell or High Water: Hurricane Katrina and the Color of Disaster* (New York: Basic, 2006), 23.



41. Quoted in Jacob Weinberg, “An Imperfect Storm,” *Slate*, September 7, 2005, 3. Here Dyson’s argument is reminiscent of the case Mike Davis makes in *Late Victorian Holocausts: El Niño Famines and the Making of the Third World*. See also Naomi Klein’s closely argued contention that “the idea of exploiting crisis and disaster has been the modus operandi of fundamentalist capitalism.” *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan, 2007), 9. “By the time Hurricane Katrina hit New Orleans, and the nexus of Republican politicians, think tanks and land developers started talking about ‘clean sheets’ and exciting opportunities, it was clear that this was now the preferred method of advancing corporate goals: using moments of collective trauma to engage in radical social and economic engineering” (ibid., 8).
42. See, for example, K. Gopalakrishnan, “Unskilled Worker Had Cleaned Tank,” *Hindustan Times*, December 5, 1984, 1; and Archana Kumar, “Sirens Called Them to Death,” *Hindustan Times*, December 5, 1984, 1.
43. Njabulo Ndebele, *Fine Lines from the Box: Further Thoughts about Our Country* (Roggebaai, South Africa: Umuzi, 2007), 137.
44. Environmental racism is alive and well in India, entangled as it is with discriminatory traditions of caste, class, gender, religion, and aboriginality. Arundhati Roy has been particularly vocal on this matter. See Roy in conversation with David Barsamian in *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile: Conversations with Arundhati Roy* (Cambridge, MA: South End, 2004), 125–127.
45. See Ndebele, *Fine Lines*, 137. In contemporary South Africa this failure notoriously manifested itself in the Mbeki government’s calamitous mixture of equivocation and denial regarding the causes of HIV/AIDS. One outraged commentator condemned the resultant mass deaths as “genocide by sloth.”
46. Sinha, “The Accidental Activist,” 11.
47. Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 283.
48. Ibid., 92.
49. The character Shambhu is “a twice-victim of the Kampani. He had breathed the poisons of that night, plus the wells in his neighborhood were full of poisons leaked from the factory” (Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 147). Sinha’s account of this second, delayed hazard transmitted through well water recalls Rachel Carson’s elegiac evocation of the poisoning of formerly pristine wells: “many man-made chemicals act in much the same way as radiation; they lie long in the soil, and enter into living organisms, passing from one to another. Or they may travel mysteriously by underground streams, emerging to combine, through the alchemy of air and sunlight, into new forms, which kill vegetation, sicken cattle, and work unknown harm on those who drink from once pure wells.” Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*, (1962; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 23–24.

50. Here I am adapting the term “ecosystem people” from Ramachandra Guha and Juan Martinez-Alier, *Varieties of Environmentalism* (London: Earthscan, 1997), 12–13.
51. Ulrich Beck, *Risk Society: Toward a New Modernity*, trans. Mark Ritter (London: Sage, 1992), 72.
52. Animal gives focus to these category leakages when he reflects on his beating at the hands of the police: “Neither Christian am I nor Hindu nor Muslim, not Brahmin nor Sufi nor saint, neither man am I nor beast. I don’t know what is being beaten here. If they kill me what will die?” (Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 313).
53. Key figures within the Indian government were complicit in this sleight of hand, as they were reluctant to alienate a global powerhouse like Dow and hoped it would continue to invest in India.
54. Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 306.
55. *Ibid.*, 185.
56. Carson, *Silent Spring*, 2–3.
57. *Ibid.*, 8.
58. Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 306.
59. Petryna, *Life Exposed*, 216.
60. Mike Davis, “Los Angeles after the Storm: The Dialectic of Ordinary Disaster,” *Antipode* 27 (1995): 221–241.
61. Iain Boal et al., *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (New York: Verso, 2005), 31.
62. The authenticity or realism of his animalized urchin voice is of no relevance here. Sinha’s novel is such a patently hybrid mix of picaresque, magic realist, social realist, gothic, zombie, and apocalyptic narrative strategies that questions of authenticity evaporate. It is the subversive charisma and page-turning urgency of Animal’s voice that matter, not whether real urchins speak like that in Bhopal (which, after all, is an inspiration for but hardly identical to Khaufpur).
63. Witness Nisha’s tirade against the Kampani: “My father’s precious justice is of no use, our government’s of no use, appeals to humanity are no use, because these people are not human, they’re animals” (Sinha, *Animal’s People*, 332). On hearing this, Animal balks at Nisha’s speciesism, which he reads as insulting to animals by debasing them to the level of humans.
64. Anon, *Lazarillo de Tormes*. Trans. Michael Alpert (Baltimore: Penguin, 1969), 23.

## 2. Fast-forward Fossil

1. For the title to this chapter, I am indebted to Ellen Driscoll’s 2009 exhibit “Fast-ForwardFossil,” a floor-sized environmental sculpture composed of recycled

plastic milk cartons that the artist harvested from dumps. Amalgamating features from three oil-drilling sites—the Niger Delta, the Alberta tar sands, and the North Sea—the exhibit creates a composite, subsiding landscape littered with abandoned oil derricks, sink holes, shattered trees, teetering houses, a gallows, and some empty cages. I read the salvaged plasticity of Driscoll's disposable landscape as the artist's way of giving imaginative shape to the slow violence of hydrocarbon time, past and future. The translucence of the recycled milk cartons—their material ghostliness—gives the sculpture an eerie, suspended quality that feels both elegiac and premonitory. <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q38bGDNWKQw>

2. Although thinking about the resource curse began to take shape in the 1980s, Richard M. Auty's *Sustaining Development in Mineral Economies: The Resource Curse Thesis* (London: Routledge, 1993) proved decisive in giving the field a memorable catch phrase and a depth of analysis it had previously lacked. The literature on the resource curse is by now immense. For some useful overviews of the issues at stake, see *Escaping the Resource Curse*, ed. Macartan Humphreys, Jeffrey D. Sachs, and Joseph E. Stiglitz (New York: Columbia University Press, 2007); and Michael T. Klare, *Resource Wars: The New Landscape of Global Conflict* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2001).
3. Antony Anghie, *Sovereignty, Imperialism and the Making of International Law* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 114–137. I am grateful to Adom Getachew for alerting me to Anghie's work and for encouraging me to clarify this point.
4. William Reno, *Warlord Politics and African States* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 1999), 7.
5. Ryszard Kapuscinski, *The Shah of Shahs*, trans. William R. Brand and Katarzyna Mroczkowska-Brand (New York: Vintage, 1985), 36.
6. Quoted in Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 1.
7. U.S. Census Bureau, *U.S. International Trade in Goods and Services, December 2009*, February 2010, <http://www.census.gov/foreign-trade/Press-Release/2009pr/12/>.
8. Peter Maas, "The Ministry of Oil Defense," *Foreign Policy*, August 5, 2010, [http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/05/the\\_ministry\\_of\\_oil\\_defense](http://www.foreignpolicy.com/articles/2010/08/05/the_ministry_of_oil_defense).
9. Amitav Ghosh, "Petrofiction," *New Republic*, March 2, 1992, 29–34.
10. Despite some expansive excursions into the Russian Revolution and World War I, Sinclair's oil novel does not engage the international ties that have come to dominate the story of petroleum and, above all, the fraught bonds between the United States and the Middle East. The reasons for this silence are obvious: Sinclair published *Oil!* before any American petroleum corporation had signed a

- concessionary agreement with a Gulf sheik and before the State of Israel existed. Arguably the most ambitious U.S. oil novel since Sinclair's is Linda Hogan's *Mean Spirit* (New York: Ivy Books, 1991). Set during the 1920s conflict over oil-rich Osage tribal lands in Oklahoma, *Mean Spirit* is informed by many of the "resource curse" concerns that animate the writings of both Munif and Saro-Wiwa.
11. Abdelrahman Munif's name sometimes also appears as Abd al-Rahman Munif. For consistency, I have deployed the former throughout, as it is the version of his name used in Peter Theroux's English translation.
  12. For Leopold's land ethic, see his posthumously published *A Sand County Almanac* (1949; repr., New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 59–73.
  13. Aldo Leopold, "Game and Wild Life Conservation," *Condor* 34 (1932): 103.
  14. Jacques Attali, *Millennium; Winners and Losers in the Coming Order* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 1992), 7. For a thoughtful essay on the indiscriminate use of the nomadic trope in contemporary theory, see Mokhtar Ghambou, "A Critique of Post/Colonial Nomadism," *Journal X* 6 (2001): 63–77.
  15. Munif, quoted in David Gilmour, "Desert Ruritania," *New York Review of Books*, March 26, 1992, 19.
  16. Bertolt Brecht, "An die Nachgeborenen (To posterity)," in *Selected Poems*, trans. H. R. Hays (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 177.
  17. Sabry Hafez provides a fuller overview of Munif's life and works in his exemplary essay, "An Arabian Master," *New Left Review* 37 (January/February 2006): 39–67. See also Rasheed El-Enany, "Cities of Salt: A Literary View of the Theme of Oil and Change in the Gulf," in *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 213–222; and Ellen McLarney, "Empire of the Machine": Oil in the Arabic Novel," *Boundary 2* 2009 36 (2): 177–198.
  18. Quoted in Hafez, "An Arabian Master," 43.
  19. In Iskander Habash, "Unpublished Munif Interview: Crisis in the Arab World—Oil, Political Islam, and Dictatorship," *Al Jadid Magazine* 9 (2003): 3.
  20. For Munif's belief in the instrumental role of literature as a form of resistance and a way of reclaiming the past, see especially Sonja Mejcher Atassi, "Writing—A Tool for Change: Abd Al-Rahman Munif," <http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes>.
  21. For Munif's reflections on his turn from organizational activism to (in his view) the more limited spheres of activism open to the public intellectual and writer, see Abdel Razzaq Takriti, "Writing—a Tool for Change," review of *Abdel Rahman Munif wal Iraq: Sira wa Dhikrayat*, ed. Maher Jarrar, *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 7 (Spring 2007), <http://web.mit.edu/cis/www/mitejmes>.
  22. Interview in *Banipal*, October 1998, quoted in Hafez, "An Arabian Master," 47. The 1967 defeat reverberated for Munif, as for many Arabs, with the

- humiliations suffered during the 1948 *nakbah*. A teenager at that time, Munif felt the shockwaves of the 1948 defeat closely as refugees poured into his hometown of Amman and transformed it. Munif testifies in the latter pages of his memoir how a young soldier, an Iraqi relative, made a lasting impression on him. The soldier passed through town twice: once as an exuberant young soldier en route to driving back the Zionists and then a second time as an angry, disillusioned member of the shambolic Arab retreat. Munif, *A Story of a City: A Childhood in Amman*, trans. Samira Kawar (London: Quartet, 1996), 275–307.
23. Habash, “Unpublished Interview,” 3.
  24. Although Munif’s books would be banned in Saudi Arabia (and elsewhere in the region), the Saudis revoked his citizenship on political grounds some years before he turned to writing.
  25. Many of his essays were infused with political polemic; others, however, addressed his great cultural passions, not least for the extensive traditions of Arab visual art, music, and architecture.
  26. Habash, “Unpublished Munif Interview,” 3.
  27. *Ibid.*, 4.
  28. Amiri Baraka (formerly LeRoi Jones), “The Changing Same: (R&B and the New Black Music),” in *Black Music* (New York: W. Morrow, 1967), 11.
  29. Indeed, the foreign oil-hunters try to camouflage their quest as a search for further water, but the locals are water-wise enough to suspect a ruse because the Americans are looking in the wrong places.
  30. Abdelrahman Munif, *Cities of Salt*, trans. Peter Theroux (New York: Vintage, 1984), 86.
  31. Retort, *Afflicted Powers: Capital and Spectacle in a New Age of War* (London: Verso, 2005), 75.
  32. Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 7.
  33. *Ibid.*, 9.
  34. Quoted Robert Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom: Mythmaking on the Saudi Oil Frontier* (London: Verso, 2009), 31.
  35. Wm. Roger Louis and Ronald Robinson, “The Imperialism of Decolonization,” *Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History* 22 (1994): 462–511.
  36. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 1.
  37. *Ibid.*, 86.
  38. *Ibid.*, 98.
  39. *Ibid.*, 106
  40. Robert Vitalis provides the most detailed, incisive account of the Jim Crow practices of American oil corporations in Saudi Arabia. See *America’s Kingdom*, 88–120.
  41. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 295.

42. Here I am in accord with Ghosh (“Petrofictions”), Hafez (“An Arabian Master”), and McLarney (“Empire of the Machine”) who all remark upon Munif’s overly romantic pursuit of a prior authenticity.
43. Shepard Krech III, *The Ecological Indian: Myth and History* (New York: Norton, 2000). For a particularly insightful response to this work, see Annette Kolodny, “Rethinking ‘The Ecological Indian’: A Penobscot Precursor,” *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and the Environment* 14 (2007): 12–31. See also Greg Garrard’s incisive reflections on assumed native environmental virtue in *Ecocriticism* (London: Routledge, 2004), 120–127.
44. See, for example, Munif’s account of how “the people of this immense, harsh desert were born, lived and died in a grim natural cycle” (*Cities of Salt*, 161).
45. Ghosh is especially insightful on Munif’s failure to give definition or interiority to the foreign workers, Asian and Middle Eastern, who are lured to Harran. See Ghosh, “Petrofictions,” 34.
46. Michael Upchurch, “Abdelrahman Munif Interview: Mixing It Up with Oil, Politics, and Fiction,” *Glimmer Train* 11 (1994): 69.
47. James Clifford, *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997).
48. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 10.
49. John Updike, “Satan’s Work and Silted Cisterns,” in *Odd Jobs: Essays and Criticism* (New York: Knopf, 1991), 563–570.
50. In conversation, June 10, 2007.
51. Updike, “Satan’s Work,” 566. Munif is imaginatively seeking to enter into the mindsets of Bedouin characters who, for religious and imperial historical reasons, remain profoundly suspicious of the motives of foreigners. Munif himself has long been on record as an opponent of what he calls political Islam, whether embodied by the Ayatollah Khomeini or by the politicized Islamic movements that America frequently helped foment and fund during the cold war as a perceived counterweight to communism.
52. *Ibid.*, 563.
53. *Ibid.*, 563–564.
54. *Ibid.*, 565.
55. John Updike, *Self-Consciousness* (New York: Fawcett, 1990), 37. Whatever Updike’s strengths as a writer, he didn’t possess any instinct for transnational imaginings, as evidenced by what is inarguably his most feeble novel, *The Terrorist*.
56. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 367.
57. Munif’s sense of how easily place and history can be irreparably fractured calls to mind sentiments that Czeslow Milosz voices in *The Captive Mind*. As a Pole, through historical hardship, Milosz learned that what he calls the “natural” social and environmental order can be irreversibly undone at high speed.

- On arriving in the United States, he was startled by the widespread American assumption that the world they inhabited would “naturally” continue more or less the same. Milosz read this assumption as an imaginative shortcoming born of historical amnesia and geographical isolation. See Milosz, *The Captive Mind*, trans. Jane Zielenko (New York: Penguin, 1980), 25–30.
58. I am grateful to Samer Alatout for elucidating this meaning of *‘al-Tih* in conversation, June 6, 2009.
  59. Vitalis, “Crossing Exceptionalism’s Frontier,” 12.
  60. William E. Mulligan Papers, quoted in Vitalis, “Black Gold,” 205.
  61. Patrick Flynn, “What It Means to Work for ARAMCO,” manuscript from 1984, box 11, folder 32, William E. Mulligan Papers, Special Collections Division, Lauinger Library, Georgetown University, Washington, DC. Quoted in Vitalis, *America’s Kingdom*, xi. Wallace Stegner, more ambiguous about his role as cheerleader for American corporate expansionism, nonetheless buys into a glossy magazine Orientalism: “This was Arabia as a romantic imagination might have created it; nights so mellow that they lay out under the scatter of dry bright stars, and heard the silence beyond their fire as if the whole desert hung listening. Physically, it might have been Arizona or New Mexico, with its flat crestlines, its dry clarity of air its silence. But it felt more mysterious than that; and the faces of soldiers and guide and interpreter, dark, bearded, gleaming in teeth and eye as they spoke or laughed, corroborated Hamilton’s sense that this was authentic Arabia, hardly touched by the West.” Wallace Stegner, *Discovery! The Search for Arabian Oil* (1971; repr., Portola St. Vista, CA: Selwa Press, 2007), 15.
  62. Quoted in Aaron David Miller, *Search for Security: Saudi Arabian Oil and American Foreign Policy, 1939–1949* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1980), 200.
  63. Updike, “Satan’s Work,” 565.
  64. Jennifer Wenzel, “Petro-magic-realism: Toward a Political Ecology of Nigerian Literature,” *Postcolonial Studies* 9 (2006): 449–464. Genres are of course never pure or absolute, but in terms of the mingled strands in Munif’s quintet, historical epic and satire are more prominent than magic realism.
  65. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 140–141.
  66. Of course, the predominantly oral Bedouin community will have encountered writing before. However, what distinguishes the Americans is the way they write and how their writing is ritually enfolded into the customary shape of their strange days.
  67. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 45.
  68. John Brinckerhoff Jackson, *Discovering the Vernacular Landscape* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1984).

69. Munif, *Cities of Salt*, 545.
70. Abdelrahman Munif, *The Trench*, trans. Paul Theroux (New York: Vintage, 1993), 479.
71. John Berger, “Stones,” in *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 69.
72. Tim Flannery, *The Future Eaters: An Ecological History of the Australasian Lands and Peoples* (New York: Grove Press, 2002).
73. Upton Sinclair, *Oil!* (1927; repr., New York: Penguin, 2007), 527. Despite their many differences, Munif, like Sinclair, was a great observer of the technologies of power—and of crowd power and worker insurrections.
74. Human Development Index compiled by United Nations Development Program. <http://lib.stat.cmu.edu/datasets/humandev>.
75. Michael J. Watts, “Violent Geographies: Speaking the Unspeakable and the Politics of Space,” *City and Society* 8 (2001): 88.
76. Abdelrahman Munif, “Other Voices—Saudi Bomb Attack an Act of Despair,” trans. Peter Theroux, *Jinn Magazine* (Pacific News Service) 2 (June 30–July 2, 1996): 7.
77. Quoted in Tariq Ali, “Farewell to Munif: A Patriarch of Arab Literature,” *Counterpunch*, January 31/February 1, 2004, <http://www.counterpunch.org/alio1312004.html>.
78. Munif, “Other Voices,” 7.
79. *Ibid.*
80. *Ibid.*
81. Hafez, “An Arabian Master,” 58.
82. Stegner, *Discovery*. The fifteen-year delay between Stegner’s submission of the book and its publication is attributable to concerns within Aramaco that it might upset relations with the House of Saud. That said, *Discovery* is, for the most part, hell-bent on defending both the idea of American exceptionalism and the honorable role the American oil corporation played in Saudi uplift.
83. *Ibid.*, xvi.
84. *Ibid.*, xxix, xxx, xxvi.
85. *Ibid.*, xvii.
86. Abdelrahman Munif, *Ul-Khalij*, November 21, 1984, 10. Quoted in Rasheed El-Enany, “Cities of Salt: A Literary View of the Theme of Oil and Change in the Gulf,” in *Arabia and the Gulf: From Traditional Society to Modern States*, ed. Ian Richard Netton (London: Croom Helm, 1986), 220.
87. Quoted in Tariq Ali, “Farewell to Munif.”
88. Munif also laments the absence of fundamental rights in Saudi Arabia and, above all, the third-class status of Saudi women that he argues has profound repercussions for Saudi dignity and belonging.



## 3. Pipedreams

1. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day: A Detention Diary* (London: Penguin, 1995).
2. Quoted in Richard Syge, "Ken Saro-Wiwa: An Obituary," *Independent (London)*, November 11, 1995, 20.
3. Ken Saro-Wiwa, "Prison Letter," *Mail and Guardian (Johannesburg)*, November 11, 1995, 1.
4. William Boyd, "Death of a Writer," *New Yorker*, November 27, 1995, 53.
5. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria: The Ogoni Tragedy* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros, 1992), 9.
6. Saro-Wiwa repeatedly uses the terms "recolonization" and "indigenous colonialism" to describe relations between Nigerian regimes that have favored the three major ethnic groups and violently suppressed the rights and claims of extreme minorities like the Ogoni. See, for example, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 20; and *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros, 1991), 71.
7. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 131.
8. Quoted in Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 19. On the problems bequeathed by the colonial invention of Nigeria, see also *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster*, 45–46.
9. For a fuller description of the beginnings of the Nigerian petroleum industry, see Michael Watts, "Sweet and Sour," in *Curse of the Black Gold: Fifty Years of Oil in the Niger Delta*, ed. Michael Watts (New York: Powerhouse, 2008), 36.
10. Watts, "Sweet and Sour," 43.
11. This clause referred to revenue generated by both mineral sales and mining rents. See Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 21.
12. Even that figure exaggerates the amount they have received, for most of the 1.5 percent has been unilaterally "borrowed" by the powerful states where the Yoruba, the Igbo, and the Hausa-Fulani are in the majority.
13. David Wheeler, "Blood on British Business Hands," *New Statesman and Society*, November 17, 1995, 14.
14. Robert Vitalis, "Black Gold, White Crude: An Essay on American Exceptionalism, Hierarchy, and Hegemony in the Gulf," *Diplomatic History* 16 (Spring 2002): 186.
15. Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels* (Boston: South End Press, 2001), 49.
16. Quoted by Claude Ake, in an interview with Andrew Rowell, *Green Backlash: Global Subversion of the Environmental Movement* (London: Routledge, 1996), 27.
17. For the most authoritative account of the events leading up to these killings, see Human Rights Watch/Africa, *Nigeria: The Ogoni Crisis—A Case-Study of Military Repression in Southeastern Nigeria*, Human Rights Watch/Africa 7, no. 5 (1995), esp. 7–25. See also Andy Rowell, "Trouble Flares in the Delta of Death," *Guardian*, November 8, 1995, 10; and Rowell, "Shell Shocked," *Village Voice*, November 21, 1995, 21.

18. Sam Bakilo Bako, quoted in Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 58.
19. Panedom Badom, quoted *ibid.*, 66.
20. Oamen Enaholo, quoted *ibid.*, 79.
21. David Wheeler, "Blood on British Business Hands," *New Statesman and Society*, November 17, 1995, 14.
22. Saro-Wiwa argues that the African writer ought to be *l'homme engage* in *A Month and a Day*, 81.
23. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Sozaboy: A Novel Written in Rotten English* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros, 1985). For a discussion of Saro-Wiwa's use of dialect, see Chantal Zabus, "Mending the Schizo-Text: Pidgin in the Nigerian Novel," *Kunapipi* 14 (1992): 119–127; and Willfried F. Feuser, "The Voice from Dukana: Ken Saro-Wiwa," *Matatu* 1 (1987): 49–57.
24. For Saro-Wiwa's own reflections on this experience, see Ken Saro-Wiwa, "A Television Drama in Nigeria: A Personal Experience" (paper presented at the African Literature Association Conference in Pittsburgh, April 1988).
25. Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster*, 118.
26. This is not, of course, to suggest that all Saro-Wiwa's multigeneric output was overtly instrumental, just that a considerable body of his writing, particularly his nonfiction, was expressly so. See, for example, his insistence that "literature in a critical situation such as Nigeria's cannot be divorced from politics. Indeed, literature must serve society by steeping itself in politics, by intervention. . . . [Writers] must play an interventionist role . . . The writer must be *l'homme engage*: the intellectual man of action." Quoted in Charles R. Larson, ed., *Under African Skies* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997), 210.
27. The traditions of socialism were never as prominent in Anglophone West Africa as they were in Southern and East Africa, not least because West Africa was more shallowly colonized than Kenya, South Africa, Zimbabwe, Namibia, Mozambique, and Angola. West Africa was thus spared the ravaging anticolonial wars in which the goals of decolonization and socialism typically converged.
28. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Barrel of a Pen: Resistance to Repression in Neo-colonial Kenya* (Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1983); Mafika Gwala, "Writing as a Cultural Weapon," in *Momentum: On Recent South African Writing*, ed. M. J. Daymond, J. U. Jacobs and Margaret Lenta (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Natal University Press, 1984), 37–44.
29. Cited in Aaron Sachs, "Eco Justice: Linking Human Rights and the Environment," (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Paper 127, 1995), 53.
30. David C. Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World* (London: Earthscan, 1995), 124.
31. Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 7.
32. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 88.

33. *Ibid.*, 88.
34. Ken Saro-Wiwa, interviewed on *Without Walls: The Hanged Man—Nigeria's Shame*, Channel 4 (UK), November 15, 1995.
35. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 79.
36. *Ibid.*, 94.
37. *Ibid.*, 183.
38. *Ibid.*, 73.
39. The phrase “judicial murder” was coined by then British prime minister John Major. See Michael Homan, “Commonwealth Challenge,” *Financial Times*, November 13, 1995, 18.
40. *A Month and a Day*, 165.
41. Bob Herbert, “Unholy Alliance in Nigeria,” *New York Times*, January 26, 1996, A27.
42. For Saro-Wiwa’s insistence that corporate racism and Nigerian domestic colonialism are equally at fault, see *Without Walls*. He also makes this case in both *Genocide in Nigeria* ( 8, 82) and *A Month and a Day* ( 18, 73, 186–188).
43. Greenpeace International, *Shell Shocked: The Environmental and Social Costs of Living with Shell in Nigeria* (Amsterdam: Greenpeace International, 1994), 9. See also Rob Nixon, “The Oil Weapon,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1995, A31.
44. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 170.
45. On the flaring, see Nick Aston-Jones, in Rowell, *Green Backlash*, 291; Ike Okonta and Oronto Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast: Shell, Human Rights, and Oil* (London: Verso, 2003); and Michael Watts, “Black Gold, White Heat: State Violence, Local Resistance and the National Question in Nigeria,” in *Geographies of Resistance*, ed. Steve Pile and Michael Keith (London: Routledge, 1997), 53.
46. Robert J. C. Young, “Dangerous and Wrong: Shell, Intervention and the Politics of Transnational Companies,” *Interventions* 1 (1999): 457.
47. Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 82.
48. Rowell, “Trouble Flares in the Delta of Death,” 11.
49. The Igbo dream of creating an independent secessionist nation called Biafra would not have been viable without the sea of oil beneath the Niger Delta, which they included in their projected Biafra. The prospect of losing that oil wealth intensified the ferocity of the Hausa-Yoruba response to the secessionists.
50. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 187.
51. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *On a Darkling Plain: An Account of the Nigerian Civil War* (Lagos, Nigeria: Saros, 1989), 29. See also Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 87–88.
52. Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 7. The neocolonial rapport between the Nigerian leadership and the oil companies may be illustrated by the case of Philip Asiodu, a Nigerian director of Chevron. Asiodu has reassured investors, “Given the small size and population of the oil-producing areas, it is not cynical to

- observe that even if the resentments of oil producing states continue, they cannot threaten the stability of the country nor affect its continued economic development” (quoted in Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 87). Before becoming a director of Chevron, Asiodu had held a prominent post in Nigeria’s Federal Ministry of Mines and Power. Nor is he the only such crossover figure: the Abacha regime and the transnationals held the delta micro-minorities in similar contempt, treating them principally as impediments to personal fortune.
53. Jonathan Freedland, “American Blacks on Nigeria,” *Guardian*, March 26, 1996, 5.
  54. Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 188.
  55. See, for example, his interview on *Without Walls* in which he called for economic sanctions and Nigeria’s expulsion from the United Nations. He argued that “[t]he military governments of Nigeria have sat on other Nigerians in a way that is just as evil as what was done in South Africa.”
  56. General Sani Abacha and his military regime annulled the democratic elections of November 1993 and imprisoned president-elect Mashood Abiola and other internal opposition leaders on trumped up charges of treason. In July 1995, former president Olusegun Obasanjo and forty other opponents of the regime were convicted and sentenced to death. After an international outcry, these sentences were commuted to life in July 1995. Four months later, another of Abacha’s kangaroo courts condemned Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni Eight to hang.
  57. Mandela’s stance echoed that of his first deputy, Thabo Mbeki, who had visited Nigeria in July 1995, and failing to dissuade Abacha from his hardline course had nonetheless concluded that “[w]e need a more equal relationship. Western countries must accept the capacity of African countries to set an African agenda.” Quoted in “Too Gentle Giant,” *Economist*, November 18, 1995, 42.
  58. “Pretoria Blunders as Nigeria Burns,” *Mail and Guardian (Johannesburg)*, November 11, 1995, 3.
  59. Rahana Rossouw, “You Can’t Blame Mandela,” *Mail and Guardian (Johannesburg)*, November 17, 1995, 17.
  60. Robert Block, “When Mandela Went Missing,” *Independent*, November 21, 1995, 17.
  61. Quoted in Steve Crawshaw and James Robers, “Pressure Mounts for Nigeria Oil Ban,” *Independent*, November 13, 1995, 1.
  62. “Where Oppression Has No Tribe,” *New Statesman and Society*, November 17, 1991, 15.
  63. Peter Vale, quoted in Robert Block, “When Mandela Went Missing,” *Independent*, November 21, 1995, 17.
  64. Piqued by South African condemnations of Nigeria after Saro-Wiwa and the Ogoni Eight were executed, Abacha barred the national soccer team (and African champions at the time), the Eagles, from participating in the African Cup

- of Nations in South Africa. The symbolic import of this competition, contested by fifty-two African nations, can scarcely be overestimated: throughout Africa it is the premier event on the sporting calendar. The Eagles' inability to defend their title (and South Africa's ensuing victory) became a deep source of national mourning in Nigeria and the surest mark of the country's growing isolation.
65. This ad was placed by the Philippine government in *Fortune* in 1975. Quoted in Korten, *When Corporations Rule the World*, 159.
66. See Eyal Press, "Freeport-McMoran at Home and Abroad," *The Nation*, July 31, 1995, 125; Warren St. John, "Last Resort," *Lingua Franca*, November/December, 1993: 15–17; Aidan Rankin, "Primitive? Then What Are We?" *Independent (London)*, January 17, 1996, 16.
67. Quoted in Rankin, "Primitive," 16.
68. *Ibid.*
69. For two powerful accounts of the battle over the Oriente, see Judith Kimerling, *Amazon Crude* (San Francisco: National Resources Defense Council, 1991); and Joe Kane, *Savages* (New York: Alfred Knopf, 1995).
70. Rick Bass, quoted in Kimerling, *Amazon Crude*, iv.
71. Quoted in Robert D. Kaplan, *The Ends of the Earth: A Journey at the Dawn of the 21st Century* (New York: Random House, 1996), 63.
72. David Orr, "Shell Wins Over Village with Cash and Liquor," *Independent (London)*, December 1, 1995, 18.
73. Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness* (1899; repr., New York: Signet, 1978), 99.
74. Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 91.
75. James Ferguson, "Seeing Like an Oil Company: Space, Security, and Global Capital in Neoliberal Africa," *American Anthropologist*, 107 (September 2005): 380.
76. Quoted in Cameron Duozu, "Cry the Beloved Country," *Observer*, November 12, 1995, 24.
77. Quoted John Berger, *Hold Everything Dear*, 66.
78. Donatella Lorch, "Is Kenya Sliding Back Toward Repression?" *New York Times*, October 29, 1995, 3.
79. Ian Black, "Nigeria Defies World With Writer's Judicial Murder," *Guardian (London)*, November, 11, 1995, 1.
80. *Ibid.*
81. Watts, "Sweet and Sour," 37.
82. Ken Wiwa, *In the Shadow of a Saint: A Son's Journey to Understand His Father's Legacy* (South Royalton, VT: Steerforth Press, 2001), 251.
83. *Ibid.*, 148.
84. *Ibid.*, 180.
85. Jad Mouawad, "Shell Agrees to Settle Abuse Case," *New York Times*, June 9, 2009, B1, B5; "Spilling Over," *Economist*, June 11, 2009, 23.

86. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria*, 91.
87. Mouawad, “Shell Agrees to Settle Abuse Case,” B5.
88. Okonta and Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast*, 204.
89. *Ibid.*, 163.
90. Watts, *Curse of the Black Gold*, 197.
91. Mouawad, “Shell Agrees to Settle Abuse Case,” B5.
92. Okonta and Douglas, *Where Vultures Feast*, 112.
93. Quoted in Watts, *Curse of the Black Gold*, 217.
94. *Ibid.*, 44.
95. Xan Rice, “Oil Find Sparks New Hope for Uganda’s People,” *Guardian (London)*, August 25, 2009, 11.

#### 4. Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor

1. Anna Lappe and Frances Moore Lappe, “The Genius of Wangari Maathai,” *International Herald Tribune*, October 15, 2004, 1–2.
2. Wangari Maathai, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (New York: Knopf, 2006), 175.
3. Lester R. Brown, “The Price of Salvation,” *Guardian*, April 25, 2007, 1.
4. Hendrik Hertzberg, “The War in Iraq,” *New Yorker*, March 27, 2003, 15.
5. *Ibid.*
6. The insistence that shock and awe was the beginning of a war unprecedented in its humanitarian precision was heard across the political spectrum. Donald Rumsfeld, most memorably, insisted that the futuristic weaponry the United States deployed in the war exhibited “a degree of precision that no one dreamt of in a prior conflict,” resulting in bombings that were morally exemplary: “The care that goes into it, the humanity that goes into it, to see that military targets are destroyed, to be sure, but that it’s done in a way, and in a manner, and in a direction and with a weapon that is appropriate to that very particularized target. . . . I think that will be the case when ground truth is achieved” (United States Department of Defense, “DoD News Briefing—Secretary Rumsfeld and Gen. Myers,” March 21, 2003).
7. Wangari Maathai, *The Green Belt Movement: Sharing the Approach and the Experience* (New York: Lantern Books, 2003), 38.
8. See especially Vandana Shiva, *Earth Democracy: Justice, Sustainability, and Peace* (Boston: South End Press, 2005); and *Soil Not Oil: Environmental Justice in an Age of Climate Crisis* (Boston: South End Press, 2008).
9. Wes Jackson, “The Agrarian Mind: Mere Nostalgia or a Practical Necessity?” in *The Essential Agrarian Reader*, ed. Norman Wirzba (Washington, DC: Shoemaker and Hoard, 2003), 141.
10. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 281.

11. Ngugi wa Thiong'o, *Petals of Blood* (1977; repr., London: Penguin, 2002).
12. Laura Wright, *Wilderness Into Civilized Shapes: Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010), 33–35.
13. For a related and insightful discussion of what she calls “articulated categories,” see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 4ff.
14. Ato Quayson, *Calibrations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2003), 73.
15. Meera Selva, “Wangari Maathai: Queen of the Greens,” *Guardian*, October 9, 2004, 9.
16. William Finnegan, “The Economics of Empire: the Washington Consensus,” *Harper's*, May 2003, 48.
17. Bertolt Brecht, “An die Nachgeborenen” (To posterity), in *Selected Poems*, trans. H. R. Hays (New York: Grove Press, 1959), 173.
18. The time frame here is crucial. With the help of international donors, Maathai put in place a system whereby each woman was paid a modest amount not for planting a tree, but for keeping it alive for six months. If it were still growing at that point, she would be remunerated. Thus the focus of the group's activities was not the single act of planting but maintaining growth over time. The literature on desertification is complex and conflicted, largely around questions of the scale and source of the problem as well as the quality of the research. Given the fraught debates over the implications of desertification, I have avoided the term, preferring simply to reference the slow violence of soil erosion and deforestation. For two useful accounts of the spread of positions on this issue, see Jeremy Swift, “Desertification: Narratives, Winners and Losers,” in *The Lie of the Land: Challenging Received Wisdom on the African Environment*, ed. Melissa Leach and Robin Mearns (Oxford: James Currey, 1996); and William M. Adams, “When Nature Won't Stay Still: Conservation, Equilibrium and Control,” in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, ed. William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan (London: Earthscan, 2003).
19. Michela Wong, *It's Our Turn to Eat: The Story of a Kenyan Whistle-Blower* (New York: Harper 2009), 37.
20. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 262.
21. Michael Pollan, *Second Nature: A Gardener's Education* (New York: Dell, 1991), 194.
22. Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, 2000), 115–124.
23. A major precursor to the conflict over Karura had occurred in 1989. The regime had been steadily appropriating and privatizing parts of Nairobi's Uhuru Park, which Maathai has likened to New York's Central Park and London's Hyde Park as a vital green space, a space for leisure and for political gatherings. When

Maathai learned that the ruling party was to erect a sixty-story skyscraper for new party headquarters and a media center in Uhuru Park, battle was joined. Green Belt activists spearheaded a successful movement to turn back the regime's efforts to privatize public land under the deceptively spectacular iconography of national development. The regime would not forgive Maathai for humiliating them in this manner.

24. Amitabh Pal, "Maathai Interview," *Progressive*, May 2005, 5.
25. I've adapted the phrase from Al Gedicks' book, *Resource Rebels: Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2001).
26. For the history of the forest fighters, see Caroline Elkins, *Imperial Reckoning: The Untold Story of Britain's Gulag in Kenya* (New York: Holt, 2005); Wunyabari O. Maloba, *Mau Mau and Kenya: An Analysis of a Peasant Revolt* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998); and especially David Anderson, *Histories of the Hanged: The Dirty War in Kenya and the End of Empire* (New York: Norton, 2005), 230–288.
27. For the most comprehensive discussion of this literature, see David Maughan-Brown, *Land, Freedom and Fiction: History and Ideology in Kenya* (London: Zed Press, 1985).
28. The Mau Mau uprising was far from being an undivided revolt: numerous fault lines opened up at times, not least between educated nationalist leaders and the predominantly peasant forest fighters.
29. Byron Caminero-Santangelo, "Different Shades of Green: Ecocriticism and African Literature," in *African Literature: An Anthology of Criticism and Theory*, ed. Tejumola Olaniyan and Ato Quayson (Oxford: Blackwell, 2007), 702.
30. In many Kenyan novels about the Mau Mau period, the forest fighters are depicted with a cloying if understandable romanticism. On the complex and varied legacies of colonial cultures of nature, one notes Maathai's admiration for the Men of the Trees, an organization founded in Kenya in the 1920s that brought together British and Kikuyu leaders to promote tree planting (Maathai, *Unbowed*, 131).
31. Although the initial resistance came from the Green Belt Movement, the resistance spread to the streets of Nairobi, where it was taken up by a broad swath of the population, particularly students, both female and male.
32. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 120.
33. See William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environmental History: The Taming of Nature in the U.S.A. and South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995); Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: Allen, 1995); and A. Fiona D. Mackenzie, "Contested Ground: Colonial Narratives and the Kenyan Environment, 1920–1945," *Journal of Southern African Studies* 26 (2000): 697–718.



34. James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998), 264.
35. Fiona Mackenzie, "Contested Ground," 27. Mackenzie, like Beinart, stresses that there were among colonial officialdom some dissident voices who recognized the value and applicability of local agricultural and environmental knowledge.
36. Stuart Jeffries, "Kenya's Tree Woman," *Mail and Guardian*, February 28, 2007, 7.
37. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 179.
38. For an ambitious experiment in adaptively blending a singular self, a social movement, and a polemical agenda, see W. E. B. Du Bois, *Dusk of Dawn: An Essay Toward an Autobiography of a Race Concept* (1940; repr., New York: Transaction Publishers, 1983).
39. An important distinction should be made between the routes that Carson and Maathai took to their writing and their activism. Carson was a lifelong writer who remade herself as an activist late in life, after she traded her lyrical voice (which she'd honed as a celebrant of marine life) for the voice of elegy and apocalypse in *Silent Spring*. Maathai's trajectory was in the opposite direction: an activist all her adult life, she became a writer of testimony only in her later years.
40. Linda Lear, *Rachel Carson: Witness for Nature* (New York: Holt, 1997), 254.
41. Quoted in Lear, *Rachel Carson*, 429.
42. "Pesticides: The Price of Progress," *Time*, September 28, 1962, 45. Quoted in Lear, *Rachel Carson*, 461. Additionally, a review by Carl Hodge was entitled "Silent Spring Makes Protest Too Hysterical," *Arizona Star*, October 14, 1962, 7.
43. Quoted in Lear, *Rachel Carson*, 417.
44. Quoted *ibid.*, 409.
45. Quoted in "The Silent Spring of Rachel Carson," transcript, *CBS Reports*, April 3, 1963.
46. Anon, "Controversial Book by Rachel Carson Lives Up to Advance Warnings," *Aerosol Age*, October 1962, 81. I'm grateful to Lindsay Woodbridge for first drawing my attention to this review in her fine unpublished senior thesis, "The Fallout of Silent Spring" (University of Wisconsin-Madison, Women's Studies, 2007).
47. This misogyny, together with the regime's authoritarian intolerance of dissent, had profound professional and financial repercussions for Maathai. In 1982, after teaching at the University of Nairobi for sixteen years, she decided to run for parliament. To do so, she was told she had to resign from her job at the university. She was then promptly informed by the electoral committee that she was disqualified (on a trumped up technicality) from running for parliament. So, twelve hours after resigning as chair of the university's Department of Veterinary Anatomy, Maathai asked for her job back. Under pressure from the regime, the university refused to reemploy her and, moreover, denied her

- all pension and health benefits. Maathai, a forty-one-year-old single mother with no safety net, was thrown out onto the streets. One notes that, in 2005, shortly after Maathai was awarded the Nobel Prize, the very university that had treated her so appallingly tried to cash in on her international fame by awarding her an honorary doctorate in science.
48. Meera Selva, “Wangari Maathai: Queen of the Greens,” *Guardian*, October 9, 2004, 8.
  49. Quoted in Jim Motavelli, “Movement Built on Power of Trees,” *E: The Environmental Magazine*, July–August 2002, 11.
  50. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 110.
  51. *Ibid.*, 111. For a more elaborate account of the burden of traditionalism placed on women in the context of a Janus-faced modernity, see Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 294–300.
  52. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 115, 196. There are echoes between the nativist arguments mounted against Maathai by President Moi and the arguments of her ex-husband, Mwangi, who testified in court that he was divorcing her because she was ungovernable: “[T]oo educated, too strong, too successful, too stubborn, and too hard to control” (quoted in *Unbowed*, 146).
  53. Kwame Anthony Appiah, *In My Father’s House* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 55.
  54. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 44–46.
  55. Maathai, *Unbowed*, 4.
  56. Quoted in Patrick E. Tyler, “In Wartime, Critics Question Peace Prize for Environmentalism,” *New York Times*, October 10, 2004, A5. Morten Hoeglund, a member of Norway’s Progress Party, concurred with Hagen, arguing that “the committee should have focused on more important matters, such as weapons of mass destruction” (quoted in Selva, “Wangari Maathai,” 9).
  57. Quoted in Patrick E. Tyler, “Peace Prize Goes to Environmentalism in Kenya,” *New York Times*, October 9, 2004, A5. See, for example, Maathai’s insistence that through a focus on reforestation and environmental resource management, “we might preempt many conflicts over the access and control of resources” (*Unbowed*, xvi).
  58. In Kenya, which boasts some forty ethnicities, the sources of ethnic tension are complex, but have often been especially explosive along the fault lines between pastoralists and farmers where resources are overstressed. Divisive politicians have manipulated these tensions to their advantage, for instance, during the violence that beset the Rift Valley, Nyanza, and Western provinces in the early 1990s and, more broadly, during the aftermath of the disputed national elections of 2007. The slow violence of resource depletion, a mistrust of government, and

- political leaders who play the ethnic card can easily kindle an atmosphere of terror that fuels social unrest.
59. Wai Chee Dimock, “World History According to Katrina,” in *States of Emergency*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Susan Gillman (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009), 148. I have elaborated elsewhere on the environmental, class, and gender dimensions to the violent conflicts that swept through Kenya in the aftermath of the December 2007 elections. The widespread, reductive media portraits of the violence as simply an eruption of “atavistic tribal hatreds” ignores the profound socioenvironmental inequalities that were masked by the official portrait of Kenya as a nation, under Moi’s successor, President Mwai Kibaki, of ascendant growth. See Rob Nixon, “Slow Violence, Gender, and the Environmentalism of the Poor,” *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 13 (2008): 29–31.
60. Quoted in Ofeibe Quist-Arcton, “Maathai: Change Kenya to Benefit People,” <http://www.greenbeltmovement.org>.

### 5. Unimagined Communities

1. See especially Lawrine Platzky and Cheryl Walker, *The Surplus People: Forced Removals in South Africa* (Johannesburg: Ravan, 1998).
2. Quoted in Jacques Leslie, *Deep Water: The Epic Struggle over Dams, Displaced People, and the Environment* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2005), 156.
3. On the basis of a country report by the World Commission on Dams, Arundhati Roy puts the figure for India’s dam-displaced at 56 million, while Patrick McCully argues that—prior to the Three Gorges project—Chinese dams alone may have displaced 60 million. See David Barsamian and Arundhati Roy, *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press, 2004), 25.
4. David Le Page, “World Bank Defends its Dam Policies,” *Mail and Guardian*, May 2, 2001, 7.
5. Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000).
6. In *Savage Dreams*, Solnit commits herself to repopulating those places of cultural and imaginative evacuation. Her restorative ambitions are both temporal and spatial: she gives back to these deserts an environmental and cultural memory as well as connecting them globally, by tracing the cold-war links between Nevada and Kazakhstan. These links include new forms of imaginative awareness generated by a transnational protest movement.
7. Solnit, *Savage Dreams*, 154.
8. Across the world, the people who are reconstituted as uninhabitants seldom belong to large or powerful ethnic groups. This is true of all the desert nuclear test sites internationally: in the Nevada Test Site; in the deserts of Kazakhstan,

Pakistan, and India; in the Central Desert in Australia; the French test sites in preindependence Algeria; in western China; and in Southern Africa's Kalahari Desert. In all these areas, the people who are strategically recast as virtual uninhabitants are micro-minorities from marginalized ethnic groups. They are also very often nomads, people who traditionally have had to learn to live, through movement, within the limits of the land.

9. Quoted in Patrick McCully, *Silenced Rivers: The Ecology and Politics of Large Dams: Enlarged and Updated Edition* (London: Zed, 2001), 75.
10. *Ibid.*, 74–76.
11. Quoted in John McPhee, *Encounters with the Archdruid* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971), 200.
12. *Ibid.*, 240.
13. Quoted in Susan Zakin, *Coyotes and Town Dogs: Earth First! and the Environmental Movement* (New York: Viking, 1993), 166
14. Arundhati Roy, "The Greater Common Good," *The Cost of Living* (New York: Modern Library, 1999), 63.
15. Edward Abbey, *Desert Solitaire* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1968), 165.
16. Roy, *Cost of Living*, 93.
17. *Ibid.*, 106.
18. Wallace Stegner, *Where the Bluebird Sings to the Lemonade Springs: Living and Writing in the West* (New York: Random House), 75.
19. Roy, *Cost of Living*, ix. The Narmada Valley project has since been surpassed—both in the scale of its engineering and the scale of environmental calamity—by the Three Gorges Dam.
20. If the advent of the nuclear age has inspired a long tradition of activist polemic—from John Hersey, Jonathan Schell, Rebecca Solnit, and Rachel Carson to Kobo Abe, E. P. Thompson, and Martin Amis—the rise of the megadam has prompted a much more modest literature, largely associated (as I've suggested) with the wilderness ethic of the American West and, more recently, the Three Gorges Dam in China.
21. Roy, "The End of Imagination," 125.
22. William Finnegan, "The Economics of Empire: Notes on the Washington Consensus," *Harper's*, May 1, 2003, 53.
23. Arundhati Roy, *The God of Small Things* (New York: Random House, 1997), 14.
24. John Berger, "Ten Dispatches about Place," in *Hold Everything Dear: Dispatches on Survival and Resistance* (New York: Pantheon, 2007), 122–123.
25. Quoted in Roy, *Cost of Living*, 13.
26. C. V. J. Sharma, ed., *Modern Temples of India: Selected Speeches of Jawaharlal Nehru at Irrigation and Power Projects* (New Delhi: Central Board of Irrigation and Power, 1989), 40.

27. McCully estimates that 40 percent of oustees are Adivasis.
28. Quoted in Leslie, *Deep Water*, 54.
29. Regarding the rationalizing of irrational rivers, Maxim Gorky observed that Soviet dam builders sought to make “mad rivers sane” (quoted in McCully, *Silenced Rivers*, 17). The discourse of insanity is an insistent one, attached by megadam proponents to “wild” rivers and by opponents to the impact of damming on floodplains, deltas, and rates of flow and silting that result in longer and more catastrophic floods. Janet Abramovitz, for example, depicts the predictable 1993 floods of the Mississippi and Missouri rivers as a direct result of overdamming, providing “a dramatic and costly lesson on the effects of treating the natural flow of rivers as a pathological condition.” Abramovitz, *Imperiled Waters, Impoverished Future: The Decline of Freshwater Ecosystems*. (Washington, DC: Worldwatch Institute, 1996), 27
30. Marq de Villiers, *Water: The Fate of Our Most Precious Resource* (Boston: Mariner Books, 2001), 121.
31. Zeyev Volfson, writing in the 1970s under the pseudonym Boris Komarov, proclaimed that “there is far more important information about the history of hydro-electric construction in the USSR in Alexander Solzhenitsyn’s *Gulag Archipelago* than in all the textbooks on hydraulic engineering.” See Volfson, *The Destruction of Nature in the Soviet Union*, trans. Michel Vale and Joe Hollander (London: Pluto, 1980), 29.
32. See especially McCully, *Silenced Rivers*, 239ff.
33. John Waterbury, *Hydropolitics of the Nile Valley* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 116. I am indebted to Patrick McCully for drawing my attention to this book.
34. On the impact of the Hoover Dam in unleashing a flood of international emulators, see especially de Villiers, *Water: The Fate of Our Most Precious Resource*, 120–128. Joan Didion, in the complex tones of the apocalyptic sublime, invoked the affective power of the Hoover Dam in her 1970 essay “At the Dam.” *The White Album* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1979), 198–201. For a stinging attack on “water-project boondoggles” in the American West, including megadams that fail to realize their promise, see Wallace Stegner’s fine essay “Striking the Rock,” in *Where the Bluebird Sings* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 76–98.
35. Decades later Hoover still had the power to terrorize the Soviets into playing catch-up.
36. Leslie, *Deep Water*, 117.
37. Quoted in Sharma, ed., *Modern Temples of India*, 52–56.
38. Arundhati Roy, *Power Politics* (Cambridge, MA: South End Press), 43.
39. See, for example, her critique of “a corporate globalization [that] has increased the distance between the people who take decisions and the people who have

- to suffer those decisions” (Barsamian and Roy, *The Checkbook and the Cruise Missile*, 73).
40. Roy, *Power Politics*, 32.
  41. *Ibid.*, 32.
  42. See Leslie, *Deep Water*, 20; and Ramachandra Guha, “The Arun Shourine of the Left,” *The Hindu*, December 10, 2000. Even before her nonfictional turn, Roy was no stranger to controversy. The intercaste relationship in *The God of Small Things* resulted in Roy being charged with obscenity, and Kerala’s Communist Party railed against her fictional depiction of local Marxist history. She was taken to court for “corrupting public morality.” Aijaz Ahmed, though admiring of the novel’s style and ambition, takes Roy to task for her depiction of Left history and for the novel’s reliance on an erotic plotting of the political. See Ahmed, “Reading Arundhati Roy Politically,” *Frontline* 14 (August 8, 1997): 103–111.
  43. George Perkins Marsh, *Man and Nature: Physical Geography as Modified By Human Action* (1864; rpt. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Library, 2001), 27.
  44. McCully, *Silenced Rivers*, 174. In *The Cost of Living*, Roy acknowledges McCully’s incomparable book as “the rock on which this work stands.”
  45. Roy, *Cost of Living*, 123.
  46. Vandana Shiva, *Water Wars: Privatization, Pollution, Profit* (Boston: South End Press, 2002), 15.
  47. “Frontline: The World of Water,” BBC2, March 28, 2009.
  48. Al Gedicks, *Resource Rebels. Native Challenges to Mining and Oil Corporations* (Boston: South End Press, 20010), 8–10.

## 6. Stranger in the Eco-village

1. My use of the term postapartheid in this chapter comes with all the familiar caveats. The nation’s democratic turn on April 27, 1994 was a critical marker in South African history. But “surely,” Njabulo Ndebele correctly insists, “the death of apartheid is a social process not an event.” (*Fine Lines from the Box: Further Thoughts About Our Country* (Roggebaai, South Africa: Umuzi, 2007), 93). That process is uneven and ongoing. This chapter is, in part, an attempt to explore from the angle of environmental justice the limits and pacing of that systemic transformation.
2. Njabulo S. Ndebele, “Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists,” in *Blank: Architecture After Apartheid*, ed. Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavic (Cape Town: David Phillips, 1998), 12.
3. Taxidermy is located at the complex crossroads of Enlightenment science, colonial trophy hunting, and hypermasculine interior design. Taxidermal time is, in multiple senses, suspended time: the mounted corpses are frozen in animated

- positions, usually (for predators) with fangs exposed. The period reference is anachronistic as is the craft itself, which projects a musty, neo-Victorian aura of white male risk-management.
4. African culture, of whatever ethnicity, was present only in the interior atmospherics: the reed baskets and masks that afforded the game lodge lobby a decorative indigeneity.
  5. The Eastern Cape is primarily a Xhosa region. It has very few Zulu inhabitants. But Kleinhans understood that Zulu had greater international recognition value, in the push for African authenticity, than Xhosa. Besides, Zulu was easier for foreigners to pronounce.
  6. Donna Haraway, "Teddy Bear Patriarchy: Taxidermy in the Garden of Eden, New York City, 1908–1936," *Social Text* 11 (1984): 20–64.
  7. The cultural histories of game lodges dedicated to game viewing, private reserves where hunting is part of the experience, and national parks are all differently inflected. Although a full accounting of those differences is beyond the scope of this chapter, performances of the eco-archaic and racialized ecologies of looking remain, I believe, a constitutive element in all those varied spaces.
  8. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 12.
  9. Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 244–245.
  10. For an insightful examination of the spatial politics of Ndebele's essay, see Rita Barnard, *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 171–172.
  11. One of the most notorious of these forced removals in the name of conservation involved the Makuleke when the Kruger National Park was extended northward. Another controversial case involved the Tonga, who were moved twice: in 1924 to make way for the Ndumo Game Reserve, then again in the 1990s to create a corridor that would give elephants greater freedom of movement and access to water which, accordingly, became more difficult for the Tonga to access. Martha Honey, *Ecotourism and Sustainable Development: Who Owns Paradise?* (Washington, DC: Island Press, 1999), 367. For a broader, international perspective on conservation refugees, see especially Ramachandra Guha, *Environmentalism: A Global History* (New York: Longman, 2000); and Mark Dowie, *Conservation Refugees* (Boston: MIT Press, 2009).
  12. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 11.
  13. Fritz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Lam Markmann (London: Pluto, 1991), 90, 92.
  14. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 13.
  15. Njabulo S. Ndebele, *Rediscovery of the Ordinary: Essays on South African Literature and Culture* (Johannesburg: COSAW, 1991), 67.

16. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 10. On her flight back from her Bahamas vacation, Jordan is likewise "burning up," on the verge of what she calls "a West Indian fit." "Report from the Bahamas," in *A Stranger in the Village: Two Centuries of African-American Travel Writing*, ed. Farah J. Griffin and Cheryl J. Fish (Boston: Beacon Press, 1998), 326.
17. On the role of effaced labor in landscape aesthetics, Raymond Williams's *The Country and the City* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1975) and J. M. Coetzee's *White Writing* (1988; repr., New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990) remain invaluable. William Cronon's related work in an American context remains foundational, while Robert Marzec's analyses of effaced labor, landscape, and enclosures in British and postcolonial environments are incisive. See Robert Marzec, *An Ecological and Postcolonial Study of Literature: From Daniel Defoe to Salman Rushdie* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007).
18. Jordan, "Report from the Bahamas," 327.
19. Kincaid, *In a Small Place* (New York: Plume, 1988), 55.
20. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 12.
21. The environmentalist literature on the construction of Caribbean Edens is rich and increasingly vast. See especially *Caribbean Literature and the Environment: Between Nature and Culture*, ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey et al. (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007); George B. Handley, *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination of Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007); and Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007).
22. *South African Eden*, James Stevenson-Hamilton's influential memoir on his Kruger Park years appeared in 1937, the same year as Karen Blixen's *Out of Africa*. Both books invoked an elegiac, Edenic rhetoric to help mobilize a megafauna-centered conservationist movement whose legacy continues to shape the contemporary economic and cultural landscapes of South African and Kenya. Stevenson-Hamilton, a Scottish immigrant (and the Kruger Park's first warden), was arguably as pivotal a figure, through his actions and writings, in the shaping of South African conservation as that other Scottish immigrant conservationist, John Muir, was in the United States.
23. See especially Elaine Freedgood, *Victorian Writing about Risk* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 2000).
24. James Baldwin, "Stranger in the Village," in *Notes of a Native Son* (1953; rpt. Boston: Beacon Press, 1984), 159.
25. *Ibid.*
26. *Ibid.*, 164.
27. Baldwin's position here bears comparison with Jordan's reflections on "The Native Show on the Patio" performed at the Sheraton British Colonial. Her



- racial and gender identification with the Bahamian women who perform in the “Native Show,” who serve her, or hawk trinkets on the street is compromised by the structures of the tourist industry: “We are not particularly women anymore; we are parties to a transaction designed to set us against each other” (Jordan, “Report from the Bahamas,” 321).
28. This is not to suggest that the relationship between local white ideologies and foreign ones always dovetail. Ndebele mentions, for instance, an American family who remark on the oddity of cross-dressing as “leisure colonialists.” Ndebele, “Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists,” 12.
  29. Amitava Kumar, *Bombay-London-New York* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 64.
  30. Baldwin, “Stranger in the Village,” 169.
  31. *Ibid.*, 173.
  32. Clearly, the postapartheid redistribution of political, economic, and cultural power remains profoundly uneven.
  33. *Ibid.*, 175.
  34. The routine comparison of Kruger with Israel reaffirms the park’s status, particularly in Afrikaner cultures of nature, as a place of spiritual pilgrimage, a chosen people’s chosen land. Kruger Park was officially established under the 1926 National Parks Act, although it was then much smaller than its current size.
  35. The status of the Kruger Park as an overdetermined buffer zone was intensified by the ascent to power of Marxist guerillas in 1975, an event that marked the end of Portuguese colonial control of Mozambique and served, in addition, as a partial revolutionary inspiration for the Soweto uprising the following year. During the ensuing Mozambican civil war, the apartheid regime deemed Mozambique (which served as a base for ANC guerillas) a terrorist state. The South African regime, with strong backing from the Reagan administration, funded, trained, harbored, and armed forces opposing the Mozambican government. By the late 1980s, the civil war had displaced 2 million of Mozambique’s 14 million people and killed 100,000 of them.
  36. Gordimer’s compelling essay on the Kruger Park-Mozambique border zone, “The Ingot and the Stick,” seems to have passed under the critical radar. It goes unmentioned both in Stephen Clingman’s extensive critical work on Gordimer and in Ronald Roberts’s 750-page biography of her.
  37. Jane Carruthers, *The Kruger National Park: A Social and Political History* (Pietermaritzburg, South Africa: University of Natal Press, 1995), 17.
  38. *Ibid.*, 31.
  39. After the discovery of gold in 1877, white immigration to the Transvaal surged. The resultant rapid ascent of industrialization and urbanization in turn fed the rise of commercial agriculture. White mining magnates and white farmers were thrust into competition with each other for scarce black labor. Waves

of legislation were passed intent of making rural survival more precarious for black subsistence communities, thereby forcing increasing numbers into capitalist wage-labor on the mines and farms. The 1913 Land Act was particularly devastating, barring blacks from buying or leasing land from whites except in the designated native reserves. From a white ruling-class perspective, this land squeeze had the double advantage of forcing blacks into wage labor and removing a source of agricultural competition. For a more textured history of these developments, see William Beinart, *The Rise of Conservation in South Africa: Settlers, Livestock, and the Environment 1770–1950* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008). Although it is beyond the scope of this chapter, a fuller accounting of the rise of game reserves in relation to colonial cultures of labor and leisure would engage J. M. Coetzee's reflections on idleness in *White Writing* (1988; rpt. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990) and Syed Hussein Alata's *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (New York: Routledge, 1977).

40. This poacher-conservationist dyad helps explain an erratic policy toward human habitation inside the Kruger National Park. After initially barring Africans from the park in the early twentieth century, the white authorities allowed about 3,000 Africans to reside there, but charged them rent (Carruthers, *Kruger National Park*, 81). This rent provided a revenue stream and ensured that those residents would be forced to sell their labor for menial amounts. Black bodies—of African renters and, later, prison gangs—were dragooned into erecting fences, building roads and camps, and catching poachers. The invention and maintenance of a wild, Edenic purity is, after all, a labor-intensive business.
41. Relevant here is Johannes Fabian's account of the two primary colonial responses to the bodily contest over land: forced removal (whether through genocide or deportation) or manipulating "the other variable—Time. With the help of various devices of sequencing and distancing one assigns to the conquered populations a different Time." Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983), 29–30.
42. Carruthers, *Kruger National Park*, 86.
43. Labuschagne, 26–27; 63–64. Quoted in Carruthers, *Kruger National Park*, 83.
44. For a suggestive history of the way the Grand Canyon was marketed to American tourists as a destination associated with the religious archaic, the sublime, and patriotic spiritual elevation, see Stephen J. Pyne, *How the Canyon Became Grand* (New York: Viking, 1998).
45. Gordimer's essay "The Ingot and the Stick" is a companion piece to a BBC2 television documentary she presented as part of a series on frontiers. Gordimer, "The Ingot and the Stick, The Ingot and the Gun: Mozambique-South Africa," in *Frontiers*, ed. George Carey (London: BBC Books, 1990), 50–77.

46. “The principle of the agreements has never changed. Gold and other mining interests in South Africa are granted large-scale labour recruiting of Mozambican men in return for a portion of the men’s wages to be paid in gold, to Portugal during colonial times, later to independent Mozambique.” *Ibid.*, 56.
47. *Ibid.*, 61.
48. Gordimer, “The Ultimate Safari,” in *Telling Tales*, ed. Nadine Gordimer (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2004), 272.
49. *Ibid.*, 273.
50. *Ibid.*, 271, 277.
51. *Ibid.*, 281.
52. Gloria Alzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (San Francisco: Aunt Lute, 1987), 3.
53. In a broader theoretical context, Liisa Malkki’s work on the pathologizing of refugees as “unnatural” has a particular resonance here. See her *Purity and Exile: Violence, Memory, and National Cosmology among Hutu Refugees in Tanzania* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).
54. The girl’s ethnicity goes unmentioned, but the story contains plenty of geographical and linguistic indications that she is Shangaan. (The Shangaan’s ethnic self-designation has varied historically and geographically. Shangaan are frequently called Tsonga in South Africa.)
55. Gordimer, “The Ultimate Safari,” 280.
56. Before Zimbabwe’s descent into chaos shrank the ambitions of the project, a three-nation transfrontier park was in the works, joining Kruger to national parks in Mozambique and Zimbabwe and thereby affording the prospect of greater freedom of movement for humans (exclusive subspecies, tourist) and other mammalian herds. The project has been dogged by controversy, not least because it would entail further involuntary removals (notably in Mozambique) and the economic benefits to local inhabitants have been at best hazily sketched out. The status of this transfrontier park, dubbed an African “super park,” remains uncertain, although the corridor linking Mozambique and Kruger appears to be going ahead.
57. From the Kruger Park’s colonial beginnings, the “gate guards” were historically Shangaan. As David Bunn notes, these uniformed guards “dramatize[d] two orders of time and racial identity—one that of the ‘improved’ native and the other that of the customary, ethnic collective—that [could not] easily coexist outside the boundaries of the reserve.” Bunn, “Relocations: Landscape Theory, South African Landscape Practice, and the Transmission of Political Value,” *Pretexts* 4 (1993): 53.
58. For a thoughtful contrastive analysis of the treatment of white tourists and African immigrants, see Kathryn Mathers and Loren B. Landau, “Tourists

- or 'Makwerekwere': Good Versus Bad Visitors and the Possibilities of Ethical Tourism in South Africa" (paper presented to the International Sociological Association Congress Durban, South Africa, July 2006, Forced Migration Working Paper Series #27, Forced Migration Studies Programme, University of Witwatersrand), 1–16.
59. Hector Magome and James Murombedzi, "Sharing South African National Parks: Community Land and Conservation in a Democratic South Africa," in *Decolonizing Nature: Strategies for Conservation in a Post-Colonial Era*, ed. William M. Adams and Martin Mulligan (London: Earthscan, 2003), 131.
60. For instance, the range of endemics in the vast Kruger National Park cannot compare with that of a seldom-visited, much smaller reserve on the Namaqualand coast that is biodiversity rich but megafauna poor. One notes also how, in a creative attempt to legitimate and market its expansion, the Greater Addo National Park has pitched itself as the only park in the world to boast the Big Seven (adding the southern right whale and the great white shark to the conventional lion, elephant, rhino, buffalo, and leopard) while also boasting that it has the greatest variety of biomes of any South African national park.
61. Tsing, *Friction*, 1.
62. Ndebele, "Game Lodges and Leisure Colonialists," 14.

## 7. Ecologies of the Aftermath

1. Paul Virilio, interviewed in James DerDerian, *Virtuous War: Mapping the Military-Industrial-Media-Entertainment Network* (Boulder: Westview Press, 2001), 64–65.
2. *Ibid.*
3. By (among others) Robert Hughes on the back cover of *Martyr's Day*.
4. Mike Kelly, *Martyr's Day: Chronicle of a Small War* (1993; repr., New York: Random House, 2001), 229.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Carol Picou, "Living with Gulf War Syndrome," in *Metal of Dishonor*, ed. John Catalinotto and Sara Flounders (New York: International Action Center, 1997), 44–45.
7. Akira Tashiro, *Discounted Casualties: The Human Cost of Depleted Uranium*, trans. Transnet (Hiroshima: Chugoku Shimbun, 2001), 94–95.
8. *Ibid.*
9. Picou, *Metal of Dishonor*, 46.
10. The best account of the role the Gulf War played in exorcising Vietnam syndrome is to be found in Andrew J. Bacevich, *The New American Militarism: How Americans are Seduced by War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005).
11. Kelly, *Martyr's Day*, 362.

12. Mike Kelly, *Martyr's Day: Chronicle of a Small War*, 2nd ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 2001), xiii. In the foreword to the 2001 edition of *Martyr's Day*, Kelly qualifies his surgical metaphor, but only by arguing, like many hawks, for a spurious connection between Saddam Hussein and the 9/11 attacks. Desert Storm, Kelly now insists, was a war of mistaken brevity, as the United States' failure to topple Saddam had opened the way for the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon.
13. For Kelly there are two levels of surgery in the "theatre" of the war: the local, surgical strikes—the small, precise incisions—within the larger clinical performance of the surgical war itself.
14. See also, for example, Fred Smoler on the Iraq War of 2003: "Why were civilian casualties so low? In part because of the self-restraint—with a few exceptions—shown by Coalition troops and in part due to a technological revolution, the use of precision-guided munitions, particularly GPS-guided munitions, in unprecedented quantities." Smoler, "Cakewalk: Getting It Wrong—U.S. Military Might and Myths," *Dissent* 47 (Summer 2003): 39.
15. Tashiro, *Discounted Casualties*.
16. Military usages of surgical metaphors are not unique to the Gulf War, of course. Consider, for instance, the American general who during the 2003 Iraq War declared that "we need to make a decision on when the cancer of Fallujah needs to be cut out." Quoted in Eliot Weinberger, *What I Heard About Iraq* (London: Verso, 2005), 9. However, what is particularly acute in Kelly's book is his representation of the entire war as surgical in its efficient, healing, and ethical brevity.
17. Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring* (1962; repr., Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992), 127.
18. Showalter argues that "hysteria not only survives in the 1990s, it is more contagious than in the past. Infectious epidemics of hysteria spread by stories circulated through self-help books, articles in newspapers and magazines, TV talk shows and series, films, the Internet, even literary criticism." *Hystories: Hysterical Epidemics and Modern Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 5.
19. *Ibid.*, 6.
20. As one anonymous commentator notes on Amazon.com: "had Showalter's book been written at the turn of the [nineteenth] century, she would have included multiple sclerosis (once known as 'faker's disease') among her list of 'hysterias.'"
  21. Showalter, *Hystories*, 4.
  22. Steven Reinberg, "Toxic Chemical Blamed for Gulf War Illness," *U.S. News & World Report*, November 17, 2008, 5.
  23. *Ibid.*

24. Duncan Graham-Rowe, "Depleted Uranium Casts Shadow Over Peace in Iraq," *New Scientist*, April 15, 2003, 2.
25. Thomas Whiteside's *The Withering Rain: America's Herbicidal Folly* (New York: Dutton, 1971); and John Lewallen, *Ecology of Devastation* (New York: Puffin, 1971).
26. Harvey Wasserman and Norman Solomon, *Killing Our Own: The Disaster of America's Experience with Atomic Radiation* (New York: Delacorte, 1982).
27. See Robert Fisk, "The Evidence Lies Dying in Basra," *Independent*, January 25, 2000, 11; and Patsy McGary, "Iraqi Child Cancers Link to Gulf War Weapons," *Irish Times*, November 30, 1999, 2.
28. Quoted in Dan Fahey, "The Use of Depleted Uranium in the 2003 Iraq War: An Initial Assessment of Information and Policies," [www.wise-uranium.org](http://www.wise-uranium.org).
29. *Ibid.* See also U.S. General Accounting Office, *Hazardous Waste: Information on Potential Superfund Sites*, GAO/RCED-99-22 (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1998), 170; Michael Orey, "Uranium Waste Site Has a Historic New England Town Up in Arms," *Wall Street Journal*, March 1, 2001, B1; Jesse D. Edmands et al., "Uptake and Mobility of Uranium in Black Oaks: Implications for Biomonitoring Depleted Uranium-Contaminated Groundwater," *Chemosphere* (2001) 44: 789–795.
30. For an incomparably astute analysis of language as an instrument of warfare, see Mary Louise Pratt, "Harm's Way: Language and the Contemporary Arts of War," *PMLA* 124 (2009), 1515–1531.
31. Quoted in Tashiro, *Discounted Casualties*, 56–57.
32. *Ibid.*
33. Doug Rokke, interview by Rob Nixon, July 7, 2005.
34. Quoted in Hillary Johnson, "Is the Pentagon Giving Our Soldiers Cancer?" *Rolling Stone*, October 2, 2003, 83.
35. *Ibid.*
36. Quoted in David Rose, "Weapons of Self-Destruction," *Vanity Fair*, December 2004, 217.
37. Quoted in Johnson, "Is the Pentagon Giving Our Soldiers Cancer?" 87. Naughton's reference here to tungsten is pointed: the German military had banned depleted uranium from its arsenal on account of the radioactive and chemical risks it posed, replacing DU with tungsten, a high-density (and more expensive) metal that proved effective both as a penetrator and in the armoring of tanks.
38. Doug Rokke, interview by Rob Nixon, July 7, 2005. If four years after the war Rokke had 432 micrograms of uranium per liter of urine, after eight years that figure had dropped to 42 micrograms. But as Rokke pointed out, that drop didn't mean his body had eliminated the rest but rather that, over time, much of that uranium had become sequestered in his soft organs and bones.

39. Ibid.
40. Leonard Dietz, "DU Spread and Contamination of Gulf War Veterans and Others," in *Metal of Dishonor*, ed. John Catalinotto and Sara Flounders (New York: International Action Center, 1997; rev. ed. 1999), 134.
41. Avril McDonald, ed., *The International Legal Regulation of the Use of Depleted Uranium Weapons* (Den Haag, 2005), especially the essay "Environmental and Health Consequences of DU Munitions," 173–192.
42. See Duncan Graham-Rowe, "Depleted Uranium Casts Shadow Over Peace in Iraq," *New Scientist*, April 15, 2003, 2–6. See also, "Special Report: Waging a New Kind of War," *Scientific American*, June 2000, 2–17.
43. Sara Flounders, "Iraqi Cities 'Hot' with Depleted Uranium," <http://www.coastalpost.com/03/09/11.htm>. For the full story, see Scott Peterson, "Remains of Toxic Bullets Litter Iraq," *Christian Science Monitor*, May 15, 2003, 3.
44. Ibid.
45. Quoted in Dan Fahey, "Science or Science Fiction? Facts, Myths and Propaganda in the Debate Over Depleted Uranium Weapons," 31.
46. Quoted in Rose, "Weapons of Self-Destruction," 219.
47. Bonham et al., *Human Cost of the War in Iraq*, 22.
48. Quoted in Johnson, "Is the Pentagon giving Our Soldiers Cancer?" 93.
49. Ibid.
50. Rabadrinath Tagore, "Persia, April 13, 1934," in *Rabadrinath Tagore: An Anthology*, ed. Krishna Dutta and Andrew Robinson (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997), 127.
51. Walt Whitman, "Drum-Taps," in *Whitman, The Complete Poems*, ed. Francis Murphy (New York: Penguin, 2005), 305.
52. Quoted in Weinberger, *What I Heard About Iraq*, 3.
53. The other most vocal defendant of cluster bombs has been Russia during the war in Chechnya.
54. Quoted in *Clearing the Fields: Solutions to the Global Landmines Crisis*, ed. Kevin M. Cahill (New York: New Press, 1996), 3.
55. Quoted Richard Norton-Taylor, "Rights Groups Warn of Danger of Unexploded Cluster Bombs," *Guardian*, August 18, 2006, 7.
56. Woodford Agee Heflin, *United States Air Force Dictionary*, <http://www.knovel.com>.
57. "Personnel," <http://www.websters-online-dictionary.org>.
58. Bonnie Docherty, *Human Rights Watch* 14, no. 7 (2002): 44.
59. Robert Fisk, "Wailing Children, the Wounded, the Dead: Victims of the Day Cluster Bombs Rained on Baghdad," *Independent*, April 13, 2003, 5.
60. Lydia Monin and Andrew Gallimore, *The Devil's Garden: A History of Landmines* (London: Random House, 2002).

61. Eric Prokosch, *The Technology of Killing: A Military and Political History of Antipersonnel Weapons* (New York: Zed, 1995), 173.
62. Henry Michaels, *US Uses Cluster Bombs to Spread Death and Destruction in Iraq*, World Socialist Web Site, <http://www.wsws.org>.
63. Quoted in Cahill, ed., *Clearing the Fields*, 192.
64. Human Rights Watch, *Off Target: The Conduct of the War and Civilian Casualties in Iraq* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2003), 73.
65. Human Rights Watch, *Off Target*, 17. See also Kenneth Rutherford, “The Evolving Arm Control Agenda: The Implications of the Role of NGOs in Banning Anti-Personnel Landmines,” *World Politics* 53 (October 2000): 74–114.
66. Human Rights Watch, *New U.S. Landmine Policy: Questions and Answers* (New York: Human Rights Watch, 2004), 13.

## 8. Environmentalism, Postcolonialism, and American Studies

1. One thinks here of innovative works like Richard Grove, *Green Imperialism: Colonial Expansion, Tropical Island Edens, and the Origins of Environmentalism, 1600–1860* (Cambridge, England: Cambridge University Press, 1995); Tom Griffiths and Libby Robin, eds., *Ecology and Empire: Environmental History of Settler Societies* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1997); David Arnold and Ramachandra Guha, eds., *Nature, Culture, Imperialism: Essays of the Environmental History of South Asia* (Delhi, India: Oxford University Press, 1995); William Beinart and Peter Coates, *Environment and History: The Taming of Nature in the USA and South Africa* (London: Routledge, 1995); and Susan M. Darlington et al., *Nature in the Global South* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003). For an excellent recent examination of the possibilities that debates in cultural geography might open up for a postcolonial ecocriticism, see Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010).
2. Jay Parini, “The Greening of the Humanities,” *New York Times Magazine*, October 23, 1995, 52–53.
3. Rob Nixon, “The Oil Weapon,” *New York Times*, November 17, 1995, A24. See also my essay, “Pipedreams: Ken Saro-Wiwa, Environmental Justice, and Micro-Minority Rights” *London Review of Books*, April 7, 1996, 11.
4. Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1996); Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, eds., *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996); Max Oelschlaeger, *The Idea of Wilderness* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1991); Daniel Payne, *Voices in the Wilderness: American Nature Writing and Environmental*



*Politics* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1996); Scott Slovic, *Seeking Awareness in American Nature Writing* (Salt Lake City: University of Utah Press, 1992).

No book illustrates the limitations of this approach more lucidly than *The Idea of Wilderness*, in which Oelschlaeger argues for the timeless, primal, universal value of wilderness. He roots his argument in ruminations on Paleolithic, Neolithic, and ancient Mediterranean notions of nature, then seeks to secure his case by analyzing an exclusively American canon of writers (Thoreau, Muir, Leopold, Jeffers, and Snyder prominent among them).

5. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Nigeria: The Brink of Disaster* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros International Publishers, 1991), 71.
6. Ken Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and A Day: A Detention Diary* (London: Penguin, 1995), 7.
7. *Ibid.*, 80.
8. *Ibid.*, 79.
9. For a prescient postcolonial challenge to the American wilderness obsession, see Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," *Environmental Ethics* 11 (Spring 1989): 71–83.
10. For an invaluable critique of the wilderness tradition of "purity," see William Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness; or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature," in *Uncommon Ground: Rethinking the Human Place in Nature*, ed. William Cronon (New York: Norton, 1996), 69–90. Since Cronon's pathbreaking essay, other ecocritics and environmental writers have recognized how a fixation with wilderness is imaginatively distorting and politically costly. However, the legacy of the wilderness obsession remains a continued source of suspicion for writers and communities who in the past have felt alienated by that emphasis.
11. For an insightful essay on the possibility of reconciling cosmopolitanism with a located patriotism, see Kwame Anthony Appiah, "Cosmopolitan Patriots," *Critical Inquiry* 97 (1997): 129–144.
12. J. M. Coetzee, *White Writing* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1990), 62.
13. Donald E. Pease, "National Identities, Postmodern Artifacts, and Postnational Narratives," in *National Identities and Post-Americanist Narratives*, (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1994), 4.
14. For an excellent discussion of the dangers of an excessive preoccupation with displacement, see Amitava Kumar, *Passport Photos* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000), 13–14. See also Ian Buruma, "The Romance of Exile," *New Republic*, February 12, 2001, 23–30.
15. Parini, "The Greening of the Humanities," 53.
16. *Ibid.*, 53.

17. Ibid.
18. On Abbey's anti-immigrant environmentalism, which became more prominent in his later years, see Rick Scarce, *Eco-Warriors: Understanding the Radical Environmental Movement* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990), 92. For Austin's anti-Semitism, see Tom Athanasiou, *Divided Planet: The Ecology of Rich and Poor* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1996), 297. At the crossroads where environmentalism and immigration politics meet, we continue to encounter what Betsy Hartmann has called "the greening of hate." To commemorate the fortieth anniversary of Earth Day in April 2010, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), a driving force behind Arizona's notorious Senate Bill 1070, issued a fifty-three-page report, "The Environmentalist's Guide to a Sensible Immigration Policy." As Andrew Ross recounts, FAIR—and allied groups like the Center for Immigration Studies—have actively sought to build a green anti-immigrant constituency, dividing the environmental movement. FAIR spin blames undocumented immigrants for everything from biodiversity loss and wilderness desecration to accelerating climate change and increased greenhouse emissions. A Center for Immigration Studies press release, urging more draconian enforcement in southern Arizona's national forests deploys the standard coupling of immigration and impurity: "How long will these beautiful lands remain unspoiled if the border is not secured?" Andrew Ross, "Greenwashing Nativism," *The Nation*, August 16, 2010, 6.
19. Richard Rodriguez, *Days of Obligation: An Argument with My Mexican Father* (New York: Penguin, 1992), 5.
20. Quoted in Kirkpatrick Sale, "The Forest for the Trees: Can Today's Environmentalists Tell the Difference," *Mother Jones* 11, no. 8 (1986): 36.
21. D. H. Lawrence, *Selected Poems* (London: Penguin, 1972), 93.
22. Rick Bass, "A Landscape of Possibility," *Outside* (December 1995): 100–101.
23. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *The Post-Colonial Critic: Interviews, Strategies, Dialogues* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 72.
24. Aldo Leopold, "Game and Wildlife Conservation," in *Game Management* (1933; repr., Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1986), 23.
25. Jennifer Oladipo, "Global Warming is Colorblind," *Orion*, November/December 2007: 5.
26. For two brilliant accounts of this process, see Rebecca Solnit, *Savage Dreams: A Journey into the Landscape Wars of the American West* (New York: 1994), 215–385; and Mark Dowie, *Conservation Refugees* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), 1–22.
27. Richard Rodriguez, "True West," in *The Anchor Essay Annual: The Best of 1997*, ed. Phillip Lopate, (New York, 1998), 331.
28. Melvin Dixon, *Ride Out the Wilderness: Geography and Identity in Afro-American Literature* (Urbana-Champaign: University of Illinois Press, 1987).

29. Camille T. Dungy, "Writing Home," in Camille T. Dungy, ed., *Black Nature. : Four Centuries of African American Nature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009), 285.
30. University of California, Berkeley, "Black Nature: A Symposium on the First Anthology of Nature Writing by African-American Poets" (video of panel discussion, March 5, 2010), YouTube.com, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bkBs81CUcpg> (accessed April 29, 2010). I'm grateful to Jalylah Burrell for alerting me to this panel discussion of the *Black Nature* anthology.
31. Richard Mabey, *Landlocked: In Pursuit of the Wild* (London: Sinclair Stevenson, 1994), 71.
32. Raymond Williams, *Toward 2000* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1983), 195. For a related perspective on community and place, see Williams, "Homespun Philosophy," *New Statesman and Society*, June 19, 1992, 8–9.
33. Williams, *Toward 2000*, 195.
34. *Ibid.*, 195.
35. Paul Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), 49–50. Stuart Hall questions Williams' prioritizing of rooted settlements in similar terms. See Hall, "Our Mongrel Selves," *New Statesman and Society*, June 19, 1992, 6–7.
36. An early, important resource on environmental writing beyond the United States is Patrick Murphy's *Literature of Nature: An International Sourcebook* (Chicago: Fitzroy Dearborn, 1998). Scott Slovic has sought to counter the complaint that "environmental literature is an exclusively Americanist preserve" by pointing, among other things, to the rise in international submissions to the premier journal in the field, *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*. This is, indeed, a promising development, but the subjects and authors of environmental literary criticism remain overwhelmingly American. The internationalizing of ecocriticism, moreover, should not simply involve additive diversification in a center-periphery fashion. As I've argued above, we need to address the way ecocriticism's dominant models and intellectual priorities remain skewed by their American genesis. See Slovic, "Forum on Literatures of the Environment," *PMLA* 114 (Oct. 1999), 1102.
37. Scott Russell Sanders, "Staying Put," in *The Future of Nature: Writing on a Human Ecology*, ed. Barry Lopez (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2007), 353–367. This essay has been adapted from Sanders' book-length polemic on this subject, *Staying Put. Making a Home in a Restless World* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1993).
38. *Ibid.*, 357.
39. I am (to use a loaded word) a "naturalized" U.S. citizen who has lived in the Midwest for thirteen of my twenty-six American years. As such, I am sympathetic to some of Sanders' regional prickliness: bicoastal and transatlantic condescension toward (and ignorance of) the Midwest remains tenacious.

40. One exception to the dearth of minority writers and public intellectuals domiciled in rural England has been V. S. Naipaul, for whom Wiltshire has served primarily as a launching pad for his international travels and as a hermitic place to write. Certainly, to judge from *The Enigma of Arrival* and Patrick French's biography of him, Naipaul never entered into the kind of community-minded engagements that Sanders associates with staying put. Moreover, Naipaul has been a renter, not a rural landowner of the kind that Sanders, Leopold, and Berry extol.
41. Sanders, "Staying Put," 356.
42. *Ibid.*, 362.
43. *Ibid.*, 365.
44. Raymond Williams' *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973) remains the most wide-ranging account of the English pastoral tradition.
45. For an eloquent and economical account of the relationship between wilderness thinking and Indian dispossession in the United States, see Cronon, "The Trouble with Wilderness," 95–96.
46. Rob Nixon, *London Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), 161. For a luminous analysis of postcolonial pastoral in a Caribbean context, see Sarah Phillips Casteel, *Second Arrivals: Landscape and Belonging in Contemporary Writing of the Americas* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2007). Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin have also productively carried forward this line of thinking in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010).
47. V. S. Naipaul, *The Enigma of Arrival* (New York: Knopf, 1987).
48. Richard Drayton, *Nature's Government: Science, Imperial Britain, and the "Improvement" of the World* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2000), xvi.
49. Jamaica Kincaid, *My Garden* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2001), 132.
50. *Ibid.*, 139.
51. Jamaica Kincaid, *A Small Place* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1988).
52. *Ibid.*, 16.
53. E. M. Forster, *Howard's End* (1910; repr., New York, 1975). This is an illuminating novel to read alongside the Naipaul and the Kincaid. Although imperial spaces trouble the edges of *Howard's End*, Forster anxiously seeks to screen out their implications by advancing a pastorally contained vision of English regeneration. In a key scene, the narrator stands on a Dorset hilltop gazing down at what he defines as a quintessential English vista. His angle of vision is akin to what Mary Louise Pratt, in an imperial context, calls the monarch-of-all-I-survey. In keeping with this tradition, Forster's method is panoramic: he creates a verbal painting that allows him to symbolically consume all of England at a glance in

the surrogate, pastoral form of the Isle of Wight. Gazing steadfastly at the Isle of Wight “the imagination swells, spreads, and deepens, until it becomes geographical and encircles England” (102). This scene’s visual geometry, one might say, is one of panoramic bioregionalism.

In this passage, the Isle of Wight, with its grassy downs and chalky cliffs, becomes England’s epitome and the guardian “till the end of time” of the nation’s “purity.” This act of synecdoche shrinks England to a nonhybrid nation of hyperpastoral. Forster thus performs here a kind of political and spatial amnesia, using a visual act of geographical circumscription to generate a highly selective notion of nationhood. By having the Isle of Wight stand in for England, Forster excludes the working classes and the polluted cities of the nation’s industrial north, as well as London, with its expansive cosmopolitan matrices. Crucially, for my larger argument about postcolonial pastoral, Forster’s vision excises colonial space from the idea of England: Cyprus and Nigeria, flickering on the edges of the novel, have no visible relation to the Isle of Wight. In this manner, Forster deploys geographical synecdoche and panoramic pastoral to foreclose from the idea of England, people, places, and histories that unsettle the book’s project of selective national regeneration and redefinition.

54. Kincaid, *My Garden*, 142.
55. For some fine insights into the relationship between botany and colonialism in Kincaid’s work, see Rachel Azima, “‘Not-the-Native’: Self-Transplantation, Ecocriticism, and Postcolonialism in Jamaica Kincaid’s *My Garden (Book)*,” *Journal of Commonwealth and Postcolonial Studies* 14 (2006): 101–119; and Jill Didur, “‘Garden-worthy’: Rerouting Colonial Botany in Jamaica Kincaid’s *Among Flowers: A Walk in the Himalaya*,” *Public* 41 (2010): 172–185.
56. *Ibid.*, 143.
57. *Ibid.*, 137.
58. Walter Benjamin, “Theses On the Philosophy of History,” in *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn (New York, 1969), 256.
59. Keith Morris Washington in video interview with *Basic Black*, YouTube.com, <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=rtGQt1woe-Y>.
60. See, for example, Richard Mabey, “Ghost Habitats,” in *A Brush With Nature* (London: BBC Books, 2010), 208–210.
61. The double consciousness of African-American pastoral surfaces repeatedly in Camille Dungy’s superb, pathbreaking anthology, *Black Nature: Four Centuries of African American Nature* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2009).
62. Ursula Heise, “Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies,” *American Literary History* 20, no. 1–2 (2008): 383–84. A crucial moment in the rise of environmental literary studies in the United States was the founding in 1992 of the Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE).

63. Peter Sauer, "Reinhabiting Environmentalism: Picking Up Where Leopold and Carson Left Off," in *The Future of Nature: Writings on a Human Ecology from Orion Magazine*, ed. Barry Lopez (Minneapolis: Milkweed, 2007), 8.
64. Peter Sauer, "Global Ethics: An American Perspective," *Orion* (Winter 2002): 3.
65. Sauer, "Global Ethics," 5.
66. It was the African-American civil rights leader, Dr. Benjamin Chavis, who coined the term "environmental racism." But he did so in 1981, long after the civil rights movement had crested.
67. Two critical texts that boosted the academic credibility of the environmental justice concerns of American minorities were Benjamin Chavis, *Toxic Wastes and Race in the United States of America* (Washington D.C.: Commission for Racial Justice, 1987) and Robert D. Bullard, *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class, and Environmental Quality* (1990; rpt. Boulder: Westview Press, 2000). However, the influence of these texts in American universities was centered in the social sciences and had at best a very limited impact on the conceptual or imaginative priorities of environmental literary studies in the United States.
68. Said himself was leery of the term "postcolonial." However, the rise of anti-imperial and postcolonial literary studies were both largely catalyzed by *Orientalism* and, in any event, were often intimately entangled.
69. Said described environmentalism, for instance, as "the indulgence of spoiled tree huggers who lack a proper cause" (personal communiqué with author, June 7, 1994).
70. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Attention: Postcolonialism!" *Journal of Caribbean Studies* 12 (1997/98): 166. Guha's work on ecological change and peasant resistance in the Himalaya and Vandana Shiva's work on gender, environmental violence, and biodiversity are just two instances of the turn toward deepening our historical understanding of the links between ecological, colonial, and postcolonial concerns.
71. Ramachandra Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism and Wilderness Preservation: A Third World Critique," reprinted in *The Great New Wilderness Debate*, ed. J. Baird Callicott and Michael P. Nelson (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1998), 231–245.
72. Roderick Nash, *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3rd ed. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1982). Quoted in Guha, "Radical American Environmentalism," 239–240.
73. The South African refugee writer Bessie Head is a classic example of this historical turn. Head was a self-declared antifeminist who in the 1970s saw no resonance in Western feminism for the kinds of issues faced by the village women whom she lived with in Botswana. Yet Head's fictional explorations of gender dynamics and women's communal resistance have since turned her into a

- widely taught writer in women's studies courses. On Head's politics, see Rob Nixon, *Homelands, Harlem and Hollywood* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 176–192.
74. Beinart and Coates, *Environment and History*, 3. This book offers a fine comparative history of national parks in the United States and South Africa.
75. See Joe Kane, *Savages* (New York: Knopf, 1995); Suzana Sawyer, "The Politics of Petroleum: Indigenous Contestation of Multinational Oil Development in the Ecuadorian Amazon" (MacArthur Consortium Occasional Papers Series, MacArthur Program, University of Minnesota, 1997); and Melina Selverston, "The 1990 Indigenous Uprising in Ecuador: Politicized Ethnicity as Social Movement" (Papers on Latin America, no. 32, Columbia University Institute of Latin American and Iberian Studies, New York, 1993).
76. See "Kenya Students Confront Moi in Battle of the Forest," *Independent on Sunday*, February 7, 1999, 18.
77. *Ibid.*
78. Lorraine Anderson, Scott Slovic, and John P. O'Grady, eds., *Literature and the Environment: A Reader on Nature and Culture* (New York: Longman, 1999). Of the 104 essays and poems included by Anderson et al., 26 are by African-American, American Indian, Latina/o, or Asian-American writers. This marks a significant advance over the more typical spectrum of Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's influential *Ecocriticism Reader*, which found room for only two minority essays out of twenty-six.
79. Lawrence Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World: Literature, Culture, and Environment in the U.S. and Beyond* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001).
80. Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World*, 24.
81. The broader scheme of the second book also encourages Buell to discuss some urban European writers, notably Dickens, Woolf, and Joyce.
82. Mahasweta Devi, "Pterodactyl, Puran Sahay, and Pirtha," in *Imaginary Maps*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (New York: Routledge, 1995), 95–96.
83. Buell, *Writing for an Endangered World*, 230.
84. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak's interview with Devi, Buell alludes briefly to Devi's overarching concern for the plight of first peoples globally, including Native Americans. However, he doesn't explore the implications of this for an American-centered environmentalism (*ibid.*, 230).
85. See Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day*, 88.
86. Ogoniland belongs to the tropical belt that runs through the Amazon, West and Central Africa, Indonesia, and Papua and New Guinea, a zone that possesses the world's most diverse, ethnically fractured populations (400 ethnicities in Nigeria, several thousand in New Guinea) as well as unusually rich natural resources (oil, precious minerals, and timber). It is in this strip that American, European, Japanese, and Chinese extraction industry multinationals,



- frequently supported by authoritarian regimes, operate with maximum violence and impunity.
87. Pedagogically, an excellent place to start would be to read Saro-Wiwa's prison diary, *A Month and a Day*, alongside both Wole Soyinka's prefigurative early play *The Swamp Dwellers* and recent work by Nigerian environmental philosopher Kaoawole Owolabi. For a resonant comparison one could turn to Joe Kane's account in *Savages* of another contest between an equatorial micro-minority (Ecuador's Huaorani Indians) and a petroleum multinational (Texaco).
  88. For an excellent theoretical account of the conceptual limitations that result from a center-periphery model, see Timothy Mitchell, "The Stage of Modernity," in Timothy Mitchell, ed., *Questions of Modernity* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 1–34. Mitchell's critique focuses on Western-centered genealogies of modernity; however, many of his insights can be applied adaptively to ecocriticism.
  89. Rob Nixon, "Postcolonialism and Environmentalism," in *Postcolonialism and Beyond*, ed. Ania Loomba et al. (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005), 233–251; Susie O'Brien, "Articulating a World of Difference: Ecocriticism, Postcolonialism and Globalization," *Canadian Literature* 170/171 (2001): 140–158; Graham Huggan, "Greening Postcolonialism: Ecocritical Perspectives," *Modern Fiction Studies* 50 (2004): 701–733.
  90. [http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Derek\\_Walcott/7728](http://www.poetryconnection.net/poets/Derek_Walcott/7728)
  91. New Zealand, Indian, South African, Australian, Californian, and Hawaiian scholars have been at the forefront of this new oceanic scholarship.
  92. See especially Elizabeth DeLoughrey, "Pacific Heliotropes: Ecology and the Wars of Light," in *Postcolonial Ecologies*, ed. Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010); and Jennifer Wenzel, "Petro-magic-realism: Toward a Political Ecology of Nigerian Literature," *Postcolonial Studies* 9 (2006): 449–464.
  93. Prominent ecocritical work that engages the Caribbean includes Casteel, *Second Arrivals*; Elizabeth DeLoughrey, *Roots and Routes: Navigating Caribbean and Pacific Island Literatures* (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2007); Elizabeth DeLoughrey, Renee Gosson, and George Handley, eds., *Caribbean Literature and the Environment* (Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press, 2005); George Handley, *New World Poetics: Nature and the Adamic Imagination in Whitman, Neruda, and Walcott* (Athens: University Of Georgia Press, 2007); and Lizabeth Paravisini-Gebert's work in progress, *Endangered Species: Ecology and the Discourses of the Caribbean Nation*.
  94. Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth Myers, eds., *Environment at the Margins* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2011); DeLoughrey and Handley, eds., *Postcolonial Ecologies*; Alex Hunt and Bonnie Roos, eds., *Postcolonial Green* (Charlottesville:



- University of Virginia Press, 2010). Also directly pertinent in its transnational ambitions is Stephanie Lemenger and Teresa Shewry, eds., *Environmental Criticism for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: Routledge, 2011).
95. Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2010); Upamanyu Pablo Mukherjee, *Postcolonial Environments: Nature, Culture and the Contemporary Indian Novel* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); and Laura Wright, *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes. Reading the Postcolonial Environment* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2010). Although Murphy doesn't address postcolonial studies directly, there is also much of pertinence to transnational environmentalism in Patrick D. Murphy, *Ecocritical Explorations in Literary and Cultural Studies* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2009).
96. The contemporary transnational turn in American studies is too vast to address here comprehensively. Key texts include Russ Castronovo and Susan Gillman, eds., *States of Emergency: The Object of American Studies* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2009); Wai Chee Dimock, *Through Other Continents: American Literature Across Deep Time* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006); Wai Chee Dimock and Lawrence Buell, eds., *Shades of the Planet: American Literature as World Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007); Inderpal Grewal et al., ed., *Transnational America* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005); Heise, "Ecocriticism and the Transnational Turn in American Studies"; J. Michael Dash, *The Other America: Caribbean Literature in a New World Context* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1998); Donald E. Pease and Robyn Wiegman, eds., *The Futures of American Studies* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002); John Carlos Rowe, ed., *Post-Nationalist American Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2000); and Janice Radway, "What's in a Name? Presidential Address to the American Studies Association, 20 November 1998," *American Quarterly* 51, no. 1 (1999): 1–32.
97. Dungy, *Black Nature*. Another exemplary recent anthology is Laird Christensen, Mark C. Long, and Fred Waage, eds., *Teaching North American Environmental Literature*, (Washington DC: Modern Language Association of America, 2008) which contains a powerful, diverse set of engagements with environmental justice literatures and methodologies from a variety of transnational perspectives.
98. The increasingly prolific engagements between native and postcolonial studies include: Sean Kicummah Teuton, *Red Land, Red Power: Grounding Knowledge in the American Indian Novel* (Durham, NC: Duke UP, 2008); Janice Acoote et al, *Reasoning Together: The Native Critics Collective* (Tulsa, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2008); Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed, 1999); Eric Cheyfitz, "The (Post)Colonial Predicament of Native American Studies," *Interventions* 4 (2002): 405-427;

Karen M. Morin, "Postcolonialism and Native American Geographies," *Cultural Geographies* 9 (2002): 158–180; James Mackay, "Review Essay: Native American Literary Theory," *Journal of American Studies*, 41(2007): 675–680; Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post) Colonial Studies," *The Journal of American History* (88) 2001: 1-41; and Arnold Krupat, "Postcolonialism, Ideology, and Native American Literature," in Amritjit Singh and Peter Schmidt, eds., *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race, Ethnicity, and Literature* (Oxford, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2000), 73-94.

### Epilogue

1. Plato, *Timaeus*, trans. R. G. Bury (New York: Loeb Classical Library, 1929), 24e.
2. For a sober assessment of the scale of climate flight—underway and projected—see the report by the United Nations Refugee Agency (UNHCR), <http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e4a5096.html>.
3. Naomi Klein, "Climate Rage," *Rolling Stone*, November 11, 2009, 18.
4. John Vidal, "Don't Consign us to History, Plead Island States at Cancun," *Guardian*, December 1, 2010, 9.
5. Toni Johnson, "Thawing Arctic's Resource Race," Council on Foreign Relations, [http://www.cfr.org/publication/13978/thawing\\_arctics\\_resource\\_race.html](http://www.cfr.org/publication/13978/thawing_arctics_resource_race.html).
6. Denmark's claim was mounted through its colonial relationship to Greenland, which has since gained independence.
7. Alok Jha, "New Survey of Africa Mineral Riches," *Guardian*, May 29, 2009.
8. <http://thinkprogress.org/2010/04/30/bp-greenwashing-drill/>
9. Other prominent members of the Global Climate Coalition included: DaimlerChrysler, Exxon/Esso, Ford Motor Company, General Motors Company, Shell Oil USA, Texaco, and the American Highway Users Alliance.
10. Barack Obama, "Remarks by the President in a Discussion on Jobs and the Economy in Charlotte, North Carolina" (Celgard, LLC, Charlotte, North Carolina, April 2, 2010) <http://www.whitehouse.gov/the-press-office/remarks-president-a-discussion-jobs-and-economy-charlotte-north-carolina>.
11. Quoted in Naomi Klein, "Gulf Oil Spill," June 19, 2010, 15.
12. "Michael Klare: Grappling With the Age of 'Tough Oil,'" NPR, June 30, 2010, <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=128212150>. See also, Elizabeth Kolbert, "Oil Shocks," *New Yorker*, May 31, 2010, 13.
13. John McQuaid, "The Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill: An Accident Waiting to Happen," *Environment* 360, May 10, 2010, <http://e360.yale.edu/content/feature.msp?id=2272>.
14. *Ibid.*

15. Matt DeLong, “Joe Barton’s BP ‘Shakedown’ Comments Are Nothing New,” *Washington Post*, June 17, 2010, <http://voices.washingtonpost.com/44/2010/06/joe-bartons-bp-shakedown-comme.html>.
16. Ixtoc was a 150-foot-deep well, a fraction of the depth at which deepwater drilling routinely occurs today. But for the late 1970s that constituted innovative deepwater drilling, with all the technological challenges that entailed.
17. Quoted in William J. Broad, “Taking Lessons From What Went Wrong,” *New York Times*, July 20, 2010, D1. On this score, see also Henry Petroski, *Success Through Failure: The Paradox of Design* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2006).
18. Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: Disaster Capitalism* (New York: Metropolitan Books, 2007).
19. Anne McClintock, “Slow Violence and the BP Coverups,” *Counterpunch*, August 23/24, 2010, <http://www.counterpunch.org/mcclintock08232010.html>.
20. *Ibid.*
21. Adam Nossiter, “Far From Gulf, a Spill Scourge Five Decades Old,” *New York Times*, June 16, 2010, A1.
22. Ulrich Beck, *World Risk Society* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), 5; Fernando Coronil, *The Magical State: Nature, Money, and Modernity in Venezuela* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 11.
23. In 1981, three years before the disaster struck, a Bhopal-based reporter, Raajkumar Keswani, predicted that the Union Carbide factory was a disaster waiting to happen.
24. In June 2010, twenty-six years after the Bhopal Disaster, an Indian court finally convicted of negligence seven former executives of Union Carbide’s Indian subsidiary. The men received two-year jail sentences and were fined the equivalent of \$2,100 each. No Americans were prosecuted. Lydia Polgreen and Hari Kumar, “Indian Court Convicts Seven in Bhopal Disaster,” *New York Times*, June 7, 2010, 9.
25. *Ibid.*
26. Christopher F. Chabris, “You Have Too Much Mail,” *Wall Street Journal*, December 15, 2008, 7.
27. The hacked emails of climate scientists at the University of East Anglia were seized on by the right as evidence that climate change was a conspiratorial hoax. However, in the immediate aftermath of climategate, five independent investigations concluded that the science remained entirely sound. [http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/12/climategate-debunking-get\\_n\\_642980.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2010/07/12/climategate-debunking-get_n_642980.html)
28. In the Trafigura case, the claimants’ out of court settlement (for 30 million pound sterling plus costs) following the WikiLeaks revelations was particularly significant for two reasons. First, the case successfully combined rich-nation

- digital civil disobedience with more traditional grass roots activism mounted by the afflicted poor. Second, the settlement broke a double silence: the silencing of slow violence and the silencing of the British media who, in an extraordinary measure, had been hit with a “super-injunction” that barred them from covering the parliamentary debate over the suppressed scientific Minton report warning of the toxic implications of the Trafigura contamination. The settlement was a classic instance of new media strategy, old media credibility, scientific testimony, legal resources, and grassroots activism among the poor combining to counter an assault on both the environmental and the information commons. <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2009/oct/16/carter-ruck-abandon-minton-injunction>
29. <http://another-green-world.blogspot.com/2008/08/lucha-indigena-defeat-alan-garcias.html>
  30. For two detailed accounts of the limits—in scale and efficacy—of the so-called Twitter revolution, see Annabelle Sreberny and Gholam Khiabany, *Blogistan: The Internet and Politics in Iran* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2010) and Evgeny Morozov, *The Net Delusion: The Dark Side of Internet Freedom* (London: Allen Lane, 2010). James Harkin has rightly charged the technophile Andrew Sullivan with strategic naivete and “irrational exuberance” for proclaiming that Twitter was “the critical tool for organizing the resistance in Iran” and that “the Revolution will be twittered.” Harkin, “Cyber-Con,” *London Review of Books*, December 2, 2010, 20.
  31. Malcolm Gladwell has famously accused wiki-activism of being hampered by low-risk “weak ties” and “horizontal associations,” in contrast to the civil rights movement, which transformed American society through high-risk, deeply committed, and vertically organized activism. Gladwell criticizes “the digerati” for “refusing to accept the fact there is a class of social problems for which there is no technological solution.” But, one might ask, do we always know in advance what class of social problems those are? While Gladwell’s dismissal of the unalloyed technophilia embodied by Clay Shirky and Andrew Sullivan is spot on, my own position is somewhat less skeptical than his. I believe that some fusion between old-style, high-risk, vertically organized strategies and wiki-activism can generate significant social change, even though such successful fusions, over the long term, can be challenging to sustain. See Gladwell, “Small Change,” [http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa\\_fact\\_gladwell](http://www.newyorker.com/reporting/2010/10/04/101004fa_fact_gladwell)
  32. Jean-Paul Sartre, *What is Literature?*; trans. Bernard Frechtman (1948; rpt. London: Methuen, 1970), 37.
  33. For a lively, imaginative website that seeks to integrate activism pertaining to the environmental and the information commons, see <http://www.onthecommons.org/>
  34. Nadine Gordimer, “The Essential Gesture” (1985). In Gordimer, *Telling Times: Writing and Living, 1954-2008* (New York: Norton, 2008), 422.