

# **The Interdisciplinarity of Post-colonialism and Environmentalism in Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* and Abdel Rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt***

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## **Introduction**

The question of environment emerged during the middle years of the previous century as a result of the threats that have faced the earth endangering both its human and non-human beings. Climate change, global warming, deforestation, acid rain, toxic substances, and the radioactive aftermaths of wars are some of the disasters that face mankind and all living things presently. Environmentalism was (and is) about the environment in its broadest sense — about plants and animals, about the air, water, and soil, or more specifically, about the ideas, rules, and patterns that define the human interaction with these entities. From such a point of view, any activity that sought to reform existing modes of human interaction with the natural world is part of the history of environmentalism (Uekoetter 2011, 9).

The Environmental thought is dominated by two perspectives: the anthropocentric and biocentric. The anthropocentric perspective focuses on the dangerous effect of environmental degradation upon human activities and life while the biocentric one stresses the fact that nature has an intrinsic moral value that should be appreciated for its own sake. However, the supporters of both perspectives and humanists grouped around one main idea which is that we face a global crisis that needs both solutions and understanding. As historian Donald Worster explains:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those ethical systems and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding. (1993, 17)

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To understand the various perspectives of environmentalism and its relationship with politics, economics, and literature, a quick glimpse of the history of environmentalism is helpful. The first response to the problems of environment began faintly with the emergence of the Industrial Revolution when very few voices were heard on the harmful effects of mining, forest clearance, and land drainage upon life. For example, in 1848, Henry Thoreau published his book *Walden* in which he mentions his experience of living in the woods near Walden Pond, Massachusetts. With the beginning of the twentieth century, the naturalist John Muir referred to the spiritual value of the wilderness and encouraged the US government to preserve some areas of wilderness, but such a demand was opposed by the economic interests of some timber companies and politicians, “[t]hus arose a division of beliefs that continues today. One claiming the only considerations are economic, the other arguing that there are other values to consider, such as spiritual value” (Reynolds 2011, 1).

In the mid-twentieth century, Aldo Leopold published his influential book *A Sand County Almanac* in which he called for protecting balance in nature and extending the humans' ethical sense of responsibility towards it. The birth of the environmental movement began with Rachel Carson's book *The Silent Spring* in 1962, as she explained how insecticides and pesticides contaminated the environment. Carson's book was criticized by media and chemical industries; yet, investigations affirmed Carson's point was right and DDT was consequently banned. On a more official level, the first Earth Summit held by developed countries in 1972 in Stockholm to discuss the side effects of industrialization led later on to the establishment of the UNEP (United Nations Environment Program). But the summit exposed a rift between ‘the developed’ (First World) and the ‘developing’ (Third World) states. This took place when the developed world's exploitation of natural resources not only degraded the environment, but also perpetuated the unequal distribution of wealth. Such a social (and economic) divide remains in place today and has arguably even widened further (Reynolds 2013, 3).

In 1983, the term “sustainable development” was coined by the chairperson of the UN World Commission on Environment, Gro Harlem Brundtland, leading to the popularization of the term ‘sustainability.’ Moreover, in 1992, the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro stressed the importance of applying strict regulatory measures in order to reduce the emission of carbon dioxide in the pursuit towards combating Global Warming. Some nations agreed to sign up related decrees while others such as the USA and Saudi Arabia were concerned about the costs of such measures as their economies depend heavily on the oil trade. However, in 2002, during the fourth Earth Summit in Johannesburg, several developing countries articulated their

demands for considering their interests. Yet, the USA, Japan, and some oil companies, which did not support the promotion of renewable energy sources in order to retain and maximize their profits, turned a deaf ear to the commitments of this summit. Thus, the notable conflict between environmental sustainability and the greedy economic interests of the developed countries has led some writers to stress the inverse relationship between capitalism and environmental sustainability. For example, Jan Hancock has depicted “economic rationality” (2003, 161) as the main reason behind environmental destruction as it transforms natural assets into products for the purpose of accommodating the consumers’ lifestyle. Such an economic perspective represents the core of capitalism.

The conflict between capitalism and environmentalism has been shown in Rubin Patterson's statement that “the environment cannot sustain capitalism and capitalism certainly cannot sustain the environment” (2010, 74). The concept of ownership in the capitalist system adopts the belief that nature can become the property of human beings who come, according to the western ideals of the great chain of being, at the top of the hierarchical natural order while animals, plants, and minerals are at the bottom. Therefore, several environmentalists highlight the contradiction between capitalism and environmental social justice as the former motivates both elements of consumption and production to ensure its own proliferation rather than satisfying social needs or promoting environmental wellbeing, as Karen Bell suggests:

because the system requires constant growth, excessive natural resources are depleted and unsustainable levels of waste are created. Moreover, the drive for profit encourages cost cutting, putting pressure on corporations to choose the cheapest processes. Companies have to make short-term decisions based on what will help their business to survive, even if this harms society and the environment. This potentially means exploitation of people and the rest of nature in the form of low wages, casual work, unsustainable extraction, irresponsible handling of waste and periodic as well as localised crises that tend to be borne by the worst-off. (2015, 2)

Since world economic powers have often been defined by their prevailing sources of energy, the Dutch were among the first to utilize wind and water as renewable energy sources; however, this did not achieve significant commercial dominance given the emergence of coal afterwards, which then enabled Britain be a notable economic power, “until the rise of oil-powered industry and military forces gave the edge to the oil-favored United States” (Phillips 2006, xlvi). As energy is closely associated with the economic hegemony of world superpowers, pursuing energy, hence, becomes the main aim of capitalist countries. Pursuing energy, to a large

extent, necessitates destroying several elements of the surrounding environment. Capitalist systems that could realize the strong bond between wealth and energy have always exploited the natural sources of various other countries to compete in the free market.

It is affirmed that there is a relationship between the demands of capitalism and the colonial rule on one hand and considering the limited natural resources on the other. Grove refers to the effect of colonialism upon the environment by discussing the growing awareness of “the destructive impact of European economic activity on the peoples and environments of the newly 'discovered' and colonized lands” (1995, 3). As land confers wealth and strategic advantages, the struggle between colonizers and colonized nations has been mainly revolving around land. The colonizers' goals focus upon the exploitation of the resources of the colonized lands, and subjugating natives is one of the mechanisms used to reach and possess the natural resources of these colonies. That exploitation corresponds with Immanuel Wallerstein's analysis of world-systems which underlines the necessity of transporting raw material from periphery countries (countries of the so called “Third World” which have been colonized), to core countries (countries of the “First World” which have been colonizing that Third World). He states “some countries were economically stronger than others (the core) and were therefore able to trade on terms that allowed surplus-value to flow from the weaker countries (the periphery) to the core” (2004, 12). Thus, increasing the wealth of the industrial capitalist communities depends on “the commodification of nature” (Murphy 2009, 10) and the exploitation of the environment. As colonial and imperial powers have been utilizing the natural resources of their colonies or Third World countries, their actions have come to threaten the global ecosystem. Such threats have been represented by destroying hectares of forests, transporting animals, seeds, and human beings from one continent or country to the other, drilling for oil, and finally burning fossil fuels leading then to global warming.

The environmental injustices that Western and imperial countries have practiced against their exploited colonies have been represented by many incidents, but the most flagrant one has been the scheme pronounced by the former president of the World Bank, Lawrence Summers, to “export rich nation garbage, toxic waste, and heavily polluting industries to Africa” (quoted. in Nixon 2011, 2). That decision mirrors the deeply rooted concepts and psyche of the colonizing and imperial Western countries that treat nations of the so called “Third World” as “dispensable citizens” (Nixon 2011, 17). The attitude articulated by Summers corresponds with the racist tendencies that arise from the self-privileging view of such Western countries. It also echoes the term “environmental racism” which has been defined

by the American environmental philosopher Deane Curtin as “the connection, in theory and practice, of race and the environment so that the oppression of one is connected to, and supported by, the oppression of the other” (2005, 135).

Such an interconnection between capitalism, colonialism, imperialism and environmental issues paves the way for creating another connection between post-colonialism and environmentalism. Although Nixon suggests that environmental and postcolonial studies have shown “an often-activist dimension that connects their priorities to movements for a social change” (2011, 233), he states that “four main schisms appeared between the dominant concerns of postcolonialists and ecocritics” (2011, 236) due to the assumption “that the subjects and methodologies of the two fields were divergent” (2011, 234). Yet, one may safely suggest that the connections may surpass the differences of perspectives in the two fields. These “schisms” are evident on several levels: firstly, the post-colonialists' tendency to adopt hybridity and a cross-cultural premise in contrast to the eco-critics' discourses of purity and wilderness; secondly, the postcolonial writings of displacement which are different from the environmental literary studies' main concern of place; thirdly, the nationalist perspective of eco-criticism that opposes the cosmopolitan and transnational framework of post-colonialism; finally, post-colonialism's primary concern to review history that opposes the major interest of environmental literature and criticism in exploring the timeless experiences of nature.

Yet, I argue that while some postcolonial literary writings mainly focus on the issues of colonialism, cross-culturalism, displacement, and history, the environmental questions also emerge amid the historical conflict between the colonizer and the colonized over place. It is difficult to separate the historical moment of the arrival of colonizers from the environmental devastation that began to take place in many colonies. The postcolonial literary writings may reveal how natives have had their concept of purity and wilderness that has been disturbed by colonialism, their perspectives for the value of place which has been exploited by the Western capitalistic colonizers, and their national perception of environmentalism that is inseparable from nativism and is threatened by imperialism. According to the notable Indian historian, Ramachandra Guha, there is a “need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together as a means of challenging continuing imperialist modes of social and environmental dominance” (quoted in Huggan and Tiffin 2010, 2). Thus, a critical reading for the value of environment in some postcolonial literary writings is needed.

Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958) and Abdel Rahman Munif's *Cities of Salt* (1984) are two novels discussing the effect of colonialism on human and non-human beings. A postcolonial environmental critique is appropriate for analyzing these two texts by showing the relationship between natives and environment after

and before the arrival of colonizers, the approach of natives and colonizers to environment, and the capitalistic system that lay behind colonialism and environmental devastation. *Things Fall Apart* describes in detail the pre-colonial life of the Nigerian Igbos and the arrival of Europeans during the late nineteenth century while *Cities of Salt* tackles the life of Arab Bedouins when oil was discovered by Americans in a Gulf country in the beginning of the twentieth century. Focusing upon setting in both novels shows the relationship between colonialism and environmental devastation.

### **The Pre-Colonial Setting**

The setting, represented by time and place, has a great significance in the postcolonial literary texts to historicize the incidents that accompany the arrival of colonizers and their effect upon the place as well as its inhabitants. Not only does the place exhibit the relationship between natives and land, but it also underlines another connection between natives and their environment. The postcolonial writer Fanon argues, “For a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread, and above all, dignity” (1961, 34). Besides, the founder of eco-criticism, Glotfelty suggests: “ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment” (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, xviii) which raises a question about the role that “the physical setting” (1996, xix) plays in the plot of some novels. Fanon's statement about the value of land for the colonized people and, consequently, for postcolonial criticism parallels Glotfelty's explanation for the essentiality of the physical setting for the ecocritical reading of any literary plot and echoes Ann B. Dobie's point about discussing the representation of nature by “taking an earth-centered approach to literary study by looking at the role nature plays” (Dobie 2012, 243). Therefore, land in its physical form is a cornerstone for a postcolonial environmental approach to the settings of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*.

*Things Fall Apart* narrates the story of its tragic hero Okonkwo who rejects the new values of the European colonizers, and its setting is mainly concerned with the Igbo community and its culture which displays how environment is involved in their daily activities. In the fictional Nigerian village of Umuofia, the Igbos' culture gives a great importance to the environment. They celebrate the earth they live on by devoting a week of peace in which no one may do any unethical deed and the Igbos should live peacefully together to obtain the blessings of land before they start a new season of cultivation:

You are not a stranger in Umuofia. You know as well as I do that our forefathers ordained that before we plant any crops in the earth we should observe a week in which a man does not say a harsh word to his neighbor. We live in peace with our fellows to honor our great goddess of the earth without whose blessing our crops will not grow. You committed a great evil. (Achebe 1959, 21)

The above words said by Ezeani, the priest of the earth goddess Ani, refer to that intimate relationship between man and earth. The earth is very much appreciated and honored by the natives who realized its effective existence in their lives, so they assigned a “week of peace” and an imaginary goddess “Ani” to glorify it. Ezeani reprimanded Okonkwo because he failed to suppress his anger and beat his wife forgetting the rules of the “week of peace.” Okonkwo who knows the laws and norms of the Igbos submitted himself to the penalty of the priest of the earth goddess. By living peacefully with each other and giving a week of rest for their lands, the Igbos adopt the perspective that peaceful co-existence among human beings is inseparable from their serene abode within the surrounding environment. The Igbos’ values are derived from their relationship with their environment. The deities of the Igbos represent the association between natives and their divine environment. There are many gods such as the Oracle of Hills and Caves that issues orders, Amadiora, the god of thunder, Ifejioku the god of yams, and Anyanwu god of the sun.

Moreover, the Igbos' folklore and norms mirror the involvement of nature in their daily activities and language. They believe in “the big and ancient silk-cotton tree which was sacred. Spirits of good children lived in that tree waiting to be born. On ordinary days young women who desired children came to sit under its shade” (Achebe 1959, 29). Their medicine comes from the “grasses and leaves, roots and barks of medicinal trees and shrubs” (Achebe 1959, 48). Their proverbs are driven from nature, for example, Eneke the bird says that since men have learned to shoot without missing, he has learned to fly without perching (Achebe 1959, 16). Even children songs celebrate nature as well: “the rain is falling, the sun is shining, alone Nnadi is cooking and eating” (Achebe 1959, 23). The characters of the folktales are birds and animals like the tale of the tortoise and birds which is narrated by Ekwefi, Okonkwo’s second wife, to her daughter Ezinma teaching morality and warning against blind confidence. Thus, nature and environment have formed their consciousness which has grown throughout history, increasingly connecting them with place. Deloughrey and Handley affirm that the “postcolonial ecology of *Things fall Apart* is evident in the way that language develops in a long historical relationship to a particular environment and culture” (2011, 7).

In Munif's *Cities of Salt*, Wadi al-Uyoun is a fictional oasis in an unnamed gulf country where green palm trees are filling the place in the heart of the harsh desert, "as if it had burst from within the earth or fallen from the sky" (Munif 1989, 1). The Bedouins consider Wadi al-Uyoun "as a salvation from death" (Munif 1989, 2) in the treacherous desert because it supplies them with water and shadowy place for the restfulness of caravans and animals. They appreciate the place as its wells endow them with life. The omens of good years appear in the abundant water that fill the three reservoirs of the wadi. Al-Hathal clan that chose to settle down in Wadi al-Uyoun had never expressed their sorrow or annoyance at living at the mercy of nature, for "nature and places also had their unknowable laws" (Munif 1989, 10). Thus, under these conditions where the supremacy of nature and place is undeniable and the same natural resources are shared by everyone, the inhabitants of the wadi have had some unique characteristics. For instance, they are shown as being a non-materialistically-minded people, for "they viewed money and possessions with haughtiness and sometimes outright scorn; no matter how life dealt with them it could never crush them, and these feelings sometimes made them rough and boorish. Nonetheless, if they trusted or loved anyone they would give him all they had, expecting nothing in return and with no bitterness" (Munif 1989, 8). The materialistic competitive tendencies that create the Machiavellian selfish individuals did not exist. Also, conforming to such physical environment has formed their distinctive physical attributes: considerable tallness, solid backs, and symmetrical stature. "To see them you might think of them as horses run and trained to the point of overleanness, but still strong, sturdy and beautiful" (Munif 1989, 9).

As environment is involved in the cultural and daily activities of the clan, they mark the important occasions of their life history with the environmental incidents that happened simultaneously as in Mugbel's birth year: "He might have been born in the year of the locusts or the year of the floods, or before or after, but he was certainly born before that frightful year of the storm, because then the wadi, the caravan road and the people had all been reduced to a state of utter poverty and devastation" (Munif 1989, 21). Environment is also shown in their language and proverbs "with luck ... a hen can lay eggs on a tent peg" (Munif 1989, 17). Besides, the young men who aspire to be independent should prove their maturity and ability to shoulder responsibility, first, by demonstrating their competence in dealing with nature. Miteb al-Hathal commands his son Fawaz, "If you are a big strong man now, then go and water the animals and come back safely" (Munif 1989, 23). Al-Hathal's rejection of his son's suggestion of leaving the wadi to travel and explore different places because "this place is better than others" (Munif 1989, 22), shows the natives' commitment to their place.



The protagonists of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt* are committed to their land which is considered an essential part of their personalities. They both have been part of the environmental place they lived in. According to Sparshott, there are several possible kinds of relationships between man and environment: I-Thou, subject-object, user and used, and so forth. But those who discuss environment should primarily have in mind “the relation of self to setting” (1972, 12); thus, the major characters that represent the natives of both novels stress this point of being part of the place. Okonkwo proves himself to be a successful farmer by surviving unexpected changeable weather conditions that spoilt his harvest. “The first rains were late, and, when they came, lasted only a brief moment. The blazing sun returned, more fierce than it had ever been known, and scorched all the green that had appeared with the rains. The earth burned like hot coals and roasted all the yams that had been sown. Like all good farmers, Okonkwo had begun to sow with the first rains” (Achebe 1959, 17). Finally, he could have his barn of yam as a sure sign that he is a self-made and unbeaten man. Miteb al-Hathal lectures his son about cultivating trees in Wadi al-Uyoun to ensure their clan’s survival and continuity:

That tree, the fourth on the left, is just your age, boy. You grow every day, and it grows with you. Tomorrow you'll plant a tree for your son, and he'll plant a tree for his son, and Wadi al-Uyoun will get greener everyday. People will keep coming to drink the water and hope never to die, and when they sit in the shade of the tree they'll say, ‘May God show mercy to whoever planted the trees and the green plants.’ (Munif 1989, 49)

Okonkwo’s and al-Hathal’s life history and identity are formed by their abilities to survive the harsh environmental conditions while showing commitment to their land. The commitment to land that Okonkwo and al-Hathal have is motivating them to prove their ability as human beings to survive and continue. The establishment of self grows amid the context of place. Self, consciousness, nationalism, and cultural and national identities develop along with eco-consciousness and environmental sustainability.

By introducing place as a prominent factor in the narratives of both novels, Nixon's claim about the rigid classified interests of postcolonial writings in displacement and ecological writings in place and “discourses of purity” (2011, 236) could be refuted. In *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*, the place represented by physical environment for the natives of both novels gives a greater perspective to the concept of purity. The purity of the bio-environmental place where natives live is inseparable from the purity of national identity that is not contaminated by foreign

ideas or concepts. Besides, both texts show the great interconnectedness between people, culture, history and earth. The cultural history of the Nigerian villagers of Umuofia and the Arab Bedouins of Wadi al-Uyoun has been intertwined with their environment and shown in their concepts, daily activities, physical attributes, language, and folklore. One may suggest that a concept of place nationalism has been introduced by Munif and Achebe by discussing that interwoven relation between natives and their environmental place earlier in these two novels and linking place to the history of community to indicate how environment forms an essential part of the natives' national identity, values, and communal ancestry. A new approach of environmental/eco-critical nationalism in which characters' national identities are promoted by nature has been formed. That approach which both writers have adopted in their novels parallels the point of Buell, Heise, and Thornber about the concept of place which "has always been of central interest to literature-environment studies" (2011, 420) and also reflects Robert Kern's call for "a movement from the human to the environmental, or at least from the exclusively human to the biocentric or ecocentric" (2003, 267). In both texts, the coexistence between humans and nature is underlined showing a distinguished unity between natives and their ideal biosphere before the arrival of colonizers.

Moreover, the place works out the narratives of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt*. The environmental place poses no threats to its inhabitants who could cope with its requirements until the arrival of colonizers disrupts that harmonious relationship between nature and natives. Okonkwo, the protagonist of *Things Fall Apart*, is banished to his mother's land because of his accidental crime against the "earth goddess," while Miteb al-Hathal the protagonist of *Cities of Salt* leaves Wadi al-Uyoun after the arrival of Americans. Neither Miteb nor Okonkwo could cope with the new conditions brought to the place by colonizers. The rising action that reveals the conflict between protagonists and colonizers is mainly based on the bond between both protagonists and their places which has been broken by colonialism. Thus, place, which is necessary for any eco-critical approach, plays a vital role to portray the struggle against colonialism, which is also essential for a postcolonial reading.

### **The Post-Colonial Setting**

The setting continues to echo the changes which took place with the arrival of European colonizers in *Things Fall Apart* and American drillers in *Cities of Salt*. Not only is the environmental place marred by the Western intruders, but the cultural traditions of natives in both narratives are also affected by colonialism and imperialism. The parallelism between the destruction of nature and the corruption

of the national values of natives is affirmed in both texts. After introducing the bond between the natives' communal history and the environment in both novels, the narrators initiate the gradual arrival of colonizers. Readers know about the arrival of white men in a few words by some characters who mention such news as trivial rumors being circulated by natives; for example, Obierika in *Things Fall Apart* observes: "It is like the story of white men who, they say, are white like this piece of chalk" (Achebe 1959, 55), and Fawaz in *Cities of Salt* says, "Ibn Rashid has foreign guests" (Munif 1989, 25). It is noted that both writers establish the relationship between natives and the environment first and then refer to the presence of white foreigners gradually: first, as a piece of information that comes within lines, and later, as certain news and facts, devoting many pages and chapters to describe the impact of these foreigners upon the environment and its community. That technique also underlines the fact that natives did not expect the deceptive strategy of colonization.

With the arrival of colonizing foreigners to the settings of the two novels, the destructive effect of colonialism and imperialism upon environment and natives emerges. In *Things Fall Apart* Obierika tells how the white strangers have killed the natives of Abame clan and polluted the lake, "Their clan is now completely empty. Even the sacred fish in their mysterious lake have fled and the lake has turned the colour of blood. A great evil has come upon their land as the oracle has warned" (Achebe 1959, 103). A similar reference is mentioned in *Cities of Salt* by Hadib who declares how those foreigners will "dig into the earth and turn it all inside out" (Munif 1989, 39), and Miteb al-Hathal who suspects the foreigners' motives to help Bedouins to find water "They're after something. The water is just an excuse... They're looking for Jinn, or devils -- who knows? But be assured of this, people of the wadi -- if they find what they're after, none of us will be left alive" (Munif 1989, 43). In both narratives, the relationship between natives' life and the continuation of bioenvironmental life is stressed. The pure uncontaminated nature is vital to the natives' survival; therefore, there is a direct reference to the killing of Nigerians and the death of fish in lakes in *Things Fall Apart*, and digging into the soil of the wadi and the Bedouins' existence in *Cities of Salt*.

By underlining that connection between environmental contamination and nations' survival, the two texts explore one of the most crucial issues of environmental justice that deals with "the disproportionate incidents of environmental contamination in communities of poor and/or communities of colour, to secure for those affected the right to live unthreatened by the risks posed by environmental degradation and contamination, and to afford equal access to natural resources that sustain life and culture" (Adamson et al. 2002, 4). Focusing upon environmental degradation brought by colonialism is one of the devices that Achebe

and Munif have applied to attract the readers' attention to the disastrous effect of colonialism upon environment. That attitude of colonizers and imperialists against nature and natives shows the inherited European ideology of hegemonic centrism which adopts institutionalized speciesism to rationalize the exploitation of animals, earth, and human beings: "European justification for invasion and colonisation proceeded from this basis, understanding non-European lands and the people and animals that inhabited them as 'spaces', 'unused, underused or empty'" (Plumwood 2003, 53). In short, for colonizers both natives and nature are considered as sources that should be used to serve the luxurious lifestyle of colonizers.

The destruction of the land and environment has been accompanied by demolishing and altering the natives' values. In Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, Nwoye's mind was greatly puzzled by the missionary's speech about Christianity. The white colonizers introduced a new faith for the natives, building a church by clearing a part of the forest. By removing the forest, which represents the natural pure place, and building a church, which represents the new faith, some new values imported by colonialism have also been cultivated. A new government is also formed and corruption emerges. The native Igbos who used to settle their disputes by the rules of the clan, began to bring their cases to court and bribe the white man's officials to reach the verdict that they desire. Obierika says: "The white man's court has decided that it (the piece of land in dispute) should belong to Nnama's family, who had given much money to the white man's messengers and interpreters" (Achebe 1959, 129). Introducing new values and concepts has paved the way for the colonizers to divide and rule. Obierika adds, "he (the white man) has put a knife on the things that hold us together and we have fallen apart" (Achebe 1959, 130).

Similarly, in Munif's *Cities of Salt*, the Arabs of Harran are shocked when they witness for the first time in their life some American women on the deck of a large ship dancing and embracing men while "each body was uncovered except for a small piece of colored cloth" (Munif 1989, 214). The Arabs of Harran have been puzzled by the dazzling display of American women and men on that American ship near their coasts, so one of the Arabs declares "I'm afraid we've lost our world and our faith" (Munif 1989, 220). The decay of natural community and morality represents the loss that the Arab Bedouins suffer with the arrival of Americans to their land. The contrast between the conservative orthodox Muslim community of the Arab Harran and the secular American community embodied by that ship shows the drastic change that many Arab and Bedouin communities have experienced with the emergence of petro-imperialism.

Western industrialization has been the medium that colonizers and imperialists have used to perpetuate their superior powerful position over their colonies. "Much

of the research which explores the relationship between technology, colonialism and environment draws attention to the way in which technology allowed colonial powers to modify social and physical spaces around the world” (Adas 1998, 11). The technological and industrial progress of Western countries has defined their policies in dealing with Asian and African societies. Such policies have been characterized by disdain for non-western accomplishments. The Western industrialization, which encouraged colonization and enabled colonizers to achieve their goals, has negatively affected the environment as well as natives. While colonizers profit from industrialization, colonized nations pay for it when they face various environmental problems.

Place has always been of great importance to post-colonial theory, but the more tangible and global issue of environmentalism is an important and growing aspect of this concept. The destruction of the environment has been one of the most damaging aspects of Western industrialization. The fact that the scramble for modernization has enticed developing countries into the destruction of their own environments, now under the disapproving gaze of a hypocritical West, is further evidence of the continuing importance of a post-colonial analysis of global crises. Post-colonial societies have taken up the ‘civilizing’ benefits of modernity, only to find themselves the ‘barbaric’ instigators of environmental damage. In such ways the dynamic of imperial moral power is maintained globally (Ashcroft et al. 2004, 213).

In *Things Fall Apart*, the reference to the industrial supremacy of European colonizers is shown in the villagers’ mention of an “iron horse,” which the white man was riding when he arrived earlier to the Abame clan. The villagers tied that iron horse to their sacred tree because “it looked as if it would run to call the man’s friends” (Achebe 1959, 103). The ignorance of the natives about the bike which the European colonizer was riding shows how Western industrialization puzzles the natives who failed to grasp the product of modernization. Another white man initiates the natives into the world of modernization and says, “I shall bring many iron horses when we have settled down among them. Some of them will even ride the iron horses themselves” (Achebe 1959, 108). Thus, the colonizers who have settled down first by destroying the forest to build their church promised the native Nigerians to experience the advantageous world of modernization by riding bikes (colonial Nigeria later became a primary source of mining oil that was explored and exported by the British government).

Likewise, in *Cities of Salt*, the American imperialists bring many machines and tools to drill for oil into the Arab land while the Arab Bedouins wonder about such a huge equipment. The narrator informs: “they opened up their crates and unloaded large pieces of black iron, and before long a sound like rolling thunder surged out

of this machine, frightening men, animals and birds” (Munif 1989, 68). The horror that human and non-human beings show, while the machine works, refers to the destructive impact of imperialism upon environment. To experience the same gains that industrialization has brought, natives should adopt the same attitudes and behaviours of their colonizers against nature and environment. In other words, they should enter that demonic vicious circle that threatens their bio-environmental life. So, one can safely say that the Western industrialization which enabled many Western countries to dominate some other developing countries led directly or indirectly to many environmental problems. Hajem, one of the natives, comments: “If those machines don’t kill us today, they’ll kill us tomorrow” (Munif 1989, 201). Machines are used to drill for oil in a process that is disruptive to the environment including human and non-human beings. There are many preliminary researches that have reported an association between living close to oil and gas wells and “adverse health effects” (Konkel 2017, 1). Hajem could predict the effect of those machines on the lives of the natives.

Furthermore, Western industrialization has endowed the colonizing countries with the boon of advancement which led to capitalism and imperialism. Capitalism, according to Lenin, “grew into a world system only on the back of colonial oppression and financial strangulation of the overwhelming majority of the population of the world by a handful of advanced countries” (Lenin 1947, 646). Lenin could develop and merge the concepts of global capitalism and colonialism into a general theory of imperialism which mainly depends on financial perspectives rather than industrial projects and changes its mode “from free trade to a monopoly of huge cartels” (Lenin 1947, 669); capitalism that aims to geographically expand needs to reorganize space and penetrate the globe: “In other words, the economic dynamics of capital is etched onto the political, cultural, material and ecological fabric of our world” (Mukherjee 2010, 13). To maximize their profits, the imperialistic and colonizing countries have changed the landscape of colonies. According to Harvey, capitalism produces a geographical landscape “appropriate to its dynamic of accumulation at a particular moment of its history, only to have to destroy and rebuild the geographical landscape to accommodate accumulation at a later date” (2000, 59).

In *Things Fall Apart*, the white men built a court to judge cases and a prison to punish the Igbos who offended the white man’s law. Those native prisoners were beaten every day and “made to work every morning clearing the government compound and fetching wood for the white commissioners and the court messengers... They were grieved by the indignity and mourned for their neglected farms” (Achebe 1959, 128). The natives and their environment have been abused by

the white colonizers. It is clear that the white colonizers have changed the colony's landscape of the Nigerians by forcing prisoners to cut wood and neglect their own farms to serve the capitalistic goals of colonialism. In this case, the geographical landscape and local environment have been altered to enable the white colonizers to settle down and accumulate capital.

The relationship between imperialism and capitalism on one hand and environmental degradation on the other is further stressed in *Cities of Salt*, as the narrator informs readers that men of the American company chose Harran to be the port and headquarters of the company: "Within Less than A Month Two Cities Began to rise: Arab Harran and American Harran. The bewildered and frightened workers, who had in the beginning inspired American contempt and laughter built the two cities" (Munif 1989, 206). The imperialist Americans who have extracted the Arab resources and cheap labour to build their city and settle down on the Arab land have manipulated the Arab workers to build the American Harran for the accommodation of Americans. The premises of capitalism have also been manifested in the Arab Harran throughout the class distinctions between the imperial Americans who own the means of production and the working-class Arabs who received inhumane treatment at the hands of Americans and their supporters of the Arab elites. That class distinction has been portrayed in the changes, which have been brought by Americans to the environmental setting of the Arab Harran:

The shift ended, and all the men drifted home to the two sectors like streams coursing down a slope, one broad and one small, the Americans to their camp and the Arabs to theirs, the Americans to their swimming pool, where their racket could be heard in the nearby barracks behind the barbed wire. When silence fell, the workers guessed that the Americans had gone into their air-conditioned rooms whose thick curtains shut everything out: sunlight, dust, flies and Arabs. (Munif 1989, 390)

The barbed wire that is created by the imperial Americans has been separating two different settings and worlds. Firstly, the privileged wide location where weather is handled by air conditions to improve the comfort of American occupants is the hegemonic world that changes environment and weather conditions to facilitate the task of accumulating wealth for the capitalistic imperial power. Secondly, the underprivileged world of the Arab workers is smaller, dirtier, and less comfortable; however, those Arab workers form an essential element of the natural place like sunlight and dust which are despised by Americans. The Arab workers who are exploited by the capitalistic American system left their tents to live in barracks: "The barracks that originally housed fifteen men was later to hold twenty or twenty-five.

The men who had rejoiced at the move were badly disappointed, for the atmosphere of the tents, pleasant and agreeable late at night and at dawn, did not exist in these tin cans that became suffocating ovens reeking of heat, sweat and sleep” (Munif 1989, 293). Those barracks which have been made for the working-class Arab deprived them of the natural environment they used to live in and enjoy. Not only does the wide gap between the world of American compound and Arab barracks refer to the new social structure of classes, but it also reveals how capitalism and imperialism have exploited both environment and natives. The ecological environment that enabled the native Arab Bedouins to live in harmony within their natural atmosphere has been altered by the American imperialists. Imperialism grew out of capitalism and changed the original natural characteristics of the setting to become more appropriate for Americans and inappropriate for natives.

Therefore, the post-colonial setting refers to the changes that have undermined the natives’ existence and their experiences with the surrounding environment. The experience that the natives had with their natural environment has been altered with the arrival of colonialism and emergence of imperialism. The drastic transformation which natives have undergone is inseparable from the devastating alteration that environment has suffered. The natives’ values, ethics, and lifestyle have been spoiled by colonialism and imperialism. The natives of both texts acquired new attitudes such as bribery, delinquency, and corruption. Capitalism that motivated Europeans and Americans to reach the utmost profit, has ruined the natural habitat and ethics of natives who began to grasp the tenets of class distinctions, becoming more stimulated to belong to the higher social classes. Cross-culturalism, which is a major concept of post-colonialism, has been embodied in the new values of capitalism which affected both the inhabitants and the habitat. In other words, a relationship has been established between cross-culturalism and environmentalism. Cross-culturalism has been based on a one direction movement of the values of the hegemonic capitalist colonialism to the inferior colonized recipient. Finally, the concept of displacement is embodied in the departure of the protagonists of *Things Fall Apart* and *Cities of Salt* away from their clans after they became shocked with the new values that replaced their original ones. Al-Hathal becomes a ghostly figure in the narrative and Okonkwo commits suicide by the end of the novel. Natives in general have been placed in a deformed environmental location created by colonialism and imperialism. The perspective of displacement became wider to include the displacement of bioenvironmental ethics to be replaced by new capitalistic attitudes, which affected the natives and environment.



## **Conclusion**

It is clear that the environmental setting is an essential critical category to approach post-colonial environmental literary texts. Natural environment represented by physical setting participates in the plots. The characters' development and actions are affected by the changes in the physical environment before and after the arrival of colonizers. The precolonial setting reflects the interaction between nature and communal culture and values of natives. The settings of both novels show a deep connection between natives and environment by showing the relationship between self and setting and the communal history and setting. As it penetrates the daily life of natives and their collective minds and consciousness, nature becomes dynamic and intertwines with culture, deities, folklore, and history. The peaceful co-existence between natives and environment has created non-materialistic values and an ideal bio-environmental pattern of living. There are no boundaries between natives and their environment or the 'us – them' dichotomy that emerges with the arrival of colonizers and American imperialists to the setting. The purity of the bio- environmental place is relevant to authentic nativism and a new concept of eco-nationalism has emerged to show that intersection of environmentalism and nationalism and prove that postcolonial criticism and eco-criticism could have some convergent views as both are dealing with the value of place.

The environmental physical setting has been altered with the gradual arrival of colonizers. It is clear that the postcolonial environmental questions have begun with European colonialism and continued with American imperialism. Colonization and Imperialism has negatively affected both environment and natives. Western industrialization, the main tool of colonialism and imperialism, has spoiled the bio-environmental life of natives. Western racism has been directed against natives and their environment to achieve the highest possible benefits for the capitalistic colonial/imperial system. Capitalism, which has changed the geographical landscape of the colonies to serve the aim of accumulating wealth for colonizers, has led to the devastation of the environment as well as the corruption and decay of the religious values and ethics of the natives. The non-materialistic values have been replaced by competitive essence of materialistic capitalism. Thus, the concept of displacement could include the alteration of bio-environmental ethics of natives to be replaced by capitalistic attitudes.

The study has shown the interconnection of capitalism, colonialism, imperialism, and the environment where environmental issues and injustices are arising from the Western implementation of such notions. Moreover, capitalism is considered the driving force behind colonialism/imperialism and consequently environmental devastation. The growth of capitalism in the West and the colonization of several

other countries had gone hand in hand leading to many hazardous consequences that threaten our earth.

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