GATED COMMUNITIES AND MALIGNANT EXTERIORITIES: ADDRESSING ECOLOGICAL ANXIETIES IN THE SELECTED SPECULATIVE FICTION OF OCTAVIA E. BUTLER AND JEAN HEGLAND

BY

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Thesis Title: Gated Communities and Malignant Exteriorities: Addressing Ecological Anxieties in the Selected Speculative Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland

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Candidate of **Master of Philosophy** at the National University of Modern Languages do hereby declare that the thesis **<u>Gated Communities and Malignant Exteriorities: Addressing Ecological Anxieties in the Selected Speculative Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland</u>** submitted by me in partial fulfillment of MPhil degree, is my original work, and has not been submitted or published earlier. I also solemnly declare that it shall not, in the future, be submitted by me for obtaining any other degree from this or any other university or institution.

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ABSTRACT

Title: Gated Communities and Malignant Exteriorities: Addressing Ecological Anxieties in the Selected Speculative Fiction of Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland

Today humanity is besieged by unprecedented levels and forms of disasters. While previously they were periods of social leveling and worked to bind the community spirit stronger than before, the nature of present disasters open doors for a more divided and barbaric future where the big money enterprises deflect the collapse on the already scavenged poor. This is how disaster capitalism operates and it brings with it unchecked violence, civil strife, apartheid, and an exponentially increasing exploitation of the biosphere. This research delves into the problems that originated and escalated due to late-stage advanced turbo-capitalism. It looks for political and social alternatives to its seething imperialistic control and hegemony. The "ownership societies" (gated communities) in the selected novels give architectonic visibility to the socio-political concerns of the free-market crusade. This study problematizes this and gears the environmental justice stance towards "sustainable eco-communities" instead. Eco-communities work on the principles of municipal confederalism and communalism. Combined they make the corpus of Social Ecology, a theory following the Marxist tradition, which looks at humanity's potential for freedom and cooperation and demands a rational (need-based) future. Social ecology aims to demolish social hierarchy from the human condition. Distinct from mythical approaches that take theoretical forms – like mysticism, deep ecology, and biocentrism – social ecology provides practical, achievable steps to foster ecological restoration as well as establish a system of governance that moves the current environment of dominance (corporate, bureaucratic, state) to networked cooperation instrumenting collective growth and sustainability. This research employs Catherine Belsey's methodology of textual analysis to deeply understand the geopolitical climate of today.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to all the environmental justice activists, writers, and researchers who have contributed and continue to contribute to the immense cause of environmental protection and sustainability.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The post-industrious hike in the techno-capitalist consumerist culture has where established a Mobius loop of competitive production and consumption for high- maintenance urban living, it has simultaneously depleted the earth of its natural reservoirs of energy to the extent that it cannot keep pace with the industrious ventures of the present capitalist Anthropocene. The exploitation of natural resources by humans and corporations and its long-lasting impacts on the environment have become increasingly relevant in the twenty-first century. This study brings in two narrative accounts that explore concerns about the eventual end of modern civilization because of environmental collapse. These are *Parable of the Sower* (1993) by Octavia E. Butler and *Into the Forest* (1998) by Jean Hegland. This study further employs Bookchin's theory of Social Ecology and concepts from Urban Ecocriticism to critique the oppressive social structures of capitalist regimentation and expose the security-fallacy of the construction of false (e)gated communities (as described in the said works) and present methods of fixing the ecological and economic collapse through proposed models of communalism, confederalism, and complementarity.

Climate Change Fiction, following the late 1980s, has seen a rise in both readership and scholarship as vast public awareness (albeit still insufficient) rises and gravitates towards the emerging bleakness of the present and foreseeable future. The materialization of the conjectured consequences of the ecological collapse featured in the last thirty years of environmental literature has to a great extent made conscious the public concern as well as ushered in a body of research to help mitigate the predicted anxieties. The dystopic futuristic fiction genre, with its emphasis on the claims of environmental justice and its predictions of likely political, social, and cultural impacts and entanglements, is constantly constructing and shaping modern conversations regarding human-nature relations and the brewing climate crises. Still, it is my observation that the irreparable ways in which human actions are changing the natural environment are not iterated and stressed enough. This can be more concisely determined by Peter Barry's remark in his *Beginning Theory* that ecocriticism is still on the margins of critical theory, lacking proper and systemic methodologies (239). However, it must not be denied that its less formal and more interdisciplinary ontology gives space for broader and more eclectic practice.

Robyn Eckersley, in her book *Environmentalism and Political Theory,* defines ecocriticism as based on 'an ecologically informed philosophy of internal relatedness, according to which all organisms are not simply interrelated with their environment but also constituted by those very environmental interrelations' (49). James Bernard Murphy expands on this definition in his review of Eckersley in *Politics and the Life Sciences,* asserting that this is the fundamental acceptance humanity needs to make to secure the environment and our place in it. The very acknowledgment that every being is constituted by its ecological relations, that humans are no island of their own but are a part of nature, allows the granting of respect and value to the ecosystem and consequently aims to stop the exploitations and utilization of nature as a source for human welfare (281-282). Murphy further asserts that any theory of ecology will depend on a 'logic of relations,' (282) and hence we get the basic premise of Eco-critical practice: the study of the relationship between humans and the environment (as is represented in literature, film, art, photography, and popular culture) and additionally, the harmful effects the former have on the latter due to a misguided perception of superiority and domination. Ecocriticism thereby aims to resist and contest anthropocentric centralization by bringing in ideas of egalitarianism, as proposed by Eckersley, or complementarity which is often the mantra of eco-socialists like Murray Bookchin. To minimize environmental damage, eco-critics call for a revaluation of the human economy and energy consumption trends and an essential reconstruction of entirely new, green ethics to combat the seething market industry. It is to bring homeostasis between the natural economy and the market economy in the words of Eckersley. The objective of eco-criticism is thus 'an understanding of man, through literature, as an inseparable part of the environment and his ability to alter this relationship while also being susceptible to its influence' (Habeeb 506).

The first selected novel *Parable of the Sower* is a post-apocalyptic science fiction work that envisions an imagined dystopic future of America featuring unprecedented violence, progressive environmental collapse, and new forms of corporate slavery that render human relations mere economic transactions. The novel portrays a vulnerable society 'adapting to the scarcity of resources driven by bio-politics and late-stage capitalism' (Guerrero 50). The novel, written in an epistolary form as diary records of the female protagonist Lauren Olamina, recounts her experiences of terror and loss as she voyages through a fallen world overcome by

murder, arson, and cannibalism. Born with a pathological condition of hyper-empathy, Lauren can effectively empathize with other sentient beings on a physical level. She is emotionally and physically stimulated by another's display of emotions (mostly pain). Denying it to be some form of supernatural power, Octavia Butler, in her interview with Stephen W. Potts, claims it to be a 'rather crippling delusion' that is 'biologically programmed in her' (335). While it is a liability to her survival, Lauren's hyper empathy allows her to be actively compassionate to racially discriminated people that have been topicalized in the text from the beginning.

The initial setting of the novel is the gated city of Robledo, which is 'one of the few remaining self-organized enwalled spaces' that has not been invaded by big corporate companies as it is 'too big, too poor, too black, and too Hispanic, to be of any interest to anybody' (Butler 113). Robledo is constantly overcome by the terror of the chaos of the cities spreading to the suburbs, and the forces tearing the society apart. In resistance, Lauren comes up with her own religion "Earthseed" which is based on the principle of constant change. This belief system envisions a return to the sense of communal purpose by navigating a future in the stars (in the encouragement of space programs of planetary colonization) (Butler 336). Butler explains this belief in "change" in her aforementioned interview with Potts: 'And I think the best way to do something else is to go someplace else where the demands on us will be different. Not because we are going to go someplace else and change ourselves, but because we will go someplace else and be forced to change' (Butler 336). Lauren responds to the structural violence after the collapse of the walled Robledo through her willful migration to another place. The novel reflects the existence of gated communities and walled cities as unsafe spaces, deemed as sheltered from outside violence and anarchy by selfish corporations that keep people gated (and thus falsely protected), exacting inhumane labor from its citizens. Their eventual collapse heralds the view that a future built solely on the capitalist agenda of the free market and negligence of environmental protection will only end in despair. The novel is thus Butler's investment in formulating a narrative that exposes the porosity and vulnerability of enclosed spaces. As Robledo continues to be violated from the outside, the idea becomes solid that seclusion and enclosure are not the solutions. This study employs Bookchin's theory of Social Ecology and Mike Davis' exposition of the fortification of Urban centers to critique the oppressive social structures of capitalist regimentation, expose the fallacy of the construction of these gated communities, and

present methods of fixing the ecological and economic collapse through urban eco-socialism.

The second novel, *Into The Forest* by Jean Hegland, foreshadows a similar collapse of the Western civilization where oil, gas, and electricity are recollections of a distant past. The story revolves solely around two sisters, Nell and Eva, who try to adapt and reconfigure themselves to changed and forlorn environments. The novel shows the evolution of characters in the emergence of care and appreciative relations to each other and nature and a break from consumerism. Nell's dream of admission to Harvard and Eva's passion for ballet come crashing down after the death of their parents, Eva's rape by a stranger, and the constant threats to their survival. One good aspect that ensures their survival in hard times is their proximity to nature. Unlike the walled city of Robledo in *Parable of the Sower*, the house of the sisters is at the edge of the forest, in some sense a space enclosed by the forest. Beyond Redwood, which is the town they live in, the world is consumed by wars, plagues, and riots.

The novel begins with the inhabitants of Redwood in what Nell calls "a fugue state" where they are constantly reminiscing the past and unaccepting the present circumstances, deceiving themselves into believing a rebirth of past glory – the toppled economy would somehow bounce back, distorted nature would somehow heal itself, and the run dry natural resources would fuel up again. The novel ends with both sisters eventually burning their house and moving to live in the forest. A final rejection of and end with consumerism. The house, no longer a shelter for them (porous to looters and rapists), they proceed to work the land, hunt and gather like Native Indians and thus start anew, now freed from the entanglements of product fetishism. This study while fostering a critique of such consumerist culture also problematizes the radicalism and primitivism of Hegland as proposed alternatives to capitalism.

Drawing on concepts from ecocriticism in general and social ecology and urban ecocriticism in particular, this research reconsiders the dystopic novels of Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland, *Parable of the Sower* and *Into the Forest* respectively, as instances of techno-capital consumerist culture expansionism evoking global ecological anxieties and chaos in the twenty-first century. This study argues that these novels employ dystopia as a genre and gated communities as a metaphor for growing and malignant capitalist and corporate regimes, and to problematize them

with environmental justice. Furthermore, this study aims to trace the authors' eco-socialist entreaties in line with the idea of communal eco-societies presented by Murray Bookchin as plausible alternatives to the dystopic existence humanity is presently engendering and likely to have shortly.

1.1 The Statement of the Problem

This study problematizes the constant tendency towards the manipulation of the biosphere's resources by the present-day consumerist culture. It also explores the spatial- economic divide in the urban space in the form of marginalized ghettos and slums on the one side and fortified corporate citadels on the other and the violent impacts this polarization is causing. It furthermore, associates the architectural militarization of cities with corporate slavery, a pervasive phenomenon in our seething market economy. The study, therefore, evaluates the energy consumption trends as presented in the post-energy crisis cities of Robledo and Redwood in the novels *Parable of the Sower* and *Into the Forest* by Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland respectively.

1.2 Research Questions

1. How does the presentation of walls (or gates) expose the complex socio-ecological interactions in the selected texts?

2. How are the imbalances humans have produced in the natural world caused by the imbalances they have created in the social world? How does this parallel play out in the selected works?

1.3 Research Methodology

The research methodology of this study is textual analysis as proposed by Catherine Belsey. Textual analysis helps us understand how people communicate their ideologies, thoughts, and experiences through texts. It relies on complex aspects of originality, creativity, inspiration, history, and cultures we live in or study. Textual analysis can be done by understanding the process of interpretation as the effect of a relationship between a reader and a text.

Textual analysis facilitates the interpretation of a text from its historical, social, and cultural contexts. This research gravitates towards the social underpinnings

of the selected texts by foregrounding the social concerns of the protagonists in their fight for sustenance and survival amidst collapsed environments. The research looks into spatial metaphors (walled cities, restricted neighborhoods, barred houses, sequestered buildings, fortified cells) and associates space with the socio-economic state of characters. The battered settings invoke thematic crisis as well, for in the breakdown and vulnerability of structure there are the themes of violence, terror, encroachment, and deterioration. The presence of restrictive and oppressive structures in the texts is interpreted as an apartheid that forces people's displacements and dispossessions. In establishing such connections, the research brings forth the cultural implications of the text – the culture of consumer fetishism and *growth-or-die* mania of the global North – and thus takes cultural practices and settings as interpretative symbols for the analysis of the selected works. The study critiques the ideological assumptions of societies that negate environmental justice ethics in their pursuits of capital and become corporate slaves. The study, therefore, foregrounds forms of enslavement – corporate and natural – through a systemic interpretation of restricted and insulated architecture, dystopic and mutilated landscapes, and barrenness. The spatial structures foregrounded in the works are infused with socio-cultural meanings and their analysis infuses the research with substance to motivate environmental justice activism.

The present research takes the novels as "texts" to be interpreted in the light of the theoretical framework (elaborated in chapter 3). For instance, a plain example of the planet being hollowed out and ultimately reaching towards its explosive fatality can be seen in the song Nell's father satirically sings on the occasion of Christmas, 'We three kings of oil and tar/ tried to smoke a rubber cigar/ It was loaded and exploded/ higher than yonder star.' (Hegland 3) Nell and Eva's father view Christmas as an event that escalates the extent of product consumption. Compared to the rest of the year's sales, Christmas is when the simple practice of gift-giving turns into selling and hoarding. The research interprets this as a socio-economic condition, problematizes it, and presents the alternative of de-growth (a slowing down on production and consumption trends).

According to Belsey, a text can be interpreted in more ways than one, and there is no definite or singular reading of a text. Hence, when Nell reads in her encyclopedia the definition of "virgin" as not inviolate but 'belonging to oneself. . . true to nature and instinct'. This study interprets this concept of virginity as the innate

character of nature: a virgin forest belongs to itself, unmutilated by human intervention. Of course, as is revealed in the story, the rape of Eva, the incident that takes away her virginity is interpreted in the study as symbolic of the mutilation of mother nature at large.

The above-stated are but minor examples of how textual analysis is done in the present study (detailed in the Analysis Chapter).

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study hopes to be significant in raising awareness of environmental anxieties and tensions through a thorough attempt at decentralization of the anthropocentric industrious flux that is resulting in deprived classes and sectors of humanity as well as deprived earth at the benefit of an over-driven, consumerist global North. The massive oil spills that have occurred over the past two decades, the extensive deforestation of tropical forests and magnificent ancient trees in temperate areas, and vast hydroelectric projects that flood places where people live, to cite only a few problems, are sobering reminders that the real battleground on which the ecological future of the planet will be decided is a social one, particularly between corporate power and the long-range interests of humanity as a whole. An activist reform is mandatory to resolve the issues this study highlights and centralizes.

This research attempts to expose the global as well as domestic centralizations of power in the form of building gated communities that do not respect climate justice ethics and render the less privileged countries/communities to carry the brunt of their manic capitalist obsessions. This research takes two such narratives to explicate the negligence and aversion to climate justice calls for concern in one of the leading superpowers of the world today – America – while also emphasizing the crucial need for awareness and development at the native stage.

Urban wastelands are the new picaresque of dystopic science fiction. The selected works feature such wastelands to make obvious the plagues, genocides, and floods that overwhelm the survival of our protagonists. This research studies the collapse of energy and economy in accompaniment with environmental collapse. It foregrounds the futuristic visions of wastelands present in the works to centralize the real and present deterioration of both the built and natural environment. Widespread yet undetermined outbreaks of plagues, unending reign of terror, segregation of

people and countries, and continually changing climate are real and present concerns that this research foregrounds.

For instance, to localize the above-mentioned concerns for immediate effect, let us take the example of Pakistan, most of which, is located on the floodplain. Floods are both our reality and a necessity for an agrarian boom. The reason for its catastrophic amplification and perversion, witnessed since the mid-nineties up till recent devastations is owing largely to bad governance and climate change. Climate change has wrought out floods' intensity as well as frequency so that now they come at unprecedented degrees. The present hot discourse on floods will soon turn into talks of droughts, smog in winter, and unexpected heat waves hitting the country just a few months from now. That is climate change. Malarial and other viral endemics will return yearly just as the floods will. The issue is the great divide between a) the global north which generates most of the carbon emissions and contributes the most to fuel exhaustion and material (carbon) imprint on the environment, and the global south which is on the frontline of the impact but with less developed infrastructure to cope with the impact and, b) the urban rich and urban/rural poor at the state-level where more developed enclaves and gated societies successfully deflect the impact over to the marginalized sectors. Climate justice activists thereby advocate a move towards a "green economy", which this study also emphasizes from its insights into social ecology and the construction of organic cities that confront the divide by giving reparations at local levels.

1.5 Delimitation of the Study

This research is delimited to the texts *Parable of the Sower* and *Into the Forest* by Octavia E. Butler and Jean Hegland respectively. Furthermore, this research employs the lens of Social Ecology by Murray Bookchin in his call for the manifestation of "organic societies" (as opposed to "ownership societies") as well as the concept of "militarization of urban space" by the urban critic Mike Davis.

Chapter 2

Review of Literature

2.1 Literature on Ecocriticism

In the last score of years, Ecocriticism has established itself from the under-theorized form of nature writing to a flourishing and decent array of earth-favoring approaches to cultural criticism bringing in ideas from fields like ecology, biology, and sociology. Its scope has extended from text-based scrutiny to other forms of digital media, as well as a shift from the romanticizing of the pastoral to growing urban representations. Its central driving concern is to address the encroaching environmental crises and an emphasis on the urgency to mitigate those crises through heightened public awareness, active political intervention, and overall social reformation. Ecocriticism often used interchangeably with green studies, is 'an umbrella term for a range of critical approaches' that investigates the representation of the human and non-human relationships in literature or other cultural forms and centralizes the harmful impacts of humanity on the biosphere (Marland 846).

Although Peter Barry in his significant *Beginning Theory* still regards the field as emergent, basically on the margins of critical academia, and lacking in many procedural and methodological ways (239) still it has seen important progress in the past two decades. One of the big reasons for its seemingly slow development is the vast scope of the criticism itself – namely the environment. As the environmental problems continue to deepen and reappear in newer facets amidst accelerated planetary degradation, Ecocriticism must also invent new tools to combat the rising uncertainties. This aim has brought in a practice of increased positionality on the subject of the environment and hence paved the way for a wide range of both contradictory and synthetically complementary discussions. Worked upon since the 1960s it wasn't until the 1990s that Ecocriticism began to appear as a serious, less romanticized study of a global concern other than what enveloped the twentieth century thus far - race, gender, war, and colonization. Another hindrance to its development was the turn literary theory had taken initially with the formalist approach where nature was confined to language and afterward the constructiveness thought that failed to see the actual physicality of the environment humanity was destroying. The ambition of the first wave of Ecocriticism, Lawrence

Buell recalls in *The Environmental Imagination,* was to reinstate the environment as real and to heighten the sense of human accountability in their interaction with the former (7-8). Further development in the field and the rise of the second wave movement were put in motion by a divide in the theory's trajectory - that between deep ecology and social ecology. Deep Ecology proposes a bio-spherical egalitarian perspective where nature's interests override those of humans. Social ecology also aims to decentralize anthropocentrism albeit from a less bio-centric viewpoint than deep ecology. Its basic working premise is to draw a parallel between men dominating men through established social hierarchies and, in a similar vein, humans dominating nature (Marland 850).

Greg Garrard in his introduction to the volume of *Ecocriticism* gives a light but efficient definition of the critical theory, defining it as an approach to the exploration of man and nature's relationship, as is imagined or portrayed, in all areas of cultural production from the pastoral writings of Wordsworth and Thoreau to the modern representations in Disney and BBC nature documentaries. Garrard's *Ecocriticism: The New Critical Idiom* and *The Oxford Handbook of Ecocriticism* are good sources to begin the in-depth exploration of the theory's history, influences, domains, positions, and present bearings. In these books, Garrard gives a comprehensive history and analysis of the still emergent though fast-developing field of modern environmentalism, its rise through Late Medieval English literature, renaissance, and romanticism to its Modern activism and fusion with other political disciplines such as Post-colonialism, Feminism, and Sociology. With a collection of thirty-four essays from multiple interdisciplinary eco- critics, his edition of *The Oxford Handbook* provides a generic but quite complete understanding of the state of Ecocriticism today. From covering Biosemiotics, Eco-film studies, Postcolonial Ecocriticism, and Eco-formalism to Phenomenology, Queer Ecocriticism, and Post-humanism, the compilation nonetheless fails to give narrative space to either Material or Urban and Social Ecocriticism; the latter being the direction this study takes.

Murray Bookchin's book *Social Ecology and Communalism* (2007) is an incessant attempt to politically deal with the ecological questions neglected in the wake of capitalism's deep centralization of economic and political supremacy. A resolute activist and theorist, Bookchin has spent the entirety of his academic and political pursuits in the quest for a rationalist alternative to today's capitalist society. His publications range from more than twenty books and a multitude of lectures and

dissertations. The general premise of his theoretical approach is the treatment of ecological issues through the detailed study of related deep-seated social issues. His theory of social ecology endeavors to re-harmonize the relationship between nature and mankind and the construction of an alternative, rationalist ecological society. Through a dialectical interpretation of human culture, history, and natural evolution, he reasons for the historically found evidence for mankind's potential for rational cooperation and complementarity. He thus embodies his theory of social ecology in the ideology he calls Communalism, involving direct democracy, municipalization, and confederalism. These are the ideological and political alternatives he presents in place of grossly centralized capitalist structures and the ravishing market economy.

Bookchin relates the idea of man's dominating nature to the historical emergence of hierarchies followed by the breakthrough of capitalism (14). In addressing the current and growing ecological dislocations, he refuses to falsely blame technological advancement or excessively uncontrolled population growth as the sole contributing factor and the resultant highly radical conclusions by some environmental justification advocates such as a return to primality or mass sterilization as markedly absurd solutions and to trace instead the dislocations around the brutally competitive "grow or die" imperatives of expansive corporate self-interests (Bookchin 20). Jean Hegland's deep ecofeminist stance in the selected work is critiqued from this standpoint in the analysis section, where the research asserts that denouncing society for the aim of natural conservation is too radical for application. Social Ecology when informed by urban ecocriticism will adequately work to provide reforms for the current urban and social setup on the brink of disaster, and abject dislocation from society as well as the construction of hyper-privatized and secluded enclaves which are not the solution either but part of the greater issue.

Bookchin aims to transform the present mentality of domination into one of complementarity which he supports through his developmental, non-linear take on nature. When seen through the developmental angle, human beings are 'increasingly subjective' and 'flexible beings' that are highly capable of 'addressing environmental change more efficiently than less flexible and developed organisms' (24). Ferreira in talking about her concept of symbiotic politics, also emphasizes "Symbiogenesis," which is an evolutionary symbiotic relationship pattern of organisms. Quoting Margulis and Sagan she explicates how 'life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking; their stress is on cooperation' (Ferreira 402). Furthermore,

Bookchin also incorporates the evolutionary evidence of microbial to human cooperation and networking to solidify his argument against the "natural" tendency towards hierarchy. Bookchin in his arguments also renders certain arenas of ecocriticism highly ineffective; beginning with the demystification of eco-spiritualism to the 'inexplicable dualism' of anthropocentrism and the 'naïve reductionism' of biocentrism (27). He further introduces his idea of natural differentiation into what he calls the 'first or biotic nature' and the 'second or social nature' (29) and claims that man in society is similar to the non-humans in the wilderness altering the first nature, the surroundings, to their needs. However, the difference lies in the profundity of environmental changes that humans produce compared to other species. The impact of the changes, techno-commodified now, on the first nature is both huge and adverse and wanting in ecological insights.

In the chapter on domination and hierarchy, he goes into great detail about how mankind's social relations started as complementary and with time diffused into that of dominance. He relates the history of the emergence of class societies to growing individualistic control groups of privilege in direct equivalence with man's domination over nature. The rise of the 'new industrial capitalist class' and the expansion of commercial power made it appear as if 'growth [was] an end in itself' (Bookchin 42). One of the pivotal concerns he addresses is how serious ecological disruptors are 'found in the large industrial centers of the world' which are producing greenhouse gases that are melting ice-capes around the world (Bookchin 44) and hence invoking climactic apocalypse in areas that have minimum global gas-emission indexes.

His solution to these grave environmental hazards is an appeal for an ecological society stemming from the communalism proposed by social ecology. His ecological society challenges the entire system of domination and power centralization, resisting its 'economy, its misuse of ethics, its administrative apparatus, its degradation of political life, its destruction of the city as a center of cultural development . . .' (Bookchin 46) and essentially the dichotomist relationship of human and the non-human world. For a political renewal such as this, the structure of centralized cities is to be converted into confederations 'sensitively tailored to the natural areas in which they are located' and those confederations to be run on eco-technologies employing renewable resources such as solar, wind, and other forms of organic renewable energies, and this to be translated to all the social confederacies

(Bookchin 47). Furthermore, industries are humanly scaled and must meet the demands of regional municipal confederacies. Replacement of insensitive, hard labor with creative craftsmanship and a shift from the sheer mechanized production and availability of goods to sustainable, and ecologically agreeable consumerism. All this is in the sheer need to 'foster healthy interdependence' (Bookchin 49). The classical sense of citizenship is to be revived, that understands and appreciates the public and natural life and is not involved in cut-throat individualist pursuits and instead 'meet(s) rationally conceived needs' (Bookchin 51). In short, social ecology has a "naturalistic outlook," a dialectic treatment of natural and social phenomena, emphasizing radical social politics in an age of advanced capitalism through the manifestation of eco-cities. How these eco-cities are different from the current trend of urban villages is further explored in the study from the lens of urban ecocriticism.

The practicality of social ecology lies in its most essential break from eco-spiritualism. Most earlier works in this line stemmed from eco-spiritualism, which believed in the inherent value of all living beings and expressed a desire for liberation from a consumerist and materialist society. Primarily influenced by deep ecology, it was taken in by eco-aesthetics and eco-feminists in their endeavors to bridge humanity with their spiritual roots and thus save the environment. Much of today's literary body still finds itself rooted in this paradigm of remedying environmental crises through spiritual reconnection. Most countries that have recently produced significant eco-critical work by borrowing the strand of American ecocriticism have contributed towards localizing the theory by establishing spiritual connections with their country's dominant religious thoughts and ideals. Wei in *Chinese Ecocriticism in the Last Ten Years* reflects on this attachment of Chinese environmental scholars to eco-spirituality as can be seen in the works of Lu Shuyuan and Zeng Fanren. To them, ecocriticism is a 'spiritual coming home' as the foreign theory is cross-bred with Taoist traditions of environmental preservation (541). Lu Shuyuan in *Ecological Research in Literature and Ar*t argues against the gross industrial and modernization of the earth and makes a call for the reshaping of the ecological spirit. However, Murray Bookchin has serious doubts about this sole dependence on a spiritual reawakening and centralization of nature's claims at the cost of human sanctity, for in opposition to anthropocentrism deep ecology and (or) ecofeminism promotes a strict biocentrism that aims to remove the human from the very picture. Bookchin believes not in the hierarchical domination of nature by man but certainly in the ability of

humanity to actively co-protect earth's biosphere and thereby his extinction.

Alongside the strand of modern social ecology is Material Ecocriticism. Material ecocriticism is a branch of ecocriticism that assesses the agency of human and non- human influences in the exchange of energy, matter, and information. Sullivan, in his essay *Material Ecocriticism And The Petro-Text,* traces the significant agents of environmental change in an essentially industrialized anthropocentric geological epoch. Developing on the study of 'storied matter' by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann in which they claim that just as life follows and draws upon distinct energy sources, human bodies and cultures are no exception, (414) similarly 'material ecocriticism combines a study of stories and materiality' (415) into what Sullivan argues are the 'petro-texts' and shows how material phenomena can be interpreted as narratives. Just as humans are subjective and active, so is matter. Karen Barad in her work on combining quantum physics and new materialism asserts that matter is "agentive" and never fixed but continuously in the process of producing and being produced. Furthering this idea material ecocriticism expands on this activism of matter and analyses matter's entanglements with humans, cultures, power, and narrative. Material ecocriticism hence offers a new direction in the environmental discourse as it invokes the idea of a "material self" that cannot be severed from history, culture, economy, and politics.

In the genre of petro-texts then, we study how the high-functioning petro-capitalism fuels and directs a petro or oil culture with its circulation of the oil economy and 'the oil-bound ways' (Sullivan 416) in which petro-citizens function daily as well as the environmental violence and despoiling that is underway by its continual capitalist expansion. Sullivan explores this notion of oil as text in various, newly-emergent eco- fictional works. He quotes Rob Nixon in the most crucial inquiry regarding the sheer absence of such literature, before the emergence of oil capitalism we had coal culture and much was written about it and its despotism, yet only a few are writing, and that too quite subtly and indirectly on the problematic expansion of petro-capitalism and its dismal effects on nature or what he calls "nature-culture." In light of Nixon's valid concern, Sullivan addresses the few books that deal with oil as today's cultural reset. The imminent and disconcerting question of the crisis of fuel or the end of fuel is raised in these works of fiction, each imagining a different though bleak future. While some assume 'a return to land-based living' others foresee absolute destruction (Sullivan 420). The common vision

however remains that our present energy consumption choices will determine our future. The fear of the spread of uncontrolled techno-petro-fuels is well expressed in the texts mentioned in the essay and Sullivan, in conclusion, implores a change in the fuel/energy pattern, a positive shift from exhausting fossil-fuel extraction and instead energy partnership with the sun 'whose agency continues to fuel most of the biosphere' (421) and hence, a future towards solar texts and solar societies.

Within the critique of massive material production and consumption set forth by modern capitalism, an understanding of the agency of matter is crucial. As previously mentioned, since matter is now deemed agentive not passive, the presumption that human beings have the right to mold it according to their whims stands morally incorrect. It is transformative and not inertly static which is why, in turn, it is transforming our environs, spaces, and bodies. Material ecocritics thus see their work as highly transformative and politically emancipatory in their assertion that matter cannot and must not be dominated. In this sense, material ecocriticism joins spiritual ecocriticism in giving matter or nature the spirit or will that anthropocentrism defies. The trees then according to new materialism and eco-spiritualism have agency and holy sanctity respectively. This is why eco-critics ought not to endorse a single trend in the environmental movement and look for points of conjecture as much as they seek out gaps and conflicts. Eco-fiction is often written and studied from the perspective of the Anthropocene – the human subject caught in a mesh of his/her doings. Material ecocriticism brings insights to the readers for a new way of reading into such texts – from the perspective of matter. As Oppermann puts it in *Material Ecocriticism*, 'matter is a site of creative becomings and dynamic expressions endowed with meanings are relentless activities of production and consumption, especially after the Second World War, the hazardous influence now threatening to exceed 'the tipping points of planetary boundaries' (22). He traces the tendency in academia to pass over the detailed critique of capitalism and instead to reduce the whole crisis to a mere ontological one – problematizing technology with nature. Saito further talks about the problematic use of the word Anthropos which is the subject of the Anthropocene. He echoes the findings of Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg in their assertion that this concept of finding a unitary subject, the Anthropos, is questionable as it reduces all social, economic, and political inequalities on a global scale into a single entity and thereby the blame is placed on one instead of equally shared by all. The fact of the matter is that the Global South barely contributes to global

environmental damage as compared to the Global North (USA 40 percent, EU 28 percent, rest of Europe 13 percent, rest of Global North 10 percent, and the collective Global South around 8 percent - in recent estimation). Additionally, the negative consequences are also somehow pushed to the peripheries, thereby maintaining their 'imperial mode of living' while putting the rest of the developing countries to face the aftereffects of their doings (Saito 23). Saito presents an alternative concept to the Anthropocene which is Capitalocene, basically the fact that the earth is now fully imprinted by capitalist accumulation and that its effects are unequally proportioned over the globe. Therefore, Saito claims that a Marxist perspective is essential to diagnose the environmental plagues of today by dismantling the centrality of capitalist regimes of the global North. A classic Marxist himself, he disengages with the green Marxism of today to deliberate on the fact that Marx had a definitive ecological consciousness which is now reconstructed in the work *Marx-Engels-Gesamtausgabe* (MEGA), the volume reasserting classical Marxist treatment of capital and natural science. Although my research is not a revision of classical Marxist dialectical tradition, it is as Saito concludes, what is needed today is a new form of democratic eco-socialism, which can be found in countries like Denmark, Sweden, and Uruguay. They have built environmentally favorable sustainable countries based on democratic eco-socialism (Saito 31). Hence, the promotion of classical Marxist traditions of thought and politics is not the aim of this study but is discussed in context to democratic urban eco-socialism and in the explanation that it breaks from the traditions of MEGA as well as anarchism.

2.2 Literature on Selected Works (Theories and Novels)

Ursula Heise, by far, gives the most accurate depiction of the current tropes of dystopic science fiction of today in her *What's the Matter with Dystopia* and argues on the effect of the recycling of themes and instances which not only normalizes dystopic cityscapes to us readers but also, in turn, renders them less effective. In her analysis of the best-sellers sci-fi of the present, including McCarthy and Margaret Atwood, what is constantly witnessed is the revision of a future that is built upon lies, deceptions, violence, and exploitation and features, in her words, a 'breakdown of energy, economy, consumption, health care, law enforcement, and many if not all forms of government leave the characters adrift in wastelands where they have to forage for cans of beans and Oreo cookies amid looming threats of violence and cannibalism' (Ursula), a repetition certainly evident in the novel this study analyzes –

Into the Forest by Jean Hegland – where the characters' constant fretting over the remaining stock of raisins, tea or tuna over graver issues certainly seems to trivialize the calamity of the dystopia (the trope of scarcity politics). This marked return to the primal ways is meant to show, either tragically or satirically, the vulnerability of present socio-economic ways of living. Ursula questions what significance is scavenging for Oreos and coffee when the characters can finally break free from the burdens of corporate capitalism and overpopulation etc. Similar to how Lauren reflects in *Parable of the Sower* that everyone in Robledo (and outside it too) has come to terms with the ensuing violence and every new event is unquestioningly received with apathy, so is Ursula's concern in this essay where she reflects that 'post-apocalyptic wastelands have themselves become too reassuringly familiar.' This return to making a dystopia a routine and presenting it as your everyday scenario fails to both shock and disturb the readers out of their comforts and hence disables social change; for greater the shock or dismay greater the activism to counter or prevent it.

In an interview with Stephen W. Potts, Butler reflects on how in classic Soviet Marxist Theory capitalism was held in direct relation to crime. She narrates a story about a man in Russia who was killed by his fellow community people just because he turned his farm into a successful private enterprise (Potts 335). In light of this anecdote, she displays her distrust in America's raving capitalism and the individualist trend it has developed in people's consciousness. Not only, in effect, there is an economic divide and racial and monetary privileging but othering of the natural world as well, on whose consumption the corporate capitalist world thrives.

To fully understand the crucial and indispensable link between crisis and capitalism and the former's encapsulation with war, terror, and violence we undertake the study of the idea of "disaster capitalism" proposed by Naomi Klein in her very successful book *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism* (2007). The key discussion in the book revolves around how powerful economic and political interests exploit moments of crisis and shock, such as natural disasters, economic downturns, or political upheavals, to advance their agenda of neoliberal economic policies and deregulation. In her proposition of "shock therapy," she decodes the economic deregulation policy of the Nobel laureate Milton Friedman who through his work instrumented an era of global- scale creation, coercion, and exploitation of national emergencies and crises. Klein argues that in moments of crisis when people are

disoriented and vulnerable, governments and corporations often push through radical economic policies that would be met with resistance during normal times. This "shock therapy" includes privatization of public assets, deregulation, and austerity measures. Freidman observed that crisis leads to change. Once a crisis occurred Friedman 'was convinced that it was crucial to act swiftly, to impose rapid and irreversible change before the crisis-racked society slipped back' to its previous status quo (Klein 6). His legacy, therefore, sees crises in any place in the globe as opportunities to inflict capitalist policies and American political supremacy. Klein provides numerous historical examples to support her thesis, including the economic reforms in Chile under General Augusto Pinochet, the post-Soviet economic transition in Russia, the shock of 9/11 and the wars on terror, and the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina in the United States. Friedman's version of capitalism functions primarily through a) the shock of war (insinuating civil wars, carrying out invasions, or supporting military dictatorships) proceeded by b) the shock of the economy (unbearable rise in inflation, selling off state companies, unemployment) coupled with c) civil oppression (massacres, political murders, jailing without trial, the establishment of concentration camps, terrorism) and then d) providing "treatment" in the form of the establishment of a feared regime that encourages an unrestrained savage stream of capitalism and hence crippling states whilst ensuring and advancing facades of freedom and democracy.

What is of special interest to this research, however, is the content discussed in part 7 of *The Shock Doctrine* – The Movable Green Zone: Buffer Zones and Blast Walls or more specifically under chapter 20: Disaster Apartheid, A World of Green Zones and Red Zones. Zooming in on the catastrophe in New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina hit Klein notes that 120,000 people awaited the state to organize evacuation and sought help that didn't come. 'Those images shocked the world because even if most of us had resigned ourselves to the daily inequalities of who has access (to basic facilities), there was still a widespread assumption that disasters were supposed to be different' (Klein 408). So the myth that the government, at least of 'a rich country' would take responsibility and come to the aid of the dispossessed and afflicted 'during a cataclysmic event' was shattered (Klein 408). It was now understood that crises were not moments in modern history where 'cut-throat capitalism' seeks a time-out but moments of opportunity where the abandonment of people leads to disaster economy and disaster apartheid (Klein 408). Hence, the Shock Therapy doctrine sees

tragedies of terror, dislocation, and disaster as occasions for capitalist reform (enforcing privatization and deregulation policies) in the aftermath of horrible events when people are too focused on survival rather than preserving their interests.

Klein further makes the connection (in rooting the causes for structural apartheidism in disaster-hit cities) between the emergence of green zones and the dissent of disaster capitalism. She claims Baghdad's green zones to be the starkest reminders of a world order that operates on divisions and where survival is not stately ensured but bought out by those who can afford it:

Baghdad 'has its own electrical grid, its own phone, and sewage system, its own oil supply, and its own state-of-the-art hospital with pristine operating theatres – all protected by five-meter-thick walls. It feels, oddly, like a giant fortified Carnival Cruise Ship parked in the middle of a sea of violence and despair, the boiling Red Zone that is Iraq. If you can get on board, there are poolside drinks, bad Hollywood movies, and Nautilus machines. If you are not among the chosen, you can get yourself shot just by standing too close to the wall' (Klein 413).

Klein then concludes that 'it's easy to imagine a future in which growing numbers of cities have their frail and long-neglected infrastructures knocked out by disasters and are then left to rot, their core services never repaired or rehabilitated. The well-off, meanwhile, will withdraw into gated communities, their needs met by privatized providers' (Klein 415). The present research envisions and supports the manifestation of a shock-resistant, sustainable anti-apartheid future where crises do not lead to "ownership societies" with hollow governments but a collaborative society that is supported by the accountable state. Furthermore, a detailed exploration of these ownership societies is essential in the imagination of the societies presented in the selected works.

We get more on the history of capitalism-induced crisis and scarcity from Hickel and Sullivan who provide the database for a critique of the narrative that Capitalism and Imperialism helped alleviate global poverty and deprivation in their well-researched essay *Capitalism, Global Poverty, and the Case for Democratic Socialism*. They flout the mainstream argument (propagated initially by the Ravallion and Pinker Graphs – formulated under the World Bank) that capitalism (around the mid-18th century) helped humanity liberate itself from the condition of extreme poverty (which is characterized by extreme malnourishment and the inability to

access basic goods) by arguing that the said research falsely establishes the apparent 90% of global poverty around the 1820s as a 'primordial condition' of poverty and 'excludes more than 300 years of relevant history' as the 'world capitalist economy' was established since the start of imperialism (hence from 15th century onwards) and what the Pinker graph shows as its starting point (of 90% global poverty) is indeed the consequence of the major 'dispossessions', displacements and global crimes of colonization (Hickel, Sullivan 2). Hence, they provide a reassessment of the capitalist impact on the global economy. Primarily, they argue that the very condition of extreme poverty described above did not exist before capitalist expansion policies under colonialism. People could at least afford to feed and shelter their respective families (minimum of four) and the scale of economic strife and scarcity resulting from wars and famines came from the 'institutionalized dispossession' under colonialism (Hickel, Sulivan 2).

Secondly, the rise in capitalism has seen a decline in human welfare. Welfare systems are different in the centers of imperialism and likewise in the peripheries and semi-peripheries. Additionally, whatever welfare progress is recorded in the peripheries Hickel and Sullivan attribute it to the counter-movements that challenged the unchecked expansion and integration of capitalism in their economic and social systems and organized their 'production around meeting human needs' of basic sustenance (2). Hence, it is largely uncontested that pre-industrial people could afford basic goods without ever succumbing to global poverty (which they only did in case of natural calamities or when they were incapacitated by colonial raiders and rulers e.g. the Bengal famines during British occupation). Not only that but research also provides evidence that the industrialization of the imperial centers depended largely on the native de- industrialization of the peripheries, crippling and incapacitating them to never provide capital for themselves but work as a collective body of cheap labor for the centers. Global poverty should then not exist at all but the grave global percentage of 17 says otherwise about our present economic systems which not only promise access to basic sustenance and welfare but celebrate progress in the name of unrestrained growth.

Furthering their call for providing decent living for all, Hickel and Sullivan argue that although people did not fall into the extreme hunger dip in pre-industrial times it does not mean that the living conditions were ideal. Industrialization and the technological boom have indeed done wonders as far as decent living is concerned

(with greater health, schooling, and other facilities). However, as long as the economy is 'organized around capital accumulation and profit maximization' people will be deprived of decent living, be it the center or the peripheries (Hickel, Sullivan 4). Hence, industrialization might be the key to decent living for all but it certainly wouldn't be functional until some 'balance of class power' in 'provisioning systems' is realized (Hickel, Sullivan 5). They conclude in favor of the case for social democracy since the present arrangement of the global economy cannot 'deliver meaningful development in the Global South' (Hickel, Sullivan 7).

One major aim of the present research is to explicate the relationship between urban (and suburban) architecture and the complex socio-economic conditions it represents. Walls, gates, fences, malls, security blockades, and check-points manifest the image of a restricted, closed city in opposition to Sennett's open city that is not yet fully sold to private corporations, mobilizes and integrates public life, and is vibrantly heterogeneous. In its study of urban hierarchies (green zones, red zones, enclaves, open- air prisons, etc.) this research attempts to answer the other key question – how are these hierarchies that are created out of socioeconomic imbalances further function to imbalance man's indispensable relation with the natural world. The "malignant exteriorities" we see in the selected works are the catastrophic results of these imbalances and the whole of the environmental justice movement is working to push governments to establish some form of order or balance to slow down and repair before we reach the absolute tipping point (provided we have not already).

Walls and gates thus hold a significant role in presenting these imbalances. They are not passive backgrounds for the events to unfold but agents of apartheidism, social disintegration, and violence. They also signify a prevalent condition of urban communities for they exist at all levels – from fancy militarized enclaves to ghettos. From sealing off some neighborhoods because they harbor the criminalized poor, orphans, or junkies to establishing electronic gates that open with membership verification, Blakely and Snyder are right in calling these establishments of boundaries 'a political act'. They argue that 'boundaries determine membership: someone must be inside and someone outside' hence creating the others/aliens (Blakely, Snyder 1). Gated communities have come into the mainstream discourse since their prevalent visibility starting in the 1980s. Blakely and Snyder call them 'one of the more dramatic forms of residential living' where a 'growing number of methods' are used 'to control the physical environment for physical and economic

security' (Blakely Snyder 1). Roitman questions the use of this ironical term as appropriate 'considering that these types of residential developments do not always seem to encourage "community" within their walls' (Roitman 31). On the autonomy of self-governed and self-contained worlds, Roitman quotes Amin and Graham (1991) who support the position of porosity and relationality which the present research also examines. 'No physically bounded community can ever completely withdraw from the city which surrounds it. No place – even a high-security prison – is ever relationally isolated completely from its surroundings' (Roitman 32). Goix and Webster regard gated communities as 'both symbols and symptoms of a line that is being crossed from voice-based citizenship to exit-based citizenship; from politically organized to market-organized civic society' (Goix, Webster 1189).

Gated communities 'manifest a number of tensions: between exclusionary aspirations rooted in fear and protection of privilege and the values of civic responsibility; between the trend towards privatization of public services and the ideals of the public good and general welfare; and between the need for personal and community control of the environment and the dangers of making outsiders of fellow citizens.' (Blakely, Snyder 3) These tensions and concerns point toward the deep-rooted prevalence of fear in present society and the need for walls. *The Fortress America* thus asks the pivotal questions in this regard: 'What is the measure of nationhood when the divisions between neighborhoods require guards and fences to keep out other citizens? When public services and even local government are privatized, what happens to the function and the very idea of social and political democracy? Can this nation fulfill its social contract in the absence of social contact?' (Blakely, Snyder 3) Hence, local governments must not be privatized but municipalized.

While we see a strong move globally towards the manifestation of corporate-run gated urban communities, leading to urban apartheidism and unchecked consumerism, many have also simultaneously envisioned the layout of an inclusive, generous city space that can allow access for all and nurture free mobility and diversity. Such an imagining informs the concept of an "open city". Richard Sennett, a prominent sociologist and author, has written about the concept of the "open city" in his works, particularly in the context of urban sociology and urban planning. While he may not have specifically coined the term "open city," his ideas on the subject are associated with urban planning and the social dynamics of cities.

Sennett emphasizes the importance of open and inclusive urban spaces, where diverse groups of people can interact and engage with each other freely. He advocates for urban design that fosters social interaction, cooperation, and the creation of a sense of community among urban residents.

In *Housing and Urban Neighbourhoods: The Open City* Sennett starts by giving an account of "the closed system" and "the brittle city". We conceive a livable city to be clean, flourishing, 'supported by a dynamic economy', stimulate growth and inwardly 'heal society's divisions of race, class, and ethnicity' (Sennett 1). However, presently cities are failing us on almost all those accounts. Sennett asserts that to possess such a city we must imagine one but what he calls "critical imagining" is weak and it is weak primarily because of modernity. He presents a paradox: modern urbanists have more resources (technological) than ever but those resources are not employed constructively. He traces the fault in 'over-determination, both of the city's visual form and its social functions' (Sennett 1). He explains how the technologies that can concretely support the critical imaginings of an open city are weakened by 'a regime of power that wants order and control' (Sennett 1). Because of this "control freakery" cities have lost vitality and a sense of time (they are not understood as a process in time/ forward-looking). Sennett associates this loss specifically with Le Corbusier, a Parisian architect of the 1920s, who in his model "Plan Voisin" replaced high and vibrant streets with 'mono-function shopping malls, by gated communities, by schools and hospitals built as isolated campuses' and disabling 'local innovation and growth' essentially freezing the city in time (Sennett 1). The product of this imagination is what Sennett calls a "brittle city". They are so named because their rate of decay is very high compared to the urban structural legacy of the past. Their form and function are meticulously specific, leaving little room to sustain change (in form and function) that naturally comes with time (especially when modern change is deemed too unpredictable) and are thus destroyed rather than adapted after they serve their purpose (which is designed to be very short- termed). This only benefits building corporations at the expense of the general public. In the long term, people flee the brittle and decaying city rather than rebuilding it, and the concept of renewing space is compromised. Sennett states that growth in an urban environment is more than just the replacement of the old by the new, or abandoning of all that which is brittle but it is far more complicated than that. 'Growth requires a dialogue between past and present, it is a matter of evolution rather than of erasure. This principle is as

true socially as it is architecturally' (Sennett 1). Furthermore, the brittle city (where the population is homogenized, the space is regulated through zoning, etc.) is a symptom of a "closed system".

Contrary to the closed system is the "open system" – first brought into conversation by the urbanist Jane Jacobs – which in its dissonance challenges homogeneity and over-determination of form and advocates diversity and complexity. Furthermore, Sennett explains the complication of walls and gates in a closed system which are structures that have existed since medieval times. Before the fiscal-military revolution 'people sheltered behind walls when attacked; the gates in walls also served to regulate commerce coming into cities, often being the place in which taxes were collected. . . but we mis-imagine how those medieval walls themselves functioned. Though they shut closed, they also served as sites for unregulated development in the city; houses were built on both sides of medieval town walls' and the zone of the wall was where the marginalized section of society gravitated (Sennett 3). Hence, they were porous, and the inside was accessible. However, now with the contemporary use of "plate-glass" for walls, there is what Sennett calls a "dead space" on either side of these transparent walls. Nothing grows or develops but is massively policed. Sennett's open city has thus an incomplete form, light architecture (meaning additions can be made to it), has both conflict and dissonance which together lead to its growth, and admits porosity in the hopes of creating a democratic space.

In the discussion of urban form and spaces the information nuggets of Mike Davis cannot be missed. Following *The City of Quartz* (1990), which makes one of the theoretical paradigms for this study, Mike Davis produced another substantial contribution to the study of urban spaces and sub-cultures. While *The City of Quartz* explores the massive militarization of urban space through architectural apartheidism, policing, and unprecedented privatization, *Planet of Slums* (2005) is a book that explores the phenomenon of urban slums and ghettos and their rapid growth in the 21st century. In his depiction of the classical slums of London and other European urban centers, Davis cites the 19th-century reformist (and social researcher of the city outcasts) Charles Booth and his take on the slums as aggregates of decrepit housing systems brewing with poverty, illness, overcrowding, and vice – depicting slums as 'places where an incorrigible and feral social residuum rots' immortally (Davis 22). We see exactly such dilapidated picaresque accounts just outside the walls of Robledo and Redwood in the selected novels. All the spaces that are not enclosed

are violated with the germs of poverty, violence, and diseases. Davis goes a step further from the usual spatial or legal characteristics of these urban settlements and works out the more difficult and problematic 'social dimensions' of the matter – taking the problem of this urban apartheidism to its core – social and economic marginality (23).

In the chapter on "Pirate Urbanization," Davis throws light on the monetary exploitation of already homeless people on the urban edge. He expounds on the "squatter community" as opposed to the "gated community" illustrated in *The City of Quartz*. I deem it necessary to adjoin the teachings of both works to further the understanding of how walls and gates play out as social and economic structures that insinuate segregation and much violence in their wake. And how that class separation and created threat of outside violence seethes from systemic oppression of a great portion of society and eventually that toxic right to superiority plays out in the exploitation of nature. The squatter community, in possession of un-entitled land, 'is coerced to pay considerable bribes to politicians, gangsters, or police to gain access to sites' and they continue to do this for years (Davis 38). This is the informal economy generated by the informal sector of the urban society.

Apart from the vulnerabilities of the informal squatter community that pays a great portion of their meager informal wages to live and sustain their sub-human existence, Davis explores other challenges that confront the slum people: from social and political exclusion and inaccessibility, environmental and health challenges to inequalities, violence, and resistances. Furthermore, Davis provides not only the globalized dialectics behind the exponential rise of slums in the 21st century but also exemplifies global cases from Cairo to Japan, from Mexico to Africa, and from Europe to Indo-Pak to best localize this urgent urban phenomenon developing more viciously as the economic and structural apartheidism of the commodity fetish states continues. The book also demystifies the illusions of self-help or self-sustenance of the slum community. Thus his study is a call for political and social action, aid, and intervention to liberate and humanize the criminalized and despairing poor (Davis 70).

A moderate body of literature on Octavia Butler's Parable series is available to us today largely concerning her visions of dystopia. Emerging from her stark portrayal of a deeply affected and dystopic world comes the hopes and imaginings of a utopia that like myself many researchers find in her interesting body of work. Many

agree that the aim of writing such disturbing dystopias is to a) bring into the present collective imagination and conversations the dangerous patterns and tendencies that will eventually lead to a bleak future of possible ruination, and b) much of the damage leading to such dystopias is not merely destructive but of nihilistic nature and hence irreversible. Furthermore, it is not the sole purpose of a visionary writer to predict the pathways to the future but as Jerry Phillips quotes Martin Buber in his essay *The Intuition of the Future: Utopia and Catastrophe in Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower* the task and responsibility of the genuine writer is far more than that. It is not simply to predict 'but to confront man with the alternatives of decision' (Phillips 300). This is a dystopic strategy shared and employed by almost all science fiction writers to 'map, warn and hope' (Stillman 15). Stillman quotes Moylan in the use of the term "Utopian anticipations" which most sci-fi writers deliberate to produce as an effect or aim of their works – looking for hope and continuity after understanding and delineating the patterns and tendencies leading to potential ruin whilst they are still reversible or controllable (Stillman 16). However, the very act of imagining the possibility of a utopia is hard-earned in Butler 'because she portrays the social and psychological effects of dystopias as pervasive and extensive, attempts to discover and create a better life are extraordinarily difficult tasks, fraught with dangers and risks' (Stillman 16).

The task of identifying the trends toward calamity by the earlier generation has largely failed us for the tipping point in the future that Butler prophesized is indeed our present reality (quite literally as the timeline of the Parable series starts with 2024), and her imagination is exact to the extent that it's no longer alarming but debilitating. The world that Butler presents, our present reality, 'is so involved in hierarchy and domination, so convinced of their rightness, so scared or so committed to maintaining their arbitrary power that it can be disheartening to attempt to hope' or to act in utopian, positive ways (Stillman 16). He sees Butler's plan for extrasolar travel and settlement as 'the only response to the outgoing chaos and degeneration on earth, where human cruelty, impotence, ecological destruction, and war put into doubt the survival of the species' (Stillman 26). According to him, Butler does not see the ecological or civil failure as an absolute failure in mankind but neither does propose that with the scale and level of ongoing destruction, we can preserve our species on a dying planet. But through incorporating technology with Earthseed (a vision of settling in space) where with diverse settlements 'humans will evolve differently in

different circumstances and environments' and will dissolve their earthly 'human ambition to impose human laws on the natural and social world' (Stillman 30). Delving deep into Butler's bleak portrayal of the gradual descent of humanity into self-annihilation one is both convinced with her utopic resolutions yet fraught with the utopic ambiguities that encircle them.

The present research flouts the overconfidence generally observed in people that whatever socio-ecological crisis we are facing in the present will soon pass and there is, in fact, an eventual return to normalcy. With the present rate of exhaustion of natural resources, there is no return. The best of a utopic conversation we can have in the present is of slowing down, essentially of "de-growth." But as Butler aptly points out this is in absolute antithesis to the existence of corporate states that have seeped in them the lifeblood of unrestricted consumption and unchecked production as their pathways towards individual progress at the expense of totalitarian demise.

Madhu Dubey builds on a novel approach to *Butler's Parable of the Sower*, claiming that the novel dismisses 'localist and organic notions of community' to mediate the dystopic urban crisis presented in her work, unlike the common trend in the body of African-American women's literature (105). The study shows that Butler discredits 'the models of organic community,' which are usually hailed by her community, as unrealistic (105) and, therefore, aims to bring a change in the African-American literary imaginations. In her presentation of Robledo and Orlando (the two contrasting walled cities of America), Butler most definitely showcases the two forms of capitalist consumerism – ending in increased racial segregation and violence and economic divisions taken to the extreme constituting an urban crisis. The alternative to these crises is a return to the land, to the practice of sowing, and thus an appeal for the agricultural economy. This may seem to be a call for the return to Black communal living in the South before the influx to the cities took place. But in her critique of Urban capitalism and a call for an agricultural economy, Dubey dismisses the idea that Butler seeks to be comforted by the past or primitive ways of being. In the novel, Lauren scowls at the elderly generation of her community which is stuck in the past and cannot envision new social transformations for a better future (109). This is where the idea of Earthseed comes in, a thought that comes to her while gardening and reflecting on how baby plants grow away from their parent plants. This attempt at a dislocation from the roots is for greater activism. As is seen in the novel, it is the parents and community at large, so much rooted in the past that they eventually get

annihilated for their inaction. Hence Butler's vision is not one toward the renewal of black folk aesthetics. Home and relations seek stability amidst chaos by confining to themselves and their limited means instead of seeking out change – a change that is the driving essential of the Earthseed belief system. This, in my opinion, is also Butler's distrust of the first wave of ecocriticism that emphasizes place or region-bound sustenance. In the Earthseed's extraterrestrial visions of living in the stars, Butler conforms instead to the second-wave ecocriticism that relinquishes an attachment to the folk models of place-bound communities.

My study while agreeing that Butler does not bring forth a primitivistic imagination, disengages with Dubey in her misinformed association of "community" with primitivism. Even with the success of the space program and space settlement, new communities will be established in the extrasolar inhabitable places. Hence, my perspective differs from Dubey's in the sense that humans have always existed and survived in the form of communities. I argue, that instead of a redundant, conservative community that mindlessly obeys current forms of oppression (and operates under fiscal debt) or exclusive communities (like gated communities) that further apartheidism, a constructive and transformative community is in need that operates democratically through local channels of confederal governances. Communal living, done right, is forward-looking and not otherwise. The very fact that the book ends with the formation of the Earthseed community is in itself a challenge to Dubey's argument.

Gregory J. Hampton presents a wonderful account of body mobility relative to socio-economic mobility in his essay *Migration and Capital of the Body: Octavia Butler's Parable of the Sower*. He references the historian John Hope Franklin and expands on his idea of migration as a result of economic adjustment in the context of Butler's emphasis on spatial change and body migration. Franklin's assertion in *From Slavery to Freedom* (1980) in this regard is that the deliberate displacement of a body in a new and better economic environment is not only a concept that dates back to ancient times (the nomadic lifestyle) but is also one that essentially marks the body 'in economic social systems as capital' (Hampton 56). Hampton argues that Butler reimagines the concepts of "body", "migration", "boundary" and "capital" in her novels. The premonition throughout the novel holds that if the boundaries of the walls surrounding and enclosing communities are compromised then the families – the body of people- will also be in sheer danger. So while this fear necessitates the existence of

boundaries it is also evident through proceeding events that boundaries are easily breachable and largely ineffective. The hostility of the outside world seeps into the inside of the walls, not through some grand battering of the boundaries but through gradual mutilation and torture of the bodies. For Hampton, Butler's emphasis on the body as capital is a stark anti-materialist estimation. Much of the violence ensued because of hoarding and consequent scarcity. The society built on hoarding possessions and its constant defense through militarization is malleable and self-destructive like the walls in Robledo (Hampton). I, however, further add (drawing from the thesis of Naomi Klein) that the society Butler predicts is not only one of militarized commodification but also functions as a state to produce political and civic strife and unrest in the whole third world through militarized intervention and hybrid colonization. Furthermore, while the bodies register violence in both novels, this phenomenon is only symptomatic of the actual illness that is at the root of the whole affair.

One present-day author to take on the legacy of Octavia E. Butler is Adrienne Maree Brown. Her book *Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds* centralizes her work and movement on building strategies that enable us to be transformative, adaptive, and relational beings. Parallel to Octavia's insistence on the necessity of community, Brown's concept of emergence 'emphasizes critical connections over critical mass, building authentic relationships' (7). Adrienne recognizes that crisis is everywhere (pretty massive at that) and in relation, we are very small and insignificant. However, 'emergence notices the small actions and connections create complex systems, patterns that become ecosystems and societies' and thereby aid in mediating the crisis and post-crisis convalescence (Brown 7). Emergence is hence, not exclusively but inspirationally, Butler's legacy of adaption and change that Adrienne builds her philosophy upon. A philosophy of intentional change that enables us 'to grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated world we long for' (Brown 7). A great portion of the book generates the necessary idea of establishing the "right relationship" with the planet through the exemplification of the preservation strategies of small, collaborative species – 'life forms that continue to proliferate, survive, grow' and 'sustain' unlike the alphas of the wilderness who despite their apparent hierarchies continue to go extinct (Brown 7). Therefore, emergent strategy is basically about transformative growth; a constant change that we continually shape to sustain and survive. She contends that we do survive and have

survived so far but with such gruesome brutality that it doesn't seem we ought to. In antithesis to the sustainability of collaborative action she claims 'we tend to slip out of togetherness the way we slip out of the womb, bloody, messy, and surprised to be alone' (Brown 8).

The imploring question around the premise of creating micro-hierarchies in a collaborative environment is 'how to turn our full-bodied intelligence' towards cooperation provided that is the only path to survival (Brown 9). For Adrienne, it all lies in fusion and merging, listening and supporting, leading and healing. The health and resilience of a single cell is the health of the whole species and the planet (Brown 12). From this existentially fractal viewpoint, she assesses the cellular divisions, the natural call of birds to flock, the strength of the oak trees amidst hurricanes, and through many such instances implicates the tendency for adaptability and cooperation in nature to adaptation in groups within civilizations. This is also in line with the objective of this study: to establish the relational parallel subsumed in the natural and the social worlds and how the imbalances in the latter co-create the imbalances in the former. Brown expands on Octavia Butler's thought that 'civilization is to groups what intelligence is to individuals. It is a means of combining the intelligence of many to achieve ongoing group adaptation' (Butler 35). We are, hence, neither isolated beings nor can the human impact be contained to itself. The intentionality of action and consequentiality of impact is not linear nor delineated. In this foundational study of apocalyptic (and post) crisis, she concludes that no other being on this earth survives long-term in this manner of false insulation: by constantly rendering each other "the other", building walls, and waging wars against each other's minds and bodies.

The return to a kind of scarcity (pre-capital) primordialism politics engaged in both the novels of my study (the acorn society of *Parable of the Sower* and the return to the forest in *Into the Forest*) operate on the thought, also explicated by Brown, that our ideas and circumstances shift with time. 'That justice, rights, things we take for granted, are not permanent. Once there were kings and queens all over the earth. Someday we might speak of presidents and CEOs in past tense only' (Brown 14). And thus, the paradigms of right and wrong also shift with time. Further reinstating the emergent thought that change is the only permanence there is. However, we can shape change towards constructive sustenance through imagination. It is the imaginary vision of writers like Butler and Hegland that we had details of the life of

environmental, economic, and structural crises we find ourselves in today that were prophesized by them in the previous century. Brown argues that we are, as is apparent in the selected works, a society constructed around the imagination of fear. The fear is a product of pervasive capitalism and its scarcity economics. And so we feel 'the need to hoard, enclose, divide, fence up, and prioritize resources and people' (Brown 14). To counter this, she proposes the idea of "collaborative ideation" where the people are constructed around a radical imagination of collective transformation and growth. She quotes Toni Cade Bambara, a black-feminist writer, who emphasized that writing makes change irresistible and that the very act of writing is engaging and participating in transformation (Brown 23). This is the aim of this research as well. To bring about even a parcel of change in the collective imagination where the imagined future is more aware of and protective of the environment we breathe in and the planet we inhabit. To unlearn many of our non-emergent, anti-nurturing social and economic practices 'that deny and destroy the abundant world we live in' and the culture of pillage that falsely justifies the abusive control of the natural world with unprecedented human intervention and manipulation (Brown 30).

Emergent Strategy does well in initiating new modes of ideation and displacing the human from its alpha hierarchism to its rightful place with the collaborative mycelium, ants, ferns, wavicles, starlings, oak, dandelions, etc. It is more conducive, however, to learn of the tenets of emergent strategy (intentional adaptation, interdependence and decentralization, non-linear pace and pathways of change, resilience, healing, and transformation) concerning the structural analysis of Mike Davis' take on seclusion urbanism and economy of control societies as decoded by Murray Bookchin to have a more eclectic understanding of present circumstances, develop an action-based approach in dealing with it, and to come up with more activism forward functional model to work out problems both on the micro and macro fronts of society and the environment.

There is strangely a stark absence in the body of research regarding *Into the Forest* provided that not only it was very well received but it has also seen a film adaptation. The lack of research into the subject only probes further the idea that eco-critical study still exists on the margins of academia. The little work that has been done is through the lens of ecofeminism which correlates the domination of the environment to the domination of women. Dawson in *Constructing an Interdisciplinary Course for Literature and Environmental Feminism* includes this

work of Hegland alongside Toni Morrison's *A Mercy* and Margaret Atwood's *The Year of the Flood* with the hopes of urging readers to recognize that 'environmental change can be used to justify hierarchies of gender as well as class and race in the service of reasserting order in the wake of disaster.' (Dawson) A thought that sits well with Naomi Klein's disaster capitalism discussed earlier. Thus the forest fires of Parable of the Sower, the infectious epidemic that wipes out cities and cities of America in *Into the Forest,* and disasters in general 'can be used to consolidate and intensify forms of political and social control resulting in power centralization and "control societies". Dawson further explores women's historical relation to land, from nineteenth and twentieth-century land politics of inheritance to how they cope with and respond to damaged and toxic landscapes. While some show women as eco-crusaders other works have more ambivalent representations. Dawson cites the example of the movie *Safe* whose major premise is the representation of women's reactions to contaminated lands. This study explores the contamination that comes forth in the form of the protagonist's chemical sensitivity – a syndrome similar to Olamina's hyper-empathy syndrome. Women's bodies subjected to contamination can also be seen in the wake of Nell and Eva's motherhood, body nourishment, and body mutilation (rape, amputation, etc.) Dawson makes the point that 'women's limited financial, corporate, and professional power channel(s) their relation to the land toward a non-commercial stewardship of the earth' (340). Socially and politically women are the most stripped of power, access, and influence, however, as much as they are incapacitated the more they are 'ethically invested in stewardship' (Dawson 340). Hence, both Butler and Hegland give space and opportunity for female ownership (of their body and land) and leadership capacity for they are best fitted for caretaking. The researcher further argues that Hegland in *Into the Forest* reveals women's authority in a new world with the destruction of the old. Two sisters surviving in the woods in a post-pandemic world, rejecting past methods of being and bringing about new forms of authority and cooperation.

Written with the pandemic crisis as context, the thesis *Nature, Care, and Post-Genderism in McCarthy's The Road and Hegland's Into the Forest* discusses narratives, that feature the end of the world, and the collapse of socio-economic and political structures, as highly relevant in present circumstances. Similar to the purpose of my study, following the coronavirus crisis has seen recurrent pandemics like dengue, monkey pox and some unidentified others (new variants) as well in the wake

of country-wide flooding and threatening increase in global warming accompanied by the still prevalent ravages of the corona pandemic: ecological crisis leading to crippled dystopic societies has become something not far off in the imagination and has intruded itself into the domain of our everyday reality as well. In light of these eco-dystopic collapse narratives, these scholars quote multiple sources that envision the future emerging out of the crisis – one being the departure from market society and hyper-individualism (Kleinberg). In such a collapsed world, this move from ceaseless consumption to the dismayed depletion of earth's natural resources is the ideological venture taken by Hegland and McCarthy in their respective works.

Although there is a sense in discussing Hegland's solution to the ecological crisis as a return to the primordial in *Into the Forest*, it can however otherwise be interpreted as more of a step towards the future than the past. Mary Rosenberry in *Forests And Traditional Ecological Knowledge In Contemporary American Novels* rightly calls forests a 'combination of the familiar and the alien, the old and the tantalizing new' (8). So much of the novel is based on the novelty of the forests that modern science and systems of knowledge have institutionally made unavailable to the general public, relegated to the past as ancient relics and monuments – admired from a distance. Rosenberry provides new perspectives on the larger premise of this research – the existence of functional cooperation in nature and how much it is necessary to sustain life. She cites research that presents novel visions of the forest. *Into the forest* sees the journey of the characters' changing visions of the forest. Characters' interaction with the forest breaks down binaries and boundaries and creates a network of 'embedded relationships' where no part of the ecosystem can be understood in isolation (Rosenberry 11). Rosenberry propounds the vast wisdom of TEK (Traditional Ecological Knowledge) and how it has been 'denigrated, attacked, and even criminalized throughout centuries of colonization and capitalism' (15). It is not that TEK alone is enough to sustain us but what is required at this critical juncture is a 'polyculture of ideas' against the domineering 'monoculture of scientism' (Rosenberry 15). This is where the metanarratives of academia are also questioned for their unfaltering invalidation of traditional systems of knowledge as outdated and meaningless in the modern world. Hegland, by her radical act of burning down the house (micro symbolic of civilization), counters the metanarratives of science and modernity.

Suzy McKee Charnas in her review *Goodbye to All That* states that Hegland

has reversed the usual men's tale of survival in a devastated planet by foregrounding feminine energy and prowess. Where post-apocalyptic stories have been largely about men and their heroism in 'rebuilding society and reclaiming some remnant of technology while protecting "their" women' from the savagery of anarchy, Hegland brings to life the 'far less interesting background chores' of women and fills their seemingly ordinary tasks of survival with fascinating vitality (Charnas 16).

Building on the above detailed eclectic sources this study strengthens its analysis through insights from interdisciplinary channels. It expands Mike Davis's criticism of Los Angeles's militarization as an Urban space to the growing phenomena of big cities becoming more and more forbidding, exclusive, and fueled by environmental resources that are depleting quickly. It focuses on two such narratives and brings to light an essentially grave social issue that since the wake of the industrial boom is being one way or another suppressed and glossed over. The aforementioned literature provides insights into multiple aspects of the field of ecocriticism in general, the theories and ideas the current research builds upon, and the novels it analyzes. However, the books and articles above detailed do not, on their own, provide a synthetic critique of the specific problems highlighted in the research questions nor are the selected novels discussed from the lenses this research undertakes.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Framework

This research in its study of collapsed societies incorporates concepts from Murray Bookchin's book on *Social Ecology* and Mike Davis's take on Urban Ecocriticism to address the socio-environmental questions raised in the selected works. Social ecology is a political, eco-critical theory that holds the conviction that nearly all of our present ecological problems originate in deep-seated social issues. Bookchin presents a convincing argument about how modern economic, ethnic, cultural, and gender conflicts lie at the core of the gravest ecological dislocations we face today, apart from natural catastrophes. Mike Davis, in *Fortress Los Angeles: The Militarization of Urban Space,* reflects on the hardening of postmodern architecture merged with the police apparatuses to produce the militarization of affluent space at the cost of public democratic space at an unprecedented degree.

3.1 Theory of Social Ecology by Murray Bookchin

Bookchin introduces parallelism in the hierarchical mentality that thoroughly permeates class relationships and the popularly justified enlightenment idea of dominating the natural world. He asserts that unless we realize that the present market society, structured around the brutally competitive imperative of "grow or die," is a thoroughly impersonal, self-operating mechanism, we will falsely tend to blame other phenomena – such as technology or population growth – for growing environmental dislocations. To remediate this, Bookchin replaces the mentality of domination with that of the ethics of complementarity whereby humanity sees its role in the natural world as creative, supportive, and deeply appreciative of the well-being of non-human life.

The bleak malignancy we see in the selected dystopic texts is addressed by Murray Bookchin in his book *Social Ecology* as the evident consequence of unchecked irrationality. He terms the ultra-capitalist society of today as manic and "irrational". A rational society operates with the mantra of 'discipline with freedom and responsibility with imagination' (Bookchin 52).

'As long as this irrational society endangers us with nuclear and biological weapons, we cannot ignore the possibility that the entire human enterprise may come to a devastating end. Given the exquisitely elaborate technical plans that the military-

industrial complex has devised, the self-extermination of the human species must be included in the futuristic scenarios…' (Bookchin 77)

To prevent such a future, social ecology presents a 'political alternative' that Bookchin was positive could 'confront the market economy and centralized institutions' (13). Where Butler and Hegland condemn the hierarchical structures that define the corporate world of today, Bookchin asserts that not only are they not "inherently natural" as is commonly misunderstood but that they must be entirely abolished: 'We have to confront and challenge all hierarchical relationships, and ultimately abolish hierarchy as such from the human condition.' (Bookchin 14) This study uses Bookchin's assertions on a post-hierarchic system of politics to undo the meta-centralizations of power, knowledge, and economy which lead to imbalances created in the human and the natural world.

Insights from social ecology, are needed, to successfully incorporate urban environments and their related problems within the discourse of ecocriticism. The synthetic theoretical framework utilizes the working models of confederations of organic eco-communities and a politics of libertarian municipalism proposed by Bookchin to counter the corporate gated city centers critiqued in the selected works.

In *Parable of the Sower,* the protagonist Lauren designs the religion of Earthseed whose basic premise is 'All that you touch/You change, /All that you Change/ Changes you…God is Change' (28). *Into the Forest* is also a novel about escaping the 'fugue- state' which is fundamentally a state of dormant stillness resisting change and radical activism. This research emphasizes the negative changes occurring in our environment that are set in motion through human contact. While the novels predict the collapse of post-energy crisis societies and make an appeal for the diminishing non-renewable energy resources, this research claims that their proposed solutions are either too far- fetched or not feasible to meet the current ecological disjuncture. While Octavia Butler suggests an investment in space programs and a future outside this increasingly uninhabitable earth, this study argues that not only is it too futuristic, will not provide speedy mitigation, impedes green activism on workable institutions but will also eventually instrument a new divide between nations who see-through space colonization and the rest who will not be able to support it techno-financially – namely the third world. Similarly, Hegland's proposal of spiritual reconnection with nature and the abandonment of social life does

involve a vital revision of present social structures but is still not a viable solution. In their call for change, both writers pursue ideas of abandonment in one form or another.

The theory of Social Ecology attempts to alleviate brewing environmental tensions through the construction of a new form of urban structure. This new libertarian society would be an integrated one where town and country would no longer be opposed to each other, politics would be directly democratic at the community level, and larger problems would be addressed through the formation of confederations. Solar and wind power will replace fossil and nuclear fuels as energy sources. Furthermore, technology will replace most of the labor, and hence, Bookchin does not fear the controversial technological encroachment on humans.

This study also reaffirms the need for the education and practice of environmentally responsive engineering. Technology and industry are quite strongly knotted together and the technological boom has certainly directed and aided the centralization of capitalism. Therefore, Bookchin's dismissal of technology as not impeding environmental sustenance is somewhat ignorant. However, this study does acknowledge the reality of the future of the meta-verse, and hence, technology is an imperative part of the social structure. Similar to today's green-washing of textile-cosmetic products, technological products are also green-washed, and technological waste is considered a sour pill necessary to swallow for societal advancement. A political theory in nature, Bookchin's organic society does not expand on the necessity for environmental engineering. Still, Bookchin's proposals have far-reaching ecological implications to limit the sprawling urban belts as well as decentralizing capitalism's hold on humanity.

3.2 Theory of Urban Ecocriticism by Mike Davis

Mike Davis's 1990 book, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, carefully examines the systemic repression in space and movement in the ominous armed surveillance of Los Angeles' enclosed sectors, and barricaded streets, and remarks it as the fortress of law-and-order Armageddon. Davis intelligently associates the hyper- militarization and restructuring of urban space with the social polarizations of the Reagan era. This anti-social integration urban renaissance has produced "fortress cities" polarized between "fortified cells" where the affluent society precipitates and "places of terror" where the police batters the criminalized

poor (Davis 223-224). Thus, a civil war of sorts gets institutionalized in the urban space. This polarization and structural violence are explicated in the selected works as well. The scope of the present research is to outline and mitigate the far-reaching consequences for such a built environment.

Lauren narrates such a polarized society in *Parable of the Sower* 'In some places, the rich are escaping by flying out in helicopters. The bridges that are still intact are guarded either by the police or gangs. Both groups are there to rob desperate, fleeing people of their weapons, money, food, and water – at the least. The penalty for being too poor to be worth robbing is a beating, a rape, and/or death. The National Guard has been activated to restore order. . . but I suspect, in the short term it will only add to the chaos. What else could another group of well-armed people do in such an insane situation. The thoughtful ones might take their guns and other equipment and vanish to help their families. Others might find themselves at war with their own people. . .Of course some will discover that they enjoy their new power...' (Butler 84-85)

The absence of state-employed apparatuses of protection and the mistrust of the private security structures is a feeling shared by both writers. 'We heard the White House was burning and the National Guard was fighting the Secret Service in the streets of D.C' (Hegland 12). The urban centers become more and more polarized, forbidding, and carceral.

Davis defines the market need and provisions of "security" and how it becomes the access to "private protective services" of hardened and restricted residential enclaves. This generated demand for security, more to do with social prestige and social insulation than actual safety, polarizes the affluent sector from the "unsavory" groups of people. Secondly, it generates the demonological lens that terrorizes the poor, further pushing that lot to institutional criminalization (Davis 226). Davis elaborates in his book how the poor are criminalized to dispossess them of their land (streets, sectors, neighborhoods) in order to build large megalomaniacal complexes there instead. The police do so 'by spreading scare literature about the "imminent gang invasion" by black teenagers.' (Davis 158)

The more the cities systematically grow inward and gated, the more the poverty and hunger rage, and more violence ensue outside. Paramilitary groups rise in retaliation to the prosperity hubs situated inside the guarded cities. To subdue them

and others of similar sentiments, modern bastilles are constructed. The very violent ones are executed amidst the civil strife and the sequestered are simply thrown away to what Davis calls the "mean streets". There they lead sub-human lives, bruised and battered, devoid of any facility or state assistance. The segregation further deepens.

'Images of prison-like inner cities, high-tech police death squads, sentient skyscrapers, and guerrilla warfare in the streets are not fantasies, but merely extrapolations from the present.' (Davis 155)

This utter bleakness for the impoverished and "outsiders" is the condition Hegland refers to as "singularity", 'a force from which nothing can escape, a negativity that devours even light.' (34)

This present study investigates the cause of this urban polarization and resultant apartheid and how it manifests in architectural forms. Endless capitalist mania, drawing from the hollowing reserves of nature, deepens and centralizes affluence in the urban centers. This research also destroys the myth that such guarded structures which destroy the "democratic public space" are completely fool-proof and can never be infiltrated. Hence, the suggested alternatives towards open systems that are inclusive of humans and the natural world.

Hence, the deconstruction of the pseudo "defensible city" that manifests a segregated built environment contributing to the interests of unchecked capitalism and incarcerated people is the scope of this research, aided by the combined insights from Davis and Bookchin.

Chapter 4

Analysis of *Parable of the Sower*

4.1 Introduction to *Parable of the Sower* by Octavia E. Butler

Octavia E. Butler (1947-2006) was an acclaimed science-fiction writer who strengthened her position in the then-white male-centered science-fiction writer's community through her many groundbreaking works; the *Parable Series* being the chief works to secure her both a solid literary status and an astonishingly activism-forward legacy afterward. Butler diagnosed, and can be reasonably argued was among the first proponents in bringing to the mainstream, the parasitic and self-destructive human condition that plagues our society more than ever today and continues to bring us closer to the end of its species as well as its planet. She grasped, in her words, 'the ongoing reality of change throughout the universe' and emphasized the need to alter the human condition with that change, or mankind will instrument its extinction (Butler 116). The human condition explored in all of her fables is predominantly of violence, piercingly graphic at times, insinuating mankind's will to dominate all life forms and yet self-destruct simultaneously. The violence thus inflicted on others is reflected with heightened intensity, manifesting a menacing planetary Thanatos. Thus synthesizing fantasy and science fiction, she produced account after account of man's actions changing the course of the universe and gearing it towards its demise. Hence, issuing forth her belief systems of adaptability and cooperation, she enriched her narratives with coping mechanisms to deal with self-preservation deeply rooted in environmental sanctity and planetary sustainability. *Parable of the Sower,* published in 1993, is one such account that pivots around change and sustainability.

Ominous as the book is in its bearing of premonitions that will likely envelop (and indeed have) most of the 21st century, *The Parable of the Sower* is a powerful narrative that in its representation of spreading dystopia, with its graphic misery, manages to evoke the much-needed call for the declaration of environmental emergency. If not already passed, we are at the planetary "tipping point" and Butler's work, so prophetic of our present realities, needs to be read and researched in current times to re-establish the need for de-growth and reparations due to the biosphere. In the novel, Butler calls back to the Bubonic Plague of medieval Europe and how so much of society was devastated: 'A lot of the continent was depopulated. Some

survivors thought the world was coming to an end. . . but once they realized it wasn't, they also realized there was a lot of vacant land available for the taking. . . A lot of things changed for the survivors. . . it took a plague to make some of the people realize that things *could* change' (Butler 21). The world we find ourselves suffering in today resembles starkly the world-building of Butler's *Parable* novel and as dark and gritty the situation gets, we find a common thread running through the whole book emphasizing that perhaps we can still reverse it, for re-birth and re- awakening factually does come after the death of something. However, that too is a contestable idea for there is no planet b and the death of this one means the death of mankind and all the species therein. The present research aims to demystify this fallacy of the modern world along with planetary health bouncing back after all the damage that is being done to it in the name of progress and advancement recorded by unprecedented and ceaseless mania of growth. Hence, whilst appreciating the necessity for change (the ethics of the religion Earthseed which Butler advances in *Parable* and which this study interprets as radical eco-social activism) the research also argues that we are very likely not at leisure in a world where nature reclaims its vitality through spontaneous regeneration. Still, the modern forms of exploitation can only lead to demise if not checked and countered by radical political action. Hence, as poetic as this Earthseed verse is, it falls short in the present circumstances of inducing personal and collective agency and responsibility: 'In order to rise/From its own ashes/A phoenix/First/Must/Burn.' (Butler 54)

In an interview, Butler better puts this fallacy of spontaneous restoration into question. She exclaims that 'the problem with humanity is that we go to the edge more often than we ought to. We go to the edge, we realize, "My God, that's a precipice, we could fall off. We could die." We draw back. The problem with something like global warming is you can't just draw back. With nuclear war, you can.' (Butler)

The Parable of the Sower is, aside from all its socio-political underpinnings, a coming-of-age story of a young adult Lauren Olamina in her epistolary narrative of navigating through a time of spatial-socio-economic structures falling through and her will to survive, relocate, and re-establish herself against all odds. The story's timeline commences with the year 2024 (making this book extremely relevant as we are living in Butler's imagined future) till the year 2027. It is still ongoing (her journey ends with the successful space travel in 2090 in the sequel *Parable of the*

Talents). The story follows the development of Lauren Olamina from a young teen to a matron leader of what comes to be called "the Acorn community" or "the Earthseed community." No exaggerated femme fatale, Lauren is a realistic protagonist; observant and consequently learned of the causes behind the malignancy and degradation encompassing and affecting her and the society and world at large. Initially sheltered in a walled community named Robledo, Lauren acknowledges before others the sense of false security they all believe to be enjoying. Her misgivings regarding the porosity of the enclosed walls and the vulnerable security of "the inside" unfortunately prove true as their small, ethnically mixed town is invaded from the outside, and ultimately raided, scorched, and ravaged. The small group of survivors being forced to relocate; Lauren starts her journey (disguised as a man) toward relatively safer grounds where she ultimately expands her group into a community to whom she preaches her religion that she nomenclates as Earthseed.

Lauren's religion of Earthseed is originally a set of moral principles that can aid us in preserving the sanctity of the planet and its populace by gearing our behavioral practices to conform with nature's will and align our pace of growth with it. Its overarching premise is also to make us conscious of our involvement and agency in the natural flow of the biosphere.

'To get along with God/Consider the consequences of your behavior.' (Butler 30)

Earthseed, a religion of perpetual change, is in fact, humanity's owning of its behavioral policies with both mankind and nature. It proposes a reconsideration and realignment to better equip us with our understanding of the need for a sustainable community and a favorable economy that can help repair us from our present bubonic plagues.

4.2 Urban Struggle: Ecological Failure and Civil Strife in *Parable of the Sower*

One major aim of this research is to draw a parallel between the natural world and the built environment and to elucidate a) how strongly the two are interlinked and b) the extent of impact the latter has on the former. The theoretical corpus of this research makes it evident that the urban struggle is a microcosm of the larger planetary struggle. Much of the violence and breakdown in urban structures is not only reflective of the greater disintegration but also fuels the natural calamities.

Hence, social calamities that appear in the novel are, according to this study, both part and extension of the natural ones. Fire and arson, for instance, mark crucial episodes of plot initiation and dynamics, and its ever-emergent reality is a terrible fear that haunts much of human society in the book and is reflective of, if not instrumental, the tragic burning of the planet. Similarly, the collapse of urban architectonic structures, the collapse of community life, and the collapse in the economy leading to crisis societies infested with all forms of violence is an extension of the environmental collapse. The practicing cannibalism is evocative of the consumption trends that are essentially eating away at the planet. Hence, Murray Bookchin, whose political body of work collectively called "social ecology", emphasizes that 'the current ecological crisis is also a social one' and unless we delineate the social factors responsible for the present collapse we can never justly answer the greater ecological questions (Bookchin 17). 'We must redefine humanity's relationship to the natural world by remaking the basic social institutions and technology and the human intellect serve both social development and a natural evolution guided by reason' (Bookchin 17). Thus, Bookchin's vision of a socially democratic eco-community is a rational one.

Amongst an array of diverse urban problems that resonate deeply with present environmental challenges, this research pays specially focused attention to the contentious existence of urban apartheidism on a global scale. Walls, gates, boundaries, borders, "formidable steel-stake" fences, check-posts, zoning, "concrete-block ziggurat," 'unassailable high-tech castles' (Davis 168, 173), etc. are all architectural representations of bounded exclusiveness, strategic homogeneity, limited access, militarization, and commodification of public spaces, war and terror, and othering – all of which emerge through the supremacy of hierarchical ideologies and renders the city as a "post-modern Bastille" or the "carceral city" (Davis 177). This study establishes the vital connection between hierarchical trends that permeate human societies resulting in socioeconomic class differences and the alienation of the natural world. To loot and plunder the natural world as our corporate regimes and capitalist free markets do requires a functioning dominant hierarchical weltanschauung. That worldview denies admitting either any level of equity in mankind or fails to see mankind as a part of nature (as integral as any other species). It functions on the hierarchical dualism that is predominantly explicit in modern-day urban structures: fortified/ unfortified cities, militarized green zones/ conflicted red zones, etc. This hierarchical discrepancy is also the driving criticism embedded in

Parable of the Sower, and Butler calls it the chief tendency in mankind that is the deep-seated cause of much of the agony of the "human condition." 'Our Problem as a species, we are told, results from having two inherited characteristics that don't work and play together, especially since the wrong one is in control. The two characteristics are intelligence and hierarchical behavior – with hierarchical behavior dominant.' (Butler 115) Murray Bookchin's Social Ecology offers a theoretical resolution to both tendencies. In his manifestation of a confederal communalist rational society (more will be said on this subject later in the analysis) and his dialectical interpretation of human history (where cooperation superseded hierarchical behavior) Bookchin attempts to answer the apartheid seething through the human/human divide as well as the human/nature divide.

The urban apartheid in *Parable of the Sower* is very much a causality for other urban struggles and challenges that make part of the world in the novel. The walled city of Robledo is the initial setting of the novel and home to Lauren Olamina. While in the beginning, Robledo may come off as a haven from "the outside," 'where things are so dangerous and crazy' (Butler 5) Lauren soon comes to suspect its apparent permanence and vitality concerning the general security of the people. 'The neighborhood wall is a massive, looming presence nearby. I see it as a crouching animal, perhaps about to spring, more threatening than protective' (Butler 4). The enclosed community is already on the brink of failing to sustain itself without the state's help and enclosing threats from the outside. With almost all state apparatuses fully collapsed or dysfunctional, American states are bristling with both rich and mediocre gated communities, separating themselves from the criminalized street poor and gangs operating outside.

The population of Robledo is mostly unemployed as the narrative commences and resources are fast depleting. Lauren's parents (both PhDs) are educators, the father has for his second profession ministry of the community's church, and the mother has established a school in the house for the children. Lauren's father is perhaps one of the only handful with still a job outside the walls. He goes out to work once a week, and the women and children do not go out at all. The first episode of a venture outside the walls happens when the community's children accompanied by adults go out in the form of a congregation to the main church to get the former baptized. They see the other Baptist minister 'who still had a real church building with a real baptistery. . . All the adults were armed. That's the rule. Go out in a bunch,

and go armed.' (Butler 5). Hence, the community folks travel through terrorized space, abject danger, and vulnerability to get baptized from the 'fortress church' (Butler 7). This travel episode showcases the urban apartheid as the congregation traverses through walled and un-walled regions. Lauren observes, 'A lot of our ride was along one neighborhood wall after another; some a block long, some two blocks, some five. . . Up towards the hills there were walled estates – one big house and a lot of shacky little dependencies where the servants lived.' (Butler 6) While there are the grand walled estates with separate servant quarters, the suburban ghettos and slums have their respective humble structures – 'We passed a couple of neighborhoods so poor that their walls were made up of unmortared rocks, chunks of concrete, and trash.' (Butler 6). And lastly the exposed and mutilated class:

'Then there were the pitiful, unwalled residential areas. A lot of the houses were trashed – burned, vandalized, infested with drunks or druggies or squatted in by homeless families with their filthy, gaunt, half-naked children. People without heads on the sidewalks outside the walls. A woman, young, naked, and filthy stumbled along past us. Maybe she had been raped so much that she was crazy' (Butler 6).

The economic disparity is obvious in the structural apartheid. This is what the urban theorist/reformist Mike Davis calls the city bristling with malice (Davis 154).

Walls and gates have existed since archaic times. Every civilization and monarchy had towering fortresses dividing the inside from the outside, so why has this phenomenon re-emerged in popular discourse as problematic? The fortresses of the past certainly had security functions but the general masses usually had much access and mobilization, and the residencies inside and outside the walls were largely similar. They were mostly divided based on professions. The shepherds and cultivators preferred the open lands outside the walls while merchants and craftsmen gravitated to the inner city. The walls, also, were not entirely isolating structures but were porous enough for trade, and hence, the marketplace or agora was mostly along the walls, so that the exchange of goods was smooth. The walls and gates were thus the centers of growth and inclusivity as well as security. Modern enclaves, in contrast, serve functions of physical, social, economic, and symbolic enclosure and provide security and access only to authorized members of the largely homogenous, insulated community. There have always existed centers of social and economic prosperity and there have always existed people living and surviving on the peripheries. This

distribution of individuals across space has, however, turned drastically cruel since capitalism invaded public life and community spirit making the resurgence of walls (ancient urban structures) 'reappear in modern settlements' as highly problematic (Grant et al. 913).

The 'incessant centralization of economic and political power' (Bookchin 7) sharpened the already present and developing hierarchies into sheer relations of domination and control. These spatial structures, operating on the unequal distribution of economic resources and social prestige, hence serve as the manifestation of a segregated urban order. This new urban order of apartheid, with its exposed populace on one hand and defensible cities on the other, operates on an 'architecture of fear,' (Grant et al. 913) crafting a built environment of terror that demands an unprecedented level of privatized security and manifests deprivation and violence in its wake in the slum aggregates of the poor. As Mike Davis observes in *The City of Quartz*, 'Wealthier neighborhoods in the canyons and hillsides cower behind walls guarded by gun-toting private police and state- of-the-art electronic surveillance systems.' (154) Jill Grant and Lindsey Mittelsteadt in their paper in the *Environment and Planning* journal elaborate on this spatial-monetary divide: 'The affluent can move to gated enclaves in search of privacy and exclusivity, and in flight from fear, closing themselves off from the dangers outside. By contrast, the poorest of the poor man find themselves enclosed in gated public housing projects, refugee detention centers, or foreign worker compounds, constrained by their circumstances to be set apart from the fabric of the city' (Grant et al. 914). The consequence of this mania for a hyper-secure city by congregating the destitute on one side of the metaphorical as well as literal fence is a) 'the destruction of any truly democratic public space' and b) the city systematically turns inward (Davis 155). This further aggravates the anxieties 'contemporary cities must address: crime, traffic, loss of sense of community, and fear of mixing.' (Grant et al. 914). This fear of mixing ethnicities and classes leads not only to the demise of democratic urban spaces but also generates a 'bias against any spatial interaction between old and new, poor and rich – except in the framework of gentrification.' (Davis 159)

Proponents of enclaves to their defense offer the necessity of security from both, chaos and crime, and natural disasters outside. This research flouts those claims by asserting that the terror of crime and chaos is generated, intensified, and perverted by the establishment of a commodified and polarized economy. This massive

polarization has deep-seated 'implications for civic society, fiscal solvency, social exclusions. . . and about the impact of global capital and real estate markets on urban social and spatial structures' (Webster et al. 315). This phenomenon warns of 'the social fragmentation of the city; out-of-control urban segregation; secession; and the end of civic order as we know it.' Gated communities, hence, stand as 'both symbols and symptoms of a line that is being crossed from voice-based citizenship to exit-based citizenship; from politically organized to market-organized civic society' (Webster 1189).

Robledo, now a poor but self-contained walled enclave, was 'once a rich, green, unwalled little city' (Butler 6). Twenty miles from Los Angeles, Robledo had no neighborhood wall back in the day. Lauren's father also 'once had a church just a few blocks outside (the) wall. He began it before there were so many walls. But after it had been slept in by the homeless, robbed, and vandalized several times, someone poured gasoline in and around it and burned it down. Seven of the homeless people sleeping inside on that last night burned with it' (Butler 5). Hence, the established justification for walls and fences that make "vandal-proof" residencies falls short of proof (Davis 169).

As greater violence ensued outside, the state relegated its responsibilities by subsidizing the public structures and apparatuses to the private multi-national corporations, and more and more of these self-segregating communities emerged. To the extent that Lauren notes it is now exceedingly unimaginable to live without them. 'Crazy to live without a wall to protect you. Even in Robledo, most of the street poor – squatters, winos, junkies, homeless people in general – are dangerous.' (Butler 6) The walls not only function to apparently secure the residential communities inside from the violence outside but also screen the general misery of the homeless outside: 'They cut off each other's ears, arms, legs. . . They carry untreated diseases and festering wounds. They have no money to spend on water to wash them with so even the unwounded have sores. They don't get enough to eat so they're malnourished – or they eat bad food and poison themselves' (Butler 6). This "imagined security" bounds the people of Robledo as a pseudo-community before episodes of outside intrusions start "becoming a daily pattern. This fallacy of the self-contained sustainability of the walled enclaves not only becomes more questionable but also problematic for it fosters the criminality outside. Roitman makes a valuable inquiry into these "self-contained" worlds and opens the line of argument concerning the following questions:

'First, to what extent can gated communities really be isolated from society or services provided by the city? Second, to what extent can their residents self-segregate from other social groups or the society as a whole as a consequence of living in a "self-contained" world?' (Roitman 32) This study quotes Amin and Graham 1990 who support the idea that 'no physically bounded community can ever completely withdraw from the city which surrounds it. No place – even a high-security prison – is ever relationally isolated completely from its surroundings. The relational ties and connections that gated communities have with the rest of the city that surrounds them merely change' (Roitman 32).

The surrounding city in the imagined world of Butler's Robledo is Los Angeles. Mike Davis, the urban theorist, in his book *The City of Quartz*, produces a detailed theoretical basis for the phenomenon which is the fortification of cities. He takes for his material the city of Los Angeles. He explicates the many challenges this fortification and militarization process poses in present-day 'globalization of economy, which leads to growing urban social inequalities, the processes of advancing social polarization and an increase in foreign investments. . . the withdrawal of the state from the provision of basic services (resulting in) a rise in urban violence and the privatization of security' (Roitman 33).

Davis writes that the city of Los Angeles 'bristles with malice'. (Davis 154) Certainly malice of the sequestered poor, mutilated homeless, and displaced immigrants. 'Downtown, a publicly subsidized "urban renaissance" has raised a forbidding corporate citadel, separated from the surrounding poor neighborhoods by battlement and moats. Some of these neighborhoods – predominantly black or Latino – have in turn been sealed off by the police with barricades and checkpoints.' (Davis 154) Indeed, while the city of Robledo is sheltered from the menace outside (and hence an exclusionary force), it is also redlined from other wealthier gated communities and, therefore, is also excluded from the privileged other. In this sense, it is both actively involved in the dual process of sealing off and being sealed off itself. Lauren's father observes, 'Robledo is too big, too poor, and too Hispanic, to be of any interest to anyone – and it has no coastline. What it does have is street poor, body dumps, and a memory of once being well-off, – of shade trees, big houses, hills, and canyons.' (Butler 42) Butler's depiction of Robledo is very similar to Davis's depiction of ethnically mixed immigrant neighborhoods in the city of Los Angeles. 'Ramparts and battlements, reflective glass and elevated pedways, are tropes in an

architectural language warning off the underclass Other. Although architectural critics are usually blind to this militarized syntax, urban pariah groups – whether young black men, poor Latino immigrants, or elderly homeless white females – read the signs immediately.' (Davis 159)

As the urban struggles continue to mount and the state apparatuses disintegrate Lauren fears that the walls and barricades the people of Robledo and other enclaves deemed unbreakable will soon give way, 'But everything was getting worse: the climate, the economy, crime, drugs, you know. I didn't believe we would be allowed to sit behind our walls, looking clean and fat and rich to the hungry, thirsty, homeless, jobless, filthy people outside.' (Butler 64) Specifically after many intrusive episodes of burglary, murder, etc. Lauren's initial fears of the brittleness of the walls and gates heighten and take on an active threat from what once was just a lingering fear. 'Someone shot Amy (Dunn) right through the metal gate. It had to be an accidental hit because you can't see through our gate from the outside. The shooter either fired at someone who was outside the gate or fired at the gate itself, at the neighborhood, at us and our supposed wealth and privilege. Most bullets wouldn't have gotten through the gate. It's supposed to be bulletproof. But it's been penetrated a couple of times before, high up, near the top.' (Butler 18) Amy was a neglected neighborhood child that Lauren had taken under her wing and taught. Similarly, the robbery of Mrs. Sims. Mrs. Sims was a 'poor, sanctimonious, old' lady who lived alone (Butler 10). One day, 'three men climbed over the neighborhood wall, cutting through the strands of barbed wire and Lazor wire on top. Lazor wire is terrible stuff. It's so fine and sharp that it slices into the wings or feet of birds who either don't see it or see it and try to settle on it. People, though, can always find a way over, under, or through.' (Butler 10) The thieves looted her house and one of them raped her. The community people helped her afterward, however, she committed suicide a week later after her first tragedy when her son's house was torched: her 'son, his five kids, his wife, her brother, and her brother's three kids all died in a house fire – an arson fire. The son's house had been in an unwalled area north and east of us, closer to the foothills' (Butler 10).

These and some other incidents helped escalate the community's general fear of the outside and Lauren's disbelief in the permanence of the enclosing walls. She likens the city to an island, 'surrounded by sharks except that sharks don't bother you unless you go into the water. But our land sharks are on their way in. It's just a matter

of how long it takes for them to get hungry enough.' (Butler 18) And Lauren realizes unless immediate collective action isn't taken regarding the situation it is only a matter of time before all their lives disperse like Amy Dunn's or Mrs. Sims's. 'We'll be hit and hit and hit, then the big hit will come. And if we're not ready for it, it will be like Jericho. . . In LA, some walled communities bigger and stronger than this one just aren't there anymore. Nothing left but ruins, rats, and squatters.' (Butler 20) Robledo experiences seven back-to-back intrusions into the community's 'house or garden in less than two months in an 11-household community. If this is what's happening to us, what must it be like for people who are really rich – although perhaps with their big guns, private armies of security guards, and up-to-date security equipment, they're better able to fight back.' (Butler 41)

What's remarkably evident is that the manifestation of walls, gates, barriers and barricades not only excessively polarize the society into spaces of over-abundance and scarcity, but also creates an "urban form" that 'obediently follows repressive function' (Davis 156). Hence, Davis calls this "fortress effect" to serve functions of "double repression" (158). The global spread of gated communities may present a glorifying/elitist and "developed" image of the urban renaissance. Still, its reality 'is only a triumphal gloss over the brutalization of its inner-city neighborhoods and the stark divisions of class and race represented in its built environment.' (Davis 156) Davis argues that since gated communities have emerged as a globally spread phenomenon now, the polarization is not only seen within the urban apartheid but enrages the already present global North/South divide. 'The pleasure domes of the elite Westside rely upon the social imprisonment of a third-world service proletariat in increasingly repressive ghettos and barrios.' (Davis 156) This polarization 'marks the decline of urban liberalism' (Davis 156).

In contradistinction, the founding principle of a gated community is homogenizing a class and denying access to non-members/residents to what was once a public entity. The city of Robledo and indeed much of the world depicted in *Parable of the Sower* dialogues with this state of grossly mean polarization and the "private solutions" the elites have come up with to counter the general malice corroding the rest of the crippling society. 'Reductions in the supply of basic services such as health, education, housing, employment, and security have left large population groups without these public provisions. Accompanied by wealthy citizens' ability to produce their own private solutions' (as is seen in the emergence of self-contained

gated communities) (Roitman 34). Roitman cites Arizaga according to whom 'the closure and social homogeneity of the gated community are essential to providing a place that protects against a world that is always changing.' (Roitman 35) This is Lauren's biggest fear and the basis for her doctrine The Earthseed. Change is inevitable and it is essential to adapt to it and embrace it rather than resist it for it cannot be stopped but shaped through rational human agency to meet our requisites for survival.

'All that you touch/You Change/All that you Change/Changes you/The only lasting truth/Is Change. /God/ Is Change' (Butler 3-4)

Eventually, change does come as the illusions of security dissipate and the gate of Robledo is destroyed from the outside by manic pariah groups. They bring with them the violence the walls were briefly keeping at bay. Lauren's premonitions of the walls eventually tumbling down and the inner community crumbling apart come true. A literal manifestation of the dream she had earlier in the book 'The wall before me is burning. Fire has sprung from nowhere, has eaten in through the wall, has begun to reach toward me, reach for me. The fire spreads.' (Butler 4)

The many challenges accompanying urban apartheidism are the escalation of violence in the ousted regions and unwalled spaces. Poverty and hunger are rampant. So much so that the world-building of *The Parable* has widespread cannibalism in impoverished and unattended areas. Lauren on her long journey to emancipated lands (north towards Canada) witnessed this firsthand. Children were 'roasting a severed human leg, maneuvering it where it lay in the middle of their fire atop the burning wood by twisting its foot' (Butler 99). Poverty and scarcity lead to loot, murder, and body violations of multiple degrees. And those who cannot even be robbed are raped and killed. Newly developed drugs that induce pyromania are in fast circulation resulting in vast-spread arson. 'The reports say that it makes watching a fire better than sex. I don't know whether the reporters are condemning it or advertising it.' (Butler 20) However, pyromania is not the only reason why most of Butler's America is burning. People are frustrated, angry, and hopeless. The people exiled from gated or walled communities channel their frustrations this way. These large-scale acts of terror and crime are accompanied by natural calamities like tornados, blizzards, earthquakes, epidemics, floods, and wildfires – all occurring in an economically collapsed society with little prospect of repair because the government ceases to be

held accountable and all responsibilities are relegated to private security and ownership. This is the state of affairs tormenting the world and its people in *The Parable of the Sower* which this study problematizes.

4.3 Capitalism and Alternative Politics in *Parable of the Sower*

'All struggles/ Are essentially power struggles/ Who will rule/ Who will lead/ Who will define/refine/confine/design/Who will dominate/All struggles/Are essentially power struggles/And most are no more intellectual/than two rams/knocking their heads together.' (Butler 33)

Murray Bookchin, the founder and proponent of social ecology, claims the modern world is an irrational one. The irrationality captured in this book is not exaggerated or far-fetched but an ultimate reality that most of us are experiencing and living through. The exquisite and mass military-industrial complex that came out of the fiscal-military revolution, expanded through the imperial World Wars has come to devise mankind's self-extermination (Bookchin 77). Bookchin goes as far as to say that before the ultimate demise of the planet, which is fast escalating, mankind would have already perished, solely owing to their failure to actualize a rational world that is ecologically administered (51). The culmination of these techno-industrial revolutions and the amassing of knowledge and power have led to the circumstances the modern irrational society, and the world of Lauren Olamina, finds itself struggling in. Hence, the fundamental premise behind the irrationality is the incessant centralization of power that takes away any social control from people over their socioeconomic affairs. This is done through the dissent or transfer of power from the state to transnational corporations and the latter's unchecked exploitation of the people and nature by exercising that power (Bookchin 7). Bankole, Lauren's travel companion and husband by the end of the book, remarks on this exploitation. 'Once people get the idea that it's all right to take what you want and destroy the rest, who knows when they'll stop.' (Butler 82) This remark is also true of America's interventionist policy of looting other countries and devastating them, executed by transnational corporate regimes and outsourced military.

How capitalism has absorbed both the political and the social is unprecedented. Interactions have become commodified. Modern relations are like market relations; society itself has become "economized". (Bookchin 53) This is late-stage advanced capitalism with its mantra of "grow-or-die" and the desiccation of

the natural world. This gradual infiltration into the social, political, and environmental domain has led capitalism from its terrain of economy to culture. Hence, the battle for social ecology is now largely a cultural one as well.

Not only is today's free market sheer but it is also met with little to no resistance. While the social and ecological crises are sped up and deepened, we find ourselves more and more disempowered to detain and reverse the damage. This is largely because there is no representation at the political fronts and most of the green movements have been hollowed out or digressed from their fundamental agendas and have bowed down to the ferocious market forces. The ideological left has crumbled. There is hardly any participation in the parliament. And the extra-parliamentary movements either do not exist or they continue to be dominated by market fundamentalism. (Bookchin 8)

The absence of a well-informed and disciplined movement to successfully respond to these challenges results in discontent channeled through the Right instead – emergent in the shape of religious fundamentalism or other extreme outcomes as is seen in *Parable of the Talents* (the sequel to *Parable*). There a terrorist regime emerges with the promise to solve the socio-economic issues only to result in further chaos and disarray. The urgency of the need for a movement that provides alternate solutions to capitalist hegemony and bestirs humanity into radical action cannot be stressed enough. Although necessary, declaring an environmental emergency is not the state's only responsibility (though not many have taken this step as well) but practical and developmental steps must be taken towards a sustainable future. This is where the need for a fully functional social ecology comes in.

Social ecology traces the roots of the current ecological crisis instrumented by capitalism to "hierarchical domination" and stresses that a 'competitive capitalist economy must unavoidably give rise to unprecedented contradictions with the nonhuman natural world.' (Bookchin 70) Social ecology thus answers one of the key questions this research poses: how are the imbalances in the natural world related to the imbalances in the social world and whether or not there's an element of causality in them? Social
ecology establishes that the hierarchical relations that lead to most of the ethnic, cultural, economic, and gender conflicts are also the root cause of ecological dislocations. (Bookchin 19) How human beings interact relationally with each other

corresponds significantly to the ecological crisis. Unless we give this crucial relationship utmost importance and not just a token recognition like most theorists and activists do, we will continue to dismiss the vital link between men dominating men and men dominating nature. And that class relationships and hierarchical mentality 'that so thoroughly permeate society (is) what has given rise to the very idea of dominating the natural world.' (Bookchin 20) Furthermore, this study establishes how the hierarchical phenomenon is given representation in our cityscapes through the domineering built environment of gated fortresses. Social ecology's transformative aim is to work to help prevail the mentality of complementarity in contrast to domination and to establish a society that takes responsibility for forming care relationships with the non-human life to achieve a 'richer, creative, and developmental whole' (Bookchin 21)

One outcome of capitalism is the prevalence of neo-slavery. With a crippled economy and widespread unemployment, people are forced to work in a form of modern- world corporate slavery. This is made evident in the city of Olivar in the novel. A small yet comparatively rich (than Robledo) coastal city, Olivar had been struggling for some time due to the drastic climate changes. Its land became increasingly unstable, parts crumbling into the ocean, rising sea levels, and retreating sandy beaches. Unlike the poor and ethnically mixed Robledo, Olivar had a more literate, white middle-class population that paid higher taxes. However, as things became overall worse on the state level, the politicians it elected abandoned them, they had an influx of desperate and forlorn refugees forcing their way inside from one side, and the rising sea from the other. Notwithstanding the crumbling earth and crumbling economy, it submitted its fate to the KSF, a company that bought it out and took over. The residents of Olivar yielded to the demands of the company: to accept way smaller salaries than their socio-economic status in exchange for food, shelter, and 'their fight with the Pacific' (Butler 42). Butler compares their policies to early American company towns that exploited their workers, cheated, and abused them. She goes back even earlier and makes similarities to antebellum slavery. Lauren's father foresees the fate of Olivar and comments, 'In not very much time, I think the new hires would be in debt to the company. That's an old company-town trick – get people into debt, hang on to them, and work them harder. Debt slavery. That might work in Christopher Donner's America. Labor laws, state and federal, are not what they once were.' (Butler 42) Mike Davis argues that without proper labor laws, workers will be

at the mercy of their owners' unjustifiable arbitrariness resulting in 'likeminded people. . . control and shape their small worlds.' (Davis 178)

On her journey to the North (where water isn't costlier than food and people do not live as 21st-century slaves), Lauren meets a group of people escaping from neo- slavery. Emery and her husband who worked on the farm for shelter and food were one such fugitive couple. Their farm was sold to a 'big agribusiness conglomerate' and they had new owners (Butler 99). They paid wages to the workers in company notes, not cash which could only be transcribed at the company store. After the deduction of their rent, and payment for food and used clothes they were left with debt for other bills and charges. Laws were established where the indebted workers could pay at other places as "quasi-industrial" people or as "convicts" to pay off their loans. With piling debts, children were put into labor as well in cases where the parents died, were disabled, or somehow escaped. Jasmine Yarish calls this escapism "fugitivity," 'a political practice by which people seek to escape the radical capitalistic impulse to confine, detain, and commodify their existence as both capital and labor' (Yarish 60). When Cory, Lauren's stepmother wishes for someone to buy Robledo as well so that they can live on the bare minimum, Lauren's father warns her that there is nothing safe about slavery and that **'this country is going to be parceled out as a source of cheap labor and cheap land. When people like those in Olivar beg to sell themselves, our surviving cities are bound to wind up the economic colonies of whoever can afford to buy them.'** (Butler 45)

To escape such forms of neo-slavery, Bookchin asserts the establishment of a system where neither the economy is nationalized nor retained in the hands of private corporations but instead municipalized (102). This forms the basis for "communalism." Also known as "libertarian municipalism," it reorders the economy and basic polity to meet the needs of a rational ecological society.

'Social ecology is an ecology not of hunger and material deprivation but of plenty; it seeks the creation of a rational society in which waste, indeed excess, will be controlled by a new system of values; and when or if shortage arise as a result of irrational behavior, popular assemblies will establish rational standards of consumption by democratic processes.' (Bookchin 97)

It initiates meaningful radical change by resisting the infinite expansion of the present-day "predatory society" by rearranging it politically and socially to become a

"rational society" in which mankind can live in a 'protective balance with the natural world' (Bookchin 96). Where capitalism is providing conditions for collective crises, communalism can deescalate it through its emphasis on municipalized economy and citizenship – 'economic systems that can be counterposed to the growing power of the centralized nation-state and centralized economic corporations.' (Bookchin 67)

As Lauren establishes the acorn or Earthseed community, the locus shifts to the community, what Bookchin calls 'the neighborhood, the town, the municipality' (56). In such a community, power is not detained to the elite strata or the state alone but institutionalized in grass-root level democracy, empowering the people who partake in communal assemblies. The free municipality operates in open tension with the state. (Bookchin 50) Unlike Lauren's acorn society, however, social eco-communities do not exist in isolation, as they will be no different from gated communities. Instead, direct democracy extends to confederations of eco-communities that work interdependently. Hence, there is a complex network of confederacies rather than stultifying, and introverted walled communities. This is the alternative politics of social ecology.

The alternative offered by Butler is a) to be sensible of how our needs will shape and drive our actions, a thought this study endorses. Lauren exclaims that to grow we must have 'enough freedom' from violence and terror. This is where disaster capitalism intervenes. It practically disables the developing countries from ever emerging on the path of development by keeping them terrorized, their state borders always on the verge of being compromised, and separatist terror groups erupting from the inside. And b) to explore and inhabit other living worlds. This is the "destiny" of the Earthseed community. 'Space could be our future' and hence a system of politics should be introduced that invests in (monetarily, technologically, and with manpower) (Butler 9). Butler believes that another living world would be easier to adapt to and grow in, one which would not have a connection with the Earth. I suppose this thought can have far- reaching consequences on how humanity will shape its future but there's a big hint of submission in Butler's doctrine as well. It's as if she's given up on the restoration of this planet. This research puts forth more achievable alternatives, a) to declare an environmental emergency immediately and to have all countries' policies be aligned with it (from paying the ecological reparations due to the afflicted countries to replacing depleting energy with eco-technologies and organic modes of sustenance that depend on renewable resources) b) to counter

advanced corporate capitalism with confederal municipal libertarianism, and work from "free-market" to "free-nature" and c) to promote and implement the ethics of complementarity to resist present hierarchical dominations of class, race, gender, ethnicity etc., all that also manifest in architectonic structures.

4.4 Resistance, Healing, and Transformation in *Parable of the Sower*

'We live in capitalism. Its power seems inescapable. So did the divine right of kings. Any human power can be resisted and changed by human beings. Resistance and change often begin in art, and very often in our art, the art of words.' (Ursula K. Le Guin)

Resistance and change are inarguably the founding principles of Lauren Oya Olamina's belief system "Earthseed: The Book of the Living." Its tenets focus on the will to live (the collective well-being of the people and the planet) and foster inertia, regeneration, and transistasis. This study interprets it as the will to induce the recovery of damaged ecosystems, biodiversity, and cooperative human communities. Earthseed is a practical, activist approach to environmental convalescence and it teaches learning, planning, and doing. 'Pray working/ Pray learning/ planning/doing/Pray creating/teaching/reaching/Pray to focus your thoughts/ Still your fears/ Strengthen your purpose.' (Butler 101) This study emphasizes that environmental issues are not just moral concerns that can be dealt with through individual accountability but they require transformative political intervention and extensive practices to counter the current regressions. From human bodies to socio-economic structures, everything is registering the hazards of ecological despair. The immense effects of the ever-expanding petro-industrial world (as have been detailed in chapter 4.2) can only be alleviated through collective resistance against its pervasive hegemony. Butler's imagined world of scarcity where food, shelter, and security are remnants of a distant past is neither far-fetched nor intentionally debilitating. It is the world we find ourselves in today but continue to treat the climate concerns as intangible and invisible. What we have is an energy crisis developed from extensive capitalist imperialism. And what we desperately lack is a well- informed and directed socio-ecological movement to address it.

The 2024-2027 (an exemplary dissent from dystopia imagined to dystopia achieved) imagined America of *Parable of the Sower* is the present state of most of the Global South engulfed with poverty, terrorism, and a range of inadequacies

consequent to the imperialist policies of the Global North. However, as the saying goes when the least of us are threatened we all are at risk. Butler's vision of America is starker than what the state can possibly envision. The architectural introversion we see in the manifestation of gated communities will produce hyper-quarantining (as is made visible post-pandemic).

'Human beings will survive of course. Some other countries will survive. Maybe they'll absorb what's left of us. Or maybe we'll just break up into a lot of little states quarreling and fighting with each other over whatever crumbs are left. That's almost happened now with states shutting themselves off from one another, treating state lines as national borders.' (Butler 113)

Earthseed is counter-quarantining. It is about convergence and co-dependence— community as a social institution regaining its lost vitality. 'Once or twice/ each week/ A Gathering of Earthseed/ Is a good and necessary thing. /It vents emotion, then/ quiets the mind. /It focuses attention/ strengthens purpose, and/ unifies people (Butler 73). In a sense, Earthseed is formed in reminiscence of the archaic indigenous teachings. Eons and eons of Indigenous people preached and practiced these Earthseed parables: protecting the water bodies, the biosphere, and the folk emphasis on community and distrust of meta-systems. 'Civilization is to groups what intelligence is to individuals. It is a means of combining the intelligence of many to achieve ongoing group adaptation' (Butler 35). Earthseed is also a resistance to homogenizing (class, gender, ethnicity). It embraces diversity. 'Embrace diversity/ Unite - / Or be Divided/ Robbed/ Ruled/ Killed/ By those who see you as prey' (Butler 67). Hence, Butler insists the community should be multi- cultural, multi-generational, multi-sexual, etc. for it to be effective. The community under Lauren's leadership is like that. Not that everybody likes everybody but they work together out of necessity and a common purpose. So "whiteness," "brownness," "blackness," "intermixed couples," "presence of children" and "presence of elderly citizens" become participatory and contributory elements instead of differences and prejudices.

Furthermore, Earthseed is about persistence and adaptability. These two elements not only constitute Earthseed but what Butler coins as "Positive Obsession". 'Without persistence, what remains is an enthusiasm of the moment. Without adaptability, what remains may be channeled into destructive fanaticism.' (Butler 3) Additionally, the God of Earthseed is not a deity but "change" itself. The reason why

Lauren calls change "God" is because people often forget ideas but they fear and remember God. 'With forethought and work/ We shape God/In the end, we yield to God/ We adapt and endure/ For we are Earthseed/ And God is Change,' and the underlying philosophy is that change cannot be resisted but must be shaped and focused. (Butler 8) The emphasis on shaping change echoes Ursula's quote – the epigram of the chapter – that any human power can be changed and resisted. Since change is an ongoing reality, what seems ceaseless and unbreakable (like the apparent permanence of capitalism's reign) can be penetrated and dissolved. What is required is agency, adaptability, and directed focus 'so that we can do more than just get batted around by crazy people, desperate people, thugs, and leaders who don't know what they're doing.' (Butler 20). Hence, in alliance with the goal of Earthseed, this study aims to initiate and guide action. To take the route from the present state of denial to 'recognition, acceptance, and the will to act.' (Johns 274)

By reimagining the community, Lauren introduces interconnectedness amidst intersectionality. Lauren's main prospect for activism and leadership is critical imagination. The very ability to imagine something new. This leads to creative transformation: creating new contexts and modes for survival. Adrienne Maree Brown calls this ability for creative transformation "emergent strategy" in her book inspired by *Parable, Emergent Strategy: Shaping Change, Changing Worlds (2017).* Change is accepting what was to where we are now, which is why Lauren can accept the loss of her family, community, friends, and town seemingly easier than the rest. That's emotional adaptability. 'Emergent strategy is how we intentionally change in ways that grow our capacity to embody the just and liberated worlds we long for (Brown 7). Emergence is being in the "right relationship" with the planet. In a nutshell, this research, in its capacity to critique capitalist fundamentalism and disaster apartheid as it shows itself in space, aims to bring Butler's baton forward in a post-pandemic crisis society and explicate the fundamental ways in which we must change and transform on micro and macro levels to allow ourselves and the environment to heal from the savage stream of consumption and militarization.

Chapter 5

Analysis of *Into the Forest*

5.1 Introduction to *Into the Forest* by Jean Hegland

Into the Forest (1997) is the debut novel of the American writer *Jean* Hegland (born 1956). Hegland has written few but very influential novels: *Into the Forest (1997), Windfalls (2004),* and *Still Time (2015).* Her maiden but most renowned work, *Into the Forest,* is based in the near-future northern California (Butler's *Parable of the Sower* published just four years prior is based in near-future southern California) and details the story of two young adult sisters, Nell (the younger) and Eva (the elder), as they navigate their lives through loss of parents, innocence, and home in a crisis-ridden America. Redwood, the comparatively isolated town they live in, is at the beginning comparatively screened from the terrors and crises that are unfolding in the larger cities and more densely populated centers. Life beyond Redwood is dominated by war, climate breakdown, biodiversity loss, freshwater scarcity, forest fires, zoonotic diseases, economic collapses, and raging inequalities. Conjectures arise as to why all the governing structures are collapsing but the people of Redwood are mostly aloof and disconnected from the events, until eventually the conflicts and converging crises come, wake, and sweep Redwood off its slumber and false security.

The gated community of Robledo in *Parable of the Sower* and the isolated town of Redwood in *Into the Forest* had in at the beginning of the narratives one thing in common – the sense of false security. Huddled by the comfort of that protection, in their isolation and disconnection (they were isolated as the crises developed for there was no gas to travel, no functional telephones for communication, no electricity, etc.) the family of four – Nell, Eva, and their parents – live on in misguided bliss unaware of the storms raging outside. Nell calls this the "fugue-state," a dismissive and half-amnesiac sustenance, a self-denying utopic hope that things will right themselves, 'as though we thought if we ignored the shadows, they would vanish into the brilliance of hope.' (Hegland 3) Change is inevitable and society, as is always the case, feared to realize that most of the environmental change is, in fact, irreversible. 'Maybe we didn't realize as soon as we might have that after decades of warnings and predictions things were actually starting to fail' (Hegland 9).

Similar to Lauren's diary entries in *Parable of the Sower,* Nell records her and

Eva's days of fugue-state, where everything (energy, technology, and most of mankind's sanity) has come to a halt and survival is questionable. Her epistolary records are a fleeting memory of losses: of her family, of her future aspirations, of goods and possessions. In contradistinction, these losses lead to other gains. The strategic location of Redwood is crucial to the narrative. Placed on the margins of the city and forest, they have access to both worlds. When one world collapses, they find refuge and abundance in the unexplored other world, the forest. Hegland goes to a great extent to emphasize the extent and gravity of losses only to bring forth the philosophy of dispossession, 'demonstrating that all we could lose is actually a burden that stifles our deeper, more natural selves' (McKee 17).

Hegland establishes that the fugue-state people have come to develop and inhabit through many decades of ignoring the signs and symptoms of collapse has led them to the crisis that is being experienced now. Nell's mother starts doing pottery to cope with her sickness and shares a very meaningful lesson from the whole learning experience:

'She used to say that a good potter had to listen to the clay, and tonight I remember how the smallest bubble or bit of gravel, the tiniest slip of her hands, and the whole perfect pot would start to wobble. If even the slightest wobble would went unnoticed or uncorrected, it would grow larger and larger, taking on its own violent life, out of control and so strong it would finally tear the pot apart – flinging wet shards of clay across the room' (Hegland 181).

This study argues that this is the consequence of unchecked capitalism and perverse consumer culture. Since the boom of the industrial mania, capitalism has escalated exceedingly and has compromised the biosphere and natural reservoirs of energy and now we are beyond the tipping point. 'Perhaps it took longer than it should have for us to suspect that something different was happening. But even in town, I think the changes began so slowly—or were so much a part of the familiar fabric of trouble and inconvenience—that nobody really recognized them until later that spring.' (Hegland 9). Reading the book twenty-six years after its conception not only proves Hegland's prophetic foresight but brings to our conscious attention the dismal notion that mankind is still trapped in a fugue state – that genocides, war and terror, pandemics, falling infrastructures, apartheid, poverty and scarcity, and the nuclear dread is not only prevalent as ever but has emerged in other horrific forms

and is moving towards its ultimate end. These are, indeed, the offshoots of free-market fundamentalism and disaster capitalism.

5.2 Urban Struggle: Ecological Failure and Civil Strife in *Into the Forest*

'Cultures topple, societies collapse, and little pockets of people are left, remnants and refugees, struggling to find food, to defend themselves from famine or disease or marauders while the grass grows up through the palace floors and the temples crumble' (Hegland 120).

The near-future world of Jean Hegland's *Into the Forest* is deep into an urban and environmental crisis. Electricity is gone, phones are not functional, planes have stopped flying, there is no food in most stores, no gas at gas stations, banks, schools, and hospitals have shut down. Civilization has once again reverted to using water pumps (which still need some gas that is fast depleting), kerosene lamps, and radio. Cases of meningitis, measles, new strains of hemorrhagic fevers, and variations of flu are rampant for which no antibiotics are available and so people have taken to quarantine. When state structures started failing, the state employees were paid with promissory notes which eventually the banks stopped acknowledging and the population went from unpaid to unemployed. Nell reflects on how quickly everyone, including herself, adapted to these changes. But these changes did not happen overnight. Hegland informs us that the state's deficit had been snowballing for more than forty years, there was a two-generational oil crisis, paramilitary groups were bombing places, the overseas currency market had collapsed, wars were being engaged in every part of the world (all instigated and staged by American policy of cross-border involvement). 'The fighting was taking place half a world away, taking place, the politicians promised, to protect our freedoms, to defend our way of life. It was a distant war, but it seemed to cling to our days, to permeate our awareness like a far-off, nasty smoke' (Hegland 12). Additionally, the fuel-fiscal industry had aggravated the environment leading to large-scale calamities:

'In March an earthquake caused one of California's nuclear reactors to melt down, and the Mississippi River flooded more violently than had ever been imagined possible. . . There were holes in the ozone, our forests were vanishing, our farmlands were demanding more and more fertilizers and pesticides to yield increasingly less—and more poisonous—food.' (Hegland 12)

Hegland mocks the free-market expansionist policy of America and emphasizes that it will lead to regression, not advancement. Hegland's near-future America is in blunt likeness to the present third-world countries in economic-ecological crises. The new U.S. president arranging for loans from the Commonwealth, third-world countries sending support and funds to bail America out, the leading super-powers China and Russia are at war with each other and America has been forgotten. Hegland, in her prophetic world- building, thus reverses the current situation to elucidate the ills of American society and assumes that its eventual end will be no better than the presently struggling Global South. Los Angeles is bereft of any water supply and 'hordes of people were trying to walk north through the drought-ridden Central Valley.' (Hegland 12) Walking like Lauren Olamina and her traveling community in *Parable of the Sowers.*

Violence steeped and furthered following the collapse of the economy escalating inflation, poverty, and scarcity. More and more people were left hungry, mad, and dissatisfied and they channeled their dissatisfaction through rioting, arson, looting, and killing. 'Schoolchildren were shooting each other at recess. Teenagers were gunning down motorists on the freeways. Grown-ups were opening fire on strangers in fast-food restaurants.' (Hegland 12) Most of the towns and cities were vacated and "Boom towns" were rumored to be emerging. Boom towns were types of gated communities that had been rebuilt on land where people had died of starvation and epidemics. The surviving population claimed the leftover lands and assets and isolated themselves from the rest of society to live like kings. Boston is one example of a fortress city, termed "boom town" in the novel. Many people left their places and moved to such boomtowns but only those who could heavily invest were permitted and the rest were left out to rot, be mobbed, and killed. Most usually died on their journey there. Those who survived but were not permitted into those towns because of a) overcrowding and b) lack of assets (or belonging to certain undesirable ethnicities, classes, or races) when returned found their houses squatted in. Unlike other places, Boom Towns had reserves of gas, phones were working, and jobs were established. Thus, we see the depiction of a fully bloomed urban apartheid.

Naomi Klein, in *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism,* argues that in moments of crisis when people are disoriented and vulnerable, governments and corporations often push through radical economic policies that would be met with resistance during normal times. Hence, in the absence of fully functional state

apparatuses, the big corporations preserved the prospering urban centers or bought out regions that had some intrinsic assets and enclaved or enwalled them as green zones/boom towns or "ownership societies", similar to the city of Olivar in *Parable of the Sower*. The capitalist, according to Klein, always sees crises as opportunities to inflict their respective policies, in this case of hegemonic socio-economic and political supremacy manifested in the forms of prosperous gated communities. Disaster capitalism thus leads to disaster apartheid, bringing forth a world order that operates on divisions and hierarchies.

The town of Redwood, so called because it is tucked up against the state-owned forest of Redwood, is isolated from the din and noise of the city. With eighty acres of second-growth forest on one side and a bristling city (distanced thirty-two miles away) on the other, the town of Redwood stands, as it were, a mediatory or conciliatory space between nature and mankind. When the daughters, Nell and Eva, craved the indulgencies of the city their father always remarked that here they had everything in bounty except for the unending greed and obsessions of people. 'At least, here some recognizable shape remains – even now – to our interrupted lives.' (Hegland 14)

While the edge of the forest gives the town of Redwood the air of an "open city," it is more similar to an enclosed gated community at the beginning of the narrative. Both spatial enclosures and constructed ideologies manifest a sinister and redundant image of the forest, while the 32-mile-apart city center evokes feelings of bliss and prosperity. The Plaza (where the girls went on most weekends) was a city block at the heart of Redwood, with gazebos where jazz bands performed, and splashy fountains where they congregated, made wishes, drank, and made bonfires. (Hegland 43) Mike Davis comments on the high "livability" of these structures – 'office workers and affluent tourists sipping a cappuccino and listening to free jazz concerts in the terraced gardens of California Plaza' (160). The world beyond the plaza, however, was crazy and out of control 'for it seemed that nothing as compelling could possibly be taking place elsewhere' (Hegland 46) but as state structures fell apart, the towns vacated, no gas for city voyages, and conditions became dire at home with the mother's demise it became increasingly clear that 'there will be no rescue' (Hegland 120). 'Ever since this began we have been waiting to be saved, waiting like stupid princesses for our rightful lives to be restored to us.' (Hegland 120)

After being marooned at their house following the loss of parents and society a grave period of stillness follows. Their inactivity breaks as the essentialism of survival kicks in. Nell refuses to follow her boyfriend, Eli, up north toward those Boomtowns and decides to remain with her sister. They cultivate their garden and store as much food as they can but further circumstances and increasing co-dependence on nature prove to them that their rightful lives 'are out there' in the forest (Hegland 191). This especially happens after Eva's rape by a man who comes looking for gas.

After the incident of assault, they become increasingly fearful of the "inside," their home, and the city structures that were previously built for protection and inclusion. While Eva goes into an emotionally detached state of numbness, Nell becomes more and more paranoid. 'And sometimes when I wake in the morning, my first thought is panic— I've got to get outside.' (Hegland 165) While the outside has its guaranteed fears, inside their home they felt trapped and exposed. Eventually, they burn their estate down, 'Silently Eva took my hand, and together we listened to the crashing and shrieking of collapsing walls, the wild hiss and roar of that much fire.' (194) Hence, they move from an enclosed space to an open system: the forest.

5.3 Capitalism and Alternative Politics in *Into the Forest*

'I never knew how much we consumed. It seems as if we are all appetite, as if a human being is simply a bundle of needs to drain the world. It's no wonder there are wars, no wonder the earth and water and air are polluted. It's no wonder the economy collapsed if Eva and I use so much merely to stay alive.' (Hegland 108)

The enlightenment of Nell and Eva in *Into the Forest* is the admission of the present mania of late-stage advanced capitalism to alter the whole climactic pattern of the environment to meet the ever-growing market system that demands expansion and imperial regimentation of commodities. Fostering marketplace values and percolating them in the social, educational, and private, all the while extracting the spiritual from the very equation. Rendering the pre-capitalist traditions of mutual aid and moral idealism as archaic, redundant, and naïve and exchanging them with business behaviors. (Bookchin 53-54) The current society is hence fully absorbed by this advanced economy. (Bookchin 57) And only when the crisis happened, did Hegland's characters come to know the reality of their struggle. The realization that the environmental struggle is also a social, cultural, and political one. Murray Bookchin,

the pioneer of the social-ecological movement from its inception in the early 1950s, remarks on the patterns of consumption and appetite which Nell reflects on in the above passage as proposedly indispensable by the raging free-market, which would not de-escalate even if the whole population is cut in half. Corporations will always find a way to brainwash people into buying far more than their natural needs to further their industry. Every individual must possess multiple gadgets where one would do. The military would keep demanding and producing new models of mass destruction to keep their industry booming (Bookchin 45). Thus, war, terror, imperialism, accumulation of wealth, and poverty would grow as exponentially as the market does while the planet grows irredeemably shallower.

The commodity has deeply infiltrated the religious, familial, and personal aspects of the modern world. On Christmas, Nell's father explains this matter in cut-throat realism: 'We're not Christians, we're capitalists. Everybody in this whang-danged country is a capitalist, whether he likes it or not. Everyone in this country is one of the world's most voracious consumers, using resources at a rate twenty times greater thanthat of anyone on this poor earth. And Christmas is our opportunity to pick up the pace.' (Hegland 3) Similarly, on noticing that most of the Christmas products were "made in China," their father remarks satirically, 'I hope we are sending them blonde Buddhas in return, nothing more likely to break down religious chauvinism than a free-market, worldwide economy.' (Hegland 6) Hence, all aspects of the social community network are dominated by capitalism, and raising environmental justice voices without acknowledging this simple reality is only talking in voids and abstractions without producing the necessary consciousness needed to combat the actual problem.

Not only is today's free market sheer but it is also met with little to no resistance. While the social and ecological crises are sped up and deepened, we find ourselves more and more disempowered to detain and reverse the damage. This is largely because there is no representation at the political fronts and most of the green movements have been hollowed out or digressed from their fundamental agendas and have come to terms with the ferocious market forces. The ideological left has crumbled. There is hardly any participation in the parliament. And the extra-parliamentary movements either do not exist or they continue to be dominated by market fundamentalism. (Bookchin 8)

The present failure of the traditional scope of politics leads to the need for alternate politics. To create a new body of thought that advances a coherent and participatory social approach that challenges systems of oppression. Bookchin was convinced that market economy and power centralization cannot be resisted through 'vague libertarian ideals of popular self-management, mutual aid, and a stateless community,' manifestos of traditional social radicalism (Bookchin 13). Only a coherent political theory can re-harmonize the relationship between society and nature, namely social ecology, marked by direct democracy, municipalization, and confederalism. (Bookchin 12-13) This form of grassroots, collaborative governance accompanied by global-scale degrowth is an absolute necessity if we are to remotely envision an alternate future instead of the one we are headed towards. From scarcity to sustenance.

On the notion of degrowth against the backdrop of mania for growth, Nell comments, 'I sometimes think how much better it would be if we were to still our desires, slough off our needs for water and shelter and all this food.' (Hegland 108) Of course, the need for water, shelter, and food are the most basic human requirements for survival. And degrowth certainly doesn't suggest such a nihilistic mode of living. 'Social ecology is an ecology not of hunger and material deprivation but of plenty' (Bookchin 97). Bookchin's emphasis on the ecological society as a "rational" society means that the demands of that society are rational. A rational society operates on a dependable, access-to-all healthcare system, a strongly networked and diverse community life. Where growth and production are demand-based (for use and not profit), where science and technology do not lead to nuclear fears and urban blights but work in synthesis for the well-being of both human and non-human lives. Where power meets 'rationally conceived needs. . . established by citizen's assemblies and confederations of assemblies' (Bookchin 51). Hence, citizenship is participatory for its absence in vital politics marks the decline in human development. For politics was 'once referred to (as) a public arena peopled by conscious citizens who felt competent to manage their own communities' (Bookchin 58).

If current geopolitics do not heed the ecological cry for deceleration and do not seek to redress the environmental abuses, mankind will most definitely transition into the scarcity-crisis society of *Into the Forest*. The horrific scale of the present unequal distribution of wealth across gated and ungated societies will lead to a hungry society whose collective imagination is centered around indelible loss and need. Nell

grieves on this depravity on seeing her emptying pantry, numbered matchsticks, fretting over and hoarding scrapes of goods, 'Now it seems as though all of life is a series of lasts—this last cup of tea weaned to the clarity of water, the last quarter-spoonful of sugar rubbed between our tongues and the roofs of our mouths until each grain has dissolved and the syrup has seeped drop by drop down our throats. The last slivers of macaroni. The final lentil.' (Hegland 108) She reminisces over the time she and her family lived with abandon and the 'careless grace of a consumer' and is appalled over their previous mode of casual existence. (Hegland 9) Unaware of the consequences of the irrationality of that existence. She reads from her encyclopedia about an ancient indigenous Baja tribe for whom meat was an extremely rare delicacy, 'they would tie a string to a scrap of animal flesh so they could chew it, swallow it, and then haul it back up, to have the pleasure of chewing and swallowing again. I was embarrassed when I read that, because it reminded me of myself, unable to let go of anything more, unable to face even the smallest loss.' (Hegland 8)

The alternative offered in *Into the Forest* is the spiritual as well as physical reconnection with nature. Escaping the urban violence, Nell and Eva with Eva's newborn baby decide to settle in the forest, starting life anew on the forest's bounty. Nell educates herself on the vast knowledge of the forest's bounty – what can be used to reduce fever, ease an upset stomach, what can give sugar, and what salt, painkillers, and antibiotics, soothe rashes, alleviate menstrual cramps and labor pains, what can be used for tea, fabric, and dyes – it's all there in the forest. Nell especially learns of the "acorns" which have traditionally made the staple diet for many communities – the Mediterranean, the Japanese, Chinese, and North American, etc. They are both nutritious and in great abundance. Nell learns that a hard-working individual, during the harvest season of oaks, may take about fifty grams of protein per day to feed a family of four or five. The indigenous community of what is now Northern California, known as Sonoma or Porno, was a multitude of tribes that existed in harmony with the forest for no less than ten thousand years before the Spaniards invaded. They harvested acorns, depended on regional plants, and had plenty of game and fish. Because of the temperate climate and their primitive practice of birth control, they managed their population in good proportion with the forest. So much so that famines were never reported (Hegland 143). Global poverty and scarcity are reportedly not preindustrial pre-colonial conditions. Hence Nell and Eva too take from the great pantry of the forest as supplies for their daily needs. For Hegland, the forest is 'an

extensive and complex ecological community' of trees that has the potential for self-perpetuation (38). Instead of living in mutual harmony with this abundant life form (that is also the beneficiary of climatic control), we continue to hollow it out of existence for ever-expanding commodity and urbanity.

The eco-spiritual practice of a return to indigeneity or primitivism is, however, not a fully practical or feasible alternative. With the evolution of the community into the highly distinguished and complicated phenomenon that it is today, such individualistic actions of dispossession are parochial, and at the very least micro. What is required is collective radical action on the global front.

5.4 Resistance, Healing, and Transformation in *Into the Forest*

'We endured. Hour after hour we endured, while inside us life's scream ran on, unstoppable. When the stars began imperceptibly to fade, we were still there, still breathing, and our father was still dead beside us, his face both sharp and slumped.' (Hegland 73)

Into the Forest is not only a tale of loss, survival, self-perpetuation, and ecological enlightenment, but it goes into great detail to combat and dialogue with the grief and guilt of the survivors, establishing methods to navigate through malice and trauma. There's something vastly transformative in the girls' gradually formative relationship with the forest. After their mother dies of cancer (emblematic of the body registering the malignancy of a distorted environment), their father of accidental amputation (his leg was sawed while cutting through the forest), Eva's rape by a stranger, the burning of the house, and the abandonment of the cities after fires, epidemics, and poverty scorched through, the protagonists find both sustainability and convalescence in and through the forest.

At the beginning of the narrative, Nell diagnoses the human condition of her crisis society as a "fugue state". It is unsparingly and dreadfully similar to the covid-pandemic society. 'People stick pretty close to home. Everybody's real afraid of germs. And there's not much reason to go out. No work. No school. And lots of people are gone. Or dead.' (Hegland 86) Just like the insignificant measles struck and terrorized the population of America in *Parable,* the flu came and wreaked havoc in *Into the Forest.* The sisters cannot go out but their visitor, Eli, informs them of 'how the flu came, and the shock and anger and terror people felt when they realized there

was no one and nothing to turn to for a cure. He told me about the fear of contagion that settled on the town, how people quit shaking hands and sharing food, how they hid in their houses, and still they died, well one week and gone the next.' (Hegland 90) However, it is evident that whether it is violence, apartheid, economic disparity, natural calamity, or a global pandemic – things don't suddenly revert to "normal" (if there does exist such a state of the human condition in our postmodern society). Still, there continues to be deep-seated despair that needs to be addressed.

In fact, *Into the Forest* predominantly informs the readers on this note – the admission that there is no going back to whatever the normal was before. 'The one conviction that all but the most wild-eyed extremists shared was that this situation is only temporary, that the world we belong to will soon begin again, and we will be able to look back on the way we are living now as a momentary interruption, a good story to tell the grandkids.' (Hegland 13) But we won't. And unless society gears itself to alternative directions (as discussed in chapter 5.3) we cannot, as a community, heal or transform much less survive. It is only downhill from here unless we register the wake-up call to slow down the eventuality of the greater collapse and find ways for reparations.

For Hegland knowledge and mobility take eminence in creative transformation. It is the emergence of critical imagination in Nell, her emergent ability to envision new modes of living and resist the old, non-functional ones, that she can change herself for the better. That she can heal and continue when everything else is dystopic and falling apart. Nell's conception of the forest transforms in the novel, from ignorance and fear to a resourceful and progenitive entity. 'Gradually the forest I walk through is becoming mine, not because I own it, but because I'm coming to know it.' (Hegland 142) Similarly, their decision to leave the remnants of a half-destroyed, half-terrorized civilization and raise Eva's newborn in the forest is symbolic of mobility that Lauren necessitated as well. For Lauren, it was finding destiny in the stars. For Nell, it's the bountiful forest. Both protest against the passive recognition of hegemonic powers as the ultimate reality or the way of the world. 'If Eva is to survive, we must leave this place where she is stuck. If Eva is to be a mother, we must find some other way for her to give birth.' (Hegland 170) Furthermore, like the folk and indigenous calling in *Parable,* Nell manifests her link with the teachings of the past: where nature was holy and not some raw material for endless consumption. 'As I clutched the oak and planned my niece's future, it

seemed I could feel generations of women receding behind us and stretching out ahead. I felt a connection with both my foremothers and with the future, and I knew—despite all odds—the bone-deep satisfaction of continuance.' (Hegland161)

Disasters can be used to 'consolidate and intensify forms of political and social control' (Dawson 333). Part of healing from disasters is finding agency and control over the seemingly hopeless circumstances. The radical environmentalism of Hegland's protagonists is just that. Endurance and adaptation are key to regaining agency. In likeness to the Redwood forest that surrounds them. 'Even when redwoods are toppled or otherwise injured, they have a remarkable adaptation for survival. Wartlike growths of dormant buds called burls are stimulated to produce sprouts which grow from a fallen or damaged tree. It is common to see young trees formed from burls encircling an injured parent tree.' (Hegland 136) Just like the bulbs that store food and resume growing when favorable environments return, Nell and Eva were able to stretch themselves out of their emotional paralysis after the death of their loved ones. However, it is not only their lives that have been interrupted, the forest is also not what it used to be. The once great forest of firs and redwood after being logged is now charred and struggling.

'We discover ourselves – our potentialities and their actualization – through creative and useful work that not only transforms the natural world but leads to our self- formation and self-determination.' (Bookchin 103) What determined the sister's future was the change in external conditions which once registered brought out acts of learning and unlearning. The constructive and transformative learning of their natural environs and how to adapt to it, and the positive unlearning of past practices of mindless production and consumption. This is also in line with Lauren's belief system of "shaping change."

While Hegland tells with great scrutiny how Nell learns to navigate and work in the forest, the formed connection, however, not only offers a material alternative to their previous mode of existence but a spiritual one as well. With the absence of violence and all the fears the rest of the world is enveloped in, the sisters have now room to grow out of their earlier traumatic experiences. 'It felt as though the tourniquet that grief had put on our lives was finally loosening.' (Hegland 67) 'I drink rain and it quenches an ancient thirst. This is no interlude, no fugue state. The moon wanes to the barest crescent. I grow content.' (Hegland 183).

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This research delved deep into the imagined worlds of Butler and Hegland where social safety and administrative networks failed and multiple crises converged to bring about anarchy and chaos. The study finds the apparent combination of ecological, economic, and culturally segregated orders as offshoots of capitalist, corporate regimentation that has massively altered and continues to change the way we live. Everything is centered around capital – hence the problem has shifted from the issue of the Anthropocene to the Capitalocene. Space is centered around the capital – the places of the public have become structures for private hoarding – and hence massively militarized. The economic disparity leads to over-domineering apartheidism. The commodity has encroached upon the body, the environment, and the psyche. The grow- or-die mantra finds itself operating in a world of dichotomies: the inside/outside, the city/forest, progress/regression, over-abundance/scarcity, chaos/inertia, etc.

The novels portray protagonists escaping bleak circumstances (what seems like the sixth extinction event on Earth due to the loss of habitation) towards sheltered regions (the utopian north). With the relegation of state responsibilities to the privatized sector, concepts like security, identity, sustenance, and longevity are all challenged. Marooned between an oppressive regime or absent state apparatuses as well as the diminishing earth, the characters are left in a frenzy of violent fundamentalism, alienation, and primitivism.

The research narrows down on the environmental and civil strife depicted in the selected novels as manifestations of the greater injustices at work. It takes the presence and absence of walls and gates, restricting and accessing structures, as symbolic of open and closed systems. The fortification processes found in the novels are essential for a closed system to operate. This study advocates that such closed systems that hegemonize energy apparatuses and the economy are not sustainable and will brew more violence and aggravated anarchies. Far from framing the environmental hazards as invisible concerns, this study foregrounds them as crucial social and economic concerns. Hence, their mitigation and intervention are through alternative socio-economic policies as well.

Butler classifies science-fiction into three broad categories: stories based on 1) What if 2) If only 3) If this goes on. The cautionary tales of Hegland and Butler are sobering reminders of the grave implications of the third category. They present to us narratives, where the climate is at its tipping point and state structures, are barely on the precipice. Even at such a juncture of accelerated demise, the GDPs of the global north are asking for 3 percent a year which means doubling the hazards in the next 20 years until we have completely burst through. It is as George Monbiot fiercely said we cannot do any ecological re-wilding by pissing around the margins of the problem, we have to go straight to the heart of capitalism and overthrow it.

Hence, this study references the dialectics of eco-socialism that replace "perpetually maximized profits and elite accumulation" with "democratic production" that meets social and ecological goals. The findings of this research are as follows:

The malignancy of advanced capitalism can only be addressed through policies of degrowth. The chief one is for all the nation-states to declare a "Climate Emergency." This involves steps towards acquiring clean energy and a break from the global oil industry. This applies to all industries – healthcare, the weapon industry, nuclear, vehicle, cosmetics, food industry, etc. First, the industries must be decolonized from imperial capitalism to function towards such sustainable goals. Incentives like a ten-year slowdown in production, creating local supply chains, addressing extreme income inequalities, and replacing present high-emission energy resources with renewable technology are micro-steps in crafting a way forward in crises. To prepare for survival we must create new contexts in which to function.

From a deep analysis of gated and walled communities, this research infers that isolation leads to regression and the dichotomy of the inside/outside leads to grand-scale civil strife. People and communities that are stranded on the outside channel their frustrations of depravity through different forms of abuse. Similarly, the nature/society dichotomy leads to hierarchical domination and depravation of the biosphere which can only result in intensified calamities and natural disasters. The study conjoins both issues and presents the fact that intensified natural disasters amidst a crippling world economy that cannot counter it will only lead to the imagined dystopia of the novels. Hence the study emphasizes the need to re-imagine community. A well-networked and inclusive community: an open system of equal access, diversity, and rational needs.

Just as in the recent pandemic, we slowed down movements and contacts to protect each other, we must slow down fossil fuel consumption for collective wellness. The militarized state must give way to the welfare state that has justice rather than social control as its fundamental objective. In resistance to corporate tyranny and state authoritarianism, this study brings forth the politics of municipal communalism by Murray Bookchin. While Bookchin's politics deal with the socio-economic aspects of the aforementioned problems, Mike Davis's observations facilitate the understanding of our forms of engagement with space and how poverty and marginalization are navigated in the urban framework. This study foregrounds the need for alternative politics at the grassroots level to methodically deal with the permeating hierarchical mentality that results in so much civil strife as well as the desiccation of the environment. Above everything we must remember, currently, there is no inhabitable planet b. And before technology leads us to extrasolar inhabitable spaces, humanity may have long perished.

Plagues, wars, calamities, etc. are not unforeseeable. They perniciously make their way deep into the social fabric and target the already dispossessed. Klein quotes Hein Marais in *Disaster Capitalism*: 'Shelve the abiding fiction that disasters do not discriminate – that they flatten everything in their path with "democratic" disregard. Plagues zero in on the dispossessed, on those forced to build their lives in the path of danger' (406). This research first problematizes the recent massive rise in calamities and their conglomeration as a result of nefarious human intervention in nature's cycle through processes of endless production and consumption. When these disasters hit, the architectonic and social divide among the people, or to further the argument, among developed and developing countries, results in impoverished classes, sectors, or countries bearing the brunt of damage not caused by them – damages that their economic structures find unsustainable. Furthermore, the capitalist regimes initiate and flare up those disasters to meet the ends just mentioned. This not only deepens the divide but also creates a class, an immense population that for bare survival gratefully sells itself to debt slavery and works, on almost zero benefit grounds, for enterprises that enlarge themselves at the further cost of environmental collapse and socio-economic floundering.

Palestine is perhaps the gravest example of disaster apartheid in present times. The Palestine conflict is the starkest instance of forcible and bloody occupation of a land and consequent eviction, dispossession, and genocide of its native population.

The open- air prison the Gaza Strip was reduced to and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) are architectonic visuals of ungated and gated, un-walled or walled, closed or open systems elaborated on in the research. A system that privileges one ethnicity/class/nation to the extent that it justifies forced occupation, detention, fragmentation, dispossession, and genocide of the other is a classic example of apartheid. The fact that this crime against humanity has been ongoing shows the failure and façade of public international laws that are as fickle and futile as the laws and regulations in Butler's and Hegland's fictions. In their works the international as well as the national apparatuses protecting human rights have collapsed, it is an "every man for himself" world where the powerful societies topple and engulf the weaker ones or the latter simply vanish from existence altogether. Lauren's father rightly calls this 'bread and circuses. . . politicians and big corporations get the bread, and we get the circuses.' (Butler 9) The horrific scenes of oppression we have been witnessing coming out from Palestine are blunt reminders of the fact that dystopia is a reality for them. 'There was a naked little boy whose skin was a mass of big red sores; a man with a huge scab over the stump where his right hand used to be; a little girl naked, may be seven years old with blood running down her bare thighs. A woman with a swollen, bloody, beaten face. . .' (Butler 7) Unfortunately, we have seen worse images. In Hegland's novel, the war is not a lived reality but is always present, overseeing every unfortunate circumstance that confronts the characters. And it's unfolding on multiple fronts just like in the present – Palestine, Ukraine, Taiwan, etc.

'Of course, there was a war going on. . . The fighting was taking place half a world away, taking place, the politicians promised, to protect our freedoms, to defend our way of life. It was a distant war, but it seemed to cling to our days, to permeate our awareness like a far-off nasty smoke. It didn't directly affect what we ate, how we worked and played, yet we couldn't shake it – it wouldn't go away. Some people said it was that war that caused the breakdown.' (Hegland 12)

To be noted, this observation is extracted from the very beginning of the text. Afterward, as the wars escalated it affected their daily lives even more sharply until everything came tumbling down.

Covid-19 is another global calamity that has shaken the modern world entirely out of its slumber and docility. Hegland prophesized the spread of a new variant of flu in *Into the Forest,* 'the fear of contagion that settled on the town, how people quit

shaking hands and sharing food, how they hid in their houses, and still they died, well one week and gone the next.' (Hegland 90)

Global pandemics, wars, erupting volcanoes, country-wide floods, smog making breathing a luxury, forest fires (the whole of Arizona ablaze), melting glaciers, global warming, hunger and scarcity are symptoms of a larger problem: the desiccation of the environment. Hegland and Butler prove to be extremely prolific and relevant writers in describing the world of today decades ago. Likewise, this research employs theorists like Davis and Bookchin whose notions needed revision and reiteration for the current readers/scholars, to instill them with agency and activism for a better, sustainable future.

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