

Eco-criticism in *The Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist*

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1.Introduction

1.1.

Contemporary concern with the environmental crisis, and how humans and the natural environment interact is fundamental to ecocriticism, a relatively new branch of literary theory. In this thesis, I will analyze two novels by South African writers who reflect on themes of ecology and environmentalism. In specific, I will examine how their characters relate to land. I will show what the writers' views are on what it means to be green in South Africa.

1.2

First, on a larger scale, there are environmentalists worldwide who actively engage to stop the destruction of plants, bacteria or other biological life-forms because of human intervention in nature. Often the merits and problems of the use of technology are taken into account because technology very often forms a threat to the natural environment. For example, nuclear energy is a controversial topic for this reason. In war-like situations, particular countries rely on nuclear power, for national protection or military defense. While technological progress has its costs, of course, as does every technology, the negative impact of nuclear power, for example, has changed many people's views on the use of atomic power. In fact, air and water has been polluted. Also, with more sulfur in the atmosphere, the temperature of the earth will continue to rise. Moreover, through the spread of radiation many people have been exposed to great dangers. Thus, this particular environmental threat contributes to a greater awareness of the importance of critical thinking on what affect humans have on their environments.

1.3

Eco-criticism, in fact, is an “important branch of green studies ... which theorizes about the place of literature in the struggle against environmental destruction” (Coupe 302). Eco-criticism is also described as “the field of enquiry that analyzes and promotes works of art which raise moral questions about human interaction with nature, while also motivating audiences to live within a limit that will be binding over generations” (Gomides 16). It encourages readers to think about how resources are divided and addresses complex problems that have no simple, technological answer (Vogel).

1.4

In South Africa, visions on environmentalism altered in the 1990s when the country's government was democratically elected (Vital 297). During apartheid, environmentalism was characterized by a colonial interest in the conservation of nature. Much “green activity” has been successful so far. Still, many practices of activists or environmental organisations have proven to have damaging effects on the South African people. Often the too bureaucratic policies and theories implemented by the environmentalist movement are not appropriate, and the individual concerns of people, human needs, are not taken into consideration (Huggan 703). However, political activity in South Africa in this field is increasingly about making environmental strategies “people-centered” (Vital 298-299). New ways are sought to reconcile the demands of environmentalism with those of social justice.

However, to bring about or conserve healthy (living) environments, while treating *all* people as valuable and in a fair manner, is complex. The ethical objections, in fact, to environmentalism (the vast majority of poor people suffering from the environmental activities, for example) are often in conflict with active protection of the environment. It is often argued that the welfare of (all) people is far more important than preserving nature.

Thus, it comes down to a moral question. Do the poor, for example, have (as much) right to actively oppose environmental concern because they suffer from it?

1.5

In the books discussed in this thesis, J.M. Coetzee's *Life & Times of Michael K* and Nadine Gordimer's *The Conservationist*, the theme of nature is clearly present. This makes these novels particularly interesting as interpretive literary solutions or obstacles in regard to the physical environment. Ultimately, these works will stimulate readers to form an ethos, or shared interpretation of the moral significance of how to relate to the physical environment, which in the long term might guide or alter current political visions or strategies for practicing environmental justice.

To be more specific, the novels analyzed offer insight into and perhaps solutions to the contemporary complex discourse of practicing environmental justice in South Africa. The writers both address nature, or Eco-critical concerns, and introduce many readers to postcolonial ecological thinking. The main question, therefore, which this thesis seeks to answer will therefore: In *The Life & Times of Michael K.* and *The Conservationists*, what views do the authors present in regard of the eco-critical debate of what one conserves and who pays for it.

From chapter three onwards, I will begin to show how the main characters in these books relate to the physical environment. The analyses in this chapter and the chapters following, I will demonstrate what the authors' views are on eco-criticism particularly in postcolonial South Africa. To be more specific, in chapter three, the notion of place will be covered. In fact, how certain characters are either privileged or subordinated because of the unfair division of land is very important in a South African context. In fact, during the apartheid, many people from disadvantaged groups, such as the blacks, suffered from environmental racism because of the racist system of apartheid. In chapter four, I will

consider what the role is of communication problems in regard to how to divide land and how to relate to land. Because certain groups do not communicate or connect, environmental justice is delayed.

2. Theoretical Framework: Eco-criticism

2.1

Eco-criticism is the theoretical framework I will use for this thesis. This framework is an academic discipline concerned with how literature and the environment relate to each other, and how nature is represented in literary works. In this chapter, I will briefly discuss the origin of this relatively young field of study in the humanities. Also, I will explain why this particular literary theory is relevant for this thesis.

2.2

The term eco-criticism was coined in the 1970s by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. Of course, earlier works of fiction were read through a “green” lens. However, specific focus on environmental-related issues arose during the 1980s, and in the 1990s, eco-criticism was considered a new trend within literature departments. Generally, in the field of literature, there were already very many critical approaches to reading texts, such as semiotics, structuralism, deconstruction or postcolonial theory. Eco-criticism has been added to these critical literary approaches. (Dissanayake). One of the reasons that this approach has become popular these past decades is because of the growing environmental concerns worldwide. People are now more interested in thinking more deeply about how we relate to nature and what effects nature has on us. Eco-criticism is in many ways very interdisciplinary. It covers areas of theory and practice in the natural sciences, sociology, politics, ethics, anthropology and all other academic fields which are concerned with philosophies on nature and human culture (Goodbody 61).

2.3

Much of eco-criticism is about human-environmental relations, which is why it is very important to understand aspects of the environmental philosophy. In fact, considering deficiencies of environmentalist philosophy will help to better consider how to apply environmentalism. Eco-criticism considers environmentalist values through literary texts, such as those by Coetzee and Gordimer. These authors, in fact, often discuss aspects of the environmental philosophy. Through their writing they pose questions on how environmental justice is effected or what the lack of it looks like. It can, in fact, marginalize people of certain races, classes and gender, for example. Looking at environmentalism from a literary approach is especially interesting because in literature there often is, as is in *The Conservationist* and *Life & Times of Michael K*, a dynamic play of voices which may reflect Gordimer's and Coetzee's view on the ecological condition in South Africa.

However, in order to answer my research question on what environmental justice means in South Africa, according to Coetzee and Gordimer, the multicultural population of South Africa must be taken into account. What I mean is that the environmental movement will only be effective, in the long term, if all people, from all races and classes, are treated as equal human beings. This means, also, that consideration of the needs of all people should be taken seriously in order to pursue justice. The Environmental Justice Movement is a model that may serve as a feasible solution. In many ways this movement is about enhancing the quality of people's lives in all areas, in their natural *and* social environments.

Throughout history, whites have accumulated and controlled resources by appropriating land and labor and by controlling the movement of people of color. In addition, the period of conquest was characterized by destruction of indigenous cultural systems ... It is not surprising, therefore, that the environmental discourses of

people of color are framed around concepts like autonomy, self-determination, access to resources, fairness and justice, and civil and human rights. These concepts are not found in mainstream environmental discourses. This is the case because the mainstream environmental discourse was developed primarily by free, white males who were either wealthy or had access to wealthy people. These men, free to develop capitalist enterprises, roamed the outdoors at will, recreated when or where they pleased, and constructed environmental discourses that reflected their cultural backgrounds, lifestyles, experiences, and thinking. (Taylor 533-34, 543)

Thus, in my analyses of the two fictional works, I hope to expose ‘environmental racism’. Environmental racism is about how environmental causes and racism are connected to each other. More specifically, environmental racism or environmental discrimination is the process by which environmental decisions, actions, and policies result in racial discrimination (Taylor 536). For example, when individuals of a particular low-income group are more likely to be exposed to environmental risks, in comparison to rich people, who because of their wealth do not suffer from pollution, for example, there is environmental racism. It is, in fact, unethical that groups of a particular class in society should suffer more from environmental damage.

2.4

The two most important chapters of this thesis are about the role of place (location) in an environmental discourse (chapter three) and about the significance of communication (or lack of it) in pursuit of environmental justice (chapter four). Below, I will briefly explain specifically on what these chapters will be about.

Part of the environmental philosophy is to consider the ethics of place. In fact, a person’s location determines how people respond to ecological issues, because the different contexts shape the individuals. In the books discussed, the main characters are likewise

engaged and affected by their settings. Throughout the narratives it is evident that both main characters highly appreciate nature and seek rest and pleasure in nature. However, the way they relate to nature very much differs. They have competing values, as it were, on how to take care of land. The question of land is, in fact, of critical concern in eco-criticism. In brief, one of the texts revolves around a white character, who can use land, for ecological ideals, because he exploits human services and resources of land elsewhere, at the expense of the disadvantaged of society, the blacks. The other text features a character who is part of this disadvantaged group. He cannot exploit, but is rather subject to the dominant claim and rule of land of the wealthy whites. Thus, this conflict in ideals, which will be further analyzed in chapter three, will underline how complex this business of how to relate to land is in a South African context. In fact, in South Africa, during apartheid, many people suffered from environmental racism similarly evident in the books of Coetzee and Gordimer.

In chapter four, the role of communication will be discussed in light of environmentalism. I will consider how the main characters relate to their natural and social environment. In the novels, the characters, in fact, are often silent or rather do not interact, communicate well with their surroundings. At other times, these characters simply do not get the opportunity to speak. I will very concretely consider why characters remain silent or why they are silenced, do not get a voice by those in power. How characters communicate is particularly interesting in the environmental justice discourse because good communication is necessary for environmentalism and justice in society. In fact, “interpersonal ties and network connections [are] crucial to the formation and development of the EJM (Environmental Justice Movement)” (Taylor 517-518). Thus, the essential question is what role communication plays in the environmental justice discourse in South Africa, as seen in these two novels.

2.5

Combining concepts such as environmentalism and environmental justice and theories on the ethics of place and on how people communicate is complex. However, in this study, *two* fictional works will be studied, which makes it a far simpler task. In the following chapters, I will contemplate the perspective of two South African writers, J.M. Coetzee and Nadine Gordimer, in the environmental discourse. I find it particularly interesting how these writers creatively engage readers in thinking about ethical values connected to the question of land, a critical concern in eco-criticism. Thus, I will use the theoretical framework of Eco-criticism to analyse what environmental justice looks like, according to Coetzee and Gordimer in *The Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist*.

3. Place

3.0 Introduction

One of the main reasons why Europeans settlers came to South Africa in the 17th century was because of its land. Those who landed on South African ground, claimed territory, which limited the physical space of indigenous peoples. Of course, conflicts arose between natives and settlers about what pieces of land could be occupied, or not. Ever since, contests on the possession of land have been somewhat common in the country of South Africa. In 1913 the parliament of South Africa implemented the Natives Land Act. Possession of land and how the harvest of a piece of land was divided was dependent on a person's race or ethnicity. During apartheid, the government divided society, in fact, in groups based on these same characteristics. These groups were appointed places of residence.

In the apartheid system, different groups of society co-existed, as it were; there was no racial mixing. There was differentiation, however, in the advantages and resources between different population groups. The whites, more powerful in society, could easily take advantage of those who had a lower position in society, the colored and the blacks. The whites had access to better grounds, for example, while the blacks were given those pieces of land that were not needed or closely managed by whites, or those grounds that had been affected by pollution. As a result, black and colored communities were disproportionately exposed to environmental risks (Taylor-Clark et al. 165).

The significant problem of land possession has also been taken into account in works of literature by South African writers. As suggested in the introductory chapter of this thesis, literature is characterized by a broad range of experiences and feelings of people, in certain

contexts and conflicts. Ecocritical literature, then, provides critical insight into a person or a group's relationship with land. Often this fictional writing provides an allegory of the role of land in the lives of South Africans, of their feelings of entitlement to it, their struggle to keep it and their strategies to protect and develop it (Graham 4). To a certain extent, ecocritical literature informs readers of the situation in South Africa. Perhaps, this increasing awareness leads to action in one way or another.

In the two novels analyzed for this thesis, in overall, there is no environmental justice because of the power imbalance between the blacks and whites. This is specifically evident in the conflict on the division and use of land between (mainly) these two races. The two main characters, in fact, have a different relationship to the land. Mehring, in *The Conservationist*, idealizes capitalistic endeavors, such as making profit off a large piece of land he owns. At the same time, he propagates conservationism of natural landscapes. Michael K, in *Life & Times of Michael K*, idealizes agricultural life but cannot own the land he takes care of, mainly because it is owned by whites. Thus, these diverging and somewhat conflicting approaches to treating (farm)land will be further explored.

To be more specific, in the first part of this chapter (3.1), I will consider how Michael K relates to land. Then, I will examine how Mehring from *The Conservationist* manages land. Thus, the primary concern of this chapter is to examine how Coetzee and Gordimer have articulated South African experiences of "the land" in their novels. Their novels show that environmental racism and the need for environmental justice are concerns connected to the problems of land division.

3.1 How Michael K Relates to Land

3.1.1

The main character in *The Life & Times of Michael K* has a physical deformity. Michael K's harelip gives him difficulty in articulation. In fact, this difficulty in articulation strongly suggests that he is part of the black race. "[F]unctional inarticulacy, in the South African context, is a readymade mark of racial identification" (Wright 442). Moreover, while growing up, he was surrounded by afflicted, unhealthy children and often laughed at because of his handicap. Also, "because of his face, he did not have women friends" (Coetzee 4). In general, Michael K is part of a marginal group in society, through his racial identity, or otherwise through his physical deformity.

3.1.2

Themes such as identity, belonging and ecological crisis characterize Coetzee's book, to a great extent. Michael K is a particularly interesting character because he is part of a marginal group of people, and has a strong desire for nature and connection to the idea of living life as a cultivator of the earth. This life as a cultivator begins, as it were, when he discovers a deserted farm. He plants pumpkins seeds and buries the ashes of his mother in the ground (Coetzee 59). In fact, he associates his mother with the earth. Coetzee uses the idea of mother earth to connect the idea of caring for something, namely K's mother by burying the ashes of his natural mother, to caring for a "cosmic one", namely mother earth (Rao 7). In fact, throughout the book, K tends the earth. He believes gardening is in his nature.

3.1.3

When Michael K stays on the farm, it becomes his deepest wish to restore natural resources. He repairs the dam, for example, in order to restore "the flow of water from the earth"

(Coetzee 60). Also, he enjoys gardening. However, the organic life that he comes to live is disturbed by the intrusion of other people on the ground that he cultivates. In fact, K is driven off the farmland, and maintains his sense of freedom by fleeing to the mountains. Thus, K suffers from the movement and rule of the powerful, those that take over the farm he lives on. Inevitably, he develops feelings of resistance against the colonization of the space he lives in.

In a way this parallels how the government, during apartheid, managed land in South Africa, and determined where people could live and where not. K needs official papers, permits, to move from place to place.

Michael K must negotiate police barricades, forcible assignment as a member of a railway labour gang, and detention in various government camps and hospitals. These experiences of confinement and discrimination allow for the interrogation of the right to land-ownership and division. (Steenkamp 65)

This is rather ironic in light of mobility of the main character in *The Conservationist*.

Mehring, the protagonist, travels a lot for business. He is a wealthy, white capitalist who can afford moving from place to place. Mehring even conjures up a picture of moving to Brazil because he seeks a new adventure (172). It is said of him that his kind “has no home-making” (159). He will easily relocate, because he can afford it. Also, because of his wealth, he can easily make use of cheap labor wherever he migrates to. The black workers who work in his farm, however, have to have papers, in order to relocate (91-92). These workers, however, are largely dependent on Mehring for work in a society where there are many workers in search for a job (Graham 3). They need to have particular documents in order to move to another farm, and work there. Thus this accentuates that how those in power, the whites often, had the power to control their subordinates. This again parallels how the government in South Africa during apartheid controlled inferiors. The government’s land management, in fact, often stood in the way of the blacks’ sense of freedom.

3.1.4

Moreover, in *The Life & Times of Michael K*, K's sense of freedom is threatened when the grandson of Visagie, the owner, appears on the farm. K's living place. The grandson himself as "boss Visagie's grandson" (Coetzee 60), and suddenly shows up and reclaims the farm, as it were. K has to now share the land he thought "belonged to no one yet" (47). Thus this piece of land is not without a "claim of ownership" (Rao 3).

However, both K and Visagie's grandson have a particular ancestral connection to the land. Since Michael K is considered black, his ancestors probably lived on the land before colonizers took over land of blacks in South Africa, if *The Life & Times of Michael K* is compared to the situation in South Africa. At the same, Visagie, the grandfather and owner of the farm bought it, so also the grandfather has right to the farm. Because both men have a particular right to the land, or so it seems, essentially it is difficult to determine who has *more* right to the land. However, despite who truly has right to the land, who can lay claim on the land is often dependent on those in power. In Michael K, the grandson is domineering in regard to land management and he is white. In South Africa, in fact, before the advent of the majority rule, pieces of land were not accessible to all races, or all people in South Africa. Who could lay claim to land often had to do with the position one held in society. Some did not have opportunity to a particular piece of land because of their race or ethnicity. Racist zoning laws were particular for the South African context during apartheid. As a result, low-income communities, mostly black or colored communities, could not own land.

The direct problem, however, in the encounter between the two men, is that they *relate* differently to the land. Though the grandson says that "the two of us will manage" (Coetzee 63), K is sceptic, as it were, about the grandson's way of relating to the farmland. "A soldier without a gun. A boy on an adventure. To him the farm is just a place of adventure" (63).

K greatly values the piece of land and finds joy in cultivating it, though he cultivates the land out of necessity (to feed himself). The Visagie grandson, on the other hand, expresses rather depreciative words when he comments the farmland to be a wasteful “adventure”. In fact, the grandson does not recognize the value of K’s care for the land. K has made dry, infertile soil fertile again. However, it is as if the grandson interrupts K’s agricultural efforts, in a way. He eagerly eats of K’s crop, “like a hungry boy”, but as a result, “there was not enough for both of them” (61). It seems to be suggested that the grandson eats more than K, leaving one of them with less food, or hungry even. It is as if the powerful, the Visagie grandson, the most dominant of the two, does not consider the hunger of K, since he desperately eats of K’s crop.

More often, the needs or desires of Michael K are not taken into consideration. In fact, as was seen above, besides that K’s agricultural efforts served the grandson of Visagie, K also has to work on land for the benefit of the powerful (whites) in camp. More specifically, when Michael K is placed in a labor camp, which is described as a “stone-hard veld” (Coetzee 95), a piece of land hardly fit for agriculture, he needs to work. Initially, K strongly refuses to comply to the demands the soldiers make on him. They are unable to exploit the services of K. K rather desires to escape and live and work in open space. The countryside promises freedom to Michael K. When K finally complies and joins other laborers in fencing around fields of a white farmer in the countryside, the farmer (the employer) commends K’s fencing skills. He even suggests that K should become a professional fencer. This is highly ironic. “[D]riving stakes in the ground, erecting fences [and] dividing up the land” (97) completely goes against K’s idea of freedom. K continually wants to escape control of others. Fencing, in fact, may very well signify “the political stratification and social divisions” (Neimneh 17) in the apartheid system. Thus, K is resistant to work on the land the way the authorities want him to. It goes against his sense of freedom, and he opposes “such negative forms of relating to the land necessitated by the political situation in the county” (Neimneh 17)

3.1.5

Thus, how two characters from different races, Michael K and Visagie's grandson, relate to land is highly significant in light of the problem of environmental racism during apartheid. What is perhaps most striking is that the Visagie's grandson assumes a superior role, and treats K as a servant, and uses K's crops for his own benefit. This accentuates how those in power exploit those who hold a subordinate role in society, servants, for example. Because the grandson asserts his right to the land, and claims somewhat of a dominant position, Michael K is restricted as it were, in physical space, and in who he is, a cultivator and person of equal value. K is someone who also wants to manage land in his own way.

Coetzee's concern for how to manage land, and who truly owns the land in a war-like situation is similar to the political situation in apartheid South Africa. In fact, "Plants and landscapes are unduly ignored and exploited in times of political strife, which accounts for Coetzee's ecocritical—and by implication political—relevance" (Neimneh and Muhaidat 12).

3.2 How Mehring Relates to Land

3.2.1

Mehring, in *The Conservationist*, is a white wealthy man, buys a large piece of land, and though he is a businessman and not a farmer, he seeks to take care of his new piece of land. As one of his visitors underlines, Mehring seeks to derive pleasure from his property: "how lovely, how lucky, how sensible to have a place like this to get away to" (Gordimer 22-23). Mehring also simply wants to take good care, in his own way, of nature. Though, as I will

further explain in the next part, Mehring romanticizes his conservation ideal, he does enjoy nature and feels some sort of peace there (Gordimer 208).

In fact, he tries to take care of his land by watering his fields, even when others, poorer people suffer from drought (Gordimer 46-47). Also he insists on taking care of his animals, feeding them, though he is confronted with the violent way other animals react to starvation or drought. In fact, in the newspaper he reads that hippos elsewhere abort their foetuses, in response to dried-up pools (40). The drought does not affect Mehring, however, because his water supply is fed by “an underground source [rather than the] surface water” blacks are dependent on (40).

3.2.2

Very often it seems that Merhring does not take the needs of others into consideration. Rather, he is only concerned with his own (nature) ideals and desires. For example, this is evident in the way he exploits land through his pig-iron business (Gordimer 254). He makes use of land elsewhere in order to make money. With this money he finances, as it were, the farm he lives on. On this farm he, tries to conserve nature by planting expensive trees, for example. Thus the money owned through exploitation is used elsewhere for nature conservation. Moreover, the waste left through Mehring’s industrial business most likely leaves surrounding neighborhoods exposed to environmental hazards.

At one point, it seems that Gordimer-almost over-emphasizes the point she is trying to make when Mehring considers what should be done with a piece of waste ground that no longer serves its original purpose. “A new [purpose] has not yet been decided, apparently; most of the mining ground has been surveyed and declared as township of one kind or another, quite a profitable operation” (Gordimer 259). Thus, despite it being a garbage dump, the land may very well become a place of residence. During apartheid in South Africa, many

whites were wealthy enough to buy and take over much ground. In fact, at the end of the day, Mehring's economic, capitalistic drive outweighs his pursuit to also conserve nature, as the title of the book also points out. "The economic force ... came down to struggles for owning more land, having more labor done, and increasing capital" (Watson 377). Mehring works on his barren farm and tries to conserve nature, to a certain extent. In fact, he wants to be seen as a country gentleman. However, he is also an exploiter of land through his industrial endeavors. Mehring who holds a position of power because of his capital and race can make choices on how to use the environment which have tremendous effects on lands originally of indigenous people, the blacks.

Moreover, not only do blacks have to live on polluted pieces of land or lands that are not needed by the whites. In apartheid South Africa, white people were powerful and could often make use of the services, labor done by the subjugated group, namely the blacks or colored people, as also seen in *The Life & Times of Michael K*. The extent to which they appropriated their services to work was frequently unfair. Often, many black people worked on the land, or on farms for white land owners, or other estate owners. In *The Conservationist*, the white male protagonist, Mehring, exploits black laborers on his farm. However, it becomes very evident that Mehring hardly knows his workers or shows interest in them. He takes their services for granted.

3.2.3

Mehring also strongly undermines how connected the blacks (still) feel to the land. As explained above, the libertine selfishness of Mehring causes him to be mainly focused on his own ideals in regard to nature. However, when Mehring is confronted with a black corpse found on his land, his conscience is pricked. He realizes that maybe the blacks have a (special) relationship, or right to the land. In fact, because Mehring and the black corpse share

the same land in this moment, he experiences some sort of feeling of “empathy, [which], in a way, establishes a common humanity” (Coundouriotis 9). In this instance it is as if the black person lays claim on Mehring’s land. After the body is buried, however, it reappears again because of heavy rainfall and floods everywhere, which caused the ground to become soft. When confronted with the corpse again, it is as if the black body “seems to be asserting a primordial claim over [the land]” (Graham 80). Mehring is then haunted by the feeling that he does not have right to the land since the blacks’ ancestors were mostly likely the first occupants of the land. Thus, the fact that Mehring enjoys his land and is materially responsible for it, does not leave him unaffected by the cultural heritage of his land. Thoughts on the black corpse are accompanied by thoughts on how blacks relate to his property.

Moreover, the cultural value and collective commitment of the blacks to nature is much stronger than Mehring thinks. This is most evident when the black community arranges a ceremonial funeral for the nameless black corpse found on Mehring’s property. This corpse, as suggested earlier, confronts Mehring with the fact that while he may own the land, the blacks have a relationship with his land or surrounding lands, a historical relationship, for example. The blacks are in fact the indigenous inhabitants of the earth in South Africa. On critic comments on how indigenous people relate to their lands:

This relationship is a very universal concept amongst Aboriginal peoples around the world ... [To indigenous people] [t]he land is the ashes of their ancestors who fought to keep the land from becoming destroyed by others, the ancestors on whose shoulders we stand in this generation, land we must preserve for the next seven generations.

(Colomeda and Wenzel 7)

In the last chapter of the book, Mehring reflects on the relationship between the blacks and the land. “[The blacks] had put [the dead body] away to rest, at last; he had come back. He took

possession of this earth; theirs one, one of them” (266). Thus, Mehring associates the blacks with the earth.

In a way, some sort of de-racialization takes place since he seems to slightly consider the blacks’ background and desires. He treats them as more equal human beings. Thus, Gordimer here illustrates how a white, wealthy man is confronted with actually questioning why and how property is divided. Indeed, the corpse is an example of how Gordimer “explores, rarely explicitly, a vision of South Africa as a place of freely interpenetrating white and black bodies” (Gorak 242).

Unfair treatment of blacks was problematic for a particular group of white people; they experienced ‘white guilt’ during apartheid. Many felt a responsibility to aid the blacks (Mullins 15). As seen above, Mehring in *The Conservationist*, is a white man who also becomes a bit insecure when he is directly faced with the idea of blacks repossessing his land, because of their supposed right to it. Moreover, just like Mehring feels somewhat threatened by the corpse on his land, similarly did whites feel somewhat threatened by the blacks’ resistance against their disadvantages in regard to land division. Pressure began to increase between different races, so that also a sense of powerlessness and guilt troubled many whites. This is also evident through South African literature written by white writers during apartheid, as was pointed out in the introduction to this chapter. To conclude, the fact that Mehring considers, albeit slightly, the history and rights of the blacks, shows how he is integrating the needs of the blacks, in a way, into his thinking. This is interesting considering the fact that Mehring hardly ever considered the needs of the vulnerable throughout the narrative.

3.3 Land division and Environmental Racism in *Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist*

The writers of *Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist* have given significant consideration to the role of land division in South Africa when thinking about concerns surrounding environmentalism. Above all, it is evident that there are many dimensions and there is much divergence in how individuals, part of a relevant collective group or not, experience and interact with physical territory. However, what both writers undoubtedly accentuate is that an individual's identity and social relationship in society is very determining for how an individual can relate to the environment. Black people, such as Michael K, were not really permitted to own a piece of land or be the actual farmers on it. They could, however, work on land, which would very often benefit the whites, those who had bought and claimed the land. White people, on the other hand, had more opportunities to relate to the land. Because of their wealth, often, or their superior position in society, they could regulate the land, exploit the land, conserve the land or relate to land in a way *they* determined. Thus rights to land were often unfair during apartheid South Africa. This environmental racism was, to be more specific, a result of power imbalance in society, or unequal social relationships. This meant, as discussed in this chapter that an individual's (collective) identity was determining for advantages or disadvantages in environmental regard.

To be 'green' regularly means that a person is environmental. However, in the context of South Africa, environmentalism is inescapably connected to the complex business of land division. Particular pieces of land are simply more environmental than other pieces of land and the division has long been based on the racial characteristics of the owners, or governmental or economic advantages of the owners. However, in order to pursue green

causes in a South African context, all people should be treated equally and fairly. Only in this way both justice is done to people and care for the environment is stimulated.

4. Communication in *Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist*

4.0 Introduction

The books of Coetzee and Gordimer were both written during apartheid in South Africa. The system of racial segregation would not be abolished till at least a decade after the second book, *Life & Times of Michael K*, was written. Thus, both Nadine Gordimer and J.M. Coetzee wrote their books in a society that had been divided by the government according to race or ethnicity. Gradually, those who felt oppressed by this system of racial segregation grew more disturbed and rebellious. They protested against the unfair privileges of certain, mostly white communities, while certain non-white communities were neglected and suffered from unhealthy living environments. As a result, there were boycotts and raids all over the country by those who opposed the apartheid regime. The most prominent group that fought against the apartheid regime was the African National Congress (ANC). This group's main purpose was to fight for a democratized South Africa, in which apartheid had come to an end and society was not racially divided. This fight was complicated, though. It took a long time. One of the reasons why the end of apartheid was held off, was that successful communication and cooperation of the different communities did not come easily. In fact, the different groups hardly communicated; because of the segregation, many communities had little contact with each other over the years.

During apartheid, writers of literature wrote about the struggle for a liberated South Africa. Through their writing, they responded to the political commotion in their country and also to the consequences of segregation in everyday life. Especially near the end of apartheid, more writers explored ways to resist apartheid through their writing. Indeed, those who wanted to enact change voiced their desire for a democratized South Africa through literature. However, for many reasons those people that believed in apartheid tried to silence citizens

who fought against the system and demanded to be heard. However, for the transition to democracy, “citizens must create a space for their voices to be heard” (Gunby 3). The government that had been guilty of “[reducing citizens] to the status of a population to be managed” (Brulle 115), had to become more considerate of the needs of the people. Many people were, as mentioned earlier, suffering from the unequal division of resources. It was no use for the government to

talk about the people living in the shack, [while] they [didn’t] even know how it would feel to live in a shack. They talk about us, about our needs, but they’re doing nothing for us. So that’s why we’re saying don’t talk about us, talk to us, because we are the ones who are suffering. (Gunby 73).

Thus, leaders could not assume to know exactly what their people needed or wanted.

Communication between those with power and their subordinates, particularly the non-white people, was necessary. As one critic says, “change needs to come from the ground up, from the people who live the injustices that politicians talk about without understanding. Ordinary citizens are the voice of truth, and as they realize their power, the voice of the voiceless will be heard” (Gunby 76).

The lack of effective communication, or ties between opposing groups, would certainly not help to promote good living circumstances or justice. In fact, closed or independent communities were far less strong, simply because the many communities and groups in a diverse country such as South Africa did not make contact or collaborate (Gorak 252). Healthy living circumstances, however, were widely dependent on how resources were divided, for example. However, improving peoples’ environments, or to be more specific, the pursuit of environmental justice, may very well be hindered because of communication problems.

As discussed in chapter three, the two main characters in the books considered for this thesis, pursue environmental ideals in different ways. Michael K idealizes living off the land. Mehring idealizes the idea of conserving nature. What characterizes both men, as well, is that they do not talk much. In fact, their unwillingness or unsatisfying ways of communication are rather striking. Silence, in fact, is a dominant theme in both books, and is often connected to the contexts they find themselves in, namely a pastoral context. The characters' silence and problems to communicate appropriately hinders their integration and connection with others. In fact, these characters' ways of communicating may very well reflect something of the situation in South Africa. Causes such as environmental justice are hindered because of faulty communication.

In this chapter, I will analyze the communication problems of Michael K and Mehring. In the first part (4.1), I will examine the origin of Michael K's silence and what his silence signifies. Then, I want to focus on why Mehring chooses to hardly communicate and what the consequences are of his behavior (4.2).

In these books silence is not necessarily attributed to a one particular individual or group. Both whites and blacks have reasons of their own not to interact with their environment. However, the barrier of silence on different occasions, does not contribute to social unity in society. Thus, I will show Michael K's and Mehring's lack of free, personal or even intimate communication, does not further the cause of environmental justice.

4.1 How Michael K Communicates

In the introductory passage to this chapter, I pointed out that both Michael K and Mehring refuse to talk (much). Although some silences are meaningless, in literature the meaning of silence is almost always relevant. What these silences mean is, however, dependent on the

context, or “the discourses surrounding the silence in question” (Brummett 294). In both books, the main characters find themselves in both urban and rural environments. However, the most important environment in the lives of Michael K and Mehring is the rural, natural environment. Both protagonists, in fact, strive towards a particular environmental consciousness, albeit through different approaches. Michael K continually drifts towards the countryside and seeks to cultivate (farm)land, and live an organic life. Mehring on the other hand decides to buy a great piece of land, because he wants to make profit off the land, and enjoy the beauty of nature. Their conscious embrace of the non-human world has significant effects on their lives. Their preoccupation with nature, indeed, inevitably causes them to be less in contact with people. They prefer not talking to others. This leads to a solitary life, which they value. However, it also distances them and complicates their relationship to other people. This inability to communicate to the rest of society, however, hinders the environmental causes they prize so highly, perhaps surprisingly so. In fact, when placed in a South African context, these characters’ refusal to communicate hinders social collaborative efforts necessary for environmental causes.

4.1.1

First of all, Michael K does not talk much. More significantly, perhaps, Michael K has learned to be quiet. His cleft lip makes it more difficult for him to talk and because his “mind was not quick” (Coetzee 4) he sometimes hesitate to interact with his environment. Also, as suggested in chapter three, K is part of an inferior race (he is black). This would mean that he would be disadvantaged or silenced, in particular ways. K has also learned to be quiet through other experiences. By being silent, he can get away with certain behavior. On the Visagie farm, for example, he does not want anybody to know that he lives on the farm. For this reason he cultivates the land at night and hides during the day (102). If he shows himself, he needs to

respond to questions on why he is taking the time to tend a farm, while the country is in chaos and war.

4.1.2

In *The Life & Times of Michael K*, Michael K's drift towards nature is associated with his pursuit of silence. The sense of freedom K desires, freedom from political control, is experienced more fully in the countryside. On his journey to farmland, he looks at the outstretched, empty landscape before him and reflects on why people would prefer to live on farmland.

“He could understand that people should have retreated here and fenced themselves in with miles and miles of silence; he could understand that they should have wanted to bequeath the privilege of so much silence to their children and grandchildren in perpetuity”. (Coetzee 47)

When K finds a specific deserted farm, he feels free to make use of the land since, “it is God's earth I am not a thief” (39). In the countryside, he encounters almost no other person, and is therefore not required to speak. During his stay at the farm, he gets used to the silence and as a result, “he lives in terror of life spent with people and at one point envisages himself as an earth-hole into which words disappear” (Rao 3). “Always, when he [Michael] tried to explain himself, there remained a gap, a hole, a darkness before which his understanding balked, into which it was useless to pour words. The words were eaten up, the gap remained” (Coetzee 110).

Besides that Michael K desires silence or does not know what to say, he is also muted by those in power. He is not always given a voice. In fact, he is silent because other people exert control over him. For example, others make decisions for him on where he should live and work, and therefore relate to the land, by telling him what to do and where to go (Coetzee 67).

They even try to determine who he is, as it were. In fact, when K is arrested, for example, somebody else fills out his form. That person writes down that he is unemployed, a drunkard and even his name is misspelled (70). “Michael K is muted by those who have the power to name and depict him” (Parry 151). The fact that K is silenced “can also be understood as being imposed by the colonizer on the colonized [in order to] to push the colonized to the realms of obscurity” (Rao 4). Thus, because K is muted, his identity and integrity as an equal person is undermined, as it were. In fact, Dominic Head says that “K’s silence and compliance assist in his oppression” (Head 98).

4.1.3

The grandson of Visagie, who was introduced in chapter three, does not treat K as an equal. In fact, when the grandson suddenly shows up at the farm, he assumes that Michael K is a servant on the farm, and treats him in this way. It is very likely, the grandson considered K to be a servant because of his skin color, since on first appearance, he directly assumes that K is a servant. This racial categorization basically subordinates K’s identity to a particular group identity, namely people of the black race. During apartheid South Africa, blacks actually held a subordinate position in society, and often worked for the whites. More importantly, perhaps, the grandson has come to the farm in order to escape the army, and asks K to be silent if authorities come and ask for him. The grandson simply assumes that K will comply and abuses, as it were, K’s subordinate position. K has to be silent for the sake of the grandson’s security. K, however, feels uncomfortable being controlled and flees to the mountains to maintain his freedom. It is as if he driven off the land that he so enjoyed, the gardening he that enjoyed because the white grandson exerts his control over K.

4.1.4

It becomes very clear how unfair it is that K is driven off the farm, where he lived happily, productively and where he was self-sufficient. He is denied the right, or voice, to demand his share of land use, because he is the victim of prejudice. In fact, K seems to be subject to the control of the powerful when his garden on the farm he tends is appropriated by rebels. K has no say in whether the rebels are allowed to use his land or not. They simply go ahead and seem to think they simply have the right to make use of K's crop. At the same time, K hides from the rebels; he does not respond to those who invade his personal space, as it were. Because Michael is so often not given a voice by others, whether it is on purpose or not, it seems that Michael K starts to dislike responding to his environment.

Then, when the rebels are gone, government soldiers find K and accuse him of feeding the enemy (the rebels). He is accused for a crime which he is not really responsible for. He is denied the opportunity, really, to speak up and defend himself. When he does, they do not understand him. They "keep asking him" where there are food storages and mock him to see if "he got a tongue [so that they] can decide if he is such an idiot as he looks" (Coetzee 122). K says that he is not what they think he is. However, "they gave no sign of understanding" (123). Rather the army destroys his garden. The agricultural endeavor of Michael K is destroyed because the powerful, the whites do not recognize the value of K's care for the land. Healthy, productive land is exploited because it is taken over, as it were, without considering the desires of others belonging to the inferior group in society during apartheid, such as Michael K. The soldiers also decide on what to do with the crop. These soldiers, however, are not the real exploiters. In a way, these soldiers may very well be smaller versions of what their masters do on a larger scale. During apartheid, for example, whites exploited the services of the blacks or the powerful denied the blacks' care for the land. Thus,

Coetzee clearly shows how K, a black person's services are misused. K, in fact, is not fully recognized as relevant to discussion on how to manage land. Good agricultural efforts are destroyed because those in power do not heed or consider appropriately the way blacks, such as K, relate to land. He is even driven off of the land completely and sent to camp or jail.

[T]he African earth is here opposed not to industrial overdevelopment but to colonialism and war specific to the South African context. It is not poisoned by industrial waste but destroyed by colonial agriculture (the Visagie farm is a wasteful "adventure") and by rival armies (the rebel soldiers allow their donkeys to trample K's crops while the government forces mine his allotment). It is not industrial plants but jails and camps...that cause "earth [to be] stamped so tight" and "baked so hard ... that nothing would ever grow there again" (Coetzee 148). (Wright 439)

Thus as the quote suggests, as a result of this dominating way of the powerful in going about managing land, the environment is not taken care of properly. Because K's voice or right is not properly considered, the land's produce is wasted and land is exploited unnecessarily, which is rather significant in a war-time context, in which there may have been hunger or strife over the land's resources. All in all, it can be said that because of miscommunication between groups, the ecology is undermined.

4.1.5

Gradually, throughout the narrative, it seems that Michael K becomes more resistant in general and chooses to be silent as a way of fighting back against those who want to control him. K's refusal to communicate becomes an act of insubordination towards those in power, as it were; it is like a weapon against the oppression he experiences (Mullins 8). His refusal to communicate empowers him, however. His non-responsiveness is some sort act of defiance against those who require him to cooperate. As mentioned earlier, K may be considered, to a

certain extent, a representative of people who hold a subordinate position in society, such as blacks in apartheid South Africa. Michael K's choice, then, to remain silent parallels how blacks sometimes purposefully chose not to speak up during apartheid South Africa. In fact, silence of people who belong to an inferior group, can have a tormenting effect on the other, opposing party (Mullins 56). One critic comments that K's silence is similarly "smothering, strangulating and dense" (Mullins 56). It is very meaningful in light of the blacks' oppression during apartheid, somewhat of a political turbulent period in South Africa.

The narrative presents an individual asserting his freedom through inarticulate defiance towards the agencies of the state and escapes through the trauma without being the victim of the ravages of the civil war. The actual war remains peripheral to the central conflict in the novel because it is peripheral to Michael K's concerns. It seems that the main conflict is between Michael, the individual and the enemy others.

(Rao 1)

The fact K is a victim of the system, and suffers oppression causes, in a way, his silence. One critic comments that on the silence of blacks during apartheid. He says that this gap left by silence was an image of how in apartheid South Africa, whites failed to see or comprehend blacks. Whites did not fully understand the amount of pain blacks experienced because of the country's racist system (Mullin 56).

4.1.6

All in all, often those who in power are able to limit the freedom of speech of their subordinates. Michael K is character who clearly is not treated equally, not given a voice, and suffers racism. Mainly, because he is part of inferior group in society, he is subject to racism. His agricultural services are used, in a rather unfair way. Also, when K actually chooses to be silent and not communicate, he is rebelling, as it were against, against those who do at times

demand him to communicate back. However, because those in power do not understand K or understand how K relates to land (through agriculture, for example), they take Michael K for granted. Coetzee seems to suggest that whites will have to put effort into understanding blacks, so that blacks will be more willing to communicate or cooperate. In fact, when the two races treat each other with respect and fairly, each party can benefit of the services and land use of the other party. In this way, there will be increasing environmental justice.

4.2 How Mehring Communicates

4.2.1

Mehring in *The Conservationist* does not talk much. In fact, Mehring's desire to buy a farm and live in nature affects how he relates socially. He seeks to escape the city and busy society, and pursues silence, as it were, by seeking to connect with nature. He chooses this rather luxurious pursuit, to find rest or fulfilment in nature, since he can easily afford buying land. In the countryside, Mehring does find some sort of peace. "Places are not just metaphorically expressive in Gordimer's work ... but they are also conceived of as ideologically productive: the ordinary enclosures in which we live shape, as much as they represent, dominant social relations" (Barnard 42). Basically, the physical environment of a character determines, to an extent, social relations.

4.2.2

The Conservationist is a psychological novel. Particular attention is given to Mehring's interior monologues, his thoughts and feelings. Mehring's thoughts, in fact, reveal that he is very much impressed by the beauty of nature. However, he hardly shares his own personal experiences with other people, nor does he show interests in the ideas and thoughts of others.

One of the reasons why he does not communicate is because he does not connect with others. Though while he is rather quiet in relation to people, he uses a lot of words to describe nature. In fact, his rather disproportionate use of words to describe landscapes, may very well be a way of asserting right over the land (Hogg 129).

Affection for the land [is] a claiming of the landscape, a relationship with nature that is shaped and distorted by power... This relationship between power relationships and representations of land has been a constant theme in the works of Gordimer and Coetzee". (Hogg 129)

This quote helps to understand that choosing to speak, and not be silent, may be a way of, ultimately, exerting control over blacks. To be more specific, Mehring's excessive words or choice to be silent may very well be motivated by a desire to exert control. For example, when Mehring is confronted with the black corpse found on his land, he observes the scene with his eyes, but is silent. This silence contrasts with the excessive words he usually uses to describe nature (Hogg 129). This silence leaves a gap, as it were (Coundouriotis 21). Moreover, this gap emphasizes his disengagement with the murdered body on his property, or simply others besides himself.

4.2.3

Mehring generally seems self-focused in relation to those he does directly communicate with. He has his own agenda; he does not want to be invited to parties by his friends in the city. When friends call him, he hardly responds to messages left on his answering machine. He does not take part in the conversation. "He gives no answer" (Gordimer 201). Generally, he rather prefers to be alone, in nature.

The fact that he does not want to connect with others is also evident in his relation to the blacks who work on his farm. In fact, he speaks many languages but is an outsider to the

language the blacks speak, as Eleni Coundouriotis observes. She observes that because Mehring travels a lot he speaks many languages, though not the indigenous African language his workers use on the farm (5). This is rather striking, especially considering the blacks *do* have to use the language Mehring speaks in order to communicate on work-related topics. In fact, “including African languages [and] discourses in Gordimer’s novel helps to expose the extent to which the divide between “them and us” fostered by the colour-bar hinders the emergence of a situation in which whites can “merge[]with an indigenous culture” (Gordimer, “From Apartheid to Afrocentrism” (46). In fact, in a way it is as if the inability to communicate properly, because of the language barrier, leads to unequal relationships (Andindilile 19). Of course, this hardly fosters foster communication between different groups. This situation parallels the language division during apartheid.

The apartheid social setup made the acquisition of the language of power mandatory for the blacks since they needed these languages to communicate with whites across the colour-bar; conversely, there was no such pressing demand for whites, hence Mehring’s life in his comfort zone, learning only the languages he believes matter (Andindilile 11) ... On the whole, Gordimer’s apartheid-era novels demonstrate how problematic cross- cultural communication can become when social entities remain insulated behind the privileges sanctioned by divisive laws and sustained by the language of power. They also demonstrate that cross-cultural interaction is more necessary than the artificial barriers created by the apartheid policies. In her apartheid-era fiction, Gordimer exposes the limited and convoluted cross-cultural exchange between black and white through her representation of African discourses. She thus represents the debilitating effects of the divisive apartheid policies on both blacks and whites. (Andindilile 19)

Thus, during apartheid there was segregation between racial groups, which resulted in poor understanding and communication between different communities. As is suggested in the quote above, this lack of communication hinders the process of cultures merging, or bridging the gap between “them and us”. As a result, because of poor communication it becomes more difficult to reconcile competing ideas on how to treat nature or how to divide land. Because groups do not communicate, they will not understand each other’s needs and interests in regard to nature. In fact, Mehring’s domineering and rather self-focused pursuit to conserve nature conflicts with the way that blacks relate to land. For example, Mehring strongly warns (black) children who are on his land (and others) not to “touch or move [the eleven valuable guinea fowl eggs discovered on his land], ever” (Gordimer 12). The fact that he does not allow anyone to touch the eggs, and his quick, rather harsh response to the children on his land, who discovered the eggs, suggests that he is not interested, at all, and considers not for a moment the fun of the children who have discovered these eggs. It seems then that Mehring only expresses his own ideals, or philosophy of how to relate to nature. The children, for example, clearly showed to also derive pleasure or purpose from Mehring’s land.

4.3 Communication and Environmental Justice *Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist*

All in all, the important role of communication in how land is divided in South Africa is creatively shown in these novels written by Coetzee and Gordimer. In this chapter, I showed how these novels demonstrated a relationship between land rights, race and silence, when understood in the context of apartheid in South Africa. The interrelationship between these three topics, as it were, yields rich political insights.

In fact, the novels can be used as a critique of faulty communication in the context of environmental causes in South Africa. What is, in fact, most evident, is that concerns regarding environmental justice are often not realized because of poor communication between different populations and individuals. This poor communication, as was evident through the characters of Michael K and Mehring was due to different reasons. As was mostly evident in the character of Mehring, silence originated because some people were unwilling to give up private desires, ideals or claims on land. Another significant reason why silence occurred during apartheid is because the disadvantaged, the subordinates in society, often the blacks, were not given the opportunity to have a say in governmental matters such as land division. However, blacks also used silence during the apartheid to resist, or oppose their oppressors. Likewise, Michael K refuses to communicate because he does not want to comply to demands of the whites. Thus as a result of this silence or difficult communication, there was little interaction between groups.

So, in regard to the role of communication in the pursuit of green causes, it becomes most evident from the novels of Coetzee and Gordimer that there are larger possibilities for environmental justice if both groups are committed to connecting and reconciliation. “This is based on the assumption that societies, like individuals, cannot grow and mature unless they come to terms with the dark places, silences [during apartheid]” (Brink 24), or unequal, dehumanizing treatment of people during apartheid. All voices should have the right to be heard, and connect with each other. To divide land fairly, individuals’ desire should not be subject to the racial or ethnic community they belong to. All people need to have equal right to relate to land, in order for environmental justice to be realized.

5. Conclusion

In my analysis of *Life & Times of Michael K* and *The Conservationist* the conflict of who possesses what land is experienced by both protagonists. Michael K's, a black person's, right to land is undermined because of his race and other characteristics which make him part of a disadvantaged group in society. Mehring's wealth and privileged position, on the other hand, permits him to exploit land for his own interest, at the expense of the blacks. Thus, by comparing these two narratives, it becomes clear how unfair it is that blacks are not allowed to own land, which is represented through Michael K who is threatened with losing his garden, while he does not even lay claim to it (it was "God's earth"). On the other hand, it seems highly unjust that a white liberal person, such as Mehring, claims dominion over land that is not inherently his and exploits it. Thus, Coetzee in his book makes an argument for how life in nature, freedom from governmental control is to be desired. Gordimer, however, accentuates through her writing how ridiculous the pursuit of white liberals was to lay claim on nature, at the expense of the blacks.

These writers expose readers to the ethical dimension of environmentalism in South Africa. The complex endeavor of land divide is highly significant to the discussion of how to pursue environmental justice in South Africa. In the past, as is allegorized, perhaps, in the work of Coetzee and Gordimer, land division was unfair and unjust. There was widespread environmental racism. Problematic communication between different layers and groups of society, however, delayed the process of reconciliation necessary for the equal divide of land and the fair treatment of all people, independent of race or other identity characteristics. Thus, to pursue ideals of environmental justice, land ownership should first of all be taken into consideration. Moreover, groups of people should be stimulated to communicate appropriately so that they will be more aware of each other's needs, when pursuing justice in

an environmental context. Better communication will moreover stimulate common, shared causes, which may also speed up the slow process of land reform and environmentalism.

All in all, the limited scope of this thesis cannot do justice to the extent of this problem. However, the eco-critical perspective in my analysis of these two novels must serve to suggest of the rich potential for further discovery possible in the field of eco-criticism, especially considering the relevance of environmental awareness these days.

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