Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences

Department of English Language and Literature

English Language and Literature

POSTNATURAL ENVIRONMENTS: LITERARY CARTOGRAPHIES OF POLLUTION IN JIM CRACE'S *THE PESTHOUSE*, JOHN BURNSIDE'S *GLISTER*, AND JOSEPH D'LACEY'S *GARBAGE MAN*

Kerim Can YAZGÜNOĞLU

Ph.D. Dissertation

Ankara, 2018

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KABUL VE ONAY

Kerim Can YAZGÜNOĞLU tarafından hazırlanan "Postnatural Environments: Literary Cartographies of Pollution in Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, John Burnside's *Glister*, and Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*" başlıklı bu çalışma, 07.06.2018 tarihinde yapılan savunma sınavı sonucunda başarılı bulunarak jürimiz tarafından Doktora Tezi olarak kabul edilmiştir.

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Bu çalışmadaki bütün bilgi ve belgeleri akademik kurallar çerçevesinde elde ettiğimi, görsel, işitsel ve yazılı tüm bilgi ve sonuçları bilimsel ahlak kurallarına uygun olarak sunduğumu, kullandığım verilerde herhangi bir tahrifat yapmadığımı, yararlandığım kaynaklara bilimsel normlara uygun olarak atıfta bulunduğumu, tezimin kaynak gösterilen durumlar dışında özgün olduğunu, Prof Dr. Serpil OPPERMANN danışmanlığında tarafımdan üretildiğini ve Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Yazım Yönergesine göre yazıldığını beyan ederim.

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ÖZET

YAZGÜNOĞLU, Kerim Can. "Doğa Sonrası Çevreler: Jim Crace'in *The Pesthouse* John Burnside'ın *Glister* ve Joseph D'Lacey'in *Garbage Man* Romanlarında Kirliliğin Edebi Kartografyaları." Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2018.

Doğa-kültür etkileşimlerinin karanlık yönüne dikkat çeken bu tez, Jim Crace'in *The Pesthouse* (2007), John Burnside'ın *Glister* (2008) ve Joseph D'Lacey'in *Garbage Man* (2009) romanlarında zehirliliğin nasıl el değmemiş, bâkir doğanın sonuna işaret ettiğini ve doğanın nasıl "doğa sonrası" hâle geldiğini inceleyerek doğadan sonra ne geldiği sorusu üzerine eğilir. Temel olarak çevre sorunlarıyla ilgilenen bu üç roman, kirlenen ve zehirlenen çevrelere ışık tutmaktadır ve günlük yaşantılarda insanın zehirliliğe maruz kalmasını göz önünde tutarak ekolojik kaygıları dile getirmektedir. Bu bağlamda romanlar özellikle insan ve çevre arasında süregelen toksik etkileşimi vurgulayarak nasıl doğa sonrası çevrelerin zaten insan bedeninin bir parçası olduğunu ortaya koyarlar. Böylelikle "yeşil sonrası ekoloji," "karanlık ekoloji" ve "çöp ekolojisi" ile ilgili son dönem akademik tartışmaları ayrıntılarıyla açıklayan bu çalışma, her romanın nasıl kirlenen çevrelerle edebi, kültürel ve ekolojik varsayımlara odaklandığını ve nasıl bu varsayımları sorunlaştırdığını örneklendirir ve seçili romanlarla ekoeleştirel bir bağlantı kurar.

Bu tezin giriş bölümünde güncel ekoeleştirel kuramlar kullanılarak doğa sonrası çevrelerle ilgili tartışmalar açıklanmıştır. Bu üç roman, zehirlilik bağlamında doğa sonrası kartograflar yaratan yeşil sonrası, karanlık ve çöp ekolojileri olarak üç farklı bölümde tartışılmıştır. Birinci bölüm insan kaynaklı müdahaleyle gezegene ve atmosfere yapılmış çevresel zararın nasıl yeşil sonrası ekolojiler ürettiğini mercek altına alarak Jim Crace'in *The Pesthouse* romanını incelemektedir. İkinci bölüm sanayi sonrası bir kasabada harabe kimya tesisi yüzünden havada ve toprakta biriken zehirlerin ve kirleticilerin nasıl karanlık ekolojik dönüşümler ortaya çıkardığını gösterecek ve bu bağlamda John Burnside'ın *Glister* romanını irdeler. Üçüncü bölüm ise çöp ve çöp atıklamanın nasıl çöp ekolojiler yarattığını ve tüketimciliğin nasıl çöp toplumlar oluşturduğunu sorgularken sosyal ve ekolojik bağlamlarda Joseph D'Lacey'in *Garbage Man* romanını analiz etmektedir. Bu bölümler ilgili kuramsal tartışmalarla bağlantılı

olarak ekoeleştirel okumalarda bulunmaktadır. Sonuç olarak bu romanlarda örneklenen doğa sonrası çevreler yeşil sonrası, karanlık ve çöp ekolojilerin meydana getirdiği "ekolojisonrası" gerçeği göstermektedir. Bu gerçeklik insanların ve insan-dışı canlıların nasıl bedenler-arası olarak toksik ilişkiler içerisinde birbiriyle bağlantılı olduğunu belirtmektedir.

Anahtar Sözcükler

Jim Crace, *The Pesthouse*, John Burnside, *Glister*, Joseph D'Lacey, *Garbage Man*, doğasonrası çevreler, yeşilsonrası ekoloji, karanlık ekoloji, çöp ekolojisi, ekolojisonrası gerçeklik

ABSTRACT

YAZGÜNOĞLU, Kerim Can. "Postnatural Environments: Literary Cartographies of Pollution in Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, John Burnside's *Glister*, and Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*." Ph.D. Dissertation, Ankara, 2018.

Drawing attention to the dark side of nature-culture interactions, this dissertation addresses the question of what comes after nature by exploring how toxicity signals the end of pristine, untouched nature, and how nature becomes "postnatural" in the twenty-first-century British fiction, namely Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* (2007), John Burnside's *Glister* (2008), and Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man* (2009). These three novels, which are mainly concerned with environmental issues, provide penetrating insights into polluted and poisoned environments, and express ecological concerns in consideration of human exposures to toxicity in quotidian lives. In this context, they specifically present the ways in which postnatural environments are already part of people's bodily natures by highlighting the ongoing toxic interaction between the human and the environment. In this way, expanding on the recent discussions on "postgreen ecology," "dark ecology," and "rubbish ecology," this study offers an ecocritical engagement with the selected novels, illustrating how each of them helps to focalise and trouble literary, cultural and ecological assumptions about polluted environments.

In the introduction of this dissertation, the arguments about postnatural environments are explained by using contemporary ecocritical theories. These three novels are discussed in three respective chapters in terms of postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies that create postnatural cartographies through toxicity. The first chapter examines Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, exploring how the environmental damage already wrought on the planet and its atmosphere by anthropogenic intervention produces postgreen ecologies. The second chapter scrutinizes John Burnside's *Glister*, and demonstrates how toxins and pollutants in the air and the soil due to derelict chemical factory create dark ecological transformations in a post-industrial town. The third chapter analyses Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*, in its social and ecological contexts, as it questions how garbage and dumping can produce rubbish ecologies and how consumerism can construct rubbish societies. These chapters undertake ecocritical readings in relation to

the relevant theoretical discussions. In consequence, postnatural environments as exemplified in these novels indicate a “postecological” reality generated by postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies. This reality shows how humans and nonhumans are trans-corporeally connected in toxic relations.

Keywords

Jim Crace, *The Pesthouse*, John Burnside, *Glister*, Joseph D’Lacey, *Garbage Man*, postnatures, postgreen ecology, dark ecology, rubbish ecology, postecological reality

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INTRODUCTION

AN ECOLOGICAL CARTOGRAPHY OF POSTNATURES

"the one thing that is not 'natural' is nature herself." (7)
Kate Soper, *What is Nature?*

This dissertation explores with ecocritical lenses how "nature" becomes "postnatural" as a result of ecological disasters, exploitative industrial practices and pollution, and how British novels in the first decade of the twenty-first century deal with these pressing issues. The term "postnatural" is coined by American eco-journalist Bill McKibben who wanted to describe the end of the idea of a pristine, untouched, and impeccable nature in order to draw attention to the worst type of environmental crisis generated by global pollution. In general, the postnatural indicates a ruined ecology in which nature and culture collapse into a complicated entanglement. In underscoring this interface, the dissertation discusses in three selected novels how the environmental crisis is specifically accounted for in the twenty-first-century British novel. Hence, the chapters will analyse the different phases of the postnatural in Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* (2007), John Burnside's *Glister* (2008), and Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man* (2009). These novels problematize the rupture between nature and culture, and human and nonhuman environments, not only questioning the common view of human beings as separate from the environment, but also offering a new perspective on how the relations between nature and culture delineate new, unruly ecologies of toxicity that affect human and nonhuman realms. In this context, the novels show how nature and culture are interdependent with permeable, precarious, and relational boundaries between the human and the more-than-human worlds. Thus, as a result of the total contamination of the planet, the imbrication of nature and culture produces postnatural landscapes as dark cartographies of toxicity. In other words, the toxic contamination of the world has engendered a shift away from the standard concept of nature towards a new paradigm of the postnatural based on toxic

landscapes. The aim of this study is to examine the environmental impact of pollution and waste on social and ecological relations with respect to the conceptualization of the postnatural in these novels, which address the question of "[h]ow do we deal with nature *after* it ends?" (Beck 90).

Additionally, the dissertation deploys the diffractive methodology[1], proposed by Donna Haraway and Karen Barad, and developed by material ecocritics Serpil Oppermann and Serenella Iovino, within the framework of postnatural theories of the environment. The dissertation is organized into three chapters which explore three interlacing ecologies that define postnatures. Chapters will unfold in terms of thematic intersections, such as toxic bodies, polluted places, and environmental illnesses. The dissertation proposes that three contemporary British novelists, Jim Crace, John Burnside, and Joseph D'Lacey, redefine nature as a postnatural composite that uneasily blends dark and rubbish ecologies in *The Pesthouse*, *Glister*, and *Garbage Man*, respectively. The novels, showing the deterioration of the physical environment, draw more attention to the major conflict between industrial societies and the environment. Besides, the novelists with ecological concerns engage directly with polluted environments and their ecological effects on human and nonhuman beings in order to amplify the environmental warning embedded in the texts. They all use toxicity to address social, political, ethical, and metaphysical questions related to the very existence of the Earth and its biosphere. The dissertation also reconceptualises postnatures as "postgreen" spaces transmutated by ecological disasters and global pollution, such as droughts, floods, hurricanes, and fires brought about by consumer capitalism and industrialization. The concept of postnature, thus, can be recuperated to address the natural-cultural experience of ecological embeddedness and interconnectedness with regard to the human and other species in the novels. Reimagining connectedness as postgreen and postnatural, the novelists respond to the environmental crisis with convincing narrative accounts of how postnatures are experienced. They create a postnatural setting in the aftermath of an environmental catastrophe through varied genres that they use, such as environmental dystopia, horror, and gothic, and therefore offer new literary constructions of reality and nature in the twenty-first-century British novel.

In an attempt to outline the ecocritical contours of the term "postnatural" in the selected novels, this dissertation mainly identifies and investigates three aspects of the term to offer a new perspective on toxic landscapes: (i) global pollution on which the "end of nature" discourse focuses; (ii) technological advancement that has shaped both cultural and natural realms; and (iii) dark and rubbish ecologies that articulate a new nature more generally without prioritizing nature over culture or vice versa. These types, indeed, offer several ecodiscourses that combine two characteristics or more, and in the typology of the postnatural there is an overlap of these types, which have been particularly influential in the development of the term. Before looking at these categories, it will be useful to ask some preliminary questions pertinent to the postnatural: Is it possible to claim that every polluted territory becomes postnatural on a planetary scale? Does such a term as "nature" exist? Is there a green narrative still running through contemporary ecodiscourses? What if nature is always already postnatural? To what extent do the selected novels expose postnatural environments? How do the novels and ecotheories record and explore the environmental predicament and change? These are important questions the answers to which reveal the status of varied forms that nature takes in the twenty-first century, and the position the British novelists take in the face of the environmental crisis. Underpinning these questions, the dissertation maps various phases of the postnatural, seeing it as a powerful literary, material, and discursive response to the ecological disturbances, articulating a sense of what comes after nature.

The concept of the postnatural is, firstly, predicated on pollution that literally combines the natural and the cultural realms. Many concerned environmental humanities scholars have called attention to the issue that global pollution is changing our lived experiences and environments more radically and unpredictably than ever before. Pollution undoubtedly emerges from the detrimental human practices, such as unrelenting flows of industrial and human waste that overwhelm the natural processes to cope with them. Given that the world has been subjected to an "unprecedented increase in types and quantities of pollution during the last two hundred years, and the onslaught grows worse day by day" (Markham xi), it is noteworthy that global pollution has been exerting a decisive influence on human and nonhuman environments. As long as the interactions between human societies and the natural

world become more and more intense through human refuse, the unpredictable effects of global pollution become more visible in the social and cultural spheres. So, pollution inevitably makes culture part of nature, showing how "naturecultures"—the compound term coined by Donna Haraway— emerge in this context.[2] Underlining the naturalcultural toxification through waste and contaminants on a global scale in *A Brief History of Pollution* (1994), Adam Markham claims that "[n]o aspect of life on earth is untouched by the dread hand of pollution. Clean water, fresh air and pristine environments no longer exist in anything more than concept" (xi). Therefore, pollution is "ubiquitous, seeping into and slowly rotting the fabric of the environment and affecting human societies and cultures in ways which we are only just beginning to fully comprehend" (xi-xii). If all places of the planet are transformed by pollution, how can one redefine nature? In addressing this question and thinking about how human practices defiled the natural world, Emma Marris also makes a similar comment on the way in which the concept of nature needs to be reconsidered. She argues that "there is one thing that nature is not: pristine. In 2011 there is no pristine wilderness on planet Earth" (2). As such, the unassailable impacts of global pollution trigger negative transformations of nature, giving rise to new questions about the definition of what nature is. Focusing on this issue, this study suggests that nature today has become postnatural and the postnatural manifests itself through material, cultural, literary, and symbolical accounts of toxicity, as social and cultural realms are woven into and co-built with the transformed environment on a planetary scale.

The main question here that this study will initially address is: does the concept of the postnatural, which generates a vision of toxified nature, denote the total destruction of nature? In answering this question concerning the end of nature discourse, three names are worth mentioning; Bill McKibben, Paul Wapner, and Steven Vogel. For them, there is no longer a pristine natural environment anywhere in the world because nature and its traditional conceptualization as untouched wilderness are no longer viable. The end of nature thesis does not "merely historicize the term 'nature' by insisting on its meanings as always bound up in particular social formations, or critique its essentialist determination, or pluralize the term to allow for multiple contexts and definitions, but instead declare its wholesale extinction as

salient material entity and conceptual apparatus" (Ronda). On this view, nature disappears and becomes totally denatured by human agency. The first proclamation of this logic can be found in Bill McKibben's bestseller *The End of Nature* (1989), where he lays out the parameters of the end of nature discourse. It is through contaminating the Earth with toxic chemicals that, as McKibben notes, human beings have permanently changed their relationship to the so-called "natural" world. In this book, McKibben hence proclaims the death of nature, suggesting that "we live in a postnatural world" (62). Discussing the global toxicity of the planet and global warming, McKibben concedes that nature has lost its cultural meanings, and its status as "an independent force" that has been destroyed by human agency: "human beings had become so large that they altered everything around us. That we had ended nature as an independent force, that or appetites and habits and desires could now be read in every cubic meter of air, in every increment on the thermometer" (xiii). According to McKibben's hypothesis, the natural world is no longer separate from the human domain, and the division between what humans have called "natural," or "unnatural" is not tenable anymore. That is, the postnatural condition is an ecological status in which excessive human activities totally shape and control all ecosystems and lifeforms all around the world, which has led to a reconsideration of the impact of pollution on our understanding of what nature becomes in the twenty-first century.

Highlighting this point, Ursula Heise also remarks that in the end of nature rhetoric "nature in the sense of a domain apart from human intention and agency no longer exists" (9). Rather, anthropocentric practices and their ramifications transmogrify nature into indeterminate, precarious, and permeable "postnatures," which McKibben regards as the recent phenomenon, for nature and culture have irrevocably merged in this moment of global pollution. This merging, however, is not so much the occasion of a synthesis of nature and culture; but a consequent factor of progressive human cultures in the obliteration of a pure nature, making it a nostalgic thing of the past. Therefore, McKibben laments the fact that humans "have ended the thing that has, at least in modern times, defined nature for us—its separation from human society" (*End* 64). In fact, he yearns for this loss of a pristine and harmonious idea of nature. It is important to note here that McKibben's perspective regarding

the relationship between nature and culture is not the same in all of the end of nature debates. Paul Wapner and Steven Vogel, for example, have shown that the idea of the end of nature—even though this ending process has been intensified today—is not just a contemporary phenomenon but an inevitable result of ongoing naturalcultural interactions over the past centuries leading to what this study terms as the postnatural environments today.[3] It is true that the negative intermeshment of human and nonhuman environments has become more visible and pernicious since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the Industrial Revolution, and since then the pollution of the Earth has been incessantly increasing. It was in this period (nineteenth century) that "[b]oth nature and the human collapsed towards each other," as Paul Outka has argued, which later continued with increasing industrial processes and with pollution climbing to unacceptable levels. So, Outka claims, "we became posthuman; nature became postnatural" (33). This position that marked an end to the antagonism between nature and culture is a challenge to the understanding of nature as the independent force.

Questioning such a vision of nature, Wapner and Vogel advance on what McKibben set up in the end of nature discourse. It is now evident that in their respective accounts we are presented with nothing less than a rethinking of nature as postnatural in terms of the environmental despoliation because today humans intensely "penetrate every realm of the earth: the lithosphere, pedosphere, atmosphere, hydrosphere, and biosphere" (39), as Paul Wapner emphasizes in "The Changing Nature of Nature: Environmental Politics in the Anthropocene." Although Wapner knows that "the boundary between humans and nature never really existed since we have never had—nor could we ever have—a clear understanding of 'nature' or 'humans' in and of themselves" (39), his argument on the end of nature is based on the increasing anthropogenic activities in the contemporary period as the main factors in negatively affecting geological and atmospheric evolution of the earth systems. He suggests that this process should be analysed not only empirically but also conceptually:

> There are two dimensions to the end of nature: empirical and conceptual. Empirically, a growing human population, unparalleled technological prowess, increasing economic

> might, and a globalizing culture of consumerism are propelling humanity to dig deeper into, reach further across, and more intensely exploit the earth's resources, sinks, and ecosystem services. To be sure, humans have always altered nature. However, over the past century or so the cumulative force of human numbers, power, and technological capability has swept people so deeply into and across all ecosystems that one can no longer draw a clean distinction between the human and nonhuman realms. Today, we mine the earth's crust, release waste into the sky, reroute rivers, fish the oceans, and reformat the land. (39)

Wapner provides a platform for discussing how human practices have eradicated both material and conceptual existence of nature. Despite the fact that the overwhelming human interference in the planet's ecosystems deeply denatures the natural realm today, Wapner's argumentation also suggests that the line demarcating nature from culture has always been arbitrary. In a discussion of this problem, Wapner contends that the end of nature

> does not simply erase the boundary between humans and nature, but fundamentally changes the identities of the two spheres as they co-constitute each other. […] Put differently, the end of nature de-essentializes both humans and nature, and therewith removes faith in the free expression of human nature or any other notion of a distinctive human essence as a response to climate change or other environmental dangers. ("Changing" 48)

Wapner's paragraph is explicit in telling us how all dimensions of ecological and cultural life interdependently relate to the biosphere. "De-essentializing" humans and nature, the end of nature discourse also gives rise to what Steven Vogel calls "a postnaturalist environmental theory" (*Thinking* 27), an ecotheory that posits the imbrication of humans and nature as the main condition of the postnatural life. In other words, nature and humans are contingent upon one another, as they co-constitute each other in the postnatural. The postnatural in this perspective signifies the dissolution of nature/culture, subject/object, and discourse/reality binaries through corralling naturecultures into a postnatural picture.

Also, like Wapner, Vogel claims that the end of nature is not at all a recent phenomenon, giving us a clear sense that it has been always already an ongoing process resulting from human practices: "the end of nature might not be a recent event but rather something that has always already taken place: human beings have always transformed the world they encounter, and they transform it in encountering it" (*Thinking* 25). In this way, he emphasizes the fact

that if the natural environments have never been exempt from human activities since the rise of civilization, as he propounds, then "'postnaturalism' is simply the (natural) human condition" (*Thinking* 26). That is, the problem of pollution is directly related to human beings since the birth of humanity, as Adam Markham also claims: "The adulteration of water, soil and air by the physical and chemical waste products of human activity has accompanied our species since it first walked upon the earth" (1). The situation today, however, is mind-boggling because of excessive carbon dioxide in the atmosphere and enormous amounts of hazardous waste materials in landscapes and waterscapes. Surely, it is our species featuring as the quintessential actor wreaking havoc on the planet.

Highlighting the total domination of nature by human agency in *Malfeasance: Appropriation through Pollution?* (2011), the French philosopher Michel Serres spells out the ways in which the end of nature has taken place through pollution. His study of pollution, the appropriation of nature, and the interdependence of nature and culture is exemplary of what is happening to nature in the twenty-first century. The world is literally constituted by the shaping force of pollution both in physical and symbolic terms, which Serres categorizes as "hard" and "soft" pollutions: "By the first I mean on the one hand solid residues, liquids, and gases, emitted throughout the atmosphere by big industrial companies or gigantic garbage dumps, the shameful signature of big cities. By the second, tsunamis of writing, signs, images, and logos flooding rural, civic, public and natural spaces as well as landscapes with their advertising" (41). No matter how insignificant this distinction is, the categorization is useful in showing how pollution is inextricably bound up with both material and cultural activities, as it "comes from measurable residues of the work and transformations related to energy, but fundamentally it emanates from our will to appropriate, our desire to conquer and expand the space of our properties" (42). This appropriation of territory at the global level suggests "*the end of* geography" (19). In Serres's words, "*Homo* appropriates the *global physical world by his hard garbage* and, as we shall see, *the global human world by soft garbage*" (54). In this respect, humans no longer inhabit the same world where our forefathers had dwelled.

> Now the pollution that we have been suffering from the nineteenth century and that we denounce and worry about as it globalizes overturns the primary, vital, "natural" givens of this contamination and its consequences. It forces us to change our methods of appropriation. We no longer inhabit the same space; the new space can no longer be enclosed at all. Our effluents are inextricably blended. *We can no longer enclose a piece of land*. This could be done only in the old space that was easily mapped. We no longer live there. (67)

Much like McKibben, Serres concludes that the world as we know it has ended through pollution. What has replaced it is now a postnatural one in which toxic substances, chemical contaminants, noxious fumes, and poisonous waste have constructed an impure and liminal zone. Thus, nature today has turned into postnatures and the postnatural here emerges as a dark cartography in which humans and nonhumans try to dwell.

As opposed to the end of nature discourses delineating such a postnatural vision, nevertheless, there are two different directions in contemporary environmentalism in terms of their approaches to nature, what Paul Wapner explains as the "dream of naturalism" and the "dream of mastery" (22-23) in *Living through the End of Nature* (2010). The first direction, the "dream of naturalism," deals with conserving and preserving nature "out there" beyond human environments. This ecodiscourse sees nature as the very source of what is true, right, good, and beautiful, suggesting that we can "live best when we align ourselves with the natural world, when we take our cues from and otherwise orient ourselves with respect to nature" (Wapner, *Living* 54-55). But there is no place left intact on the globe. So it is impossible to renaturalize the world. Contrary to the first direction, the second one, the "dream of mastery," maintains that humanity is the measure of everything, as it views nature as a raw source to be used, mastered, manipulated, and designed for the technological and industrial amelioration of humanity. This "domination of nature" thesis insists that "human beings are uniquely endowed with ingenuity, resourcefulness, and the spirit of enterprise, and that we can and should use these to unlock and override nature's secrets" (Wapner, *Living* 24). This view privileges humanity over everything else. Criticising this thesis, William Leiss argues in *The Domination of Nature* (1972) that scientific and technological progress brings about new forms of mastery with repercussions like pollution and environmental destruction. Therefore, in underlining the failure of this thesis, Leiss remarks that the "notion of a

common domination of the human race over external nature is nonsensical" (123) as long as nature and humanity are regarded as separate from one another. Indeed, neither directions are successful in establishing new ecological relations between humanity and nature. Rather, both directions invoke and support the very distinction between nature and culture, attaching importance to nature "over there" or to denatured environments manipulated under industrial progress. Despite their differences, however, they share the same premise that nature as an external entity can be managed for preservation or destruction. However, without supporting the "dream of mastery" one can argue that the human domination of nature has actually already dissolved the boundary between nature and culture, and transformed material relations, thereby constructing a new nature imbricated in human practices. For example, in the attempt at mastering nature, as Leiss asks, "what is the 'nature' that is mastered in this process?" (97). The response to this question is the conceptualisation of the postnatural emerging from the complex entanglements between technology, pollution, and nature.

The postnatural, secondly, is used to characterize the intentional modification of nature and nonhumans through high technology. This usage of the term comes from Richard Pell and Lauren Allen. In defining the postnatural in their "Preface to a Genealogy of the Postnatural," they refer to

> anthropogenic interventions into evolution that are both intentional and heritable, regardless of their subsequent unintentional consequences. The postnatural therefore is not an epoch of Earth's geohistory, but a conceptually inclined adjective used to describe the purposeful and permanent modification of living species by human through domesticating, genetic engineering, and synthetic biology. (79)

If the postnatural denotes "permanent modification of living species," humans here can only remain powerful external manipulators of nature, which is an anthropocentric vision that is not acceptable. On the contrary, humans are always part of all natural processes even if they have dreams of mastery and can manipulate life to some extent as this dissertation illustrates with examples, claiming that under no circumstances can postnatures be conceived without human beings. In fact, the hypothesis that will unfold with each chapter is that postnatures are, in Stacy Alaimo's words, "the entangled territories of material and discursive, natural

and cultural, biological and textual" (*Bodily* 3), which allow us to envisage how these terrains overlap and coexist in complex ways.

As can be seen in relation to the above reflections, there are various and sometimes conflictual delineations of what constitutes postnature among ecocritics. Sean Cubitt and David Mazel, for example, claim that pollution and technological industry are interrelated in terms of the constitution of a postnatural world. Cubitt correlates postnatures with ecological, technological, and digital incursions into the natural world, claiming that "altering landscapes" have returned as "postnatures" (231). Talking about three sides of postnatures in "Supernatural Futures: Theses on Digital Aesthetics," such as "the supernatural, the antinatural and the cybernatural" (238), he underlines the formation of postnatural interzones between ecology, technology, and aesthetics in line with the end of nature discourses:

> [P]ostnatures do not supersede or sublate one another, but co-exist in the ways we think about the digital domain. Postnature is not a unified zone, any more than nature itself. With each postnatural vision comes a revision of the natural, and with each new nature/postnature pair is associated an aesthetics and a politics. But each vision persists in the others, and the more a schema is historically embedded and the more it is regarded as outmoded and forgotten, the more it returns, as repressed, as tragedy and as farce, in the others. (238)

As "a revision of the natural," the postnatural vision here points to what comes after nature, after life, after "the triumph of technology over nature, and the creation of artificial life" (238). Indeed, the postnatural has always been inextricably bound to social, cultural, and technological practices. The postnatural discourse thus siginifies something more than just the "dream of mastery"; it is humanity's creative and destructive relationship to nature and technology. Such discussions are embodied in what David Mazel calls "postnatural ecocriticism" (185). Mazel himself draws specific attention to global biosurveillance which, according to him, has thoroughly denatured the natural realm

> by monitoring the temperature and chemical composition of the atmosphere; by tracking the temperature of the oceans and the circulation of marine nutrients; by recording the movements of migratory wildlife as animals and birds distribute themselves across an international system of flyways and refuges; by "mapping" the genomes of a variety of species. (186)

Regarding biosurveillance as just an element contributing to the postnatural, Mazel acknowledges that biotechnological industry is part of the ecological process of "changing material relations to nature" (193). So conceived, these material relations produced by ecological or technological transformations are always effective in new formations, and are in a state of flux, thereby illustrative of how nature changes, if not totally perishes, under the sign of naturecultures. In other words, the natural and the cultural domains are becoming one, creating postnatural cartographies that are always porous and often unpredictable. Significantly, then, in all these discussions what is highlighted is the fact that with the advancement of biotechnological industry "nature in the 21st century is literally being remade" (Wills 205), or extensively manipulated. As Slavoj Žižek perceptively argues *In Defense of Lost Causes* (2008), it is impossible to think of the end of nature without thinking about biogenetics. According to him, "with the latest biogenetic developments," humans "are entering a new phase in which it is simply *nature itself* which melts into air: the main consequence of the scientific breakthroughs in biogenetics is the end of nature" (435). This technological end of nature position in a way resembles McKibben's argument as it unravels how the human domination of the natural world leaves behind a completely denatured world.

The reformulation of nature as postnatures, nonetheless, is not only confined to the ongoing debates about technological manipulations of nature. As the chapters will extensively elaborate, the terms postnatural and postnature also emerge from the recent discussions on green ecology, dark ecology, and rubbish ecology. The locus of this study's contention is that postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies are the manifestations of the postnatural, as it redefines nature as, to quote Jamie Lorimer, "hybrid – neither social nor natural" (2); that is to say, the postnatural world as envisioned in this dissertation is, indeed, "multinatural" (2). Although each chapter critically examines postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies and their manifestations in the novels in detail, a preliminary explanation of these ecologies with regard to postnatural environments will be helpful here. A green understanding of nature termed as "green ecology" connotes an ideal green place that exists beyond the human realm, and generates life as an independent and holistic force. The "story of contemporary green ecology," as Levi Byrant explains it, "either seems to be that once there was an idyllic and

harmonious nature that was then destroyed through the advent of humans, or that once nature and hominids lived in harmony only to have this harmony destroyed by the advent of modern science, technology, and capitalist economy" ("Black" 290). Such an ecological vision grounded in the idea of nature as green, stable, pristine, and untouched, thus as separate from culture, engenders a false distinction between nature and humans. It is in this respect that the postnatural problematizes green ecological discourses as in the "dream of naturalism," but it does not ignore the green places left intact on Earth, and even it encapsulates such green places as to show the variegated status of postnatures. In this respect, postnatures do not entirely abandon the concept of nature, as extensively discussed by Timothy Morton in *Ecology without Nature* (2007). Morton prefers the term "ecology without nature" to "Nature" because he claims that the normative construction of "Nature" obstructs all ecological dimensions of life and culture. Morton argues that there is never such a thing as nature. Responding to his argument, Levi Byrant proposes that we can rethink the relations and interactions between nature and culture without abandoning the notion of "nature":

> Morton advocates abandoning the notion of "nature" as it gives rise to connotations of an elsewhere, an "over there," that is outside society; but it seems that this risks reducing the natural world to cultural constructions. The winning move, it seems, would lie not in abandoning the concept of nature but in abandoning the idea that culture is something outside nature. The advantage of this move is twofold: it undermines the human exceptionalism implicit in the distinction between nature and culture, and highlights the manner in which social and cultural formations are imbricated with broader material domains. ("Black" 295-296)

Although Byrant demonstrates how Morton's argument can fail, neither scholar supports green ecological discourses. Instead, both Morton and Byrant respectively point to the human imbrication within the natural world, suggesting that societies actually can never distance themselves from nature. With consonance to the postnatural, in this regard, Morton and Byrant's views provide an ecological vision whereby all forms of life are embedded within networks of complex relations between nature and culture.

In particular, this ecological vision is embodied in Morton's new concept of "dark ecology," which is predicated on the repudiation of green ecology. For Morton, green ecology remains

inadequate in explaining today's ecological predicament, because here "[e]xcluding pollution is part of performing Nature as pristine, wild, immediate, and pure" ("Queer Ecology" 274). Can we ever find even a remote place not infiltrated by pollution produced by socio-cultural activities and practices? According to Morton, wild nature as such does not exist. Therefore, pollution is the main factor in the formation of dark ecology. Paying special attention to the dark side of the inextricability of nature and culture, Morton deconstructs the very idea of green nature, resulting in what he calls "the ecological thought," which is "a practice and a process of becoming fully aware of how human beings are connected with other beings – animals, vegetable, or mineral" (*Ecological* 7). Dark ecology insists that human beings are fundamentally "enmeshed" in and interdependent with the more-than-human world. The concept of "mesh" in this dark ecological thought signifies a network, a radical interconnection of all life forms; and "life-forms constituting a *mesh*" blurs the boundaries "between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment" ("Queer Ecology" 275-276). The mesh is comprised of "strange strangers," which is the concept Morton uses to explain how all beings relate to each other despite being strangers to each other. In the dark ecological thought, strange strangers, as Levi Byrant also states, "challenge the clean lines of any clear place or category," which he claims are the "very essence of *nature*" (Bryant, "Ecological Thought"). These strange strangers are in fact the very manifestation of postnatures, products of dark ecology, which Morton defines as "radically different, [and] irreducibly strange" (Morton, "Dark Ecology" 265), and also as "a weird, perverse aesthetics that includes the ugly and the horrifying, embracing the monster" (Morton, *Ecological* 124). This conception of dark ecology will be considerably more helpful in thinking postnatural environments in terms of the toxic contamination of the planet, which is the concern of the second chapter. Nevertheless, dark ecology interestingly foregrounds the death of human and nonhuman beings as part of the destruction of the planet, showing that it is impossible to run away from the toxic predicament befalling humans alongside other beings.

Challenging this ultimate hopelessness found in dark ecology, however, several ecocritics, such as Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Serpil Oppermann, Serenalla Iovino, and Heather Sullivan,

launch a main shift away from dark ecology towards a "postgreen" paradigm that stands as an interzone between dark and green ecologies. Arguing that green ecology and dark ecology are always inseparably related, Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, and Heather Sullivan in their respective ways highlight the coexistence of contrasting elements, such as life and death, light and dark, order and chaos, and culture and nature, indicating the positive connotations of the postgreen. In "After Green Ecologies: Prismatic Visions," Iovino and Oppermann, for example, argue for a postgreen world, stating that "[b]eyond the color green there is an ecology that hosts zombies, bioluminescence, aurora borealis, and gamma rays" (336). The postgreen in this regard brings together both negative and affirmative forms of life in conceptual and symbolic ways. The postgreen landscape in this discussion is also connected to the environmental contamination because our world today, as Iovino and Oppermann remark, "houses toxins, radiation, pesticides, food preservatives, viruses, migrating bacteria, and many human pollutants exist in the most intimate recesses of the earth" (332-333). However, in their elaboration, postgreen environments also indicate a possibility of living in the relation between green and dark ecologies, for the postgreen domain is "embedded in heterogeneous naturecultures, from the contaminated whiteness of the Arctic and the caked deserts of Africa to the gloomy synesthetic mélanges of urban landfills" (Iovino and Oppermann 330). Thus, the postgreen world also presents a liveable place for human and nonhuman survival, and one can find regenerative life in a devastated earth. Like Iovino and Oppermann's reflections, Heather Sullivan similarly argues for dark and green ecological entanglement of naturecultures although she first posited the postgreen only as toxic landscapes in the EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) webinar, "The Dark Pastoral" (2015). In this webinar, she maintained that postgreen environments are inseparable from toxicity. However, despite the deadly toxicity, the postgreen nature also negotiates a future at the nexus of green and dark ecologies, indicating the possibility that life always finds a way to flourish. The postgreen can be a new beginning for human and nonhuman survival. In that sense, what Iovino and Oppermann, and Sullivan respectively propose through the concept postgreen is the possibility for the reconciliation between green and dark ecologies. Hence, the postgreen topography as part of postnatures is a relatively safe place to dwell, and becomes an

exuberant landscape for humans and nonhumans that eke out a brutal struggle in the face of the global pollution, especially in the post-apocalyptic novels, such as *The Pesthouse*.

Along with dark ecology and postgreen environments, the understanding of the postnatural is also shaped by two versions of "rubbish ecology" coined by Patricia Yaeger and respectively elaborated by Heather Sullivan and Susan Signe Morrison. Patricia Yaeger argues that if nature under waste, rubbish, and trash is a transformed nature, this global condition can only be characterized as "rubbish ecology." In rubbish ecology, every place is now a place of rubbish, and various types of waste that infiltrate into every territory and body radically reconfigure our reality. In this context, Susan S. Morrison's question that she poses at the beginning of her book, *The Literature of Waste: Material Ecopoetics and Ethical Matter* (2015), is crucial: "In a world in which material prosperity and life itself are inevitably linked to pollution and the production of waste, how can we humans – ourselves sources of waste in terms of all that we discard – understand and cope with waste?" (1). The answer here is that it is really difficult to cope with waste in any easy way. Since waste has become the inevitable part of our bodies and environments, other ecocritics on this matter also agree, such as Dana Philips, John Scanlan, Gay Hawkins, and Brian Thill who claim that waste has ecologically transformed the entire globe.[4] Hawkins, for instance, notes that waste "has been revalued and recorded from rubbish to recyclable resource, it has moved from the bin to the compost heap, it has insinuated itself into our lives in different ways and with different effects" (*Ethics* 5). As long as humanity generates increasing amounts of waste, garbage, trash, and debris on a planetary scale, it is hard to see any undefiled environment. Emphasizing this ecological predicament as inevitable, Brian Thill similarly writes the following:

> There is no human-made object so well traveled, so ambient, as waste. It fills the oceans and the highest peaks. Our waste lays thick blankets of our chemical age across the entire planet, into every rocky outcropping, to the bottom of every sea's floor, nestling in the trees and bogs and pools of the world. It's in the air, in the water, in yard sales brimming with kitsch, in houses stuffed to the rafters with rubbish, in outer space, spreading out in invisible clouds of toxic chemicals, and piling up in immense mountains of garbage stacked in trash-bricks below ground at Fresh Kills or Puente Hills or a thousand other dump sites. The soil itself is part of a new geology, as the beaches have been remade

> into plastiglomerate, their sands mingled with the pulverized microplastics of our petroleum age. The genes of sea creatures that ingest these incredibly small fragments of our trash are mutating. Geologists have now begun to study "technofossils" and the sedimented debris-layers of our vast compressed cities, so immense and consequential that they now constitute part of the geological and planetary record. With our waste we have reordered space and place, reshaping them in its image the world over. (3-4)

This long quotation is a good illustration of the ways in which waste crosses the boundaries between the inside and the outside, the body and the earth, and culture and nature, and profoundly shapes the landscape and its meanings. In other words, waste transmutes every landscape, society, and body into rubbish ecologies fed from consumerist societies for which humans are responsible. In the twenty-first century, as stated by Brian Thill, "[e]very place is a place of waste" (71). Hence, the articulation of postnature can be understood through landscapes of waste and living in a community choked with garbage, an unsavoury position that puts every human and nonhuman realm in touch with waste. So, thinking through nature as rubbish radically affects how we define the environment and society.

It is important to note here that the material relations between waste and nature register different states of rubbish ecology. For instance, given that "waste may physically leak, spill, seep, corrode, slip, collapse or explode, contaminating groundwater, soil, the atmosphere, and organisms" (Hird, "Waste Flows"), the rubbish ecological reality indicates how waste generates a postnatural zone that is dangerous, deadly, and unhealthy by coursing through human and nonhuman places as toxic matter. This rubbish ecological reality actually relies on what Heather Sullivan calls "dirty nature," which is another concept that aims to shed light on the postnatural environments. Sullivan posits that dirt, as a pivotal part of "dirty nature," eliminates the strict separation of nature and culture, and points to the contingent status of naturecultures. For Sullivan, "dirt" in dirty nature is both "life-sustaining" and also filled with "toxic agencies" ("Dirty Theory" 516). Drawing more attention to the material interactions of nature, culture, pollution, and bodies, Sullivan suggests that dirty nature reveals dirt both as a generative life in naturecultures and as a toxic substance that is dangerous to these naturecultures. Dirty nature in this regard views "postnature" as a complex and ambivalent meeting point of human and nonhuman realms, full of tensions and frictions.

A “dirty nature,” argues Sullivan, might seem an in-between realm, a material interzone of life and death, loss and regeneration. In that sense, “[d]irty nature’s vital exchanges enabling the biosphere and modern industrial permeations of toxins” to intermingle (“Dirty Nature” 114) make every urban and rural place a postnatural environment at a global level. The toxic contamination of the planet, in consequence, shows the ongoing ecological crisis with a little hope for a liveable future. Indeed, postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies, discussed in depth in the chapters, are important exemplars of “postnatural environments,” in which human and nonhuman agents are strange strangers in an uncanny web of entanglements. These ecologies that overlap and coexist are also “a kind of linkage that generates something new, that simultaneously dismantles existing assemblages, space-time, physics, and generates mutations, hybrid formations, that always operate through a kind of shared excess, through a peculiar sense of resistance or struggle” (Cred 120). In short, postnatural environments are cartographies of toxicity which open up, to quote Stacy Alaimo, “a mobile space that acknowledges the often unpredictable and unwanted actions of human bodies, nonhuman creatures, ecological systems, chemical agents, and other actors” (*Bodily* 2). Postnatural environments are, in fact, simply our ontological condition, and are inside us, beyond us, and around us.

Within this context, the postnatural world emerges as a contingent one in which ecosystems collapse due to anthropogenic practices as a result of which social systems disintegrate, while it demonstrates how nature as we know is reshaped under the stress of overwhelming toxicity and waste. If toxicity totally envelops the earth, it renders it a non-regenerative place, a waste land laden with tainted ecologies. By illustrating the anthropocentric appropriation of the material world through pollution and waste, this study reveals that toxicity makes such landscapes abject sites of disruption, corruption, alienation, deformation, putrescence, and chaos. However, despite the fact that the postnatural terrain is dangerous, fatal, and malignant for human and nonhuman life, it also holds various traces of ecological resilience. One can relate this resilience to humans’ survival, observing at the same time that “nature’s adaptability becomes a metaphor for human resilience in the face of environmental crisis; a robust and enduring earth offers a model for human resistance to planetary dislocation”

(Curry 31-32). The resilience of life in a toxic, postnatural landscape can, therefore, reflect a sign of hope.

Such a postnatural approach to understand the physical environments and the place of humans within them is of increasing relevance to contemporary British novel in the twenty-first century. Recent reflections on the status of contemporary British novel are congruent with the accounts of what comes after nature mentioned above. Talking about millennial anxieties regarding a sense of "endism" like the end of the world, for example, the literary critic Malcom Bradbury describes contemporary British novel as catastrophic and apocalyptic:

> The world's problems – industrial pollution, environmental crisis, global warming – had not gone away. Apocalyptic signs abounded: plagues (AIDS and drugs) and earthquakes seemed to spread, weather patterns shifted, cities decayed. Human pleasures were human pains: food and drinks, sex and smoking, all came with health warnings. New visions arose of the technological wilderness, the age of dreck, crime-ridden, drug-crazed cities, wasted landscapes, ethnic cleansing, modern genocide, tribal slaughters, rising seas, shrinking ice-caps, urban surveillance, genetic interference, human cloning, cyberspace. Sensations of transition, anxiety and uncontrollable energies and disorders had always haunted the ends of centuries. (510)

These bleakest evocations of a catastrophic world articulated in contemporary British novels make them raise questions on social, political, religious, and ecological collapses caused by industrialization, globalization, and technologization. As Siân Adiseshiah and Rupert Hildyard contend in their book *Twenty-first Century Fiction* (2013), conflicts and disasters, such as "9/11, environmental catastrophe, peak oil, financial collapse, the neo-liberal dismembering of the social democratic settlement" (2) are part of the unprecedented social and ecological crises of the twenty-first century, and inevitably find expression in many British novels. The authors also observe that the "integuments of meaning woven by family, gender, community, class, place, politics, religion, nation, even nature have been burst asunder, in the West at least, by the acceleration of technology, communication and globalisation" (2). Although these ruptures illustrate uncertainty and pessimism in the novel, the authors maintain that the cultural and natural irruptions would generate new ways of writings in a new context:

> And around these human conflicts looms the gathering response of the non-human world we share to the accumulated and accelerating impact of our species. This concatenation of events may be moving both literary fiction and academic criticism beyond the postmodernism associated with the neo-liberal politics of the last thirty years and driving a search for new forms, tropes and theoretical strategies to envisage new horizons of possibility. (1)

The selected novels and ecotheories in this dissertation could provide such a new horizon for reconceptualising nature as postnature in a post-millennial world. The twenty-first century has seen the "development of a new wave of environmental disaster fiction" whose focus is upon the "stuttering collapse of the ecosystems that have sustained life on the planet" (Boxall 217). According to Peter Boxall, the environmental disaster novels, such as Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* (2007), and Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* explore the effects of ecological devastations upon the individual, society, and nature in a scorched earth, presenting a bleak future. Viewing this future as the harbinger of a "global death" (221), Boxall emphatically remarks that the "way that human cultures have understood and manipulated the natural world – the way that we have built our civilisations upon an anthropocentric idea of the natural, as well as our reckless plundering of natural resources – leads ineluctably to our eventual denaturing, our encounter with a cold and hostile nature which is finally immune to our narrative power" (221). Exploring this perspective and the trope "cold and hostile nature" from the theoretical perspectives of postnatures in a different selection of British novels, this dissertation offers a sustained meditation on the question of to what extent and in what ways the environment in crisis exists in these literary texts.

Within this theoretical framework, the first chapter elaborates on the term postgreen, and analyzes Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* in its social and ecological contexts, exploring how an ecological disaster leads to the formation of postgreen landscapes and discusses how the novel exhibits the changing landscapes of pollution. Jim Crace provides a rather hopeful perspective for understanding inevitable interconnections between human and nonhuman environments in *The Pesthouse*, juxtaposing a striking dark ecology with a postgreen one. Demonstrating the co-dependence of postnatural and social life, the novel describes a bleak,

dark world in which humans and nonhumans have become totally toxic after a cataclysm has eradicated civilization and all technology. The protagonists, Franklin and Margaret, are two nomadic travellers who try to get to a safer place in a poisoned, ravaged America. Many people, including Franklin and Margaret, who long to leave the toxic places, take a dangerous journey in metally blighted cities in order to go to the new promised land, Europe. During this journey, Franklin and Margaret are exposed to extreme toxicity on land, water, and air, as well as pestilence, but they never lose hope for survival. Here, Crace offers an insight into "death, belonging, desire, rivalry, spirituality, and malevolence" (Tew, *Contemporary* 89), picturing Franklin and Margaret as alienated nomads in this bleak world. *The Pesthouse,* as a result, presents an exemplary case of living in postgreen landscapes, which means living in the transformed relation between culture and nature.

The second chapter critically focuses on dark ecologies in *Glister* in socio-cultural contexts and discusses how John Burnside deals with the environmental effects of a derelict chemical factory oozing toxic contaminants in a post-industrial town. This chapter delves into the exploration of social and ecological change in nature-culture interactions by foregrounding the dynamic relations between people, nature, society, and capitalism. Adopting a dark ecological lens in his novel, Burnside is mainly concerned with the environmental and bodily contamination and its effects on social and moral structures of everyday life in a ruined environment. *Glister* depicts social and ecological deterioration in a small Scottish town called "Innertown" with a closed chemical plant still leaking noxious substances to the environment, poisoning everything: the soil, the air, vegetation, animals, and people. The focus is on the protagonist, young Leonard Wilson, who represents hope in this decaying town. Leonard is strangely attracted to this toxic landscape and attains a strange relationship with this postnature. For him, the lousy factory is both beautiful and frightening. This relationship illustrates how human beings are never separate from and embedded within the environment, however transformed it may be.

The third chapter examines rubbish ecologies in Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*, exploring the pervasive environmental damage brought about by pollution and waste in a small town,

called Shreve. Set in a toxic landfill site where rubbish is buried and forgotten in the Welsh hills, the novel depicts a bleak future where waste crisis, economic crises, health crises, and personal crises all jostle, each of which poses a threat to human and nonhuman life. Addressing the problem of toxic landfill, *Garbage Man* describes a desperate vision of a totally ruined place and shows how the products of human industry contaminate people and the environments. The novel portrays the people of Shreve, most of whom are selfish, greedy, and oblivious. The protagonist Mason Brand, a former well-known photographer, lives near the dumpsite, and communes with nature, thinking that this is a healing act. However, a thing called "Fecalith" emerges from rubbish, junk, and trash. This abject "monster" gradually acquires "human" attributes and becomes a garbage "man" who feeds on trash and flesh of humans and animals, terrorizing the inhabitants of Shreve. The novel can be read as a refracted mirror through which we can consider our contemporary preoccupation with garbage, waste, trash, and rubbish. In particular, conjuring up a bleak vision of rubbish ecology and society in the novel, D'Lacey illustrates the centrality of waste to consumer society and offers no hope for redemption. In this regard, D'Lacey contributes to larger discussions about what nature has become in the twenty-first century, providing insights into our concerns and fears regarding our connection to the natural world.

On the whole, this dissertation concludes that postnatural environments, as exemplified in these novels, challenge and transform the dichotomous relationship between the natural and the cultural, showing an inverted sense of ecological embeddedness within the environment. It resituates nature as postnature transformed by the confluence of postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies. On this view, postnatural cartographies play a direct role in constructing what we can call "postecologies" which portray "the precarious, accidental, contingent, expedient, striving, dynamic status of life in a messy, complicated, resistant, brute world of materiality" (Grosz 2).

CHAPTER I

POSTGREEN LANDSCAPES IN JIM CRACE'S *THE PESTHOUSE*

The shaping of a world
is in your hands. You have to make it green.
John Burnside, "Green" 74.

The global ecological crises have generated a series of post-apocalyptic British novels set in near or distant future in the first decade of the twenty-first-century. Belonging to what Peter Boxall calls "environmental dystopianism" (217), the British novels, from David Mitchell's *Cloud Atlas* (2004), Will Self's *The Book of Dave* (2006), Jeanette Winterson's *The Stone Gods* (2007), and Sarah Hall's *The Carhullan Army* (2007) to Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* (2007), and Marcel Theroux's *Far North* (2009), offer futuristic narratives in which environmentally-inflicted disruptions of nature are at the forefront. The emergence of literary "ecodystopian" novel in the new millennium, as Boxall contends, exemplifies "a movement which sets out to rethink the narrative texture of the present, in the shadow of ecocatastrophe" (216). In approaching green landscapes through the prism of ecocatastrophe, the contemporary British novelists mentioned above address the degradation of the natural environment caused by industrial activities, as well as presenting the "climate-driven collapse of Euro-American modernity" (Dawson 82). By focusing on the aftermaths of the ecological collapse, the novelists (Self, Crace, Hall, and Theroux) all trace "how, in the wake of environmental disaster and war, humanity might survive in an altered landscape" (Tearle 112). In this respect, these writers take their characters to the ends of the earth, transforming them into silent and impotent witnesses as nature becomes ruin. Human survival and environmental ruination are exclusively the primary focus of such ecodystopias. Creating such dystopian ecological visions, as Ashley Dawson argues, such writers draw attention to two significant dilemmas in the twenty-first century, both of which are

> the destruction of nature by an economic system predicated on ceaseless expansion, and our inability to empathize with the lives of others, both those who are geographically distant from the affluent consumerist cultures of Anglo-America and who will be the worst afflicted by climate chaos, and those who are distant from us in time, the future generations whose lives are likely to be crimped and ultimately snuffed out by our unwillingness to forgo the standard of living to which we are presently accustomed. (83)

For the novelists deploying this caveat in their fiction, the survival of humanity is thus contingent upon the survival of the environment. Considering that it is impossible to contemplate a world without humanity, however, such novelists arguably limn a world without "nature," darkened by ecocatastrophes. In particular, the end of nature rhetoric, woven inextricably into the fabric of contemporary environmental discourses, exercises a pervasive presence in the twenty-first-century British novel. More noteworthy but less acknowledged is the extent to which postenvironmental apocalyptic narratives envision the demise of nature. To this end, it is worth asking how Jim Crace discussed in this chapter is engaging both with the experience of the decimation of natural life on earth and with those who live in its midst.

Jim Crace has established a reputation for writing about communities in transition and landscapes of imagined unfamiliar settings. Regarded as an innovative author, a "poet of detail, the laureate of the mineral, the bacterial and the gaseous" (Cartwright, "After the plague"), Crace published twelve novels to date. His first novel, *Continent* (1986), which won the Whitbread First Novel Award, the Guardian Fiction Prize, and the David Higham Prize for Fiction, creates an imaginary seventh continent through seven interconnected stories of an indeterminate locale's people, exploring multifarious aspects of the Third World. *The Gift of Stones* (1988) portrays a Stone Age community threatened by Bronze Age, while his third novel, *Arcadia* (1992), set in a dystopian British city in the near future, exhibits the tension between city and countryside. *Signals of Distress* (1994), which won the Winifred Holtby Memorial Prize, explores a shipwreck off the Cornish coast in the 1830s, and its aftermath through the presence of nature as a shaping force. Shortlisted for the Booker Prize for Fiction, *Quarantine* (1997) narrates Jesus Christ's sojourn in the wild desert. *Being Dead* (1999) describes the dissolution and putrefaction of the dead bodies of two zoologists,

murdered on a deserted beach. The novel won the Whitbread Novel Award, the National Book Critics' Circle Fiction Award, and was shortlisted for both the Booker Prize for Fiction and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. His novel *Six* (2003) charts the sexual crisis and gendered desire of actor Felix Dern, who lives in the City of Kisses. His most recent books are *On Heat* (2008), *All That Follows* (2010), and *Harvest* (2013), which was shortlisted for the 2013 Man Booker Prize, the Goldsmiths Prize and the Walter Scott Prize, and won the 2013 James Tait Black Memorial Prize and the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award in 2015. *Harvest* explores the experience of a communal life in an unnamed village with an emphasis on the conflict between country and town through the protagonist, Walter Thirsk.

From the Stone Age and the futuristic city to the Judean desert and the uprooted village, the novels of Jim Crace defamiliarize the familiar, offering various accounts of communal, technological, personal, political, and natural changes in different historical periods. Drawing on "a rich tradition of English pastoral, Renaissance grotesquerie and chiaroscuro," and rejuvenating "genres as diverse as the Arcadian, the urban utopia, the quest novel, the medieval bestiary and the fabliaux" (Waugh, "Jim Crace"), his novels carve out a distinct space which Adam Begley has called "Craceland" ("A Pilgrim" 230), "a place both strange and familiar, historically specific and timeless" (Begley, "Jim Crace" 184). Craceland is an idiosyncratic world that is unlabelled, eerie, unfamiliar, with a propensity for the fabulous, for the colloquial, for the mythic, for the unspeakable, and for the archetypal. As Philip Tew notes, in Craceland, "the very settings allow Crace to create a marginal hinterland, a territory not fully absorbed by the modern where its cultural problems and dynamics are played out both literally and allegorically" (32). However, Crace's topography is not merely realist; nor is it mythic and fabulous. Rather, Crace's hinterland is "an amalgam of the imaginary and the realistic" (Quinn, "Reproduction Values"). In other words, operating at the interface of reality and imagination, his novels construct a borderline between stasis and progress, life and death, individual and community, nature and civilization, time and space, urban and rural, and human and nonhuman. Indeed, Craceland both embraces these borderlines and amplifies the characters' experiences of the borderlines. Crace writes about

> social justice, class, gender relations, violence, abuse and territorialism, the threat of the stranger and the alien, community and its tensions, post-secularism, the naturalist turn and the vulnerability of the body, terrorism, apocalypse, eco-catastrophe, but he addresses and embodies these concerns in strange or fabular or mythopoeic landscapes peopled with iconic beings in prose that is at turns declamatory, resonant, hallucinatory and sensuously hypnotic. (Waugh, "Jim Crace")

His subjects, his style, and the narrative structures he employs are so multifarious and versatile that the canon of Jim Crace eludes easy definition.

A self-confessed "landscape" writer, Crace sees his engagement with landscapes as a defining tenet of his practice. At the root of his practice is an understanding that the physical environment is not somewhere else but is interconnected with civilization. In his novels the environment is not merely a backdrop against which human beings act their lives, but an active actor. Crace concedes that "I love landscape. My novels are full of it. Landscape is almost a character in them all" (qtd. in Tew 5). The common point that all the novels share, to some extent, is a strong sense of landscape as deeply disturbing, contradictory, chaotic, and uneven, fraught with anxieties and conflicts liable to erupt at any moment. "The rhythmic insistence of Crace's style," as Philip Tew contends, "often prioritizes the strong presence of landscape as a characterized presence, rather than a sense of internal subjectivity" (6). Yet Tew fails to see landscapes as part of a wider ecological system which is no longer separate from the cultural realm. In contrast to the contention in which Tew describes Crace's landscapes as callous, indifferent, and reckless, Miyahara Kazunari posits that "Crace's landscapes are in flux, teeming with life, sensitive to interconnections between living things" ("*Quarantine*"). For Crace, landscapes produce life as well as death, while also illustrating the collision of human and nonhuman worlds, because landscapes are always in a repetitious pattern of change and transformation, affecting the interconnected existence of all life forms. Indeed, for Crace whose focal viewpoint is on environments and communities in transition, the shaping force of nature is not at all independent from culture, and always collides with society. In an interview with Sally Vincent, Crace explains that his preoccupation is the "conflict between town and country, nature and civilisation, the way we associate the countryside with all that is virtuous and dull, and the city with all that is sinful and exciting"

("Death"). The juxtaposition reflects Crace's main concern. Not content with merely framing a view of the natural world, Crace takes things a step further by decontextualizing various aspects of green landscapes in new ways and alternative settings. Crace brings elements of nature into dialogue with culture and civilization, either by recreating post/natural phenomena in a human-made setting or by deploying elements from nature, such as fauna and flora, living and dead, and organic and inorganic that challenge the perceptions of the relations between the human and natural realms. It is through dismantling boundaries between nature and culture, the urban and the rural, the biological and the technological, and life and death that Crace's ouvre projects a new kind of "nature" into literary space. Crace argues that nature is a compost, a melange of rebirth and death, beauty and putrefaction, thus undermining the binary nature/culture categories: "I like the natural world and because I'm interested in the natural world I know that the natural world is complicated and that it involves compost, it involves death and it involves disease as well as beautiful things like flowers and rainbows" ("Interview" 4). For Crace, the natural world that encompasses stability and chaos, ugliness and beauty, disease and cure, is no longer natural because universal carbon pollution is already exacerbating the degradation of the biosphere. As a vivid observer of this environmental scourge, Crace is cognizant of how the natural and the cultural co-produce each other. Hence, by foregrounding the longstanding conflict between nature and culture in his novels, Crace yokes together disparate elements of the natural and the cultural, creating a heterogeneous amalgam that is beyond green ecology.

The locution "green ecology" has occupied a distinctive place in the ecocritical discourses, and especially in the early stages of ecocriticism's development. Regarded as the first "wave" of ecocriticism, the green ecological tradition, from popular environmentalism to theories of sustainability, embraces an exemplary nature separate from human habitation.[5] Within the green ecological tradition this stance, in Greg Garrard's words, has a predilection to "celebrate nature rather than querying 'nature' as a concept" ("Introduction" 1). The reason behind extoling the beauty of exemplary landscapes is an assumption that our relationship with the natural world has been totally disrupted and that we need to protect and preserve the remaining "natural" environments from industrial practices of human culture. This is a desire

to “return to a healthy relationship with the natural world,” which necessitates “a state best represented by the verdant, bright green forest” (White, “Beyond Green”). The early ecocritics aimed to “reconnect” the environmental writing and literary criticism with “environmental experience – meaning in particular the *natural* world” (Buell 6). In order to do so, nature writers aesthetically wrote about their experiences in wilderness, such as seeing a Yosemite sunrise rather than air pollution in Ohio. Nonetheless, in this green ecological tradition the problem arises when the division between the human realm and nature is upheld through nonfiction nature writing and wilderness experiences that encode purity onto nature. In other words, this tradition perpetuates the very bifurcation between nature and culture. Later, this green thinking came under scrutiny when the second wave ecocriticism that connects ecological and social disruptions began to question whether there are separations or interconnections between rural and urban spaces, and humans and nonhumans. Certainly, the question of green ecology was not adequately resolved in this phase either. Even this ecocritical vein produced titles, such as *The Green Studies Reader* edited by Laurence Coupe, *Greening the Lyre: Environmental Poetics and Ethics* by David Gilcrest, or *The Greening of Literary Scholarship: Literature, Theory, and the Environment* edited by Steven Rosendale. Although influenced by social ecology, urban environmentalism, and the environmental justice movement, these books are not at all far from succumbing to a nostalgic celebration of green ecology. In particular, such emphasis on “greening” in these titles illustrates that they do not move beyond green ecology. So, is it impossible to go beyond green ecology in ecocritical studies? That was a tough question to answer at the time, but certain ecocritics such as Timothy Morton, Jeffrey J. Cohen, and Heather Sullivan have done so in their attempts to deconstruct the very idea of green ecology as explained later in this chapter.

It appears that the question of green ecology is thus as much about false but persistent dichotomy nature/culture as it is about “green.”[6] The notion of green has been extensively discussed in Jeffrey J. Cohen’s “Introduction: Ecology’s Rainbow” in *Prismatic Ecology: Ecotheory beyond Green* (2013). Here, Cohen redefines the familiar but ill-defined nature conventionally called green, and notes that nature as green provides a problematic frame for understanding multihued nature and our relationship with it; because green ecology preserves

the notion of nature as "a purified place to which one travels rather than dwells always within: separate from the human, empty, foundationally pure" ("Introduction" xxi). In this view, as seen in nature writing, green nature is somewhere we go to rather than a place in which we dwell. Therefore, this understanding frames the natural world in limited ways. Nevertheless, instead of directly effacing green ecology, Cohen deconstructs the rhetorics of green by considering how "green is a composite color that arrives in a multitude of shades" ("Introduction" xx-xxi). Arguing against the monolithic understandings of green that presume the natural as a stable, pure, empty, and static category, he assumes that nature has different shades of green. Green, as he puts it, has "constitutive and intractable hybridities" ("Introduction" xx). However, in the cultural imaginary, green, as Cohen knows, "too frequently signifies a return, however belatedly, to the verdancy of an unspoiled world, to whatever remnants of a lost paradise might be reclaimed" ("Introduction" xxi). For this reason, the green must be redefined without falling into the green ecological trap. Otherwise, no matter how deconstructive this new "green" rhetoric appears, green, as we well know, will continue to be "the favoured color of ecocriticism" ("Introduction" xx), even though new ecocritical discourses challenge the hegemonic idea of green. Undoubtedly, however, green ecology, Levi S. Bryant also points out, is a "mystified conception of nature that confuses its own normative preferences with the being of nature as such" ("Black" 291). That is, idealized accounts of nature always obscure the material reality. Consequently, as ecocritics such as Stacy Alaimo, Timothy Morton, and Levi Byrant have asserted, green ecology is a totalized, false entity in a world that is increasingly polluted, degraded, and destabilized.

There is an emergent consensus today that all around the world ecological conditions undergo extremely rapid changes, culminating in local ecocatastrophes, such as Hurricane Katrina in 2005, the Australian Millennium drought between 2001 and 2009, California wildfires, and Hurricane Harvey in 2017, and their effects had unprecedented consequences. Indeed, with all the devastation, ecological ruins, and ecosystemic collapses, it is "dark ecology," according to certain ecocritics like Timothy Morton, that better defines the present condition we actually experience. Morton remarks that environmental "catastrophe, far from being imminent, *has already taken place*" (*Ecology* 28). For Morton, dark ecology provides a frame

for thinking about the ecological crisis as pervasive, as ecocatastrophes frequently affect our quotidian lives. This recognition signifies that nature as green can no longer be idealized as a pure, pristine, and exemplary whole. Rather, as an ecocritical counterpoint to green ecology, Morton points out, dark ecology provides an interconnected picture of the world, entailing both "dark-depressing," "dark-uncanny," and "dark-sweet" (*Dark* 5). In other words, dark ecology would never affirm the existence of a pristine wilderness set apart from humans, nor does it yearn for it. Instead, dark ecological reality embraces "the 'goth' assertion of the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to stay with a dying world" (*Ecology* 185), rather than the green ecological assertion of "natural" world as "sunny, straightforward, ableist, holistic, hearty, and 'healthy'" (*Ecological* 16). In a radical move, Morton reconceptualizes ecology, while also claiming that there never really is any natural landscape. But further questions emerge when green and dark ecologies remain opposed to one another. Is it possible to overcome this separation of green and dark ecologies? To answer this question, it is necessary to consider the convergence of green and dark ecologies. What if green ecological attempts to conjugate an affirmative understanding of nature and Morton's negative account of dark ecology can merge in the conceptualization of postgreen?

The postgreen might be best understood as an ecocritical alternative to both green and dark ecologies precisely because it reconfigures a new connection between natural and cultural landscapes. What is postgreen, then? Having first proposed the term "postgreen" in "After Green Ecologies," Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann argue that ecological discourse can be extended "beyond the monochromatic language of green" (330). On ground shared by posthuman theories of the environment, Iovino and Oppermann attempt to reconcile green and dark ecologies, suggesting that the postgreen is a new material reality in which human and nonhuman bodies are intimately and fundamentally entwined with ecological and technological systems and processes in both affirmative and negative ways. In stressing the significance of green ecological networks and dark ecological connections in the making of postgreen landscapes in their assessment, Iovino and Oppermann suggest that these ecologies, whether dark, brown, or blue, "contain both disruptive and harmonic elements, blurring the boundaries between the sylvan spectra of green exegesis and disclosures of dark

ecology" (330). In other words, at the heart of their vision is an understanding that the postgreen is an interplay of green and dark ecologies where the line between nature and culture is blurred beyond all recognition, showing it is impossible to frame nature as either green ecology or dark ecology in the age of the Anthropocene.[7]

Similar to Iovino and Oppermann's argumentation, in the EASLCE (European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture and Environment) webinar (2015), Heather Sullivan identified and traced four different ecodiscourses that describe varied versions of green pastoral. Following Timothy Morton's notion of dark ecology, Sullivan showed a genealogical analysis of pastorals in which she created a new paradigm as "dark pastoral"[8] that accounts for the conglomeration of green and dark ecologies. During this webinar, much like Iovino and Oppermann, Sullivan argued for the necessity of including dark ecology more fully within green ecological discourses. She suggested that "[w]e need green as much as the darkness if we are to continue." For her, the postgreen could be said to subscribe to the convergence of green and dark ecologies because humans and nonhumans, Sullivan noted, dwell within a material world in which "every part of the planet's surface contains traces, whether microscopic or massively structural, of anthropogenic activity." These anthropogenic activities are crucial in making postgreen spaces in which new ecosystems can occur. Whether desirable or undesirable, novel ecosystems, such as garbage dumps, might produce new life forms, new habitats, and even new invasive species. But, even if they are considered to be generative, new life forms in postgreen places can be quite disruptive on the local ecosystems; therefore, the argument here is not about celebrating transformations caused by anthropogenic activities, which would of course be absurd, but acknowledging their phenomenal impact on the health of the physical environments. Moreover, this recognition—that the world has become postgreen— does not mean that we are doomed as the postgreen is not all about a wholesale catastrophic reality. Instead, it is an environment in which green and dark ecologies can blend in ways in which life would still be sustained. The postgreen in this respect is a "new nature" of today's anthropogenic world.

Further to this, as Heather Sullivan noted in her webinar, postgreen places can be also defined as "post-apocalyptic toxic landscape sprouting dangerous tendrils," those that bypass beauty to encompass the damaged, the transmuted, and the decomposed, which reflects the dark ecological vision of the postgreen. Through this formulation, Sullivan posits postgreen places as poisoned landscapes that are darkened by environmental cataclysms. On the other hand, postgreen landscapes in these conceptualizations might encapsulate wilderness reservations, verdant forests, and green fields, whether local or not, even though they are affected by anthropogenic activities. As such, the postgreen is a sort of merger between green and dark ecologies, a new vision of nature that combines beauty and horror, illustrating both threatening and affirmative conditions of the world. In a sense, opposed to a nature seen as pristine and in balance, postgreen territories can include what Cohen describes as "the catastrophic, the disruptive, urban ecologies, the eruptive, heterogeneous microclimates, inhumanly vast or tiny scales of being and time, the mixed spaces where the separation of nature and culture are impossible to maintain" ("Introduction" xxii). For example, territories fully absorbed by nuclear fallout as in the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disaster (2011) have a disruptive and toxic ecology conceived as postgreen. This instance clearly illustrates that toxic environment as postgreen is neither an effect of humanity nor an effect of nature, but the intersection of both. However, what this conciliation implies for humanity and society is unanswered, because it is impossible to embrace toxic environments, or to reject the sterile environment of safety. Hence, it is necessary to redraw the boundaries between inside and outside, health and illness, organic and synthetic in the conceptualization of toxicity as postgreen. Toxins, such as radioactive molecules, might locally mark bodily natures, altering human and nonhuman bodies in a postgreen landscape. Thus, the boundary between health and illness becomes contingent in insalubrious environments. Obviously, the postgreen is not a static construction but a precarious reality predicated on Stacy Alaimo's dictum that we live in a "material world that is never merely external place but always the very substance of our selves and others" (*Bodily* 158). In this sense, the postgreen becomes a generative and destructive compound where green and dark ecologies, human and nonhuman bodies appear to coalesce in a postnatural position that disrupts and blurs the line between the natural and the cultural, the organic and the inorganic, the biological and the technological.

Serpil Oppermann likewise embraces a postnatural stance, arguing that contemporary ecocriticism "entertains the intricacies of environmental anomalies caused by climate change, ozone-fleeing ultraviolet radiation, anaerobic environments, pesticides, invasive species, toxic bodies, hybrid natures, intelligent machines, and a motley of other strange agencies" ("From Material" 286). The postgreen as a concept embodies these anomalies, demonstrating that a green upsurge in a waste repository can be presented as a source of resilience of life in the face of adversity, while dark powers of an ecocatastrophe become a threat to ecological safety of both humans and nonhumans. This precarious predicament is now a de facto condition of the world because "the naturalcultural forces, bodies, and countless material agencies," to quote Oppermann, "bear witness to the viral condition within which the nonhuman (animal, vegetal, mineral) is as much enmeshed as the human" ("From Material" 280). This viral condition is constitutive in the ongoing configuration of the postgreen, while also proving the idea that an absolute pristine or wild nature cannot be sustained.

The postgreen is not a bifurcated reality as it affords an opportunity not only to explore interconnections between the damaged and the pure, the beautiful and the ugly, but also to analyze the fragile boundary between the human and the nonhuman. The postgreen imbrication serves not as a stable position that regulates the binary of nature and culture but as a new material and discursive space through which we can foster "a restless expanse of multihued contaminations, impurities, hybridity, monstrosity, contagion, interruption, hesitation, enmeshment, refraction, unexpected relations, and wonder" (Cohen, "Introduction" xxiv). So conceived, the postgreen as a key word is of utter importance to hold the possibility for a new kind of postnature posited in this study, because the postgreen can be a new "ecological thought," in Morton's words, that conceives spatial and bodily relations primarily in terms of the connective properties of green and dark ecologies.

Within this context, this chapter provides an ecocritical inquiry into *The Pesthouse* in which Jim Crace conjures up a new vision of humanity and nature coming apart under the pressure of environmental disasters, challenging both green and dark ecologies. Thereby this chapter

focuses on postgreen landscapes. The argument the chapter will advance is that Crace tries to find a congruity between Timothy Morton's "ecology without nature" and Bill McKibben's "end of nature" in the novel. These two views are not similar even if they may sound so; therefore, it is necessary to explain their differences in order to understand the ways in which they inform the novel's postgreen landscape. In *Ecology Without Nature* (2007) Timothy Morton discusses ecological interrelations between the human and the nonhuman realms upon which he founds what he calls "ecology without nature." In his formulation of a new ecology of relations Morton offers an obliteration of the idea of nature independent of culture, since he considers the normative understanding of nature to be "a transcendental term in a material mask" (*Ecology* 14) and an ideological totality that "in all its confusing, ideological intensity, … ironically impedes a proper relationship with the earth and its lifeforms" (*Ecology* 2). For Morton, hence, an ecology without the need for nature is a way to think ecologically across nature and culture, and to acknowledge pretty, dirty, fragile and contingent interactions between ecosystems and humanity. His natureless ecology points to a coexistence of the human and the nonhuman which might not be always harmonious or balanced. In ecology without nature the human and the nonhuman are just heterogeneous components of the world's ecologies. His ecology, as Stephanie LeMenager explains, "defies the idea of a godlike force or presence within things and points, again, to the unknowability of specific natures beyond their relationship to each other" (490). Here, Morton's understanding of ecology seems agnostic, but he accepts that all non/life forms live in the relation between nature and culture. Bill McKibben, by contrast, expresses his anxiety associated with losing green ecology in *The End of Nature* (1989). For McKibben, nature which he envisions as green and exemplary, and harmonious and healthy is a self-regulating mechanism separate from the human world. This allegedly "authentic" nature, as he contends, has been replaced by an "artificial" nature made by industrial processes: "We have changed the atmosphere, and thus we are changing the weather. By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man-made and artificial. We have deprived nature of its independence" (*End* 60). Acknowledging that as a result of climate change and pollution "[t]here's no such thing as nature anymore" (*End* 97), McKibben concedes that the toxification of human and nonhuman geographies through chemical pollutants on global

scale signals the demise of the idea of a pure, pristine nature, which was thought to exist outside of human culture. This is actually what he laments for. Through the end of nature, in fact, McKibben delineates a false opposition between the natural and the cultural, which differentiates him from Morton. The question is, then, how Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse* attests to these views. Does the novel present a natureless ecology or an end of nature or a third one? Is it a story about loss and destruction, or is it a story about the necessary in-betweenness of the human and the nonhuman? The obvious answer is that Crace supports neither views, but uses both by complicating these questions. In this way, he reverses the relationship of nature and culture. For instance, although there is an end of nature at the beginning of *The Pesthouse*, there is a sense of reviving what was thought to be lost at the end of the novel. In doing so, Crace shapes and alters the meaning of landscape in his own way, suggesting that the landscape does not conform to the human; instead, the human has to yield to the landscape. Otherwise, it is highly unlikely for the human to survive. For Crace, at stake is not just the end of nature but a reflection on how the end might provide new formations, novel ecosystems for survival and life. As Stephanie LeMenager writes: "Nature's endings are tied to what it starts, to the epistemological sputtering prompted by it, to beginnings" (497). This is what we see in the novel.

The Pesthouse is a new literary hinge which Crace tests to dis/connect the respective accounts of post/green environments. This way Crace redefines nature and redraws the boundaries of the postgreen. By focusing more directly upon localised ecocatastrophes in the novel, Crace develops the postgreen neither as "out there" nor as "in here." Rather, he constructs more ambiguous territories not fully demarcated from toxicity. That is, he makes thinkable an alternative space between green and dark ecologies, because the survival of humans is dependent upon the survival of the environment in which new ecologies struggle to find a precarious balance. So, Crace conveys his postgreen vision, showing that life is still present through the growth of trees attempting to take back the land in which relics and ruins reside, even though landscapes are corrupted and dying. In this way, he illustrates creative-destructive forces of post/nature that sometimes renders life itself im/possible. In this vision, Crace constructs a postgreen melange in which environments as multiple, hybrid, and

contingent are primal forces to affect postapocalyptic survival and life in the novel. What *The Pesthouse* demonstrates is that it is no longer possible nor valid to presume a distance between the natural and the cultural, thereby constructing postnatured ecologies that engulf human-made constructs and all life forms. In other words, Crace's landscapes in *The Pesthouse* act as an active force enveloping both green and dark ecologies beset by ecocatastrophes. With *The Pesthouse*, then, Crace responds to global ecological anxieties through a survival narrative in a post-apocalyptic environment.

Considered as a "post-environmental apocalyptic" narrative (Smith 134), *The Pesthouse* is about the United States of America, transfigured by a terrible but unspecified ecocatastrophe that has destroyed much of the population and altered green landscapes. This terrible cataclysm turns America into a rural, quasi-medieval, preindustrial world, one stripped of science, technology, law, religion, economy, and government. Consequently, America collapses into a disordered and chaotic dark age, a time when environmental uncertainty disturbs the stability of the continent, and due to the toxicity of metals, the green lands are destroyed although some pieces of lands have remained as arable and fertile. America is now "distinguished by deprivation; its people, perhaps a century or more into the future, are illiterate and have no memories of modern technology or the nation's former status as a superpower, the culture of the deep past no more than the half rumour of folktale and song" (Tate 1). In this age, the illiterate people struggle to migrate to the East coast to board a ship to Europe. Among these immigrants are two virile brothers, Jackson and Franklin Lopez, who stop over in Ferrytown, a small town where local people help immigrants to reach the coast. During their journey to Ferrytown, Franklin suffers a severe knee injury and cannot go on, thereby forcing his brother Jackson to take some provisions from the town. On Butter Hill, Franklin seeks refuge from a torrential downpour and discovers a wooden shack and a woman, Margaret, who is infected with the contagious disease called "flux," which confined her to this "pesthouse." Margaret is left there till she either dies of the flux or recovers enough to come back to the town on her own. During the night, the local ecodisaster caused by a landslide annihilates all of Ferrytown, creating a dead land where every living being dies in its sleep. Following the destruction of the town, Margaret and Franklin ineluctably decide to

travel to the coast together. During their peregrinations, they are attacked by a barbaric band of marauders, and Franklin and other male immigrants are enslaved by the band. Because of her shaved-head Margaret is left behind along with other older immigrants and a baby called Bella whose father is taken into slavery along with Franklin. It is through various misadventures that Margaret and Bella take refuge in Tidewater in an "Ark" governed by the Finger Baptist pilgrims who ban all metal objects but provide shelter and food. After Margaret and Bella spend a winter there, the same band of forty rustlers attacks the fortification of the Ark, killing older pilgrims. During this attack, Margaret and Franklin escape and arrive at the coast. Having discovered that armed soldiers on ships do not take women and children aboard, they decide to embark upon a second odyssey back to the West, Ferrytown. As is seen from this short synopsis, driven by a focus on the survival of the human protagonists, *The Pesthouse* narrates a road trip through a ruined wasteland of post-America.

By portraying a thoroughly "ruined, post-collapse America" (Tate 83), Jim Crace conveys his vision of the future without technology in the novel. "The post-catastrophe novel," writes Chad Harbach in his review of *The Pesthouse*, "liberates the violent potential of technology (and its enemy, nature) to create an altered world whose chief characteristic is a bewildering lack of technology" ("The End"). Demonstrating that the twenty-first-century advanced technologies and industrial products have failed, Crace's novel points to a retreat to preindustrial and premodern ways of life so as to "ironize the concept of a post-industrial age as not conventionally futuristic but apparently regressive after a cataclysmic reversal of globalization" (Tew 196). Crace explains why he opts for such a vision in an interview with Andrew Lawless:

> It's an attempt to retell and correct science fiction. Science fiction, and I'm generalising here, tends to see the future as one in which society expands, and technology increases, and the possibilities of human kind get even greater. That doesn't tell us anything about our dependence on technology, it's an inflated *status quo*. What I'm interested in is to learn the nature of our 21st century existence by taking it away. By taking away those things that define the 21st century: science, technology, the abandonment of belief, etc. So, where would be a better place to set this than America, because if you're going to return humankind, or western humanity at least, to a medieval existence, how mischievous would it be to give it to America which has never had a medieval past. […] I wanted to set this book in the hot seat of technological, and business development,

> which is America, and return it to a medieval past, although it never had one. To give it a medieval future. To examine something about ourselves. To see what human kind has become, now that we're not huddled around fires with hot faces and cold backs. ("Poet of Prose")

With the downfall of an advanced, technological society comes a future without technology, nature, and even history. According to Francis Fukuyama, "there can be no end of history without an end of modern natural science and technology" (15), which the novel clearly demonstrates. The preindustrial future of *The Pesthouse* shows how America has devolved into a location of loss. The loss of nature, technology, and civilization drive the narrative logic, and Crace explains that the novel is "not about a prehistoric community adapting itself to progress, but a modern, slightly futuristic community adapting itself to a world without science, political institutions or social coherence" (qtd. in Tew xvii). In fact, Crace depicts a tale of crisis by presenting a dystopian life in the aftermath of a massive ecological and social collapse in the United States.

The end of nature rhetoric provides a proper point of entry into the discussion of the novel because its ecodystopian world is based on the death of nature to some extent, much like Bill McKibben's claim. This rhetoric dismantles the common equation of nature with notions of pristine and ideal landscapes and reconfigures it as postnatural. At the beginning, Crace's novel illustrates McKibben's vision of the end of nature, for the environmental transformation caused by an unknown ecocatastrophe is so sudden and irreversible that many landscapes remain unrecognizable and penurious in the text. In such environmental degradation, people and animals inhabit a noxious, postnatural space where the natural and cultural realms have been increasingly overlapping. *The Pesthouse* opens with an ecological calamity. Starting with the first line, "Everybody died at night" (1), the novel presents an environmental nightmare in Ferrytown, a hinterland where green and dark ecologies meet. The reason behind this sudden decimation is the stagnant but vile lake and river near Ferrytown. After a torrential downpour, a localised ecocatastrophe takes place in Ferrytown, as told by the narrator:

> The landslip had hit the deepest side of the lake and, therefore, took some moments to reach the bottom, ten man heights from the surface, and then took some moments more for the avalanche of stone, earth, swarf and ancient buried scrap to show how heavy it was and squeeze the life out of the gas-rich sediments, the volatile silt and compacted weeds, the soda pockets, which had settled on the bed through centuries and were now ready – almost eager – for this catalyst. Shaken up and shaken out in one great flatulence, the water fizzed and belched until all the gases were discharged, to form a heavy, deadly, surface-hugging cloud, not as high as the pines but higher, certainly, than animals. There wasn't any wind that night to thin the suffocating vapors and no longer any rain to wash the poison from the air, but there was gravity to direct them down, beyond the rapids and cascades, along the valley, past the tetherings, past the secret wooden bridge, past the metal fields, past the stone footings of the one-time shoe factory and tanning works, to seep between the palings of the pine stockades and settle on the town at the river's crossing point, where almost everyone was sleeping and dreaming of the ruined, rusty way ahead and all the paradise beyond. (2-3)

This long passage illustrates how the environmental changes can influence life profoundly with lethal effects. Here, a cloud of toxic gas that has been trapped beneath the surface of the lake wipes out the entire community and animals through asphyxiation. The narrator poses a question: "how could anyone not know by now how mischievous the world could be?" (2). The death of nature here points to the complexities of unruly ecologies. The main culprit in this event is "carbon dioxide— a sly, macabre fable for the global-warming era" (Harbach, "The End"). The toxic remnants of the past continue to haunt the land and its inhabitants in the narrative. As Bill McKibben would say, the vision of the "end of nature" is what characterizes this narrative. If we remember McKibben's discussion on the toxification of the world through chemical pollutants, and global warming, the novel would be an exemplary platform to explore postnatural scenarios. According to McKibben,

> it's not just global warming. We've used so much nitrogen for fertilizer that we've altered the basic nutrient balance of rivers and bays. We wipe out hundreds of species a month. This is not the normal and unavoidable "pollution" that comes from altering the places where we live and grow our food. This is total. … [F]our highly regarded researchers … declared that we now lived on a "human-dominated" planet. This is new. We have ended nature. ("Postnatural")

The end of nature as identified by McKibben happens at the beginning of *The Pesthouse*, which also brings an end to culture. In other words, with the end of nature comes our cultural death. The total destruction of Ferrytown exemplifies this well. Affected by "the smell – sour

milk and mushroom, earthy, reasty and metallic" (67), Franklin and Margaret encounter the carcasses of dead bodies everywhere: "No living creatures, other than the few travellers and the birds that had arrived since death had done its work. No welcome from her family" (69). Horrified at the spectacle of the dead, Margaret "had to concentrate to hit upon the oddity. She was not familiar with human corpses. But still it came to her, a chilling absence" (69). The death of nature has destroyed what is left of civilization in Ferrytown which, for Franklin and Margaret, becomes "the habitation of the dead. The living had to turn their backs on it and speed away" (70). Formerly known as a "fertile valley, of which it used to be boasted that you had only to flick a booger on the ground for a mushroom to grow overnight" (23), Ferrytown is presented to the reader as an unproductive, fallow wasteland where dark ecology replaces green ecology. What makes nature postgreen in this narrative is nothing but toxification and acidification of the world framed by the omnipresence of death. It is because, the "conflicted and contradictory environment," as Philip Tew suggests, "is hostile and indifferent to human existence" (193). Ferrytown turns into a postgreen place, dangerous and unpredictable, but the logic of the postgreen is not entirely predicated on the death of nature on a global scale, because while Ferrytown dies other places, like Butler Hill, survive, where green and dark ecologies seem to co-exist. Right next to the dark ecology of the toxic town with the ruin of nature and culture, is Butler Hill with the mountain and the forest representing its green ecology, but a "hill so tortuous and uneven" (16). Ferrytown and Butter Hill, in this regard, embody the logic of postgreen.

Initially, Ferrytown was a place of stability, serenity, and hope, but it increasingly becomes a site of chaos, terror, and darkness as a result of the poisoning of humans. Ferrytown is the location of demise, and the charred valley is no place to dwell safely. On their return to Ferrytown at the end of the novel, Franklin and Margaret observe this: "What little remained was scorched and blackened beyond recognition. Even the earth and the flagstones in the compounds were charred. The town was colorless" (301). In seeking a refuge from the rain on Butter Hill, Franklin and Margaret notice the hill's brittle nature:

> Franklin had not expected so much rain. Anyone could tell from how brittle the landscape was that, in these parts at least, it had scarcely rained all season, and what

> clouds there'd been that day had been horizon clouds, passer-by, or overtakers, actually for they were heading eastward, too – but hardly any time had gone before the last light of the day threw out its washing water, splashing it as heavily as grit on the brittle undergrowth and setting free its long-stored smells, part hope and part decay. The rain is unforgiving in its weight. It meant to stay and do some damage and some good in equal parts. (28)

The natural forces depicted here illustrate both the benevolent and the destructive aspects of nature through such words as "hope," "decay," "damage," and "good." For Margaret, however, the trees "were menacing – they wheezed and cracked. Bats feasted on the early moths. The undergrowth was busy with its residents," whereas Margaret, "Red Margaret, the Apricot, the drained and fragile woman in the hills, that applicant for unexpected death," feels "shocked and lost, bewildered and unloved" (26). Pointing to Margaret's precarious status, the text connects the theme of death and recovery to issues of ecology. As Andrew Tate remarks, the novel "couples resurrection [of Margaret] with the sudden death of the town from which she was banished" (99). The narrative breaks down the binaries between green/dark ecologies in favour of a postgreen melange and shows how the postnatural spaces are inhabited in two coextensive, porous worlds. Obviously, the vacillation between green ecology of Butter Hill and dark ecology of Ferrytown comes to define the postgreen which is constantly on the move between these two positions of ecology. In her reading of *The Pesthouse*, Caroline Edwards suggests that Crace's landscapes in the novel are "a far cry from the ravaged, desolate environments" depicted in postapocalyptic novels such as Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (2006). In fact, *The Pesthouse* presents an interweaving of greenery and ravaged places rather than constructing a hyperseparation between pristine nature and chaotic culture. The problem in Edwards's interpretation, however, lies in the reconfiguration of the very binary between pure green nature and dirty culture. "Crace's pre-modern landscape," Edwards contends, "is very different in the optimistic, almost-human depiction" (771) of nature. Nonetheless, Crace's construction of postnature is different from what Edwards describes, for Crace's landscapes are constituted by ongoing flux and transformation rather than harmony and stability, becoming *in-between*. Crace presents an inverse relationship of nature and culture, and enables postnature to become a primal force, contending with human activities. Instead of succumbing to entropy, Crace provides a third

way in which green is reconstituted as postgreen without the idealization of nature. In this way, what Crace proposes through the postgreen is the possibility of a composite space between the green and postgreen ecologies.

Crace depicts both ecologies similarly at the outset, in a way that appears to assert their separate characteristics, but in fact which continues the process of blurring boundaries that divide them through the images of the lake and the river. The lake is the main cause of the ecodisaster; it is a brackish entity, a black ecology, darkened by the remains of the old civilization, and has an agentic power to punish and forgive:

> The lake had not stored any memories; it seemed expressionless and bland. Just heavy with itself. Indifferent to visitors. No sign of movement on its surface. Not a wave and not a bird, not a single ship, not a reflected sparkle. No bouncing light. Predictable. Unlike the ocean, it was not threatening. Its smell was not as salty or as bitter. If anything, it smelled a little sulphurous, the odor of an egg, just boiled. (295)

The stagnant lake is a seemingly passive but relentlessly destructive force that represents nothingness. Neither pristine nor benevolent versions of green ecology are accessible here. The river separating the West from the East is probably the Mississippi, which is no longer verdant, nor is it “a waterway of innate plenitude” running “outside cataclysm or imbalance” (Cohen, “Introduction” xxvi- xxvii). Emphasizing this quality of the river, Franklin and Margaret note that the “mud around the reeds was black and deep. It released thick bubbles and a stench like rotten potatoes” (297). Hence, the river is not a pure, clean waterway but a murky one. As Cohen remarks, “[p]ollution, silt, and swift force ensure that the roiled depths of the Mississippi are murky,” and the “Muddy Mississippi is the brown river, a place of interstices, mixing, hybridity, autonomy, cogency” (“Introduction” xxvii). Dangerous and unpredictable, the valley, the river, the lake in Ferrytown, and the forest on Butter Hill appear darker, murky, and impure, and thus like a multihued, postgreen medley. In setting these two spaces, Ferrytown and Butter Hill, side-by-side, Crace provides a platform on how dark and green ecologies are inextricably intertwined. “Is there a wider way to conceptualize ecology?” asks Cohen, “one that embraces the harmonies of green, the dangers of blue, and the difficult admixtures of brown, but recognizes that there is not sufficient dwelling space

in any of these hues?" ("Introduction" xxviii). The answer to this question is in the figuration of the postnatural, the postgreen, as exemplified by the pesthouse.

The motif Crace selects for a postgreen composite is the pesthouse located on Butter Hill in the mountainous forest above Ferrytown and the lake, a place of confinement from the flux for the Ferrytowners. It is a site of quarantine for people who are infected with this pestilence known as "flux," "an intermittent visitor, unwelcome but well known" that "was carried in and carried out by travellers, or by their goods, or by their animals, or in their bedding, or in their clothes" (20). Suffering from the flux, Margaret is expelled from Ferrytown and is condemned to live in this isolated hut called the pesthouse on Butter Hill until she either recovers or dies of it. As the narrator puts it, Margaret has "to go up the little boulder Pesthouse above the valley for ten days or so, unattended and unvisited, to see if she recovered or was lost" (21). It is important to note that there is no medicine in this futuristic world. Therefore, the banishment from society is the only solution for contagious diseases. In short, the practice is such: "If any of the travellers were ill, then they were thrown out of town at once. No bed or sustenance for them. But if the victim was a Ferrytowner, the Pesthouse was the only option" (21). As "a rough, temporary abode for the sick and dying" (Tate 98), the pesthouse is sealed off to prevent contamination in the woods, which is considered to be a "safe" place where people with flux can heal if possible. However, the pesthouse becomes part of post/green environment when the separation between the landscape and the body collapses. Such a "trans-corporeal" understanding of the environment and the body is what is underlined in the pesthouse. As Stacy Alaimo has repeatedly argued, trans-corporeality "traces material interchanges across human bodies, animal bodies, and the wider material world" (*Exposed* 112) to which Andrew Tate also calls attention, stating that the pesthouse is a "makeshift bothy, a dwelling that is barely distinguishable from its organic surroundings" (98-99). Furthermore, the "natural" scene has become transformed by the narrator's gaze into a postnatural wilderness: Margaret and her grandfather "took half a day to reach the nearest woody swaggings in the sash of hills, where the rocky scrubland of the ascent relaxed into softer meadows and clearings of grass and highland reed, before the darkness of the woods and the distant, snowcapped mountain pates. The view was wasted on

them" (25). Even though it is "natural" with hills, rocks, meadows, and snowy mountains, this landscape carries elements of culture in it with the presence of people, or in David Matless's words, it "carries a relational hybridity, always already natural and cultural, deep and superficial" (231), which also epitomizes the postgreen vision of the novel as a whole.

Since Crace's landscape descriptions are poetic, *The Pesthouse* does not reject the idea of green ecology as part of the postgreen by bringing into focus the pesthouse, which lies beyond the boundary of the dark woods. It is "constructed out of sun-dried turfs, fire-proof and wind-protected, much loved by mice but easily collapsed," at core "a woodsman's soddy" (25). In the pesthouse, there is "a sleeping bench inside, a hearth and chimney stack, a leather bucket and some pots" (25). The pesthouse is not a family home, but an arboreal place of death, disease, or absence, as exemplified by the death of Margaret's father: "She was dreaming of a death like his. She could not forget how red his eyes had been, his sneezing and his hoarseness, or the black and livid spots across his face, and how his body – especially his neck and thighs and arms – had erupted overnight with boils as solid and large as goose eggs" (47). Through this imagery and the sudden destruction of Ferrytown, Crace demonstrates that contagious diseases and ecodisasters are rampant, and part of the quotidian life, illustrating how bodies are vulnerable and precarious in this post-apocalyptic America. In particular, the flux has wiped out much of the population. Therefore, the pesthouse symbolically stands for a general view of pestilence in post-America. In an interview with Adam Begley in *The Paris Review*, Crace states that the idea of disease and a pesthouse derives from his visit to the Isles of Scilly.

> I was on a tiny uninhabited island in the Isles of Scilly called St. Helen's. I discovered the ruin of the pesthouse, a building where anyone with an illness who was passing through the western passages into the British Isles in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries would be quarantined and left to die. It struck me as being an immensely interesting conceit—the shared abandonment of people with nothing in common except illness. It offered the irresistible title for a book too. ("Jim Crace")

What most attaches him to the pesthouse is the experience of isolation, as felt by Franklin after his brother leaves him, and Margaret after confined to the pesthouse. For Crace, clearly, the pesthouse signifies a solitary confinement for the sick; it is an embodiment of the

irrevocable loss, and the end of life. But, the pesthouse also involves living in the relation between life and death, nature and culture, health and illness, alienation and endearment as the postgreen exemplifies. Hence, the pesthouse embodies double literal and figurative meanings which underscore the flexible and porous status of the postgreen. More particularly, this decrepit shack becomes a thread between Ferrytown and Butter Hill, Franklin and Margaret, East and West, wilderness and civilization, a home for Franklin, "narrow, healthy, promising," and Margaret, "the bald, round head of someone very sick and beautiful" (31). The place itself once Margaret inhabits is "a relief" (25), and Franklin does not want to "abandon the Pesthouse so soon. He had started to take pleasure in its intimate darkness" (60), although it stands for an area of abandonment. Despite its devastating atmosphere, however, for Franklin and Margaret, the pesthouse will become a new hearth, a new homeland in the novel. At the beginning, the pesthouse holds particular importance in terms of recovery and rejuvenation. Contrary to general expectation, Margaret does not die there but recovers when Franklin nurses her to health through his visceral touches despite the possibility of contagion.

> Now, with Margaret's cold and clammy feet in his hands, Franklin felt unwell himself. His body ached. His throat was dry. His shoulders and neck seemed fixed. His eyes were watering. His hands were tingling. But he chose to hold onto her feet and massage them. … He pressed his thumbs against each toe, he pushed against the hollows of her ankles, he worked his knuckles against the soles, he stroked each nail. She seemed to push her legs against his hands, as if she knew what he was drawing out of her. (53-54)

By means of this intimate affinity which seems unavailable in Ferrytown, Margaret recuperates. As a "zone of intimacy," Andrew Tate suggests, the pesthouse is a place of bodily resuscitation, one in which "life encounters the near presence of mortality" (99). So, Crace uses the pesthouse to signal a moment of recovery at a crisis point in the characters' lives. In fact, the pesthouse as a postgreen environment offers a dynamic and open space and allows the characters to fashion their identities through a postgreen possibility of connections. Caroline Edwards points out that Crace "unfurls a neutral, imaginary space in which to explore the elemental, human traits of his characters: their perseverance, their capacity for love, their resources of hope" (772). The pesthouse provides this kind of avenue for self-

construction within the postnatural space, for with the pesthouse the narrative presents an in-between space for the characters, a space between the outside and the inside, or even life and death. This liminal postgreen space is thus a permeable boundary between life and death, green and dark ecologies, innocence and experience, disease and recovery.

Significantly, at the end of the novel, no longer a site where weary and sick people recuperate or die, the pesthouse becomes a spot of regeneration and rebirth for Franklin and Margaret after their hazardous journey to the coast. In a way, the intersection of home and post/nature is explored compellingly towards the end of the narrative when they return to the pesthouse. The suggestion that the pesthouse is the source of renewal that prompts Franklin to set up a homeland is endorsed by description of the vernal postnature, such as "the first green signs of spring showing on the ground" (287). "Soon they'd reached," the narrator continues, "and passed through the thicket of junipers, laurels and scrub oaks that smelled sweet with spring. The last time they'd been there, the odors had been fungal and metallic" (305). In contrast to the metallic smell, the vernal odour is the harbinger of rejuvenation of both nature and culture in the novel. At the beginning of their journey, however, postnature is depicted oblivious to humans: "In daylight, trees had let her pass, ignored her almost, pretended not to notice her" (26). In their return to the pesthouse, postnature appears "lush and forgiving" (Edwards 771): "It was as if the country that had once been hostile to them was regretful for it, and was now providing recompense – fewer dangers, warmer nights, softer going in a season that was opening up rather than closing down. It even decorated the way with early flowers" (290). The regenerative force replaces the destructive one. Caroline Edwards argues that this post/green scene epitomizes the "necessity of man's co-operation with Nature and recognition of its powers" (772). Aware of postnature's powers, Franklin decides to build a new house, a permanent one on Butter Hill in order to find "a roof under which he, Jackie and Margaret could recuperate" (305):

> It was not until the afternoon, when finally the three of them crested the last rise on the path and looked across the flatter clearings of grass and highland reed toward the black-green woods and the high, white peaks beyond, that she truly recognized the place. It hadn't changed, despite the bare branches and the blanched-out colors of the undergrowth. It was still a little warmer than the hillside path, its dips and hollows

> protected from the worst of the wind. It still appeared the safest acre in America, a place of remedy and recovery where, surely, they could at least spend the night or spend the month or spend eternity. (306)

This quotation exemplifies how the postgreen, epitomized as black-green woods, here delineates the process of the refounding of post- or pre-America.[9] Margaret's recognition of the landscape shows that the past has left its trace here, which echoes a yearning for domestic idyll. According to Siddhartha Deb, as "Franklin and Margaret see their country, they also create it in some sense" ("Manifest"). Ruth Heholt extends this discussion further, commenting on the heterogeneous status of postnatural landscapes: "marked by what has gone before, by the people who populated and shaped the environment in many different ways," landscapes are always characterized "by the weather of millennia, by the habitations and actions of the non-human" (2). Transformed by Ferrytown's past and postnature's creative-destructive powers, the pesthouse is this kind of place where survival is possible. "Layers of memory and action," Heholt maintains, "are embedded in the landscape alongside the layering of the earth's history in stone" (2). Paradoxically, now regarded as the safest place in America, the pesthouse merges the dark ecological elements of disease and death with the conventions of renewal and rebirth of green ecology, thereby constructing a postgreen landscape in the postlapsarian world of America, which lends new significance to Crace's choice to choose the title *Pesthouse* for his novel.

The pesthouse also stands for an interzone between the West and the East. The people of the United States need to pass through Ferrytown as they emigrate from the West to the East in search of a promised land. The ruined West is juxtaposed with the so-called paradise East in the immigrants' dreams. However, the East signifies both a green place associated with the idea of home, and a dark landscape for them. Earlier in the narrative, for example, Jackson, during his stay in Ferrytown, hears varied stories about the East from other immigrants. In these "mythical" stories, there is a division between optimists and pessimists in terms of the description of the East. The optimists believe that

> once the river had been crossed, something of the old America would be discovered, […] a land of profusion, safe from human predators, snake-free, and welcoming beyond

> the hog and hominy of this raw place, a place described by […] a good climate, fertile soil, wholesome air and water, plenty of provisions, good pay for labor, kind neighbors, good laws, a free government and a hearty welcome. (42)

It is evident for optimists that the East represents a promised land. The myth is that there is no devastation, and no ecological collapse, much like "old America." The effect of such a passage eerily points to the yearning for a prelapsarian past, but Crace's choice of this myth shows the radical break with the past by creating an amnesiac America. Most of the immigrants who do not know the past believe in such a myth. Such transcendental vision of nature, however, is impossible and remains utopian. As for the pessimists, there is only a dark ecological vision:

> Rivers too wide and wild to cross. Forests so impenetrable and gloomy that nothing grew at ground level except funguses. […] Great, dusty, waterless plains. Ridges sharper than a knife that tore your clothes. Others spoke of brackish swamps that could be crossed – in twenty days, if they were strong and lucky – only by travellers who dared to leave their horses and their carts behind and drag themselves across the mire on wooden rafts. (43)

This version of myth is also a made-up story; however not as far removed from the truth as the utopic one optimists adhere to, because the narrator describes not only the West as "battered, weather-poisoned" (10), but also the East as "an odd, perplexing place, … haunted, wrecked and hard underfoot, with prairies of rubble where people had once lived in bastions and towers" (5). What is real in this world is that everywhere in post-America is penurious, ruined, bleak, and rife with disasters. So, the only place where one can dwell is the pesthouse which, as Andrew Smith contends, might be "a liminal environmental place in which territory is both mastered and beyond control" (136). As such, it is the only postnatural place offering a promise of hope for a new home. Being neither in the West nor in the East, the pesthouse, then, is chosen as a home at the end by Franklin: "They could imagine striking out to claim a piece of long-abandoned land and making home in some old place, some territory begging to be used" (309).

Since *The Pesthouse* revolves around the themes of loss of home and the desire to find a new homeland through the road trip to the East coast, Franklin and Margaret appear as nomads

whose itinerary is not uncertain but full of dangers and fears. The nomadic journey shapes their identities and futures which is "emblematic of a rootlessness dangerous to social order," as Ann Brigham points out, stating that mobility on the road is an act of "productivity" (198), that is, the production of the domestic hearth. But such a promise for productivity is lost for Margaret already with the destruction of Ferrytown, her hometown, and for Franklin and Jackson after the acidification of their farmland, and their nomadic journey does not offer a palpable hope. Instead, when Franklin and Margaret begin their journey for such a hope, what they find is more desolation. All the ecodisasters that hit their home are also there on the road. Yet, Franklin and Margaret's exodus in search for a new homeland, "an outward search for the domestic" (Brigham 198) had begun with the burning of Ferrytown as a material but also a symbolic act for renewal and cleansing of the past: "The flames would allow the passage of the dead. Why should that bother them? The past was burning at their backs. The fire was in the west, and not ahead" (82). However, in order to feel being at home, at Margaret's request, Franklin takes some provisions from Ferrytown, and he adds a pot of mint in the cart, associated with the ideas of home, soil, and the past, as well as regeneration, death, and punishment.

The mint plant is the very symbol of up/rootedness in the narration. For Franklin, the soil is the beginning of a new home, as he is a farm boy. When he is at the coast, he plans to cultivate the land: "He looked more fondly on the land than he had done for months. Yes, land was something he could deal with. Even this brackish neighbourhood. Remove the skin of sand and he'd find fertile earth" (247). Although Franklin knows that it is impossible to cultivate this brackish soil, he is eager to domesticate the postgreen land. He realizes that he wants to head back into the past and back to the West from the East: "That was a shock to realize that he did not truly want to leave America. His dream was not the future but the past. Some land, a cabin and a family. A mother waiting on the stoop" (249). The reconstitution of the domestic hearth depends on the past. As Andrew Tate suggests, the "image of agricultural and domestic harmony echoes, consciously or otherwise, the idealistic image of America as a 'sweet mother'" (100). Thus, Crace constructs a loop that indicates the promise of return to the past, while deconstructing this ideal image of America, for there is no such a "sweet"

place as America. Similarly, Ann Brigham remarks that "[a]s the road trip develops into a search for a domestic that has been lost, it becomes a way to incorporate that loss, and that incorporation takes place, in part, as a return to the past" (199). Clearly, the reterritorialization in the novel takes place through some land, a house, and a family. In this sense, *The Pesthouse* is not only a reflection on the loss of nature and culture, but also a contemplation of that loss through the emergence of postgreen environments.

Crace's attitude to postgreen vacillates between contrasting images of the green forest and the ruined Dreaming Highway, of utopian Ark and dingy ocean, places of refuge and escape, of light and dark. Through the perambulations of Franklin and Margaret in the forest, the Dreaming Highway, the last farmlands, Tidewater, and the coast, Crace conveys the thrills and hardships of their travels. Their experiences are so extraordinary that the "environ-metal" landscape changes as do their own natures. After Margaret's revelation that "between the cascades and the downfall from the lake where the river was at its narrowest, hidden by the undergrowth, there was a wooden bridge, wide and strong enough to take the weight of a horseman" (84), the characters embark on their journey first through the forest in the eastside. The forest is the first space of the post/green which the protagonists have to pass through:

> [O]n the east bank of the river, where the water table was high, the going is wet. The flat forest paths beyond the wooden bridge and the lakeside were still drenched and swollen. Here, away from the thin, rolling soil of the mountain passes and the well-drained scrubland of stocky junipers and tangled laurels that laboured for existence on the lower slopes, any rain could not drain easily or quickly. Where could it go? It had to settle in and spread itself and deepen.
>
> These wetland, silt-rich forests – a mixture of chestnuts, marsh oaks, maples and hickories, which at this time of the year were exchanging green for oranges and reds – were distended with water and, therefore, so fertile and tightly undergrowthed in places that not even mule could pass. (94)

The forest here appears so green and fertile that it seems undamaged, and it is rendered through the depiction of green ecology as a lush green entity: "this relatively undamaged land, more forested and fertile than the country he had fled" (88). This green spot, however, is not depicted as an idealized place; nor is it described as serene, easeful, and benign.

Because, a green forest here does not mean that it is totally untouched by the devastation even though it preserves its green vista. When the characters enter this forest, they sense a foreboding predicament there. Even the green field creates a feeling of fear. For example, for Franklin, who feels “as inundated as the landscape he was pushing through” (96), the forest appears menacing like a human being: “The countryside appeared to him, in fact, not in the least beautiful. He was more used to the wide lit, open country of the plains. Such a crowded mass of trees did not seem natural. It did seem sinister. Here was just another challenge to be braved” (95). The forest in Crace’s depiction appears to have its own agency acting on Franklin and Margaret in a menacing way, and tries to swallow Franklin and Margaret, and Franklin feels buried alive in the swollen soil. This shows that they cannot survive here even if they become part of it. But in order to find his way in the territory, Franklin must listen to “the forest more intently now. He needed its advice” (100). Nevertheless, whether serene or disturbing, the forest is a verdant landscape as opposed to the toxic Dreaming Highway.

Jim Crace further complicates postgreen by mixing it throughout the narrative with images of green and metallic landscapes, such as the coexistence of the forest with the derelict Highway. After Franklin and Margaret spend the night in the forest, the road trip continues until they arrive at the Dreaming Highway only to discover the wreckage that industrial civilization of the past has left behind:

> Neither Margaret nor Franklin had seen or imagined such a straight and broad road before. People here must have land to waste, they thought, although there wasn’t yet much evidence of people. They’d not encountered any settlements or signs of active farming since they’d descended from the forests after their three days of rest. The country was discarded. It had been abandoned long enough ago for fences to have flattened, for walls to have slipped and lost their shape, and for tough scrub, already chest high, to have colonized what must have been good fertile fields. (109)

The dereliction that is starkly described illustrates how civilization comes to an end, leaving behind its ruins. And the fertile fields turn into a barren landscape. While they witness the green ecology of the forest, here they are surprised to find a penurious land, a darkened land. The contrast between dark and green ecologies throughout the novel displays how the postgreen absorbs both of them. Crace provides a dark insight into toxic landscape as

postgreen in this highway. The polluted surroundings in which Franklin and Margaret are immersed have been moulded by both nature and culture. In other words, nature and the remains of culture co-produce each other, creating new entanglements of waste, verdant environment, and metal ruins. Such a vision is more visible in the novel when Franklin and Margaret meet the potter and his son, the Joeys. During their journey, they come across an "environ-metal" landscape in which metals are part of environmental ruination:

> They traveled together for a short distance until the escarpments at the edge of their road flattened out entirely into a broad, barriered semicircle and provided them with daunting views across a debris field of tumbled stone and rock, stained with rust and ancient metal melt. Colossal devastated wheels and iron machines, too large for human hands, stood at the perimeter of the semicircle, as if they had been dumped by long-retreated glaciers and had no purpose now other than to age. Hardly anything grew amid the waste. The earth was poisoned, probably. Twisted rods of steel protruded from the masonry. Discarded shafts and metal planks, too heavy to pull aside even, blocked their paths.
>
> […] [Margaret] – and certainly Franklin – had never encountered such mighty metal blocks before or such a profligate display of waste by these ancestors. The smell was oily, acidic and medicinal, the sort of smell even a skunk would avoid. This had to be the junkle that she'd heard reported, third, fourth hand, from stories that had managed to cross the river back to Ferrytown, even if the storytellers hadn't. (118-119)

It is necessary to quote this lengthy passage in its entirety due to the manner in which the postgreen landscape is framed by debris, decay, and rust. This postgreen territory carries the trace of what has been forgotten: metal ruins. Clearly, the old America and nature crumble into ruins, and rubbles. In this passage, Jim Crace ecoaesthetically blends the natural and the metal ruin, coining the word "junkle," a neologism that reflects hazardous places, "the metal-contaminated, surviving parts of the old American empire" (Crace, "Jim Crace"). It is so noteworthy that everywhere is overtaken by the metal ruins. Wandering around metal fields, Franklin and Margaret notice, what Caroline Edwards calls, the "subjugation of Nature's abilities to burgeon or produce amid the rubble" (773), for metal ruins, according to Edwards, obstruct the "natural environment's own abilities to produce vegetative growth" (773). In contrast to what Edwards suggests, there is no longer such a "natural environment" in this territory, because it is totally "poisoned." The ruins here signify the end of civilization and the death of nature. Ruins, as Malcolm Miles remarks, "denote a breakdown in the ordering

of things but their survival indicates a durability informing a multivalent sensibility which encompasses a beauty sensed in destruction" (75). In this sense, the survival of the lands of ruin, rubble, and "junkle" creates a toxified postgreen nature. Notably, in ruin imagery of dilapidated roads, abandoned industrial plants, and collapsed cities, Crace reveals the exploitation of nature. In fact, as Caroline Edwards claims, the interaction between nature and metal leftovers "betrays an antagonism between two historical forces" that are "man's technologisation" and "Nature's ever-evolving growth" (773). Within this tension, the novel becomes a meditation on the ruin of modernity, the progressive advancement of technology and industry. As Jon Beasley-Murray notes, ruins "demonstrate that whole cultures, just like the lives of mortals, are transient" (212). Exposing the leftover remains of an advanced civilization, the text conjures up a rotting spectacle in which the metal remnants dominate nature; not only is nature decentred, but the very notion of green ecology becomes more and more untenable in the light of metal ruination. Interestingly, such a ruinscape makes Franklin and Margaret excited:

> It was fascinating, if disturbing, to stand now among the bludgeoned stones and rusting cadavers, trying to imagine what America had been all those grandpas ago […] They retreated, shaking their heads, baffled but excited by the presence of so much antiquity, until they noticed signs of life on the outskirts of the junkle. (119)

For Franklin and Margaret, the ruins they encounter on the road are signifiers of their past and history, that is durability, despite the destruction and catastrophe.

The Pesthouse posits the road as a postgreen site in which the journey for the characters becomes a process of liberation and an exploration of the postnatural world around them. According to Ann Brigham, going on the road indicates "a total liberation or flight from that which constrains us – society, self, the family, the past, or the familiar" (6). For Franklin and Margaret, however, the road means more threat and danger than freedom or escape even though they are potentially there as well. In a sense, for the protagonists, the postnatural road as a search for finding a new nature is an experience that provides a fluid conception of nature, or as an experience that makes the pursuit of an ideal nature impossible. The narrator describes the road:

> The road, indeed, seemed built – by how many laborers and over how many years, at what immense cost? – to take great weights. Its now damaged surface, much degraded by the weather and time, was comprised mostly of chips of stone, loose grit and sticky black rubble, which only the toughest of plants – knotweed, sagebrush and thistle – had succeeded in penetrating. Along the verge, behind thick curbs of fashioned rectangular rock and what seemed like rusted metal fences, thinned to a finger's breadth by corrosion, were clumps of jimson, not yet cut back by the frosts, their summer trumpets rotting at their bases. There was nothing edible for travellers – unless they craved hallucinations and stomach cramp or could, like beetles, dine on rust. (115)

As a built environment, the road symbolizes the death of civilization through the ruins. More particularly, the relic of the road signifies the death of American cultural identity, because as Andrew Tate notes: "Concepts of American identity in the era of global capital are frequently defined by ideas of mobility and speed" (87). In this Craceland, the name Dreaming Highway remains ironical, indicating the dream of freedom and mobility. For Franklin, for example, the road is "the long tract where time ago, he supposed, great vehicles and crowds had hastened between the grand old towns – *cities* was the word he'd heard – and the people of America had been so numerous and healthy as fleas" (114). However, the road now stands for a topography of immobility and dereliction, one whose boundaries become part of nature in the narrative. The absence of cities from the text and the ruined Highway are inextricably linked to the death of nature and culture, in that when nature dies, so do culture and civilization. Indeed, industrial cultures have ended "nature" through roads and cities. This phenomenon is aptly called "denature" by Timothy Luke in *Ecocritique* (1997):

> Nature increasingly is no longer a vast realm of unknown, unmanageable, or uncontrollable wild nonhuman activity. After becoming completely ensnared within the megamachinic grids of global production and consumption, …, Nature is turning into 'Denature.' Much of the earth is a 'built environment,' a 'planned habitat,' or 'managed range' as pollution modifies atmospheric chemistry, urbanization restructures weather events, architecture encloses whole biomes in sprawling megacities, and biotechnology reengineers the base codes of existing biomass. (195)

In an attempt to describe the postnatural formation of nature, Luke points to a denatured environment in which the natural realm and the humanly constructed realm are becoming one. This is precisely what Franklin and Margaret experience when they encounter the symmetrical escarpment as denatured construction, and they are baffled:

> The distant escarpment, after their first observation, had not been clearly visible for much of their journey that morning, so it had come as a relief and a surprise when they had crested an oddly regular esker of oval hillocks to gain their second view of what seemed now, on this closer inspection, to be an unnaturally shallow, flat valley without a river but flanked by parallel mounds as regular as the best-plowed furrow –except that no plow was big enough, not even in the fairytales, to throw aside so great a swath of earth. Initially, they were merely baffled. This was no escarpment provided by nature, unless nature had on this one occasion broken its own rules and failed to twist and bend, but had instead hurtled forward, all symmetry and parallels. (110-111)

For the characters, this construction is not at all natural. Obviously, there is a profound difference between the world that permeates the mind of Franklin and Margaret and the world where their ancestors had lived. Nature, however, does not have rigid boundaries; rather, it is able to twist and bend, always flexible and porous. This understanding of nature is different from Bill McKibben's or Timothy Morton's visions, in that for Franklin and Margaret, nature is not a normative signifier here; instead, nature is a material reality able to engulf or partner with the human. Franklin and Margaret are just walkers on this postnatural road, witnessing an old leftover. The road is a dead land in which green ecologies cannot flourish, a reminder of the past. Nature and culture here are encroaching on each other, rather than creating a bifurcation, showing their coexistence, albeit in negative terms. The emerging postgreen environment now positions humanity as part of its own framework, and the Dreaming Highway is one of the best examples of this formation.

The remains of industrial civilization are already sunk into the earth, while humanity is plunged into primitive life in the novel. This postnatural predicament of desolation and hope manifests through the ruined road and the last remaining agricultural farm. Upon arriving at "the stone and metal cave" (120), moreover, Franklin and Margaret encounter an immigrated family, including Andrew, Melody, and Acton Bose, as well as Acton's baby, Bella. Later in the narrative, the moment they share the provisions around the fire in the metal shelter, a brigand of about six rustlers and "landlopers" whose smiles are "far too sharp to promise anything but cruelty," and whose faces are "too weather-beaten to be townspeople" (123), assault the company, and enslave Franklin, the Joeys, and Acton. As Crace suggests, this future provides a bleak regression to slavery and lawlessness. As a result of this enslavement, Franklin and Margaret are separated for a time. After the separation, Margaret, Andrew,

Melody, and Bella Bose wander around to find some provisions and milk for Bella. On traversing the debris fields on foot, they discover "the final farmlands of America" (152), the only remaining "agricultural" site:

> They noticed that pockets of land around the pathway were cultivated and that within easy reach were clusters of unabandoned wooden huts, some with plumes of smoke and hostile dogs, others with washing lines, others with a tethered cow or two and goats. The smallholdings around the homes were dying back for winter, but still the practiced eye could recognize where rows of kale and corn had been and see that apples had been in such abundance that year that the ground was squelchy with windfalls. This was almost the America that they had all been born in. It was reassuring finally to discover such normality, but it was unnerving also, especially for the Boses. If everything was normal here, then who was to say that their flight from their fine, shuttered house and those lucrative riverside employments that had provided wealth and respect had not been precipitate? (141)

Here, these "green" cultivated lands which are stitched into the cultural history of America are associated with normalcy, but with regard to the fact that most "places were abandoned nowadays" (161), to find such an agrarian space is surprising for Margaret and Boses. Holding Bella in her arms, Margaret visits some homesteads in the cultivated land. However, contrary to what she expects from an American farmer, the two men try to rape her. After her escape, she finds a desolate land:

> [O]nce she broke through to a clearing there was nothing familiar in sight, not a single building, not a reminiscent shape, not even any cultured land, and only the footings of ancient walls and lines of metal spikes, rusted thin, as evidence that this had once been farmed many years before but now was wilderness. People had been there in better times, had lived there possibly, had died, but there was little chance that anyone would come again. People were becoming scarce. America was emptying. The land was living only for itself. (169)

This postgreen space here is nothing but a compound, consisting of rotting metals, and darkened stones, an ensemble of both wilderness and the leftovers of civilization. According to Levi Byrant, wilderness "evokes connotations of an environment hostile to us, where we are not masters, and where we are abandoned. Here is one place where a black or existential ecology differs markedly from green ecology, recognizing that the wilderness is just as prone to disequilibrium as it is to balance" ("Black" 301). The wilderness can be either a destructive

or a benevolent force, vacillating between order and disorder, stability and flux. Given that the "land was living only for itself," it is interesting to see that the personified nature is not hostile but reclaims what is left.

Although throughout the novel the protagonists believe in finding a green "utopian possibility," they gradually recognise it is futile to search for such a possibility. For example, after escaping with Bella, Margaret arrives at Tidewater, seeking refuge in a settlement called "The Ark" run by a religious fundamentalist sect known as the Finger Baptists. "The Ark, whatever its purpose might be," Margaret thinks, "would rescue her and Bella. It would be their first home together" (190). Recognizing "the homely smells of women, washing, tobacco and hog-fat candles" (190), Margaret considers herself as part of a "perfect" community, and reroots herself in the community:

> It was an oddly comfortable existence for Margaret and Bella. Much of the doubt, regret and danger had been removed from her life, though what replaced them was mostly dull. In this respect, the Finger Baptists were proved correct – No Blades, No Blood. The emigrants were honest, because there was nothing to steal; sharing, because there was plenty to eat; sober, because there was no liquor; there were no misers, because there was no wealth to hoard; they were industrious, because it was Work or Starve. (193)

Obviously, to quote Caroline Edwards, the Ark indicates "a utopian community" (774). Margaret also sees the Ark as an "Arcadian" domestic stability, a green utopia of sufficiency as indicated in the quotation above. However, unlike Noah's Ark, the Ark of the Baptists cannot move. This rootedness makes the Ark a desirable home for the immigrants, but it is open to vulnerability, for the Finger Baptists view "metal and human industry as the source of humanity's fall from grace" (Tate 96). Thus, metals are forbidden in the Ark:

> "Nothing metal, nothing metal," one of them was commanding, walking up and down the line, repeating his instructions and devotions to every group. "Remove all metal from your hair, no antique combs, no knives at all, no silverware, no ear or finger rings, no pans. Metal is the Devil's work. Metal is the cause of greed and war. In here we are, like air and water, without which none of us can live, the enemies of metal. Check your pockets. Shake out all your rust. Remove your shoes. Unlace your bags." (184)

The Baptists bury metals again into soil, creating an "environ-metal" landscape outside the settlement. This act is called "restitution" (186). The metal as a symbol of industrial progress is the remainder of the old civilization. It is through effacing the past that the Ark stands for the future. Yet their project fails, because when the band of rustlers comes to the Ark for metals, the Ark remains defenceless without metal weapons. This utopian dream then becomes a dystopian nightmare. During the attack, in trying to escape with Bella again, Margaret sees Franklin in this band of marauders. The pair succeeds in running away from the violent band and, finally, reaches the coast.

From the beginning onwards Jim Crace thematizes hope through the motif of the "promised" land in *The Pesthouse*, but the eventual arrival at the shoreline is an utter disappointment for Franklin and Margaret. It is clear that there is neither a promised land nor a safe community but a diseased territory and a military ship that takes the rich and the healthy men on board. The postnatural landscape that surrounds them is never far away, as well. For Franklin and Margaret, the encounter with the ocean is disheartening due to its toxic transformation. Margaret first sees the ocean as a grey entity on visiting the coast in the early morning: "Margaret could not have guessed how leaden it would be and lacking in expression. It seemed … more metallic than watery. […] Now the leaden surface was alive" (236). The ocean, incrusted with metallic colours and weeds, serves not as a liberatory place but as a constricted territory. Yet, here the oceanic landscape is "alive," responding to Margaret, but as an eerie entity because it is not stable anymore. Rather, it appears elastic, changing its colours. Margaret observes "how the sea could express itself in such variety, now blushing blue, now gray as ash, now green. Its moodiness made no sense" (253-254). The changeable, reactive, and elastic status of the ocean indicates the disequilibrium in the oceanic ecosystem. Pointing to an extreme tidal wave in the ocean, the narrator remarks:

> The ocean had changed entirely by the time Margaret returned to the overhang with Jackie and Franklin. The rising light had carted off the lead and left its sheeny residues of blues and greens. The water seemed to have withdrawn, leaving a deeper beach with fringes of green-black weed, and there were yellow banks of sand offshore that she had not noticed previously. (237)

Notably, the ocean as a postnatural entity reflects how the unknown catastrophe has totally transformed all the ecosystems through toxicity in America, creating permeable but dark territories. Franklin also notes that the ocean is brackish: “It all smelled bad: the weed, the water and the sand, the shells, the battered lengths of drift, the pink-gray armored parts of animals that were not spiders exactly. He did not like the shore. It seemed ungenerous. Its music was funeral. It was a mystery” (246). The ocean echoes the death of nature, while remaining uncanny for Franklin.

At the end of the novel, Franklin and Margaret with Bella return to the pesthouse where they had first met. This return denotes the reconstitution of the domestic hearth in the novel. Paradoxically, the mobility on the road suggests that there is no home but nomadic movement. But this movement becomes “a mobility of the homeland” (Brigham 187) when Franklin and Margaret try to reroot themselves in the communities as a way of connection to the family, the past, and the postnatural environment. As a symbol of mobility, for instance, the barrow turns out to be a home during their stay in the forest. Although both Franklin and Margaret are confined to the barrow, they yearn to belong to a stable place. After they cross the wooden bridge, Franklin longs for his home, and the narrator notes that “what troubled Franklin from the moment he reached the east side of the bridge was the fear that he had made a big mistake, that where he truly should be traveling was westward, back to the family hearth, back to mother waiting at the center of abandoned fields” (91). This presentiment takes place throughout the novel, making the idea of home crucial to understand up/rootedness in its relation to the land, death, birth, and circular narrative.

CHAPTER II

DARK ECOLOGIES IN JOHN BURNSIDE'S *GLISTER*

The world was void,

The populous and the powerful – was a lump,

Seasonless, herbless, treeless, manless, lifeless –

A lump of death – a chaos of hard clay.

Lord Byron, "Darkness," 246

The global environmental crisis is the inevitable result of industrialism and capitalism, which have constructed a thoroughly anthropocentric consumerist culture that regards itself as separate from the natural world. Dissociating culture from nature is also the reason behind the disenchantment of the environment. Taking up these themes in relation to environmental pollution, the Scottish author John Burnside portrays a disenchanted world of toxicity in *Glister*, exploring how toxic intrusion into human and nonhuman bodies and places changes our relationships with nature, and reconstructs a dark world in which people and the community physically and morally fall apart. In this sense, the novel presents a thoroughly dark ecological vision in which nature becomes the ultimate other, dangerous and inimical to humanity, and thus this chapter examines *Glister* as an exemplary novel of "dark ecology."

The term "dark ecology" is introduced by both Timothy Morton and Paul Kingsnorth in order to draw attention to our present ecological condition marked by global pollution. Despite their different approaches to the concept of nature, both scholars claim that nature no longer provides relief and solace from negativity; instead, due to the complex imbrication of the social and natural environments on a global scale, nature has become dark, indeterminate, and dangerous, rendering all life vulnerable to ecological disasters. Therefore, they suggest, we need to establish a new framework for describing the ecocide with which human beings are nowadays confronted. Responding to the ecological plight in his *Confessions of a*

Recovering Environmentalist and Other Essays (2017), Kingsnorth discusses the ways that industrialization damaged humanity's relations to nature, and what he sees happening is the disappearance of nature that generates life:

> Our civilization is beginning to break down. We are at the start of an unfolding economic and social collapse which may take decades or centuries to play out—and which is playing out against the background of a planetary ecocide that nobody seems able to prevent. We are not gods, and our machines will not get us off this hook, however clever they are and however much we would like to believe it. (142)

Kingsnorth sounds pessimistic, declaring an unavoidable ecocollapse in the future as the result of industrial progress and technological advancement, which is the dawn of dark ecology, as he calls it. The dark ecological perspective is his response to the planetary ecocide brought about by capitalism that, he argues, has only produced ecological devastation. Together with Dougald Hine, Kingsnorth published a manifesto called "Uncivilisation" for the Dark Mountain Project in 2009, describing dark ecology as "an underlying darkness at the root of everything we have built" (262) with the aim to disavow "humanity's delusions of difference, of its separation from and superiority to the living world which surrounds it" (266). Their perspective reflects a dark life in the twenty-first century since the possibility of establishing a harmonious connection between human beings and the environment is almost lost. In this project, however, nature is presented as "something thoroughly alive and intimately interwoven with human existence" (162-163) -- a network ecology in which one can find beauty and ugliness, fear and happiness, terror and awe. In Kingsnorth's words:

> what I call "nature" (an imperfect word, but I can never seem to find a better one) is really just another word for life; an ever-turning wheel of blood and shit and death and rebirth. Nature is fatal as often as it is beautiful, and sometimes it is both at once. But for me, that's the point: it is the fear and the violence inherent in wild nature, as much as the beauty and the peace, that inspires in me the impulses which religions ask me to direct towards their human-shaped gods: humility, a sense of smallness, sometimes a fear, usually a desire to be part of something bigger than me and my kind. To lose myself; to lose my Self. (162)

Notwithstanding the distinctive view of nature with its creative-destructive processes within the network of the human and nonhuman realms, Kingsnorth, influenced by Buddhism, draws attention to a vital, liminal collective unity, along with spiritual and sacred aspects of nature about which nobody cares in consumer societies. As he puts it, "nature is somehow sacred, is widely held, crosses cultural and national boundaries, and is a potentially powerful defence against the intellectual assaults of the New Gods" (177). Referring to premodern notions of nature, Kingsnorth regards nature as a "spiritual" community of which human beings become part, for once we "lived in harmony with the natural world," he writes, "until the first grain seed was cultivated, after which we slid into a future of hierarchy, control and ecological destruction" (37). Yet, the consumerist society lacks such a vision, as the ecological collapse leaves behind a dark ecology, creating a sense of "eco-lament," making us weep for the fact that pristine nature has disappeared. In noting that the "nature of nature has always been change, which means that death – and rebirth – will always be with us, and that rebirth may take forms we do not recognise and did not expect" (222), Kingsnorth claims: "[y]ou are part of this process, and so am I, and this time around we are the cause of it too. The future offers chaos, uncertainty, loss" (222). Dark ecology, thus, is an environmental process containing chaos, uncertainty, and loss. It configures a dark life for humans and other beings. As such, dark ecology means an environmental melancholy, an "eco-grief" for the loss of regenerative nature: "I looked around me, at the diminishing natural beauty and its accelerating destruction, and I despaired" (216). Kingsnorth clearly feels despair at the present state of the planet, but he also states that you "need to be able to acknowledge the reality of the loss, and the pain it causes. You need to stop pretending that the loss isn't real, or that it will all go back to how it was. Grieving is the starting point for being able to move on and through, and to begin to rebuild yourself again" (98). In other words, he argues that if that natural loss is culturally recognised and valued through grieving, our anthropocentric vision can be changed. But this view is not too convincing for many ecocritics. Catrina Mortimer-Sandilands, for instance, poses an important question in "Melancholy Natures, Queer Ecologies": "how does one mourn in the midst of a culture that finds it almost impossible to recognize the value of what has been lost?" (333). As an answer to this question, Kingsnorth would state that whether one denies or acknowledges that loss,

dark ecology surrounding humans will make people recognize how ecosystems are deteriorating, and then, this predicament may pave the way for an environmental affection. Kingsnorth's vision, as Deirdre d'Albertis observes in "Dark Nature," underlines "mourning and grief not so much for the planet itself (which will endure) but for humanity's doomed relationship to a nature it both venerates and desecrates without respite" (137). In Kingsnorth's perspective, even if nature is able to barely survive any ecocollapse, it is necessary to move on through grief. So, Kingsnorth discusses the recognition of vulnerability, suffering, and mortality conferred onto not only humans but also nonhumans. In this respect, not certain but all lives are grievable in the dark ecological vision.

Repudiating the concept of pristine nature in a similar vein, Timothy Morton, too, predicates his vision of dark ecology on a "melancholic ethics" (*Ecology* 186), which he defines as pursuing a negative, dark desire that is always already located in ecology. Similar to Kingsnorth's vision, Morton propounds a dark ecological world in which the "ecological crisis makes us aware of how interdependent everything is" (*Ecological* 30). Morton's ecological vision implies that nothing is holistic outside its relations.[10] Yet, by no means does he celebrate this situation. Rather, he regards it in negative terms, suggesting that "everything is interconnected. And it sucks" (*Ecological* 33). Thus, Morton's ecological thought contains "negativity and irony, ugliness and horror" (*Ecological* 17), as well as "uncertainty" and the "anti-ecological" (*Ecological* 16, 59). The ecological reality in the twenty-first century, in this sense, is indeterminate, encompassing ugly chemical plants, nuclear bombs, and horror and terror that ecocatastrophes have inflicted upon humans and nonhumans. Dark ecology, therefore, illustrates how humans and nonhumans are fundamentally enmeshed in and negatively interdependent with one another with no boundaries between nature and culture. As Morton clarifies in *Dark Ecology* (2016), "ecological reality requires an awareness that at first has the characteristics of tragic melancholy and negativity, concerning inextricable coexistence with a host of entities that surround and penetrate us, but which evolves paradoxically into an anarchic, comedic sense of coexistence" (160). Recognizing this coexistence that capitalist societies ignore, provides, according to Morton, a basis for a tragic melancholy, an eco-grief underlying the precariousness of human beings. This kind of

coexistence indicates a dark ecological enmeshment in which humans interact with nonhumans in chaotic and anarchic ways. The darkness in this enmeshment comes from what he terms "the strange stranger" in "the mesh" (*Ecological* 80, 8).

Morton's conceptual tools, "the mesh" and "the strange stranger," in his dark ecological project are quite important to understand his formulation of dark ecology. He argues for an ecological mesh rife with familiar and strange beings, an open, vast, and incoherent whole that is by no means harmonious but uncanny and destructive. In this mesh, strange strangers are not only humans and nonhumans, but also imaginary entities, including ghosts, vampires, and giants. These strangers are totally strange to themselves, to each other but in a way interrelated with one another. In other words, they are uncannily coexistent in the mesh. These real and unreal creatures might also cause holes, gaps, and breaches in the mesh of dark ecology. In *The Ecological Thought*, Morton describes dark ecology as "a vast, sprawling mesh of interconnection without a definite center or edge. It is radical intimacy, coexistence with other beings, sentient and otherwise" (8). This is a radical "interconnectedness of all living and non-living things" (*Ecological* 28), which, as a main vector of the mesh, often creates difference and separateness between human and nonhuman beings: "Interconnection implies separateness and difference. There would be no mesh if there were no strange strangers. The mesh isn't a background against which the strange stranger appears. It is the entanglement of all strangers" (*Ecological* 47). Obviously, Morton's dark ecology is enmeshed in strange strangers which, he argues, cannot entirely be known. As he explains it:

> Each entity in the mesh looks strange. Nothing exists all by itself, and so nothing is fully "itself." There is curiously "less" of the Universe at the same time, and for the same reasons, as we see "more" of it. Our encounter with other beings becomes profound. They are strange, even intrinsically strange. Getting to know them makes them stranger. When we talk about life forms, we're talking about *strange strangers*. The ecological thought imagines a multitude of entangled strange strangers. (*Ecological* 15)

What he suggests here is that strange strangers occupy "a subaesthetic level of being, beyond the cute and beyond the awesome" (Morton, *Ecological* 91). Here is the paradox that human beings and animals are visible and can be categorized as beautiful or ugly, depending on our

anthropocentric perspectives. However, he prefers the totalization that strange strangers are dangerous, disgusting, ugly, and even evil, in the process of becoming uncanny in the mesh. Morton complicates this understanding of dark ecology by suggesting uncanniness in strange strangers that "are right next to us" (78) despite being "strange to herself, or himself, or itself" (66). Despite the fact that all types of entities can be regarded to exist on the equal and same plane of the mesh, it is really difficult to discern the scale of strange strangers, for Morton claims strange strangers are both discernible and unknowable to humans: "we must challenge our sense of what is real and what is unreal, what counts as existent and what counts as non-existent" (*Ecological* 10). What Morton means by this reality versus unreality is ambiguous, but he implies that the present ecological predicament shows that the boundary between reality and appearance has dissolved in such a radical manner that it is no longer easy to understand the material world; instead, there is the mesh of dark ecology that renders humans and nonhumans coexistent in eerie ways.[11] His emphasis, in this respect, falls on the uncanny and the radical otherness of strange strangers to reveal that our material environment has become dark, and our ecological reality has been horrifying as well as spectral.

One theme repeatedly raised in Morton's recent writings, though not highlighted as an alternative ecology, is spectrality. He proclaims that dark ecology is a "spectral" mesh of strange strangers. Spectrality is explained in the sense that, like strange strangers, it has both visible and invisible aspects, because the spectral realm connotes a non-existent realm of spirits, ghosts, and phantoms that are liminal creatures. Hence, Morton's dark ecology emerges as "a spectral realm in which all kinds of strange, uncanny entities flit about, hard to distinguish from one another in a thin or rigid way: vampires, ghosts, fingers, pieces of brain, phantom limbs, flowers, tropes, self-concepts, earlobes, appendices, swim bladders, minds, eyes, meadows, tardigrades, viruses" ("Ecology" 43-44). Arguably, Morton deploys this concept so as to put emphasis not only on the radical otherness of nature, but also on the possibility of dissolving rigid boundaries between natural, cultural, and literary realms. Morton's provocative statement, "spectral beings emerge when the life-nonlife boundary collapses, along with the human-nonhuman boundary" ("Specters" 313) serves as the basis of his theorization of the ecological coexistence of the visible and the invisible.

> [t]he more we think ecological beings—a human, a tree, an ecosystem, a cloud—the more we find ourselves obliged to think them not as alive or dead, but as spectral. The more we think them, moreover, the more we discover that such beings are not solidly "real" nor completely "unreal"— in this sense, too, ecological beings are spectral. In particular, ecological beings provide insights into the weird way in which entities are riven from within between what they are and how they appear. Another way of putting this is that beings, as a possibility condition for their existing at all, are specters. ("Specters" 304)

This radical move in his sense of ecology seems highly speculative. Yet, it opens up a creative and literary space to speculate on what constitutes nature. In this vision, the divide between the immaterial realm and the material realm is blurred and dissolved, and thereby all beings become spectral.[12] This brings the incorporeal into dark ecology, which is one of the most important leitmotifs used in Burnside's novels and poems. It is within this context that this chapter will discuss *Glister*'s dark ecological approach to nature to see whether there is a way in which thinking about dark ecology could open up alternative spaces for contemporary definitions of nature in the novel. In order to further develop the convergence of ecology, humans, nonhumans, and toxicity, it will be helpful to elucidate Burnside's understanding of nature in his oeuvre.

John Burnside has established his reputation as a prolific poet and writer in Scotland. He published numerous short story, memoir, and poetry collections, such as *The Asylum Dance* (2000), *The Hunt in the Forest* (2009), and *Black Cat Bone* (2011), which won both the Forward Poetry Prize and the T. S. Eliot Prize, and many novels, including *The Dumb House* (1997), *Living Nowhere* (2003), *A Summer of Drowning* (2011), and *Havergey* (2017), which is set in the futuristic and ecodystopian world of Scotland and explores how an utopian island community might be ecologically formed after the environmental cataclysm. His oeuvre focuses on many subjects, such as nature, dwelling, home, alienation, masculinity, violence, death, life, and community, all of which are central to exposing the relations between the material and the spiritual, as well as understanding the tension between the self and the other. With his preoccupation with philosophical, religious, political, and ecological concerns in his verse and fiction Burnside produces, in his words, an "ecological art" that is concerned as much with material environments as with mysterious realms—one that would "restore that

mystery, to put us back into the open, to make us both vulnerable and wondrous again—to reconnect us" ("Science" 105). In his effort to expand the bounds of un/reality, Burnside demonstrates what David James views as "a preoccupation with otherworldly locales and the sensations they elicit" (601). In fact, the polarities Burnside explores in his verse and fiction – nature/culture, spirit/matter, body/mind, love/hate – are efficiently laid out and gridded over one another in such an unexpected way that the interconnections can construct uncanny spaces in which the boundary between these polarities becomes porous. These fictional worlds are not harmonious and healthy; instead, they are dangerous, unpleasant, and dark. Viewing the fictional worlds that Burnside has created as "liminal spaces" (422), Astrid Bracke contends that Burnside's universes are "strange, haunting and frequently thoroughly unpleasant places, filled with bewildering events and characters" (421). In this sense, Burnside projects his understanding of ecology on to his fictional worlds that manifest a dark mystical sense of becoming with (dark) nature. At the root of his practice is an understanding that the environment is an uncanny, immense assemblage of not only human beings, but also nonhuman ones and inorganic forces, which transgresses the boundaries between the self and the other, nature and culture, and body and spirit because, as Burnside explains in an interview with Patricia McCarthy, the "green 'movement' has become one more refuge for fatcats and windbags – and it needs to be re-taken by deep (dark) ecology thinking" ("John Burnside" 34). In the same interview, he describes himself as "dark green" ("John Burnside" 34). His dark green ecological thought, like Morton's dark perspective, does not offer a harmonious way of living with nature, or a retreat into wilderness; nor does he suggest that nature is fertile, stable, and exists for human ends. Instead, his dark world of ecology demonstrates an ever-changing entity reconfigured by nature-culture interchanges, and thus by industrial activities and capitalist practices. By so doing, he vacillates between "momentary identification with the 'natural' *other* and subsequent presentation of that *other* as completely at odds with, perhaps even inimical to, humanity" (Aretoulakis 182). Talking about this aspect of Burnside's vision of nature, Louisa Gairn remarks that "[b]y deliberately blurring the gaps between 'self' and 'other,' 'human' and 'nature,' Burnside invites the reader to join him in deconstructing these binary oppositions, which he feels are misleading and constrictive, exploring the liminal world which exists at the edges of such categories" (174).

In this respect, Burnside reveals this dark green world of liminality in a strange way that invites "both tentative and radical, tender and violent movements of transgression" (Griem 99).

Similarly, in suggesting that Burnside's fiction and poetry present "an exploration of the liminal" ("Sustainable" 77), David Borthwick contends that Burnside's sense of ecology points to an "openness to the original 'other' of nature" ("Sustainable" 68). Here, crucial to Burnside's vision of a dark ecology is an interconnectedness of liminal spaces and strange bodies where the boundary between spirit and matter is also blurred to the point of dissolution. In an interview with Attila Dosa, for example, Burnside, like Kingsnorth, concedes that spirit and matter complement each other, from which Timothy Morton would refrain, stating:

> If you think in terms of "spirit," you might be talking about something that at least wouldn't be so easy to force into this kind of dualism. I wanted to replace the idea of duality, which suggests two separate things, with an idea of the binary, where the two things complement each other. What is interesting is the play between these imaginary forces that you might think of as spirit and matter. There is no such thing as matter separate from spirit, or spirit separate from matter. (*Beyond* 119)

In the same interview, Burnside summarizes his ecological project as, "The right dwelling in the world is the key to living as a spirit" (*Beyond* 119). This living as a spirit is something spectral to the world, a/n in/corporeal force sustained by mutability, contingency, and the interrelations of the material and the spiritual. In this way, Burnside attends to Morton's debate on the spectral realm in dark ecology to challenge the familiar conceptions of nature, for dark nature contains the magical, uncanny realm that is invisible. As Burnside puts it, the dark green and spectral world is "populated by all manner of creature, many of them only half-human, and some wholly animal, vegetable or mineral. Not to mention scents, patterns, shadows, numbers" ("John Burnside" 30). Yet, this spectral realm might haunt the material one, as Graeme Macdonald notes, because nature is frequently depicted as "a kind of active revenant in Burnside's work; haunting or reclaiming territory lost or violently reshaped by human modes of production" (Macdonald 225-226). For Burnside, the depictions of these material and spectral realms need to be made strange by including terror and "awe." He

claims that “awe is central, is vitally necessary, to any description of the world. A description that lacks this awe is, in truth, a lie” (“Science” 95). Filled with disturbing images of violence, loss, death, and haunting, Burnside’s *Glister* epitomizes this credo, forsaking realistic depictions of nature by creating a spectral realm whose porous boundary easily seeps into the material world. Two distinctive yet entwined approaches to nature coalesce in Burnside’s dark green vision of nature. He exposes a dark ecology of otherness and alterity, presenting a toxic portrait of reality in which the visible world is just an illusory layer that envelopes a liminal, “depthless ecology” (Morton, *Ecological* 59) populated by postnatural and spectral forces. Dark ecology, then, finds a fictional embodiment in *Glister*, which has been extensively reviewed and praised.

Glister is Burnside’ seventh novel, described as “horror-suspense-mystery” by Joanna Kavenna, but also as “eco-gothic” (602) and “ecological thriller” (605) by David James. Calling the novel “a fusion of styles and genres,” Simon Appleby also finds it “a haunting tale.” Similarly, reviewing the novel as a “crime novel, a mystery novel and a horror novel in one” in the *Independent*, Simon Kovesi writes that the novel is “more broadly directed at the amoral irresponsibilities of big business in its abuse of nature. Even more effectively, it points to the secret abuses of the environment carried out by us all” (“Glister”). Pointing out that “[m]an’s effect on the environment is a Burnside staple. Nature’s resilience is a comfort to him,” Richard Wilson adds that “there is darkness in *Glister*, but it is not overwhelming. The shadows, instead, serve to illuminate liberation – of people, of the soul, of life itself” (“Glister”). In the light of these comments, one can say that the novel illustrates an ongoing battle between the forces of capitalism on the one hand and mundane human and natural life on the other, thereby criticizing industrial encroachment on nature. In other words, it conjures up a dark ecological world in which pollution entirely swallows up both the natural and the social. Burnside shows the readers a toxic world they know in a weird way that makes them realize they have never actually looked at it. Displaying the vicissitudes of a toxic life, the novel is a haunting text that recounts a physical and moral carnage resulting from consumerism, industrialism, and docility. Adventuring into both real and afterlife realms, Burnside surveys human frailty and “natural” resilience against the backdrop of a

nightmarish territory, questioning the extent to which human beings, animals, and ghosts are implicated in dark-green nature. Burnside then can be said to reimagine our relations to the environment, industrialism, and society, illustrating a noxious world in which one cannot find a true sense of belonging but death, annihilation, and entropy.

In *Glister*, Burnside ushers us into a tenebrous world of an enclosed Scottish community of the Innertown inevitably affected by postindustrialization. At its heart stands a defunct chemical plant that slowly poisons and kills people, animals, and trees and plants. This noxious but mysterious factory contaminates not only the bodies but also the spirits of people in the Innertown. The people become so sick, docile, and apathetic to their environment that only existential despair can define their predicament exacerbated by toxicity. Beneath the secrets of the Innertown lies an unsettling account of five disappearing boys in the dark, poisoned woods: Mark Wilkinson, William Ash, Alex Slocombe, Stewart Riva, and Liam Nugent. The people believe the boys simply ran away, but that is not the case. The local policeman, John Morrison, finds Mark Wilkinson strung up from the tree and ritualistically slain, but, instead of writing a report on the incident, he calls Brian Smith, the owner of the plant linked to the Consortium, an organization of local and international companies that built the chemical plant thirty years ago. Then, together they cover up such disappearances, but the guilt-ridden Morrison creates a memorial garden in the woods to repent and mourn for Mark and the dead. Trying to come to terms with the fact that the town is dying and his schoolmates are disappearing, the protagonist, Leonard Wilson—a teenager member of the violent gang that hunts animals, and kills Andrew Rivers, who is believed to be a paedophile—undertakes his own investigation in the poisoned woods. As a precocious boy, and as a voracious reader Leonard stands for youth, passion, hope and resilience amidst the Innertown's darkness, with his girlfriend Elspeth whose only aim is to have sex. Leonard, curious to find out what happens to the town's missing teenagers, shows intimate interest in the eerie, even spectral landscape in which the toxic plant and forest compete with and complement one another. During his journey in the forest, Leonard encounters and befriends the Moth Man, who is a mysterious "murderer" visiting the town every year to collect moths. At the end, Leonard, who is, we suspect, the Moth Man's next victim, goes through the portal

called "Glister" and arrives at the spectral realm in which he tells of this story of the wasteland of human grievances.

With Leonard's story, Burnside envisages a dark nature of toxicity in the narrative, foregrounding the borderlands between life and death, pleasure and pain, rapture and terror. His aim is to show that ecology is a much weirder phenomenon capable of possessing super/post-natural dimensions that are totally "inhuman,"[13] which can be described as a postecological reality. Unfolding in two main sections entitled as "The Book of Job" and "The Fire Sermon," the narrative presents a Scottish region divided into two territories, Innertown and Outertown, that are separated by "the former golf course, conveniently situated so as to divide the good people in the nice houses" (61). The Innertown, with the derelict chemical factory nearby, epitomizes "a ghetto for poisoned, cast-off workers" (61), whereas the Outertown has "ranch-style villas with wide, miraculously green lawns and hedges" (61). In this way, the novel juxtaposes the Outertown with the Innertown, but it prioritizes the abject spectacle of the Innertown's wasteland; indeed, both of them are part of what Timothy Morton describes as mesh. Deploying the chemical plant and the poisoned forest as dark ecologies of otherness to illustrate the porosity between nature and culture, *Glister* works from the premise that ecological collapse brings social collapse. This defunct chemical factory entirely poisons everything: the soil, the air, vegetation, animals, and people living in the Innertown. As the narrator explains, "[e]everybody understands, by now, that the entire land under their feet is irredeemably soured, poisoned by years of run-off and soakaway from the plant" (10). Toxic chemicals and deadly poisons leaking out of the defunct factory have already mutated both human and nonhuman realms, forming dark ecologies and strange corporealities:

> [T]he plant had finally been shut down, but its ruins were still standing out on the headland, all around the east side of the Innertown, acres and acres of dead real estate, running from the gutted administration buildings at the junction of East Road and Charity Street, through a series of vast, echoey kilns, warehouses, waste-processing units, and derelict production blocks, all the way to the loading docks on the shore, where great tankers rusted beside the slick, greasy waters of the firth. You could see evidence wherever you looked of the plant's effects on the land: avenues of dead trees, black and skeletal along the old rail tracks and access roads; great piles of sulfurous rocks where

> pools of effluent had been left to evaporate in the sun. A few keen fishermen found mutant sea creatures washed up on the shore, where those great boats had once been loaded with thousands and thousands of drums of who knew what, and some people claimed that they had seen bizarre animals out in the remaining tracts of woodland, not sick, or dying, but not right either, with their enlarged faces and swollen, twisted bodies. (11)

This passage reveals how the wretched chemical plant epitomizes what Rob Nixon calls "slow violence" of toxicity, one that is "neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales" (2). In this respect, the slow violence in the Innertown, whether visible or invisible, regularly kills numerous people suffering from "unexplained clusters of rare cancers," "mysterious behavioral problems," depression, and mental illnesses (Burnside, *Glister* 12). For instance, Leonard's father, James Wilson, who was once a worker at the plant, is the victim of this contamination although he insists that the chemicals are harmless: "it was all harmless agricultural material: fertilisers and pesticides, fungicides, growth accelerants or growth retardants, complicated chains of molecules that got into the root or the stem of a plant and changed how it grew, or when it flowered, or whether it set seed" (12). His slow death, as told by Leonard, is the very result of these chemicals. "A large percentage of the people who worked in production at the plant are either sick or dead now. My dad, for example. My dad has been sick for almost as long as I can remember" (70), Leonard affirms, suggesting that toxic exposure will finally culminate in death. And toxicity makes every human body sick, illustrating the vulnerability of human life. His girlfriend, Elspeth, adds at one point that "[s]ome of us are still healthy, but it's only a matter of time" (99), since it is a very well-known fact that "the sickness was already there, waiting to happen" (98). This kind of slow death as a pervasive fate befalling the people is an extremity produced by industrial practices. As underlined in the above quotation, specifically "dead trees," "mutant sea creatures," and "bizarre animals" with corporeal condition of disfigured faces point to the imbrication of toxicity and nonhumans, as well. "Exposing the lethal interchanges of bodies and xenobiotic substances that percolate through soil, air, and water" (Oppermann 284), *Glister* also exemplifies the "toxic kinship" between humans and nonhumans. The toxic predicament illustrates how human and nonhuman life is precarious, and how bodies are

permeable, indeterminate, and contingent. In this sense, the toxic kinship points to a dark ontology in which humans, nonhumans, ecosystem, and even objects are intermingled in the mesh on a complex scale. In other words, every entity in the Innertown, including Leonard, the chemical plant, and the toxic forest, emerges as strange strangers. They are totally strange strangers, because they are strange to each other in an uncannily interconnected way. This coexistence in the novel manifests ineradicable relations between pain, violence, and what Leonard strangely claims, the beauty of the world as he finds the factory beautiful. Burnside's dark ecological town, however, is only filled with dangerous and repulsive strange strangeness, and obviously lacks any sense of beauty. Therefore, the darkness of toxicity, as Burnside explores in the novel, culminates in death, annihilation, mutation, and sickness.

The very sources of this darkness, the chemical plant and the forest are, moreover, foreign to human beings and relentlessly hostile. They are transitional environments that transcend the familiar concepts of the natural or the unnatural. Burnside provides a musing on what the poisoned forest and the plant mean when brought into a new relationship with dark ecology beset by an unfolding postnatural process. The postnatural forest on the edge of the town as part of the mesh is called the "poisoned wood" (16) by everyone. Toxicity has blackened the trees, and the contamination has spread beneath the surface: "This wood has poison running in its veins, in the sap of every tree, in every crumb of loam and every blade of grass under my feet" (197). The wood is a dark composition of strange strangers, such as deformed trees and animals affected by spreading chemicals, a moribund place of loss, death, and withdrawal. Yet, it does not lose its vitality; instead, it emerges as a liminal zone between life and nonlife: "the trees, though still alive, were strangely black, a black that didn't look like charring or the result of drought, but rather suggested that the trees were veined with a dark, poisoned sap, black, but with a trace of livid green in the essence of it, a green that was bitter and primordial, like wormwood, or gall" (16). The dark green imagery teeming with dark life within blackened trees illustrates how nonhuman actors are resilient despite the fact that, for Burnside, "Pan is still there, in the woods, in the shadows, and he is the 'green force' that renews and perpetuates our traditions" ("Wonder" 57). This dark ecology, as Jeffrey J. Cohen would suggest, "reveals the inhuman as a thriving of life in other forms, a vitality even

in the decay that demonstrates how the nonhuman is already inside, cohabitating and continuing" ("Grey" 272). Burnside successfully conveys this inhuman intensity and change of the in/organic life that springs from his dark green landscape. The novel also echoes what Morton claims in explaining dark ecology, that "Nature is no longer unhuman but inhuman, radically different, irreducibly strange" ("Dark Ecology" 265). Revealing this strangeness, Leonard posits the noxious wood as a spectral realm in which myth and reality are commingling:

> Everybody has a theory about the secret fauna of the headland. People tell stories about all kinds of real or imaginary encounters: they see herds of strange animals, they catch glimpses of devils, sprites, fairies, they come face to face with terribly disfigured or angelic-looking mutants from old science-fiction programs on late-night TV. And it's not just animals they see. You hear all kinds of stories about mysterious strangers: lone figures stealing through the woods, gangs of men roaming around at night, a criminal element who come in from the shore side to see what they can steal from the plant, troublemakers and pikeys, sex perverts and terrorists. (113)

It is through Leonard that Burnside signals the advent of a new coexistence of real and unreal entities in dark ecology, which is profoundly affected not only by material realities that have a great impact on humans and nonhumans, but also unreal, mysterious, and uncanny entities we cannot know or we can only imagine. Just as Morton posits ecological bodies as monstrous, strange or spectral, so through their eerie interconnectedness, Burnside accepts the suggestion that the ecological world is full of strange strangers, a spectral realm fraught with mystery, horror, and paradox. In fact, "strange animals," "devils, sprites, fairies," "mutants," and "mysterious strangers" embody what Morton describes as the strange stranger:

> I use *strange stranger*. This stranger isn't just strange. She, or he, or it – can we tell? how? – is strangely strange. Their strangeness itself is strange. We can never absolutely figure them out. If we could, then all we would have is a ready-made box to put them in, and we would just be looking at the box, not at the strange strangers. They are intrinsically strange. Do we know for sure whether they are sentient or not? Do we know whether they are alive or not? Their strangeness is part of who they are. (*Ecological* 41)

In this regard, all living, non-living, and imaginary creatures that inhabit the mesh are in themselves strange, uncanny, and even dangerous. In conjunction with this dark ecological

vision, Burnside acknowledges the mystery of the strange stranger in the examples of the poisoned wood and the chemical plant.

The chemical plant and its toxic vicinity become a "home" for adolescent boys of the Innertown as a playground and for a child-murderer. Although the novel is concerned with the disappearance of some teenage boys around the disused factory, the focus is on the protagonist, teenage Leonard Wilson, who is adrift in the punitive world of postindustrial society. Leonard, who wonders about the missing boys, and is fond of wandering around the plant, plunges into dark ecology engendered by the toxic plant and the poisoned woods. They become a locus for dark desire, the spectral, and strangely enough, the beautiful. Leonard's way out is to "love" the poisonous plant and to seek beauty in what is utterly ugly. He states that "if you want to stay alive, which is hard to do in a place like this, you have to love *something*, and the one thing I love is the chemical plant" (60). Leonard does not shrink from the ugliness and darkness that accompany the breaking down of natural and cultural spheres in dark ecology. Immersed in becoming one with the toxic world, instead, Leonard has a prominent role to play in articulating a dark ecological conception of nature. Commenting on the idea that "you're definitely *weird*, if you love the plant" (60), he discovers the "beauty" in the midst of the contamination:

> The thing is, I know everybody says it's dangerous, that it's making us all sick, that they should have razed it to the ground years ago and cleared the entire eastern peninsula instead of just leaving it to rot—and that's all true, I know that, but you still have to admit that it's beautiful. Maybe there are more obviously beautiful places in Canada or California, maybe they have gardens and parks with clear lakes and honest-to-Betsy live trees with autumn leaves and all the stuff you see on television, but we don't have those things. All we have is the plant. (60)

As a desperate boy in this uncanny land, Leonard is overawed by the ugly, wretched chemical plant although it is constantly poisoning while it glistens. The plant induces a blend of pleasure and anxiety, and Leonard's attachment to this plant is immediate and profound. Therefore, he questions the concept of beauty in itself without any suggestion that beauty "has come to be equated with what we can control … what we can, and choose, to save" (Hird, "Proliferation" 256). Leonard notes that

> it's just that things are beautiful, only what you mean by beautiful is different from what people usually mean when they say that word. It's not sentimental, or choccy box. It's beautiful, and it's terrible too. It takes your breath away, but you don't know if that comes from awe or terror. Sometimes, I wonder why people think so little of beauty, why they think it's just calendars and pictures of little white churches or mountain streams in adverts and travel brochures. Why do they settle for that? I'm only fifteen, and even I can see there's more to it than that. (212)

Capable to see the beauty inherent in the strange strangers, and to see beyond the material, Leonard senses that beauty takes on a numinous, spectral reality that transcends usual imagery through more attention to strange strangers. Julika Griem calls Burnside's landscapes as "liminal beauty" (101), because it is as strange as the chemical plant. Here, Leonard also shares what Morton suggests: "beauty is always haunted by its disgusting, spectral double, the kitsch" ("Specters" 305). In that sense, Leonard does succeed in evoking an immanent world of uncanniness. The intensity of this strangeness is distilled into the way Leonard develops with dark nature. The change in his perception of ecological reality can be seen in the example of snow as he describes how the headland have a numinous appearance:[14]

> When the first snow comes, you start to see new things, and you realize how much of the world is invisible, or just on the point of being seen, if you could only find the right kind of attention to pay it, […] And then there's the way it's all transformed, how it all looks so innocent, as if it couldn't hurt you in a million years, all those drums of crusted and curdled effluent, all those pits with their lingering traces of poison or radiation, or whatever it is the authorities want to keep sealed up here, along with the dangerous mass of our polluted bodies. Under the snow, it all looks pure, even when a wet rust mark bleeds through, or some trace of cobalt blue or verdigris rises up through an inch of white, it's beautiful. (64)

This ecoaesthetic vision expresses how the imbrication of the visible and the invisible transforms the headland into a dark allure haunted by toxicity. Finding dark nature both beautiful and frightening, fraught with mystery and wonder, Leonard sees the chemical plant as a spectral force haunting the people of Innnertown. The insight operates not through disenchantment but through ecological awareness of this strangeness. For Burnside, the recognition of dark ecology provides a way for the reenchantment of dark green nature although uncanny encounters with strange strangers become, in Morton's words, "loving, risky, [and] perverse" (*Ecological* 81). Thus, Burnside's depictions of familiar and strange

landscapes possess a luminous quality projecting a sense of wonder at the discovery of a new but dark spectral realm.

Burnside penetrates much further than Morton into the spectral/spiritual side of ecology by means of what Leonard goes through, however. It is throughout the novel that Leonard searches for and longs for sanctifying something that has what Burnside posits "living as a spirit," much like Paul Kingsnorth's vision of sacred nature. Leonard ponders, for instance, if not-green and wasted places have this spirit: "They say every place has its own spirit, but when they talk about it in books and poems and stuff, they always mean places like bosky groves, or dark reed beds where Pan sits playing his pipes to some lost nymph, or maybe some lake with a lady sleeping just beneath the surface, but why not an old warehouse, or a cooled furnace? Why not a landfill?" (211). In this way, Leonard, stranded in the wasteland, tries to find a place which he wants to become part of. However, what only remains in this derelict town is the chemical plant, along with the poisoned woods. The chemical plant that drains the vitality of humans and nonhumans has a spectral presence, resembling Kingsnorth's depiction of "chaos, uncertainty, loss" (222) to which Leonard feels an obsessive spiritual attachment. In talking about it, he remarks:

> I'd always felt something out at the chemical plant, no matter where I went. You could call it a spirit, or a *genius loci*—why not? It was present, and I always thought it was trying to talk to me. Not in words, though. Not like that. It was more like pointing. It was there, pointing to something I should know about, something I should have seen beyond the things I was seeing, but it wasn't concerned with what you could say in words. [...] Sometimes, the whole world points to something you can't see, some essence, some hidden principle. You can't see it, but you can feel it, though you have no idea how to put it into words. (211-212)

Wondering about what Florian Niedlich explores as "spiritual reality" (220) in his article on *Glister*, Leonard shows a "reverence" for the plant because "this apparent wasteland is all the church we have," and "what I have chanced upon is a secret ceremony, a private ritual" (66). In fact, this side of the toxic plant gives Leonard a strange sense of existence blending the material and the spiritual, creating a kind of relief for him. As such, Burnside's theme of the liminality between the material and the spiritual is linked to the strange strangers: the

plant, the woods, and the town. This rupture provides a dark, spectral realm in which uncanny entities and the environment are equally implicated, much like Morton's dark ecology of specters.

Interestingly enough, *Glister* opens with Leonard's spectral presence in his "afterlife" narration although he insists that "there *is* no afterlife, because there *is* no after. It's always now, and everything – past and future, problem and resolution, life and death – everything is simultaneous here, at this point, in this moment" (2). This is a spectral abyss also called "Heaven, Hell, Tir Na Nog, the Dreamtime" (2), an uncanny realm in which nonhumans like gulls reside as specters. As a strange stranger now, Leonard talks about how everything becomes one with what Morton terms as "super-natural," or "extra Nature" (*Ecological* 45). Here, Leonard announces the central theme of the novel that "everything is transformed, everything *becomes*, and that becoming is the only story that continues forever. Everything becomes everything else, moment by moment, for all time" (2). This process in the atemporal and incorporeal space reconciles the living and the dead, the past and the future, presuming the possibility of a way to liberation for Leonard who sometimes remembers, sometimes forgets. Burnside explicitly wants a radical reconfiguration of that mysterious, wondrous, and unknown realm even though he does not have any clear concept of what this realm might be. It is, in fact, the very "mesh," an uncanny and liminal space that allows human and nonhuman, living and non-living, or real and imaginary entities to exist together. But, what really frames Burnside's perspective is the imbrication of the human and the nonhuman realms where the corporeal and the incorporeal constitutes an ecological un/reality. In this regard, Burnside's novel does not solely echo the thoughts of Morton. Rather, he combines both Kingsnorth's and Morton's approaches, suggesting that every place, toxic or natural, is living as a spirit, a spectre haunting humans and nonhumans, and hence, it is necessary to acknowledge our dwelling within the mesh. His plea, in this respect, is for a redress of humans' disenchantment with dark or super-nature.

The new relationship in *Glister* between Leonard and the material/spectral environment involves a new sensuous grasp of the mesh. It also reflects Burnside's search for a new

depiction of life which relates to a unity between dark nature and humans and nonhumans. Burnside presents this relationship just as strange as he does in the example of the Moth Man who wanders around the poisoned woods by his van and studies butterflies and moths for his project Lepidoptera. The Moth Man, who is able to "*read* the landscape" (122), is a strange stranger whom Leonard assumes is "the mystery," "yin and yang, thesis, antithesis, synthesis; he was the dialectic in the form of a living, breathing friend" (246). Describing the Moth Man as a spectre, Leonard adds that he is "new: an unforeseeable new creature, suddenly released from some secret hiding place to walk and breathe and act, as if for the first time" (246). As a mysterious stranger or implied murderer, the Moth Man haunts the Innertown and Leonard, but also guides Leonard to see the interconnective mesh beyond the material by means of a strange, drugged tea:

> I start to feel odd, kind of warm from the inside, but not feverish, and things look different. The trees have more detail, the colours are subtler, everything looks more complicated and, at the same time, it all makes more sense, it all seems to be there for a reason. I don't mean it's designed, I'm not talking about some isn't natural wonderful shit. I mean—it's there, and it doesn't have to be explained. It's all shall be well and all manner of thing, and all that. I look around. The green of the grass is like something out of Plato, every twig and leaf is perfect, but it's not just that, it's not just that the objects I see are perfectly clear and logical and right, it's something else. It's wider. From where I'm sitting, I can see everything around me in perfect, almost dizzying detail, but I can also feel how one thing is connected to the next, and that thing to the next after that, or not connected, so much, but all one thing. Everything's one thing. It's not a matter of connections, it's an indivisibility. A unity. I can feel the world reaching away around me in every direction, the world and everything alive in it, every bud and leaf and bird and frog and bat and horse and tiger and human being, every fern and clubmoss, every fish and fowl, every serpent, all the sap and blood warmed by the sun, everything touched by the light, everything hidden in the darkness. It's all one. There isn't a me or a not-me about it. It's all continuous and I'm alive with everything that lives. (129)

What is so extraordinary is that Leonard is looking through the material world from the other side of the mesh through some hyper-senses. Regardless of whether this is a Gaian holism, as this long quotation illustrates, Burnside's treatment of unity and oneness receives a new expression with regards to Morton's conception of the spectral mesh, raising the fundamental question as to what constitutes "nature." The spectral here is crucial to "seeing the extra dimension" (Morton, *Ecological* 56), and living and non-living entities as specters "constitute a *mesh*, a nontotalizable, open-ended concatenation of interrelations that blur and

confound boundaries at practically any level: between species, between the living and the nonliving, between organism and environment" ("Queer Ecology" 275-276). Leonard is literally transported into this spectral realm of the mesh, which brings about an ecological awareness built upon coexistence. Thus, his fascination with this mesh might explain his love for the chemical plant, the poisoned woods, and other disgusting objects in the Innertown. The primary beauty for Leonard, upon which all material and spectral life is to be based, is the reconciliation in the mesh although they are strange to themselves. Commenting upon the "neo-spiritual" aspect of Leonard's vision, Florian Niedlich, in "Finding the Right Kind of Attention: Dystopia and Transcendence in John Burnside's *Glister*," reads this passage as follows: Leonard's "vision of ultimate reality, in which all contraries are reconciled, and his momentary reconnection with nature and return to the original oneness, in which man is freed from individuality, are, it seems, the only true source of comfort and relief in the badlands of the Innertown" (219). This remark reminds us that Burnside reverses the dualisms of mind/body, and spirit/matter to jar us into a recognition of the liminality between the material immanent reality and the incorporeal spectrality, and of the borderland between the self and the other. In this way, as Monika Szuba puts it, Burnside proposes to "abolish the view of the natural, in which the human and the animal are separated, the former absent from his bodily reality," suggesting that "[o]scillating between exteriority and interiority, Burnside sees a possibility of a nondualistic, embodied understanding of subjectivity" (34). As such, Burnside brings bodily self into dialogue with the ecological other in the uncanny, spectral mesh of strange strangers. Similarly, drawing attention to this weird unity in *Glister*, Emily Horton notes that "nature becomes coterminous with the self, banishing the traditional Cartesian ego in favor of an indivisible and dynamic natural wholeness" (81). Abolishing the boundary between the self and dark nature is of primary importance for Burnside. For instance, the murdered man, Andrew Rivers, comments at one point that "[w]e tire of *the self*, of the shape of it, and its slightly exaggerated colours; most of all, we tire of its constant noise and just long for a little quiet" (167). This stillness Rivers yearns for emerges after the sensuous corporeal reconnection with super-nature. Like Rivers, Leonard feels "beautiful stillness" (132) after he gains oneness with the mesh. Burnside, in this regard, attempts to break down the invisible wall between the human self and the natural other through becoming

one with dark nature. At the end of the novel, Leonard's tendency to love turns to the idea of "to be" something: "if you want to stay alive, you have to love something. Though maybe love is the wrong word after all. Maybe you have to *be* something" (251). It is worth noting that the emphasis upon becoming, to be something, or the idea of oneness, exhibits how the boundary between the self and the other, subject and object is reconciled merely through the recognition of otherness, alterity, and vitality of dark nature. As Timothy Baker sums up reflecting on *Glister*, "[b]eing, and being one with the world, is the only idea of life that remains. Being is both becoming and stasis: it is simply life" (144). Yet, undoubtedly, this life is a dark green one to which Burnside pays special attention.

This dark life, nevertheless, evokes a melancholy, despair, and grief not just for human loss, but the human disenchantment of ecological reality. Accordingly, by the murders of teenage boys, and the toxic world of the Innertown, Burnside articulates a lament for the worst that can happen anywhere. So, he not only complicates Timothy Morton's idea of melancholy predicated on loving dark ecology, the otherness of dark nature, but also presents a commentary on what Paul Kingsnorth posits as eco-grief, exemplifying the docility of the people of the Innertown. In terms of human loss, first, it is John Morrison, the local constable of the Innertown, who mourns for human mortality to reflect the failure of the capitalist community, along with yearning for more intimate relations with the world around him. The Innertown is so traumatized and overwhelmed by the missing teenagers that the disappearances now seem mundane and humdrum. Some authorities claim that "each of the boys left the Innertown of his own accord, independently and without speaking a word to anyone, to try his luck in the big wide world" (8), whereas some assume that "the boys have, in fact, been murdered, and that they are probably buried somewhere in the ruins of the old chemical plant between the Innertown and the sea, where their mutilated bodies will decay quickly" (8). When the first boy, Mark Wilkinson, is lost, John Morrison, described as "weak, lacking, [and] frightened" (31), goes to the Wilkinson family to learn Mark's whereabouts, only to find the family too oblivious to speak about this event. Later, just as John searches for the lost boy in the poisoned woods, he discovers Mark's slain body hanging from a tree and arranged like a ritual killing:

> A boy's body, Mark Wilkinson's body, suspended from the bough of the largest tree; suspended, perfectly bright and neat and—this was what disturbed Morrison most, this was what his mind kept going back to afterward—absurdly gift wrapped, at the throat and around the chest and ankles, in tinsel and bright lengths of fabric, like a decoration or a small gift hung on a Christmas tree. (26)

The moment John witnesses this horrendous spectacle, he gets petrified and, later, describes Mark as a strange stranger, saying that "most of his clothes had been removed, leaving him so thin and stark and creaturely that he looked more like some new kind of animal than his early teens" (28). Despite noticing Mark's creaturely corporeality as a strange stranger, John phones Brian Smith who orders a coverup. Together, thus, they become complicit in hiding the reality behind the disappearances. As the narrator asserts, John "made the worst mistake he could have made" (32). For that reason, John and the community, Leonard tells us, are "unforgivable" for this "sin" (249). John's only redemption is to secretly make a memorial garden in the poisoned woods as a shrine to the missing boys to whom the town's people are oblivious. His garden is a "sacred place" which is "a neat square of poppies and carnations, dotted here and there with the knuckles of polished glass and stone that he collects on his long walks around the Innertown and the wasteland beyond" (7). It is through his garden that he repents his sin and mourns for the boys, because he believes that mourning can reconstruct the community that entirely fails in the Innertown. He feels a yearning for the communal remembrance: "It's a town that remembers its dead, a town where everyone remembers together, guarding the ancestors in their ancient solitude, long after they might have imagined themselves forgotten. It is, in other words, a good town, a town where people have detailed and carefully nurtured memories" (51). For him, individual and communal mourning works as the basis of all relationships as he tries to create a bond with the dead.

Similar to John's, Leonard's story also evokes a sense of remembering and forgetting in relation to the theme of death. At the beginning of the novel, Leonard says: "I thought life was one thing and death was something else […] I want to tell it [the story] in full even as I forget it, and so, by telling and forgetting, forgive everyone who figures there, including myself. Because *this* is where the future begins: in the forgotten, in what is lost" (1). The

lamentation shows how Leonard mourns the loss of life, and he wants to be remembered by telling his story: "it's good for the dead to be remembered" (124). However, this grief is in fact the indicator of the acceptance of death, because Leonard wants to be in Glister, an imaginary acronym of George Lister and Son, who built the plant. One of the tenets of dark ecology is to see death as a radical otherness of dark nature. As Morton suggests, the "task is not to bury the dead but to join them, to be bitten by the undead and become them" (*Ecology* 201). Hence, Leonard, questioning life and death, becomes the merger between the living and the dead.

Here, the Innertown, the chemical plant, and the garden are a graveyard laden with grief, melancholy, and lament, regarding the liminality between life and death. For example, suspecting that John Morrison may be the murderer, Leonard comes across the garden in the woods, insisting that this "isn't a garden, it's a grave. Something is buried here. Something, or somebody" (195). As part of dark ecology, the garden/grave/plant/Innertown imagery evokes a sense of life in death or death in life as in Morton's claim that dark nature is a realm "of life and death, of death-in-life and life-in-death, an undead place of zombies, viroids, junk DNA, ghosts, silicates, cyanide, radiation, demonic forces, and pollution" (*Hyperobjects* 126). The garden/grave wavering between the material and the immaterial indicates the only consolation for John, the constable, who is "an expert in mourning" (52). As the novel underlines it, what John really mourns for is the vanished relations among the Innertown people:

> *Mimosa pudica*, that was it. Pale green, slightly downy plants, with their sensitive, finger-like leaves and perfectly engineered stems that simply folded at any contact till they were all but absent. A fingertip, the nib of a pen, even a single water drop. That was all it took to make the whole plant collapse. A single touch, and everything fell away, till all you were left with was an indifferent, infinitely patient absence. Sometimes, Morrison feels that this is what he mourns more than anything: that this is the true source of his grief. He had expected to be touched […]. (53)

What is healing for John is to touch human or nonhuman entities. Here, the plant along with the garden, teeming with nonhumans, links human loss and personal ruination with the loss of nature. As Paul Kingsnorth remarks, there is "a way to work through the grief caused by

the end of much of what we hold dear" (98), in that grieving is a way of accepting what has happened to humans or nonhumans. In this regard, neither John nor Leonard deny grief and melancholy found in life and death; rather, they see the garden and the chemical plant respectively as a way out in the wasteland of the Innertown even though the tragic melancholy that dark ecology incites continues to haunt them in terms of a blend of detachment and involvement. Terrence Rafferty, reviewing *Glister*, notes: "What is most beautiful, and most frightening, about the novel itself is its melancholy awareness of how desperate our acts of devotion can be in places like this toxic town, how terrible the things we can learn to love" ("Disappeared"). The recognition of this dark green nature thus becomes the very source of eco-grief.

Eco-grief might be associated with the disconnection of people from nature that causes suffering, pain, and death, an existential despair exhibited by the Innertown people whose "sole business is slow decay" (9). As the inhabitants yield to stagnation and paralysis, they can only eke out a toxic existence. Leonard points out that the people are "bound to this soil, not by work or family or some more general fondness for the light or the weather, but by inertia" (78). At no point does Leonard believe that this inert community has a way out. Disappointed with this plight, Leonard maintains that "everybody blames these problems on the plant, but they don't have the energy to do anything about it" (12). When toxicity contaminates not merely bodies but also minds and spirits, it becomes impossible to eradicate lethargy in the community. As Emily Horton remarks, "it is not only nature and bodies that are affected, but also souls, whereby indifference to abuse and oppression now constitute unmistakable components of Innertown consciousness" (76). The indifference and stagnation illustrate the way that the people become totally estranged from and oblivious to their bodies, friends, family, and the environment which surrounds them in this dark ecological world. Calling attention to this, Terrence Rafferty points out that "[d]espair, denial and an awful, endemic quiescence have seeped into their souls" ("Disappeared"). In this sense, *Glister* demonstrates how spiritual infection follows material contamination, which then urges us to speculate whether the soul is in itself dark. The religious and literary allusions to The Book of Job and The Fire Sermon found in both *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot and Buddhism

inform this vision. When the Moth Man and Leonard torture John Morrison at the chemical plant, for instance, it is John's opinion:

> It's something that Morrison finds insulting, as if this man wants to deny him everything, not just a life, or an explanation, but even a soul. Or maybe what he is denying is the soul itself. The very possibility of a soul. Someone like Morrison can't have a soul of his own, because the soul is intrinsically good, intrinsically clean, a piece of property borrowed from God and all His angels, to be returned some day, pearly and clean and undamaged. The idea makes Morrison angry, and he wants to tell this man, this boy, that he's wrong, that the soul is wet and dark, a creature that takes up residence in the human body like a parasite and feeds on it, a creature hungry for experience and power and possessed of an inhuman joy that cares nothing for its host, but lives, as it must live, in perpetual, disfigured longing. (236)

Giving the example of parasite, Burnside shows how both spirit and body are deeply embedded in the darkness, while presenting "a commitment to spiritual contemplation of humanity's plight in the face of environmental degradation" (Borthwick, "'Comfort'" 91). So, the novel is a toxic voyage into the darkness of human beings and the material environment through a critique of postindustrial community and culture, deliberately juxtaposing the spectral mesh with the mere quotidian stasis to which characters aspire in their life. In that sense, *Glister* speaks to our age with painful and melancholic insight not only in its critique of postindustrial practices, but also in its fascinating depiction of dark ecology. In short, *Glister* evinces a compelling sense of the uncanny, exemplifying the major environmental threat of pollution confronting today's societies.

CHAPTER III

DIRTY NATURES IN JOSEPH D'LACEY'S *GARBAGE MAN*

garbage has to be the poem of our time because
garbage is spiritual, believable enough
to get our attention
A. R. Ammons, *Garbage*, 18

Drawing upon waste studies as "a literary and cultural critical approach" (Morrison 2), this chapter analyzes the literary depictions of waste (also used as garbage, thrash, refuse, debris, rubbish, detritus) in Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man* by using the concepts of rubbish ecology and dirty nature proposed respectively by Patricia Yaeger and Heather Sullivan. In order to understand the specific character of rubbish ecology and dirty nature, and to place them within the ecocritical analysis of the novel, it is necessary first to comment on waste. According to William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, trash refers to the "'dry' stuff – newspapers, boxes, cans, and so on," while garbage "refers technically to 'wet' discards – food remains, yard waste, and offal" (9). However, refuse as an inclusive term covers both, and rubbish "refers to all refuse plus construction and demolition debris" (9). In this chapter, these terms are used interchangeably, though they have slightly different connotations. In the context of a view that "waste is always material (first) and figurative and metaphoric (second)" (Morrison 8), waste has so multifarious meanings and myriad interpretations that it defies the exact definition. As Rachele Dini remarks, however, waste chiefly emerges, "metaphorically, as a sign of a system gone awry, or literally, as an obstacle to production; as a reproach to our compulsion to consume, or as a means to shock and arrest us into thinking otherwise; as something produced and expelled by humans, or as a category to which humans themselves are relegated" (214). In this formulation, waste is associated with dis/order, conflict, creation, destruction, desire, the unwanted, useless or valueless. In many forms, waste becomes a material and discursive entity, and rather than being stable, immobile, and

durable, waste is contingent, viscous, and liminal as it transgresses borders, boundaries, and limits. As Heather Rogers writes:

> Garbage is the text in which abundance is overwritten by decay and filth: natural substances rot next to art images on discarded plastic packaging; objects of superb design – the spent lightbulb or battery – lie among sanitary napkins and rancied meat scraps. Rubbish is also a border separating the clean and useful from the unclean and dangerous. And trash is the visible interface between everyday life and the deep, often abstract horrors of ecological crisis. Through waste we can read the logic of industrial society's relationship to nature and human labour. Here it is, all at once, all mixed together: work, nature, land, production, consumption, the past and the future. And in garbage we find material proof that there is no plan for stewarding the earth, that resources are not being conserved, that waste and destruction are the necessary analogues of consumer society. (3)

Recognising the problematic status of waste, Rogers points to its in-betweenness, and highlights the idea that waste erases the dividing line between nature and culture, production and consumption, and thus consumer society producing so much garbage signifies a wasted planet. Christopher Todd Anderson also makes a similar remark that garbage is "a liminal substance," one that "exists on the border between the natural and the artificial and, by extension, between human culture and wild nature" (35). Indeed, waste both as a material substance and as a discursive construct attests to this liminal status. This is especially evident in literary articulations of waste: "waste as an elemental foundation of life, waste as a loss or deficiency of life's value, waste as a menacing threat to life, and waste as life's ever-present and inevitable shadow" (O'Brien 57). However, in *On Garbage* (2005), John Scanlan claims that a definitive conceptualization of garbage as such is impossible and, in turn, notes the following: "If this outline of 'garbage' makes one thing clear it is that there is no determinate and singularly applicable concept of 'garbage.' Indeed, there is no 'social theory' or concept of garbage at all" (14). For Scanlan, garbage as a kind of formlessness defies any definition. Following this, moreover, he points out that "the act of conceptualizing garbage actually transforms it into something else" (14-15). That does not mean that we deny the liminal and material status of waste. Acknowledging this status, Peter Sloterdijk suggests that the "grand act of ecology in the history of ideas" is to "transform the phenomenon of refuse into a 'high' theme" (151).

Waste as a high theme occupies a pivotal position in the reconstitution of nature as rubbish ecology and dirty nature in Patricia Yaeger's and Heather Sullivan's ecocritical conceptualizations. Contemporary reality, according to their vision, is one in which waste infiltrates every human and nonhuman body, every urban and rural place, and even art itself, creating a nexus between society and nature. In "Editor's Column: The Death of Nature and the Apotheosis of Trash; or, Rubbish Ecology," Yaeger calls attention to how the "old opposition between nature and culture has been displaced in postmodern art by a preoccupation with trash" (323). Yaeger argues that there is no place apart from waste. In her view, the search for a seamless, pristine, coherent nature is fruitless, for "[w]e are born into a detritus-strewn world," and "the nature that buffets us is never culture's opposite" (323). Not only does she question the distinction between nature and culture, but also uses trash as a substitute for nature. In what she calls "rubbish ecology," "detritus replace[s] nature" (331). In doing so, she defines rubbish ecology as "the act of saving and savouring debris" (329). On the intersection of trash and nature, Yaeger presents a new constitution of nature as rubbish ecology:

> [T]he binary trash/culture has become more ethically charged and aesthetically interesting than the binary nature/culture. In a world where nature is dominated, polluted, pocketed, eco-touristed, warming, melting, bleaching, dissipating, and fleeing toward the poles—detritus is both its curse and its alternative. Trash is the becoming natural of culture, what culture, eating nature, tries to cast away. (338)

Rubbish ecology in this respect focuses on waste as the prime signifier of culture dominating nature and becoming nature. But, critics like Michael Sloane raise important questions regarding rubbish ecology: "[W]hy is culture left intact if it is inextricably linked to its 'opposite'? That is, is trash not a byproduct of culture? And what happens to nature if nature is not just green?" (87). In an answer to these questions, however, Heather Sullivan offers a much broader way of thinking about rubbish ecology beyond the dichotomy of waste/culture, or nature/culture. Heather Sullivan, like Yaeger, advances an argument for the recognition of wastespaces, but she criticizes the commonplace notions of nature and culture in favour of the binary blurring, because she suggests that green approaches to nature contribute to the "dichotomy dividing our material surroundings into a place of 'pure, clean nature' and the

dirty human sphere" ("Dirt Theory" 515). Hence, she theorizes "dirty nature" as a phenomenon that is "always with us as part of ongoing interactions among all kinds of material agents" ("Dirt Theory" 515), and adds that dirty nature is "more process than place" ("Dirt Theory" 515). She views both concepts of nature and culture exclusively through the lens of dirt. Considering "the matter of dirt itself" as "both material and discursive" ("Dirty Nature" 113), Sullivan provides insightful comment on dirt:

> Dirt is the literal ground without which there would be no terrestrial life, and which is always shifting and on the move. On the darker side, dirt and dust can be highly toxic or radioactive, and thus can impose a destructively agentic influence onto most of the living things they contact. Dirt theory must encompass the full range of life-sustaining and toxic agencies in the soil without flinching. ("Dirt Theory" 516)

In this view, dirty nature does encompass not only toxic substances that pollute the environment, but also "life-sustaining" forms in the soil. Therefore, dirty nature equates dirt with all the organic and inorganic non/living entities, including the human and the nonhuman, objects, and systems. What matters to this new vitalist way of thinking is "material environmental immersion" (Sullivan, "Dirt Theory" 518); that is, dirty nature is characterized as "an enmeshed process of material interconnectedness" (Sullivan, "Dirt Theory" 520). Here, the outlook of dirty nature chimes in with the notion of rubbish ecology so far as rubbish ecology points to the human and nonhuman immersion in waste, to the interrelationship of nature, culture and trash. Yet, in contrast to rubbish ecology, dirty nature is more inclusive, and posits a more comprehensive means to diagnose material and social realities. Dirty nature means not simply an act of recognition of waste, trash, and garbage as part of the world in the quotidian life, but also a specific way of relating to waste and the world, a distinctive way that any entity relates to dirt.

Another prominent theorist of dirt, Gay Hawkins, too, in *The Ethics of Waste* (2006) sees waste as the relating of nature and culture, self and other, which she surmises as necessary for a truly re-enchantment with nature, much like Sullivan's argument. As Hawkins claims, "what we reject is as important as what we identify with" (11) even though waste is deemed as "ontologically other" (11). For Hawkins, we are interconnected to but separated from

waste: “For separation is a relation, it is not the opposite of connection; to experience ourselves as separate from rubbish is still to be in a relation with it” (41). Paradoxically, separation from waste makes evident our connection to it because in Hawkins’ words “we stay enmeshed with rubbishy things whether we like or not” (80). This ambiguous understanding of waste is predicated on the insight that the material and discursive aspects of waste have been relationally constituted. She also asserts that this relational connection would bring a new habit of life to the world, a new “ethics” of waste:

> waste and our interconnections with it, rather than abstract human reason, might have more of a role to play in disrupting habits than we ever give it credit. The waste that suddenly claims our attention, maybe by its repulsive smell, maybe by its ephemeral presence on the side of the road, can disrupt habits and precipitate new sensations and perceptions. (15)

The problem, according to Hawkins, is found in our negative attitude to and our disavowal of dirt, waste, and garbage. Hence, in her conceptual frame, more attention to waste might allow us to change our waste habits as in the examples of recycling or saving energy. However, in the novel this relation ends up with eliminating humanity.

All of these views of dirt, waste, rubbish, garbage, and waste are present in Joseph D’Lacey’s *Garbage Man,* which dramatizes how we live in dirty nature pointing to the interrelationship of waste and nature, and waste and culture. For D’Lacey the human’s relation to waste would bring merely destruction even though waste as a spatial dimension blurs the allegedly irrevocable boundaries between pristine nature and social culture, purity and impurity, cleanliness and dirt, birth and decay, use and uselessness, body and world, rather than demarcating the boundaries of the house, the city, or the body. The central problem, as D’Lacey sees it, is that contemporary consumer society serves to demolish the human’s “ethical” identification with nature. In this regard, *Garbage Man* deals with the complicated relationship between humanity and natural forces. In this relation, D’Lacey positions nature not as an idealized, passive, and predictable entity, but as a complex, unknown, and unpredictable formation capable to nurture and disrupt. In this respect, his version of nature might embody dirty nature in terms of hybridity, multiplicity and fluidity, for dirty nature, as

Heather Sullivan puts it, encompasses “not only nurturing ‘soil,’ but also depleted soil, dust, the toxic grime on the ground of industrial sites” (“Dirt Theory” 517). However, D’Lacey expands the notion of dirty nature by bringing into view both caring, even mythological, benevolent, and destructive, frightening, uncanny, and deadly sides of nature. In particular, he reverses the relations between the human and the nonhuman, waste and culture, life and death, and desire and discard. What D’Lacey posits in *Garbage Man* is that nature becomes the monster when human culture totally infiltrates it. In this regard, “monstrous nature,” in Stacy Alaimo’s terms (“Discomforting” 279), finds its best manifestation in *Garbage Man*, which this chapter will discuss, arguing that monstrous nature is bound up with a destructive force of waste. It is through the literary depiction of waste as imbalance, chaos, abjection, and monster that *Garbage Man* functions as an eco-literary text crystallising our fears of environmental and social collapse. This anxiety underpins much of D’Lacey’s novel, which veers between the hopeless recognition of dirty nature and the desire for the rejuvenation of nature. Nevertheless, *Garbage Man* holds the key to the ultimate question whether nature becomes totally dirty and monstrous, or hybrid and fluid. D’Lacey, moreover, articulates the environmentalist concern that whatever waste we have dumped somewhere beyond human environs would return to us with vengeance. This vengeance in the narrative is directed toward humans, in that *Garbage Man* holds that nature is the central force and that the human realm is secondary. Despite the fact that this perspective seems to maintain the separation between humans and nature, D’Lacey decentres the human subject as the geological agent of the environmental disruption through the reanimation of waste objects; that is, monstrous dirty natures. He poses the crucial question of how one can save the environment from its rubbish status in the novel. Is the answer to destroy the human presence so as to revitalize the environment? As Dana Philips and Heather Sullivan contend, “we must explore the fact that having a very large number of healthy bodies in one species – human beings, for example – can be detrimental to healthy environments” (445-446). What D’Lacey suggests in the narrative is to test out this view.

Winner of the British Fantasy Award for Best Newcomer, Joseph D’Lacey is the author of six horror novels, including *Garbage Man*, some of which encompass ecological topics, such

as vegetarianism, pollution, postapocalyptic survival, displacement, and the decimation of the natural world. Describing himself as an "ecohorror" novelist, D'Lacey contributes to the discussions about nature and survival in the twenty-first century, giving insights into our concerns and fears regarding our connection to the "natural" world. D'Lacey particularly exemplifies both the contemporary fascination with and the dread of nature as an inescapable force. Indeed, D'Lacey's oeuvre responds to both social and ecological links between nature and society by exposing darker ecologies and ecofears. To articulate profound ecological and social horrors which humanity is likely to confront in the future, D'Lacey uses science fiction, fantasy and horror in his writing. In an interview with Simon Bestwick, he says that he sees himself in a tradition that includes Sarah Pinborough, Adam Nevill, Poppy Brite, Alison Littlewood, and Conrad Williams ("Interview"). In the same interview, he categorises his writing as "dark fiction," one that blends three genres to create not just postapocalyptic but surreal, and grotesque landscapes ("Interview"). Though preoccupied with despair, doom, gloom, dread, oblivion, and entropy in these imaginary worlds, D'Lacey prompts reflections on a full-colour world rather than on a grey one. However, whether deemed as a metaphor, a symbol, or a warning for the present time, the imaginary world D'Lacey builds is filled with vivid descriptions of dirt, slime, stink, reek, decay, grime, corruption, and deracination. For his writing derives its power from the insight that there is no escape from the environmental crisis. His oeuvre, in this respect, offers a substantial challenge to the idea that it is possible to find verdant, pure, and isolated landscapes separated from society. D'Lacey's solution to the conundrum of how to respond to the environmental degradation is to conjure an image of a darker planet ravaged by humanity, to create an impossible world in which people struggle to survive. As a meticulous observer of the ordinary as well as the extraordinary, D'Lacey opens up an ecodiscursive space in which light and dark meet, birth and death intermingle, nature, culture, and waste are mutually defining each other.

Garbage Man posits new realities with environmental ideas and presents an environmental horror narrative of a small Welsh town, Shreve whose colossal landfill toxifies everybody. D'Lacey deftly delineates not only the suburban community of Shreve but the landfill itself. More trash and garbage are dumped, landfilled, and incinerated here every day. So, waste

begins to overflow into the town. Although the landfill renders garbage invisible to the inhabitants who walk nearby and possibly carry traces of waste's toxic effects in their bodies, they neither question where their trash goes nor care that the landfill poisons the town and their bodies. Pointing to Shreve marooned in alienation and spiritual malaise, D'Lacey offers a remarkably diverse but humdrum array of characters blighted by their own desires. In order to stave off ecological and moral alienation, the protagonist Mason Brand, once a well-known photographer and a limelight in London, decides to embark on a new life in Shreve after wandering around England. Interestingly, he starts to hear a "calling" from the landfill. Once Mason heeds the call, he helps a new creature born from the landfill. From the toxic landfill emerges the "Fecalith" that horrifically strikes back at humanity, punishing people's abuse of the world around them. For Mason Brand, the fecalith does not stand for frightening and destructive monster; rather, it becomes a saviour. However, the fecalith destroys people by killing and eating them. It becomes a reminder of the end of human beings in the novel. It is possible to see this as retribution for their ignorance of the environment and for their moral transgression. Indeed, environmental and social anxieties are held in relational tension to one another in the narrative. The novel directly criticizes the consumerist habits as it links moral degradation to "throwaway" society. Thus, the human predicament takes on a moral dimension. Focusing on social and sexual deviations, dysfunctional families, and voracious desires that undergird moral decay in *Garbage Man*, D'Lacey concedes that it is impossible to separate out the good from the evil, friend from enemy, the redeemable from the abject, and the sick from the healthy in dirty natures. The flawed characters come from three main families, the Smithfields, the Dohertys and the Wades, around which the story circles. Of all characters, though, the most interesting is Agatha Smithfield, who is prey to her teenage anxiety to become a famous model in London, but she ends up as a prostitute instead, while her father Richard Smithfield, a paedophilic pervert, is seen wandering around the playground. In a way, D'Lacey condems all the people in Shreve due to their habits intertwined with wastefulness, and the fecalith emerges here as the embodiment of ultimate "ecohorror."

D'Lacey uses the conventions of ecohorror as a genre to narrativize the actual lived horrors of the environmental degradation like waste pollution. As Stephen Rust and Carter Soles note in their introduction to "Ecohorror Special Cluster," ecological threats "alert us to the horrific events poised to alter life as we know it on this planet" (509). Highlighting the inevitable nature of horrific events, they claim that "our sense of horror is amplified by considering the relationship between textual horrors and those in the material world" (509). D'Lacey intervenes in that relationship to illustrate social and cultural anxiety rooted in the environment. In the ecohorror genre exploited nature is always the very source of horror and fear by embodying monstrous features that are sometimes anthropomorphic. Exploring how "nature is constructed as monstrous or the natural world constructs monsters" (xviii), Robin L. Murray and Joseph K. Heumann suggest that ecohorror films and fiction transform nonhumans into "horrific monsters, an 'Other' whose humanlike qualities grow into a monstrous nature not only because this is a convention of the horror genre but also because their transformation is either a product of a genetic, chemical, or nuclear eco-disaster or a violation of human and nonhuman nature alike" (24). Underlining this violation, D'Lacey shows how the toxic environment transforms into a rubbish monster with a vengeance on humans. In the context of a discussion that "horror is becoming the environmental norm" (Crosby 514), the emphasis in ecohorror falls on the "revenge of nature" motif, particularly on the way in which human beings do horrific things to the physical environment, and in return, "postnatural" monstrous entities attack and destroy humans. Then, a heroic protagonist must battle and defeat the destructive monster which evokes "feelings of loathing, repugnance, aversion, dread, and outright terror" (Rust and Soles 509). In these narratives, as Richard Kerridge puts it, "the disaster, and the horrors it releases, come both as nemesis to human greed and presumption, and also as a test which rouses latent qualities in the characters who eventually defeat the horror" (245). Underlining the ambivalence of ecohorror as a warning, Kerridge asserts that the heroic action these fantasies generate supports not only the rationalist idea that nature must be controlled, but they also anchor anthropocentrism and human exceptionalism which D'Lacey aims to deconstruct. Likewise, Christy Tidwell points out that in ecohorror narratives "nature is the enemy of humanity" (538). Obviously, the main problem seems that ecohorror novels reinforce the separation of

culture from nature, and human from nonhuman. Nonetheless, Tidwell claims that it is impossible to maintain this split, for contemporary ecohorror novels, like *Garbage Man*, directly challenge the "division of human and nonhuman, internal and external" (539). The epigraph of *Garbage Man*, for instance, endorses this statement, highlighting the interdependence: "*The earth and myself are of one mind. The measure of the land and the measure of our bodies are the same ...*" (vi). The novel also articulates this interdependence between human and nonhuman natures depicted both as affirmative and as negative, highlighting the fact that "the true monster in the Anthropocene age" is "humanity itself" (Murray and Heumann 207). Within this context, D'Lacey develops the novel as a postnatural ecohorror narrative in which nature as a darker, weird force is not at all separated from cultural leftovers. The novel illustrates how both social and ecological landscapes are particularly depicted as dirty ones, reflecting the breakdown between nature, society, and waste. Exemplifying this dirtiness through an animated garbage entity, the narrative urges us to realize the interconnections of human and nonhuman communities. In this way, the ecocritical analysis of *Garbage Man* answers this question: "What happens when connections between human and nonhuman kill rather than simply change us?" (Tidwell 543).

As a key between the conflicting realities of nature, culture, and waste, the central character, Mason Brand, who exudes nothing but fame and greed as a famous photographer, struggles desperately to find a new home in England. Finding out that "London life, photographic life and all the parties that accompanied it, had … not suited him" (36), Mason achieves three things in London: "Fame, money and a nervous breakdown. […] [H]e had no personality and yet London turned him into a personality" (37). Mason believes that people marooned in rapacious consumer life could unmaroon themselves by turning to nature. So, by buying "a tiny mobile home" (38), he "drove his new home away from London and didn't stop until he reached the north coast of Scotland" (38). However, he realizes that the "barren Scottish wilds hurt him with their emptiness almost as much as London's overpopulation and amorality had affronted him. There were no trees to speak of, only vast, layered ranges of hills and mountains, blasted by wind and carpeted with heather" (38). After that, wandering

around Welsh mountains, which invigorates him, Mason comes upon a poor-farmer family so old that they live as though they were spectres of the forest, and dwell in a derelict farmhouse that “exhale[s] the smell of living human decay” (38). Here, the farmer tutors Mason, and he learns “stories sometimes, tales of people who lived in times lost to memory and history,” and “visions of those ages and visions of the future. He taught about the Earth and the land” (70). The lessons the farmer teaches are nature-oriented and about elemental forces of nature, whether visible or invisible. In one lesson, the farmer, like a shaman, makes “the woods silent then, like a conductor, and creature by creature, sound by sound, mood by mood,” and then, he brings “it back to life and Mason’s soul was enchanted. ‘- you’ll heed me. You’ll work hard to discard what you thought you knew and who you used to be. You’ll understand – the way the old ones did’” (70). This ritualistic lesson enables Mason to realize that nature is not by any means a simple entity; rather, it is an unknowable, complex, and uncanny one. One of the advices the farmer gives to Mason is that you will “‘learn to love your mother, boy. Smell her, taste her, listen to her. Respect her. This is what you are, boy, your mother’s reek and muck. Everything you are, she’s given you’” (71). For the farmer and Mason, nature is a maternal place to which humans are corporeally related, and thereby nature is explicitly gendered as a female identity from their viewpoints. However, the novel complicates this perspective by masculinizing the fecalith as a garbage man. In this lesson, Mason, furthermore, discerns that nature as a postnatural entity is enchanting, but also weird. In such a lesson, Mason again “was lifted by his head until his feet lost contact with the earth. He felt the most nauseating whirling and disorientation, a disconnection from everything, a free-floating terror” (71). Interestingly enough, this disconnection makes Mason see a “pure” but strange side of nature: “The soil was gone from his mouth and nose and face. Gone was the fecund stench of endless cycles of becoming and destruction. He could see. And so he looked. What he saw was the sun. It burned everything else from his vision. It scouted his mind of all distraction until there was only eye-whitening heat and purity” (71). This scene acknowledges the unknowable ecology as nearly as possible as well as ecology’s endless cycles of restruction and destruction. This surreal encounter with uncanny nature and the extra-rational knowledge of nature make visible the hidden forces animating the land. D’Lacey demonstrates that the experience Mason goes through incarnates a very primitive,

organic fundamental idea of what nature is, which might be a "chthonic" one. However, integral to the novel is a critique of such an impeccable idea of nature because the novel amplifies an understanding of dirty nature by juxtaposing the forest as a site of mystery with the town as a site of horror. Undoubtedly, through the protagonist, the novel pursues the question of green and rubbish landscapes, how they might be connected, lived in, and recorded. The novel also demonstrates how the landscapes are corporeally experienced.

As "a creature of the land and of the forest" (61), Mason knows that humans are part of nature, however calming as well as fearsome it may be. When he lives in the suburbia of Shreve, he yearns for a tranquil nature. As the narrator comments, Mason's "true solitude came during his time among the trees. It was so difficult. Life in the woods had been so tranquil and so restorative to him that it was painful to admit how much the loneliness of it hurt him" (61). Is nature still a source of pleasure, beauty, delight, solitude, and solace? The narrator continues to assert as follows:

> It wasn't just the loneliness, of course. The depth of solitude was the obvious thing, the thing he would have talked about if anyone ever discussed it with him as a friend. There was another issue, however. The one he'd come to suburbia to avoid. Most of the time it was noisy enough that he didn't notice it. He missed it and feared equally. The land and the trees and all the animals he'd shared the woods with had a voice, one voice, a calling. And they talked to him as though he were their closest confidant. They talked and the land talked and they never shut up. (61)

In this way, occasionally, the narrator commiserates with the protagonist in the novel. What *Garbage Man* posits here is that the mistake is to believe that nature is inert, silent, and predictable. Instead, nature is a vibrant place of wondrous and threatening occurrences. Later, for Mason, this calling turns out to be a warning for humans in Shreve. Any nostalgia for an ostensibly safer and greener, better and purer ecology dissolves into a bitter recognition that garbage, waste, and trash now constitute nature. Thus, Mason Brand finds himself drawn into investigating the landfill.

By redefining the boundary between nature and garbage, D'Lacey provides a grim panorama of Shreve near the biggest landfill in Britain. Around it on all sides are only forest, sea, and

landfill. Appearing as grey and gloomy, the town is a post-industrial place, a lonely and sad one, defined only by its landfill. The colossal toxic dumping area, called Shreve District Council landfill, is juxtaposed with both the brownland and the woods as a green field. No matter how the landfill toxifies the landscape, the juxtaposition creates a contrast in the novel. First of all, the forest near the landfill solely emerges as a green ecological spot. For instance, the goth-girl Delilah, who is fond of the woods near the landfill, provides an articulate commentary on the recuperative side of nature. After being gang raped, she survives in the woods, purifying and rejuvenating her body: "This was the place where their [rapists'] power had fallen into the ground, impotent and wasted. This was my place, not theirs. I used the dirt where I'd squatted to perform cleansing rituals on myself. And then I fell in love with the outdoors" (229). Such a passage clearly underlines the purification through dirt. Notwithstanding that Delilah is associated with dirty "mother" nature, the horrific behaviour of men in terms of sexual perversity is challenged here by means of dirty nature. In other words, the element of man's domination is reversed, which is the premise of the novel as a whole. So, dirty nature restores Delilah's body. Second, the brownland surrounding the landfill shows that Shreve was formerly a mining town whose economy depended on coal mining. The landfill "led out onto an expanse of brownland where the grass that grew was sparse and clumped. Underfoot was coke and slag from the open cast coal mine that had been there before the days of the landfill. … [M]uch of the waste ground was littered with shattered glass from discarded bottles and other litter" (27). This brown landscape exemplifies how mining at an industrial scale has already poisoned the environment during and after the coal extraction. The extraction and the landfilling here point not only to the environmental degradation, but also to the inversion of the "natural" order. For instance, the mining extraction forces the inside into the outside just as the landfilling forces the outside into the inside. Both the mining and landfilling illustrate that nature is the source of raw substances and waste objects. The mining field and landfill of Shreve emerge as a gothic space capable to contain deadly secrets, as a maternal repository to produce monstrous natures, and as dirty nature. All of these landscapes are postlapsarian environments ravaged by industrial practices. They are part of Shreve's dark "litter-ary" landscape. The most important is the Shreve landfill, which the omniscient narrator describes in vivid detail:

> The driver slammed the truck into gear and ground away along the temporary road leading to the landfill cells. Very soon, when the canyons of trash were all filled, the whole landfill would be sealed and covered with soil. They'd turn it onto a public park or sports centre or playing field and, in time, no one would remember the network of feeder roads that led the trucks to the huge mouths in the earth which swallowed the town's muck silently and willingly. […] There would always be waste and there would always be a need for waste managers and refuse engineers. (20)

As this passage shows, the landfill is transformed into a cultural space after it is covered with soil. As Myra J. Hird puts it, through the landfilling "waste [is] covered up, covered over, and imagined as the never-having-existed infrastructural base of children's play parks in middle-class suburbia" ("Proliferation" 264). Irrespective of how garbage is controlled and managed, it is inevitable that hazardous chemicals continue to affect the environment. Edward Humes remarks that trash might be "deadly when you bury it" (24). Obviously, the landfill is a toxic and destructive place, one full of what people throw away every day. It is no doubt that the "modern landfill is the graveyard of 'quotidian' culture" (O'Brien 54). In this view, the landfill literally and metaphorically incorporates death, destruction, dissolution, mortality, oblivion, and impermanence. However, the landfill is also a reflection of people's habits, behaviour, and customs, a history of objects and humanity. Regarding landfills as an archaeological inquiry, William Rathje and Cullen Murphy, archaeologists at the University of Arizona's Garbage Project, posit that

> landfills represent valuable lodes of information that may, when mined and interpreted, produce valuable insights – insights not into the nature of some past society, of course, but into the nature of our own. Garbage is among humanity's most prodigious physical legacies to those who have yet to be born; if we can come to understand our discards, Garbage Project archaeologists argue, then we will better understand the world in which we live. (4)

What emerges from this understanding is that landfills shed light on today's consumer society as archaeological sites. However, through the landfill, which human overconsumption has created, *Garbage Man* presents a critique of modern consumerism depleting the planet.

Besides, by means of the example of the dump site of Shreve, D'Lacey asserts that nature cannot remain separate from the cultural remnants, and draws attention to waste/ culture/

nature connections. Reading the novel through the lens of dirty nature reveals that the "natural" and cultural spheres can be breached through waste. At the nexus between nature and waste is Mason Brand who develops an entirely different relationship with waste with his repeated visits to the landfill. Discovering something alluring in the landfill, he beatifies the soil-covered dump site: "To anyone else it would have been the filthiest place on Earth. To Mason Brand it was a place of power, even more sacred and essential than his precious vegetable garden. He broke in there most nights to make contact with the land" (22). Commonly, landfills are stinking, noxious, abhorrent, dreadful, and dangerous places. But, as Susan Signe Morrison points out, "waste contains the potential to *charge*, catalyzing ethical behaviour and profound insights, even compassion" (3). Mason's compassion for the landfill depends on his insight that the beautiful can be born out of the terrible. For Mason, "there was something very beneficial about this place of gathered mess and heaped destruction and filth. Something almost holy. He had a gut feeling about the land and about its influence" (23). Although Mason regards the landfill as a "place of entropy and rot" (24), he believes in wasted soil's healing power. As the narrator says, Mason

> had a sense of the earth's ability to heal and transform. This power came in the form of a pull or draw – not gravity exactly but a force of similar quality. The body of the planet, its soil and dust, was something like a living poultice. He had used this quality to cure himself of various ills over the years. A pack of wet soil wrapped in muslin and applied directly to his skin had cleared him of an attack of boils five years previously. Two years later, the same treatment, combined with crushed herbs from his garden, had relieved him of scabies. (23)

This outlook which equates curative regeneration with dirt, soil, and dust discloses Mason's embracement of dirty nature. "Dirt, soil, earth, and dust," as Sullivan notes, "are the stuff of geological structure, of the rocky Earth itself, and are mobile like our bodies" ("Dirt Theory" 515). This holds true for Mason who uses soil for his illnesses in his house. In his front garden, "hidden among his fruits and vegetables," Mason generally "would lie awake all night with the worms and the slugs progressing around him. The Earth would draw the spiritual sickness from him and by drawing he would be clean. Clean as the day his mother had expelled him, innocent and unprotected, into the filthy world of men" (24). Here, the connection between dirty nature and Mason's body is taken for granted, while the narrator

actually establishes a boundary between nature and culture by regarding Mason "innocent" and "clean." What is suggested here is that Mason's connections to the "green" world tie him to the idea that nature is a separate entity away from civilization. His beatification of waste, however, obliterates the understanding of pristine nature. In the landfill, standing "barefoot on a layer of freshly dumped soil" below which "the thin, yielding earth millions of tons of compacted waste rotted" (22), Mason "curled his toes into the soil, gripped the Earth, held onto her. She took away his leavings too; bad energies, bad thoughts, sickness before it had the chance to take root in him. Wrongfulness was pulled down through him, leaving him pure" (24-25). Despite rejecting the idea of purity, dirty nature in Sullivan's formulation might be positive and benevolent, which in the novel is highlighted when Mason uses dirt to heal his body, like Delilah had done before.

In her theorization of pollution in her seminal book *Purity and Danger* (1966), Mary Douglas claims that, "where there is dirt, there is system: […] a set ordered relations and a contravention of that order" (36). In other words, societies use the concept of dirt in order to sustain social order. Thus, the binaries between cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity, and use and useless are established. But if dirt is "essentially disorder" (Douglas 2), it is illusory to maintain these dichotomies. It is though dirt that the distinction between purity and impurity easily collapses, for dirt acts as a merger between them. For Mason, waste and soil first set up a binary opposition between purity and impurity, but later, this dissolves, as the narrator writes: "[e]very part of his body was cold but the soles of his feet, still receiving warmth from the ground, still bleeding out his darker energies. He would never be completely pure – nothing and no one could be" (25). Dirt, as Heather Sullivan suggests, flows through "both biotic and abiotic cycles alike and entering virtually every organic body and cycle occurring in the biosphere" ("Dirty Traffic" 83). Hence, dirt is no longer "out of place;" rather, it is a material entity found in every place. What the novel posits by dirt in the landfill is that epitomizing dirty nature is a contravention of order, society, and civilization. As Rachele Dini notes, it is "an unsavoury entity" (205) as there is "something very dangerous about Shreve's landfill. Here, after all, was the most poisonous site in the Midlands – in the country perhaps. More polluted than the run off from any of Shreve's factories" (23). It may

be a source of ecohorror, but it is just as important for our understanding of contemporary consumer society as the mall or the restaurant.

As Caroline Schaumann and Heather Sullivan articulate, dirty nature involves "a composite of material interactions on many scales including the activities of bodies, species, and energy politics in which we human beings are full participants along with our fellow species on the planet" (105). The landfill in the novel emerges as such a composite and teems with the leftovers of society:

> The expanse below, filled with every kind of rubbish so compressed it was solid enough to build upon, was alive with decomposition. Tiny bugs were multiplying and eating the waste, breaking it down a particle at a time. Even the metals were being oxidised and consumed. All manner of human leavings and discarded materials were locked below him [Mason] in cells the size of canyons excavated deep into the earth. Tramped down, by huge machines with toothed wheels, covered with soil to be forgotten and ignored. An entire country's dumping ground. A place no one ever thought about unless the wind was blowing the wrong way. (22)

This description is reminiscent of Robert Sullivan's remarks on the liveliness of the garbage hills in New York: "the garbage hills are alive" (96). Replete with useless, valueless, unhealthy, and impure objects, the Shreve landfill, too, is alive; so alive that it gives birth to a living monster like creature, the fecalith.

More importantly, landfills like that of Shreve's are heterogeneous zones full of "known, unknown, and unknowable objects" (Hird, "Proliferation" 260); they "mix waste designated hazardous with that defined as nonhazardous, including over seven million known chemicals, eighty thousand of which are in commercial circulation, with a further thousand new chemicals entering into commercial use each year" (260). This is visible, for instance, in D'Lacey's depiction of a noxious composite, known as leachate. Not only does this substance poison groundwater, but also leaks odours into the air and toxins into soil. Myra Hird explains how leachate in a landfill is formed, and affects the environment:

> Aerobic bacteria metabolize a landfill's early life, which produces material that is highly acidic and toxic to surface water. Anaerobic bacteria do the bulk of the metabolizing

> work deeper in the landfill's strata, producing leachate. Leachate is a heterogeneous mix of heavy metals, endocrine-disrupting chemicals, phthalates, herbicides, pesticides, and various gases including methane, carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, hydrogen, oxygen, nitrogen, and hydrogen sulfide. […] [L]eachate may percolate into soil and groundwater […] where it moves into and through plants, trees, animals, fungi, insects, and the atmosphere. ("Proliferation" 260-261)

By leaking beyond the landfill, leachate exhausts all living things. As a destructive agent the leachate draws Mason's attention: "He looked down and scanned the darkness where only his feet were recognisable, fungus white against the black humus. Around them, oily liquid blackness was spreading out. The viscous fluid reflected the scalpel sharp moon and even the yellow glow of the streetlights coming from Meadowlands, the estate where he lived" (26). Leachate here emerges as a viscous fluid flowing through the landfill and the brownland. Observing that "Something in the landfill had burst and its filth was seeping upwards" (26), Mason wonders whether it is an entirely different fluid entity, and, therefore, he

> crouched a little and put his hand to the surface of this rising flood. It was warm and slightly greasy between his fingertips. He held the substance below his nose and inhaled. It smelled rusty. This made sense to him. The landfill was full of oxidising iron and steel. Perhaps the leachate from the landfill had been blocked somehow and was backing up. […] The fluid should have smelled of things other than metal decay. It should have smelled of shit and rot. It didn't. (26)

For Mason, leachate extends beyond the landfill area to encompass the whole town. It is like "[d]irty nature's vital exchanges enabling the biosphere and modern industrial permeations of toxins" to intermingle (Sullivan, "Dirty Nature" 114), even though they are invisible for humans. Hence, toxins which emanate from the landfill have a substantial influence on human and nonhuman worlds. In terms of waste, Mira Engler remarks that waste is "a key element in the ways in which we order and shape our environments, and it is inseparably intertwined and evolving with those environments" (xiii-xiv). In other words, waste or dirt cannot be viewed as a distinct entity independent from human presence. Likewise, Véronique Bragard writes that waste becomes "a powerful type of matter that mutates, modulates, transforms both humans and their habitat" (460). For both of these critics, humans and nonhumans are intrinsically enmeshed within waste. Pointing to the conflation of this opposition between waste and society through dirty nature, Caroline Schaumann and Sullivan

also assert that "[t]here is no pure nature, nor pure culture/humanity. They are both dirty, as in mixed and blended" (107). If they are both dirty, then, does Mason endeavour in vain to cleanse the world?

At the heart of these arguments is the destructive force ascribed to waste, which is believed to maintain the dualism between nature and society, cleanliness and dirt, purity and impurity, rather than contest the binaries invoked by anthropocentrism. Kate Soper, for example, blatantly proclaims that waste "understood as the unused or inutilizable remains of human productive activity … must today count as one of the major markers of the distinction between humanity and the rest of nature" (259-260). Similarly, Susan Signe Morrison writes that "[s]eparation from garbage makes culture possible" (80). In other words, waste erases the boundaries between bodies, cultures, and the environments. This is what D'Lacey illustrates in the novel, which showcases how these boundaries become viscerally porous. Waste here transmogrifies both nature and culture into a rubbish composite. In order to make this point more emphatic, the narrator occasionally raises his voice about the landfill:

> [T]he landfill was specifically designed not to be an eyesore. What was visible was a laterally-spreading volume of multicoloured trash. Each evening, the machines covered the newest waste with soil. In the direction that this solid river crept were man-made canyons – once an open cast coal mine – awaiting the growing flood. The landscape changed so gradually it was impossible to define, even in the space of a day, what it was that had altered. But alter it did, and constantly. This kind of dumping was going on all over the country. What couldn't be dumped here was shipped overseas. He wondered how long it would be before the world smothered itself beneath a crust of refuse. Then, like a tightly crumpled ball of tossed scrap paper, Earth would spin through space, useless and dead. (109)

This passage resonates with Patricia Yaeger's observation that "in a world where molecular garbage has infiltrated earth, water, and air, we cannot encounter the natural untouched or uncontaminated by human remains. Trash becomes nature, and nature becomes trash" (332). Thus, this dirty landscape dissolves the very nature/culture binary. A cogent point is that turning nature into trash attests to a postnatural situation that is the nexus where two actors, trash and nature, undergo a kind of fusion. That is the premise of dirty nature conceived as a vast heterogeneous mix of varied in/organic entities. The dirty landscape is a glittering

monument to consumer society and global capitalism. "Every landscape," Brian Thill also claims, is "a trashscape. This not only transforms the world into one vast and unevenly distributed trash heap; it changes, in ways that might not even be perceptible to us, our sense of self and humanity in the world" (4). Obviously, as landfills, dump sites, and junkyards increase all around the world, it is no longer possible to find a "pristine" place. In Shreve, Mason always feels the presence of the trashscape, regardless of its filthy condition:

> When the wind turned, it bore upon it the odorous ghosts of a billion objects – some degradable, others not. Mason's nose recognised it all. He smelled the composted tops, tails and skins of fruits and vegetables – none as wholesome as the ones he grew. He smelled greasy leftovers – inedible animal bones and fat. He smelled the soured excrement trapped in wadded disposable nappies and feared for the health of the children that had worn them. He smelled the owners of discarded clothes and shoes, knew them a little. He smelled old blood and tissues, the acid of batteries, smelled the abandonment of broken toys, the obsolescence of outdated computers and other electronic devices. (109)

These rotting objects demonstrate the culmination of human existence in rubbish ecology. That is, the dirty landscape is an adjunct of excess production and overconsumption. Indeed, the landfill is the very embodiment of irrevocability of destructive and malicious behaviour of people as a whole. Further, the novel complicates the landfill as site of destruction, when Mason takes it as a place of renewal. In ruminating on paradoxical interconnection between rejuvenation and destruction, Mason stands "in the fertile surroundings staring through the newly forming fruits and vegetables. Pods, gourds, edible flowers, seed heads, nourishing green stalks. All had grown up from the ash and dust of the earth. All had taken strength and vitality from dead or decaying matter, from things that had once lived" (129). Here, Mason's sense of nature as a rubbish composite teemed with cycles of birth, death, decay, and renewal comes through distinctly. For Mason, green plants, such as potatoes, tomatoes, and runner beans, "grew from a special compost that he'd devised over the years. Dead things fed the living. That was the natural way. And flowers, fruits and seeds were the organs by which those living things reproduced and flourished" (130). As such, Mason realizes that destruction is inextricably connected to renewal, which dirty nature embraces. What if the landfill becomes a site of birth and renewal rather than a place of destruction?

In an afterword, writing the motive behind his novel, D'Lacey addresses such questions: "What have we put down there [landfill]? And what if the combination of chemical and biological waste is similar to the primordial sludge from which life first crawled hundreds of millions of years ago? […] What would happen if the Earth evolved a new way to deal with all our pollution – some kind of new, garbage-eating species perhaps?" (D'Lacey, "Spawning" 276). In this way, the novel connects waste with ecocatastrophe, because D'Lacey creates a "monstrous" nature, called the fecalith. Emerging as a "postnatural" composite body of garbage, the creature fecalith attempts to strike back at the people of Shreve as "punishment for environmental disruption" (Rust and Soles 509). It is with the example of the fecalith that *Garbage Man* focuses on the boundary breakdowns between nature and culture, the organic and the inorganic, the human and the nonhuman, thereby suggesting a postnatural dirt ecology. In fact, the Shreve landfill is a "maternal" place, a place of transmutation, the place from which the fecalith comes. The spawning of the fecalith is narrated as follows:

> Steel panels and shattered glass; plastic bags and shitty, rotten nappies.
>
> Old shirts and mouldering dishrags; torn corduroy trousers and moth eaten jumpers. Crushed, jagged baked bean cans; short loops of flex; plastic packaging, broken plastic toys; tubing, stuffing, plasterboard, bricks; oxidising springs, hinges and wire; splintered planks and bent nails; light fittings; smashed picture frames and burnt things; peelings, leftovers and cooked bones; raw bones; dead rats, guinea pigs and hamsters; aborted foetuses; grease, fat and oil; upturned drawers and their unwanted contents; retired desks and lamps; keyboards, mice, PCs, laptops, hard drives, monitors, TVs, satellite dishes, speakers, mobile phones, Sim cards, software.
>
> Blood.
>
> Rust.
>
> Lightning.
>
> Intent.
>
> These were the things of which the fecalith was wrought. (197)

Here, the fecalith embodies dirty nature in the sense that it emerges as a fragmented but composite entity with a mix of waste objects, which deconstructs the binaries trash/culture, and nature/society. In fact, the formation of the fecalith begins with Mason. The focus of the opening scene in the novel is on the "mythic" ritual of revitalizing the soil, and of creating a new species. In the mysterious, surreptitious meeting between Mason and Agatha Smithfield, Mason performs a fertility ritual on Midsummer's Day in his garden by using Agatha's blood, which is part of the ecohorror ritual. The spawning of the fecalith depends upon blood, garbage, and lightning as in Mary Shelley's *Frankestein* (1818). As the novel progresses, Mason finds the fecalith as a baby-rubbish thing in his garden. Bewildered and confused, Mason feels an affinity towards it. For Mason, the "thing was an accident. It was an abortion. Yet it lived. The shape of its body was that of a huge, bloated tadpole. He could see echoes of embryo, attempts at foetus, but it was all wrong: plastic and cardboard and glass and paper did not live, could not move" (124). Mason regards it not as a living entity but as animated dead matter:

> The thing in the shed was not living in the strictest sense. It had been born amid the slime and ordure of human waste. It had come from dead, discarded things and it had crawled away from its birthplace in its attempt to survive. Clearly, whatever it needed wasn't in the landfill. The dead feed the living. That was the law. But it was an old law now. This creature was something new; nature's new vision. A break from evolution. Something that would perhaps save the world from self-destruction if it had the chance to survive. He knew it was important. It was beyond important. The creature was the key to a fresh nature in the world, a new logic that would reverse the destructive appetites of humanity. (130)

For Mason, the fecalith is nature's new face, one that wants revenge by annihilating humans and thus restoring nature's broken balance. Mason then becomes the main collaborator in humanity's wipeout. The fecalith inspires in him not just anxiety and awe but also fascination, since Mason experiences an irresistible force associated with the fecalith. As Gay Hawkins argues, "the sense of wonder or horror" can be "the impulse for new relations: a motivation for a different ethics, a sudden inspiration for a new use" (85). Mason feels this relational affect between himself and the fecalith, but his engagement with the fecalith leads to the annihilation of the town people. Therefore, the fecalith remains a source of imminent danger and horror, even for Mason himself in the end. Susan Signe Morrison suggests that

waste “produces a perception of affinity and connection while simultaneously disrupting through difference” (176). This is what Mason feels for the fecalith. Regarding himself as “the midwife of the new nature,” or as “the nursemaid of the new nature” (130), Mason is enthralled to see how the fecalith grows when fed with his blood. The shed-thing

> went back to the landfill and returned with extra parts. Blood was enough to keep it alive, but it needed bone and soft tissue in order to grow. The first time it absorbed a sleeping cat, it returned from the landfill with a second eye and a replacement for the first one. The eyes were made from a discarded pair of spectacles and caused the creature to look bookish and short-sighted. Everything it added to itself was made of garbage. Inside, Mason imagined it creating amalgamated organs that grew as it grew. Three hedgehog livers and four cat livers to make one shed-thing liver. (144)

Made neither purely of inanimate nor of living flesh, the fecalith is a combination of both elements, a muddy mixture that resists simple categorization. Susan Morrison argues that waste is “a way to acknowledge the body; and, with this insight, comes an awareness of the interconnectedness of one’s body with those of others, enabling compassion for others” (146). But would such an acknowledgement inspire any compassion in people? Surely not, as the novel makes clear, Mason feels no compassion for people in the town killed by the fecalith. Instead, the novel posits that rubbish ecology is paradoxical; while it illustrates the interconnection between nature, culture, and waste, and cleanliness and dirt, it cautions the readers about the consequences of ongoing production of the monstrous amounts of waste. Put differently, there is no sign of mercy and compassion in rubbish ecology, even if it is rendered as a nonanthropocentric vision. Given that monsters are “always aggressive, gigantic, man-eating, malevolent, bizarre in shape, gruesome, atavistic, powerful and gratuitously violent” (Gilmore ix), it is not surprising to see that the fecalith emerges in order to extract revenge on humanity. It grows into a superhumanly masculine entity, gigantic in form.

> Each night he let it out and each morning, long before dawn it returned; larger, altered. It developed itself. The process made Mason think of hermit crabs discarding shells they’d outgrown in favour of something more spacious. But there was so much more to it than that. The shed-thing didn’t merely make itself larger. It improved itself, it self-modified. It appeared to learn as it went what the best combinations were for a strong, resilient frame. This was not the behaviour of senseless dead matter. (163-164)

If the fecalith is not at all a "senseless dead matter," then, what is it? The conflict whether the fecalith is a living entity, or an inanimate matter, or a useless garbage, can be read in light of Jane Bennet's concept of "thing-power" in which matter has "a vitality intrinsic to materiality" (*Vibrant* xiii). Contesting the older visions of matter as "passive, mechanistic, or divinely infused substance" (*Vibrant* xiii), Bennett questions whether trash is "stuff whose power to move, speak, or make a difference has become dormant or dead" ("Force" 350). According to Bennett, trash has the capacity to affect and be affected in its complex interactions with human and nonhuman factors. Bennett observes that "dead stuff" has "live presence: junk, then claimant; inert matter, then live wire" (*Vibrant* 5). In her figuration of lively matter, trash has thing-power, as she contends that "inanimate things have a life of their own, that deep within them is an inexplicable vitality or energy, a moment of independence from and resistance to us and other things. A kind of thing-power" ("Force" 358). For Bennett, in short, thing-power not only includes "the ability to shift or vibrate between different states of being, to go from trash/inanimate/resting to treasure/animate/alert," but also emphasizes things' "powers of life, resistance, and even a kind of will" ("Force" 354, 360). As an evolving, animate entity, hence, the fecalith has thing-power to destroy humans and nonhumans. The narrator illustrates this vibrant situation of the fecalith in the novel as follows:

> It was using some of the flesh it had taken as muscle and sinew to hold its newest parts together. Corroded copper pipes, pieces of garden hose and bicycle tyre inner tubes had become its veins and in them, judging by the smell, flowed the filthy biochemistry of recycled bloods and the slimy leachate from beneath the landfill. It was more complicated thing to look at now. Mason found it bewitching in the way of sunsets, for, like them, the creature was never the same two days in a row. It was mysterious; Mason knew what was in it, what it was *of*, but not how it fitted together. Not how it lived. The shed-thing was animate; sentient, junkyard mechanics. It was improvised biology melded with reclaimed human wreckage. The shed-thing defied entropy – more than that, it opposed and reversed it. It was beautiful and new the way the shimmering fur of a tiny wild fox cub was beautiful. It was as feral as a wolf, as intelligent as … (164)

Here, the fecalith is obviously an example of thing-power. The fecalith, as Serpil Oppermann would say, has "matter's inherent vitality" ("Lateral" 465), as it is posited as "animate; sentient, junkyard mechanics." This vitality transmogrifies the fecalith into an animate

monster which eats people and animals. For instance, the first victim we see is Donald Smithfield, Agatha's brother, who have a relationship with a married woman. After devouring Donald, the fecalith evolves into a humanoid garbage "man" who is a conglomeration of objects, bottles, filthy liquids, unidentifiable substances, the remnants of humans and nonhumans.

Apart from possessing thing-power, the fecalith gains agency and becomes a personification of waste as the unpredicable other. D'Lacey's aim here is to draw attention to the predicament of the planet through the monstrous amounts of humanly produced garbage represented by the fecalith as the garbage man. Presented as a terrifying spectral force, the fecalith is the very embodiment of abjection and grotesqueness. In addition to its vibrancy, the fecalith embodies what Patricia Yaeger states about detritus: "detritus has unexpectedly taken on the sublimity that was once associated with nature" (327). That is, rubbish ecology signifies something abject in our relationship to nature. As a monstrous body in pieces, the fecalith is simultaneously beyond the limitations of the human world, yet also is very familiar to that world:

> The old man's offerings – the hedgehogs and cats and rabbits, his own blood and the mind and body of the boy – all these flowed and lived within him, as aspects of his vast and growing consciousness, as did the blood of the boy's sister. They formed the templates from which inanimate things became living. Parts of him bristled with approximated fur or spines, his teeth were copies of dog canines, human incisors and herbivorous molars – but huge now and made of hard junk. His jaws were hinged girders, his fingers, jointed railings. He walked on legs of reclaimed iron and in his rubber and copper veins flowed a new blood of commingled effluent and living plasma. In this blood moved the soul of the fecalith and the fecalith's will. In his steel-cased skull processors, motherboards, hard drives and software grew and evolved. Awareness seeped into the circuitry, code flowed into its assembly of brains. In the slime at the bottom of the landfill, the fecalith philosophised and meditated as he swam.
>
> Like all sentient beings, he contemplated the reason for his becoming, the purpose of his existence. The where of it, the when of it, the how. (198)

As this passage illustrates, the fecalith is "becoming" a cacophonous agglomeration of trash objects, but it is alive, sentient, and intelligent like a human being. For Ray Wade, a minor character fond of computer games in the narrative, the fecalith is a "zombie cyborg trash"

(263). Indeed, it is through the fecalith that the novel attends to rubbish ecology, combining dirty nature and the relational dynamics of waste: "Muck and blood flowed in the veins and improvised tubules of the creature, death and life mingled to make some third state – newborn in the world" (199). The fecalith speaks to an in-between, threshold and living-dead status, both horrifying and fascinating. In this way, it threatens stability, cohesion, and order. Highlighting horrific monsters' breakdown of the distinctions between living and dead, Noel Carroll argues that

> [o]ne structure for the composition of horrific beings is fusion. On the simplest physical level, this often entails the construction of creatures that transgress categorical distinctions such as inside/outside, living/dead, insect/human, flesh/machine, and so on. … A fusion figure is a composite that unites attributes held to be categorically distinct and/or at odds in the cultural scheme of things in unambiguously one, spatio-temporally discrete entity. (43)

As an assemblage of trash continually being reconfigured and remade, the monstrous rubbish fecalith "embodies the existential threat to social life, the chaos, atavism, and negativism that symbolize destructiveness and all other obstacles to order and progress, all that which defeats, destroys, draws back, undermines, subverts the human project" (Gilmore 12). But Mason Brand believes that the fecalith emerges as a ravenous monster to save nature in the novel. Obviously, the fecalith's central aim is to persecute the miscreant. For Mason and the fecalith, it is human condition that is frustrating, and that is thwarted. Whether seeking to take revenge on humans or salvaging the planet from humans, the fecalith arrives to take Shreve away from humans as though he was its rightful owner.

Notably, D'Lacey sets his story up for an ecodisaster, and the monstrous disaster dutifully arrives on the scene. Lost in the woods, Delilah's lover, Ray Wade's attention is arrested by the sight of the fecalith, and then, he witnesses the fecalith creating new rubbish monsters in the landfill which becomes a site of mystery for the characters. As soon as Ray observes that the "trash from the landfill was alive. The garbage man was coming" (204), he is so petrified that he just smells the "wafted rot of re-forged detritus and reanimated filth" (204). Later, Ray attends how the fecalith uses the landfill as a "feminine" reproductive force: "The garbage man knelt and thrust the power-spewing ligament deep into the rubbish. […] Then

the surface of the landfill began to pulsate and liquefy. It began to boil. Embryonic shadows, too small and distant to define, began to slither and crawl from the deep pits of trash. They left it from every side, in every direction" (205). As discussed earlier, the landfill serves as a gothic maternal place to produce monstrous natures. But, rather than rendering the maternal body monstrous, D'Lacey constructs the obviously male fecalith as a freakish entity of abject monstrosity, and later on new rubbish creatures arrive, and begin to feed on humans in Shreve which turns out to be "an invasion site" (253) thronged with new rubbish ecologies. The garbage creatures

> made use of absolutely everything, not a scrap was wasted. Some of the creatures were as fragile as the paper that formed their skins; others were sturdy with boxes or crates forming an efficient carapace. They'd copied themselves from the living things of the world or attempted approximations of them. Some were more successful than others but at each new taking-in of living tissues, they re-forged themselves into something better, something stealthier, something faster. (269)

Neither entirely liquid nor purely solid, the creatures are remaking themselves as vibrant actors. Adding up something rubbish to their split bodies, they grow into something bigger, becoming more monstrous. With organic and inorganic appendages, rubbish creatures transform and renew themselves. That is, they turn waste into a new life. Refuting the idea that waste is only dead matter, *Garbage Man* reinforces the idea that waste is a dangerously vibrant thing. This is reiterated in the survival scene of Ray, Delilah, and Jimmy in the narrative. Throughout Shreve, more and more people fall victims to the ravenous rubbish creatures which communicate with each other. After witnessing what the fecalith has done in the landfill, Ray finds Delilah, and together they seek refuge from "the life forms born of the landfill" (287). Then, in their search, they come upon Jimmy, a young man, both horrified and terrorized. In order to run away from these inhuman garbage creatures, they temporarily take shelter in a shopping market also ravaged by the grotesque beings. Here, Ray and Delilah watch Jimmy being broken into smithereens, noting how a new monstrous nature is amalgamated out of the leftovers of Jimmy:

> The other limbs were busy cutting Jimmy's body into useful pieces and attaching them to itself. Then Ray realised it wasn't one landfill creature he was looking at but three.

> They were working together melding flesh and waste with the tools they had amongst them. Bones were attached to steel frames, plastic and skin were clamped or stapled together, veins and tubing were welded with a festering ichor that blurred the distinction between flesh and inanimate material. The creatures made Jimmy fall apart. They made him disappear. (311)

The fusion deconstructing the boundary between living and dead emerges as a new rubbish monster. It is spectacular and terrifying to see that “the three of them made themselves one. In an act of reverse fission, the three became a huge junkyard amoeba. The newly-fused thing rose up, delighting in its new frame and extra mobility; humanoid in shape but with extra appendages no man would ever wish for” (311). This imbrication of trash, human, and nature conjures up a postnatural vision of dirty nature in which every corporeality is embedded in trash.

Developing a complex relationship between nature and society, waste and culture, human and nonhuman, *Garbage Man* also challenges the division between self and other. The line between self and other is compromised in the relation between Mason and the fecalith, for Mason is a reflection of masculinized humanist self, and the fecalith stands for the monstrous other. “Waste,” as Susan Signe Morrison explains, is “both the other *and* of ourselves and forces us to confront our own natural instincts and temptations” (143). Mason, in this respect, plays an influential role in re-establishing a connection with the other, that is, the fecalith, contributing to dirty nature. In order to become totally united in the fecalith, Mason visits the Shreve landfill filled with active trash, vibrant waste, vital rubbish, and “living garbage” (315). There the fecalith stands as a heterogeneous whole, a horrendous entity moving as one, living as one, behaving as one, and thinking as one. For Mason, the fecalith develops into “a monstrous humanoid tower. It was fashioned of steel and timber and plastic and glass and circuitry and was welded together with the flesh of a thousand living creatures” (315). Seen as a hybrid rubbish being, the fecalith is “beyond the human, the superhuman, the unnameable, the tabooed, the terrible, and the unknown” (Gilmore 10). This monstrous corporeality elicits not disgust, horror, and sickness but affection, seduction, and affinity for Mason, who has just enough insight to convince himself, since he feels an instant connection with the fecalith. Mason’s identification of himself with this garbage man offers an uncanny

recognition of the other as an inseparable property of himself as in Gay Hawkins's argument for the relation with waste: "the affective responses that waste can trigger disrupt oppositions between self and world or self and waste" (121). As his act disrupts the Cartesian self/other binary, Mason decides to enter into the fecalith's rubbish body:

> Its inspection complete, the hand dropped to the fecalith's chest and there a rusted panel the size of a door slid open. The smell from inside was so rotten, Mason choked. The hand pressed him into darkness and there, inside the fecalith's torso, he heard the beating of its giant borrowed heart. The door slid closed behind him. Wires and tubes reached out towards Mason in the resounding blackness. Copper and rubber arteries pierced his head and neck. Animal veins and capillaries melted through his skin and attached themselves to his own. The plasma of poisonous excrement and homogenised bloods which flowed through the fecalith's vessels began to flow in his. (316)

Distinctly, the fecalith draws Mason toward it, attracting him to peer down into its gothic darkness. He believes that the world is about to end with the triumph of the fecalith, even though it means a kind of self-annihilation. Being conquered and invaded by the fecalith, Mason begins to become, very physically, part of the fecalith's rubbish ecology. As the narrator comments, the fecalith "shared everything with Mason, just as Mason had shared everything with it" (325). In doing so, Mason realizes "both the otherness of nature and its continuity with the human self" (Plumwood 160). The fusion obviously shows how deeply and profoundly people's bodies are intertwined with what they throw away. In the fecalith's rubbish corporeality, the fecalith and Mason coalesce into one entity, forming a postnatural dirty nature:

> In the chest of the fecalith, Mason changed. The filth that flowed in its veins now flowed in his through the many tubular and canular connections between them. The fecalith's chest had become a kind of womb in which Mason grew in knowledge. The fecalith fed him of its own strange plasma, nurtured him. Kept him alive. Every union with the fecalith was painful, each penetration of wire or silicone or steel or glass an abhorrence. Mason was deeply fulfilled, though, for he had become one with the new life, the new nature and that was more than he could ever have hoped for. (325-326)

This lurid passage bespeaks the loss of boundaries of self and its absorption into the other as a whole, both heterogeneous and fragmented. This union is like "an enlarged sense of inter-connection between self and others, including the non-human or 'earth' [rubbish] others"

(Braidotti 49). The new relationship with garbage that Mason develops points to the uncanny sense of something being self and other, self and waste.

Garbage Man is preoccupied as much with “rubbish society” as with dirty nature, since “our material waste has always been,” as Brian Thill points out, “inextricably bound to social, political, and economic crises” (27). D’Lacey dauntingly writes of the ways in which a typical consumer society alienates humans from nature, and enforces its definition of pureness, normalcy, and degeneration. The novel articulates that Shreve, existing among the waste of consumer communities, epitomizes a rubbish society and the disgusting side of society’s impure morality. Exploring how waste becomes part of society, literature, and nature, Martin O’Brien contends that “the developed and wealthy societies in the world today should not be construed as ‘consumer societies’ but as ‘rubbish societies’” (5) despite their recycling. Paying attention to inanities of rubbish society, D’Lacey reveals that the rubbish would manifest not only through the decay of the landfill but also via the debasement of hearts and minds. Indeed, waste, garbage, trash, and detritus are all “environmentally degrading and socially menacing” (O’Brien 170). So, the novel presents a rubbish world stuck in the toxic landfill, and three families, Richard and Pamela Smithfield, Kevin and Tamsin Doherty, and Ray and Jenny Wade, who were unable to have affective relations with people and the environment surrounding them. Although the novel evinces a limited range of character types, these characters are all lewd and randy people who display a particularly rubbish cultural identity. The erosion of the community, therefore, depends on perverse obsessions, social deviations, and antisocial alienation. For example, Richard Smithfield, a pervert who likes watching child pornography, “couldn’t drive past a playground or school without giving them a sidelong glance” (13-14). The novel posits this sexual perversity as part of wasted society. Indeed, the events presented are often mundane in themselves: births, deaths, meetings, divorce, marriages, and school. Most lives are obviously an accumulation of banal events. However, the vagaries of consumer life in terms of morality permeate the town. The marriages of Tamsin Doherty and Kevin Doherty, Ray Wade and Jenny Wade, for example, are humdrum, affectless, and desireless ones. “Marriage,” as the narrator asserts, “was like everything else in the World. It revolved around money and power” (11). The novel

makes us realize that the more we understand the prevalence of consumer society's vagaries, the more reprehensible the society's morality becomes. In the example of Agatha Smithfield, who runs away from the insular Shreve town to London in order to become a fashion model, consumer society transforms her body into a wasted object to be consumed. In London, Agatha's life becomes even worse: "It was only her second week in London and already she felt like she'd been there two months. The smell of the city was in her skin now, didn't come off no matter how hard she scrubbed" (138). The dirty air of London makes her corporeality wasted, as she begins to work not as a model but as a prostitute. This situation continues: "Somewhere in the house there was damp rot and every room smelled of mould and sweaty decay. […] Her skin had taken the grey out of the city air. Her sweat smelled stronger, sourer than when she'd lived at home" (223). Dirt in terms of morality implies corruption, sickness, and suffering. People in Shreve, like Agatha, are foreign to themselves as much as to their environment. People are increasingly out of touch with the natural world. With the landfill, the novel illustrates the rottenness within the Shreve society. The society teeters on the brink of both moral and ecological collapse. However, the lethargic sleep permeates the town, as the incinerators of the landfill deposit black, dirty ashes into the atmosphere. People do not want to face what is happening. In this regard, the novel is critical of why the people do not question their predicament. Despite the fact that the inhabitants ignore this ugly landfill, it is impossible to become oblivious, for the toxic landfill creates an "ecosick" environment, and the toxins emanating from the dump site affect vulnerable bodies. The gross landfill is

> [m]ore pregnant with disease than the sewers. Cut yourself on a piece of rusted metal here and the wound would corrupt your entire body with sickness, end your life in a few days. These were the things the people of Shreve might have thought about the landfill, if they'd had a spare moment. And, of course, if they thought about it a little more carefully, they might have realised they were incredibly fortunate such a place existed; a place of severance and forgetting, a place of great convenience where all their waste could be covered over and ignored. (23)

Here, the landfill emerges as a locus of ecosickness, a term, coined by Heather Houser, to describe health problems stemming from industrial practices. For House, ecosickness has a relational position that "links up the biomedical, environmental, social, and ethicopolitical" (11), and interweaves human corporeality and the environment through illnesses. In the

novel, for instance, Donald Smithfield draws attention to the interconnectedness between illnesses and the landfill:

> Shreve had been on national TV today but he'd been too preoccupied to listen properly. He looked up the story on the BBC. – Doctors blame poor waste management for rise in health problems – read the headline. Apparently, Shreve's residents were suffering a far higher than average incidence of migraine, asthma and eye problem. Some hospital consultants in the area were blaming waste-leakage and fumes from the landfill site. During the day, Donald could see the huge dump they were talking about from his bedroom window. A local obstetrician had gone on the record to say he believed a recent and sharp rise in birth defects and childhood leukaemia to be directly related to the landfill. (56-57)

The narrative imbricates the body and the environment through ecosickness, pointing to the permeable boundaries in dirty nature. Of course, it might come as no surprise that under terrible conditions of toxic industrialization all humans might become ecosick. In fact, environmental toxification can make human bodies weaker as well as exhaust the environment. It is no doubt that "at this point in history," as Stacy Alaimo remarks, "all bodies, human and otherwise, are, to greater or lesser degrees, toxic" ("Trans-Corporeal" 260). That is to say, human and nonhuman bodies are susceptible to be ecosick due to pervasive toxicity. At the same time, ecosickness, like dirty nature, dissolves the boundary between the body and the environment. Referring to the toxic waste dump in David Foster Wallace's *Infinite Jest* (1996), Houser argues that the physical condition "articulates the conceptual and material breakdown of the body environment boundary" (123-124). In the period after the destruction of the hybrid monster composed of the fecalith and Mason at the end of the novel, black ashes rising from the scorched landfill make the survivors ecosick, transmogrifying them into a new rubbish species that devour waste to clean the planet. The metamorphoses of Ray and Delilah exemplify this process:

> Her beautifully pal skin was turning black, the black of rubbish sacks. Her hair, silky as crow feathers, was whitening, the same colour as the vein-like threads expanding from his sick-bowl. […] His hand was coal black shot with grey, dentritic capillaries. What flowed inside those veins now? The chalky veins had grown from his fingertips, protruding like shoots. His hand was shaggy with hair-like extensions. (336)

Dirty nature gets its revenge by unleashing a gory fury which destroys the majority of humans. This way, the novel questions if saving and cleansing the environment through monstrous rubbish natures is possible, whether "monstrous natures may be more green than they seem" (Alaimo, "Discomforting" 292). With the help of Mason, the fecalith succeeds in conducting a clean-up operation to eliminate human presence as enemy from the world:

> The world was about to self-cleanse again, the fecalith showed him. Its birth in the depths of the landfill was only an early sign of the change. Mason had been right all along, the fecalith was a new order of life. It came from the dead things humans throw away. Human trash had accumulated to a globally toxic level. Now the Earth was working hard to get rid of the toxicity and its cause. She'd sent a new species to facilitate the operation. The new species could not be destroyed or stopped by humans but that didn't matter. There was new hope – as there always was and always had been – because the Earth would not destroy humankind totally. It would merely bring it to the edge of extinction where, as a species, humanity would learn a valuable new lesson and then rebuild itself better than before. The whole organism of the world would benefit from the cleansing. There was a bright future ahead. (327)

This lesson is the recognition that both human and nonhuman communities totally depend on the environment within which they dwell; hence, the narrative promotes an environmental consciousness, while also exemplifying the very fact that waste becomes part of our life no matter how we strive to shun it. In this respect, D'Lacey puts a greater emphasis upon "interdependence and relatedness in nature," and reflects "an intense desire to restore man to a place of intimate intercourse with the vast organism that constitutes the earth" (Worster 82). *Garbage Man* also presents a palpable critique of capitalism, illustrating that excessive consumption and production do not provide a way out for both the individual and the community. The novel then becomes a refracted mirror through which we consider our contemporary preoccupation with garbage, waste, trash, and rubbish.

Regarding waste essentially as bad, D'Lacey acknowledges that waste is a fundamental actor in producing rubbish ecology and in breaking down the boundaries. Therefore, what D'Lacey ultimately suggests is that the removal and elimination of waste need to be a precondition for human and nonhuman survival in the planet. Otherwise, modern society might be hopelessly corrupted and degraded, both physically and morally, by the repercussions of overconsumption and consumerism.

CONCLUSION

TOWARD A POSTECOLOGICAL PARADIGM AFTER NATURE

"The most alarming of all man's assaults upon the environment is the contamination of air, earth, rivers, and sea with dangerous and even lethal materials." (23)

Rachel Carson, *Silent Spring*

The emerging realities of climate change, escalating pollution and toxicity woven materially into the fabric of all life forms, and globally happening ecocatastrophes today, play a distinctive role in the twenty-first-century British novel. Reworked as a thematic thread, toxicity is a dynamic entity within material and imaginary landscapes because today the earth is replete with "colourful forces, objects, and substances that are endowed with destruction: synthetic matter, chemicals, toxins, migrating viruses, microbes, pesticides, and plastic in varying densities cohabitate in natural and urban environments everywhere" (Oppermann, "Nature's Colors" 164). Thus, environmental toxicity steers the established conventions of nature as stable and untouched in a new direction. One can find this direction in the imaginary reconstructions of lethal zones and bleached landscapes in the econarratives of Jim Crace, John Burnside, and Joseph D'Lacey. Given that "contemporary novelists use chemical substances as a trope for the blurring of boundaries between body and environment, public and domestic space, and harmful and beneficial technologies" (Heise, "Toxins" 748), this study has identified environmental shifts concerning pollution in the twenty-first-century British novel by establishing thematic links between toxicity, ecology, and bodies. In that nexus, Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey respectively investigate three different but related ecologies posited as postnatural in *The Pesthouse*, *Glister*, and *Garbage Man*. These novels project a "postgreen ecology" in which humans can survive, "dark ecology" defined only by negation, and "rubbish ecology" in which nature becomes waste. In this respect, each writer concurs that the novels become literary interfaces that are capable of revealing hidden or visible ecologies of toxicity that is material through their ecological imaginary.

In this trajectory, the novels on which this dissertation has dwelt have demonstrated what will happen when the conventional understandings of nature "go extinct" (McKibben, *End of Nature* 48). In particular, these novels reflect how the multiple ecologies mentioned above emerge out of the uneasy coexistence and tension between culture and the natural realm. These ecologies are articulated through the narratives in such a way that they maintain the complexity of the convergence of the cultural and the natural processes. In other words, postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies raise nature to a postnatural level to demonstrate the inevitable transformation of green landscapes into postnatural environments characterised by toxicity. For instance, Crace's protagonists Franklin and Margaret only survive in a postgreen place where life-giving properties still exist. The pesthouse, in this regard, preserves a real sense of hope in the fallen world of the novel. Or, Burnside writes that the Innertown is a darkening town where the industrial activity encroaches on the natural world through noxious leakage. This barren place is a typical example of dark ecology where death is present for all the inhabitants there. Similarly, D'Lacey reconfigures the town, Shreve, as the locus of the tension between nature, culture, and waste by virtue of an overflowing landfill. This landfill is presented as a rubbish ecology where nature and culture transform into waste. In this regard, each novelist develops a postnatural sense of the world with a focus on how it is reconstructed through pollution. So, they highlight the idea that the outcomes of the postnatural convergence address today's ecological complexity, ushering in a paradigm shift on the relationship with, and the understanding of nature. In this sense, the writers articulate postnatures as a way of coming to terms with the strange, messy, and lethal world.

Postnatural environments, discussed in Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey's selected novels, open up a pathway to the idea that postnature can be an end or a beginning for humans in the ecoapocalyptic world. Each of the novels presents postnature as an end that just brings chaos and loss to the characters. In doing so, the novelists deploy disaster, violence, and death to bring into question how deteriorating environments pose a particular challenge to the human struggle for survival, adaptation, and coexistence. Crace's *The Pesthouse*, for instance, projects a bleak, postnatural world transformed by the virulent plague and by environmental catastrophe. In particular, at the beginning of the novel, a terrible ecocatastrophe erases the

Ferrytown via a noxious atmosphere, leaving behind a dark landscape of dead bodies. After the protagonists, Franklin and Margaret, witness this hellscape, they struggle to make their way in a dangerous, inhospitable world. Similarly, Burnside presents a dark, postindustrial Innertown where the ecodisaster is always occurring as a death process via the defunct plant in *Glister*. The lousy town as a postnatural site slowly decays, affecting everybody. Witnessing the physical and moral carnage that results from this disaster, the protagonist, Leonard, prefers to "stay with the trouble" (1) in Donna Haraway's words. D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*, on the other hand, exemplifies the reimagining of waste as a dangerous, monstrous garbage man, fecalith, which has killed most of the population in Shreve. The protagonist, Mason, serves to reinforce the suggestion that waste is totally destructive and disruptive. As such, the protagonists attempt to make re-attunement to the dying and changing environment as their encounters in postnature discover the uncertainty and disorder of the world. Positing ecodisasters as the fabric of life, these novels can be seen as responding to an ecological anxiety of the human-world relations.

Rather than merely depicting postnatural landscapes as totally dangerous places, that are "lost, broken and destroyed, or … as alien and fantastical" (Garforth 128), Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey envisage a postnatural world that can be both precarious and exuberant, vacillating between hope and despair. Even if they portend death, disruption, and chaos, the postnatural landscapes also emerge as places of recovery and healing, as in the case of *The Pesthouse*, or even shimmering beauty as in *Glister*. Crace offers an in-between place by the example of the pesthouse where Margaret recovers from the contagious flux. Burnside paints a dark portrait of an enclosed Innertown, which epitomizes sickness, toxicity, and death, where toxic chemicals have already mutated both human and nonhuman bodies, forming dark ecology, but Leonard finds a glimpse of beauty there. Unlike Crace and Burnside, however, D'Lacey presents a totally nightmarish scenario in which the waste land of Shreve is described as a destructive force. Only in this novel, the postnatural appears to be a really dark, repulsive, and an alien environment. Notwithstanding this example, the postnatural landscapes in three novels manifest ineradicable relations between humans and the beauty, pain and violence of the world.

Overall, the writers explore the ecoapocalyptic worlds in terms of suffering, pain, death, mutation, and ecosickness. Ecosickness, for instance, emerges as a connected theme among the novels as the poisoned landscapes make almost every human (and also nonhuman) ecosick, which also denotes the ecological interconnectedness through disease. As pointed out by Stacy Alaimo, "[e]nvironmental illness epitomizes that humans are inseparable from their environment – there is no safe place, no possibility of transcending from the nature that is wracked with poison" ("Discomforting" 290-291). Highlighting this very fact in the novels, Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey provide an insight into how toxicity in human and nonhuman bodies is bound to lead to ecosickness. For instance, Crace renders the flux as a kind of ecosickness in *The Pesthouse*, which annihilates much of the population. Crace postulates through the character Margaret how an ecosick body is treated in a post-apocalyptic community. At the beginning of the novel, Margaret suffers from the flux, and thereby is shun from the community, but she later recovers. Burnside also shows how ecosickness permeates human lives in Innertown. He highlights the inevitable death in a dark ecological community by ecosickness. Leonard Wilson's father, James Wilson, who works in the plant, has a suffering ecosick body and dies later in the novel. Like Crace and Burnside, D'Lacey posits that the toxic waste dump of Shreve creates an ecosick environment, for the toxins emanating from the dump site affect vulnerable bodies. Here, Donald Smithfield witnesses ecosick situations on TV news, and then just ignores this very fact. As such, each character becomes an "immersed subject of trans-corporeality" (Alaimo, *Exposed* 158), as toxic ecologies are inextricably entangled with human bodies in the novels.

Joseph D'Lacey in *Garbage Man* spotlights another significant dimension of the postnatural environments by drawing attention to the monstrous nature produced by garbage and thrash that strike back, which is a dimension addressed neither in Crace nor in Burnside. D'Lacey ascribes a kind of monstrous subjectivity to nature itself although it seemingly perpetuates the binaries, nature/culture. Indeed, D'Lacey deploys the fecalith as a malign and punitive killer that cleanses the human scourge as to demonstrate that humans could commit suicide if they continue to treat the environment in the way they do in their quotidian life. In this scenario, maybe, only the monstrous return of nature can change human habits. The fecalith

in the novel is depicted as "monstrous precisely because its life is so enmeshed in death, it is animated death, an abject form of postnatural life, which finds its state of being intolerable, and which vengefully pursues its creator" (Waldby, "Revenants"). As a monstrous entity, hence, the fecalith haunts humanity in Shreve. D'Lacey's rubbish monster here can be read as a metaphor for consumer societies today.

Last but not least, two conclusions can be drawn from the ecoliterary discussions on each text that addresses the scary and desperate visions of the earth's ruined ecosystems. First, the delineations of postgreen, dark, and rubbish ecologies in the chosen novels could be indicative of a "postecological" reality, which pinpoints that no simple account of ecology can be obtained. Rather, one can find in this reality hybrid, social-material worlds where humans and nature could never coexist in harmony, and where humans hardly survive through environmental and social disintegration. The postecological world consists of polluted and ruined sites, postindustrial landscapes transfigured by ecocatastrophes, and shabby and desolate territories that are at once industrial, and inhabited by humans, animals, and plants, as well as green spots. This world could never return to its former state as a beautiful site. Instead, it becomes more disturbing, threatening, and degraded, as it incorporates waste dumps, deforested lands, mines, oil rigs, polluted valleys, dams, and ruins. Thus, the postecological vision is altogether different from that which positions nature outside of the cultural realm. So, underlining this reality, Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey conceive this postecological vision as a "sprawling mesh of interconnection" (Morton, *Ecological* 8), and see "humans, biological organisms, and humanly made substances trans-corporeally connected in multifarious and often dangerous relations" (Oppermann, "Nature's Colors" 165-166). This way, they offer a postecological reality as inextricably entangled with toxicity and the human realm by pointing to the melding of human bodies and toxic environments in a manner that complicates boundary distinctions. These writers' establishment of both resonant and unbeautiful, and both lifeless and vibrant territories as a bulwark against green ecology makes landscapes' postecological status all the more obvious. For instance, what one can find in the novels are toxic landfill, gross suburban, and unbeautiful locales that are juxtaposed by the traditionally accepted contours of nature, such

as grasslands, forests, mountains, rivers. In that respect, presenting different aspect of postnatures, the novelists suggest that postnatural landscapes occupy a contingent space between green and dark ecologies, which becomes a postecological territory of interactions, discovery, and danger.

A second conclusion relates to the way in which Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey's econarratives serve as dark cautionary stories that record contemporary concerns and anxieties for and about the environmental despoliation. Instead of presenting a harmonious green world, the novelists highlight dark ecological truth to show our new ecological connections with postnature and to suggest an end to green nature. As remarked by Serpil Oppermann, the novel has a distinct capacity to "disclose how the discursive constructions of nature shape and condition the human valuation and understanding of the environment" ("Seeking" 243). In this sense, these chosen novels share this concern of how new meanings, new constructions of nature, and new realities transform human-dominated practices. The novels come out of a flexible space within which to negotiate these ideas. In their effort to expand the bounds of the postecological reality, the novelists also deploy what Imre Szeman terms as "eco-apocalypse," a "genre of disaster designed to modify behaviour and transform the social" (816). In all three of these novels, like ecodisasters, ecoapocalypse is foregrounded as a crucial part of the main narrative to articulate the postecolocial reality. So conceived, these novels become a means to warn and inoculate ourselves against the travails and trials of environmental contamination.

All in all, this study concludes that the ecocritical framework acts as a catalyst of change, not only progressing us towards postecological realities that emphasise the mutability of the natural and the cultural in the postnatural landscapes, but also propelling us towards an ecoconscious behaviour. Accordingly, Crace, Burnside, and D'Lacey provide a relational position between ecologies, questioning "[e]ither everything is alive, or nothing is alive; either everything is pulsating flux and flow, autoaffecting and self-transformation, or everything is silence, stillness, and the enigmatic, vacuous hum of nothingness" (Thacker, "Darklife" 318).

NOTES

[1] In *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (2007), Karen Barad offers "diffraction" as a methodological approach that foregrounds connections, interactions, and entanglements between nature and culture, subject and object, discourse and matter, and the human and the nonhuman. As Barad explains it, "unlike methods of reading one text or set of ideas against another where one set serves as a fixed frame of reference, diffraction involves reading insights through one another in ways that help illuminate differences as they emerge: how different differences get made, what gets excluded, and how those exclusions matter" (*Meeting* 30). A diffractive method in this respect suggests that the binaries like nature/culture are not fixed entities, but can be dialogically read through one another as entanglements. Thus, the diffractive methodology can be regarded as a way of deconstructing the dualisms. Barad claims that "diffraction troubles the very notion of dicho-tomy – cutting into two – as a singular act of absolute differentiation, fracturing this from that, now from then" ("Diffracting" 168). In this sense, diffractive readings provide a non-dualistic and relational platform as to engender unexpected insights. For a discussion of diffractive methodology, see Karen Barad's *Meeting the Universe Halfway* and "Diffracting Diffraction"; also see Iris van der Tuin's article "Diffraction as a Methodology for Feminist Onto-Epistemology."

[2] In her book *The Companion Species Manifesto* (2003), Haraway discusses naturalcultural entanglement of humans and animals, and real and artificial entities, while seeing humans and nonhumans as "companion species." She argues that "[c]yborgs and companion species each bring together the human and non-human, the organic and technological, carbon and silicon, freedom and structure, history and myth, the rich and the poor, the state and the subject, diversity and depletion, modernity and postmodernity, and nature and culture in unexpected ways" (4).

[3] Paul Wapner and Steven Vogel respectively elaborate on the concept "postnature" after McKibben's contention. See Wapner's *Living through the End of Nature* (2010), and Vogel's *Thinking like a Mall* (2015).

[4] Susan Signe Morrison classifies these scholars' work as what she calls "Waste Studies," "a field that focuses on filth, rubbish, garbage, litter, refuse, and, yes, excrement […] to offer ethical and moral frameworks for us to pay attention to, understand, and act on bodily, cultural and societal waste – material aspects of our world" ("Postmedieval" 151).

[5] See Lawrence Buell who discusses in detail the emergence of environmental criticism and its historical process in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) using the wave metaphor to describe the phases of ecocriticism.

[6] According to Edwin Battistella, "[f]rom 1979 on," the green "refers to environmentalism broadly, though sometimes writers would signal that they were using the word in a novel way by placing it in scare quotes" ("How"). Although the green exactly corresponds to the idea that there exists such unspoiled and pure places away from toxicity and human impact, Gillian Rudd contends that the term green is the "color of ethical and political awareness, equal respect for the human and nonhuman world, animal, vegetable, and mineral, both collectively … and in its constituent parts as each animal, plant, or landscape is accorded intrinsic worth" (30).

[7] Coined by Paul Crutzen and Eugene F. Stoermer, the term Anthropocene refers to a new geological epoch where humans have become a geological force changing planetary ecosystems. See Crutzen, Paul and Eugene Stoermer, "The Anthropocene." *IGB Global Change Newsletter* 41(May 2000):1-18.

[8] The term dark pastoral is used by Sullivan to describe the "traditional idyllic form's possible alternative to our current petro-cultural consumer societies while attempting to avoid both sentimentalized views of static nature and also the naturalization of existing power structures" (EASLCE Webinar (2015), Sullivan's Introductory lecture).

[9] Andrew Tate suggests that the brothers' surname Lopez means "wolf" in Spanish, reminiscent of the myth Romulus and Remus, and the name is "a quiet-suggestion that a new civilization might be inaugurated by one of these brothers of the wolf" (97). With regard to this metaphoric reading, Tate also states that the name, Franklin, is directly an allusion to Benjamin Franklin, while the name, Jackson, is the reminiscent of Andrew Jackson.

[10] In *The Ecological Thought* (2010), Morton argues that the ecological thought does not at all support a holistic form of nature: "The ecological thought isn't about a superorganism. Holism maintains that the whole is greater than the sum of its parts. 'Nature' tends to be holistic. Unlike Nature, what the ecological thought is thinking isn't more than the sum of its parts" (35).

[11] Complicating what is real or unreal, Morton argues that a "thing exceeds my capacity to grasp it. There is an inevitable gap between how it appears and what it is" ("Specters" 317).

[12] What is interesting here is that Morton sees both human beings and nonhumans as a kind of ghost, a specter which is one of the main elements in the gothic tradition, referring to the invisible side of existence. Talking about spectrality in the gothic literature, Andrew Smith defines a spectre as "an absent presence, a liminal being" (147), while Julian Wolfreys notes that the spectral is "neither alive nor dead" (xi), underlining the liminality of a spectre.

[13] Jeffrey J. Cohen uses inhuman to "emphasize both difference ('in-' as negative prefix) and intimacy ('in-' as indicator of estranged interiority)" (*Stone* 10).

[14] The images, such as the snow, ghosts, cottonwood, and whiteness, are recurrent in Burnside's oeuvre, and, as he highlights it, they are "my existence. I would say that this is where the self who 'already was' dwells" ("John Burnside" 28).

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APPENDIX I: GLOSSARY

Dark ecology: Karanlık ekoloji

Dark green nature: Karanlık yeşil doğa

Denature: Doğasızlaştırmak

Denatured: Doğasız

Depthless ecology: Dipsiz ekoloji.

Diffractive methodology: Kırınımlayıcı yöntem

Dirty nature: Kirli doğa

Dirty theory: Kir kuramı

Ecology without nature: Doğasız ekoloji

Ecoaesthetic: Ekoestetik, çevresel estetik

Ecoapocalypse: Çevresel kıyamet

Ecocatastrophe: Çevresel felaket

Ecodiscourse: Ekosöylem, çevresel söylem

Ecodystopia: Ekodistopya, dönüşen çevreyle ilgili distopyalar

Ecogothic: Çevresel gotik

Ecogrief: Doğanın yokoluşundan kaynaklanan keder

Ecohorror: Çevresel korku

Ecolament: Doğanın yokoluşuna ağıt yakma

Ecosickness: Ekohastalık, çevreden kaynaklı hastalık

End of nature discourse: Doğanın sonu söylemi

Environmental melancholy: Çevreden kaynaklı melankoli

Green ecology: Yeşil ekoloji

Mesh: Ekolojik ağ örgüsü

Monstrous nature: Canavar doğa

Naturalcultural: Doğalkültürel

Postecology: Ekolojisonrası

Postgreen: Yeşilsonrası

Postnature: Doğasonrası

Postnatural: Doğasonrası

Postnaturalism: Doğasonrasıllık

Rubbish ecology: Çöp ekolojisi

Rubbish society: Çöp toplumu

Spectrality: Hayalsellik

Strange stranger: Yabansı yabancı

Supernature: Doğaüstü çevre

Toxic body: Toksik beden

Thing-power: Nesne-gücü

Trans-corporeal: Bedenler-arası

Vitality: Dirimsellik

Waste studies: Atık çalışmaları

APPENDIX II: ORIGINALITY REPORTS

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
DOKTORA TEZ ÇALIŞMASI ORİJİNALLİK RAPORU

HACETTEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ
İNGİLİZ DİLİ VE EDEBİYATI ANABİLİM DALI BAŞKANLIĞI'NA

Tarih: 28/06/2018

Tez Başlığı : Postnatural Environments: Literary Cartographies of Pollution in Jim Crace's *The Pesthouse*, John Burnside's *Glister*, and Joseph D'Lacey's *Garbage Man*

Yukarıda başlığı gösterilen tez çalışmamın a) Kapak sayfası, b) Giriş, c) Ana bölümler ve d) Sonuç kısımlarından oluşan toplam 127 sayfalık kısmına ilişkin, 22/06/2018 tarihinde tez danışmanım tarafından Turnitin adlı intihal tespit programından aşağıda işaretlenmiş filtrelemeler uygulanarak alınmış olan orijinallik raporuna göre, tezimin benzerlik oranı % 2 'dir.

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1- ☒ Kabul/Onay ve Bildirim sayfaları hariç
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3- ☒ Alıntılar hariç
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5- ☒ 5 kelimeden daha az örtüşme içeren metin kısımları hariç

Hacettepe Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü Tez Çalışması Orijinallik Raporu Alınması ve Kullanılması Uygulama Esasları'nı inceledim ve bu Uygulama Esasları'nda belirtilen azami benzerlik oranlarına göre tez çalışmamın herhangi bir intihal içermediğini; aksinin tespit edileceği muhtemel durumda doğabilecek her türlü hukuki sorumluluğu kabul ettiğimi ve yukarıda vermiş olduğum bilgilerin doğru olduğunu beyan ederim.

Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

28/06/2018

Adı Soyadı:	Kerim Can Yazgünoğlu
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HACETTEPE UNIVERSITY
GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
Ph.D. DISSERTATION ORIGINALITY REPORT

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES
DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

Date: 28/06/2018

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ADVISOR APPROVAL

APPROVED.

Prof. Dr. Serpil Oppermann

APPENDIX III: ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORMS

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3. Beden bütünlüğüne müdahale içermemektedir.
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Gereğini saygılarımla arz ederim.

28/06/2018

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ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE DEPARTMENT

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2. Does not necessitate the use of biological material (blood, urine, biological fluids and samples, etc.).
3. Does not involve any interference of the body's integrity.
4. Is not based on observational and descriptive research (survey, interview, measures/scales, data scanning, system-model development).

I declare, I have carefully read Hacettepe University's Ethics Regulations and the Commission's Guidelines, and in order to proceed with my thesis according to these regulations I do not have to get permission from the Ethics Board/Commission for anything; in any infringement of the regulations I accept all legal responsibility and I declare that all the information I have provided is true.

I respectfully submit this for approval.

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