Ecocritical Negotiations of Migration in Contemporary Postcolonial Anglophone Fictions

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Abstract

The thesis *Ecocritical Negotiations of Migration in Contemporary Postcolonial Anglophone Fictions* deals with the connections between the fields of ecocriticism and migration within the framework of postcolonial studies. The aim is to illustrate in which ways environmental aspects and migration are interlinked in thirteen chosen novels to gain a deeper understanding of the concepts that link both fields. As the urgency of the climate crisis and increasing migration numbers move into the centre of attention in general discourse, a literary approach offers another access to the fields. Within the categories of colonialism and remaining structures, environmental destruction and pollution, displacement, and diaspora, violence and conflict, and notions of home and imagining alternative ways of acting the intersections of ecocriticism and migration are illuminated. This highlights the importance of widening the points of view on both topics, including diverse voices and imagining alternatives. Considering the world as a holistic entity offers the possibility to create new assumptions about inherent structures.

1. Introduction

1.1 Ecological Thought and Migration – Uniting Two Major Issues in Contemporary Times

Current debates centre around the effects of climate change and connected issues of migration. The 2021 Groundswell Report captioned "Climate Change Could Force 216 Million People to Migrate Within Their Own Countries by 2050" finds that climate change is an increasingly potent driver of migration and calls for immediate action to reduce global emissions (World Bank 2021, online). The dissertation thesis *Ecocritical Negotiations of Migration in Contemporary Postcolonial Anglophone Fictions* aims at uniting the fields of ecocriticism and migration within the scope of postcolonial studies to find interdependencies. It highlights the importance of considering the correlations between environmental topics and migration. Accordingly, the trend has also reached the literary sector, as recently published works deal with the links between both topics. Therefore, in this thesis, contemporary novels from different regions with a British colonial background are analysed in order to compare the forms and functions of the ecocritical negotiation of migration dealt with in the novels. The goal is to investigate the interdependence of different

ecological aspects of human movements and mobility and their sources. For this reason, answers are sought to the question of the beginnings of the relationship between migration and ecology, but also to how interconnections of migration and the environment are expressed in general and in literature in particular. On what fields does this touch? And what relevance does this connection have for our everyday life and political and societal developments? Hence, the research on this topic not only aims at illuminating a fairer division of natural resources but also broadens the scope to interspecies relationships and possibilities for more human equality.

Climate change and ecological consciousness are among the most relevant topics in recent times[1] and are discussed in the media or politics and becoming increasingly important in everyday life. The widely known speeches and actions of climate activist Greta Thunberg highlight not only the urgency of her concerns but also show how an image and a narrative can change people´s thinking and influence many people. The worldwide protests of Fridays for Future,[2] as well as more drastic forms of protest, clearly depict such an effect. In this context, also literary works on environmental topics and their relation to humans gain importance. “The value of imaginative literature as cultural ecology lies in its becoming a means to discuss important political issues more freely and openly than politics can, through the power of example, but also through the capacity of literature to imagine alternative worlds, in which the wrongs of society are challenged and sometimes even put right in the possible world constructed in the book” (Draga Alexandrou 2017, 39f). Therefore, the current debates on climate are mirrored in literary texts. Thereby contemporary novels deal with recent developments in the ecocritical debate, but also older texts offer insights into the human-nature relationship. Eckstein argues

> that, in fact, all literary forms, every literary piece within those genres, need reinterpretations as genres of climate change. Imagery, plot, characterization of self and humanity in the long history of Earth, recognition of or assumptions about life-sustaining water and food, moral codes, articulation or avoidance of encounters with other species, understanding of the sound and sense of our languages as human habitat, exploration of the media of expression: all this and more need reinterpretations that contribute to the necessary composition of humans’ relationship with the Earth. (Eckstein 2014, 253)

These changes also lead to migration for which reason this is another crucial topic in recent times, as the numbers of people on the move increase. Considering only the statistics of displaced people, the numbers have grown from about 40 million at the turn of the

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[1] See also the *State of the Global Climate 2023* by WMO in Appendix (WMO 2024, online).
[2] Fridays for Future is an international organization that fights against the climate crisis and ecological breakdown (cf. Fridays for Future 2024, online).

millennium to over 100 million in the year 2022 (UNHCR 2023, online).[3] Migration has many causes; however, the changes in the natural environment and the connected competition for natural resources often provoke migration movements of different forms. Many media representations of migration movements currently focus on the scale and number of people on the move, often disregarding the complexity and diversity that are included in the reasons for migrating. These simplified and generalized depictions leave out essential points of consideration. Thus, there are strong intersections of the fields of migration and the natural environment, which can be found in many aspects and forms of movement. Forced migration, displacement, voluntary migration, or the escape from natural catastrophes can all represent such phenomena. With as many forms of migration as exist, so are there as many impacts they can have on the environment. Thus, the points of contact are multifaceted and reach into different areas of psychological, political, or social dimensions.

This is why exploring ecocritical negotiations of migration in fiction offers an interesting perspective into the connections and intersections of migration and the natural environment. The advantages that an analysis of fictional texts offer are several. On the one hand, it offers an insight into general ideas and attitudes that were common at the time it was published, such as political directions, social trends, or important special events, for example, natural catastrophes. Also, fictional texts can be read as a criticism of actions or opinions on the level of politics or social inequalities. On the other hand, fiction opens up a multitude of personal perspectives within the many characters of the work that can not only stand for general ideas and positions and criticism of them but also for very personal experiences that are mostly excluded in political or social debates about migration and environmental issues, as these cannot be applied to a large group of people. This is exactly the benefit that a fictional text offers—that it includes general and individual aspects of a topic that can be applied to some people or groups in reality but are sometimes very unique. Also, they can create visions of improving life on earth by connecting past, present, and future.

Before showing how the intersections of migration and environmentalism are treated in fictional texts, the following subchapters clarify specific terminology that is important throughout this work for a common understanding. Thereafter, previous research on

[3] Of this number internally displaced people form the largest group with over 60 million and most displaced people originate from Syria, Ukraine or Afghanistan (UNHCR 2023, online). The corresponding statistics are attached in the appendix of this thesis.

connections between nature and migration is put into the context of this approach before closing the first chapter by highlighting the importance of considering different perspectives when dealing with the topics of ecocriticism and migration. Chapter 2 focuses on the general context of ecocriticism and migration, explaining both fields of study in more detail but also connecting them to the concept of postcolonial studies. The essential theories for analysing ecocritical aspects of migration in the selected fictional texts are discussed in chapter 3 by outlining different concepts that are drawn from interdisciplinary scholarship. This theoretical focus is followed by a deeper analysis of five novels in chapter 4. These novels include *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh (2008), *Oil on Water* by Helon Habila (2011), *The Swan Book* by Alexis Wright (2013), *The Wall* by John Lanchester (2019), and *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King (2017). In chapter 5, the theoretical concepts found in novels are compared and again reconnected to the main topic of ecocritical negotiations of migration by applying them to further contemporary novels. These novels include Amitav Ghosh´s *Gun Island* (2019), Kate Grenville´s *The Secret River* (2018), Tanure Ojaide´s *The Activist* (2006), Tara June Winch´s *The Yield* (2020), Charlotte McConaghy´s *Migrations* (2020), Cynan Jones´ *Stillicide* (2019), Ramabai Espinet´s *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), and Tanya Tagaq´s *Split Tooth* (2018). This thesis concludes with chapter 6 by summarizing and recapitulating the different aspects and theories that interlink ecocriticism and migration and offering answers to the research questions.

The novels *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh, *Oil on Water* by Helon Habila, *The Wall* by John Lanchester, *The Swan Book* by Alexis Wright, and *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King serve as main examples of literary works that deal with environmental issues and related migration movements. Hence, the focus of the analysis will lie on those five novels, although other relevant texts will be mentioned and put into context. All of the novels can be understood as postcolonial texts in which the impacts of British colonialism play an important role. Their settings in India, Nigeria, Britain, Australia, and Canada all are connected to Britain´s colonial history, but also further examples share this characteristic. The choice of novels from different world regions will offer the possibility of comparing the differences and similarities of environmentalism and migration in similar, but still different contexts. Therefore, the forms of negotiation on nature and migration in this thesis offer a more complete overview of the considered works of fiction.

In Amitav Ghosh´s novel *Sea of Poppies* (2008), nature and migration represent the main topics, as the characters are displaced from their homes in India and migrate to Mauritius in order to find a better life. Nature plays a role for most of the characters, as

colonial politics destroy the natural resources of the main characters in order to plant poppies for opium. Hence, colonization practices stand at the core of this narrative. These circumstances of displacement motivate several characters to migrate across the Indian Ocean to Mauritius. Environmental aspects play a role in Ghosh´s novel not only through the planting of poppies and opium as a natural product but also in other contexts. For example, the French family of Paulette migrated to India in order to explore the natural environment, classify its flora, and create botanical gardens.

Migration and environmentalism are also dealt with in Helon Habila´s *Oil on Water* (2011). The novel describes different perspectives on the oil companies´ actions in Nigeria, including the displacement of native people and environmental pollution. Therefore, environmental justice is a main topic of this narrative, as well as the violence that is often connected to matters of injustice. An interesting aspect of the novel is its focus on the media representation of migration and the destruction of nature. As media plays an important role in and for current debates on both topics, it is crucial to approach this factual matter also in a fictional context.

The novel *The Swan Book* (2013) by Alexis Wright serves as an Australian example of a contemporary novel, uniting aspects of migration and ecocriticism within a postcolonial perspective. The central plot deals with dispossession, displacement, and climate refugees. The novel is set in the near future and depicts Australia as a climate change-torn country where nature is destroyed, and people and animals have to migrate in order to survive. The Swans thereby embody many aspects of the described topics, including the central issues of migration and ecocriticism, but also of myths, legends, and societal aspects in a country still influenced by the impacts of colonialism.

In John Lanchester´s *The Wall* (2019), a similar world is depicted in which climate change has altered societies and world orders. Thereby, the focus is placed on Britain, which protects itself with a huge wall around its landmass as one of the last safe countries outside of which there is only chaos. Besides the main topic of climate change, frontiers and violence also play an essential role in this novel, as the narration centres around the conflicts of the inhabitants of safe Britain and the migrants who desperately search for a safe place to live.

In Thomas King´s *The Back of The Turtle* (2017), environmentalism and migration are viewed from a different angle. Through different environmental circumstances and ecological disasters, the main characters move back to their origins and therefore migrate in an opposite direction: not away, but back. Thereby, belonging and home are pivotal aspects

of the novel as well as the multitude of perspectives, mainly the Western capitalist point of view and the Indigenous one that are in contrast with each other.

Concisely, this work will analyse the relationship between humans and their environment through different aspects of movement and settlement on Earth. Thereby, human-nature contacts within the concept of migration will be viewed through various interdisciplinary theories that are also connected to the field of postcolonial studies. The aim is to point out the function of literary texts in this context and illustrate diverse perspectives on the connected issues.

1.2 Terminology

In order to sharpen the various aspects of this thesis that are included in the interdependence between migration and environmental matters, different theoretical concepts need to be considered. The main theories of ecocriticism, migration studies, and postcolonialism are explained in detail in chapter 2. However, other important terms are mentioned and therefore explained briefly in this chapter to gain the same understanding. As a result, the difficulty of the interdisciplinarity of this topic should be considered first. Schmidt states that “inter- and transdisciplinarity urge us to rethink our thinking and to reframe our framing of nature; also, they compel us to reflect on and change our practice in science, research, and education” (2022, 12f). He makes the important observation that through combining multiple disciplines, totally new ideas arise. Interdisciplinarity became popular at the end of the twentieth century and stands in a strong context to environmentalism, as this field also became popular during this time. He states, “Interdisciplinarity has served as a synonym, first, for a cultural and social critique of knowledge production and specifically for a critique of the sciences within society and their view of nature and, second, for the engagement of the academic system in bettering socio-ecological praxis and poiesis of the human–nature relation” (Schmidt 2022, 2). Therefore, per se, historically seen there is a connection between interdisciplinarity and environmentalism. This makes sense, however, because no matter how strongly interdisciplinarity is criticised as hype without a critical momentum (cf. Schmidt 2022, 1), the approach gains its authority through the innovative findings that have come into being. An application of interdisciplinarity into many fields of studies makes sense since all of them can profit from it. Therefore, interdisciplinarity is not only relevant for environmental topics but also for migration studies as a field in social sciences, politics, or literary studies.

An important underlying concept of this work is new historicism, which represents a literary theory that aims to understand history through literature and its cultural context. This postmodern approach to history was shaped especially by the ideas of Stephen Greenblatt in the 1980s. Veeser states, "New Historicism has given scholars new opportunities to cross the boundaries separating history, anthropology, art, politics, literature, and economics" (Veeser 1989, ix). This acknowledges the assumption that using the opportunities of uniting allegedly separated fields of study opens up many new perspectives and insights so that the connecting points between literary works and historical events are important devices of research. Greenblatt further says, "Literary criticism has a familiar set of terms for the relationship between a work of art and the historical events to which it refers: we speak of allusion, symbolization, allegorization, representation, and above all mimesis" (1989, 11). Greenblatt underlines the importance of developing means of describing how reality is transferred into different discursive spheres and becomes aesthetic property and vice versa, meaning that social discourse and aesthetic discourse are bound up and determine each other (Greenblatt 1989, 11). This conception is crucial when analysing the connecting points of environmentalism and migration, as both phenomena are strongly interwoven with history. When looking at migration movements in literary fiction, the historical and cultural context is relevant as well in the sphere in which the text is set, as well as in the sphere in which the text was written. The same applies to environmental matters. Furthermore, what is meant by historical and cultural context often already includes the links that these two fields have.

The current period is often labelled as the Anthropocene. This term, introduced by the geologist Stoermer and made popular by the climate scientist Crutzen in 2000, highlights the current human impact on nature by appointing the human footprint as the central characteristic of this geological epoch (Rolston 2017, 62). In this "Age of Man", many factors, such as degrading environments, biodiversity loss, or the growth of agriculture, represent the modes through which humans shape the world (Rolston 2017, 62f). Therefore, the notion of the Anthropocene synergizes these matters. Rightly, however, Nixon questions if the Anthropocene can "help rouse citizens and governments to act for long- term, concerted change" (Nixon 2011, 11), meaning that labelling a problem does not always help to provoke change:

> Critics worry that, though the intentions sound high, they have an immoral trailer. "Forward for me and my kind!" "Save nature for people, not from people." That could be as much the problem as the answer. The subtext seems to be the "old myths" that wildlife or ecosystems or biodiversity or evolutionary creative genesis have goods of their own, intrinsic value worth protecting. Essentially this puts Homo sapiens as the first, if not the only, location of moral relevance. Justice is just-us. This

> is the Anthropocene, and too bad for the non-anthropic. Anthropocene proponents are concerned to get people fed, even if doing so drives tigers and butterflies into extinction. (Rolston 2017, 69)

As human agency affects everything on Earth, including its geological patterns, it is clear that environmental topics always need to be considered within this frame of the Anthropocene. Also, migration is connected to this epoch, as changes in nature mean an alternation of the basis of existence or even make places uninhabitable.

The concepts that are explained above already mirror the difficulty of interdisciplinarity that will also be relevant for other parts throughout this work. So far, ideas and theories from natural sciences, social sciences, and the humanities have found their way into this occupation with ecocritical negotiations of migration. Often these interdisciplinary viewpoints are compatible or complete one another; however, sometimes there are also contradictory statements that need to be compromised in order to do justice to different fields of study.

1.3 Research on Ecocritical Negotiation of Migration

Environment and migration can be connected in different ways and from different points of view. Many approaches come from the field of social studies, as causes and effects of environmental issues as well as migration matters have strong impacts on society. Within this frame, McLeman and Gemenne (2018) describe the development as the following: "Environmental migration scholarship has evolved considerably from its 19th century origins and is today best described by two key characteristics. First is an increasing and ongoing engagement between researchers specifically interested in the migration outcomes of environmental phenomena with the much larger and wider body of migration and refugee research that looks at the socio-economic causes and implications" (12). However, the connection between the fields of environmental studies and migration studies has not been researched for a long period.

> It was not until the 1970s and 1980s, when a series of catastrophic famines and natural disaster events struck countries in Africa and Asia, that significant numbers of scholars began investigating the question of how environment and migration may be connected. Even then, most of the published research was carried out by researchers and NGOs not historically engaged in migration research, resulting in the emergence and popularization of terms like 'environmental refugees' that continue to be used by media, policymakers, and the general public, to the frustration of many social scientists. It was only with the emergence of the UNFCCC process and the sustained attention given to climate change impacts in successive Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) reports that social

> scientists, legal scholars and others outside the traditional natural hazards research community began studying EMD[4] systematically. (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 4f)

This shows that the awareness of connections between the environment and migration arose only at the end of the twentieth century and with the establishment of non-governmental organisations (NGOs). This had the effect that these matters were better researched and taken more seriously.

> Scholars such as political scientist Thomas Homer-Dixon (1991) and ecologist Norman Myers (1993) warned of environmental conflicts and environmental refugees to come in future decades. A story about environmental degradation, conflict, and refugees in West Africa published in the February, 1994, issue of the Atlantic Monthly, bearing the title "The Coming Anarchy", was required reading in Bill Clinton's White House (Dabelko and Dabelko 1995). By 2003, the US government was commissioning studies of the security implications of climate change (Schwartz and Randall 2003), and on two subsequent occasions the UN Security Council debated the international security implications of climate change. (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 5)

From there on, the knowledge of the connections of environment and migration provoked an effect on politics and other fields of research. "The high-quality research that has been done in the past decade or so has successfully persuaded policymakers and the concerned public that environmental change, mobility, migration patterns, and human security can no longer be thought of in isolation" (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 5). Consequently, the fields of study have been connected in many ways and in different contexts. This development is also observed by the European Association for the Study of Literature, Culture, and Environment. In 2016, the international conference on *The Environment and Human Migration: Rethinking the Politics of Poetry* dealt with questions of how the environmental crisis and intensifying migration movements are interrelated (easlce 2016, online). With its focus on poetry, the conference considered links between environmental and migratory issues in the larger framework of poetics, ethics, and politics, especially highlighting the influence of poetry on the latter (easlce 2016, online). This illustrates the importance of considering the topics of ecocriticism and migration in each other´s context.

Despite this newer development, there were earlier attempts at connecting environment and migration. For example, one twentieth-century scholar viewed environmental aspects as factors of migration:

> One of Ratzel's students, the American scholar Ellen Churchill Semple (1903, 1911), further developed Ratzel's theories by arguing that the natural environment was a key determinant of the

[4] McLeman and Gemenne have abbreviated ´environmental migration and displacement´ to EMD.

> historical evolution of global population patterns and, more controversially, of the social and economic success of nations and of racial groups. Her contemporary Ellsworth Huntington (1913, 1924) argued that climate change was responsible for many historical migrations and the collapse of civilizations, and combined maps of global climate regions with selected industrial output data to suggest that temperate climates were more likely to produce industrious people than hot, tropical climates. (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 8).

These approaches to the connections between the two fields about 100 years ago show interesting ideas towards the early research done on this topic.

Accordingly, environmental negotiations of migration have found their way into the field of literary and cultural studies. Although not all approaches name the connection directly, several studies and theories deal with the interconnectedness of both fields. For example, previously published dissertations have dealt with postcolonial ecocriticism and/or migration, e.g., Hanna Straß-Senol´s dissertation *Stories of pollution: narrating toxicity in postcolonial contexts* (2015) or Shane Donelly Hall´s *War by other means: Environmental violence in the 21st century* (2017). Straß-Senol focuses on ecocritical aspects of environmental pollution and environmental justice. In her work, she analyses literary negotiations of chemical or radioactive pollution from different regions within the context of the *postcolonial toxic Gothic*. Hence, Straß-Senol´s dissertation contains important aspects of ecocritical negotiations of environmental pollution, colonial oppression, and capitalism. However, the dissertation does not place a special focus on the connection between ecocriticism and human movements, as it only touches lightly on the topic of migration. Donelly Hall´s dissertation deals with environmental military violence in the U.S. and touches on militarism, climate change, and environmental justice. Through the choice of literary works the dissertation also covers the topic of migration, as the death of migrants on the Mexican-U.S. border is discussed, as well as the figure of the environmental refugee as paradigmatic in the climate change discourse. Therefore, Donelly Hall discussed topics similar to ecocritical negotiations of migration. The focus, however, remains on a military perspective within the literature of the United States and therefore is limited to a very specific context. Another example is Rina Garcia Chua´s dissertation *Migrant Ecocriticism: Unbinding Movements and Spaces in Anthologies of Ecopoetry* from the year 2022. Her thesis focuses on poetic negotiations through the method of migrant reading practice in order to reimagine, reconceptualise, and reconstruct territorialized and Euro-American concepts in ecocriticism. This approach deals with anthologies of poetry but offers a similar perspective on the topics.

The difference between previous works on environment and migration issues and this thesis is mainly one of complexity. It includes more than one aspect of the interconnectedness of environment and migration and analyses them in different contexts. This means that on the one hand, broader understandings of environment and migration are included, and on the other hand, the contexts of the literary works are widened to several world regions and different perspectives of different authors.

1.4 Matters of Perspectivity in Ecocritical Fiction of Migration

A central objective of this work is to include a multitude of perspectives on the intersections of environmentalism and migration. Therefore, perspectivity will refer to many different, but not comparable, points of view that aim at gathering diverse ideas. This makes the overall picture of ecocritical negotiations of migration more complete. General distinctions can be made by showing how perspectives from so-called Western cultures and non-Western cultures, the Global North and the Global South, and Indigenous and non-Indigenous (indigeneity studies) points of view vary from each other. On a different level, the human perspective on nature, in general, needs to be scrutinized and connected to the question of whether nature can speak for itself. Strongly connected is the matter of animal perspective that deals with similar questions.

The first aspect of perspectivity arises from the question of how different cultural backgrounds play into fictional representations of ecological issues and migration. As the general topics of environmentalism and migration in the scientific context were mostly situated in Western cultures, many authorities in these fields also represent ideas from these cultures.

> A second characteristic is a broadening in the range of disciplines interested in environmental migration questions, bringing to EMD research many talented groups of people who historically were not represented. Environmental migration was once a relatively obscure corner of scholarship, primarily of interest to small numbers of demographers, economists, ecologists, geographers, and the occasional political scientist. The subject now engages researchers from an ever-widening spectrum of disciplines such as computer modelling, gender studies, history, human rights, international development, law, media studies, medicine, philosophy, and psychology. (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 12)

This interest in different disciplines highlights the importance of perspectivity, as the fields are negotiated from different points of view.

A major distinction can be made between a Western or Eurocentric view in contrast to Indigenous perspectives. In many cases, Indigenous peoples still live parts of their traditional life strongly connected to nature. "Not least, many indigenous knowledges are intimately bound up with some of the world's most biodiverse regions. In the case of South America, for example, approximately 80 percent of the continent's biodiversity is to be found in indigenous territories. Indigenous knowledge is therefore a highly important sources of nonhumanistic ontological frameworks constructed over millennia in concert with complex, many-sided systems." (Cooke 2018, 2). This highlights the fact that there is a level on which a connection between Indigenous people, their perspectives, and nature is presupposed. In contrast, there are also voices that view this assumption as problematic, since it can be viewed as a myth of an ecological Indian that does not depict reality (cf. Kuester 2020, 144). Moss sees this image as rooted in the nineteenth-century image of the ´noble savage´ that shows Native peoples of North America as "closely associated with a land ethic based on a supposedly non-invasive relationship with the natural world." (Moss 2020, 157). To emphasise this, several famous examples of Indigenous leaders and activists that held environmentally friendly speeches, such as Black Elk, Chief Joseph, or Chief Seattle, reinforced this image (Moss 2020, 158). Thereby, this image should be viewed critically though, as it is mostly a very one-sided depiction of Indigenous people (Moss 2020, 157). As an example, Moss mentions the polar bear hunt of Inuit people who see this as their traditional right but neglect critical voices that point to the lack of traditional knowledge of many hunters and the general changes of the environment that lead to quasi-extinction of the polar bear in some regions (Moss 2020, 166). Furthermore, there are problems within some Native communities, as they are "increasingly torn between traditional band members asserting what they perceive to be their Indigenous rights and environmentally inclined traditional members criticizing the trespassing of an ecological – and also traditional – taboo." (Moss 2020, 168). This shows that for different reasons Indigenous peoples often can behave non-ecologically and this needs to be considered if the conservation of nature and animals is a general goal, for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people.

For the reasons explained above, it is important to consider how to negotiate Indigenous narratives from a Western perspective. This includes handling Indigenous points of view as equivalent to others and with the equal necessity to criticise aspects that have no proper basis. Kuester, for example, writes that

> interpreting First Nations Canadians and their attitudes towards ecological questions seems to put European scholars at the double disadvantage of, firstly, not being Canadian and of, secondly, not

being Native North American, and so a European approach like mine will have to bear in mind Pamela Banting´s statement that "engagement with First Nations orature, literature, and theory about the natural world must begin with the question to what extent existing ecocritical theories and practices are imbued with ´settler´ ideology, investments, and blindspots." (Kuester 2020, 142)

This highlights the importance of a sensitive handling of other perspectives from a European point of view. Therefore, Moss claims that one should question Western environmental ethics in order to appreciate the meaning of traditional practices before the European invasion (Moss 2020, 163). This, as well as her plea for Native and non-Native people to cooperate in questions of environmentalism, is crucial advice for handling this topic (Moss 2020, 169).

Another important aspect when considering nature in fictional texts is the perspective of nature itself. Therefore, it is interesting to question if nature can speak for itself and in which ways. For example, there is a crucial difference between not speaking about nature, but speaking for nature (Coupe 2000, 4 – in Green Studies Reader). This shows that there is a difference in representing perspectives of nature and perspectives for nature. What is also important is the "distinction between natural history and human history" (Chakrabarty 2009, 201). When considering aspects of the natural environment, history can deviate from the perspective of human history. Emanating from the idea of new historicism, which deals with the understanding of history through literature and the cultural context (cf. chapter 1.2), the perspective on and of nature in literary texts forms a central means in the understanding of natural history, also in the context of migration.

The concept of speciesism deals with the differences of species. It can be defined as "discrimination against individuals on the basis of their species membership, taken to be morally relevant" (Corbey and Lanjouw 2013, 1). So, speciesism engages itself in drawing lines between different species and giving them a hierarchical order dependent on their morals. "The concept was coined in the early 1970s by analogy to racism, sexism, and classism." (Corbey and Lanjouw 2013, 1). Corbey and Lanjouw (2013) argue for a respectful coexistence of different species through "the ability to share resources and space, as well as to respect each other's needs and self. The expression implies an acknowledgment of moral and social relevance. It has connotations of concern, heedfulness, care, and regard for the other" (2013, 2). Departing from this, another perspective should be included, namely the perspective of animals. As is the question with nature itself, one might ask if animals have their own perspective in fictional texts and how this is constructed. Following the previous argumentation, it is also important to consider the animal perspective as part of the natural

perspective, but also as one's own. For some of the analysed novels in chapter 4, the perspective of an animal or a group of animals should be considered in the discussion of migration. Therefore, it is crucial to reflect on matters from this perspective. Fiamengo considers the questions "what it means to speak of realism, accuracy, or avoidance of anthropocentrism in writing about animals. To what extent can writers bridge the species divide, and are there techniques of writing that help them do so? Or can we, indeed, never do anything more than speak of ourselves? Are animals always symbols for human meanings, or can they be both symbols and themselves" (Fiamengo 2007, 13)? These questions are at the core of considerations of perspectivity and animals. Similarly to the perspective on and of nature, the perspective on and of animals plays a central role in ecocritical negotiations of migration.

Therefore, one needs to consider how humans see animals. This has changed in many cases in the last years, but the relationship is still often very ambivalent: "mass species extinctions, as well as the pervasive cruelties of the factory farm and the laboratory, have led many of us to confront the contradictions in our relations with animals, who are often both cherished family members and factory raised and slaughtered food on the table—at times loved and wept over; at other times ignored" (Fiamengo 2007, 3). Hence, the ambiguity of the human-animal relationship always resonates in accounts of and about animals. What is more, "many of the cognitive domains formerly reserved to human beings alone—emotions, communication, versatile behaviour, tool use, even forms of self-consciousness—are actually shared, though in widely divergent forms, across many species" (Fiamengo 2007, 3). This makes many characteristics that were thought of as uniquely human shared features of humans and other species. Therefore, the perspective on animals has changed yet again, as humans realise that they have more in common with animals than part of their DNA. In the context of migration, animals share central features with humans. Many animal species migrate not only temporally for a certain season, but increasingly loss of habitat or climate change displaces animals and forces them to find new spaces to live. "Without migration, understood as the spatiotemporal and/or metabolic movements and displacements of organisms and populations, usually from energy-poor to energetically rich milieus, life forms would not achieve the necessary equilibrium to exist" (Sohn and Cordova Gonzalez 2019, 160). From an interdisciplinary point of view (animal) migration is "is an indispensable and fundamental factor that not only guarantees the immediate survival of a population, but that it also propels difference and change over time, thus ensuring genetic variation among populations, and ultimately, contributing to the evolution of life forms" (Sohn/Cordova

Gonzalez 2019, 160). These aspects should be considered when including animal perspectives in the ecocritical negotiations of migration.

To sum up this subchapter on perspectivity, the distinction, as well as the inclusion of different points of view play a central role in ecocritical negotiation of migration. In several aspects, perspectives from the Global North and the Global South deviate significantly from each other. The Indigenous point of view, which has often been excluded from general discourse in the past, represents another important perspective on nature and migration. Lastly, nature and animals as a central topic of this thesis represent their own category of perspective which is more complex to grasp, as they cannot speak for themselves. For the analysed novels in chapter 4, all perspectives play an important role; however, not every perspective is part of every novel. For example, Indigenous points of view form the basis for Alexis Wright´s *The Swan Book*, whereas John Lanchester´s *The Wall* focuses on perspectives from the Global North.

2. A postcolonial perspective on ecocriticism and migration

This chapter focuses on the theoretical conceptualisations of ecocriticism and migration and their connections to the overarching field of postcolonialism. Therefore, each field is described individually and then connected to postcolonial studies. The chapter is structured by depicting ecocriticism in the first subchapter. This is followed by an outline of postcolonial studies and the connection of both fields in the second subchapter. The third subchapter offers a short overview of prominent examples of nature writing and general tendencies in this context. Similarly, the subchapter on migration first defines and describes this field of study, and the following subchapter connects these aspects to postcolonialism. In the last subchapter of chapter 2, examples of literary texts on migration are negotiated.

2.1 Ecocriticism

The interdependence in the ever-existing relationship between humans and nature has been described by humans for a long time. Despite developments in technology and industrialisation, the dependence on nature that bears food and the basis for life has not changed considerably. The perpetual task of protecting nature as the basis of life also means protecting human existence. In this immense task, literary texts play a role by pointing out

nuisances like exploitation or destruction of nature but also by depicting alternative modes of life.

The field of ecocriticism is located within literary studies and includes a broad scope of perspectives that deal with aspects of literature and environmental issues. Glotfelty (2015) defines it as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (122). Although this definition has been criticised and extended many times, it overall still captures the central idea. Buell, Heise, and Thornber (2011) describe ecocriticism in more detail and define it as an "eclectic, pluriform, and cross-disciplinary initiative that aims at exploring the environmental dimensions of literature and other creative media in a spirit of environmental concern not limited to any one method or commitment" (418). This definition is further modified by Bühler (2016) who suggests including not only literary but also cultural and scientific manifestations, as well as historical transformations of the environment, into different methodological and theoretical perspectives of literary and cultural studies (32). This includes the complexity of interdisciplinarity that was negotiated in the introductory chapter. Generally, one can see that ecocriticism is not as easy to define as it is also a matter of the direction of studies with which it deals.

At the end of the twentieth century, different ecological approaches were united in the field of ecocriticism. "Ecocriticism emerged as a movement among literary scholars in the early 1990s, born of an awareness of environmental crisis and a desire to be part of the solution" (Garrard and Glotfelty 2014: ix). From this starting point, the field of ecocriticism has "evolved and expanded tremendously" (Slovic et al. 2019, 1). This development is described by Slovic et al. in their introduction on ecocriticism as "one theory describes this development as a wave, another as a palimpsest" Slovic et al. 2019, 1f).[5] wave theory is the most known version. The first wave of ecocriticism mostly deals with "literary renditions of the natural world in poetry, fiction and nonfiction as means of evoking and promoting contact with it; to value nature preservation and human attachment to place at a local-communitarian or bioregional level; and to affirm […] an innate bond […] conjoining the individual human being to the natural world" (Buell et al. 2011, 419). From there, ecocriticism has developed a new focus on different genres of environmental issues and justice issues in different contexts in the second wave (Slovic et al. 2019, 2). Thereafter, in

[5] Buell states that "no definite map of environmental criticism in literary studies can be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines […]. However, most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong […]. In this sense, "palimpsest" would be a better metaphor than "wave"." (Buell 2005, 17). By this statement he highlights the idea that like a palimpsest, new ideas are written over older ones again and again without them disappearing fully.

the third wave, the emphasis was on global concepts of place, gender, animal perspective, and postcolonial ecocriticism (Slovic et al. 2019, 2). Lately, the field of studies has centred on material ecocriticism and applied ecocriticism in a fourth wave (Slovic et al. 2019, 2). Generally, one can see that "with accelerated technosocial change has come greatly intensified anxiety about "the environment," and with it a redirection of traditional discourses and a plethora of new ones" (Buell 2001, 3).

The Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment, established in the US in 1992, has expanded to other Anglophone regions such as Europe, East and South Asia, and Australia and New Zealand but with the US and the United Kingdom still predominating (Buell et al. 2011, 418). This tendency for US and UK dominance still exists, although the ecocritical spectrum of different voices from around the world has grown. Still, Bühler (2016) argues for a geographical differentiation of ecocriticism in order to avoid a predominantly Western and/or Eurocentric perspective (51). Therefore, a multitude of different perspectives on ecocritical topics is essential, as Glotfelty and Fromm have already stated, "There should be an "interdisciplinary, multicultural and international orientation of ecocriticism" (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, xxv).

The main function of ecocriticism is to bring environmental considerations into the discourse of literary criticism and theory (Garrard and Glotfelty 2014, x). Thus, ecocriticism covers many different aspects of the environment and continuously broadens its topics. From critically engaging with regional aspects of the environment, ecocriticism has evolved to deal with more general and universal topics, for example, climate change: "Ecocriticism evolved primarily to address **local** and easily identifiable outrages and injustices – the destruction of wilderness, the effects of aggressive systems of agriculture on a bioregion and its inhabitants, etc. Climate change thus challenges some green critics with the fact that while they have been inventing ways to think and act in relation to their national cultures and histories, they seem – like almost everyone else – still a long way short of thinking in the way and on the scale demanded by a truly **global issue**" (Clark 2011, 11). Therefore, ecocritical studies have many topics that intersect with general issues of the Anthropocene.

Overall, ecocriticism is a broad field that is useful in many contexts and can be applied to different texts. "It makes sense that the reach of "ecocriticism"—the omnibus term by which the new polyform literature and environment studies movement has come to be labelled, especially in the United States—should extend from the oldest surviving texts to works of the present moment" (Buell 2001, 2f). Hence, this relatively new field of study is an essential tool in the analysis of the representation of the ever-existing relationship

between nature and humans. Still, there is much more potential within ecocriticism that has gone beyond its disciplinary borders and, for example, deals with risk narratives, environmental catastrophes, or animals as agents (Bühler 2016, x). This expansion of ecocriticism is especially important for the changes and new challenges that appear in the human-nature relationship as it evolves.

2.1.1 Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Theory

When dealing with ecocriticism and its local and global topics, one can draw many connections to the field of postcolonial studies. Colonialism[6] comes from the Roman word *colonia* which means *farm* or *settlement* (Oxford English Dictionary, online). Thereby, as Loomba (2005) remarks, most definitions of colonialism avoid any reference to people other than the colonisers and leave out the implication of conquest and domination (7). By adding the *post*, which literally means *after*, it is implied that the field of studies deals with everything after the colonial period. This aftermath is implied in two senses: temporally and ideologically, as the time of colonisation is over and its ideology is supplanted (Loomba 2005, 12.) However, a country can be postcolonial by being under independent rule and at the same time neo-colonial (Loomba 2005, 12.) This shows that it is not easy to grasp what postcolonialism includes. Further than this is the interdisciplinarity that the field nowadays contains. Due to this interdisciplinarity of postcolonial studies, "the term postcolonial studies has become so heterogeneous and diffuse that it is impossible to describe satisfactorily what its study might entail" (Loomba 2005, 2). It, for example, includes literary analysis, research on colonial government, critique of medical texts, and economic theory (Loomba 2005, 2). In order to understand the aim of postcolonial studies, one should consider its definition from the ´founders´ of this field of study:

> We use the term ´post-colonial´, however, to cover all the culture affected by the imperial processes from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical processes initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. In this sense this book is concerned with the world as it exists during and after the period of European imperial domination and the effects of this on contemporary literatures. (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 2)

[6] The terms colonialism and imperialism are often used interchangeably, as both deal with power and domination. Loomba (2005) explains the difference as an imperial entity having power that is spread and a colony as the specific place that is penetrated or controlled; therefore, imperialism can function without a formal colony and colonialism cannot (12).

This quote shows that the field of postcolonial studies does not stand in contrast to the aspects that it has been criticised for but was conceived to cover all discourses on the effects of colonialism. As a result, the notion of continuity plays an important role, since colonial effects can be found from the moment of colonisation to the present day, as the authors explain. Furthermore, postcolonial studies in this sense include many forms of literary criticism and therefore apply to many forms of literary production.

The field of postcolonial studies has also been criticised for various reasons. "While many of its critics felt that the subject was not radical enough, most complaints came from conservatives who feared that it was part of the dangerous new politization of the academy in general, and humanities in particular" (Loomba 2005, 1f). This criticism reflects the political consequences that new forms of analysis might have. Also, it is difficult to determine strict boundaries in postcolonial studies. "It might seem that because the age of colonialism is over, and because the descendants of once-colonised people live everywhere, the whole world is postcolonial. And yet the term has been fiercely contested on many counts" (Loomba 2005, 12). Thus, postcolonial studies are a concept that is relatively wide-reaching and therefore reviewed as vague and difficult to grasp. Despite these criticisms, the field of study has become very popular and has managed to bring different and new perspectives into literary negotiations of many topics. Therefore, "these critiques attest to the fact that, whatever their shortcomings, postcolonial studies have managed to make visible the history and legacy of European imperialism" (Loomba 2005, 2).

The possibilities that postcolonial studies offer can also be used when considering environmental topics in literature. As this offers an important insight into many structures, the two fields have been combined into the theory of postcolonial ecocriticism. "Postcolonial ecocriticism is an opportunity to examine relationships between humans, animals, and nature in postcolonial literary texts in order to show that "human liberation will never be fully achieved without challenging the ways human societies have constructed themselves in hierarchical relation to other human and non-human communities, and without imagining new ways in which these ecologically connected groupings can be creatively transformed" (Huggan and Tiffin 2010, ii, cited in Draga Alexandrou 2017, 40). In other words, the human-nature relationship should be seen in the wider structure of postcolonial studies and vice versa. Furthermore, the perspectivity of postcolonial studies concurs with the concept of new historicism that was described in chapter 1, insofar as it links literary texts and historical events.

Therefore, the exhortation by Armbruster and Wallace (2001) to include social aspects into ecocritical considerations, such as poverty or environmental pollution, seems necessary and can be advanced by the combination of the two fields of study. Many societal problems can also be seen in connection to environmental ones. Additionally, Armbruster and Wallace (2001) hint at the limited reach of environmental thinking due to social inequality and its relation to society and culture. Many frameworks of society have an impact on environmental issues, such as political decision-making, economic development, or education. This again shows the link between environmental issues and the structures of human society that are shaped by postcolonialism.

Overall, ecocriticism can be embedded into the theory of postcolonial studies, as both fields deal with human structures that need to be challenged and illuminated by different perspectives. Given that numerous aspects of society as well as ecological issues can be regarded in a postcolonial context, it makes sense to research the connecting point of both fields.

2.1.2 Writing about Nature

The relationship between humans and nature has changed during different periods and was influenced by religions, philosophers, and other impacts. These changes in relationship are also mirrored in writing about nature. The first forms of human depiction of their relationship with nature can be seen in cave paintings, which often show humans and animals, hinting towards human dependence on nature. Yet again, myths of creation in writings of antiquity have depicted the human-nature relationship differently than, for example, the famous writings of Alexander von Humboldt in the nineteenth century. While in antiquity nature was still seen as a divine entity, it was explored and explained differently during the Enlightenment. Another example is the Bible which has rather promoted a hierarchical understanding of domination between humans and nature that subsequently influenced other writings of nature. The depiction of human superiority in the Bible has often led to dominant behaviour toward nature and was in many cases even used to justify destructive behaviour. Armbruster and Wallace (2001) state that the most destructive attitude towards nature began in the Renaissance and "then flowered during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, the periods associated with the Scientific Revolution, the Enlightenment, and the rise of a money-based economic system" (9). Hence, a hierarchical image of humans and nature was explained by biblical texts and then led to the exploitation of nature for monetary profit. On

the other hand, there are also alternative literary and philosophical attitudes toward nature in the West (Armbruster and Wallace 2001, 9) and elsewhere. The example of *The Origin of Species* by Charles Darwin shows that an alternative perspective to ideas from the nineteenth century can change the viewpoint on humans and nature thoroughly. This famous writing on evolutionary biology had a great impact on many writers and researchers, for example, the British scholar Herbert Spence, who was one of the first to write on social Darwinism and hence transfer natural principles into social sciences (cf. McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 8).

Another prominent example is Henry David Thoreau´s *Walden*, published in 1854. This classic example of writing on nature deals with Thoreau´s experience of living in a cabin in the woods near Concord and is a negotiation with an alternative form of life apart from the industrialised world and in more accordance with nature. In this work, Thoreau acknowledges his predecessors in natural historians and other writers who have documented landscapes of North America before him (Armbruster and Wallace 2001, 11). "With the rise of the environmental movement in the 1970s and 1980s, Thoreau became its patron saint. "In wildness is the preservation of the world" became the slogan of the influential Sierra Club, and other slogans from Thoreau became popular bumper-sticker copy" (Harding 1995, 10). This shows that his writing has inspired movements of nature protection and thus influenced perspectives on the human-nature relationship.

A century later, Rachel Carson produced another prominent example of writing about nature with *Silent Spring*, published in 1962. Similar to Thoreau´s writing, *Silent Spring* had a great impact on the perception of nature as it deals with the impact chemicals have on the environment. "Serialized, reviewed, and excerpted in uncountable numbers of journals, magazines, TV, and radio shows, *Silent Spring* reached even further into popular culture and consciousness" (Seager 2014, 2). Hence, the importance of this writing is even acknowledged in popular culture, making the book a classic on environmental issues. Furthermore, it still has an effect, as it is not only mentioned in several discussions on ecocriticism but also on environmental topics in general. "*Silent Spring* continues to be invoked in contemporary debates about climate change, mosquito control, public health, and ethics. Carson's warnings about the ecological catastrophe being wrought by the wanton use and misuse of pesticides seem more salient today than ever" (Seager 2014, 3). In the continuing times of species extinction, the legal actions against Monsanto and Bayer and their pesticides represent a good example of an ongoing debate on this topic that Carson already broached sixty years ago.

Slovic et al. (2019) state that the field of ecocriticism, understood as an environmental approach to textual and cultural analysis, has existed for a very long time, perhaps even dating back to natural themes in ancient sacred texts (1). This highlights the idea that even though the field of ecocriticism was professionalized at the end of the twentieth century, it can be applied to many literary and cultural examples in every period. One example, as Slovic et al. (2019) state, is analysing the human-nature relationship in the writings of ancient sacred texts.

Next to the mentioned texts that mostly represent non-fiction writings about nature, there are also many examples of fictional works on the human-nature relationship. In old legends, myths, fairy tales, or fables, nature has always played an important role. For instance, in *Little Red Riding Hood,* the forest and its inhabitants play an essential role. Also, in one of the most famous novels from the eighteenth century, Daniel Defoe´s *Robinson Crusoe*, the relationship between humans and nature and human survival in wild nature is a central topic. In analysing such examples of literary fiction, ecocritical attention has mostly been given to texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, including authors such as Herman Melville, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, William Faulkner, Wallace Stevens, Gerard Manley Hopkins, D.H. Lawrence, or Ted Hughes (Armbruster and Wallace 2001, 12). Thereby, nature is mostly understood as a setting or as having symbolical significance (Armbruster and Wallace 2001, 12). This means that nature does not stand for itself but always has to be seen in relation to human beings. In newer texts, this does not apply always, as nature can stand for itself and hence can represent an entity other than the human or can even contradict the human perspective. This is further explained in the analysis in chapter 4.

One can see that writing on nature has always existed, as has the relationship between humans and nature. Through this, the role of nature has varied with the changes of perspective. Many modern environmental writings aim to depict nature in order to preserve it. The perspectives they entail can have a great influence on human behaviour. "The success of all environmentalist efforts finally hinges not on "some highly developed technology, or some arcane new science" but on "a state of mind": on attitudes, feelings, images, narratives" (Buell 2001, 1). These attitudes, feelings, images, and narratives that can change a collective state of mind are found in writings about nature.

> I continue to believe that reorientation of human attention and values according to a stronger ethic of care for the nonhuman environment would make the world a better place, for humans as well as for nonhumans. Pressing that argument, however, meant understating the force of such anthropocentric

> concerns as public health and environmental equity as motivators of environmental imagination and commitment. To those living in endangered communities, the first environmental priorities will understandably be health, safety, and sustenance, and as guarantors of these the civic priorities of political and economic enfranchisement. (Buell 2001, 6).

Flys et al. (2010) state that in order to overcome the generally known environmental crisis, one needs to understand and evaluate the impacts human activities have on nature, as well as the systems that have allowed the over-exploitation and abuse of nature (25). Fictional negotiations of issues concerning the environmental crisis are a useful way of reaching such an understanding and imagining new ways of co-existence and changing culturally constructed patterns. As ecocritic Jonathan Bate affirms, "the dream of deep ecology will never be realized upon the earth, but our survival as a species may be dependent on our capacity to dream it in the work of our imagination" (Buell 2001, 7). Therefore, this thesis will negotiate the intersections of ecocriticism and migration in order to gain a deeper understanding of the connections.

2.2 Migration

Migration is a phenomenon which has existed throughout the history of humans. Structural mobility and migration are a constituent of the human species since the very beginning when people left Africa about 60,000 years ago (Lucassen and Lucassen 2013, 53), populating other regions of the planet. Ever since, humans have changed their habitats because of the weather, in search of food, in order to survive, or more generally, in order to improve their living conditions. Therefore, migration is a normal process. In current debates "human migration is regarded as something problematic, violent, and accidental. It is read as a symptom, and as sign of imminent or ongoing crisis" (Sohn and Cordova Gonzalez 2019, 161). This depiction of migration prevails, although "[f]or most species migration is the rule, not the exception. There is, however, something utterly disturbing when what we stand witness to is not a swarm of migratory monarch butterflies, but the exodus of human beings escaping war, violence, environmental catastrophes, political repression, ethnical and religious persecution, poverty, or social marginalization" (Sohn and Cordova Gonzalez 2019, 160). "This produces the reduction of human subjectivities into diverse forms of subjectification as victimization, precariousness, and vulnerability into defining forms of a fixed, static identity (of being a victim, marginalized, vulnerable, poor), denying them any other ontological possibilities, including that of qualitative trans formation (of becoming something 'else')" (Sohn and Cordova Gonzalez 2019, 161). A broader perspective on

migration can influence its general perception as well as help to understand push and pull factors and connected processes. “Human migration is especially prone to the effects of such simplification, leading to a reduced understanding of the complexity of the migration phenomenon itself” (Sohn/Cordova Gonzalez 2019, 162). Therefore, a closer look into the field of migration is important.

Migration is defined as “[t]he movement of a person or people from one country, locality, place of residence, etc., to settle in another; an instance of this” (Oxford English Dictionary, online). This already hints at different aspects within the movement of migration. Migration always describes forms of movement from one place to another, but this can have different reasons or causes. Migration can occur voluntarily as well as based on coercion or escape. This entails different conditions for the migration as such and the new surroundings thereafter. In contrast to exile, migration does not imply that returning home is impossible (Kalra et al. 2005, 11). Still, it depends on the circumstances of migration. One example of voluntary migration are migration movements of European settlers into other parts of the world. Consequently, the voluntary migrant can be regarded as an invader in a new environment. In contrast, the process of involuntary migration describes people leaving their home countries because of a lack of alternatives. The most dramatic figure is the figure of the refugee who, according to the Convention of Refugees, passes the border in order to seek asylum and stay (Müller-Funk 2016, 19). This staying in an unknown cultural surrounding, however, forces the figure of the refugee to maintain their status as a foreigner, even if the passport then says something different (Müller-Funk 2016, 20). Accordingly, the different designations of migrants need to be considered, as these hint at causes for migration and the status in the target country. Some examples are the descriptions as refugee, displaced person, asylum seeker, or expatriate. Overall, there exist differences in causes and motivations for migration, and various forms of movements can be distinguished. The perception of migrants as refugees, asylum seekers, exiles, or working migrants, as well as their former home countries, plays a role in their experiences. Despite those differences, however, migration experiences also show many similarities. For example, anxieties or insecurities play a role for many people moving to a new place but also the feeling of the hope of improving their living conditions. Furthermore, forms of migration and connected experiences often do not fit into one category only in many cases, but examples show that migration is a complex process in which distinguished characteristics are often interwoven.

There is also a further definition that includes the aspect of temporality. In this further definition, migration is specified as: “The seasonal movement or temporary removal of a

person, people, social group, etc., from one place to another; an instance of this. Also (occasionally): a journey" (Oxford English Dictionary, online). Based on this, one needs to consider the fact that migration can also be temporary, as, for example, the so-called guest workers that come to another country for a certain period to earn money but with the intention of returning to their former home country. In this instance, it is important to consider concepts related to migration. Firstly, migration needs to be distinguished from the mentioned notion of the journey, which is defined as: "The action of travelling or making a journey, esp. to distant places or through foreign lands. / More generally: the action of moving or passing along a course or path, or over a distance" (Oxford English Dictionary, online). This definition shows that the focus lies more on the action of movement itself. Also, the concept of travelling needs to be put in context as a 'spell' or continued course of going or travelling, having its beginning and end in place or time, and thus viewed as a distinct whole; a march, ride, drive, or combination of these or other modes of progression to a certain more or less distant place, or extending over a certain distance or space of time; an excursion or expedition to some distance; a round of travel. Usually applied to land travel, or travel mainly by land, in contradistinction to a *voyage* by sea" (Oxford English Dictionary, online). In this description, the aspect of temporariness plays a crucial role, as it distinguishes travelling from migrating. Even if migration can be temporary as well, as the definition above shows that travelling is defined as the aim of moving without the intention of settling. Although this different terminology needs to be distinguished, all aspects play a role in the process of migration. For example, travelling, as in making a journey or voyage, often stands at the beginning of migration movements.

Another definition of migration includes animals when describing migration as "[t]he movement of an animal from one region, location, or habitat to another in order to breed, grow, or find food; an instance of this; *esp.* (of a bird, mammal, or fish) the periodic travel to and from a region at a particular season and along a well-established route" (Oxford English Dictionary, online). This form of migration is connected strongly to environmental factors and shows the dependence between the animal´s instincts and the climate conditions. Animal migration can be seen as a form of adaptation to the natural environment. The matter of settlement, however, is different in animal migration than in human migration, as animals primarily keep moving back and forth. Therefore, settlement does not refer to only one place but can include many. Another interesting definition of migration in the biological context states, "Change in or extension of the distribution of a plant or animal; an instance of this"

(Oxford English Dictionary, online). This broader perspective of migration includes the non-human world into aspects of movement.

In addition, definitions of migration already include a historical aspect, when for example incorporating historical factors, such as the "great migration *n. (a)* (usually with *the*) any of the major or significant migratory movements of peoples in ancient or historic times; *(b) New Zealand History* (also with capital initials), (according to a Maori founding myth, now considered of doubtful historicity) the migration of Polynesian peoples in a fleet of canoes from Hawaiki to New Zealand in the 14th cent.; also called *heke*" (Oxford English Dictionary, online). This points to the argument that the history of migration is as long as human history itself.[7] Furthermore, it includes the human settlement of different continents as well as seasonal movements of humans that can be compared to animal migration. Whereas the seasonal migration of humans in the era before they settled in fixed places illustrates the parallels to animal movement and the dependence on natural conditions, the forms of migration that aim at fixed settlement show strong connections to colonisation and the processes of adaptation that come along with them. In different periods, the meaning of migration, especially of migration of larger groups of people, has changed. For example, seasonal migration has been a relevant form of movement since the Middle Ages, as many workers left their homes temporarily to work for higher wages (Lucassen/Lucassen 2013, 35). Then of course colonization migration played an important role, for example, for the Russian Empire when between 1750 and 1900 about 10 million people settled in the *Steppe* regions of southeastern Europe (Lucassen and Lucassen 2013, 35) but also for European Imperialism as explained above. In the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, migration numbers increased due to bad living conditions in Europe and the two World Wars. This is expressed through high numbers of movements from the country to the cities or labour migrants before the world wars (Lucassen and Lucassen 2013, 36). During and after the world wars, many forced migrants were displaced or deported as political prisoners or to concentration camps (Lucassen and Lucassen 2013, 38). Also, the guest worker phenomenon after World War II created a great number of migrants who settled from countries in Eastern Europe, Asia, etc. to work in Europe (Lucassen/Lucassen 2013, 38/42). Very currently, migration is very relevant again in many parts of the world as ongoing movements of large numbers of people migrate, for example, from South America to the United States, flee from

[7] The following historical sequences do not aim at representing a full account of the history of migration, but merely represent examples for bigger migration movements (mainly in Europe). This selection is not more important than other migrations, for example in the Americas or elsewhere, but only illustrates the continual constituent that migration takes in human history.

wars in the Middle East, or try to get away from authoritarian African regimes and into Europe. In all these examples, migration that is connected to environmental changes plays an essential role.

It was pointed out previously that different forms of migration should be considered under the two main types, forced and voluntary migration (cf. Piguet 2018, 17). Hence, migration can occur due to reasons that do not leave an alternative, for example, fleeing from wars or political prosecution but also because of the destruction of the natural environment of the place of origin. In contrast, voluntary migration is (as its name describes) optional, for example, moving to another country for work or in order to study. Accordingly, in migration theory, the concept of push and pull factors has been developed to describe the determinants that characterise the different forms of migration. Another distinction can be made between endogenous (controlled) and exogenous (beyond control, influence, or knowledge of migrant) factors (Ravenstein cited in McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 7). One relevant push factor in contemporary times is climate change or the changing of the environment in general. Although migration due to environmental changes has existed throughout history (Lonergan 2012, 59), El-Hinnawi was the first to officially use and define the term environmental refugee as "those people who have been forced to leave their traditional habitat, temporarily or permanently, because of a marked environmental disruption (natural and/or triggered by people) that jeopardized their existence and/or seriously affected the quality of their life" (El-Hinnawi 1985, 4, cited in Lonergan 2012, 59). According to the UNHCR, the root causes of refugee flows are political instability, economic tension, ethnic conflict, and environmental degradation (Lonergan 2012, 55). Therefore, human migration may turn out to be the greatest effect of climate change (IPCC 1990, cited in Lonergan 2012, 55). Lonergan (2012) observes a greening of hate that is related to the political discourse of environmental degradation and population displacement (56). "Population movements, then, are a response to broader structural forces in society, in particular those associated with the uneven penetration of capitalism which has created substantial spatial inequalities" (Lonergan 2012, 58).

Considering the different definitions and approaches of migration studies, it is important to notice the connotations that are associated with different forms of migration. For example, refugees, displaced persons, and asylum seekers are often perceived negatively or as people to be pitied, whereas working migrants or migration movements for educational reasons are generally viewed rather neutrally or positively. Also, the direction of migration plays a role. Movements from the Global North to the Global South are regarded in another

way than vice versa. When thinking of migration, the crossing of national borders seems to play an important role, leaving out the many forms of migration that take place within the borders of a nation. Furthermore, the associations of migration can change over time. For example, European migration to the US in the 19th and 20th centuries is today often described as positive and essential for the development of the nation, disregarding negative aspects or the devastating effects on First Nations people. In contrast, contemporary migration to the US from countries of South America or Asia is regarded as negative and a potential threat. What this shows is that certain images prevail when thinking of migrants who do not live up to the complex realities of migration movements. By dealing with different aspects of migration, the diversity of the field is displayed, and prevailing images are put into question.

As most of the migration theories above show, migration research is mostly done in the field of social science or biology, but there are also some approaches in literary studies, assuming that structures of society are mirrored in literary productions. This highlights the idea that the migration phenomenon represents modern culture, as it emphasises the instability and relativity in its conceptions of individual and communal identities (Löschnigg and Löschnigg 2009, 10). This means that migration not only influences societies but also represents a general characteristic of modern society itself. "Migrancy as a basic condition of contemporary life […] can be seen in its most tangible form in modern cities, where everybody becomes a nomad in a world which is multiple in itself, and where the diversity of spaces needs to be integrated into a meaningful whole" (Löschnigg and Löschnigg 2009, 11). Thus, migration shapes everyday life and has become a crucial aspect of contemporary society that cannot be separated anymore. Hence, migration fosters the development of mixed and internationally influenced societies that stand in the impact of movement. "The breaking up of traditions under the experience of movement, transformation and disruption is relevant for nearly all contemporary societies" (Löschnigg and Löschnigg 2009, 11).

Generally, the concept of migration is a very complex one that reaches into different fields of society. However, one can observe a strong connection between human migration movement upon land and the environment that surrounds these movements. Hence, different factors need to be considered, such as the impact of movement itself through othering the landscape, reasons for migration movements in the home and host country, attachment to country or landscape within the process of migration, etc. Also, as mentioned above, not only humans migrate, but other species also need to be included in these considerations. However, "[…], we need to resist the impulse to abstract migrancy into a figure and address the material differences between a variety of migratory experiences that are separated by

class, gender, sexuality and circumstances of departure. Otherwise, we subsume, and therefore erase, less privileged forms of migration into a celebratory paradigm" (Newns 2020, 7). This is why it is necessary to have a closer look at this topic by including interdisciplinary points of view. Recently, there has been a "[…] general paradigmatic shift that has occurred in migration studies, from a conception of migration as a once-and-for-all movement between two geographical spaces, to the conception of a transnational space of flow within which migrants move without losing contact with their region of origin." (Palloni et al. 2001; Faist 1997; Vertovec 1999; Portes 2001 cited in Piguet 2018, 20). This approach of understanding migration as a complex process and including different experiences in the field of research measures the complexity that is entailed.

2.2.1 Postcolonial Theory and Migration

When looking eco-critically at migration there are several aspects to consider. For example, one can distinguish causes for migration that can include fleeing for environmental reasons, migrating because of environmental benefits or interests, or looking at the direct environmental consequences of migration. However, many of these reasons for or of migration can directly or indirectly be connected to colonialism, as the following chapter illuminates by connecting postcolonial studies and migration, parallelly to the connection between ecocriticism and postcolonial studies.

The colonialism that is held responsible for many aspects of contemporary society including migration movements is the European colonialism from the sixteenth century onwards. In the British context, the claiming of the sovereignty of Newfoundland by Henry VIII in 1537 forms one of the first landmarks in colonial acts. "Modern European colonialism was by far the most extensive of the different kinds of colonial contact that have been a recurrent feature of human history" (Loomba 2005, 3). It is important to notice that colonialism is not only the sixteenth century´s expansion of European powers into Asia, Africa, or America but is generally a recurrent and widespread feature of human history (Loomba 2005, 8). Examples such as the Roman Empire of the second century, the empire of the Mongols in the thirteenth century, and the Vijaynagar Empire in the fifteenth century highlight this (Loomba 2005, 8). Still, the colonial practices of the Europeans remain outstanding in their scope and longevity, as they have altered the globe in a way in which the other colonialist activities did not (Loomba 2005, 9). In 1914, Western imperial domination held 85 percent of the globe, of which England controlled one-fifth and therefore

a quarter of the Earth´s population (cf. Marzec 2011, 2). This highlights the huge impact that colonial powers such as Britain had in colonial times and continue to have. Also, colonizers and colonized—in different ways—were deeply altered in the colonizing process and restructured by decolonization (Loomba 2005, 22). For this reason, imperialism is reflected in almost all areas of human production and existence (Marzec 2011, 1). "The colonial legacy continues to affect the lives of human beings and their environments in the twenty-first century" (Marzec 2011, 3). Therefore, it investigates one of the historically most consequential human concerns (Marzec 2011, 1). "Modern colonialism did more than extract tribute, goods and wealth from the countries that it conquered – it restructured the economies of the latter, drawing them into a complex relationship with their own, so that there was a flow of human and natural resources between colonized and colonial countries. This flow worked in both directions […]" (Loomba 2005, 9). However, "in whichever direction human beings and materials travelled, the profits always flowed back into the so-called ´mother country´" (Loomba 2005, 9). It can be claimed that colonialism has led to European capitalism, as it created an imbalance between Europe and the colonized countries (Loomba 2005, 9-10). This shows the connection between colonialism and migration. Even as migration has existed throughout the history of humans—as has colonialism—it has been highly increased through European colonialism, changing the world in matters of societal structure, human mobility, and global connection. Therefore, it is interesting to investigate these changes in society made by European colonialism, as they reach into contemporary times. Unequal relations remain existent, as contemporary imbalances between so-called ´first´ and ´third´ world nations show (Loomba 2005, 12). This reaches into different societal, as well as political structures.

The aim of postcolonial studies is to analyse the multifaceted effects of European colonialism that extend into contemporary society. Postcolonial theory engages with the different impacts of colonization and neo-colonial relations of power as effects of colonization and migration (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 18). Therefore, postcolonial theory has a strong influence on cultural analysis and social theory (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 18). Postcolonial studies argue that Western[8] deployments of superiority, identity, and power are social, cultural, and ontological constructions without a real basis (Marzec 2011, 4). This means that culturally accepted conceptions of power and societal structures are created by Western perspectives and are not naturally given. The socio-historical context of the reception of migration literature has influenced the focus of study

[8] Cf. chapter 1 on perspectivity.

and the theoretical conceptualizations (Wesselhöft 2006, 37). This can clearly be observed in the case of typical immigration countries, such as the US, Australia, or Canada, as political migration policies play an important role for the reception of literature (Wesselhöft 2006, 37). In the literary history of the US, migration literature has been perceived as ethnic literature, labelling different ethnic groups (Wesselhöft 2006, 37). In contrast, Australian and Canadian texts were regarded under the perspective of multicultural literature, canonizing them through national literature prizes or curricula in school (Wesselhöft 2006, 37). The colonial analysis of discourse as an important part of postcolonial theory insists on understanding literature in its historical, political, philosophical, and social contexts to represent new ways of reading colonial history (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 17). Thus, new perspectives are included in the broad field of colonialism. It is important to acknowledge that issues of postcolonialism remain urgent and vital today since there are many difficulties that can only be discussed across many language communities internationally (Loomba 2005, 212).

Migration is a key issue in contemporary societies worldwide (Löschnigg and Löschnigg 2009, 9). The era of European imperialism has shaped modern societies considerably. Imperialist, military, and colonial conquests are widely recognized as the roots of global international migration flows (Hondagneu-Sotelo 2013, 233). Thereby, migration creates a relationship that changes the sending as well as the receiving country (Kalra et al. 2005, 15). The flows of people migrating after the colonial period drastically climbed, raising the general mobility of people around the world. Thus, people around the globe have been influenced by migration. The rising numbers of international migration movements at the end of the twentieth century can be regarded as a central societal characteristic (Wesselhöft 2006, 17). However, it is not clear if this can be seen as the beginning of an ´age of migration´, as the growth of population has led to an unchanging number of international migrants (Wesselhöft 2006, 18). Generally, one can observe an increase in the mobility of individuals and a greater attention towards migration (Wesselhöft 2006, 18). Migration movements have changed in their forms and ranges, such that migration is a basic factor of societal changes in an increasing number of countries (Wesselhöft 2006, 18). Wesselhöft (2006) states that Western, industrialized countries numerically have the most migrants arriving, resulting in most of them having developed policies and concepts of migration (18). These policies often lead to a selection of migrants in terms of education or language abilities, as is the case, for example, in Canada (Wesselhöft 2006, 18). Recent statistics show that the number of migrants is not the highest in industrialized countries, as the main

receiving countries of refugees are Iran, Lebanon, Pakistan, and Uganda (UNHCR online, 2018). However, the target countries mostly remain Western states with strict regulations and migration policies.[9]

When connecting migration and colonialism from a postcolonial perspective, a first link to the natural environment can be already found. In migratory movements of European imperialism, the natural surroundings mostly of the target countries play an essential role as shown by, for example, plantations for tobacco and other products. This highlights the fact that the flow of human resources has altered migration, which itself has existed from the beginning of human history, to a form that still exists today with all its related aspects. Migration and its relationship to nature have effects in all directions: "Both the colonised and the colonisers moved: the former not only as slaves but also as indentured labourers, domestic servants, travellers and traders, and the colonial masters as administrators, soldiers, merchants, settlers, travellers, writers, domestic staff, missionaries, teachers and scientists" (Loomba 2005, 9). Therefore, migration movements that have grown since European colonialism connect the contemporary globalized world through constant people movements.

2.2.2 Writing About Migration

The phenomenon of migration is a component of many sequences in human history, which is why it has a long tradition in literature as well. Here, and in general, literature offers a unique perspective on migration that reveals many aspects of the cultural and political surroundings but also gives insight into very personal and unique experiences. Works from the 19th and 20th centuries picked out travel and adventure stories in the context of colonialism as a central topic but also exile literature. "The movement of people from country to city, provoked by ruptures in traditional patterns of employment and land ownership, is a familiar story in nineteenth-century English literature" (McDonagh 2021, 1). This movement from the country to the city is an important motif. "Yet for many travellers during the nineteenth century, arrival in the city was not an ending at all, but a stage in a journey made up of comings and goings between country and city, sometimes seasonal and repetitive, and which frequently extended to onward voyages across oceans and continents

[9] It is difficult to compare numbers and statistics of migration, as they refer to different forms of migration. The UNHCR statistic refers to refugees only; however, it is not clear to which form of migration the statistic of Wesselhöft (2006) applies. Nonetheless, the main idea of Wesselhöft (2006) is that most migrants attempt to move into an industrialized, Western country.

to new colonies in far-flung places" (McDonagh 2021, 1). The reasons for this lay in the developments of this time. "Propelled by many of the same factors as internal movement—encroachment on common land, industrial development, new transport technologies, the expansion of European colonization, world markets—people from all parts of the world moved more often, more quickly, and greater distances than they ever had before, producing a redistribution of population on an unprecedented scale that shaped the modern world" (McDonagh 2021, 2). This development of migration is depicted in a very multifaceted way in the variety of literature that originates from this period of time. The previously mentioned example of *Robinson Crusoe* from the year 1719 can be seen as one of the early examples of migration literature. Although the main character did not land on the island voluntarily, his settlement and the encounter with other living conditions and partially other cultures demonstrate many aspects of migrant life.

An important topic of migration stories is slavery[10]. This section in human history has led to a huge number of people being forced to migrate to different parts of the world and was also given attention in many fictional narratives. In the eighteenth century, there were many fictional texts on slavery, which are nowadays considered as unable to represent slavery realistically as they for example focus on inter-racial romances or the concept of the *noble savage* rather than authentic experiences of this large group of forced migrants (Aravamudan 2016, viii). However, these earlier narratives on slavery as well as more recently written ones have impacted the image of slavery immensely:

> 'Slavery' as a phenomenon cannot be understood merely through the fatal statistics favoured by historical positivism. It needs the support of narrative reconstruction in order to be apprehended as a lived experience shared by many. Narratives of 'the times' in which slavery occurred - both as history and as fiction - are responsible for making the meaning of slavery. Mackenzie's title suggests that slavery did not just occur in its moment but stood for the entire period. Anti-slavery themes emerge out of a series of polemical interventions and moral interrogations, and often through a number of struggles with pro-slavery adversaries. (Aravamudan 2016, viii)

This reveals that narratives on slavery give detailed insight into the experiences of so many people who were forced to migrate to a place far away. Newer examples of literature on slavery than the ones from the eighteenth century include the famous novel *Uncle Tom´s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe, published in 1852. This anti-slavery novel had a great impact on the perception of the migrant life of slaves in the U.S. and helped with the

[10] Slavery itself is a very complex topic, including, for example, concepts of oppression, abolition, emancipation, and so on. In this context, it merely functions as an example of migration and therefore explanations cannot include a detailed description of this huge field but only a few aspects that are relevant for migration.

abolishment. Very modern takes on slavery like Andrea Levy´s *The Long Song* from 2011 manage to portray a realistic account of the circumstances of life as a slave. Through including accurate historical details as well as very personal perspectives of many characters, the novel depicts an extensive view of how the life of slaves could have looked from a modern postcolonial perspective.

The period of post-war migration from Britain´s colonies in the twentieth century, known as the Windrush generation, produced a new interest in migration and with it many literary works (Newns 2020, 29). As an example, Newns mentions Sam Selvon's *Lonely Londoners* from 1956 as an important novel that deals with this experience of migration (Newns 2020, 30). An important aspect in many of these writings is racism and racial othering. "Migrants arriving in the decades following Windrush faced the brunt of backlash against the new visibility of racial others within, including widespread discrimination in employment and housing" (Newns 2020, 29). Another fitting example, which Newns also mentions, is Andrea Levy´s *Small Island* (2004), which deals with the same topic from a postcolonial perspective. "The novel's complex intersections of class, race and gender are uncovered through an exploration of its engagement with the cult of domesticity as practiced in both the colony and the metropole" (Newns 2020, 31).

In contemporary literature, generally, many postcolonial works are also labelled as migration literature, as some sort of migratory movement often plays a role—sometimes in earlier generations or for a main character itself. Typical contexts of modern migration stories include migration from South America or Mexico to the United States, from African countries to Europe, or from the Middle East to Europe or North America as Danny Ramadan pictures in *The Clothesline Swing*. However, not only typical migration routes are discussed; there are also many alternative perspectives and narratives on internal movement or displacement within one country or continent such as the novel *A Bend in the River* by V. S. Naipaul exemplifies.

Overall, both fields of ecocriticism and migration and their contexts to postcolonial studies form important aspects in contemporary scholarship of literary studies. This chapter depicts an overview of the developments in each field of research and touches on points that interlink the fields. In the following chapter, these points of connection are examined in more detail to understand in which ways ecocriticism and migration are interwoven within the framework of postcolonialism.

3. Ecocritical aspects of migration

The previous chapters have already shown some connecting points between environmental studies and migration studies. This chapter will point out theoretical concepts in more detail that represent the basis for the analysis in chapter 4. Therefore, this chapter is structured parallelly to the fourth chapter in which each subchapter has its focus on one novel. As in the analysis in chapter 4, the most characteristic concepts for each novel are depicted, although several theoretical aspects can also be applied to other novels. However, as the explanations below will show, many theoretical concepts are also interconnected or based on each other. McLeman and Gemenne (2018) speak of a recent development that identifies "systematic connections between environmental changes, human population movements, and the wellbeing and security of individuals, households, and states" (3). According to their thesis, three factors have influenced this development: the "awareness of the extent and scale of human degradation of the environment and of the worrying implications for human wellbeing, especially the risks posed by anthropogenic climate change;" the "awareness that environmental degradation has far-reaching consequences for human wellbeing and, consequently, for human mobility and migration patterns;" and lastly "the end of the Cold War in 1991 meant that security agencies and security scholars began taking an interest in broader influences on international security, including environmental factors" (McLeman and Gemenne 2018, 3ff). Parting from these factors, this chapter will look into concrete sub-categories and theories that deal with the connecting aspects of ecocriticism and migration, and subsequently, the theoretical concepts originate not only from literary studies but from interdisciplinary scholarship including theories from multiple disciplines (cf. chapter 1.2). The idea of new historicism which has also been depicted in chapter 1.2 represents another important factor, as the described theoretical concepts of this chapter form the basis for the understanding of history in and through the chosen novels.

3.1 Colonialism and Its Effect on Migration and Nature

European colonialism as it has been defined and described in chapter 2 has taken place in many parts of the world. The historical development of the countries that are dealt with in the analysed novels is shaped by the British Empire. **Colonisation practices** have provoked

several structural changes that have strong effects on migration movements across the world. For instance, slavery or industrialisation have provoked the movements of many people(s).

> Surprisingly, empire building did not die out with the end of mercantilism and slavery but increased apace during the nineteenth century. Hobsbawm in Industry and Empire (1968) proposes that the earlier British Empire was crucial in promoting the industrial transformation of 1750–1850 which in turn gave rise to the second British Empire. His argument is that the Industrial Revolution could not have occurred in Britain but for the possession of a colonial empire that provided outlets far in excess of anything the home markets could offer. Industrialization entailed a sudden expansion of productive capacity possible only in a country that occupied a key position within the evolving world economy. Imperialism at this time was an unspoken assumption rather than a concrete doctrine. (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 141)

Many examples in history show that the building of communities and societies has relied on delimiting the own or the Self from the Other. Concepts of **alterity** and **otherness** represent a crucial role in the negotiation of colonisation. The term alterity is derived from the Latin *alteritas*, meaning 'the state of being other or different; diversity, otherness' (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 12). Müller-Funk defines the term alterity as otherness that includes all forms of the Other than the Self (Müller-Funk 2016, 17). As a result, the Other and the Self are connected in a constant process and experience, influenced by the constituting and constructing of the Other (Müller-Funk 2016, 17). Otherness is defined as being or feeling different in appearance or character from what is familiar, expected, or generally accepted (Cambridge Dictionary online, 2019). Alterity can appear in different phenomena for which in each phenomenon the moment of irritation and fright can be included to different extents, forming the basis for racism and marginalization (Müller-Funk 2016, 18). This basis forms a central justification for colonization processes, as for example, missionary projects show. Thus, otherness plays an important role in migration. "Otherness is the situation of being beyond the conceptual definition of national identity in legal, societal or personal terms" (Hanauer 2008, 202). Hence, individuals with a different national identity can be perceived as alien others (Hanauer 2008, 202). The concept of otherness is deeply anchored in the human societies. Therefore, the national projects of all countries have employed processes of self-construction against the others (Kamali 2008, 303). For example, this can be found in particularities of local food culture that can be seen as a positive outcome of self-construction against the other, but also in racist movements that seek to depict a society as a homogenous group in which "others" do not fit. These processes of negotiating the self and the other are important for decision-making when migrating but also for the experiences migrating people have in their target countries. For example, cases of racism and exclusion

are based on such self-other constructions. Related to this idea is the notion of the **subaltern** which was coined by Spivak. “Subaltern, meaning ‘of inferior rank’ […] Subaltern classes may include peasants, workers and other groups denied access to ‘hegemonic’ power” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 244). In general, people who are perceived as others and therefore are deprived of certain rights or opinions can be described as subalterns. In the postcolonial context, this often refers to Indigenous groups, migrants, or marginalized groups that usually are excluded from certain parts of society. However, the existence of postcolonial discourse is an example of subalterns, others, or marginalized people speaking for themselves or their group, and in most cases, the dominant language or mode of representation is appropriated so that the marginal voice can be heard (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 247).

The previous conceptualisation of alterity and otherness plays a crucial role in migration, as it forms the foundation for colonisation practices. For example, the othering of convicted people was a prerequisite for transporting them to Australia. Thereby, new power relations were established that formed the premise for exploitation. “Colonialism could only exist at all by postulating that there existed a binary opposition into which the world was divided. The gradual establishment of an empire depended upon a stable hierarchical relationship in which the colonized existed as the other of the colonizing culture” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 43). From the colonisers´ perspective, Europe and Western culture was the centre of the world and other cultures were at its periphery: “Imperial Europe became defined as the ‘centre’ in a geography at least as metaphysical as physical. Everything that lay outside that centre was by definition at the margin or the periphery of culture, power and civilization” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 43). This is a crucial assumption for colonial practices, as it highlights the process of othering people and cultures outside the Western perspective. Connected to this is the concept of hegemony, which can be described as an undebated form of sovereignty. “Domination is thus exerted not by force, or even necessarily by active persuasion, but by a more subtle and inclusive power over the economy, and over state apparatuses such as education and the media, by which the ruling class’s interest is presented as the common interest and thus comes to be taken for granted” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 134). Again, the perspective of the centre is generalized to the margins.

The described colonisation processes can be seen in the context of social structures and migration but also as an effect of and on the natural environment. The definition of the term colonialism, as given in chapter 2, itself gives a hint towards the connection of migration and its effect on the natural environment, i.e., the migration movement of the colonising people who by definition come in order to form a settlement or farm alters the

natural conditions of the colonised place, as the place is a natural space or a space cultivated by an Indigenous people which is transformed to a space that conforms to the purposes of the (European) coloniser and shows the strong connection between the different processes of colonization and nature. Related to this idea is the concept of pastoralism which also connects colonization processes with migration and nature: "pastoralism, in the settler colony context, where large fenced pastoral properties have been located on the traditional lands of indigenous peoples has meant the displacement of the traditional owners and the widespread degradation of fragile ecosystems" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 196). In this, one can see the overarching effects colonialism had on people and nature. Therefore, "[…] scholars point out that the European colonization of the New World occurring at this time was characterized not only by greed and racism but also by shameless plundering of natural resources" (Armbruster and Wallace 2001, 9). The natural environment of colonized countries was a target and victim of imperialism, which leads to the concept of ecological imperialism, "[a] term coined by Alfred W. Crosby (Crosby 1986) to describe the ways in which the environments of colonized societies have been physically transformed by the experience of colonial occupation. According to this thesis, imperialism not only altered the cultural, political and social structures of colonized societies, but also devastated colonial ecologies and traditional subsistence patterns" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 92). This had strong effects on nature and the local people: "Many such 'settled' regions were developed historically as plantations or agricultural colonies to grow foodstuffs for the metropolitan populations, and thus a large-scale demand for labour was created in many regions where the local population could not supply the need" (Ashcroft 2013, 82). This again hints at the idea of the hegemonic power of the centre—in which the assumption was prevalent that everything should serve mankind and that nature is available as an extension and enrichment of human sovereignty—that is an expression of the otherness between humans and nature (cf. Worster 1977, 35 Imperial cited in Bühler 2016, 7). From this perspective, humans and nature are strictly divided from each other, different from ideas that are common, for example, in Indigenous cultures. This so-called human-nature dualism or nature-culture dualism that sees humans apart from and in contrast to nature is the basis for colonization practices on nature and the outcome of degradation, pollution, and exploitation. For example, "[i]n precolonial times South Africa was home to dense populations of large mammals—elephants, rhinos, giraffes, many species of antelopes, zebras, buffalos, and lions—enormous quantities of birds and fish, and some of the most complex and diverse plant communities found anywhere in the world. The arrival of Europeans, with their horses, firearms, and

superior killing capacity, quickly saw the region's large, diverse populations of mammalian fauna diminish to a shadow of what they had been" (McGiffin 2019, 20).

In contrast to the **nature-culture dualism**, scholars as Donna Haraway have aimed at theorizing connections between humans and nature. In their attempt to merge and combine the concepts, the border of separation is cleared, forming Haraway's concept of "natureculture", as described in her 2003 book *The Companion Species Manifesto*. "Natureculture conceptualises a dynamic, mutually correcting intertwining of the natural with the culturally constructed or the man-made, of the body with the mind, of the rational with the emotional, of the masculine with the feminine etc." (Draga Alexandru 2017, 39). Another related idea is the nature-culture dualism coined by Timothy Morton. "Indeed, the nature-culture distinction itself is an anthropogenic product, deriving in the first instance from the transition from nomadism to settlement that began millennia ago in southwestern Asia" (Buell 2001, 3). This idea of considering the human sphere separately from the natural one is a central prerequisite for exploitation and destruction that has led to anthropogenic climate change. However, "[h]uman transformations of physical nature have made the two realms increasingly indistinguishable" (Buell 2001, 3). The interconnectedness of natural and human topics mirrors a general recent development. As a "disquiet has been expressed by environmental scholars over what they see as a postcolonialism's relative lack of attention to the extra-human sphere, while postcolonialists have regarded environmentalists as ignoring the human cultural aspects of colonial history" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 133). This is also found in the theory of postcolonial ecocriticism, which was explained in chapter 2. Hence, postcolonial ecocriticism functions as a means of working against colonial practices from the past and present that affect humans and nature. "The mission of postcolonial criticism has been to fight off unjustified abuses of colonial power and erase centre-margin dichotomies (some of them absurd by Western standards, such as the boundaries of untouchability between superior castes and lower-caste people or people outside the caste system, who used to be placed on a par, or sometimes lower than animals)" (Draga Alexandru 2017, 40).

Within postcolonial studies, **diaspora** is an important concept that deals with the effects of migration. The concept of diaspora is derived from the Greek gardening tradition, referring to the scattering of seeds and therefore implying dispersal (Kalra et al. 2005, 9). From the Greek *dia* meaning ´though´ and *speirein* meaning ´to scatter´, the term refers to a ´dispersion from´ (Brah 1996, 181). A central idea is the etymology of seeds and sperm, carrying culture as well as reproductive capacity (Kalra et al. 2005, 9). Interestingly, the

etymology of the term is derived from nature and then applied to migration, which gives the first hint at the interconnectedness of nature and migration within this concept. The first description of diaspora in the context of forced exile is the expulsion of Jews after the destruction of the First Temple in the sixth century BC (Kalra et al. 2005, 9). Their exile to Babylon has become one of the central Jewish political and cultural narratives, which is why the Jewish experience of loss and suffering is regarded as the prototype of diasporic experience (Kalra et al. 2005, 9). "The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings" (Brah 1996, 193). Experiences of diaspora can be very different, depending on several factors, for example, the circumstances of migration. "Diasporas, the voluntary or forcible movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions, is a central historical fact of colonization. Colonialism itself was a radically diasporic movement, involving the temporary or permanent dispersion and settlement of millions of Europeans over the entire world" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 81). In most cases, however, diaspora is connected to forced migration movements. Therefore, the concept of diaspora relates to forced movement, exile, and a sense of loss felt through the inability to return (Kalra et al. 2005, 10). Kalra et al. regard the "defining characteristic […] a blockage to return – that there is a difficulty, if not an absolute bar, in returning to the place of migration. Forced exile becomes essential to the heightened sense of longing for home and is central to this understanding of diaspora" (Kalra et al. 2005, 10). This form of forced exile is important for movements of the past, for example, the movement of African slaves but also for recent migration movements, for example, the events in the Balkans in the 1990s through the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia (Kalra et al. 2005, 10). For contemporary migration, diaspora is important, as "[t]he displacement of people as asylum-seekers and refugees also brings with it the difficulty of returning home" (Kalra et al. 2005, 10). In general, "diaspora is not limited to any particular historical period in that we even have examples of precolonial, colonial and post-colonial diasporas" (Kalra et al. 2005, 13). For migration literature diaspora represents an important concept, as it includes many aspects of the migration experience. The dimensions of diaspora have a great impact on cultural and literary studies, as they benefit from an interculturalism created by experiences of migration (Kalra et al. 2005, 37). For this reason, diaspora studies not only are connected to migration studies but have an influence on them. "Diasporic understandings can add many dimensions to the study of immigration, but these are, on the whole, complementary rather than competing accounts" (Kalra et al. 2005, 16). Diaspora, on the one hand, forms an important concept for experiences of

migration. On the other hand, diasporic cultural productions are important in the context of industry´s desire for newness, which expresses the requirements of expansion and extending markets of capitalism (Kalra et al. 2005, 46). As the status of a refugee is related to the notion of an exiled diaspora, the idea of forced migration is strongly connected to the creation of diasporas in the contemporary world (Kalra et al. 2005, 11). These diasporas can be the results of actions of a nation-state but also of inequalities created by capitalism, for example, labour demand, poverty, or demands for better social or economic conditions (Kalra et al. 2005, 11). One can see that the topic reaches into many fields of societal life. The concept of diaspora may help to view groups as more settled than the term immigration implies, but it also holds the possibility of emphasizing differences by highlighting transnational affiliations (Kalra et al. 2005, 14). Also, it is important to consider diaspora as a process influencing people´s way of living in society rather than categorizing groups of diasporas that have different reasons for migration and experience different processes of settlement (Kalra et al. 2005, 29). Kalra et al. (2005) present a list of conditions developed by Cohen (1997) that categorize experiences of diaspora (Kalra et al. 2005, 11). These conditions include the dispersal and scattering from a homeland, collective trauma while in the homeland, cultural flowering while away, a troubled relationship with the majority while away, a sense of community transcending national frontiers, and finally promoting a return movement away to home (Kalra et al. 2005, 11). Furthermore, diaspora describes a form of crisis of identity, as the concerns of displacement have a strong impact on the relationship between self and place (Ashcroft et al. 1989, 9).

As has been stated above, notions of diaspora are related to **identity**. Identity is derived from the Latin *idem*, meaning ´same´, and the suffix *-tas* or *-tatem*, meaning ´see´ (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989), thus meaning ´to see the sameness in oneself´. Accordingly, the term expresses the notion of sameness, likeness, and oneness (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989). Also, identity can be defined as "[t]he quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness" (The Oxford English Dictionary 1989). The given definitions show the interdependence of identity theory and conceptions of otherness as explained in the beginning of this chapter. The innate of a person becomes evident through a constant process of weighing the other and the self (cf. Müller-Funk 2016, 17). Thus, identity consists of the other and the self by making both into the innate, as the process of weighing is never completed. Identity theory attempts to understand how we situate ourselves with the social world within a complex nature of individual attachment and

belonging (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2008, 43). Thus, identity can be understood as a constant process. Identity includes dialectical and contradictory processes as well as attachments, feelings, preferences, and memberships that feed into a sense of belonging (Jones / Krzyzanowski 2008, 42). This leads to a determination of the self that distinguishes itself from the other. Also, identity has the capacity to incorporate other identities as part of the definition of the self (Jones / Krzyzanowski 2008, 42).

As another subcategory, individual and collective identity can be distinguished, as they refer to different processes of identity formation. Individual identity is a process of negotiating images of self, which then mediate according to individual biography in the interaction between the individual and society (Weingarten 2010, 161). Collective identity is a common identity of a group depending on specific cultural forms of the group (Weingarten 2010, 161). This means that groups develop a certain exclusive nature that does not open up for everyone (Weingarten 2010, 161). In this case, the self can be seen as a collective or group that delineates itself from other groups or people with for example different cultures, languages, or religions. "Collective identity is the process of signification whereby commonalities of experience around a specific axis of differentiation, say class, caste or religion, are invested with particular meanings. In this sense a given collective identity partially erases, but also carries traces of other identities" (Brah 1996, 124). This aspect of the formation of collective identity through erasing and including other identities is crucial for issues connected with migration. Inclusion, assimilation, and integration strongly depend on collective identity as well as the sense of belonging to a group, society, or country. Belonging can only be understood in terms of an individual situating himself or herself in relation to a collective, such that collective identities become fundamental for the sense of belonging (Jones and Krzyzanowski 2008, 46). Since individual identity also is shaped by negotiating the self with the environment, it can also be affected by migration and the connection to collective identities. For this reason, "[d]iasporic identities are at once local and global. They are networks of transnational identifications encompassing ´imagined´ and ´encountered´ communities" (Brah 1996, 196). In that sense, migration includes different aspects in the formation of collective identities.

As the concept of diaspora, the concept of **hybridity** has its origins in biology and botany (Kalra et al. 2005, 70), describing the mixing of species. In the context of literary studies, it refers to the mixing and combination of cultural exchange (Kalra et al. 2005, 71). The concept of hybridity in the context of postcolonial theory can refer to the mixing of peoples and languages, as in the case of creolisation or mestizaje, but also to the mixing of

ideas and identities (Loomba 2005, 145). Through the contact of different versions of self and other, something new is created that contains elements of both. Therefore, “hybridity commonly refers to the creation of new transcultural forms within the contact zone produced by colonization” (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 135). The previously described concept of diaspora can be regarded as a preliminary stage of hybridity. Hybridity appears as a contact point of a diaspora, describing a cultural mixture of diasporised and host within migration (Kalra et al. 2005, 70). The rather negative connotation of suffering in the diaspora can potentially be turned into something new that combines differences. The idea of cultural hybridity is often deemed the most prominent concept of postcolonial studies (Wesselhöft 2006, 35). It was coined by Homi Bhabha, who noticed that the major function of colonial discourse lies in creating a space for the colonized persons through the production of knowledge, continuous mechanisms of surveillance, and the creation of stereotypes (Chakrabarti 2010, 233). This implies that colonial discourse offers colonized people a chance to represent their perspectives and impacts the ways in which their issues are perceived. Therefore, hybridity often describes migrants in creative and subversive cultural interspaces (Wesselhöft 2006, 35). Bhabha uses hybridity as an in-between term, referring to it as a third space, especially in the context of the colonial-cultural interface (Kalra et al. 2005, 71). This means that in the connection of self and other a new hybrid space is created. Thereby,

> [h]ybridity, as the central conceptualization of Bhabha´s cultural theory, is seen as an active challenge to the dominant cultural power, a force that transforms the cultural from a source of conflict into a productive element and thereby opens up a ´third space´. The in-betweenness of cultural and social migrant spaces and their imaginings allows us to mediate meaning of the ´incompatible, the silenced, the unconscious´ as this kind of ´third space´ should not be understood as a static, fixed and identity bestowing unity but as a process, one that can be re-written and translated. (Christou 2013, 306)

With these positive and creative implications, the concept of hybridity takes a central role in the recreation of culture. Homi Bhabha defines culture as a signifying process, in which culture is not static but dynamic, not stable but flexible, and not complete but hybrid (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 248). Bhabha has significantly coined ideas of hybridity in recent scholarship. For people migrating from one culture to another, this plays an important role. The liminality between cultures becomes its own space, the ´**third space**´ (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 248). However, hybridity does not consist in acknowledging two primary sources of which a third develops, but hybridity is the third space that allows the emergence of new positions (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 249). Therefore, cultures shape migration and vice versa. The concept of the third space shows the ambivalence between migrant culture or postcolonial culture and their counterparts with the goal of creating new space and

time for the political and cultural practice of the present (Castro Varela and Dhawan 2015, 249). The concepts of diaspora and hybridity show that migration experiences can be transferred into positively perceived third spaces despite the problems that are involved. Especially in literary productions this positive third space often is depicted. Therefore, "[i]n recent times, the notion of a 'diasporic identity' has been adopted by many writers as a positive affirmation of their hybridity" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 83).

To sum up this subchapter, the theoretical concepts of colonisation, alterity, diaspora, identity, hybridity, and third space were presented in order to form the basis for the analysis of Amitav Ghosh´s novel *Sea of Poppies* in chapter 4. Colonisation includes different processes that are based on otherness and power structures and often evoke the exploitation, abuse, and destruction of other, marginalized people and nature. Colonization involves different movements of migration that affect societal structures and the natural environment of colonized countries. In the context of (mostly) forced migration, diaspora plays an essential role, as this field of study deals with loss and displacement. This is connected to the concept of identity as a constant process that negotiates aspects of self and other. Hybridity refers to a new, in-between space that is created by the mixing and combining of cultures and perspectives. This third space creates new positions that are often depicted as positive.

3.2 Environmental Justice, Displacement and Violence

The development of ecocriticism as described in chapter 2 leads directly to questions of **environmental justice** (EJ). At the base of this is the fact that natural resources are limited and not distributed equally but also that impacts of natural degradation often affect people that are not directly degrading nature themselves. "Environmental justice has been one of the central organizing discourses of environmental and climate change movements over the last 30 years. […] EJ is primarily seen as a concern for (in)equity in the distribution of environmental bads (and goods), an insistence on recognizing and redressing them where and when they occur, and a demand to avoid their expansion or replication" (Schlosberg et al. 2018, 592). The topic is ever more relevant in recent times as resources and their distribution are scarce, and the world population grows. "Although some three decades have passed since the term environmental justice began mobilizing activists and making headlines – along with related terms like environmental racism, environmental equity, and

environmental inequality – the conditions it names remain just as relevant today" (Holifield et al. 2018, 1). Hence, one has to take a closer look at power relations and their connection to nature and what effects there are to unjust distributions. "The principles of natural resource right justified from this perspective will, I argue, be ones designed to protect the ability of all human beings to satisfy their basic needs as members of self-determining political communities, where I take it that the genuine exercise of self-determination is not possible for communities that occupy a position of significant disadvantage in global wealth and power relations" (Blomfield 2019, 6). This shows that resource distribution not only depends on capacity but on other factors such as economy, politics, or logistics. Furthermore, the destruction and pollution of nature have strong and far-reaching effects that affect groups of people differently.

> Environmental problems, from water and pollution to biodiversity loss and global warming, have the capacity to affect all of us. […] they do not affect us all equally, or in the same ways. Nor do we have equal power to decide solutions to these problems, or to take the necessary action to solve them. This unequal and differentiated positioning, which typically places the heaviest environmental burdens upon marginalized, disadvantaged, and less powerful populations, forms the central premise of the problem of environmental injustice and the hope for environmental justice as its solution. (Holifield et al. 2018, 1).

The field of environmental justice deals with different aspects of how groups of people are affected by environmental aspects, such as pollution, destruction, loss of habitats, or resource distribution. Woods distinguishes different forms of environmental justice: "Environmental justice as concerned with environmentally produced or exacerbated social inequalities, both locally (as in Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina) and globally (as in the inequalities arising from unequal economic relationships between the Global North and the Global South […]) as well as environmental justice as concerned with justice to the environment or between humans and nonhuman entities" (Woods 2018, 150).

Another perspective of environmental justice is the negotiation with **environmental racism**. Many problems that arise from environmental issues strongly affect poor people over rich ones. As human rights try to establish a standard under which all humans can live, the recognition of a connection to environmental topics offers a new perspective. "The growing recognition of environmental human rights, in both theory and practice, may

represent a powerful tool in the struggle for environmental justice" (Woods 2018, 157). Environmental justice is anchored in human rights,[11] and violations should be prosecuted:

> To say that a human right has been violated is to say that a fundamental wrong has been committed, and redress is urgently called for. Given both the gravity and the urgency of many environmental problems, one might expect the human rights framework to be an appropriate one through which to address environmental harms. […] Given both the scale of environmental harms that we are currently witnessing, and the fact that we know and understand that human choices and actions are causing these harms, it is intuitively plausible to appeal to environmental human rights as a framework for achieving environmental justice. (Woods 2018, 150)

Basically, "[r]ecognizing environmental rights as human rights prompts us to take seriously the idea that we are ecologically embedded beings" (Woods 2018, 157). This insight is essential for all considerations of environmental justice. "For example, environmental human rights, in virtue of being human rights, can hardly avoid charges of anthropocentrism. Making a claim for environmental justice through the idiom of human rights may plausibly be said not to disrupt dominant ways of thinking about the relationship between human and nonhuman nature, since the human rights framework implicitly accepts the human as the locus of moral value" (Woods 2018, 151).

In spite of these considerations of environmental justice and human rights, the fact stands that environmental problems and deficits are not distributed equally.

> Following the path of least resistance often means targeting the most disempowered communities in society for the most ecologically hazardous industrial facilities, toxic waste sites, and natural resource extraction and energy development schemes. The less political power a community of people possesses, the fewer resources (time, money, education) that people within have to defend themselves from potential threats; the lower the level of community awareness and mobilization against potential ecological threats, the more likely they are to experience arduous environmental and human health problems. (Faber 2018, 62)

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[11] The resolution of the UN Human Rights Council, as well as the UN General Assembly have considered this in their latest actions. "The human right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment was recently recognized by the UN General Assembly (2022) and the UN Human Rights Council (2021). This recognition empowers all people with a critical tool to hold their governments, big polluters and all those responsible for environmental harm to account. UNDP is committed to supporting Member States realize the right to a clean, healthy, and sustainable environment as well as strengthening protections for environmental human rights defenders that face reprisals for standing up for our rights and our planet. UNDP has developed a global strategy for environmental justice that seeks to increase accountability and protection of 'environmental rights' for current and future generations; and promote the environmental rule of law" (UNDP online, 2024).

Once again, these forms of environmental racism are rooted in aspects of otherness, hegemony, and power relations that often remain from colonial times.

> The worsening ecological crisis in the Global South is directly related to a global system of economic and environmental stratification in which the United States and other advanced capitalist nations are able to shift or impose a growing environmental burden on weaker states. Given the weakness of national environmental policy in most developing nations, the lack of rigorous environmental laws and sanctions against corporate polluters, the anti-environmental content of the so-called "free-trade" agreements, and a growing willingness by many desperately poor countries to accept long-term environmental problems in exchange for short-term economic gains, the growing mobility of capital is facilitating the export of environmental problems from the advanced capitalist countries to the Global South and sub-peripheral states. (Faber 2018, 69)

Environmental racism exacerbates many problems that already strongly affect the Global South. Another connected point is the consideration of whether environmental justice should only serve humans or if non-humans, e.g., animals or nature itself, should have rights. "Environmental harms, such as pollution, biodiversity loss, deforestation, soil erosion, and climate change, can have sustained and severe impacts on both human and nonhuman life. […] Indeed, we need to know whether nonhuman beings and future human beings can properly be held to have environmental rights" (Woods 2018, 149).

Exploitation as well as environmental and social degradation are almost always accompanied by different forms of **violence**, which are a result of an unbalance in power structures. Violence is defined as "The deliberate exercise of physical force against a person, property, etc.; physically violent behaviour or treatment; (*Law*) the unlawful exercise of physical force, intimidation by the exhibition of such force. Formerly also: the abuse of power or authority to persecute or oppress (*obsolete*)" (Oxford English Dictionary online, 2023). In the context of environmental degradation and resource scarcity, violence plays a crucial role that is reflected in the concept of environmental racism: "Developing countries are likely to be affected sooner and more severely than developed countries. They tend to be much more dependent on environmental goods and services for their economic well-being; they often do not have the financial, material, and human capital resources to buffer themselves from the effects of environmental scarcities; and their economic and political institutions tend to be fragile and riven with discord" (Homer-Dixon 1999, 4). Homer-Dixon (1999) lists several forms of violence that are connected to violations of environmental justice, among them are disputes over local degradation such as factory emissions, ethnic clashes over environmental scarcity that arise from migration, civil strife, scarcity-induced interstate war, and North-South conflicts (5). Pollution or degradation of the environment

can have different violent reactions and extents. For example, "[scholars] showed that hunger, famine, and consequent economic and physical displacements of people arise primarily in situations where conflicts, corruption, and exploitative political systems deny people access to food" (McLeman/Gemenne 2018, 9). This shows the strong connection between natural resources and violence. In his research on possible positive effects of natural changes, Homer-Dixon (1999) states that despite the possible advantages of the mobilization of people in order to create change or technological entrepreneurship as well as institutional change, violence, and environmental degradation prevail (5). He comes to the finding that in many cases environmental scarcity evokes a self-reinforcing spiral of violence, institutional dysfunction, and social fragmentation (Homer-Dixon 1999, 5). Therefore, only in rare cases does environmental degradation lead to positive change, while in most cases, destabilizing violence is the result.

> Sixty to seventy percent of the world's poor people live in rural areas, and most depend on agriculture for their main income; a large majority of these people are smallholder farmers, including many who are semisubsistence (which means they survive mainly by eating what they grow). Over 40 percent of people on the planet—some 2.4 billion— use fuelwood, charcoal, straw, or cow dung as their main source of energy; 50 to 60 percent rely on these biomass fuels for at least some of their primary energy needs. Over 1.2 billion people lack access to clean drinking water; many are forced to walk far to get what water they can find. (Homer-Dixon 1999, 13)

With these numbers, Homer-Dixon links the previously explained concept of environmental racism with the emergence of violence due to the degradation of nature shortly before the turn of the millennium. Recent statistics show only minor improvements.[12] Homer-Dixon (1999) asserts that "environmental scarcity helps generate chronic, diffuse, subnational violence—exactly the kind of violence that bedevils conventional military institutions. Around the world, we see conventional armies pinned down and often utterly impotent in the face of interethnic violence or attacks by ragtag bands of lightly armed guerrillas and insurgents" (13). These findings still define the everyday lives of many populations of the Global South.

In addition, the concept of environmental violence helps to understand the facets of environmental justice and the concept of **slow violence**. Slow violence can be defined as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed at all" (Nixon 2011, 2). This means that in contrast to the usual violence that is instantaneous,

[12] In an article from the year 2019 UNICEF and the WHO state that one third of the global population do not have access to safe drinking water (WHO online, 2019).

spectacular, and direct, slow violence can be noticed across a range of temporal scales (Nixon 2011, 2). Slow violence can occur simultaneously with direct violence but manifests itself differently. According to Nixon, results of slow violence, such as deforestation, radioactive aftermaths of war, toxic drifts, or climate change, affect humanity and ecology much more strongly, as the consequences arrive delayed and are underrepresented in human memory (Nixon 2011, 2f). Direct violence, as explained above is often present in human perceptions of environmental degradation and resource scarcity. When looking at incidents of violence that can be connected to environmental factors, direct violence is omnipresent whereas forms of slow violence are often only seldom examined. Another point is that slow violence is under-represented in the news and human narratives, as the effects often are not immediate and spectacular (Nixon 2011, 3). Hence, the representational bias against slow violence determines that its casualties are often not recognized or counted (Nixon 2011, 13).

A fundamental matter of environmental justice is the concept of **place**, as the environment and the surrounding resources play an important role in the spaces that people live in. As a result of environmental degradation and either direct or slow violence, people more often are displaced from their homes, which leads to increased migration numbers worldwide. "The concepts of place and displacement demonstrate the very complex interaction of language, history and environment in the experience of colonized peoples and the importance of space and location in the process of identity formation. In many cases, 'place' does not become an issue in a society's cultural discourse until colonial intervention radically disrupts the primary modes of its representation by separating 'space' from 'place'" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 197). Place and the displacement from it are strongly linked to postcolonial studies and questions of identity (cf. chapter 3.1). Also, they coincide with the concept of dislocation. It is a "term for both the occasion of displacement that occurs as a result of imperial occupation and the experiences associated with this event. The phenomenon may be a result of transportation from one country to another by slavery or imprisonment, by invasion and settlement, a consequence of willing or unwilling movement from a known to an unknown location" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 85f). Furthermore, the term is often used in a philosophical context with Heidegger's unheimelich or unheimelichkeit – literally 'unhousedness' or 'not-at-home-ness', which is also sometimes translated as 'uncanny' or 'uncanniness' (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 86). The bond that humans have with place and environment has a strong impact on them. A place with its environmental characteristics influences humans physically and psychologically:

> This issue of environmental quality brings us to the final way in which place is relational, which is that places inscribe our bodies with location-based markers of environmental quality. The weather conditions we experience, the air we breathe, the food we eat, the water we drink and the green (or decidedly not green) spaces we walk through all impact our bodies with toxins, nutrients, pollens, viruses, bacteria, radioisotopes and the like. Places contribute to whether we are sick or healthy, not just via their physical qualities, but also via our emotional connection to them – whether a yearning, love, sadness or repulsion. For this reason, places play a key role in considerations of environmental (in)justice. (Schlosberg et al. 2018, 593)

This observation prevails for all humans however the importance is often recognized stronger by Indigenous people. "Since the beginning of European colonization, indigenous peoples have been dispossessed of their land and usually displaced to less arable land and to native reserves or government missions" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 87). As Indigenous people in the course of history have experienced displacement to a greater extent, the issue has been present to them for a long time.

> [W]hile we want to emphasize the important nature of place attachment, it is crucial to understand that "attachment" to place can also be a negative. In the history of environmental justice, it is an attachment to places that are damaged, poisoned, and/or dangerous, that defines many communities. Here, attachment is about the material or psychological dependence on a place and/or the inability to move away from it, generating the experience of being stuck, despite the location's negative effects. Whether it is toxic dumping in poor communities, border communities subject to air pollution, the children of poor families drinking contaminated water in Flint, Michigan, or marginalized and vulnerable people living along coastlines in danger of climate-induced flooding, the financial, physical, social and cultural inability to physically escape from environmental bads – and the attachment to threatened, damaged or damaging places – is part of the stressful experience of environmental injustice. We must see both the positive and the potentially negative experience of this relationship between attachment and place. (Schlosberg et al. 2018, 595)

Place and displacement represent important concepts when linking environmental factors and migration, as the natural resources of a place form the basis for living in it but potentially also harm people physically or psychologically, which can lead to displacement. For these reasons, dependencies or attachments between place, identity, and agency should play a greater role in our understanding of a broad conception of environmental justice (Schlosberg et al. 2018, 594). These aspects can be linked to the concept of slow violence, which broadens the dimension of displacement. Nixon (2011) stresses that "communities are involuntarily (and often militarily) relocated to less hospitable environs, but [there are] also those affected by what [he] call[s] displacement without moving. In other words, [he] want[s] to propose a more radical notion of displacement, one that, instead of referring solely to the movement of people from their places of belonging, refers rather to the loss of the land

and resources beneath them, a loss that leaves communities stranded in a place stripped of the very characteristics that made it inhabitable" (19). Summarizing, the concepts of place, displacement, and dislocation are interrelated due to the effects of their colonial history and the focus they lay on the environmental aspects of a place that influence human life and the location in which they live.

Finally, the idea of the **glocal** should be introduced, as it combines many aspects that have been explained in this chapter. Its "use for postcolonial studies has been principally in its foregrounding of local agency against a seemingly relentless global culture. Globalization is itself always local and while globalization operates according to 'flows', the agency of the local ensures that the flow is very often reciprocal" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 131). Local and global processes are often interrelated and influence each other. For example, if an international company exports a resource from a country of the Global South this can lead to environmental degradation at the place of extraction, with the possible outcome of negatively influencing the local population or displacing them. "The concept is important to postcolonial studies because it can be understood in terms of the transcultural relationships pertaining between colony and imperial centre in imperialism" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 131). The image of reciprocal impacts of local and global processes is crucial in the understanding of aspects that connect ecocriticism and migration.

The key concepts of environmental justice, environmental racism, violence, slow violence, and forms of displacement and dislocation will form the basis for the analysis of Helon Habila´s *Oil on Water* in chapter 4.

3.3 Voice, Agency, and Climate Change

In the context of forced migration, displacement and dispossession lead to the phenomenon of climate refugees. Therefore, one can directly draw the connection between migration and ecocriticism. This has already been partially dealt with in the previous subchapter; however, further concepts interweave these topics. Especially when looking at the history of colonization and Indigenous people from a postcolonial perspective, the aspects of voice, agency, and trauma are predominant and can be traced in experiences of climate change induced migration movements.

Voice represents an important concept that is dealt with in postcolonial studies and can be applied to issues of ecocriticism and migration. In the Oxford English Dictionary (2023), voice is defined among other definitions as a "mode of expression or point of view in writing; a particular literary tone or style.", and also "originally: a right to vote. In later use also: a right or power to take part in the control or management of something; a right to express a preference or opinion, a say. Chiefly in to have a voice in" (online). This shows that voice is connected to ideas of power and having an opinion that is heard. In the context of postcolonial studies, the concept of voice refers to people gaining a voice and being heard who in the past have been excluded from expressing their opinions, e.g., subalterns (cf. chapter 3.1). Therefore, voice can be understood as both a formal and a political concept—who speaks to whom under what conditions, and with how much authority (Phelan 2011, 57). Ashcroft et al. (1989) have developed their idea of writing back, which describes a literary voice that expresses points of view from formerly colonized people who get back into the debate that mostly takes place in the Western hemisphere, writing back from the margin to the former centre thereby taking part in the general discourse. This is important for migration, as displaced people and refugees gain a voice in the discussion around the field. In the debates on environmental issues and climate change, the inclusion of different opinions and voices has led to a broadening of perspectives and possible solutions. The Oxford English Dictionary (2023) offers another definition of voice as the "agency or means by which something specified is expressed, represented, or revealed" (online).

Whereas voice refers to the freedom of opinion and speech, **agency** deals with the freedom of action. "Agency refers to the ability to act or perform an action. In contemporary theory, it hinges on the question of whether individuals can freely and autonomously initiate action, or whether the things they do are in some sense determined by the ways in which their identity has been constructed. Agency is particularly important in postcolonial theory because it refers to the ability of postcolonial subjects to initiate action in engaging or resisting imperial power" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 9f). One can see that similar to the concept of voice, agency represents an important aspect when dealing with migration and ecocriticism. Action can take place in different forms, for example, voting for a political party, participating in debates, or writing on a topic or opinion. Therefore, Ashcroft et al. (2013) state that "[b]oth literary writing and its transcultural scenario emphasize the agency of the local and of individual subjects and colonial communities to interpolate the discourses of imperial power" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 131). Agency is strongly attached to individual power against dominating imperial thought. Fischer (2020) sees agency as an ambiguity of

processes of individualisation and connects the concepts with the idea of gaining a voice that matters (15). The concepts of voice and agency determine each other in a way in which they empower individuals to resist dominant opinions and express new points of view.

In postcolonial contexts, **trauma** can play an important role due to the experiences of colonialism that are connected to racism, domination, or violence. "The field of trauma studies emerged in the early 1990s as an attempt to construct an ethical response to forms of human suffering and their cultural and artistic representation. Born out of the confluence between deconstructive and psychoanalytic criticism and the study of Holocaust literature, from its outset trauma theory's mission was to bear witness to traumatic histories in such a way as to attend to the suffering of the other" (Andermahr 2015, 1). The term trauma is derived from the Greek term for wound, which hints at the marks that are left through different forms of violence. Postcolonial scholars have criticised that trauma studies have engaged mainly in Western perspectives and have neglected non-Western and minority traumas (Andermahr 2015, 1). Therefore, several attempts were made in order to decolonize trauma studies and impose a cross-cultural focus. For example, "racially based forms of trauma historically rooted in the global systems of slavery and colonialism pose a significant challenge to the Eurocentric model of trauma as a single overwhelming event" (Andermahr, 2015, 2). Ashcroft et al. (2013) state that "[i]n psychology, trauma refers to a psychic injury, especially one caused by emotional shock the memory of which is repressed and remains unhealed (OED)" (267). In applying trauma studies to postcolonial studies, different aspects that have been mentioned before play an important role, for example, colonization practices (chapter 3.1), displacement (chapter 3.2), or different forms of violence (chapter 3.2). Therefore, trauma "has particular relevance in indigenous societies of settler colonies where the expropriation of traditional lands, displacement of indigenous populations, and child removal (the 'stolen generations') so traumatizes the society that social dysfunction results" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 268). In the context of postcolonial theory, the concept of trauma involves the construction and interrogation of the history of colonialism and decolonization through narratives. According to Visser (2015), it is an established understanding that colonialism's traumatic aftermath continues until the present day (15). Therefore, the narrativization of trauma is an important factor (Visser 2015, 14). The domain of literature serves as a means to present, re-present, and dramatize trauma in its many manifestations without making claims to precise definitions or complete exactitude (Visser 2015, 12). This plays a crucial role in the depiction of trauma. Furthermore, storytelling is itself a ritual means to heal from trauma because it connects past and present, drawing upon the ancestors

and their sacred power to restore harmony and health (Visser 2015, 16). This shows how narratives and especially postcolonial narratives are a central means in the dealing with trauma. Visser concludes "that trauma can be narrated with integrity, and that oral storytelling enables a healing process, which allows insight, acceptance, and access to various modes of redress" (Visser 2015, 16).

Trauma studies deal with the wounding of humans; however, certain aspects can be transferred to the harms that are left on nature by pollution, environmental degradation, or resource extraction. "The metaphor of trauma often used in trauma theory is that of a sudden, sharp piercing of a membrane, as, for instance, by a sharp object implanted in the psyche, where it remains in its original form, hidden behind the screen of consciousness, but making itself known through a serious of symptoms" (Visser 2015, 9). As explained in chapter 3.1, colonization practices on nature were sudden, strong impacts that partially are forgotten or not present but leave traces or symptoms. For example, the extensive hunting practices by colonizers in some cases led to the extinction or near-extinction of certain species. Also, traumatic events over a longer period of time, as explained in the previous paragraph, leave structural traumas on nature. For example, the constant pollution of a forest can lead to its vanishing. "From a historical standpoint, problems arise when European theory is imposed on non-European cultures with their own belief systems, living conditions, and ways of negotiating systemic and environmental trauma" (Rajiva 2021, 9). This highlights the different forms and shapes trauma can have. Therefore, Rajiva includes objects, organic substances, or animals in the analysis of trauma (Rajiva 2021, 11). As humans and nature are strongly connected, this also reaches into the field of traumatic experiences. Thus, Rajiva (2021) stresses the interconnection between trauma studies and material ecocriticism (16). In literary works, this link can be depicted with many details, as borders between different categories can be blurred. Thereby, the perspective of animals and nature play central roles (cf. chapter 1.4).

One possible symptom of the traumas of nature is **climate change**. In the introductory chapter, which deals with the far-reaching effects humans have on nature, the Anthropocene was explained. Strongly connected and possibly the most obvious effect is climate change. Blomfield defines climate change in the following way: "Climate change is said to occur when there is a change in the properties of the climate that persists over an extended period—'typically decades or longer'" (IPCC 2013: 1450). Anthropogenic climate change takes place when such change in the climate results from anthropogenic external

forcings on the climate system. Anthropogenic external forcings include land use change and other activities that alter the composition of the atmosphere" (Blomfield 2019, 8). This altering leads to different effects on nature and climate that can all be traced back to human action. Therefore, "the forcer of the current, sudden (100-200 years) change in climate is humans increasing, by use of fossil fuels, the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, such as carbon dioxide (CO^2) and methane (CH), that, in turn, trap heat" (Eckstein 2014, 250). Apart from the changes on the natural environment, climate change has far-reaching effects on many aspects of human life. Eckstein (2014) notices that "the effects of the current climate change diminish and destroy the world we humans value: the species and landscapes of the Holocene that have trained our senses and our science and defined our art" (252). So, the depiction of the world, nature, humans, and their connections can be transported impactfully by literary art, such as novels.

A consequence of climate change is migration, as the altering of nature leads to the altering and deprivation of spaces in which people live. "What is clear is that people movement in the context of anthropogenic climate change is a complex topic. […] [T]he effects of anthropogenic climate change will increase the risk of an array of disturbances occurring, and these in turn can increase the likelihood that people have to move, desire to move, or decide to move" (Thornton 2018, 4). The more climate change affects different places on Earth, the more important the topic of migration will become. The concepts of place and displacement that were mentioned in chapter 3.2 apply also to climate change and migration. In literary studies, their interdependence can be explored in detail. "The concept of place has always been of central interest to literature-environment studies. […] as it reflects its recognition of the interconnectedness between human life / history and physical environments to which works of imagination (in all media, including literature) bear witness […]" (Buell et al. 2011, 420). This highlights how climate change has found its way into literature that deals with ecocriticism and migration.

The whole chapter deals with the concepts of voice, agency, and trauma in order to connect ecocritical topics with migration in the context of postcolonial studies. Furthermore, climate change represents the link between the two central elements of this thesis. These aspects form the basis for the analysis of Alexis Wight´s *The Swan Book* in chapter 4, in which Indigenous perspectives in particular will be discussed.

3.4 Borders, Nations, and Conflict

An important issue in the discourse on migration is the border or **frontier** as a demarcation between different countries. "The idea of the border is clearly crucial to postcolonial studies and manifests itself in concerns with the constructed boundaries between peoples, nations and individuals" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 36). As Ashcroft (2013) states, borders can refer to different entities and differentiate people or countries. Therefore, alterity (see chapter 3.1) is interconnected to considerations of borders. "The idea of a frontier, a boundary or a limiting zone to distinguish one space or people from another, is clearly much older and used more widely than in colonial and postcolonial theory" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 122). Despite this concept being much older, it plays a central role in imperialism and contemporary impacts, such as considerations of transculturality or globalisation. "The frontier or boundary that limited the space so defined was a crucial feature in imagining the imperial self, and in creating and defining (othering) those others by which that 'self' could achieve definition and value" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 123). This shows that alterity plays an important role in the creation of borders between countries, as well as limiting factors between people or ethnologies. "As well as literal frontiers, the discourse of empire was metaphorically concerned to delineate boundaries and frontiers, inventing categories for which the spatial was always and only a loose image for a perceived or desired racial, cultural or gendered divide" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 123). Therefore, alterity forms a prerequisite for the formation of borders. In the context of postcolonial studies, it is also important to notice that borders and frontiers in the past were made by the colonizing power. Therefore, the delineation of self and other is randomly appointed through colonizers.

In contrast, the concept of **liminality** describes a space between borders and difference. In this way "liminal spaces act to problematize and so dismantle the binary systems which bring them into being" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 36). The "term derives from the word 'limen', meaning threshold […] The importance of the liminal for postcolonial theory is precisely its usefulness for describing an 'in-between' space in which cultural change may occur: the transcultural space in which strategies for personal or communal self-hood may be elaborated, a region in which there is a continual process of movement and interchange between different states" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 145). The liminal space depends on the existence of borders, as they form in-between space and at the same time represent an opposition, combining aspects that are supposed to be delimited by a frontier.

The process of overcoming a frontier can have different effects. Ashcroft notices that "[t]he world is more mobile than it has ever been: borders are being crossed daily, populations are changing as the mobility of migrants and refugees increases" (Ashcroft 2023, 1). This can lead to conflicts as liminal spaces arise and diversity increases. "Border crossing means disturbance, the blurring of long-standing concepts of culture and identity, which has led nation states to extreme forms of border protection" (Ashcroft 2023, 1f). Strong forms of border protection seem to develop in many places in modern times; the wall being its most prominent shape. Ashcroft (2023) finds that although at the end of the Second World War there were 7 border walls, by 1989 there were 15, and today there are about 77, they all eventually failed, which can be seen in the examples of the Great Wall of China, Hadrian´s Wall, or the Berlin Wall (Ashcroft 2023, 3). Not only have popular examples of walls failed to stop border crossing and migration, but even though there are more walls today than in the past, migration numbers have increased. "The distinctiveness of societies, nations and cultures is based on a seemingly unproblematic division of space, on the fact that they occupy 'naturally' discontinuous spaces. The premise of discontinuity forms the starting point from which to theorise contact, conflict, and contradiction between cultures and societies. Consequently, the psychological and cultural forces against mobility are deeply rooted" (Ashcroft 2023, 2). Therefore, borders themselves, as well as crossing borders can provoke conflicts. Ashcroft (2023) describes this as a "tension between the bordering practices of nation states and the actual diversity of the cultures round which their fences are built, both to keep in and keep out" 2).

Borders or frontiers separate different entities, often **nations**. Therefore, borders form the key to nationhood (Ashcroft 2023, 4). The idea of nationhood is connected to further aspects of postcolonial studies.

> Constructions of the nation are thus potent sites of control and domination within modern society. This is further emphasized by the fact that the myth of a 'national tradition' is employed not only to legitimize a general idea of a social group ('a people') but also to construct a modern idea of a nation-state, in which all the instrumentalities of state power (e.g. military and police agencies, judiciaries, religious hierarchies, educational systems and political assemblies or organizations) are subsumed and legitimized as the 'natural' expressions of a unified national history and culture. (Ashcroft et a. 2013, 167).

The aspect of control is central to the idea of a nation. "It also makes it an extremely contentious site, on which ideas of self-determination and freedom, of identity and unity collide with ideas of suppression and force, of domination and exclusion" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 168). This shows how delimiting factors of nationhood potentially have several

negative impacts. Ashcroft (2013) states that "[p]erhaps the issue is not whether we have nations but what kinds of nations we have, whether, that is, they insist on an exclusionary myth of national unity based in some abstraction such as race, religion or ethnic exclusivity, or they embrace plurality and multiculturalism" (171). This means that delimiting factors that are expressed through alterity and borders can be overcome by factors that determine the concept of liminality in which unifying aspects override. However:

> Human history is dominated by descriptions of wars and confrontations. The existence of the threat of them, i.e. our enemies, has been an inseparable and constitutive part of social constructions of us. The family, the clan, the group, the empire and the nation to which we developed a sense of belonging and identification contributed to the construction of different levels of the socio-political us. However, the intensity of the levels of identity formation and conceptualizations of us has varied through historical socioeconomic and political formations. There is little doubt that it has been intensified in modernity when other forms of political organization – cities and empires – became allied to the nation-state. Nation-building programmes or the nationalization of the nation laid the ground for the development of national sentiments which gradually became institutionalized within political borders. (Kamali 2008, 302).

Borders and nations have a long tradition and represent the normal state into which modern society is divided. In the past and currently, this has led to conflict and war. This is due to the formation processes of borders or their scrutinization.

These concepts of border and nation play a central role in postcolonial studies and the considerations of migration. As has been mentioned previously, the aspect of control is anchored into ideas of nationhood that aim to represent and unite a group of people by delimiting it from others. Therefore, the nation implies a form of societal and political security that potentially can be endangered by plurality and multiculturalism which works against the division of categories of people. Because factors such as migration, multiculturalism, and plurality have recently increased some see a danger for the nation. This potentially leads to conflict. Nykänen and Samola (2020) depict how such ideas of nationalism feed cultures of fear (14). Accordingly, "words as 'safety', 'security', 'protection', and 'defence' are used in public discourse to justify the control and surveillance of citizens, including different minority groups, and to legitimize war and other acts of violence in far-away countries. In Europe, the refugee crisis [in 2015] produced border militarism and a border war as a consequence of national boundary fortification, which seeks to protect space from the invasions of enemy outsiders" Nykänen and Samola 2020, 14). This principle works in any society as it is triggered by the basic and universal core emotion of fear (Nykänen and Samola 2020, 17). Thereby, fear can be induced by real dangers as

well as constructed or narrated dangers. "The cultural politics of fear are connected to experiences of threat, both imagined and real. A sense of security arises from the absence of threat, which allows communities to create emotionally balanced societies" (Nykänen and Samola 2020, 15). Therefore, the perception of threats or safety is crucial for a society. Nykänen and Samola (2020) find that narratives of othering that delimit groups of people from others lead to racial profiling and stereotypes and thereby strengthen populist movements by creating images of fear and threats (18). As a result, it does not matter whether a potential threat is real or imagined, it can have a similar effect on society. This increases the importance of narratives, as they create and/or destruct threats. "Contemporary dystopian fiction has moved from depicting oppressive totalitarian states to portrayals of more complex threats in which changes in climate and the environment have serious negative consequences" (Nykänen and Samola 2020, 23). This shows that potential threats from environmental causes are perceived as stronger than in the past and are therefore included more intensely in contemporary narratives.

As indicated above, another factor for the provocation of **conflict** is the changing of climate and the competition for natural resources. These ecocritical aspects potentially lead to conflicts about limits or borders of spaces in which humans live, as the following examples illustrate:

> Human history is often driven by military conquest that seeks to control a resource. The search for gold and silver was a major driver in European seafaring exploration and colonization of the New World. Trade in spice was a major factor in Dutch annexation of Indonesia. The British carved out Belize from Guatemala after their defeat in the American Revolution in which they lost access to hardwood forests of North Carolina. This wood was vital for construction of the British fleet. The lucrative fur trade was a key factor driving British and French competition in North America. (Lee 2018, 20).

Not only do historically environmental aspects have an impact on conflicts, but recently, the environmental factors that potentially create conflict have increased. "Environmental stress is one of the major elements among many political, economic, and social factors that contribute to instability and conflict" (Swain and Öjendal 2018, 2). Thereby, conflict and environment influence each other, for which reason there is a strong connection between ecocritical aspects and migration. "Destruction of the environment is commonly seen as a repercussion of violent conflict or conflict-induced migration" (Swain and Öjendal 2018, 2). Floods or droughts represent direct factors of climate change and lead to migration. In many cases, people migrate for environmental reasons, however, the migration process itself also has an influence on the environment. "Refugees [...] are more likely to cause environmental

destruction than others. Their uncertain residential status, lack of land ownership, and desire to return to their native place reduce their incentive to protect the environment in which they unwillingly find themselves. The refugees' consumption of resources coupled with their unfamiliarity with the local ecosystem often multiplies the harm to the local environment" (Swain and Öjendal 2018, 3). This shows that the aspects of conflict, migration, and environmental destruction are interconnected. However, as stated before, "[e]nvironmental destruction, while not immediately intuitive, can also be the cause and not merely the consequence or premeditated consequence of violent conflicts" (Swain and Öjendal 2018, 3). Swain and Öjendal (2018) notice that "environmentally induced resource scarcity might also lead to the loss of land or other basic needs that are requisite for survival, which may force the affected population to migrate" (5). Environmental degradation therefore is a cause for conflict and push factor for migration, but conflict and migration also have (negative) impacts on the environment. "Environmental conflict is emerging because violent behaviour is increasingly associated with environmental actions, as either cause or effect" (Lee 2018, 17). Competition over natural resources becomes ever more important and potential conflicts increase. Lee (2018) lists some examples:

> Energy issues alone are important enough to make countries go to war. Coltan, a vital input into consumer electronics, is a driver of war in eastern Congo. Diamonds were used to fund civil war in West Africa. Second, war's ability to impact the environment has also changed. Weaponry today is far more lethal and can literally move mountains. Bio-chemical agents can kill almost every living thing in a certain area. Nuclear weapons can change the planet's climate. (17)

This shows in which ways conflicts over nature impact humans and the environment.

Concluding this subchapter on borders, frontiers, and liminality, but also on nation and conflict, one can see how alteration and limiting factors facilitate conflict, which increases migration and potential harms to nature. Therefore, these aspects represent the basis for analysing the connection between ecocriticism and migration in John Lanchester´s *The Wall*.

3.5 Migration Movements and Home

As has been shown previously, migration is defined as movement and leaving a place in order to reach a new one. The place of new settlement does thereby sometimes become a place of home and belonging, which leads to the necessity of discussing notions of rootedness and home and their connection to nature.

The notion of **home** corresponds with the concept of diaspora (chapter 3.1), as the national narrative of place is expressed through terms such as homeland, motherland, or fatherland (Hanauer 2008, 201). Therefore, home forms an antipole for the concept of diaspora while simultaneously being part of it. Hanauer (2008) finds that the national territory becomes a symbolic meaning and creates emotional attachment (201). In this sense, nation can be a unifying factor of belonging that stands in contrast to the previously described notion (chapter 3.4). "Thus, space is layered with deep emotional meaning creating a connection between the individual and the landscape of the homeland" (Hanauer 2008, 201). This connection is attached to feelings of homeliness and belonging and therefore also to nationalism. Still, "it is difficult to generalise about nationalism because none of the factors we might think of as responsible for forging national consciousness – language, territory, a shared past, religion, race, customs – are applicable in every instance" (Loomba 2005, 156). These aspects of the notion of home are important for the exploration of migration experiences. Home is at once a mythical place of desire for diasporic imaginations but also the lived experience of a locality (Brah 1996, 192). In the context of migration and diaspora, the concepts of home and dispersion are put into a relation of creative tension (Brah 1996, 193). In that way, the relation of creative tension can either enrich the new living circumstances or create suffering. This highlights the problematics of belonging, which can lead as far as trauma (cf. chapter 3.2): "The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience" (Brah 1996, 193). On the other hand, diaspora can be used in a creative way of overcoming difference and thus describes cultural mixture as a precondition for hybridity (also see chapter 3.1).

Previously described aspects such as diaspora, nation, and migration experiences influence notions of and ideas about home. These can be individually different and dependent on many factors. Home is then understood, here, as both a material environment and a set of meaningful relationships, recollections, and aspirations to be emplaced (Boccagni 2017, xxiv). As a result, home can be a physical place or feelings that are attached to this notion. Boccagni (2017) describes home as a search and process with an open end (xxiv). This conceptualises home as an active process of looking for or making a home. Especially in the context of migration, this gains importance, as migrants leave home in order to find a new home. This means that the process of searching for a home is connected to the process of searching for their personal idea of what a home constitutes. Therefore, "home can be fruitfully appreciated both within, on migrants' life experience, and between,

regarding the interactions with their native and non-migrant counterparts" (Boccagni 2017, xxiv).

The concept of **belonging** which has already been mentioned previously is connected to the concept of home but also to nationhood (chapter 3.4). "The cultural and political contingency of the nation leads directly to the issue of belonging" (Ashcroft 2023, 11). This implies that apart from the structural level, nationhood is also connected to a feeling. Ashcroft defines belonging as an active process (Ashcroft 2023, 11). This sense of activeness holds a similarity to the process of searching for home. "There is a struggle going on between the structures of nation-states and the populations they control. Where nations rest on the necessity and rootedness of cultures, peoples' relation to the bordering practices of the state is purely contingent depending on their methods of performing belonging" (Ashcroft 2023, 13). This clarifies that belonging is not only a personal feeling but also a communal aspect of society. In literary studies, the concepts of home and belonging are often associated with representations of the uncanny. As Ashcroft states, "belonging in literature is what I would call the literature of uncanny, of cultural difference, of the weirdness of displacement, literature of absence and loss, of being not-at-home" (Ashcroft 2023, 12f). Literary negotiations of the uncanny basically represent aspects of otherness that highlight differences between the own and the other. This dealing with alterity, as explained in chapter 3.1, forms the basis of narratives on the uncanny and the search for home and belonging. Therefore, this concept can be connected to experiences of migration, as they deal with a constant process of negotiating otherness and belonging. "Home, belonging, identity are all destinations dependent on the contingency of the everyday" (Ashcroft 2023, 15). This idea of home and belonging being a destination again highlights the underlying process of making oneself home.

Home and belonging and their absence are always attached to different places and therefore play a crucial role in migration experiences. Different aspects of migration deal with the process of finding a home and belonging. This is also the case for migration processes that return to places of origin instead of leaving them. Tsuda (2013) finds that the number of ethnic return migrants has increased in recent years (172). The reasons for this are the wish to reconnect with ancestral roots or economic reasons (Tsuda 2013, 173). Therefore, pull factors of return migration differ partially from the ones of migration, as feelings of home and belonging influence the migration decision of returnees more often than, for example, economic or environmental reasons. This can be traced back to "nostalgic

affiliation to their country of ethnic origin" (Tsuda 2013, 174). According to Tsuda (2013), experiences of return migration can be similar to migration experiences, as alienation and separation are also factors of return migration (185). This shows that on the one hand, all forms of migration initiate processes of searching for home and belonging and on the other hand, that the connection to place plays a central role.

In his conceptualisation of place-sense, Buell (1996) describes place as perceived and felt space (253). Therefore, he highlights human attachment to place, which is individually created. Buell finds

> that place-consciousness in literature, and most especially the consciousness of the nonhuman environment as a network enfolding human inhabitants, ought to be considered a utopian project that realizes itself, in its more instructive forms, not as a *fait accompli* but as an incompletion undertaken in awareness that place is something we are always in the process of finding, and always perforce creating in some degree as we find it, so as to make it a perpetual challenge to compensate for the different kinds of reduction I have described.[13] (Buell 1996, 260)

This shows that the constant process of dealing with place and the environment becomes especially visible in literary negotiation. The exploration of nature in literary forms creates awareness of environmental issues or new features. "Seeing things new, seeing new things, expanding the notion of community so that it becomes situated within the ecological community— these are some ways in which environmental writing can reperceive the familiar in the interest of deepening the sense of place. These examples make clear not only that such devices displace in order to replace, but also that they depend heavily on metaphor, myth, and even fantasy to put readers in touch with place" (Buell 1996, 266). Buell (1996) here hints at the idea of forming a community between human and nonhuman environments. Therefore, the nonhuman environment becomes a dimension of personal and communal sense of place (260). These aspects of place sense form an essential point for the concept of home and its ecocritical negotiation.

For home and belonging environmental aspects play an important role, as it is the case for the other concepts described in the previous subchapters. Places of home and belonging are attached to environment and earth, so they have a strong impact on humans. Flys, et al. (2010) state that belonging to a place determines forms of being and acting (17). This shows that home and place can leave their mark on identities. Also, Flys et al. (2010)

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[13] Buell (1996) connects his described discovery of environmental consciousness and commitment to place especially to Thoreau´s works as a "perfect record of this process" (262).

highlight the importance of home and belonging by departing from Jonthan Bates idea of humans being uprooted and alienated in contrast to other species who live in their ecosystems and natural habitats (17). This somewhat extreme idea emphasises the loss of connection between humans and nature. Different forms of art can function as a space of exile in which the human loss of the natural home on earth is mourned (Flys et al. 2010, 17). Thus, ecocritical negotiations of place can reconnect humans to their natural homes. Certain factors make out a place, for example, plants and animals can be seen as characteristics of an area. Therefore, plants are often symbols of specific places or connected to notions of home. Whereas plants are sedentary, but down their roots deep into the earth they live on and are only influenced by seasons or severe climatic changes, animals are often embossed by migration. Many animal species follow migration patterns that, obviously differ from human migration, but associate animals with different places. This connection of place and migration forms another aspect of the concept of home.

Considering previously described aspects of home, it is also important to include strategies for displaced people´s search for a place of belonging. Especially for Indigenous peoples with strong connections to their natural places of home, this plays an essential role. The concept of **revivance** deals with the processes of finding home and belonging in Indigenous places and cultures. The concept was "[c]oined by Gerald Vizenor as a key term in describing his vision of Indigenous nations, survivance is survival and resistance together: surviving the documented, centuries-long genocide of American Indian peoples and resisting still in the narratives and policies that seek to marginalize and – yes, still now – assimilate indigenous peoples" (King et al. 2015, 7). For revivance, literature is an important means of creating new narratives that include Indigenous perspectives and empower marginalized and displaced peoples. "[…] [Thomas] King is arguing something much bigger: the stories we tell about ourselves and about our world frame our perceptions, our relationships, our actions, and our ethics. They change our reality. The stories we tell each other tell us who we are, locate us in time and space and history and land, and suggest who gets to speak and how" (King et al. 2015, 3). This illustrates how narratives form and impact perspectives on human connections to nature, home, and place that lead to changes. One famous example of the impact survivance had in the past is the social justice movement Idle No More[14].

[14] "Idle No More is an Indigenous-led grassroots social justice movement focused on environmental advocacy, global Indigenous resurgence, and civil resistance against (neo)colonial power structures. The movement took shape in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan during November of 2012, quickly gained public support throughout the territory now known as Canada and expanded to include international participation by January of 2013. Although it experienced a decrease in widespread public action and engagement during the second half of 2013, Idle No More remains an active social justice movement" (Torbica 2023, 2).

To close this subchapter on home and belonging, the aspect of **community** has to be mentioned. The Oxford English Dictionary (2024) defines community as "a body of people who live in the same place, usually sharing a common cultural or ethnic identity. Hence: a place where a particular body of people lives." This definition includes the aforementioned aspect of place as well as identity. Therefore, place and its connection to nature and the environment play into the identities of a people in a community. "For Native nations, this kind of a nation is defined by peoplehood, a concept that has its roots in the preservation and prospering of the community and binds its members together in cultural and often religious terms. Culture and religion are in turn derived by the people from the land they inhabit; thus, the people, the culture, and the land take their meanings from each other" (King 2015, 19). Place and the natural environment represent central characteristics in Indigenous communities and continue even in a diasporic situation. This inclusion of human and non-human elements into the understanding of community not only gives an insight into Indigenous worldviews but also offers perspectives for ecocritical negotiations of migration.

To recapitulate this subchapter on migration movements and home, concepts of home and belonging form the central hub of ecocriticism and migration. As migration numbers in general, but also return migration movements, increase, the feelings of belonging and processes of actively searching for a home become more important. Parting from an Indigenous perspective that can be extended to further contexts, the connection to nature and place sense play important roles in notions of home, belonging, and the forming of communities. Thereby survivance is one central element in forming perspectives of belonging. These aspects are used to analyse Thomas King´s novel *The Back of the Turtle* in the following chapter.

4. The Depiction of Ecocritical Migration in Contemporary Postcolonial Fictions

In this chapter, the bigger theoretical concepts of ecocriticism, migration studies, and postcolonial studies will be applied to five chosen contemporary novels. These include Amitav Ghosh´s *Sea of Poppies*, Helon Habila´s *Oil on Water*, Alexis Wright´s *The Swan Book*, John Lanchester´s *The Wall*, and Thomas King´s *The Back of the Turtle*. In the deeper analysis, the concepts that were explained in chapter 3 will give more insight into how the novels negotiate ecocritical and migration topics. Therefore, the analysis of each novel focuses on different concepts according to their explanations in chapter 3.

4.1 Colonial Practices and Diaspora in Amitav Ghosh´s *Sea of Poppies*

In Amitav Ghosh´s novel *Sea of Poppies* (2008), colonization practices and diaspora represent central motifs that deal with the altering of nature and the effects of migration. The novel is set at the beginning of the 19th century in India, which was colonized and ruled by the British. Through different circumstances, the novels´ main characters, who belong to different social groups and nationalities, end up onboard the ship *Ibis* that sails to Mauritius to transport indentured labourers to work on sugar plantations. Among the main characters are Deeti, a woman from a higher caste who cultivates poppies for a local opium factory; Kalua, a low caste man who saves Deeti from her abusive family and becomes her husband; Raja Neel Rattan Halder, a rich landowner (zemindar of Raskhali) who is convicted of forgery by British law; Paulette Lambert, a French young adult who lives with the trader Mr. Burnham after her father (a botanist) dies; Jodu, a Muslim boatman who dreams of becoming a lascar and grew up with Paulette; and Zachary Reid, an African-American sailor who becomes second mate of the *Ibis*. The story revolves around the opium trade between the British colonizers in India and China that took place during this time and ended in the Opium Wars.

The novel´s historical background is the Opium Wars of the 19th century and therefore includes several historical events. *Sea of Poppies* is set in the year 1838 (Ghosh 2008, 10), which is just before the two mid-nineteenth-century Anglo-Chinese Opium Wars (1839–1842 and 1856–1860) (Draga Alexandru 2017, 38). Another important element is the abolition of slavery in Britain: "The abolition of slavery in the British Empire in 1833 put an end to the providing of cheap labour in the sugar plantations. At the same time, the profitable monopoly enjoyed by the East India Company over the opium trade, in which the drug was produced and manufactured in India to be shipped to China, came under threat after the Chinese government repeatedly tried to suppress the influx of the drug into its coasts at the turn of the nineteenth century" (Martín-González 2021, 75). The opium trade and the need for labour in the colonies collide during this time. "After the slave trade, and when slavery was outlawed by the European powers in the first decades of the nineteenth century, the demand for cheap agricultural labour in colonial plantation economies was met by the development of a system of indentured labour. This involved transporting, under indenture agreements, large populations of poor agricultural labourers from population-rich areas, such

as India and China, to areas where they were needed to service plantations" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 82). *Sea of Poppies* tries to imagine the ways in which the histories of slavery, the Opium trade, the British Empire, and migration are interwoven (Arora 2012, 21). Hence, the fictional negotiation of these topics includes historical elements, for example, descriptions of the real Ghazipur Opium Factory (Ghosh 2008, 531). "The narration, subdivided into three parts, namely Land, River and Sea, adopts a microhistorical perspective, with the first two parts providing minute descriptions of the lives of North-Indian peasantry, river life and littoral Calcutta and the third section recording the voyage of the characters on the *Ibis* from Calcutta to the sugar plantation and penal colony of Mauritius." (Martín-González 2021, 74).

The novel´s title refers to the fields of poppies that represent the crucial natural resource around which the storyline is centred. The sea also plays an essential role in trade and colonial practices. Also, the ocean functions as a metaphor for the inner transformation of many characters, as it corresponds with the actual journey and can be interpreted as a symbol for openness and freedom. The "[…] relationship between nature and culture, which has changed dramatically in the recent decades, mirrors a changing in the relationship between the "West" and the "East" and an increased fluidity in world hierarchies, as suggested by the triad "Land-River-Sea" proposed by the three parts of the Ibis Trilogy" (Draga Alexandru 2021, 147). This structural classification together with the title´s associations hints at the hybrid spaces that the novel deals with and the decentring of the West.

Just as in the historical context of India, colonization practices play an essential role in *Sea of Poppies*, especially in relation to nature. A central topic is the poppy plantation that is used to grow poppy seeds for the production of opium. Several central characters work on the poppy plantation or exist in relation to it. In general, the environment in Ghosh´s novel is shaped by colonialism. This is not only visible in rural areas as fields but also in the town Ghazipur in which the opium factory is set. The striking sights of the town are a palace of Persians, a structure of Grecian inspiration, a dome in the style of Yorktown, and a statue of an Englishman (Ghosh 2008, 73), thus hinting at ancient and newer colonisation traditions. However, colonialism is also present outside the city, where the growing of poppies serves as a good example for the colonization process of a natural environment, as nature is changed in order to make space for the profitable plant. Cultivating poppies is described as a complex process that makes a lot of work and needs a lot of water (cf. Ghosh 2008, 30f). Colonizers and their helpers force farmers to grow poppies through cash advances, contracts, or forged thumbprints (Ghosh 2008, 30f). Thus, poppy cultivation expands in the Indian colony despite

the costs. Furthermore, for the local population earnings from poppy cultivation mostly do not suffice to make a living or even pay off advances (cf. Ghosh 2008, 31). What is more is that for the local population crops like wheat, dal, or vegetables are far more useful, as they make less work, need less water, and provide people with food and necessary material (cf. Ghosh 2008, 31). For example, there is a lack of thatch to repair roofs (Ghosh 2008, 30), hence the costs for thatch increase, as it needs to be bought from far away (Ghosh 2008, 30). Therefore, locals need to loan money with interest rates to pay for their food and other materials (Ghosh 2008, 163). In contrast, in the times before colonization, poppies were only grown in small amounts to serve families with opium during illness or were sold to the local nobility (Ghosh 2008, 30). The increase in poppy cultivation entails an alteration of the environment that has many negative side effects for the Indian local population. Hence, the depiction of an altered nature creates an "image of ecological imbalance in India during the nineteenth century, when the monopoly of East India Company resulted in the monoculture of poppy in colonial India" (Amjad and Baharvand 2018-2019, 35). Aside from the altering of the ecosystem through poppies, the opium production from their seeds has another effect on nature. The opium factory pollutes the environment, which is described through the sneezing of Deeti, Kabutri, Kalua, and his oxen when they pass the factory due to the dust that hangs in the air like a fog of snuff (Ghosh 2008, 95), showing the health risks for the local population.

For Deeti, nature has significance and meaning apart from sustaining her family with food. For example, the river Karamnasa, ´the destroyer of karma´, runs along the place where Deeti grew up and is believed to erase a lifetime of hard-earned merit (Ghosh 2008, 202). Just like in the city and the place where Deeti lived with her family, the environment near this river is altered. "Except for the foliage of a few mango and jackfruit trees, nowhere was there anything green to relieve the eye. This, she knew, was what her own fields looked like, and were she at home today, she would have been asking herself what she would eat in the month ahead: where were the vegetables, the grains" (Ghosh 2008, 203)? Through Deeti´s connection to nature, she notices these environmental changes. Another central passage is the wedding of Deeti and Kalua in nature, hidden in the greenery of the riverbank (Ghosh 2008, 187f). Draga Alexandru (2021) defines this scene as "the moment of true ecological intimacy" (151). Also, Paulette feels a strong connection to nature, as she grew up in a natural environment. When she leaves India, she figures, "Now, watching the familiar foliage slip by, Paulette´s eyes filled with tears: these were more than plants to her, they were the companions of her earliest childhood and their shoots seemed almost to be her own,

plunged deep into this soil, no matter where she went or for how long, she knew that nothing would ever tie her to a place as did these childhood roots" (Ghosh 2008, 397). In that text passage, the roots of the plants represent Paulette´s own roots or as Draga Alexandru (2017) analyses further: "[…] process of localised, detail-sensitive history rewriting, the acute presence of the environment and of ecology plays a very important part, as it changes the whole perspective in which inter-human relations are situated and thus seriously challenges the status quo in both Hindu society and the British colonial rule of the time" (Draga Alexandru 2017, 41).

The production of opium also has its effects on the animal world. The monkeys that live near the opium factory show a changed behaviour due to the drug (Ghosh 2008, 95), and the fish around the riverbank of the Ganga near the opium factory are easily caught as they consume the remains of the opium production (Ghosh 2008, 96). Furthermore, the abuse of nature and animals is mirrored in Ghosh´s novel as part of the colonial, exploitative system. This is shown, for example, in the abuse of a horse by landlords (Ghosh 2008, 59f). The depiction of animals highlights in which ways the non-human world is affected by the polluting and violating system of colonialism. In contrast to this colonial perspective, there are local characters who treat nature and animals with respect, for example, Kalua, who lives with his oxen and loves his animals as if they were his kin (Ghosh 2008, 185). These contrasting perspectives highlight the differences between Western colonial points of view and Eastern ones.

The opium that plays a central role in *Sea of Poppies* is made from the poppy plant and connects all aspects that are dealt with in the novel. It is the reason for ecological changes that bring social transformations and a new trading system to the Indian population. Trade and capitalism are described through examples such as the investment system of Neel (Ghosh 2008, 88ff) that leads to his bankruptcy or the scaling system of opium production in the opium factory of Ghazipur (Ghosh 2008, 97ff). Also, opium brings chances and risks, which is shown through Deeti's husband Hukam Singh, who is an opium addict due to his war injuries (Ghosh 2008, 35). The opium that once helped him to endure the pains of his injury in the end makes him an addict. All these facets show that opium by cultivation, trade, or consumption holds power over people. "As for Deeti, the more she ministered the drug, the more she came to respect its potency: […] – for if a little bit of this gum could give her such power over the life, the character, the very soul of this elderly women, then with more of it at her disposal, why should she not be able to seize kingdoms and control multitudes" (Ghosh 2008, 40)? This demonstration of power that Deeti observes in her own

surroundings, exemplifies the power that opium has on the bigger scale of the colonial system. The opium trade is the exclusive monopoly of the British (Ghosh 2008, 88). Thereby it also stands for progress and modernity: "Why, one might even say that it is opium that has made this age of progress and industry possible: without it, the streets of London would be thronged with coughing, sleepless, incontinent multitudes" (Ghosh 2008, 121f). Neel hints at the negative aspects of the opium trade, such as addiction and intoxication, but is reminded by Mr Burnham that "everything you possess is paid for by opium" (Ghosh 2008, 123). This shows not only that the trading sector is dependent on opium but also that this dependency reaches far into society. This is why the British considered a war because of the opium trade (Ghosh 2008, 116). The omnipresence of opium is further highlighted when Zachary learns of the captain´s opium consumption. He states that this is none of his business (Ghosh 2008, 452); the captain, however, reminds him that "in these waters it´s everyone´s business and it´ll be yours, too, if you intend to continue as a seaman: you´ll be stowing it, packing it, selling it…" (Ghosh 2008, 452). Staying away from opium is impossible, as it affects almost every aspect of society. Also, the captain sees opium as a gift of nature, equal to fire or water, that needs to be handled with care and caution (Ghosh 2008, 453). This underlines the elementary status that opium holds. Towards the end of the novel Deeti finds a poppy seed under her nails and realizes the power this tiny seed has. "She looked at the seed as if she had never seen one before, and suddenly she knew that it was not the planet above that governed her life: it was this minuscule orb […]" (Ghosh 2008, 469).

Nature is also depicted in the novel by the garden motif. The family of Paulette Lambert migrated to India to study the local flora and fauna and work for the Royal Botanical Garden of Calcutta. Pierre Lambert serves as the assistant curator of Calcutta´s Botanical Gardens (Ghosh 2008, 69) and writes the *Materia Medica* of the plants of Bengal (Ghosh 2008, 135). Thereby, he travels around to study his environment but also the plants in the botanical garden. His daughter grows up in very natural surroundings, studying plants, planting, and learning in and from nature. Instead of being educated like the British and studying religion, Paulette learns how to label plants in Bengali and Sanskrit, is taught Latin, and reads the French literature of Voltaire, Rousseau, or M. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre (Ghosh 2008, 137). Therefore, she grows up secluded from the British colonizer society. The boatman Jodu notices that "this was not the only difference between the Lamberts and the English. He learned that the reason why Pierre Lambert had left his country was that he had been involved, in his youth, in a revolt against the king; that he was shunned by respectable English society because he had publicly denied the existence of God and the sanctity of

marriage” (Ghosh 2008, 70). The main characteristic of the Lamberts is the passion for nature which stands in opposition to British beliefs and society. This passion for plants is also inherited by Paulette, who often travels with her father to search for new specimens of plants (Ghosh 2008, 71). Shortly before Pierre Lambert dies, he describes his daughter as a child of nature who “has never worshipped at any altar except that of Nature; the trees have been her Scripture and the Earth her Revelation. […] I have raised her to revel in that state of liberty that is Nature itself” (Ghosh 2008, 143). This claim goes beyond the liberating factors of the Enlightenment that stand in contrast to the medieval times in which religion ruled prevailing worldviews but instead suggests moving nature into the centre.

The garden motif is also relevant for the description of the part of Calcutta in which the white merchants like Mr. Burnham live. Their mansions look like European manors and are surrounded by parks or gardens with fanciful plantings, avenues of trees, greenery, qanats, ponds, geometrical Mughal terraces, fountains, etc. (Ghosh 2008, 104). This shaping of nature according to European ideas demonstrates the altering of the Indian environment. For instance, the way Mr. Burnham has his garden shaped: “[…] Mr Burnham had felt no constraint in shaping the grounds to his needs and desires, ordering, without hesitation, the clearing of every unseemly weed and growth that obscured his view of the river – among them several ancient mango trees and a heathenish thicket of fifty-foot bamboo” (Ghosh 2008, 104). Hence, old plants that determine the local flora and are adapted to the Indian climate get cut down and are partially replaced by European plants. The garden motif thus represents two important aspects: on the one hand, it is a symbol of the connection to nature that promotes the admiration for nature, and on the other hand, it stands for the colonial adaptation of ecosystems according to European ideas. Furthermore, the contrast between the European-adapted garden and the natural Indian environment illustrates the idea of a nature-culture dualism, as explained in chapter 3.1. The practice of eliminating or erasing the original appearance of nature and dominating it is also mirrored in the naming of plants, e.g., *Dendrobium pauletii* (Ghosh 2008, 397). By giving the Indian plant a European imprint in the form of Paulette´s name, the crop is colonized and classified due to European norms.

Colonization processes are not only found in the colonizing of nature as the examples above show, but also in the colonization of the Indian people which provokes different forms of migration. One form of movement is the migration of British colonizers to India to make a profit and rule over their Empire. Also, there is migration of other nationalities to India for different reasons, for example, of the Lambert family or the sailors. Another aspect is the voluntary or forced migration to Mauritius. This constitutes the biggest group of migrants in

Sea of Poppies, as most main characters are met onboard the *Ibis*. Almost all of them leave India as indentured labourers: the girmitiyas, who are named after the girmits, “agreements written on pieces of paper” (Ghosh 2008, 75). For the local population, this group of people is seen as outcasts who enter the netherworld and lose the connection and culture of their home country (cf. Ghosh 2008, 75). The reasons for becoming a girmitiya are various, which are also described in Ghosh´s novel. For example, violence and abuse from in-laws, being left by a husband, becoming pregnant without being married, and men being sold into indenture or being driven from their homes after a revolt against the British rulers (Ghosh 2008, 255ff).

The trading structure that was promoted by the British Empire not only included people as trading agents but also as goods, which the case of the girmitiyas and convicts shows. “In the good old days people used to say there were only things to be exported from Calcutta: thugs and drugs – or opium and coolies as some would have it” (Ghosh 2008, 79). Furthermore, “[…] Benjamin Burnham sieved a fortune from the tide of transportees that was flowing out of Calcutta, and this inflow of capital allowed him to enter the China trade on an even bigger scale than he had envisaged […]” (Ghosh 2008, 80). “The gomusta was well aware that Mr Burnham considered the transportation of migrants an unimportant and somewhat annoying part of his shipping enterprise, since the margins of profit were negligible in comparison to the enormous gains offered by opium” (Ghosh 2008, 224f). Although, indenture is deemed today a minor vector of Asian mobility in the nineteenth century, as there were far more Asian migrants who migrated for trade or in the service of the British Empire (Martín-González 2021, 78), it is still an important phenomenon of historiography, as “[t]he shadows of coercion and violence which surrounded the indenture system in the Victorian era have attracted wide scholarly attention […]” (Martín-González 2021, 78).

The basis for the migration of indentured labourers and also the main push factor is the colonial system and the increasing importance of international trade. In the eyes of the British colonizers, freedom is the mastery of the white over men of lesser races (Ghosh 2008, 82). This idea that lies at the bottom of colonialism is depicted as a global phenomenon in *Sea of Poppies*: “[…] a so-called slave of the Carolinas. is he not more free than his brethren in Africa, groaning under the rule of some dark tyrant?” (Ghosh 2008, 82). “When the doors of freedom were closed to the African, the Lord opened them to a tribe that was yet more needful of it – the Asiatick [sic]” (Ghosh 2008, 83). According to this logic, Mr. Burnham justifies a possible war with China: “It will be for a principle: for freedom – for the freedom

of trade and for the freedom of the Chinese people. Free Trade is a right conferred on Man by God, and its principles apply as much to opium as to any other article of trade" (Ghosh 2008, 120). Trade is not only equated to freedom but also described as given by God. What is more is the insight that British rule in India would not be possible without the opium trade (Ghosh 2008, 120), which is connected to the idea that the whole of India profits from this so-called freedom of trade. Some voices in *Sea of Poppies* see the trading system and British Imperialism critically. Not only do Neel and Zachary have doubts about a possible war against China (cf. Ghosh 2008, 120f), but also Captain Chillingworth has a more realistic view of colonial practices. "I can well do without another round of butchery. […] I am not sure whose good you mean, theirs or our? […] The truth is, sir, that men do what their power permits them to do. We are no different from the Pharaohs or the Mongols: the difference is only that when we kill people we feel compelled to pretend that it is for some higher cause. It is this pretence of virtue, I promise you, that will never be forgiven by history" (Ghosh 2008, 274f).

Within the other push factors of migration, the altering of nature is an important reason for leaving India not only through the previously described side effects. Parts of the local population join the group of indentured labourers because of environmental changes. "Many of these people had been driven from their villages by the flood of flowers that had washed over the countryside: lands that had once proved sustenance were now swamped by the rising tide of poppies; food was so hard to come by that people were glad to lick the leaves in which offerings were made at temples or sip the starchy water from a pot in which rice had been boiled" (Ghosh 2008, 213). Hence, the poppy monoculture evokes climate refugees within the British Empire. Another push factor for migration is the penal colonies of the British Empire, which are often mentioned in the novel, for example Port Blair on the Andaman Islands (Ghosh 2008, 77) or Penang, Bencoolen, or Mauritius (Ghosh 2008, 79). By negotiating different factors of migration, *Sea of Poppies* also deals with notions of the West and the East. The character Ah Fatt who comes from Canton and has an Indian father and a Chinese mother defines the West differently than usual. After reading *Journey to the West*, he dreams of going to India, as it is depicted in this book (Ghosh 2008, 438). His Indian father, however, does not want him to travel to India, instead, he suggests: "Later, when you´re grown up, I´ll send you to the real West – to France or America or England, some place where people are civilized" (Ghosh 2008, 439). This mirrors the different understandings of what the West actually means. "Ah Fatt's hybridity challenges and remaps the binaries West/East and coloniser/colonised and his use of Pidgin English ironically

features as an instrument to express and disseminate his own English-free cultural heritage" (Martín-González 2021, 93). By including these other notions, the perspective on colonialism and European dominance is challenged again.

What becomes apparent through Ghosh´s depiction of migration, is how these processes are structured and organized and then included into the system of profit-making. When Mr. Burnham hesitates to build a camp for the indentured labourers he wants to transport to Mauritius, his gomusta Baboo Nob Kissin convinces him by suggesting selling the camp to the Municipal Council once they finished their enterprise: "You can tell Municipal Council that proper immigrant depot is needed. Otherwise cleanliness will suffer and progress will be delayed. Then to them only we can sell, no? Mr Hobbes is there – he will ensure payment" (Ghosh 2008, 225). The planning of a bigger infrastructure for migration is part of getting more money out of his growing enterprise. This shows the ways in which the "forms of colonial oppression [tie in] with neo-historical fiction's preoccupation with the past and its material effects in the present" (Martín-González 2021, 81). The example of the migrant camp illustrates how economic thinking structures shape the colonized country and its politics.

The ship *Ibis* is a former slave ship that was bought from the shipping company Burnham Bros. for trade after the abolition of the slave trade in Britain (Ghosh 2008, 12). Zachary delivers a letter to the owner of a sugar-cane plantation in Mauritius and in return is asked to put in a word for him to get some indentured labourers: "Tell Mr Burnham that I need men. Now that we may no longer have slaves in Mauritius, I must have coolies, or I am doomed" (Ghosh 2008, 22). These passages show the connection between the former slave trade and the labour trade from India. When the *Ibis* arrives in India, it is still shaped for its purpose of transporting slaves. Jodu describes the inside of the ship with compartments with iron chains (Ghosh 2008, 150). Although the ship is adapted for the indentured labourers, the conditions on board the *Ibis* remain bad: the girmitiyas have no rights, and sickness and death are regular among the migrants (Ghosh 2008, 430f). These power relations that continue from the time of the slave trade and colonial practices entail several forms of abuse, for example, the rape of Deeti (Ghosh 2008, 36), the violation of Kalua (Ghosh 2008, 59f), the humiliation of Neel and Ah Fatt (Ghosh 2008, 474f), the punishment of Jodu (Ghosh 2008, 487f), or the lashing of Kalua (Ghosh 2008, 506f). Throughout the novel, the moral ambiguity of the colonizer´s logic is picked out as a theme, another example for this is a passage in which Mr. Burnham does not want to partake in a dancing spectacle at Neel´s dinner out of respect for the dignity of the fairer sex (Ghosh

2008, 126), but takes advantage of Paulette during bible lesson by making her beat him with different tools for sexual pleasure (Ghosh 2008, 313ff). This shows that the colonial structures continue to work in different power relations that often lead to the exploitation and abuse of subalterns, as in the examples above, or of animals and nature, as shown earlier. This exploitative and violent scheme is reiterated throughout history, which is shown through the connection between slave history and indentured labourers in India. “The physical traces left by former slaves on the hold not only connect the histories of the Atlantic to those of the Indian Ocean but also highlight a continuity between analogous systems of oppression” (Martín-González 2021, 81).

British colonizers secure their power not only by their trading system but also by applying their law system in India. This is shown by the trial in which Neel is found guilty of forgery with the explanatory statement that before law all men are equal no matter their cultural background (Ghosh 2008, 247ff). This trial, which is based on true events, namely the forgery trial of Prawnkissen Holdar of 1829 (Ghosh 2008, 531), on the one hand, stands in contrast to other verdicts in the novel and on the other hand, is disproved by the background of this sentence. The background is given by Baboo Nob Kissin, who suggests to Mr. Burnham it would be profitable to acquire the estate of Neel in order to plant poppies and sugar cane for profit (Ghosh 2008, 226f). Therefore, getting rid of its owner Neel seems easy, as Mr. Burnham is friends with the judge Mr. Justice Kendalbushe who renders the judgement (Ghosh 2008, 231). As a result, Neel is sentenced to be transported to the penal settlement on the Mauritius Islands for seven years (Ghosh 2008, 252). In contrast, other scenes in the novel show that British men in power do consider cultural differences in their decisions, which is the case with the captain of the *Ibis*. In order to secure his power and command on the ship, he allows the lashing of Kalua as a favour to Byron Singh (Ghosh 2008, 500). He claims that “there is an unspoken pact between the white man and the natives who sustain his power in Hindoosthan […]. This is the inviolable principle on which our authority is based […] (Ghosh 2008, 500). Although this is not a proper trial, it highlights that the law system functions rather as a tool for maintaining power than for justice itself. Similar to nature and the natural flora, the law system was changed and adapted in order to serve the British colonizers.

When considering intertwined histories and aspects of power relations and migration, the character of Zachary contains many facets, which have already been mentioned. Zachary is an African American son of a white father who owned slaves and one of his slaves, whom he abused when she was only 14 years old (Ghosh 2008, 318). Hence, Zachary gets to know

what slavery in America means, especially from the perspective of a young female. Also, he grows up in a rich house observing the manners and habits of the American upper class. Therefore, he knows perfect English, which he has learned in the house of his natural father, but also has the ability to learn other languages or adapt his language to different speaker groups (cf. Ghosh 2008, 17/53). His socialisation between the two cultures enables him to adapt quickly and be able to change his perspective. For example, when he learns of Paulette being exploited by Mr. Burnham, he immediately takes two perspectives: comparing Paulette´s experiences to the abuse of his mother but also seeing that he has profited from Mr. Burnham as he has profited from his father Mr. Reid (Ghosh 2008, 318). Before migrating to India by becoming a sailor, he worked as a carpenter on the docks of Baltimore, but after an incident in which a Black slave gets attacked by white colleagues and he fails to defend him, he joins the crew of the *Ibis* (Ghosh 2008, 53f). In several scenes, Zachary is depicted as an in-between character, who withholds many perspectives and cannot be put into a rigid category. Therefore, he often connects people of different cultures or opinions. This is also the case on the *Ibis*: "[…] Zachary became the link between the two parts of the ship […]" (Ghosh 2008, 13). "For Serang Ali and his men Zachary was almost one of themselves, while yet being endowed with the power to undertake an impersonation that was unthinkable for any of them; it was as much for their own sakes as for his that they wanted to see him succeed" (Ghosh 2008, 52). On a historical level, his perspective unites the experiences of slaves migrating on the Atlantic and the multi-cultural migration on the Indian Ocean depicted in Ghosh´s novel: "The African-American sailor illustrates, then, Ghosh's attempt to relocate the memory of the black Atlantic beyond the borders of the Atlantic and to render visible the interconnections between Atlantic and Indian Oceans (and their respective systems of oppression, slavery and indentureship) […]" (Martín-González 2021, 83). "His very presence becomes a surrogate for black Atlantic memory, harking back to another history of sea crossing and locating the novel within another discourse of diaspora and migration" (Gangopadhyay 2017, 60).

Another important group of migrants in *Sea of Poppies* is the lascars. They represent a very multicultural group that left their country to live as sailors on the Indian Ocean. "He had thought that lascars were a tribe or a nation, like the Cherokee or Sioux; he discovered now that they came from places that were far apart, and had nothing in common, except the Indian Ocean; among them were Chinese and East Africans, Arabs and Malays, Bengalis and Goans, Tamils and Arakanese" (Ghosh 2008, 14). Also, their religions are very different, and they have many stories of travelling the world (Ghosh 2008, 199f). As the groups of

lascars are so diverse, they create their own language to communicate: “This rendering of Laskari as an idiom sedimented with several languages and ‘spoken nowhere but on the water’ illustrates the Indian Ocean and their waterways as a map of travelling words, the lascars being vectors for the trajectories of a multilingual lingo shared by a transoceanic and global workforce” (Martín-González 2021, 94). The depiction of the lascars in Ghosh´s novel includes another dimension of migration and diasporic experience. “[…] Ghosh tracks the labouring lascars, who are the ultimate border-crossers as they float from ship to ship, between national borders, shore and sea in search of work” (Arora 2012, 27). Therefore, the migrant group of the lascars adapt themselves to the conditions of the colonized world by becoming an intercultural diasporic group. Also, Ghosh hints at the dependency of Europeans on lascars, who are left out in history writing. An example of this can be found in Serang Ali navigating the ship to its destination when Zachary does not know how to do so (Arora 2012, 27). This highlights the valuable traditional knowledge of the seafaring lascars from which Western colonizers profit.

As the example above has already shown, the aspect of language is essential when dealing with migration and diaspora, as language serves not only as a form of communication but also as a means of power and representation. Neel speaks perfect English (Ghosh 2008, 50), and when Neel is humiliated by a British officer in one of the prisons, he begins to address him in English, although the officer tries to alter him by speaking in Hindustani (Ghosh 2008, 330ff). Neel, however, challenges him in English and regains some power: “The man´s eyes flared and Neel saw that he had nettled him, simply by virtue of addressing him in his own tongue – a thing that was evidently counted as an act of intolerable insolence in an Indian convict, a defilement of the language. […] he still possessed the ability to affront this man whose authority over his person was absolute […]” (Ghosh 2008, 302). This passage shows how, on the one hand, language is used as a means of power that highlights the otherness between the two characters. On the other hand, the use of English for Neel functions as a form of resistance and regaining of power. This small example in *Sea of Poppies* stands for the general idea of ´Writing Back` (cf. Ashcroft et al. 1989) Another interesting facet of the novel is the inclusion of the original lexicon of the 19th century, e.g., from a naval dictionary or from the Hindustani Language (Ghosh 2008, 531). This shows that despite the power and suppression of the British colonizers, linguistic diversity exists. In *Sea of Poppies*, “[…] the author blows away any stable category of standard English by breaking the language into multiple varieties of English which coexist and are in friction with each other” (Martín-González 2021, 90). The inclusion of the different languages

underlines the multiculturalism of the Indian Ocean (Martín-Gonzalez 2021, 90) and its migration history that hints at many diasporic experiences.

Language use is one central element in the depiction of otherness that functions as a means of creating alterity and hierarchy. Alterity plays a central role in Ghosh´s novel in which subalterns represent the main characters (cf. chapter 3.1). Martín-González states that Ghosh´s novel deals with how the opium trade pushes the novel´s subaltern characters on board the *Ibis* (Martín-González 2021, 75). Thereby, otherness also forms the prerequisite of the character´s experience of being torn from their home country. Hence, Gangopadhyay identifies the novel as a story of the Indian diaspora (Gangopadhyay 2017, 56). As in the definition in chapter 3.1, the main characters are dispersed from their home and culture into other parts of the world. This paragraph seeks to analyse how the migrants perceive their Indian diaspora and how they deal with their experiences. In their status as indentured labourers, they "[…] occupy a liminal space between freedom and unfreedom since they are still low-paid and subject to the tyrannies, oppressions, and petty humiliations of the British as well as the Indian middle-men (the guards)" (Arora 2012, 33). The Kala-Pani or ´the Back Water´ (Ghosh 2008, 3), which is often mentioned throughout the novel, for the migrants means more than just the water of the Indian Ocean but entails notions of uncertainty, migrating into the unknown, or losing connection of the homeland. Therefore, Nob Kissin Pander builds a temple for the migrants before their journey (Ghosh 2008, 208). He wants to offer spiritual support for the migrants´ passage. The experiences that shape the girmitiyas diaspora are already found at the beginning of their route. On their migration journey, the girmitiyas travel along the river and encounter unfamiliar and strange—landscapes, people, and language changes (Ghosh 2008, 252f). This contact with otherness evokes the first fears and feelings of strangeness on their migration route: "[…] they could no longer understand what the spectators were saying, for their jeers and taunts were in Bengali. To add to the migrants´ growing unease, the landscape changed: the flat, fertile, populous plains yielded to swamps and marshes; the river turned brackish […]" (Ghosh 2008, 258). Also, while being confronted with their fears of migrating, rumours about what happens to migrants in foreign lands are passed among them (Ghosh 2008, 259). The fears of migrating peak at the arrival of the girmitiyas in Calcutta; then, however, Deeti finds great comfort in the unfamiliar and intimidating (Ghosh 2008, 290).

Deeti and other migrants realize that their diaspora holds many opportunities, for example, caste does not matter for migrants (Ghosh 2008, 216). This creates the opportunity for self-agency and more freedom. On the ship, the migrants, who for various reasons were

pushed away from India, get the chance to reinvent themselves: "[…] the *Ibis* was not a ship like any other; in her inward reality she was a vehicle of transformation […]" (Ghosh 2008, 440). In this new community, the migrants have a chance to reinvent their identities in this new space of freedom. "This act of imagining a utopian community is an act of resistance that functions as a "counterflow" to colonialism, which seeks to reduce them to commodities" (Arora 2012, 38). "As victims of Victorian imperialism, the ship-siblings on board turn the Ibis into the Third Space of diaspora […]" (Martín-González 2021, 86). According to the concept of hybridity, explained in chapter 3.1, the new diasporic community of the migrants on the ship *Ibis* forms a hybrid third space in which cultural exchange takes part. By combining elements of different cultures, the individuals form positive perspectives that in some ways enable them to resist the marginalization and reinvent their new community. In this process of resistance and reinvention, each character passes through a transformation. Neel´s identity begins to change when he goes beyond the taboos of his caste. In prison, he has to evolve eating habits that are against his caste to the extent that "his very skin seemed to be peeling from his body. That night his dreams were plagued by a vision of himself, transformed into a moulting cobra, a snake that was struggling to free itself of its outworn skin" (Ghosh 2008, 280). Neel rids himself of his old identity like a snake does with its skin. Another form of transforming identity is shown through naming. For example, Paulette is also called Putli - ´doll´ (Ghosh 2008, 69) or Pugli (Ghosh 2008, 515). Her name variety reflects the many aspects and cultural influences that make out her character. In the group of girmitiyas, Deeti chooses a new name out of fear of being discovered: Aditi (Ghosh 2008, 245). "No sooner had she said it than it became real: this was who she was – Aditi, a woman who had been granted, by a whim of the gods, the boon of living her life again" (Ghosh 2008, 245). This shows that with her choosing a new name, her process of changing her identity begins. Apart from choosing new names for fear of being discovered, Deeti´s and Kalua´s names are further altered when they are registered by a British officer in the migration camp. As the officer cannot write Kalua´s chosen name, Madhu, he registers him as Maddow Colver (Ghosh 2008, 296f). This alteration and anglicisation of Kalua´s name, however, is welcomed by him, as "the sound of it was no longer new or unfamiliar: it was as much his own now as his skin, or his eyes, or his hair – Maddow Colver" (Ghosh 2008, 297). Zachary is called Malum Zikri by Serang Ali and from Paulette he learns, that Zikri means ´the one who remembers´ (Ghosh 2008, 271). The multiplicity of names attests to the identity of the diasporic subject to be in permanent transformation. (Martín-González 2021, 87). This illustrates how the migrants´ experiences of otherness and diaspora influence their identities, as described in theory in chapter 3.1.

Since identity is a constant process of weighing the other and the self, both have become innate to the girmitiyas, both in their individual and collective identities (cf. chapter 3.1).

Apart from the individual transformation of the characters, the otherness between them is broken up, and the migrants create a new power of making their own choices and show what life in a diaspora is like. An example of this is the marriage choice of Heeru, who as a woman chooses to marry a man from a different caste (Ghosh 2008, 448f). This new identification within the group of coolies, allows the migrants to cope with their experiences of diaspora. “Coolitude as seen through Ghosh’s novel features as a category which defies boundaries of race, language and caste, and at the same time, it retrieves the humanity of the coolie as an agent in charge of creatively reconceptualising his or her identity in the face of adversity, dislocation and uprootedness” (Martín-González 2021, 84). The girmitiyas form a new community that also enables friendships between migrants, no matter their caste or origins. One example of this bond of friendship is Neel and Ah Fatt, both convicts on the *Ibis*. As one of the guards in jail predicts, “the sentence you have been given will tear you forever from the ties that bind others. When you step on that ship, to go across the Black Water, you and your fellow transportees will become a brotherhood of your own: you will be your own village, your own family, your own caste” (Ghosh 2008, 328). As this example shows, the otherness is broken through migration. “On a boat of pilgrims, no one can lose caste and everyone is the same […]. There´ll be no difference between us.” (Ghosh 2008, 372). Hence, what is first described as a process of finality (Ghosh 2008, 387), evolves as a chance of transformation and equality.

Concluding, Ghosh´s *Sea of Poppies* deals with the exploitation of nature and humans through colonial practices and the connected migration processes and experiences of diaspora. Thereby, “[t]his novel also pushes ahead Ghosh’s project of investigating the multi-dimensionality of postcolonial history and experience” (Arora 2012, 23). What is shown through the connection of slave history and Indian indentured labourers and the inclusion of other ethnic groups, like the lascars, which are usually excluded from history writing, is how different aspects are connected or stand in relation to each other. “In a response to Eurocentric history, Ghosh reclaims the Indian Ocean as a site full of history of cultural exchanges, conflict, and contestation, testifying to the tangled global relationships across multiple continents” (Arora 2012, 24). Most importantly, environmental issues are included in the considerations of connectedness. “In many ways, ecological postcolonialism provides answers to historical questions such as the ones that arise in this novel, built around rigid dichotomies that have oppressed people for ages” (Draga Alexandru 2017, 48).

Ghosh´s novel deals with the oppressive system of the British colonizers that changes the order of India. “Hence, victimization of native subjects is accompanied by the detrimental cultivation of opium resulting in drastic changes in Indian agriculture and ecosystems” (Amjad and Baharvand 2018-2019, 30). Besides Ghosh´s focus on experiences of migration and diaspora, the depiction of nature and environmental issues plays an essential role. Therefore, *Sea of Poppies* represents a perfect example of the connection between ecocriticism and migration. “Ghosh’s work promotes a radical rethinking of human interactions in an ecological light, which, I would like to argue, imagines the Indian Ocean as a kind of receptacle of dynamic forces in which older and newer perspectives and attitudes melt and interact” (Draga Alexandru 2021, 147). This highlights how perspectives on environmental influences on migration and colonization practices on natural habitats influence each other and create new insight into their interconnections. The journey from a suppressed and violated land over the everchanging river to the openness and freedom of the wide ocean is mirrored by the internal processes of the main characters.

4.2 Environmental Justice in Helon Habila´s *Oil on Water*

Habila´s novel *Oil on Water* centres around issues of environmental justice and displacement. The novel is mostly set in the Niger Delta, where the main character Rufus travels together with the famous reporter Zaq in order to find the wife of a British oil worker, Mr. Floode, who was kidnapped by the militants who fight against the oil industry and for the environment. However, Rufus, who is still a young reporter, is not only looking for the British woman but mainly for a big story that pushes his career. In his search for both these things, Rufus mainly finds truths about the living conditions of the local population and what living among oil fields really means. The novel’s title already hints at many contradicting features that the novel deals with. The image of oil on water suggests an “incompatibility of the two elements” (Pirzadeh 2021, 516). This notion of oil from industrial extraction floating on the water of natural habitats, polluting sensitive ecosystems, illustrates the contrasts between these worlds. “This image also highlights oil’s oppressive viscosity as it deprives the Delta of much-needed natural sustenance and disrupts its balance” (Pirzadeh 2021, 517). However, the incompatibility of oil and water stands as a symbol for the opposing views of the oil industry and militants and corporations and environmental activists. Furthermore, the image depicts the contrasts of different migration movements.

The two central migration movements that are dealt with in the novel are voluntary immigration (mostly from Europe) of workers for the oil industry and involuntary migration within the country of Nigeria, shown through the displacement of people who stand in the way of oil companies or people who have to leave their homes because their polluted land cannot provide food anymore. The difference between these migration movements is illustrated by comparing the description of the expatriate housing to the living conditions of the people who are displaced within their country. The people immigrating to Nigeria, like the family of the abducted British woman, live in colonial-style buildings on the waterfront, hidden behind a wire-topped wall and protected by security guards (Habila 2011, 104). They represent the rich colonizers who live in nice places, making lots of money from the oil industry, and profiting from the natural resources the country has to offer. As the description of the colonial-style buildings already suggests, it can be seen as a form of neo-colonial migration. This impression is also communicated in interactions with European immigrants expressing their prejudices about the local population and denying them their agency, like Floode does (cf. Habila 2011, 105ff). For example, this is demonstrated in a passage where Floode watches the news about people protesting against the oil companies and "about poverty in Nigeria, and how corruption sustained that poverty, and how oil was the main source of revenue, and how because the country was so corrupt, only a few had access to that wealth" (Habila 2011, 107). Floode comments on this by asserting that the potential of Nigeria is lost through corruption and that the people do not understand what they do to themselves (Habila 2011, 107). This Western perspective disregards the circumstances and realities under which the local population lives, suggesting that it is their fault and not a problem of the system. Rufus instead tries to reply to this by explaining, "I don´t blame them for wanting to vandalize the pipelines that have brought nothing but suffering to their lives, leaking into the rivers and wells, killing the fish, and poisoning the farmlands. And all they are told by the oil companies and the government is that the pipelines are there for their own good, that they hold great potential for their country, their future. These people endure the worst conditions of any oil-producing community on earth, the government knows it but doesn´t have the will to stop it, the oil companies know it, but because the government doesn´t care, they also don´t care. And you think the people are corrupt? No. They are just hungry, and tired" (Habila 2011, 107f). This explanation of the situation only reassures Floode, since he asserts that this would illustrate his point of powerless locals who cannot develop their own country (Habila 2011, 108). Here the ignorance of the West towards the local people and their perspective on the oil industry becomes very clear. "The oil rich Niger Delta exemplifies circumstances wherein the proper conceptualization, understanding and

pursuit of environmental justice determine the outcomes of natural resource exploitation. For about half a century, multinationals have, in joint ventures with the Federal Government of Nigeria, exploited oil from the Niger Delta, deriving huge revenues for both parties. […] . In contrast, host communities have over the years consistently decried the negative impacts of the oil industry which they have to bear without any real sustainable positive benefits" (Ako and Olawuyi 2018, 567). The conflict between the international oil companies and the local population illustrates the glocal character of Habila´s novel, which, from a postcolonial perspective, deals with elements of global culture and their effects on local agency (cf. chapter 3.2).

The displacement of local communities that call the Niger Delta their homeland stands in contrast to (European) immigration to the Niger Delta. The more resources are extracted from the Niger Delta by European immigrants, the more local people have to flee this area. As one example the scholar Okuyade (2016) names the removal of Niger Delta militants who have been relocated to cities around the world (214). Taking this into account, as well as the fact that the Niger Delta generates around three percent of oil worldwide and 80 percent of Nigeria´s annual revenue (Ejobowah 2000, 33), the polarisation of global and local interests becomes clear. Hence, the novel not only includes two contrasting forms of migration but also shows their interdependence. Therefore, "international markets and politics, and global flows of capital and oil are only one part of the story. There is also a very local story about people and their sense of wholeness through place" (Okuyade 2016, 226). The local place that is impacted by global factors is a main topic in ecocriticism, which is a main focus in Habila´s novel and describes the situation in the Niger Delta. In the context of environmental justice, environmental racism becomes evident, as mostly poor people are affected by pollution of the natural surroundings (cf. chapter 3.2).

Oil on Water touches on different stories of people losing their homes and/or being displaced that are all related to the oil industry. The first example of this is the narrator and main character Rufus himself, whose village is destroyed by oil that catches fire, displacing his family and dispersing them to different places (Habila 2011, 3). Rufus´s father, who tries to profit from the oil like the big oil industries by selling stolen oil (Habila 2011, 64) is in prison after the fire starts from his illegal business. Rufus´s mother returns to live in another village with her parents (Habila 2011, 3), and his sister Boma, after several stations, finally ends up with the religious group on the island of Irikefe (Habila 2011, 215). This example of an uprooted family is followed by many more examples of displaced people in *Oil on Water*. "Since the inhabitants of the region rely almost exclusively on environmental

resources, mainly as farmers and/or fishermen, their sources of livelihood are impacted by the environmental consequences of oil exploration and production. In addition, there are health impacts on the human population, livestock, the fauna and flora as well as other species that flourish in the Delta's rich and diverse environment" (Ako and Olawuyi 2018, 567). This shows the dependence of the people in the Niger Delta on their environment as the reason for displacement. Okuyade (2016) asserts that creek communities, human and non-human, evacuate the Niger Delta due to the destruction of their habitat (213). Furthermore, the destruction of the local biodiversity including animals and plants has severe impacts on local economies, as fishing is a primary source of income for local people (Okuyade 2016, 213). Along with these reasons for the displacement of people in the Niger Delta, the social aspects, such as the removal of people from their homes and the alienation from their communities, mark important aspects of the novel (Okuyade 2016, 214). This form of environmental racism that is rooted in colonialism portrays the necessity of considerations on environmental justice (cf. chapter 3.2).

One of the effects of the conflicts that arise from the displacement of people and the unjust distribution of the resource oil is violence. According to the explanations in chapter 3.2, the strong dependence on natural resources facilitates the emergence of violence. "The inequitable distribution of environmental benefits and disadvantages has become a source of conflict and the resultant violence has threatened the state, the oil industry and the host communities" (Ako and Olawuyi 2018, 567f). The conflict between poverty and wealth arises from the fact that the people most severely impacted by environmental destruction due to oil extraction do not enjoy the benefits, making the Niger Delta economically the most stable and at the same time the most marginalised and least developed region in the country (Okuyade 2016, 216). The resulting violence plays a central role in Helon Habila´s story. The main conflict centres around the government and oil companies trying to protect their business and the militants fighting against the oil industry and trying to protect the environment (Habila 2011, 49). Their method is to blow up pipelines or oil rigs and refineries (Habila 2011, 7). Often, they take hostages, mostly European oil workers or their family, to finance their actions and weapons. Through the fighting between the militants and the government's military many villages are destroyed, displacing their inhabitants. Such a village is described at the beginning of the novel when in search of the hostage the group arrives in a village whose inhabitants left due to the fighting and which looks "as if a deadly epidemic had swept through it" (Habila 2011, 8). The fighting for the natural resource of oil causes the displacement of many people. Furthermore, the local people of the Niger Delta

are often harmed in shootings that take place everywhere. In their search for the British woman, the group of reporters also passes villages that are empty after shootings with the victims left behind (e.g., Habila 2011, 70). “Displacement is one of the major consequences of strategic and structural violence among groups, struggling to vilify or demonise the other within this glocal oil enterprise” (Okuyade 2016, 218).

As stated above, the violence that affects the characters in the novel arises from the fighting for limited natural resources and the system around them. Throughout the novel, the importance—especially the monetary importance— of the oil industry for Nigeria is negotiated. However, the negative side effects of the oil industry seem to dominate the story. Apart from the already discussed displacement, health issues, corruption, and even the division of a whole country are negotiated. Habila (2011) describes this as being “caught between the militants and the military, and the only way they could avoid being crushed out of existence was to pretend to be deaf and dumb and blind” (33). This shows how the people mostly are either for the oil industry if they profit from it or against it if they consider its negative sides. The oil industry seems to swallow the whole country, not leaving any other future perspective for the people. This is shown, for example, when Tamuno asks Rufus and Zaq to take his son with them, so he has a perspective for his future (Habila 2011, 35). As he explains, there are no fish left to make a living as a fisherman, and Tamuno fears that his son will end up with the militants out of the lack of alternatives (36). Only in the big cities are there a few other possibilities like learning a trade or becoming a driver (Habila 2011, 36). For many people, as for Rufus himself, this means that moving to the cities is the only option they have (cf. Habila 2011, 61). The example shows that the displacement due to environmental destruction goes along with many social aspects. “The displaced often struggle with problems of permanent itinerancy, landlessness, loss of access to common property, homelessness, joblessness, food insecurity, social marginalisation, increased morbidity and social disarticulation” (Okuyade 2016, 228). This demonstrates how matters of environmental justice go hand in hand with matters of social justice.

Within this struggle for environmental and social justice, the oil industry and its wealth are a constant temptation for people from local communities. The character Chief Ibiram compares the story of the oil industry in Nigeria with the story of Adam and Eve:

> Once upon a time they lived in paradise, he said, in a small village close to Yellow Island. They lacked for nothing, fishing and hunting and farming and watching their children growing up before them, happy. The village was close-knit, made-up of cousins and uncles and aunts and brothers and sisters, and, though they were happily insulated from the rest of the world by their creeks and rivers and

> forests, they were not totally unaware of the changes going on all around them: the gas flares that lit up neighbouring villages all day and night, and the cars and TVs and video players in the front rooms of their neighbours who had allowed the flares to be set up. […] For the first time the close, unified community was divided – for how could they not be tempted, with the flare in the next village burning over them every night, its flame long and coiled like a snake, whispering, winking, hissing? (Habila 2011, 38)

Here, the people of the village are described to be living happily in paradise, like Adam and Eve, with everything they need in abundance. Then, the oil company arrives in the neighbouring villages and like the snake in the biblical story, tempts the inhabitants with the money that the oil industry might bear. Although the village's chief, Chief Malabo, resists the temptation during his lifetime, the village ends up in the hands of the oil industry, dividing the community and displacing the inhabitants (Habila 2011, 40f). The left-over people of this community then form a new village, the village of Chief Ibiram, who states: "I say how can we be happy when we are mere wanderers without a home" (Habila 2011, 41). This story of Chief Ibiram's people's fall from paradise mirrors the neo-colonial structures that capitalist industries potentially create and their effects. The people themselves take part in the destruction of their homes, hoping for prosperity and thereby worsening their situation. In the end, this form of sociocultural dislocation shows the gradual loss of identities of minority groups in Nigeria, which is determined by the relationship between human being and their home places (Okuyade 2016, 218). Therefore, not only the oil industry is a threat to local people in the Niger Delta, but also "the disintegration of the sociocultural and environmental fabric that makes them an Indigenous group in Nigeria – in short, their relationship to their primordial base" (Okuyade 2016, 227). This shows in which ways displacement affects language, history, and environment (cf. chapter 3.2). As chapter 3.2 explained in theory, the bond between humans and the environment has a strong impact, for which reason displacement affects people in various ways as the examples above show.

Throughout the novel *Oil on Water* environmental destruction and pollution go hand in hand with violence. For instance, when the priest Naman gives an account of the history of the shrine and explains how it started after a terrible war, which resulted in polluting the rivers and nature with blood and bodies in such a way that "even the water in the wells turned red" (Habila 2011, 129). After that, the shrine was built because "[t]he land needed to be cleansed of blood, and pollution" (Habila 2011, 130). As in this passage, violence against people is often accompanied by violence against nature, highlighting the idea that they are interconnected. Yet, the cleansed nature around the shrine is in danger again, although the priests have "managed to keep the island free from oil prospecting and other activities that

contaminate the water and lead to greed and violence" (Habila 2011, 130). Consistently, violence on people and nature are interlinked by simultaneously discussing the contamination of water and the violence on people. It seems like the oil industry has put up another war against nature involving native people and people from Western societies. In general, Okuyade (2016) observes that "the only innocent party in the oil war crisis is the environment" (225). Hence, what is left is the degradation of land, aquatic and human life as well as the human failure to change this (Okuyade 2016, 225). This represents a stark contrast, as the water that once was the basis for life has changed into a deadly environment.

In Habila´s novel, the concept of slow violence is found right next to the more obvious direct violence of the rebels in the Niger Delta. One example of this structural violence is the health condition of the local people. Michael, the boy who accompanies Zaq and Rufus on their search for the British woman, is described as looking "stunted by poor diet" (Habila 2011, 6). Also, his hair is sparse and his arms are bony (Habila 2011, 6). This state of health is one of the results of the oil companies taking the land that provides food for the local people and for their business. Furthermore, oil spills and bad air pollute the environment in which the people live, leaving them in a contaminated place that affects their health. Throughout their search, Rufus describes the Niger Delta as a deadly habitat. One example is the following: "Soon we were in a dense mangrove swamp; the water underneath us had turned foul and sulphurous; insects rose from above the surface in swarms to settle in a mobile cloud above us, biting our arms and faces and ears. […] We followed a bend in the river and in front of us we saw dead birds draped over tree branches, their outstretched wings black and slick with oil; dead fishes bobbed white-bellied between tree roots" (Habila 2011, 9). Rufus's observations are confirmed when he meets the doctor in a military camp, who tells him about his work in the region of the Niger Delta. When the people in the region sell their land to an oil company and the gas flares light up everywhere in the region, the doctor observes plants and livestock dying (Habila 2011, 92). He begins to record toxins in blood samples of the local people and confronts first oil workers, then the manager, the government, and later NGOs and international organizations (Habila 2011, 92f). Although the doctor is right about his suspicion that the gas flares are severely damaging the health of the people and the environment, and his findings are even published internationally, the oil company continues its work, and more people fall ill and many die (Habila 2011, 93). Other people leave their toxic villages, so the doctor observes his whole village disappear (Habila 2011, 93). This shows how oil extraction gradually destroys the environment, displacing many local people from their homelands.

The destruction of nature and homes is further highlighted by the description of the oil fields: “It looked like a setting for a sci-fi movie: the meagre landscape was covered in pipelines flying in all directions, sprouting from the evil-smelling, oil-fecund earth” (Habila 2011, 34). This text passage is a perfect example of the concept of slow violence, implying the process of gradually, not obviously, damaging the people and the environment and making them sick. The illustrated forms of violence happen out of sight and go unnoticed by the majority, which characterises slow violence (cf. chapter 3.2). Those who survive in the polluted environment, eventually are forced to leave their homes for better living conditions. Ako and Olawuyi (2018) state that the federal government prioritizes the protection of economic interests, for which reason the repercussions of this approach have “included environmental pollution and degradation, abuse of human rights and violent conflicts, all of which contribute to the environmental injustices that plague the region.” (569). In this obvious process, slow violence is strongly connected to issues of environmental justice with lasting consequences for the following generations: “With primary economic activities (farming and fishing being the traditional sources of livelihood) negatively affected by the polluted environment, community inhabitants can barely afford medical and educational services. Thus, the younger generations are confined to recurrent poverty and poor health despite the rich environmental endowments of the Niger Delta region” (Ako/Olawuyi 2018, 571). The former balance between nature and living in it is destroyed. This can also be seen in the extinction of animals alongside the destruction of biospheres. This issue is broached when the nurse Gloria observes a cloud of bats swarming into the night, and she tells Rufus that the gas flares kill them, as well as other flying creatures (Habila 2011, 129).

In contrast to the empty villages and the polluted environment, the places in which people live more or less in peace are described as very natural. The first example of this is the village of Karibi. “The houses seemed to belong more to the trees and forest behind them than they did to a domestic human settlement” (Habila 2011, 11). This is the first shelter in which Zaq and Rufus want to stay on their search. Their next refuge is Chief Ibiram´s village, which is also very close to its natural surroundings, as it is built on stilts and appears to be floating on the river (Habila 2011, 14). Rufus observes that the village is mostly made from bamboo and raffia palms (Habila 2011, 14). So, although it is described as rather desolate (Habila 2011, 15), it offers a relatively safe place for its inhabitants in the environment. Lastly, a natural place to which Rufus and Zaq return for safety is the island of Irikefe. When they first arrive there at nighttime, they can foremost see trees (Habila 2011, 78). The next morning, Rufus finds sea air and bird songs, which make him feel at peace (Habila 2011,

82). Rufus and Zaq begin to find out about the people on Irikefe island, many of whom practice the religion of the shrine—a religion, that worships nature. They explain that they "believe that the sun brings renewal. All of creation is born anew with the new day. Whatever goes wrong in the night has a chance for redemption after a cycle" (Habila 2011, 83). These examples underline the idea that connectedness to nature is the key to a peaceful place for living. Although the villages of Chief Ibiram and the island of Irikefe are left or destroyed towards the end of the novel, their connection to nature seems to protect them from the outer world. This is also stressed when the worshippers build the shrine again after the destruction (Habila 2011, 211). These examples of villages that are close to nature and represent exiles for the displaced people highlight the importance of recognizing the natural environment as home.

The novel *Oil on Water* offers a close insight into the negotiated topics, as they are described through the lens of a journalist. This brings another aspect into the discussion on environment and migration, as their representation in the media plays an important role. In the novel, the depiction of environmentalism, migration, activism, and the finding of truths build the frame for the story using the central motifs of fog and mist. During Rufus´s search for the British woman in the Niger Delta, he is constantly confronted with mist that blocks the view into the landscape (Habila 2011, 4/6/33/42/163/210), but also in the finding of truths, his perspective is often obstructed by fog, as he realises already at the beginning of the novel: "The fog lifts as suddenly as it descended, and the sun shines brightly again, and once more I am on sure ground, but I know the fog can return again, get into memory´s eyes, blinding it momentarily" (Habila 2011, 4). This image is dissolved toward the end of the novel when descriptions focus more on the imagery of light (cf. Habila 2011, 207/212/213/215). This coincides with the growing consciousness of the main character. From a neutral spectator perspective, it appears that the knowledge Rufus gains during his search clears away the fog in his mind, enlightening his view on the whole story. Zaq, like a mentor, often philosophizes about journalism and judges the happening, whereas Rufus seldom expresses his own opinion. It seems that he is neither on the side of the oil industry nor of the militants but takes his job of neutral reporting more seriously. However, the more the story progresses, the more Rufus can make something of Zaq's philosophical anecdotes, for example, when he observes the captured militants, guilty or not, being drenched in oil as a punishment (Habila 2011, 57). After remembering a part of Zaq's lecture, he describes how impotent and angry he feels observing the situation in his neutral, observer role, unable to help the people being punished (Habila 2011, 57). When he talks to Zaq about the

situation, he asks him how he can help, but Zaq tells him that he cannot intervene (Habila 2011, 60). His only option is to observe and write about it to inform the public which then can try to create change (Habila 2011, 60).

On the other side, reporters have a great responsibility. Rufus remembers another passage from Zaq's lecture in which he talks about the conservationist role of journalists and that only a true journalist can do justice to the truth that might later become a transcendental moment (Habila 2011, 73). In the context of the story, this is an interesting aspect, as in the end, Rufus seems to discover the whole truth about the story he is investigating and even more. He illuminates important aspects of the oil industry that affect the majority of people in Nigeria, the environment, and the displacement in the Niger Delta. As he remembers from Zaq's lecture "the best stories are the ones we write with tears in our eyes, the ones whose stings we feel personally" (Habila 2011, 135). What is naively quoted from his mentor here is a central point, as the story affects himself, but even more importantly, it affects many people, as they directly feel the stings the oil industry forces on them. This shows that Rufus is trapped between three groups, the local people, the militants, and the military, and struggles to tell their respective ideas of the truth (Okuyade 2016, 221). Through Rufus's journalistic storytelling style, he includes the many perspectives of the characters that are involved. This results in an organic wholeness of the narrative when the separate pieces are held together by Rufus's perspective (Okuyade 2016, 221). The different perspectives that are represented through the different characters together form a new truth. This truth is composed of mainstream ideas as well as notions of people who are usually not able to speak for themselves. By including their views, Rufus gives them their voice.

This wide range of perspectives of journalism is even enlarged by the trope of the journey. As Okuyade notices, "journeying […] offers both journalists the yardage to explore the environment and meet different groups involved in this glocal oil racketeering" (Okuyade 2016, 220). The movement through the Delta opens insights into different perspectives in the search for truth. This kind of journey motif can be compared to the journey depicted in Conrad's *Heart of the Darkness* from 1899. In both novels, the journey can be understood as a physical journey as well as an ideological or psychological one (cf. Okuyade 2016, 220). Therefore, the connection between natural and human exploitation is depicted, as "the motif of the journey [makes] the reader aware of the social and environmental damage that arises from extraction practices and [highlights] their interrelatedness" (Fernández-Vázquez 2021, 109). Interestingly, Fernández-Vázquez interprets *Oil on Water* as a postcolonial recontextualization of *Heart of the Darkness*

through the similar depiction of extraction practices in Africa that shows that domination systems persist in new forms and strategies (Fernández-Vázquez 2021, 118f). In both novels, the journeys on the rivers of Africa and the search for truth highlight the long tradition of abuse and violence in Africa that local communities have had to suffer (Fernández-Vázquez 2021, 119). "Oil on Water illustrates the principles of ecocritical thinking, which Conrad somehow anticipated and that are particularly relevant to explain the situation in the Delta, one of the most polluted areas in the world" (Fernández-Vázquez 2021, 119). This shows that *Oil on Water* can be situated in a long tradition of writing about Africa and the exploitation of its nature. The intertextuality found in Habila's novel can be seen as a type of postcolonial *writing back to the centre* (cf. chapter 2), as current problems are placed within the historical and cultural tradition (Fernández-Vázquez 2021, 106).

From a postcolonial perspective, the militants play an essential role in taking responsibility for their country. Throughout the story, the reporters only seldom meet the militants and are not able to talk to them. They only reproduce the general assumptions everybody has about them or rumours that they catch up (cf. Habila 2011, 96). The prevalent opinion about the militants is that they "are responsible for that, they call themselves freedom fighters, but they are rebels, terrorists, kidnappers" (Habila 2011, 96). Therefore, the reporters in the beginning sometimes are even astonished at their actions, for example, when they send a boatman to save the reporters from an uninhabited island and Rufus asserts that "they weren't inhuman, after all" (Habila 2011, 77). As the story progresses, Rufus gets even more insights into the motives of the militants and begins to uncover more details about them. This is shown, for example, when a major in the military tells him a totally different version of the story about the militants' leader, the Professor, than the story that is commonly known (Habila 2011, 97). The major's perspective on the militants mirrors a racist, colonial view of the people who fight for the environment. This becomes even more clear when he states, "You journalists, with your fancy ideas about human rights and justice … all nonsense. There are no human rights for people like them. You jail them and in a year they'll be out on the streets. The best thing is to line them up and shoot them. But you people…" (Habila 2011, 97). This highlights the perspective of some people who, just as in colonialism, see the capitalist way as the only valid one.

Rufus, however, is determined to understand both sides, especially the side of the militants (Habila 2011, 98). One key scene from the perspective of the local people is depicted when Rufus and Zaq talk to Henshaw, a militant incarcerated by the major. He concludes his explanations by stating, "[W]e are the people, we are the Delta, we represent

the very earth on which we stand" (Habila 2011, 149). This gives insight into the perspective of the local population fighting the oil industry. They want to decide for themselves and their land; they want agency. Rufus gets even more insight into this perspective when he meets the leader of the militants, the Professor, in person. He tells him, "We are not the barbarians the government propagandists say we are. We are for the people. Everything we do is for the people, what will we gain if we terrorize them?" (Habila 2011, 209). With this statement, he puts into question everything that is known about the militants. The Professor accuses other militant groups of being responsible for the killings and violence, and even if it remains unknown if this is true or just an excuse for his actions, he turns the perspective around. He tells Rufus, "Write only the truth. Tell them about the flares you see at night, and the oil on the water. And the soldiers forcing us to escalate the violence every day. Tell them how we are hounded daily in our own land. Where do they want us to go, tell me where? Tell them, we are going nowhere. This land belongs to us. That is the truth, remember that" (Habila 2011, 209f). The Professor not only explains the militants' point of view, but also illustrates that there is not one truth, but that truth is always a matter of perspective. "Habila not only gives them a voice, but he also re-humanises them by rewriting history from the perspective of the displaced and oppressed" (Okuyade 2016, 231).

Another key passage is a scene in which Rufus watches a science fiction movie about a submerged world (cf. Habila 2011, 101). Casually, he summarizes the movie and while he falls asleep states that "there was something sad about a people who were born and lived and died on water, on rusty ships and boats and fantastic balloons, their days and nights filled with the hope of someday finding dry earth, their wars and industries and relationships and culture all driven by the myth of dry land" (Habila 2011, 101). It seems ironic how naïve Rufus states these findings when his country, his reality, is in danger of ending in a similar way.

After Rufus's search for truth during the search for the kidnapped woman, the novel ends in an interesting way: it is left unknown whether the British woman is saved by the oil company (Habila 2011, 215) and the whole story remains open. The shrine is repaired, Boma finds a safe place to stay, Gloria and the doctor are safe, and everything seems to fall into place. However, in the paragraph following these happy outlooks (Habila 2011, 215), the reader is reminded of the problems that still exist: "Far away on the horizon the flares were still sending up smoke into the air, and for a moment I imagined, somewhere on the river, a refinery up in flames, sabotaged by the Professor and his men – if nothing had happened last night to stop them. I imagined huge cliffs of smoke and giant escarpments of orange fire

rising into the atmosphere, and thousands of gallons of oil floating into the water, the weight of the oil tight like a hangman's noose round the neck of whatever life form lay underneath" (Habila 2011, 215). This puts in contrast the individual successful conclusions for many characters in the novel and the ever-looming danger that remains for the Niger Delta. Okuyade (2016) states that the novel's end reminds the reader that "humanity needs nature to survive, but nature hardly needs humans for survival" (232).

Concluding, environmentalism and migration are dealt with in the depiction of environmental justice and displacement, as well as slow and direct violence. Okuyade (2016) states that through the negotiation of resistance, silence, and migration, Habila's novel depicts "the reality of displacement – a kind of displacement that is environmentally induced, bringing to the fore a kind of violence that is associated with the dispossession of the Niger Delta people's ancestral home" (214). Helon Habila's novel depicts the causes and "the real effects of dislocation" (Okuyade 2016, 227) and "the social costs of oil production, which enunciates the asymmetric power relationship between transnational capital and the populations of developing countries, particularly indigenous peripheral people" (Okuyade 2016, 227). Therefore, the novel connects postcolonialism and ecocriticism by depicting the forms of movement that interweave these fields.

4.3 Voice, Agency and Climate Change in Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book*

In Wright's *The Swan Book,* voice, agency, and climate change are central points that deal with ecocritical aspects and migration. Wright's novel narrates the story of Oblivia who lives in an Australia that is altered by climate change. The story begins in a swamp in the north which is home to Oblivia and where the girl lives with Bella Donna, a European climate refugee who has saved her from a tree in which she has lived after she was raped as a young girl. This swamp is renamed Swan Lake when black swans inhabit this northern water landscape, although their natural habitat is in the climate change-destroyed Australian south. When Oblivia is older, she is separated from the swans and the swamp and taken to a southern city by Warren, the first Indigenous president of Australia, in order to marry him as his contractually promised wife. As climate change progresses, Warren is murdered, and

the city gets flooded. Oblivia joins other climate refugees to get back to her swamp in the north. Finally, she arrives at her destination with the swan Stranger whom she saved.

One of the central topics of Wright's novel is voice and the connected questions of who has a voice and for what is it used. Oblivia's full name is Oblivion Ethyl(ene) (cf. Wright 2013, 18). This name entails important aspects that determine Oblivia's voice throughout the novel: "She is oblivion (both forgetting and forgotten). […] And she is Ethylene, a hydrocarbon found in crude oil, which is used for petrol sniffing and produces among many other things the ubiquitous plastic shopping bag" (Gleeson-White 2016/2017, 34). These details in her name refer to the petrol-sniffing boys who have raped Oblivia and her lack of memory about this incident. Also, they stand for more general issues that are dealt with in *The Swan Book*, such as the neglect of Aboriginal peoples and the destruction of the natural environment by humans. However, names and identities are depicted as variable, as the above-mentioned example of Swan Lake shows. Warren asks Oblivia if her real name is Emily Wake and "[i]t occurred to her that this stranger could tell her who she was, the identity she had sought by searching through words written on pages" (Wright 2013, 142). This shows how Oblivia does not identify with her name or even her characteristic traits but accepts what people tell her what she is called or who she is. This lack of voice in the sense of opinion/power/identity is highlighted by Oblivia's physical lack of voice: she is mute since she was raped (cf. Wright 2013, 17). "Oblivia had long forgotten how to speak, and did not know she could speak, and had no confidence to speak." (Wright 2013, 55). Therefore, she cannot speak, nor express her feelings verbally. For example, her feelings of fear and disconnectedness when she leaves her home in the hull are described rather through the perspective of the swans that are paralleled to Oblivia's experiences (cf. Wright 2013, 143f). "She had no sound either [like a dying swan], and knew what it was like to be without sound. This country would never hear her voice, or the language she spoke" (Wright 2013, 157). Oblivia's voicelessness is paralleled by nature, which cannot express itself or talk for itself. This shows that the depiction of Oblivia's voice is an inner one, which is why she feels that other people speaking silence her, robbing her of her (inner) voice: "she wanted to scream at him to stop robbing people of their thoughts. She hated how he killed silence" (Wright 2013, 206). Oblivia's voicelessness reaches far, as she does not trust herself anymore, which is mentioned when she depicts her memory as unreliable (Wright 2013, 210). This shows how voice is connected to power and self-confidence. As mentioned above, instead of speaking for herself, the feelings and thoughts of Oblivia are represented in other ways. For example, she writes with her fingers in an ancient language (cf. Wright 2013, 6f).

“Oblivia’s fingers kept on writing the swirl language over the dust that fell on what the tree had witnessed in its lifetime, and the history of the stories that continued to be told by the locals about the years of fighting like a bunch of battle-axes […].” (Wright 2013, 8f). This form of non-verbal communication hints at Oblivia’s connectedness to nature, but also spiritual Indigenous beliefs and the bonds to country. Generally, Oblivia’s forms of communicating and her voicelessness depict the colonial power relations and illustrate how subalterns are deprived of their opinion (cf. chapter 3.3).

The muteness of the main character Oblivia stands for the loss of language in general. So, after considering the concept of voice, language also plays an important role. In her novel, Wright (2013) uses Indigenous words and sentences, as well as passages in French, German, or other languages (e.g., 19/66/152). “First, she puts Waanyi words into circulation not only within the state language of English, which Wright reminds us is an impure amalgam of Latin, French, and German (among other) words that are also in the novel. Waanyi is the cultural and language group to which Wright belongs. […] Second, in many places in the novel, characters speak Aboriginal English, or ‘old time blackfella English’ (Wright 2013a, 133), the language that emerged from contact between an Indigenous language and English. Of the roughly 250 distinct Aboriginal languages that existed prior to colonisation, initially, many pidgins arose across the continent, which in turn gave rise to many creole languages” (Daley 2016, 315). Aboriginal languages are dealt with not only as they are used within the story but also as they are picked out as a central theme when it comes to language extinction. Hence, Aboriginal people are not only depicted as voiceless when it comes to matters of self-determination but furthermore, this voicelessness is highlighted by negotiating the extinction of Aboriginal languages. For example, this is shown when Oblivia observes homesick parrots in the genie’s shop that know ancient languages but waste their knowledge, as these ancient languages are lost and fade away (Wright 2013, 234). The extinction of Aboriginal languages goes hand in hand with the loss of Aboriginal voice. The narrator claims: “[…] were they really invisible in anyone’s language no matter what they said, and would remain un-Australian for loving ancient beliefs of their traditional lands too much” (Wright 2013, 131). This tuning out of Indigenous voices due to Aboriginal descent emphasises the problematic power structures in the novel’s society and the systematic silencing of Aboriginal people in Australia. In another example, when Warren dies and Aboriginal elders want to bury him in their traditional country, they are not trusted and are refused their bids (cf. Wright 2013, 258ff). Instead, the non-Aboriginal members of Warren’s family get to decide what happens to his corpse (Wright

2013, 261). Again, the voice of non-Aboriginal people silences Aboriginal ones. Oblivia explores parts of non-Aboriginal history when she lives in the Christmas house and finds nothing she recognizes. “She could not understand why this history did not exist in this world of creation. It was incomplete. Wrong. […] There was no miniature black girl such as herself in any of these depictions of humanity […]” (Wright 2013, 198). This illustrates in which ways Aboriginal voices are not only excluded from general discourse but also wiped out in historical accounts.

Voicelessness is not only ascribed to Indigenous people but also to migrants. Especially when it comes to voice, the difference between Bella Donna and Oblivia is highlighted. Bella Donna as a European refugee seems to hold a special status in the community in the swamp, which highlights how a Western perspective often has more saying than an Aboriginal one. Also, she pretends to know what the mute girl would think: “The startled old women, believing she understood whatever the girl was saying or thinking, having cracked the code of the language of windstorms or wind gusts, spoke in a pitched tone of voice that implied she held a high status in this poor community” (Wright 2013, 18). Donna fills Oblivia’s voicelessness with her own voice. “Oblivia’s silence creates something of a vacuum for other voices to fill. Since her muteness is linked to an alternative, ecocentric reality, the voices it opposes are representative of what is conventionally accepted as “reality” in anthropocentric and Eurocentric terms” (Johns-Putra 2018, 35). Despite the silence, Oblivia has a voice; it is described as the language of a windstorm, subsuming it into the natural world. This highlights Oblivia’s connection to nature. The differences in voice also become clear in another passage: “[…] I have used my opportunities for influencing people across the world. You must use the voice. The girl thought that she should be silent if words were just a geographical device to be transplanted anywhere on earth. Then if that was possible: Was it possible for her voice to be heard by imaginary people too?” (Wright 2013, 20). Bella Donna, who has already influenced other people, tells Oblivia to use her voice, whereas Oblivia has not only lost her voice but also her self-consciousness. Although in the novel Bella Donna as a migrant has a stronger voice than Oblivia as an Indigenous girl, similar experiences of voicelessness are made by refugees as well as Indigenous people. Bella Donna tells Oblivia several stories about the hardships on her migration route through which she has learned to speak for herself (cf. Wright 2013, 198). Hence, in *The Swan Book*, Aboriginal people, migrants, and animals all are perceived as having no voice and having to fight for their right to express opinions. This is summed up in the following quotation: “They [Harbor Master and monkey Rigoletto] were too obsessed about having no real voice in the

politics of Australia" (Wright 2013, 229). The Harbor Master represents the group of migrants, whereas Rigoletto functions as a representative of the animal as well as to indigenous spiritual world.

> The dislodging of voice is, of course, particularly significant with regard to the nonhuman. These novels remind us that the relentless search for the "voice" of "nature" is a doomed anthropocentric obsession, a quest born of human vanity. The idea that the nonhuman should or could be rendered in terms of voice stems from a fetishization of voice itself, a preoccupation with this human medium as the only way in which "nature" might communicate and be counted. (Johns-Putra 2018, 39)

Voicelessness and the exclusion of groups of people and non-humans from general discourse and political debates is an important factor of discrimination and colonial domination. The lack of voice of marginalized groups and especially of Oblivia calls attention to these facts and propels them to the forefront.

Warren Finch, who in the novel becomes the first Aboriginal president of Australia in many ways functions as an intermediate figure. He is described as the best man who ever breathed air on this planet (Wright 2013, 83), the chosen one or gift from God (Wright 2013, 88). Also, he is a half-caste, educated according to traditional Aboriginal law as well as in scientific knowledge (cf. Wright 2013, 89f & 93). He uses his in-between position to promote Indigenous beliefs in the Western world (for example, ideas about protecting the environment, not further specified in the novel), but also Western assumptions in the Indigenous world. "Warren claimed to be one of those people who used the voice given to him by the spiritual ancestors of the land for its only useful purpose, to uplift Aboriginal thought to its rightful place of efficaciousness, to be fit in mind and body, and residing in thought and action alongside the land" (Wright 2013, 116). Warren uses his voice to promote Aboriginal ideas of living but also to have influence as the political leader of Australia. In general, he is depicted as a strong, trustworthy character, loved and admired by everybody. As a result, Warren's voice and influence seem endless and eternal. Even after he dies, he has influence: "Anyone would think that he had been the only Aboriginal person on the planet. The only one who had a voice, and could voice his opinion. He has become the only public Aboriginal voice of the era" (Wright 2013, 262). This illustrates the power that is connected to Warren's voice that functions as a form of writing back from the margin (from an Indigenous perspective) to the centre (the general discourse) (cf. chapter 3.3).

In contrast to Warren, the Harbor Master, who is also half-caste, is depicted as untrustworthy due to his mixed origins. As he does not fit into one category, he is determined to be unreliable. "This *wululuku* was an Aboriginal man with an Asian heritage, the kind of

person all sorts of people liked to call half-caste, yellow fella, or mixed-blood urban Aboriginal. Half-caste. Thinking! Thinking! Mixture. Mixed-up. Not straight this or that. Extract! Lost purity. Not purely trustworthy. […]" (Wright 2013, 11). Although the Harbor Master has the same characteristics that would qualify him as a person who could mediate between cultures, he is a powerless character, whose voice is only heard by Oblivia. This aspect directly links questions of voice to the concept of agency. As the theory in chapter 3.3 presented, voice is strongly connected to agency. Due to her voicelessness, Oblivia also feels that she has no ability to act. This lack of the feeling of agency for example is depicted when she marries Warren and nods, as she thinks it does not matter whether she said *I do* or *fuck you* (cf. Wright 2013, 200). Oblivia is lost and lives in a eucalyptus tree (cf. Wright 2013, 6). "She was running away through the path made in her thoughts to the tree that stood clear in her mind. […] They remind her that the tree was destroyed, there was nowhere to run. The swans' clamorous trumpeting made her realize that nobody ran from Warren Finch. Already, he possessed her life" (Wright 2013, 140). In contrast to Oblivia's lack of agency and powerlessness is Warren's strength, which matches his previously described voice. He is able to change things and is heard. "It was his words that described hugeness that helped her to realize how powerful he was, and her lack of power, in a place that she did not know" (Wright 2013, 214). "Oblivia, clearly, belongs to a community disempowered by both imperialist brutality and ecological degradation" (Johns-Putra 2018, 34). But despite Oblivia's lack of agency, in a sense, she is a caretaker of the land, for example, when she rescues swans that crash into the building in which Oblivia lives in the city (cf. Wright 2013, 225f). By reconnecting with her ancestral culture of taking care of the land, she slowly regains a form of self-determination.

Johns-Putra (2018) notices that human agency has caused many changes in the climate, which is described by the concept of the Anthropocene, hence humanity is a geological agent (cf. Johns-Putra 2018, 26). Furthermore, she traces the "entangled nature of human and nonhuman agency" which determines the strong impact human actions have on the environment (Johns-Putra 2018, 26). In *The Swan Book*, however, nature, environment, and non-humans are given agency that overbids and outlasts the agency that humans have. For example, a Mute Swan saves Bella Donna and other refugees (cf. Wright 2013, 24f) or the Harbor Master has a monkey friend who claims to be a genius in world politics (cf. Wright 2013, 34). Animals have agency and influence the outcome of migration processes or human opinion.

> Bella Donna is close to European swans, Warren Finch to brolgas and more generally to birds, the Harbour Master to a monkey friend, Machine the butler and Red to cats, Half-Life has a cicada and a camel, the genies are fond of owls, the homeless kids have Staffordshire bull terriers, and Oblivia can speak to cats, trusts an owl to guide her through the city of Heaven and is close to swans. Humans develop various relationships with animals throughout the novel, whose narrative is also propelled by animals. (Lehartel 2022, 5)

This highlights how many of the novel's human characters have a close connection to the animal world. "Moreover, in referring to international swan music, stories, poems, lore and constructions (subanahongsa swan barges), Wright reminds readers of the many ways humans (not just Indigenous people) perceive themselves and perhaps better understand themselves in relation to animals, reinvigorating our perception that humans relate to animals in many ways across the world" (Lehartel 2022, 5). The difference between the two species is somewhat relativised. Also, "[t]he narrative's emphasis on Indigenous Australian closeness to animals extends to other cultures" (Lehartel 2022, 5). Not only does Oblivia have a strong affection for swans, but also Bella Donna from whom she learns of this connection. Animal agency is also depicted when a crow in the outback is crying for its friend crushed by a car (cf. Wright 2013, 160). Warren goes up to the bird to console it for its loss and sends it back into the northerly winds (Wright 2013, 160). Thereby "[t]he bird responded well to his voice, for it did another strange thing to demonstrate its ability to communicate its feelings to human beings" (Wright 2013, 160). The crow is not only a character with agency associated with emotions but also has an ability to interact with humans and vice versa. Another central animal character is the previously mentioned monkey Rigoletto, who comments on many happenings around Oblivia, is an expert in politics and religion, and acts as a guru to the Harbor Master (cf. Wright 2013, 224/228). He demonstrates voice, agency, and power over human characters. "A wild animal was not supposed to look after people. It was supposed to be the other way round. Where was the beauty in a monkey worrying about people?" (254). By swapping human-animal characteristics, power relations are questioned.

Moreover, Gleeson-White (2016/2017) determines nature and country as agents and narrative authorities (32). One example is the sand mountain: "He said his sand was welcome to stay regardless of all inconveniences. It will go away when it wants" (Wright 2013, 55). Another example is the tree watching what happened to Oblivia and calling for her when it saw that people had broken the law (Wright 2013, 69). After the incidents, the army destroys the tree because it thinks believing in sacred trees is dangerous (cf. Wright 2013, 69). Also, Warren perceives nature as an agent when he notices it "[…] could have been the country

trying to teach him to stay away […]" (Wright 2013, 100). By including these examples, Wright hints at Indigenous conceptions of country that contain the Aboriginal knowledge system and its complex interrelations of humans and non-humans (Gleeson-White 2016/2017, 29). The inclusion of Indigenous notions of country is a central element in *The Swan Book.* "It is centrally concerned with land, and with land as Country, an active agent in the narrative, a protagonist that operates to counter settler misunderstandings of Aboriginal land as inert, exchangeable property. Here land and humans are mutually constituted rather than humans being apart from and above land" (Gleeson-White 2016/2017, 30). The depiction of non-human entities as active parts of the novel is achieved by including their perspectives on different layers. "In addition to multiple voices, the narrative's points of view are constantly shifting: from human to tree (79); to the junk of the rotting hulks (11); to the snake (183); to bird (15, 18, and 71), as well as shifts in the order of reality (dreamt, imagined, and reported). These different points of view dissolve the distinction between a human subject of perception and a world of non-human objects. They dissolve an external reality to show that each of these viewpoints has its own individuated reality" (Daley 2016, 308).

Agency is also important when it comes to the rights of Aboriginal people. Therefore, Wright's novel deals with a number of political decisions that have massive influences on Aboriginal agency (cf. Wright 2013, 19/29/41f/45/69/73/90f/103/123ff/266). Also, references to historical facts such as Stolen Generations (cf. Wright 2013, 75), Mission-life of Aboriginal people (cf. Wright 2013, 95), Native Title Legislation (Wright 2013, 121) are picked up in *The Swan Book*.

> By referring to a wide range of past and contemporary Australian policies, Wright not only complicates readers' perception of Australia because it requires them to know or look into these policies to get a grasp of what the narrator is recounting but also informs their understanding of its political space. The author maps Australia as a place of unfair treatment and dramatises its possible evolution by imagining it going forward with marginalising Indigenous Australians, boat people, asylum seekers and other unwanted people to the swamp. (Lehartel 2022, 3)

Discrimination against Aboriginal people is contextualised and depicted in relation to other marginalised groups, for example, migrants. Consequently, the novel alludes to "Australia's history as a penal colony, as well as […] to the imprisonment of refugees deemed to be "illegal" and directly referencing the coercive government control of Aboriginal lives" (Sheridan 2017, 198). This highlights the effects colonialism leaves on different structures of Australian society.

An important aspect that can be related to the concept of voice, as well as agency and loss of identity, is trauma. In trauma theory, colonialism and connected forms of violence play an essential role (cf. chapter 3.3). Symptoms of trauma can be found in Oblivia and the novel's society, as well as in the country. The structural trauma of the colonization of people and nature is interwoven with the personal trauma that Oblivia experiences. Collective trauma is one characteristic that is mentioned about the novel's society: "[…] as if they didn't already know what happens to the inheritors of oppression and dispossession. It's not that shit happens as other people have said; it's the eternal reality of a legacy in brokenness that was the problem to them" (Wright 2013, 75). Thereby shame plays an essential role (cf. Wright 2013, 74) First of all, the suppression of traumatic memories is negotiated as a central aspect of trauma: "The girl that had eventually come out of the bowel of the tree had no memory of the swamp. Did not recognize it. Had no memory of the past. Her memory was created by what the old woman had chosen to tell her" (Wright 2013, 77f). Trauma determines Oblivia's perception of reality. "Oblivia's violation is a synecdoche for the violation of Aboriginal country, people, and ontology" (Johns-Putra 2018, 34), as John-Putra highlights in the connection of collective and individual traumas. Oblivia is reminded of her traumatic experience when she sleeps next to Warren on their journey: "Her instincts keep telling her to run, she cannot stand being near him, feels like death to her, but fearing he would kill her, she remains frozen, barely able to move" (Wright 2013, 154). "Her mind changes itself. It is at war with action. Fights decisions. She forgets to act when memories quickly regain control of her brain, and instead of fighting, she escapes with a flood of thoughts running back along the song lines to the swamp, and the language inside her goes bolting down the tree with all the swans in the swamp following her" (Wright 2013, 155). Oblivia not only escapes reality in her thoughts, but in the few occasions in which she has the chance to act, she escapes into natural environments. For example, when she lives in the city, she finds refuge in the botanical gardens (Wright 2013, 242), or after she was raped, she hides in a tree (Wright 2013, 6). Nature seems to be the only place where she can find peace after her traumatic experiences.

Apart from the main character's personal trauma, trauma is also mirrored in the treatment of the environment, as migrating people and nature suffer similarly. An example of this is the description of roadkill on the journey Oblivia makes through the outback (cf. Wright 2013, 150) or the over-consumption of meat on their wedding: "Then, she lost track of the number of cattle, pigs, sheep, and poultry slaughtered, and vegetable fields that had been raided, the sea emptied, and all of this – deteriorating into the guts of seagulls eating

the rubbish" (Wright 2013, 203). Oblivia perceives these human actions as traumatising impacts on the natural environment. "Instead of diving in and enjoying the banquet, she perceives the food processing scheme and tracks back where the food items come from and how they were obtained. The use of the preterit verbs "slaughtered," "raided," "emptied" and present progressive "deteriorating" point to the current short-sighted extractive capitalist model paired with a progressing throw-away culture." (Lehartel 2022, 7f). When Oblivia runs her hands along wood panels in the Christmas house, imagining tree trunks in a forest (Wright 2013, 195), environmental trauma is again referenced. The tree is uprooted just like Oblivia herself and shaped and altered by colonialist practices.

The most obvious symptom of *The Swan Book*'s traumatising nature is climate change, by which the natural environment in Wright's novel is severely altered. "People on the road called her Mother Catastrophe of flood, fire, drought and blizzard. These were the four seasons, which she threw around the world whenever she liked" (Wright 2013, 5). The world is also shaped by extinction, dust storms, tsunamis, nuclear fallout, war, and pollution (cf. Wright 2013, 5f/22/51). These descriptions depict the traumatic effects that anthropogenic influences have on humans and environmental spaces (cf. chapter 3.3). Climate change can be interpreted as a curse of colonialism, as "[t]his happened during the massive sandstorm that cursed the place after the arrival of the strangers from the sea" (Wright 2013, 7). Climate change in *The Swan Book* goes hand in hand with the change in general and the chaos that change potentially brings with it. It affects not only the main character but also most living and non-living creatures in the novel. The first chapter begins with: "When the world changed, the people were different" (Wright 2013, 5). This shows that the alterations that climate change include have wide-reaching impacts on everything, not just the climate itself. Again, the role of Indigenous people is specified in more detail, showing that climate change especially affects people with a strong connection to land. "These were really stubborn people sticking to the earth of the ancestors, even though they knew well enough that the contaminated lake caused bellyaches […] It was no good thinking about contaminated water leading to deformity in their culture for an eternity" (Wright 2013, 9f). This passage highlights not only the physical dependency of humans on nature but also what this means for their culture. "For country never leaves its people" (Wright 2013, 23). Indigenous understandings of country that connect humans, nature, animals, culture, and society predominate this depiction of the world. "Thank climate change and even the wars such a catastrophe created, and thank the millions of refugees around the world being sick and tired of how they were treated, that had cleaved the opportunity for this one nation of

Indigenous people deemed worthy enough, to force Australia to sign a treaty by bringing the country to its illegal colonizing knees in the World Court" (Wright 2013, 91). Western structures have provoked the disconnection of humans and nature and the environmental destruction that goes along with it. The novel ends with severe flooding as an effect of climate change that causes mass migration movements to the north (Wright 2013, 274ff). Thereby, the description of refugees includes many aspects of migration movements in general, such as human traffickers, fear/tiredness/hunger, violence among refugees, and people dying on their journey (Wright 2013, 274ff). The depiction of the country's trauma in the form of climate change functions as a warning to listen to the voice of nature. In the epilogue, the narrator states, "You had to hear these soothsaying creatures [myna birds] creating glimpses of a new internationally dimensional language about global warming and changing climates for this land. Really listen hard to what they were saying" (Wright 2013, 297). Oblivia wants to give the swan Stranger, which she has ever since taken care of, back to the country/nature (Wright 2013, 298). However, country can no longer take care of the swan, as it is destroyed and polluted (cf. Wright 2013, 298f). This highlights the irreversibility of the process of destruction. Jane Gleeson-White (2010) proposes that in a time of climate change, as landscapes are altered and disappear, new stories are required that portray the natural world as having agency and in which human life is inextricably bound to country (Gleeson-White 2010, 31).

Central figures in the depiction of climate change and connected migration movements are the swans. Different species of swans inhabit the world (cf. Wright 2013, 36), and yet a central passage is the description of sea explorers seeing black swans for the first time, remarking "*Rara avis in terries nigroque simillima cygno*" (Wright 2013, 70). This refers to the "former belief in the rest of the world that swans were by definition white—the Roman poet Juvenal's famous sarcastic reference to a good woman being Rara avis in terris nigroque simillima cygno, a "rare bird, as rare on earth as a black swan"—effectively, an impossibility. This belief was directly contradicted by the "discovery" of black swans in Australia" (Sheridan 2017, 212). "The black swan is the very sign of difference, not simply from a white swan, but from the concept of possibility itself" (Daley 2016, 313). This mirrors the limited Western perspective on nature in which ignorance marks the gap that enables the destruction of nature by colonialism. First swans arrive in the swamp (cf. Wright 2013, 11f) and then are exiled (Wright 2013, 12). "The swans, native to Australia's south, have been displaced by global warming, an analogy with the spiritual dislocation of Oblivia's community, whose connection to the land is severed both by the Army's use of it as a

dumping ground and by the effects of climate change" (Johns-Putra 2018, 34). This highlights the special connection between Oblivia and the swans (cf. Wright 2013, 16). Both are othered and displaced by the remains of colonial structures. "The swans had become gypsies, searching the deserts for vast sheets of storm water soaking the centuries-old died lakes when their own habitat had dried from prolonged drought. They had become nomads, migratory like the white swans of the northern world, with their established seasonal routes taking them back and forth, but unlike them, the black swans were following the rainwaters of cyclones deeper and deeper into the continent" (Wright 2013, 13f). The role of the swans is also stressed in the description of their migration and their journeys (cf. Wright 2013, 59). "The black swans' forced migration functions as a metaphor for the dire effects of Indigenous dispersal, disempowerment, and death in the area but also denotes the devastating effects of the mainstream mismanagement of the land in general" (Renes 2021, 8). The parallel othering of Oblivia and the swans is further depicted in the swamp. "Swamp people said the swans were frightening them. They accused the swans of looking right into their souls and stealing their traditional culture" (Wright 2013, 61). The fear of the other is essential in this passage. Oblivia, however, feels a connection to these animals with whom she shares many features. For example, she develops a burial ceremony for the swans that die (cf. Wright 2013, 80) in order to pay them respect. "In *The Swan Book* Oblivia's relationship to the swans is a custodianship based on mutual recognition. This theme speaks to contemporary attempts to reassert human connection with the natural world, in the context of the global crises brought about by climate change. It is also an aspect of these novels' generic affinity with traditional fables, where animals may speak and act with humans, and even exchange their mode of existence" (Sheridan 2017, 200).

Finally, *The Swan Book* takes up an element that is important not only for Indigenous culture but also for voice, agency, and matters of environmentalism and migration — the story. "Stories had value. Could buy trust. Could buy lots of things. Even silence. This story was new cash among people full of suspicion of one another" (Wright 2013, 23). The impact narratives have in contemporary times is a central element of Wright's novel. This is also stressed in the following passage: "The maddest on Earth told her stories of exile endlessly, but who listened? The swamp people were not interested in being conquered by other people's stories. Aunty Bella Donna of the Champions knew times when no one listened to the inconsequential stories she sang to herself: when hungry people feed themselves fat on voices droning from the radio, and repeat what they hear, they are like canaries" (Wright 2013, 29). The power of narrative is reconnected to questions of voice and agency. In *The*

Swan Book, Wright tells this story of the voiceless, agency-lacking, and traumatized girl who, despite her experiences of migration in a climate change-torn country, is the centre of a narrative that can help to change the perspective. Despite Oblivia's voicelessness and her lack of agency, she leaves a trace through the story she indirectly tells and what it stands for (cf. Wright 2013, 302). "By concerning themselves with voicelessness but refusing to correlate it with passivity, these narratives interrogate the valorization of (human) voice, and reveal such an investment to be at the heart of anthropocentric thinking and Anthropocenic damage" (Johns-Putra 2018, 39). This withholds a critique of the aforementioned master narratives that originate mostly from Western cultures.

> The West's acquisitive wanderings and trespass across the entire Earth, and its exploitation of the planet's resources in search of cheap natures, have so transformed Country and its creatures that they have lost their ancestral stories connected with specific land forms and locations. In a time of climate change, as landscapes are altered and disappear, new stories are required: stories about biota that portray the natural world not as a spectacular backdrop for human dramas, but as a being with agency and with which human life is inextricably bound, Country. The Swan Book is one such new story. (Gleeson-White 2016/2017, 31)

Dominating systems that remain from colonial times and recreate unjust power relations create a culture of destruction and exploitation. "*The Swan Book* holds this culture responsible for climate change, for so disregarding the Earth and its quiet wisdom that it has ransacked it for human purposes. Writing this global story into a story of Country, it argues for Oblivia's quiet action in caring, or attempting to care, for the place to which she belongs" (Gleeson-White 2016/2017, 36). Indigenous perspectives and worldviews move into the centre of the story. "To tell her fable of the black swan, Wright has invented an Indigenous voice that invites us others as welcome guests, but also requires us to read differently, to listen with new ears. New stories are needed for new times, and these times are catastrophic" (Sheridan 2017, 213).

The Swan Book is a postcolonial novel that, by questioning the dominance of master narratives, questions dominance in general and instead presents a radical silence (Johns-Putra 2018, 27). This is achieved by the depiction and combination of many different human and non-human voices and perspectives that fill the gap of the lacking voice of the main character. Through its anthropocentric perspective connections to ecocritical strands of postcolonialism are drawn (Johns-Putra 2018, 27). "Postcolonial ecocriticism has identified how the project of imperialism and the ideology of racism on which it depends have facilitated the domination of both racial and nonhuman others in the name of conquest and

civilization […]" (Johns-Putra 2018, 32). This is depicted by the traces left by domination of marginalized humans and non-human agents in Wright's novel.

4.4 Frontiers and Conflict in John Lanchester's *The Wall*

The novel *The Wall* by John Lanchester evolves around the consequences of climate change and strongly engages with matters of the border and surrounding conflicts that involve issues of ecocriticism and migration. The story is set in a near-future fictional Britain, which, due to rising sea levels, has to be protected by a wall that encircles the whole country. As most other countries no longer exist, so-called Others, displaced people from other (no longer existing) countries, try to climb over the Wall[15] to find a safe place in which to live. Therefore, every young inhabitant of Britain, apart from the ruling elite, has to serve two years on the Wall as a Defender to ensure that no Others come into the country. If Defenders fail to protect the Wall, they are put out to sea and are expelled from the safe land of Britain. The novel is split into three parts, starting with the section titled *The Wall* in which the protagonist Joseph Kavanagh starts his first day as a Defender on the Wall. The second part, *The Others*, deals with Others attacking the Wall where Kavanagh serves as a Defender, and lastly in *The Sea* Kavanagh and some of his Defender colleagues are put out to sea and struggle to survive on the open water.

The central motif of Lanchester's novel is the frontier, which is already highlighted by its title *The Wall*. The Wall represents a border in many ways: it is an ordinary border that divides the country and the open sea, also this border separates the inhabitants of Britain and the Others. Furthermore, in a symbolic sense, the Wall stands for the time before and after the Change, the non-defined event that caused the extreme climate change in the story. Outside the Wall, there is chaos provoked by the Change; whereas inside the Wall, people live a relatively normal life, as it used to be before the Change. What is more, the story is divided into three parts, each delimiting its topic from the other parts, furthering and enhancing the boundary motif. This shows that the aspects of demarcation of the frontier play an important role in the ecocritical aspects of the novel, as well as in the topic of migration. Therefore, Sandrock (2020) positions border images in "the temporal experiences of border immobility, the shifting boundaries of climate change, and the novel's structural

[15] The Wall is written in capitals in the novel and in this thesis, as it is treated like a proper name.

split into formally distinct parts" (163f). Frontiers, as conceptualised in chapter 3.4, appear in the literal sense, as well as in the form of ideological borders.

In the descriptions of the Wall, coldness and the rigidity of concrete are emphasized (cf. Lanchester 2019, 3/5/15ff). This illustrates the demarcation of two different parts and the boundaries that the Wall maintains (cf. chapter 3.4). Furthermore, the description of the Wall generates a division between nature and civilisation. Another factor that is often mentioned in Kavanagh's descriptions of the Wall is time. Time seems not to pass on the Wall and standing on the Wall is described as dull and monotonous (cf. Lanchester 2019, 23/43f/117/155). The time factor enhances the feeling of limitation, as the frontier does not change no matter how much time passes. Sandrock (2020) goes as far as identifying The Wall as the primary agent in Lanchester's novel (166). Although Kavanagh is the protagonist and narrator of The Wall, the concrete wall participates in an epistemic destabilization of borders by dislocating the main characters and hence functioning as a defamiliarizing device (Sandrock 2020, 166). *The Wall* considers contemporary and historical connotations of walls by referring to a time when walls used to come down (cf. Lanchester 2019). Thus, the inner-Irish border, the Berlin Wall, the Mediterranean Sea as the border between Europe and Africa, or the wall between the USA and Mexico are put into the context of the novel (Sandrock 2020, 167). Like all these historic examples, the Wall stands as an example of failure in dealing with global migrancy (cf. Sandrock 2020, 169). This aspect, which also was mentioned in chapter 3.4, involves considerations of nationhood.

For the literary creation of borders, language plays an important role in *The Wall*. Through the simplified categorical labels—for groups of people as Defenders/Others/Help/Breeders, events as Change, or objects as Wall—difference is created. Therefore, the alterity is a central means in the creation of frontiers. In the depiction of Others in *The Wall*, the previous concept of the other plays an essential role (Sandrock 2020, 164). This also becomes clear when the strict division of groups is broken up. "[…] now that I was one of them [Others], they weren't Others any more? If I was an Other and they were Others perhaps none of us were Others but instead we were a new Us. It was confusing" (Lanchester 2019, 203). Despite its focus on frontiers, the novel also deals with liminal spaces, as the previous passage shows (cf. chapter 3.4). Apart from the separating of groups, the wall divides generations and reinforces the perception of alterity. The people born before the Change, who are responsible for the natural changes of the world, are contrasted to the people, such as Kavanagh, who are born after the Change (cf. Lanchester 2019, 55). The "mass guilt, generational guilt [… of knowing that they…] fucked up the

world" (Lanchester 2019, 55) creates an unbreachable threshold between the generations. Thus, the environmental changes of the world not only create borders between countries but also between people inside a country. This depiction of generational conflict highlights the otherness between people of different generations and even inverts their roles, as Kavanagh describes that his generation no longer turns to their parents for life advice or wisdom, but rather his generation represents the role of the parents who need to be in charge (cf. Lanchester 2019, 55). Hence, Sandrock (2020) attests that society in *The Wall* has a strong intergenerational division (174). These sociological divisions are combined with the unstable borders of environmental change, as well as migration (165).

Language also is a significant means in the depiction of the various conflicts in the novel as it creates a loaded atmosphere. One example of this is the military language that is applied at the beginning of the novel. The Defender system is built like an army and organized into companies and squads (Lanchester 2019, 9), which are led by the Captain and the Sergeant (Lanchester 2019, 6). When Kavanagh starts his first shift, the central descriptions of the scene are "order", "frightening command", "close combat", "kill or die" and "fix bayonets" (Lanchester 2019, 12). Furthermore, Kavanagh describes Defenders as using the most direct language, for example when talking about killing Others (cf. Lanchester 2019, 36). In contrast, The Flight, airplanes, or drones that guard the coastline, "takes them out", the Guards, coast guards on ships, "sink the Other's boats" (Lanchester 2019, 36), or the ruling elite leaves Others that come into the country the choice of being euthanized (Lanchester 2019, 47). The war vocabulary withholds a central function in the depiction of otherness and conflict.

Strongly connected to the frontier are notions of safety. As borders delimit the own from the other, they suggest being safe inside its demarcation (cf. chapter 3.4). Sandrock (2020) asserts that within the idea of borders as markers of safety, Lanchester's novel depicts a "grown-up border imaginary where no place is safe anymore, neither inside nor outside of the border" (165). This highlights the possibilities of conflict that borders contain (cf. chapter 3.4). When Kavanagh and his friends are put out to sea, he not only feels afraid but notices that "we would be lost, with the same complete lack of agency we had ever since the night of the attack" (Lanchester 2019, 183). This shows that the safety the Wall is supposed to create is an illusion. The protection the Wall seems to offer does not defy the border crossers but instead emerges as a means of control from the ruling elites (cf. chapter 3.4). Once the main characters live in their lifeboat on the open sea, safety becomes ever more important as they search for a safe place to live and make corresponding plans to head south (cf.

Lanchester 2019, 193). “Safe. I wouldn’t have thought it possible for a single word to have such an impact. Safe. To think of being safe meant to have hope, and I knew, had learnt recently, how dangerous hope is” (Lanchester 2019, 193). The uncertainties of living in the illusion of safety are picked up again as Kavanagh’s group gets attacked by pirates while living on the presumable flotilla (cf. Lanchester 2019, 227ff). This highlights the importance of safe places in migration processes. When finally, the only surviving Defenders, Kavanagh and Hifa, land on the oil rig, they find some form of safety (Lanchester 2019, 248ff). This feeling is reinforced when the main characters discover oil on the platform (Lanchester 2019, 260). The oil conveys security, as the familiarity of light and warmth are connected to notions of home. Again, the protagonist reflects on safety: “‘Safe`. I could feel myself tearing up at the word, my eyes swimming; a sign of how exhausted I was. Safe. We lay there on the platform, barely moving or speaking, for a long time” (Lanchester 2019, 267). The novel ends with Kavanagh and Hifa looking into the light of the oil lamp for a long time and feeling relieved before Kavanagh tells Hifa their story, and *The Wall* ends with the same words as it begins: “It’s cold on the Wall” (Lanchester 2019, 276). For the relief that is depicted when Kavanagh and Hifa find oil, Whittle (2021) observes Lanchester’s inability to imagine “a world beyond the anthropocentric control of fossil fuels” (90), which gives the story an ironic turn. Although oil extraction is one of the driving factors for climate change and therefore for climate refugees, Kavanagh and Hifa are happy to find oil on the rig. “Oil is one of the major symbols of human-made ecological disasters. In a British context, it is furthermore associated with North Sea oil and Scotland while, in a postcolonial context, it connects the novel’s colonial overtones with the subject of environmental change and border epistemologies” (Sandrock 2020, 176). With the dispersion of the image of security comes the destruction of the frontier. “Towards the end of the novel borders between the self and its surroundings are breaking down. The fluidity of the sea is a metaphor for the characters’ disillusionment with concrete borders as potential markers of security” (Sandrock 2020, 177).

Whittle (2021) identifies global mobility as the central theme in Lanchester’s novel and hence finds different forms of lifeboat symbolism (83). These include lifeboat nationalism, meaning nationalist isolationism due to overpopulation; no lifeboats, referring to global solidarity; and armed lifeboats, which represent a radical form of militarization and strengthening of national borders, especially of the Global North (83). Within these images of the lifeboat, the Wall can be seen as an armed lifeboat, since the armed border of Britain mainly has the aim of killing refugees (Whittle 2021, 88). “[…] Lanchester’s dystopian form

is able to expose the cruel absurdity of an obsession with the 'carrying capacity' of nation-states by taking it to its logical conclusion" (Whittle 2021, 88). The lifeboat symbolism that entails the notion of restricted and finite space appears in a double sense in Lanchester's novel, as Britain itself is the armed lifeboat, as interpreted by Whittle, but also Kavanagh and his friends end up living on a literal lifeboat. Both forms of the lifeboat emphasise the idea of the frontier and aspects of nationhood as described in chapter 3.4. The motif of the lifeboat means that the insiders are safe and survive, whereas the outsiders face another destiny. This is depicted in the passage in which Kavanagh and Hifa survive the explosion because they hide in their lifeboat (Lanchester 2019, 238). Moreover, the lifeboat in *The Wall* represents a space that deals with migration and ecocritical aspects. Thereby, Whittle stresses the necessity of postcolonial studies reengaging migration and the ecocritical turn (Whittle 2021, 84). For Whittle (2020), the negotiation of novels such as *The Wall* has the capacity to break with ideas of the functioning of strict borders: "At this perilous moment in the history of the planet, postcolonial analysis is able to challenge dominant 'lifeboat' discourses that use climate breakdown to justify the restriction of human rights pertaining especially to women, the poor, Indigenous peoples, and people with disabilities" (Whittle 2021, 95f). "As environmental borders continue to move, territorial borders become increasingly contested because climate instability accelerates global nomadism. The Wall comments on current debates about environmental change through various trajectories. One of its main messages is that climate change does not stop at borders" (Sandrock 2020, 170). This picks up the idea that multiculturalism does not threaten security (cf. chapter 3.4), but instead, common action is needed in order to protect the spaces in which humans live.

A central character in Lanchester's novel is the Captain, who used to be an Other (cf. Lanchester 2019, 46). As he had come to Britain before the laws changed, he was allowed to stay in the country, and since then served on the Wall with the official reason of wanting to keep Others out (Lanchester 2019, 46). The migration policy at the Captain's time of arrival regulated that Others could stay in the country if they had valuable skills, which changed as this policy worked as a pull factor for Others (Lanchester 2019, 47). When Kavanagh finds out that the Captain is an Other, he thinks about what the Captain must have seen and must have done to get into Britain (Lanchester 2019, 47). Although his evaluation of the Captain is completely wrong, he starts breaking up the mental borders that strictly divide the novel's characters and merges them into one single group: the Captain is an Other and a Defender. Also, the Captain is a traitor, as he works with Others in order to get them into the country (cf. Lanchester 2019, 170). For Kavanagh, the feeling of betrayal when he

finds out is overwhelming. Through the strict delineation of groups and ideas, it seemed impossible to Kavanaugh that people could be in between different groups and therefore not be as easy to read.

As in the previously discussed novel by Alexis Wright, flooding due to climate change is also a central topic of Lanchester's *The Wall*. However, the outcome of the changes in nature and climate is more extreme and causes violent conflict. Already on the first page, Kavanagh notices that "everything about the Wall means you have no choice" (Lanchester 2019, 3). This is not only applicable to Kavanagh's not wanting to serve on the Wall but also to many other aspects. The Wall does not leave the British Defenders any choice if they want to serve on the Wall; also, it stands for Others not having any choice where they want to live and embodies the irreversible Change, meaning that there no longer is any choice if the environment can be saved or not. The British people call climate development the Change, whereas people from other places have different names for it. For example, Others from the south call the Change *Kuishia*, the Swahili word for 'the ending' (Lanchester 2019, 82). "The reference to the Global South in the Swahili word underpins the novel's exploration of different border temporalities. Whereas life in Great Britain still functions on a level of early twenty-first-century normalcy […] the Global South has already experienced its "ending" and is now living in post-apocalyptic times" (Sandrock 2020, 170).

In Lanchester's novel, the Breeders exemplify the change of mindset that is part of the conflicts described in *The Wall*. Procreation socially no longer is popular, as "people don't want to Breed, because the world is such a horrible place" (Lanchester 2019, 35). Kavanagh depicts this development as an idea that spread after the Change, as people are responsible for the conditions that make people starve, drown, die, or live desperate lives, and therefore no more humans should be made (Lanchester 2019, 35). Despite this internalized conception, people offer to become Breeders and therefore receive benefits such as a shorter serving on the Wall or paid accommodation by the government. As Kavanagh himself notices, "[i]t's a paradox" (Lanchester 2019, 34). Britain needs people to watch the Wall in order to stop Others coming over it, but as people do not want to procreate any longer, the ruling elite inside The Wall offer special benefits to people who become so-called Breeders.

One of the effects of the conflict and violence depicted in *The Wall* is the legalisation of slavery, represented by the people called Help. If Others manage to get over the Wall, they can choose to become property of the state and work without salary (cf. Lanchester 2019, 148). Thereby, the people are othered and only defined by their working status.

> I'd never really thought about Help before, either having or being it, and the linked question of what their lives had been like before and after the Change, and the journeys they had made to get here, and how they had got over the Wall, and what it had been like to be among the Others and now to be Help. I could just about imagine burning sand, a huge yellow sun close overhead, salt water stinging in cuts, the weak being left behind, the bitter tastes of exile and loss, the longing for safety, the incandescent desperation and grief driving you onwards. … no, I couldn't really imagine. And yet here they were. (Lanchester 2019, 80)

Kavanagh reflects on the frontier that is created between different groups of people and shapes their ways of thinking. Whittle notices that "the execution and subjugation of climate refugees is upheld by a social structure that is based on pre-existing inequities of wealth both nationally and internationally (Whittle 2021, 89). The Change influences living conditions; however, the social hierarchy between privileged and unprivileged continues to exist. This marks another frontier within the British society. The leading elite only realises what the Change really means when this frontier is broken down. For example, this is illustrated when the baby politician James is also put out to sea (Lanchester 2019, 186).

The main character Kavanagh overcomes the mentioned frontiers internally and externally by recognizing the complexity of the world when he is put out to sea. Thereby, another obvious effect created by the conflicts in the novel is the loss of home. Others lose their home, as their countries no longer exist. Additionally, the concept of home also changes for the people who live in the allegedly safe Britain. "Home: it didn't just seem as if home was a long way away, or a long time ago, it actually felt as if the whole concept of home was strange, a thing you used to believe in, an ideology you'd once been passionate about but had now abandoned" (Lanchester 2019, 54). Referring to home as a concept and an ideology shows that there is no humanity and no emotional bonding to the living space left in a secluding system.

Concluding, John Lanchester's *The Wall* negotiates frontiers of different kinds by depicting alterity in many forms. Thereby, "[i]t enters global debates about rebordering processes, mass migration, environmental change, biometric surveillance, and the role of the nation-state vis-à-vis contemporary global crisis" (Sandrock 2020, 164). The colonial system of othering leads to a conflict-loaded society that fails to cope with environmental crises and human migration movements. "Through this literary approach to borders *The Wall* offers an entry point into thinking about the shifting dynamics between geophysical space and narratives of difference" (Sandrock 2020, 167). These insuperable borders lead to the violent conflicts that dominate the plot of the novel. Overall, the depiction of frontiers and conflicts

shows a crucial aspect of ecocriticism and migration as it highlights the structural patterns that determine both fields.

4.5 Moving Home in Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*

In contrast to the previously analysed novels, *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King mainly deals with a movement home and questions of belonging in connection to environmental change and degradation. The novel is set in Toronto, where the CEO Dorian Asher of the agricultural company Domidion lives and works in Samaritan Bay, a small coast town that has been severely affected by chemical pollution and is/becomes home to the main characters Gabriel Quinn, a former scientist of Domidion with Indigenous heritage, Mara Reid, an artist, also with Indigenous roots, Nicholas Crisp, Sonny, and the dog Soldier. After Samaritan Bay was polluted by the chemical *Green Sweep*, which was developed by Gabriel during his time at Domidion, many inhabitants died or got sick, leaving the town almost abandoned. The most affected area is the reserve Smoke River, the former home to Gabriel's and Mara's family, who died from the chemicals. The reserve was evacuated and is since uninhabited.

The novel's two main migration movements centre around Samaritan Bay. After the disaster of *Green Sweep*, the inhabitants flee from their polluted homes or are displaced by the government. "[T]he government had forced the surviving families off the reserve. For their own safety, the officials had said. And for their own safety, the families had been relocated to Saskatchewan and Manitoba, to communities as far away from Samaritan Bay as possible" (King 2014, 156). This displacement of Indigenous people alludes to other forms of displacement in the past, although here people are moved for their safety and survival. "Spatial regulations through which Indigenous peoples were displaced from their lands or relocated to reserves point to a colonial violence which is also replicated in present-day state politics of resource management, all undergirded by a discourse on progress that situates settlers as civilized and Indigenous as uncivilized" (Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 4). The experience of displacement itself is not dealt with in the King's novel; instead, the effects are described in detail, which after the evacuation of the reserve, leave behind an empty town. "The abandoned houses, the empty trailers, the deserted community centre, the solitary water tower. Without the people, none of these places had any meaning" (King 2014, 74). Samaritan Bay is depicted as an "authentic Aboriginal Ghost Town" (King 2014, 99). The atmosphere of emptiness is accompanied by a lack of people. So, in the town of Samaritan

Bay only a few people remain, and most shops are closed down (King 2014, 101f/158). "How can everything be so empty? The cupboards. The refrigerator. The motel. The town. The beach. Empty, empty, empty" (King 2014, 353). This shows that the displacement of the people from the reserve is depicted through the perspective of the remaining people who live in an empty and lonely town. Thus, Eguíbar-Holgado (2022) recognizes the subject of exile and displacement (5) in the form of an Indigenous diaspora (Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 2). However, the experience of the people who were displaced is told through an outward perspective. Still, it is "important to pay attention to stories about Indigenous experiences of mobility, migration and displacement, so as to redress limiting narratives that situate Indigenous peoples as necessarily outside transnational or diasporic paradigms" (Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 3). This part of the novel deals with the aspects of diaspora described in theory in chapters 3.1 and 3.5.

The other central migration movement deals with a return home as a reverse movement to the above-described displacement. This form of migration is described through the eyes of Gabriel and Mara returning, as well as through the perspective of Crisp and Sonny who remained at Samaritan Bay. "But the reserve was still band land. The families would return. Over time, they would find their way home" (King 2014, 156). Mara comes back from Toronto to live in the house in which she grew up and is the first to really return to the reserve (cf. King 2014, 361). Mara's way of coping with the environmental disaster at Samaritan Bay and the death of her family is through art. By painting the people who once lived in the reserve, Mara commemorates them but also raises awareness for the injustice that is happening. She hangs the portraits on the doors of the empty houses, which Gabriel remarks by comparing her action of nailing her art on the wooden doors of the reserve to Martin Luther (King 2014, 281). This small form of protest stands for reestablishing Indigenous rights and the revitalization of Indigenous culture in the reserve. This is not only important for the few Indigenous people in the novel, but also for non-Indigenous inhabitants of the town. Sonny sees a girl with long black hair in town and immediately mistakes her for an Indigenous girl and hopes for them to return to the reserve: "An Indian. […] The beginning of days. The Indians have arrived. Soon the birds of the air and the fish of the sea and the animals, big and small, will come home, two by two. And then the people. All the people who had left will return with glad tidings of comfort and joy" (King 2014, 104). This image refers to Noah's ark in the bible as a sign of hope and survival. Thus, the return of Indigenous people to their former homes means hope for other people as well. Crisp sees the home movements as a form of beginning anew. "They were all here now. Mara, Soldier, and

this Gabriel. So, it had begun" (King 2014, 85). "Everyone comes home […] Trust an old traveller on that. In the end, we all comes [sic] home" (King 2014, 108). Coming back to their places of origin depicts the return migration and connected feelings of attachment to a place described in chapter 3.5.

By coming to Samaritan Bay, Gabriel returns to his roots. He has not lived in this place himself, but as it was his family's home, he has a connection to the place. Although Gabriel initially does not believe in relationship and home, something makes him stay at Samaritan Bay. "Why did everyone put so much stock in relationships? People were like the universe. Expanding. That was a human condition. Moving away. Babies moved away from their mothers. Children moved away from their parents. […]" (King 2014, 186). Gabriel cannot feel at home in Samaritan Bay because of his guilt (King 2014, 340). "Gabriel understands environmental devastation through his own experience with loss and guilt that arguably transcends Western/non-Western and colonizer/colonized binaries, though he is also attentive to them" (Morrison 2018, 47). Still, in the end, he finds reconciliation and home at Samaritan Bay and moves to the reserve (King 2014, 517). "We do see Gabriel returning to his community and its spiritual and storytelling practices; this return represents the possibility of partnership between Indigenous and Western science that could lead to solutions to a number of climate problems" (Morrison 2018, 49). Gabriel's return to the reserve stands at the end of his active process of finding home and negotiating feelings of belonging (cf. chapter 3.5) and serves as a catharsis for his guilt of polluting his homeland.

Another migration issue that is dealt with is depicted by the Taiwanese family that by chance lands in Samaritan Bay after being shipwrecked (King 2014, 433ff). Gabriel saves the family from the ocean, describing them as "sea people. The first people. The ones who had come from the ocean when the world was new. The long black hair. The fierce eyes. They had heard his song, and they had come to be with him at his dying" (King 2014, 9). In his attempt to commit suicide, Gabriel cannot allocate the people in the sea and mistakes them for ancestral beings that relate to an indigenous creation story and his Indigenous origins. Also, Sonny mistakes a Taiwanese girl for a mythical being. "She's one of the Indians who died. A lost Indian. A sad ghost who is trying to find her way home. And the dog is her guide" (King 2014, 199). "The Taiwanese thus shift from myth to real slowly over the course of the novel, as they begin to make a life for themselves after being wrecked ashore, becoming refugees of a global capitalist system devoid of empathy" (Morrison 2018, 52). The Taiwanese family represents a migration story of Indigenous peoples who settle the land, as well as the story of a family who leaves their country and reaches a possible new

home by boat. When they arrive at Samaritan Bay, the family hides in the empty reserve out of fear of being arrested (King 2014, 435). When they are still hiding from the people of Samaritan Bay and live in the reserve secretly, Mara states that they should know that they are not welcome (King 2014, 302). This hints at the experiences many migrants have of having to hide from the local population and not being welcome in their new country. However, when Mara and the others get to know the family, they are welcomed into the community and find a new home at the motel of Samaritan Bay (King 2014, 495). "Perhaps this connection [between colonization histories and multiethnicity] implies that King's Taiwanese refugees might understand the relationship between Indigenous North Americans and European settlers" (Morrison 2018, 51). Again, the process of finding home and belonging is successful by overcoming traumatic experiences of diaspora and difference (cf. chapter 3.5).

Another crucial point for the notion of home and overcoming diaspora from an Indigenous perspective is revivance (cf. chapter 3.5), in which Indigenous perspectives, storytelling, and the inclusion of their culture form the basis. The story of *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky* is an Indigenous creation story that plays an essential role in King's novel. It connects the topics of migration and ecocriticism through an Indigenous perspective. The complete story is told by Crisp during his birthday party in the natural hot springs near the reservation (King 2014, 222ff), after asking Mara for permission to tell the story, so as not to appropriate the story from a member of the indigenous community and noticing that "[i]t's a story that comes with the land, and the two are forever wedded" (King 2014, 222). Hence, Morrison notes that there is a "balance between retelling different cultural stories without appropriating Indigenous myth, and this emphasis speaks to [King's] larger concern with balancing cultural sovereignty and community partnership" (Morrison 2018, 53). The story is about a woman who digs a hole and falls into it, falling into the sky, and landing on Earth, which consists only of water and water creatures. Birds put her on the back of a turtle where she can survive. However, as she is pregnant with twins, the space does not suffice for more than one, and she sets a diving contest for the animals on the earth to bring back mud from the bottom of the ocean. When one animal succeeds, she puts the mud ball on the back of the turtle; through song, the ball grows into Earth. The twins work on the Earth, the right-handed twin creating all the easy and convenient and the left-handed twin creating all the complicated parts, so that "the world were complete and perfect" (King 2014, 236), kept in balance. The story, which narrates the creation of Turtle Island, the Indigenous name for North America (cf. Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 2), hence is about a harmonious co-existence of

people and animals in the natural environment and the settlement of the Indigenous woman and her twins on the newly created Earth. Consequently, it "acknowledges the interconnections between humans, non-humans, and the natural elements, fostering respect and responsibility for the preservation of ecological balance" (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 133).

Crisp tells the story in a very lively and interactive way, which alludes to oral traditions of storytelling in Indigenous culture (cf. King 2014, 244). Overall, *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky* lends itself to an environmental theme in that it emphasizes both humans' responsibility to the earth and the precarious balance of creation and destruction" (Morrison 2018, 50). Also, it takes into account that storytelling is an important element of the Anishinaabe culture (Ganz 2018, 12). "King draws heavily on Indigenous storytelling practices, which allow for stories to change over time; such stories discourage unifying and implacable moralism, and they do not simply prescribe ways of living and being in the world. The Back of the Turtle exemplifies how storytelling as a method of dissemination of cultural ideas might inform intersectional politics" (Morrison 2018, 45). These aspects highlight how the depiction of Indigenous place sense fosters aspects of revivance by including them in the general discourse (cf. chapter 3.5). Furthermore, the creation story promotes community from an indigenous understanding, including humans, animals, and the natural environment (cf. chapter 3.5). This shows a form of "storytelling with political significance when envisioning the possibilities for inter-community solidarity in the age of environmental instability, suggesting that the sharing of stories can build solidarity" (Morrison 2018, 46). "Despite their similarities as creation stories, the Judeo-Christian legend of Eden and the Anishinaabe Skywoman story nevertheless have little in common: they present competing views of nature and humanity's place in the world" (Rhoads 2019, 131). Whereas in the biblical creation story, which is the foundation for many Western ideologies, the human is superior to the rest of the world, the Indigenous creation story emphasises the interconnectedness between everything.

In the novel, the major aspects of the movement back home are the revitalization of Indigenous culture and the connections to environmentalism that stand for community and belonging. Gabriel feels responsible for what happened in Samaritan Bay: "I'm the author of all that destruction" (King 2014, 337). His guilt drives him to several suicide attempts (King 2014, 6/445). Although they are described in a rather humorous way, they show an important change in Gabriel's mindset: "Gabriel's preparations for self-annihilation actually signal his reconciliation and reconnection with his ancestral beliefs, symbolically represented by the items that he takes with him as he walks into the ocean" (Fraile-Marcos

2020, 132f). Gabriel belongs to the Anishinaabe (King 2014, 110) and grew up with Indigenous culture and traditions, for example, he used to go to Indian Days (King 2014, 119) or to play drums and sing (King 2014, 120). Gabriel's parents both come from a reservation and even if they did not find it easy, they have a strong attachment to their places and people (King 2014, 315/417). However, he has not felt as belonging to this culture and community completely. For instance, "[h]e doesn't look Indian" (King 2014, 110) and even is attacked for his different looks (King 2014, 314) so that he grows up between the discrimination of Indigenous people (King 2014, 216),[16] as well as being discriminated against for not looking like an Indian (King 2014, 110). He used to like aspects of Indigenous culture but was seeking something more. "Gabriel had liked singing at the powwows […]. But he was never comfortable. He knew that, when other people saw him at the drum, they didn't see an Indian. His skin was pale. His hair was brown. […] And he had gotten tired of having to explain" (King 2014, 120). Furthermore, as a young adult, he finds it difficult to unite the Indigenous lifestyle with his deep understanding of science: "His world was a world of facts, of equations, of numbers. His family's world was made up of connections and emotions" (King 2014, 184). He feels the infringement of Indigenous lifestyle and scientific explanations of the world. He chooses science as his way: "Science was supposed to have been the answer. World hunger. Disease. Energy. Security. Commerce. Biology would save the world. Geology would fuel the future. Physics would make sense of the universe. At one time, science had been Gabriel's answer to everything. […] He had mistaken the enterprise completely, had seen only the questions, and had ignored the obvious answers. […] Very much too late" (King 2014, 446f). His family has already died, when Gabriel realizes that science is not the ultimate answer to everything, and he changes his perspective. "Instead of addressing environmental problems, Western science—i.e., agricultural science's GreenSweep, a satirical allusion to greenwashing combined with Roundup—will soon cause (another) apocalypse with Gabriel as its unwitting architect" (Morrison 2018, 49). Thereby, the mismatch of science and environmental questions does not only touch Gabriel's life but stands as an example of the suppression of other cultures in general: "technological revolution that consolidated Western supremacy, was also instrumental in the suppression of other knowledges and the social groups from which they emerged" (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 126).

[16] Gabriel´s father gets killed by a racist white man, who in the trial is found not guilty for murdering him (King 2014, 256).

Generally, these aspects made Gabriel lose his connections to both, people and science. “Maybe that was Gabriel’s problem. Maybe he didn’t have a community, didn’t have anyone to anchor him to life. People weren’t single, autonomous entities. They were part of a larger organism” (King 2014, 189). At Samaritan Bay, Gabriel realizes that he somehow still has a connection to his Indigenous self that he is not ready to discard (King 2014, 206). He thinks about what makes people stay in a place or leave and how this influences them (King 2014, 337). Also, he begins to think about what home and belonging mean to him. Gabriel sees home as an illusion: “Home wasn’t a place. At best, it was a shifting illusion, a fiction you created to mask the fact that, in the end, you were alone in the world” (King 2014, 311). In contrast, Mara defines it as a place where she comes to stay (King 2014, 249). When she moves back to her home, the place where she grew up, she is at peace (King 2014, 375). In spite of the two characters’ different notions of home, they both had the impulse to leave home and experience something different. When she was younger, she wanted to go to France to study art (King 2014, 127). Her family was not happy about her plan to leave home (King 2014, 153), as they see this as a form of losing connection to the Indigenous community and home. Mara survives The Ruin[17] because at that time she lives in Toronto (King 2014, 248). When she returns to Samaritan Bay, she has to live with the knowledge that she only survived because she left her home and her community. What is interesting is King’s negotiation of concepts of home and belonging from the perspectives of two characters from a similar background that evolve contrasting ideas, but at the same time share many ideas. “Stories of Indigenous diasporas do voice a complex relationship to the (home)land and negotiate belonging in contexts of alienation, spatial and ideological, marked by past and ongoing colonial policies” (Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 3). In the end, despite the dramatic outcomes of the GreenSweep disaster, Gabriel becomes a part of the Samarita Bay community. This shows in which ways even the polluted and destroyed place is part of his identity and creates feelings of belonging (cf. chapter 3.5).

In King’s novel, environmental degradation and its effects play an essential role, as has already been shown by its impact on migration. At the beginning of the novel, Gabriel disappears from his work at Domidion, and in the search for him, the company’s security finds that he has written on all the walls of his house, creating a list of human-caused environmental disasters (King 2014, 23). What appears to be the work of a madman functions as a mirror to Gabriel’s conscience, showing that he feels responsible for the

[17] The Ruin is another name for the GreenSweep disaster that killed or injured many of the inhabitants of Samaritan Bay and in the reserve and destroyed the environment.

disaster that his invention GreenSweep has created. Furthermore, it highlights that the novel's fictional disasters at Samaritan Bay and Athabasca River, blend into an endless list of real disasters[18] that could fill the walls of a house, illustrating the threatening existence of humankind. The environmental disaster at Samaritan Bay is referred to as That One Bad Day (King 2014, 27) or The Ruin (King 2014, 34). It killed or displaced many people in that area and altered the whole environment (cf. King 2014, 248). Flora and fauna vanished: "The weasels were gone now, along with the birds and the fish and the other animals. And the turtles. Each year the turtles had returned to the beach to lay their eggs. […] All gone" (King 2014, 47). The image of the eggs that are laid by the turtles stresses the affectedness that goes beyond one generation. The destruction not only affects the land but also reaches into the ocean: "At one time, the lower reaches of the Apostles had been covered with orange starfish, black mussels, and purple urchins, […] But not now. Now all that remained of the community were the bleached bodies of barnacles still bound to the rock" (King 2014, 4f). The environmental pollution by GreenSweep has left nothing alive, not even in the ocean. Interestingly, the different ocean creatures are also described as community. This highlights the animals' belonging to this element in notions of place and home.

The GreenSweep disaster was human-caused, as a series of human mistakes had led to it. A manager of Domidion decided to use the unlicenced chemical GreenSweep to clear the thick underbrush where a pipeline was to be built (King 2014, 320). Additionally, the dilution of the chemical was too high, and hence, it killed everything, creating an environmental nightmare (King 2014, 322). "GreenSweep had carved a path of destruction all the way to the coast. The surprise was just how virulent the bacterium had remained even after it had been diluted with salt water. It had destroyed all life in the bay and pushed the kill zone out into the ocean some twenty kilometres" (King 2014, 324). Similar to the GreenSweep disaster, the spill at the Athabasca River could have been prevented. The ponds that broke and let the toxins flow into the river were used as evaporation ponds to process tar-sand oil and, as the production was higher than the ponds' capacity, they failed (cf. King 2014, 288). The extent to which this disaster develops means that "[t]he spill will kill everything in the river. In less than a week, the toxins will join the Mackenzie River system and everything will wind up in the Beaufort sea. […] Within a month, the pollution will reach the Arctic Circle" (King 2014, 289f). This demonstrates the connectedness of the

[18] Among the examples are Deepwater Horizon (King 2014, 289) or the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear facility (King 2014, 324): Panda states that by including disasters of atomic bombs and related issues, King hints to the fact that the Los Alamos laboratory and the test site in Alamogordo, New Mexico, occupied ancestral lands of the Navajo and Apache, and hence, he connects the nuclear apocalypse with the existential threat of climate change (Panda 2020, 336).

worldwide water system and the extension of pollution. Both disasters could have been prevented and were only possible because of the company's greed for profit. As the Athabasca disaster gets worse, Dorian notices that the most affected are Indigenous communities (King 2014, 437). Here again, there is a parallel to the GreenSweep disaster in which many people from the reservation died. Domidion's solution, however, is to declare that in general, the mortality rate in Indigenous communities is higher than in white communities, making it difficult to determine whether the people are dying because of the spill or the lifestyle (King 2014, 437). This shows that Indigenous peoples are often affected more severely by environmental degradation and how this environmental racism is turned into the locals' personal responsibility. Ganz notes that Indigenous people are strongly affected by environmental degradation and contamination which represents an ongoing story that keeps repeating, as the examples of Minamata poisoning in Japan and the poisoning of the Grassy Narrows reserve in Canada show (Ganz 2018, 5). Thereby, economic advantages are favoured over the health and welfare of the vulnerable population (Ganz 2018, 6). This links the central features of the novel to the concept of environmental racism (cf. Huggan and Tiffin 2009, 4). Summarizing, King combines three main narratives of environmental degradation, namely historical industrial accidents and the two fictional ongoing disasters at Samaritan Bay and Athabasca (Ganz 2018, 10). "The narrative's ecological catastrophe begins at Kali Creek (appropriately named after the Hindu goddess of death and liberation), traverses to the Smoke River (perhaps alluding to the importance of offering tobacco to the Creator in many Indigenous traditions), and then pours into Samaritan Bay (referencing the Christian parable of "The Good Samaritan"), linking a diverse range of religious and cultural traditions through both water and the trauma of "The Ruin"" (Rhoads 2019, 124). By including different religions in the narrative, King again highlights the connectedness of the people, as no religion is spared of the destruction.

As the novel's title suggests, turtles play an essential role in *The Back of the Turtle*. They nest in Samaritan Bay as the warm currents offer a good breeding habitat, despite this place being far in the north (King 2014, 159). In The Ruin, the turtles die and have not returned: "the only sign that the turtles had ever been to the bay were the bleached skeletons that piled up on shore after each storm" (King 2014, 159). Thus, the turtles represent the ecological catastrophe as well as the hope of re-establishing a healthy environment. "It would depend on the turtles. […] If the turtles returned, so would the people" (King 2014, 159). Furthermore, the turtle is a symbol of North America, as has been shown previously in the passage on the creation story of The Woman Who Fell from the Sky. This directly

connects the turtle to notions of home. It can be interpreted as a natural home(land) that offers humans a place to stay, as in the story. Gabriel's sister Lilly calls him a turtle when he leaves home, as he carries everything, he needs with him like a turtle carries its house (King 2014, 259). This idea of Gabriel having his home in a sense of safety and belonging with him however is somewhat overridden when one considers his suicide plans and his initial feelings of being lost. Here again, the concept of home as a safe place is questioned. As the turtle's home (their shell) cannot save them from environmental-induced extinction, homes cannot save humans from the realities of climate crisis and environmental pollution. Instead, natural balances need to be reestablished for humans and non-humans to find places of belonging.

The direct influences of nature degradation and pollution can be observed in places like Samaritan Bay or the Athabasca River; however, there is another layer to these observations from a scientific and economic point of view, which is told through the eyes of Dorian. "Before the influx of fresh water from the melting Arctic ice cap had begun to slow the ocean's thermohaline conveyor, and global weather patterns had begun to shift. […] It wasn't a surprise. It had been predicted, the matter studied until the public had gotten tired of being told what was going to happen. Yer now it was happening […]" (King 2014, 11). On the one hand, this passage demonstrates the bare scientific facts and predictability of climate change; on the other hand, it points at the reactions of society, which often, like Dorian Asher, lives far away from the direct impacts of climate change or pollution; this is in contrast to Gabriel or Mara, who come to see the destruction at first hand. Hence, climate change and pollution are depicted from a distance, an outward perspective that focuses on facts rather than effects. "Dorian closed the magazine and began counting the barren trees along the lake, trees that would never come green again. It was our damn fault, he reminded himself, not that finding blame in the obvious was of any value. Or consolation" (King 2014, 14). "North American Norm didn't give a damn about the environment. […] Spoil a river somewhere in Humdrum, Alberta? Good luck getting Norm off the sofa" (King 2014, 422). Dorian knows of human's but especially his own role in the environmental destruction, still he does not bear the responsibility. The lack of corporate responsibilities is also shown when American bacteria are found in China, and Dorian claims that as soon as a virus or bacterium was sold and shipped around the world, Domidion could not keep track of it, so it is not the corporation's fault what happens with its products (King 2014, 18). Furthermore, agribusiness has already altered the natural environment to the extent that agriculture depends on companies such as Domidion. "Most of the soil in the world was exhausted. […]

Years of pesticide use and agricultural stress had stripped the land of all its nutrients and its disease-spreading bacteria, fungi, protozoa, and nematodes. The only way these soils could support any sort of growth was through the extensive use of artificial fertilizers" (King 2014, 43). These descriptions contain a certain resignation towards the alterations of nature that have taken place. "Nothing to be done about the spills. Shit happens. […] for much of the last century, sawmills and farms along the way had been dumping furans, chlorinated dioxins, and phosphorus into the watershed. The river would clean itself. That's what rivers did" (King 2014, 303). What worries Dorian more are the economic annoyances that come with a spill into the river (King 2014, 303). Instead of taking responsibility for their products and actions, corporations like Domidion focus on their image and on how to keep bad news out of the media. Domidion tries to hide environmental damage from the media (King 2014, 114/135), lies about their involvement (King 2014, 194), or lies or invents conspiracy theories about activists sabotaging their projects as a form of protest (King 2014, 306/439f). What seems to be more important than the actual damage to nature is its perception by the media and the public. "In 2008, more than 1,600 ducks had been killed when they landed on one of the tailing ponds. In 2010, another 350 ducks died in the same manner. These were the public figures. In actual fact, Dorian knew, the numbers were much higher" (King 2014, 113). This common capitalistic procedure that exploits natural resources and leads to the maximisation of companies' profits illustrates the real price of natural resources.

The capitalist ignorance towards environmental problems is also shown by the way in which toxic waste is disposed of. The *Anguis* is one of Domidion's ships that carry toxic waste and biohazards in order to dump them in the ocean or take them to "poor countries and desperate governments who needed the money" (King 2014, 18f). As toxic chemicals are not wanted in countries like Canada, they simply export them to other countries. "Domidion had initially struck a deal with Haiti. But by the end of the first week, the barge had become such a powerful symbol of what was wrong with North American culture that not even the Haitians were willing to take it. Up and down the coast the *Anguis* went, an orphan looking for a home" (King 2014, 19). Hence, in the case of the *Anguis*, plans do not work out, and the dangerous ship cannot be left for someone else to manage. This raises attention to the issue of exploitation of the global South and pollution of countries, such as Haiti, by toxic waste from the Global North. This form of ecological imperialism, as described by Huggan and Tiffin represents a systemic mistreatment of nature and humans (cf. Huggan/Tiffin 2009, 4). Social injustices between the Global North and the Global South are directly connection to questions of environmental justice. Despite the publicity the

Anguis gets, the problem cannot be solved, but instead, the biohazards, among them 10,000 litres of GreenSweep (King 2014, 441), float on the ocean in constant danger of creating an environmental disaster in the ocean. Dorian even thinks that an accidental sinking would be the best possible outcome, taking the *Anguis* "at the bottom of the ocean, where it belonged" (King 2014, 20). At the end of the novel, the ship is washed onto the shore of Samaritan Bay, again reminding the reader that the biohazards have not disappeared but could repeat the disaster at Samaritan Bay—even in the same place. In a communal act, Crisp, Mara, Gabriel, and the people who returned to Samaritan Bay push the *Anguis* away from the shore—away from their old and new home (King 2014, 498ff). Crisp motivates everybody to help push the ship off the shore because they do not have much time (King 2014, 498). The time factor refers to the tide coming to help move the ship away but can also be interpreted as the time running out to save nature from disaster as the GreenSweep disaster. "*The Back of the Turtle* provides political education through storytelling, highlighting environmental racism in Canada, and the need for people of European descent to act as allies/accomplices in Indigenous-led resistance to environmental racism" (Morrison 2018, 45). Hence, community and cooperation play an important role for nature and people. This again includes Indigenous perspectives of including humans and non-humans in understandings of community (cf. chapter 3.5).

The Back of the Turtle contrasts the perspective of Domidion with indigenous relationships to nature. For example, Mara holds onto an old family ritual of touching the river and sprinkling tobacco into it as "a reminder of the relationship that human beings had with the world" (King 2014, 45). What the novel also shows is the ignorance of the rest of the population towards Indigenous culture and their connection to nature. This is shown when, in a school paper, Mara writes about her family ritual and her teacher asks if this is a way that Indian people worship their water god (King 2014, 45). When Mara explains to her that there is no water god in their culture, the teacher gives her lower grades (King 2014, 46). Moreover, when hearing of the story of *The Woman Who Fell from the Sky*, the school principal tells the girls' mother that such stories were inappropriate in an educational setting, instead suggesting that an appropriate creation story is "about that naked couple in that garden" (King 2014, 46). What can be observed in this passage, as in others, is the humorous way in which King deals with topics such as indigeneity and postcolonialism. Panda (2020) notices that the novel "raises the stakes by allowing Indigenous, postcolonial, and postmodern humor with an ecocritical perspective" (326). "[H]umor is the best option for addressing something as alarmingly serious, even apocalyptic, as climate change, a number

of contemporary writers suggest that humor may, indeed, be a highly effective way to raise awareness about assaults on nature" (Panda 2020, 324). What should be noticed is that while King highlights the connection to nature of many Indigenous people, he breaks this image in the character of Gabriel, who destroys a big ecosystem. In this manner, he challenges stereotypical representations of Indigenous people.

Analogous to the people returning to their homes in Samaritan Bay, nature returns. "The Ruin had pushed life away. Now life was pushing back, filling the vacuum as it has always filled the empty spaces in the world" (King 2014, 344). Step by step, nature finds its way back to Samaritan Bay. First, a bird is seen (King 2014, 382); then, a turtle returns (King 2014, 429) and lays her eggs at Samaritan Bay (King 2014, 487). When observing the turtle, Crisp notes: "But she don't need our help. It's us what needs hers" (King 2014, 487). This statement alludes to the idea that nature does not need humans to survive, but humans need nature. Parallel to the land, the life in the water returns, for example, crabs are found (King 2014, 472). "The ocean was coming back to life" (King 2014, 473). In the end, there are increased signs of life—fish, birds, and turtles hatching from the eggs (King 2014, 517). This leaves a sense of hope for the recuperation of nature towards the end of *The Back of the Turtle*.

All these examples point to the importance of animal agency. This is continuously portrayed through the dog Soldier, who represents a character just like the human characters in the novel. His interests and actions are described throughout the narrative. Soldier has concerns about environmental problems (King 2014, 508). "But Soldier had no interest in chasing sticks. It was almost as though he had more important things to do and wasn't about to waste his time with such a silly activity" (King 2014, 120). Crisp recognizes Soldier's intelligence and understands his forms of communication, therefore the dog has a similar agency as other characters in King's novel. As early as in the prologue, something happens that Soldier predicted (King 2014, 1) Also, Soldier and Crisp have a special connection as they save each other from drowning in the ocean (King 2014, 387). Gabriel talks to the dog as he does to other characters (cf. King 2014, 4) and recognises their companionship. "But the only person waiting for him, when he limped back to the beach, was the dog" (King 2014, 10). What is noticeable is that Soldier does not speak directly, but his thoughts are always translated as assumptions by the humans that surround him. On the one hand, this represents realistic animal-human communication; on the other hand, this acknowledges that humans cannot know what animals really think, rendering the dog a medium for human empathy with nature. In parts, Soldier is depicted as a mythical figure with special abilities.

“Soldier was ancient, and there was something about the way the soft coastal light played on the dog’s body that made Gabriel wonder if Soldier wasn’t already dead, if what was following him around this dreary landscape of water and wind was a ghost” (King 2014, 121). Underlining this, Crisp ascribes a special power to Soldier. “Dogs are the messengers of the universe. […] On the morning of The Ruin, it were Master Dog what set the alarm, barking and howling for all the good it did. On that day, the Smoke ran green and sparkling down to the sea. On that day, everything died” (King 2014, 142). Additionally, Soldier seems to have a lot of knowledge, as “this dog knew stories that Sonny has never heard, strange stories about women who fall out of the sky, about creatures similar to dogs who can change their shape, about birds who steal fire, and hero twins who fight monsters” (King 2014, 146). King creates a figure that mediates between nature and humans, helping them to reestablish connections.

The novel ends with an attempted murder of the Canadian prime minister, and all the environmental disasters and interests in environmental issues disappear from the media (King 2014, 505). The damage continues to spread as predicted but is ignored by the public (King 2014, 511). Domidion’s stock prices rise (King 2014, 506), Dorian enjoys his new life as a divorced man (King 2014, 512), and the *Anguis* continues to float on the ocean (King 2014, 514). This ending relativizes the positive developments and the hope this entails for humans and nature, reminding the reader how fragile the human-nature relationship is. One can observe that migration back home means hope for the main characters Mara and Gabriel and for nature itself. “[I]ndividuals and the environment are connected and both show the possibility for resilience and rebirth, in part through active participation in the process of telling the story. In all of these situations it is up to the individual and community to reclaim the story from industry and government in order to shape the future stories to celebrate the protection of the land and people” (Ganz 2018, 13). Thereby, connection and forms of belonging are driving forces in this process of gaining agency and supporting Indigenous revivance. It can be observed that “*The Back of the Turtle*’s thematic emphasis [is] on community and cooperation as a way forward for combatting environmental and ecological crises” (Rhoads 2019, 123). The novel focuses on a way into the future without ignoring exploitative and colonialist actions from the past. “Humanity’s dark past and its conflicted legacy cannot be ignored, but only by working together in a shared, diverse community can we ward off environmental destruction like “The Ruin” that devastated Samaritan Bay” (Rhoads 2019, 133). This highlights the interconnectedness of environmental topics and aspects of colonialism and migration. Furthermore, King promotes “an awareness of the

interdependence between the natural environment, humans, and other-than-human beings that is central to Indigenous epistemologies, these works contribute to the shift toward the construction of an ecology of knowledges and hold the potential for renewed decolonizing efforts, social justice, and environmental sustainability" (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 125). For this reason, King's novel can be seen as a means of revivance in which Indigenous perspectives are included in the discourse on environmentalism and migration. "The alliances and cooperation between Indigenous thinkers and Western scholars resulting from this shift find an important platform in narrative fiction and nonfiction that probe the limits, challenges, contradictions, and possibilities of Indigenous notions of kinship for the creation of ecologies of knowledge" (Fraile-Marcos 2020, 143). This call for communal cooperation prevents the problems of natural degradation, social injustices, and remnants of colonialism from being tackled. Returning home and dealing with the process of finding belonging and a sense of place provokes such community building. Therefore, the "narratives of movement, displacement, return and reunion are framed in Indigenous relational epistemologies and ontologies, pointing to survivance and a potentially thriving future" (Eguíbar-Holgado 2022, 7). The intercultural perspective opens the possibility of "changing historically racist stories of the past and telling new stories that can change the present and the future" (Ganz 2018, 12).

Overall, the analysis in this chapter has shown in which ways ecocriticism and migration are interlinked. The intersections can be traced through the various concepts that have been defined and described in chapter 3. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the connections between environmental aspects and migration, the following chapter puts the findings of this chapter into a broader context.

5. Contextuality of Ecocritical Migration in Postcolonial Fictions

This chapter reiterates the previous analysis of the literary texts, highlighting the most important points and showing what they have in common in terms of ecocriticism and migration. In order to further deal with the relevance of the interrelatedness of environmental topics and migration, some background information about the authors is put into relationship with their literary works. Also, other novels are put into the context of these considerations, functioning as further examples for literary texts that interlink the two topics. These novels include Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2006),

Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006), Tara June Winch's *The Yield* (2019), Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations* (2020), Cynan Jones' *Stillicide* (2019), Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), and Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* (2018). Primarily, each novel is compared in its regional context, but also general tendencies are demonstrated with reference to all novels covered in this thesis. By contextualising linking points of postcolonial ecocriticism and migration in a broader scope of novels, their relevance for contemporary literature will be further explained. This is important in order to embrace the complexity and diversity of the field. By including further Indigenous perspectives in each regional context, the special characteristics that account for the multifaceted interconnections of ecocriticism and migration are displayed. Also, this applies to non-Indigenous points of view or literary representations of or from the Global North that reinforce colonial structures or seek to dismantle them.

In Amitav Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies*, which was analysed in chapter 4, colonization processes and diaspora represent the most important aspects that connect ecocriticism and migration. The novel is set in the time of the Opium Wars in the 19th century and therefore refers to several historical events, such as the abolition of slavery, the opium trade, and the transportation of indentured labourers. Considering these factors in the context of new historicism demonstrates how a literary perspective can help to imagine possible details of history. Colonization practices as described in the novel alter India's nature and agriculture, bringing several societal changes. The migration movement of the indentured labourers that is evoked by the alteration of nature among other things creates a diasporic environment for the indentured labourers but also the possibility of a new and better future. Therefore, a third space comes into being in which hybrid personalities can exist. *Sea of Poppies* includes many perspectives and voices, which not only illustrates the complexity of migration history and colonialism but also highlights the importance of considering different points of view.

The Indian author Amitav Ghosh is known for his negotiation of migration and increasingly for the depiction of the climate crisis in his works. Born in Calcutta, he grew up in India, Bangladesh, and Sri Lanka (amitavghosh.com online, 2024). Ghosh studied in Delhi, Oxford, and Alexandria (amitavghosh.com online, 2024). Therefore, the Bengali author has a transcultural background. Sankaran (2023) states that "[h]is views resemble the perspectives of several other contemporary Asian authors. Unlike post-Enlightenment Western thought that emphasizes human exclusivity and the control of Nature, there is less resistance to the idea of vital materiality in Asia" (1). His special interests are the climate

crisis and the Asian perspective thereon (Sankaran 2023, 1) as well as on the political and historical developments of globalization (Sankaran 2023, 2), which also include migration. Ghosh illustrates this connection between ecological aspects and migration in *Sea of Poppies* and in non-fiction texts, such as *The Great Derangement* (2017). In this text, Ghosh criticises the colonial and imperial roots of climate change (Kaur 2023, 123). Theoretical aspects as anthropocentrism and nature-culture dualism, as explained in chapter 3 of this thesis, also represent central elements of Ghosh's theoretical considerations. Ghosh draws a connection between indigenous people and the natural world. "Natives and nonhuman Nature were subsumed under the same ideological space of passivity with 'Man' (read, European male) taking control of the natural world, mastering its waywardness, calming its savagery and pushing forward to civilize the barbarians" (Sankaran 2023, 5). Draga Alexandrou (2021) finds that there is a

> conflictual relationship created between humankind and the environment at a time of increased number of natural catastrophes such as tornadoes and hurricanes. […] As for Ghosh, even though he continues to celebrate an always desirable harmony between humans and nature, such harmony […] will only be possible in conjunction with a practice of respect towards and non-intervention in nature […]. Somewhat paradoxically, harmony with nature seems to require a separation from it. This, however, implies not a renewed nature-culture division, but a nature-culture continuum based on respect for each other's specific ways of being." (152f).

This shows that theoretical concepts influence his writing processes. "Ghosh is well aware of the key debates in the field of climate change studies and of environmental movements of the West, especially their navel-gazing Euro-Americentric perspective that continues to ignore the Global South" (Kaur 2023, 115). Ghosh recognizes the chances fictional storytelling offers for the understanding of ecocritical aspects of migration, but also for possible change. This highlights that "action on climate change needs to be invested in communal agency—in collective belief that we can, and should, act to combat the planetary crisis that threatens us. It is in this context that Ghosh argues for new, more affective modes of storytelling that appeal to the preternatural and the uncanny to arouse our collective survival instinct, which seems to have been drowned out by a smug consumerist culture that elides the reality of the climate crisis" (Kaur 2023, 115).

Ghosh's latest novel, *Gun Island*, published in 2019, is another fictional example of the intertwining of migration and ecocriticism. This novel shows how the author has evolved in making ecocritical negotiations of migration a central element of his novel. By comparison to *Sea of Poppies*, *Gun Island* includes even more aspects of migration and environmentalism and explicitly calls for action to change structures that enable and promote

displacement, destruction, and violence. The main character Deen Datta travels through India, the US, and Venice, discovering aspects of international migration history and colonization practices. Through the story and legend of the gun merchant from the 17th century, Deen reveals that aspects of migration and ecocriticism are linked by illustrating aspects of the past and contemporary times. For example, climate change-induced migration is an important aspect of the novel. On the one hand, Deen finds that migration and climatic events have already influenced people of the past. "He remembered vividly, for example, the disaster that had forced the Gun Merchant to flee his homeland: a drought so terrible that the streams, rivers and ponds had dried up and the stench of rotting fish and dead livestock had hung heavy in the air" (Ghosh 2019, 60). The aspect of climate impact in the past is also dealt with when two of the main characters listen to a talk on the Little Ice Age in Venice in the 17th century (Ghosh 2019, 135). On the other hand, these climatic irregularities are worsened by anthropogenic climate change in the present time of the novel, for example, with cyclones in the Sundarbans threatening to displace many people and altering the fertile land through salt water (Ghosh 2019, 52f). Climate change, the neglect of the natural environment, and environmental injustice affect people as well as animals. The field biologist Piya has studied dolphins in the Sundarbans for many years, tracking their migration routes and behaviour (Ghosh 2019, 101). "During the early years of Piya's research these patterns of movement had been regular and predictable. But then the tracks had begun to vary, becoming increasingly erratic; this was due, Piya believed, the changes in the composition of the waters of the Sundarbans. As sea levels rose, and the flow of fresh water diminished, salt water had begun to intrude deeper upstream, making certain stretches too saline for the dolphins" (Ghosh 2019, 101f). As a result, the dolphins had to change their behaviour and migration routes with the end effects of landing in fishing nets, being hit by boats, and finally beaching for unknown reasons (Ghosh 2019, 101f/107). *Gun Island* also deals with other environmental aspects, for example, wildfires (Ghosh 2019, 127) or high water in Venice (Ghosh 2019, 255) that not only affect nature but also humans. Thereby, Ghosh stresses the dependency of humans on the natural world.

Another example that depicts the interconnectedness of the past of the Gun Merchant and the present time of the novel is migration. Both the Gun Merchant in the 17th century as well as the characters Tipu and Rafi in the present time of the novel decide to migrate from Bangladesh and India to Venice because of environmental changes in their home country. However, their experiences deviate strongly from each other. While the Gun Merchant migrates to a cosmopolitan Venice on a prosperous journey, contemporary migration

movements to Venice of many Bangladeshis are coined by traumatic migration routes and racism. “Your Merchant was would not have been the first, or last, dark-skinned man in Venice. It was then the most cosmopolitan place in the world. Visitors from other parts of Europe always commented in how many foreigners were in Venice – including people from Levant, North Africa, Mali. That was Shakespeare set those two plays in Venice – it was the only plausible setting for characters like Shylock and Othello” (Ghosh 2019, 156). The scholar Cinta depicts the cosmopolitan Venice of the 17th century as an enriching place in which the Jewish diaspora (a reference to Shylock) and black diaspora (a reference to Othello) form part of the society. In contrast, Tipu and Rafi migrate illegally and through human trafficking have very different experiences. As early as at the beginning of the novel, the character Tipu admits earning his money by helping people to migrate through “[t]he people-moving industry […]. It’s already one of the world’s biggest and still growing fast. Turnover last year was in the billions” (Ghosh 2019, 65). Their own migration experiences are dominated by violence, abuse, and other dangers (Ghosh 2019, 209ff). When Rafi arrives in Venice, he encounters bad living and working conditions, constantly being confronted with racism (Ghosh 2019, 184f), which, for example, is depicted through anti-migration protesters shouting “Close borders now! L’Italia agli Italiani!” (Ghosh 2019, 299). This shows how the novel includes the concept of borders in different ways. Samkaria (2022) finds that “ideological and material construction of borders as fixed and totalitarian which, in the advent of (in)voluntary border-crossing and displacement are paradoxically rendered open and permeable” (27). Still, “marginalised people with less or no social mobility are constantly negotiating with borders, visualising the constructedness of borders and their own precarious destinies. Transforming international spaces into a common point of gathering, characters that meet in the Sundarbans at the start of the novel (Deen, Tipu, Rafi, and Piya) end up finding each other in Venice due to unforeseeable climate events, uncanny coincidences, and social mobility (legally and illegally)” (Samkaria 2022, 37). Within the novel’s migration processes, social justice and environmental justice are intertwined and put into relation.

Furthermore, animals are included in the depiction of migration. Parallel to the boat of human migrants arriving, migrating dolphins, as well as whales (Ghosh 2019, 284/300) and birds (Ghosh 2019, 306), are observed (Ghosh 2019, 283/293). On the one hand, this aspect of the novel shows that animals “were free to migrate from their domestic Venetian habitats to “international” habitats” (Samkaria 2022, 38). On the other hand, animal migration shows that displacement “is not reserved either for solely human members of the

global south or for nonhuman creatures of the global north. Thus, the act of crossing borders due to climate emergency is tantamount to the fact that climate change does not discriminate between geographical borders, nation-states, and living beings" (Samkaria 2022, 38). Within the context of migration, borders are blurred to highlight the overarching effects of climate change. "In locating different species and humans within the common frame of anthropogenic displacement, the text defamiliarizes colonialist discourse that conflates species and race" (Kaur 2023, 125). The inclusion of non-human agents in the novel's dealing with displacement and migration illustrates the necessity to reconsider prevailing structures.

The animal perspective holds an important role in *Gun Island*. "Gun Island argues for an alternative vision of multi-species eco-justice, where human exceptionalism is not the norm" (Kaur 2023, 116). As described before, animal migration is not only depicted through the issue of dolphin beaching but also in several other scenes (cf. also Ghosh 2019, 65). Piya's dismay when finding the pod of dolphins dead illustrates her compassion for the animals and depicts how human voice and agency can be used to speak for animals and represent their perspective. This aspect of the novel again highlights the connectedness of humans and nature. Another topic that appears in the novel is animal agency. Through the bite of a cobra (Ghosh 2019, 84), Tipu seems to be possessed by animals, snakes in particular. He gains special knowledge (Ghosh 2019, 91), has visions (Ghosh 2019, 89), and seems to communicate with animals (Ghosh 2019, 117). This influence of the snake represents animal agency, as the animal world gains a voice through Tipu. Similarly, the mythical goddess of snakes Manasa Devi pursues the Gun Merchant to create an awareness of the natural world through the animal perspective (Ghosh 2019). Samkaria (2022) observes how Ghosh includes the animalistic agency of the nonhuman world in his novel (28). This agency, however, is not limited to animals but is extended to nature in general. The topic is brought up by depicting the prevailing nature-culture dualism (cf. chapter 3.1). For example, this is illustrated through the description of the frontiers between humans and nature. "The Sundarbans are the frontier where commerce and the wilderness look each other directly in the eye; that's exactly where the war between profit and Nature is fought" (Ghosh 2019, 9). As the story evolves, this frontier gets blurred, liminal spaces are depicted, and nature becomes an agent itself in Ghosh's novel. When the character Moyna describes the impact of the cyclones in the Sundarbans, she finds that "it seemed as though both land and water were turning against those who lived in the Sundarbans" (Ghosh 2019, 53). She feels that nature has gained agency and has turned against humans. Also, the main characters hear a

story from a boy who observed a tornado hitting a house with traffickers and migrants (Ghosh 2019, 286). As a result, the traffickers are killed or overpowered, and the migrants are able to free themselves, get a boat, and continue their route of migration (Ghosh 2019, 286). The destruction the tornado causes seems purposeful—as if nature is helping the migrants to overcome the exploitative system of human trafficking. Towards the end of the novel Samkaria (2022) observes: "A severe change in the weather conditions results in the swirling of the waters and the sky and this natural disaster (storm) looms over all social actors" (38). Again, nature, here in the form of weather, becomes an agent in Ghosh's novel, eradicating human-made borders. This highlights how the novel includes the concept of the frontier also in an ideological way, as can be seen in the "disruption of manmade borders which conceptually seek to compartmentalise and retain dualisms between one and the other" (Samkaria 2022, 34). By breaking up this traditional nature-culture dualism, *Gun Island* offers a postcolonial perspective on ecocriticism and migration. "Dovetailing interconnectedness between human and nonhuman in terms of an invisible but scientifically and biologically identifiable reality (trans-corporeality) and as an invisible but inexplicably embodied experience (trans/altered consciousness) illustrates decolonial models of engagement that counter imperialist, neocolonial, and unjust practices of environmentalism" (Samkaria 2022, 34). In this respect, the novel has many parallels to King's *The Back of the Turtle*. The animal perspective is an important means for this effect. "In taking cognisance of nonhuman perspectives, Ghosh critiques anthropocentrism by inverting the gaze such that it is the nonhuman that is unleashed upon the human" (Samkaria 2022, 34). However, not only does the animal perspective create a postcolonial perspective but also the inclusion of non-Western points of view. By including the legend of the Gun Merchant and non-human perspectives, Ghosh calls attention to overthinking Euro-centrist ideas of the world. Therefore, the "shift in perspective of reading the Gun Merchant's story through Manasi Devi's eyes emerges as an act of taking cognisance of the entanglement between the materiality of the nonhuman environmental lifeworld and cultural embeddedness of environmental storytelling" (Samkaria 2022, 31). In this way, Gun Island decentres the human, highlighting the coexistence with environmental surroundings (Samkaria 2022, 31).

Summarizing the novel *Gun Island* includes several theoretical concepts that were explained in chapter 3 in order to negotiate ecocritical aspects and migration. Among them, displacement, climate change, environmental justice, and non-human agency form central points of connection. In this way, different perspectives play an essential role. "*Gun Island* tells a twin-pronged tale that links the climate catastrophe to multi-species migration and the

refugee crisis, as humans, venomous spiders, bark beetles, and sea serpents alike are displaced to new locales and habitats with disastrous consequences" (Kaur 2023, 119). Within the novel's plot, environmental justice highlights the connectedness of environmental concerns of migration. "The text masterfully brings together its ecological and social justice concerns […]" (Kaur 2023, 121). Thereby, communal aspects of humans and non-humans play an essential role. Humans, animals, and nature function as agents in Ghosh's novel. In this way, Ghosh promotes a radical kinship between species (Kaur 2023, 120). The "sight of the human and more-than-human world coming together showcases the commonality of migration as a natural phenomenon" (Kaur 2023, 127). Therefore, the novel also includes the aspect of community. Kaur states that "interspecies confluence at the end of the novel is a utopian imaginary gesturing to restorative interspecies bonds and communication" (Kaur 2023, 124). This concept of community offers an alternative way of dealing with ecocritical aspects of migration. "As the ending of *Gun Island* makes clear, Ghosh envisions an interspecies collectivity and solidarity to confront the challenges of climate change as opposed to the individualistic gloom and doom narratives that abound in Western media and literature" (Kaur 2023, 125).

Another literary example that deals with colonization practices and their impacts on nature in a similar way to Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* is Kate Grenville's novel *The Secret River* from 2006. This historical settler novel deals with Australia as Britain's penal colony, where the main character William is transported with his wife and son for a minor crime he committed. After working as a convict in Sydney Cove, New South Wales, he is freed and given a piece of land on which to live. The family, then with five children, explore their new surroundings, try to cultivate their land, and continually meet Aboriginal inhabitants of this area with whom they begin to fight over the land. The novel depicts how alterity between European settlers and Indigenous Australians creates social and environmental injustice. In the process of creating a new home after the family's involuntary migration from Europe to Australia, conflicts with the local population arise that impact the natural environment that is altered by the convicts and settlers who take over the land.

The central aspect of alterity, which is also a central element of Ghosh's novel *Sea of Poppies*, is created by descriptions that highlight the differences between Europe and Australia. The Australian landscape seems unfamiliar and strange to the convicts and settlers; therefore, "[i]t was easier to turn to the familiar, this speck of England laid out within the forest. Sydney looked foreign, but in the ways that mattered to the Thornhills it was the Thames all over again" (Grenville 2006, 84). The alterity that the settlers experience is also

mirrored in encounters between people. Therefore, otherness is also negotiated by depicting the differences between European settlers and aboriginal people. William categorises the Indigenous inhabitants into two groups: the visible ones that live in or near the European settlement (Grenville 2006, 92f) and the invisible ones that he describes as unknown silhouettes that live off and in nature (Grenville 2006, 95). In descriptions of Aboriginal people aspects of otherness and mystery play essential roles as well as fear. For example, when William meets an Indigenous person in the settlement "Thornhill felt a quick pulse of fright, then the man turned away and was gone" (Grenville 2006, 93). Although there is no reason to be scared of Aboriginal people, their anxiety increases as they are constantly othered by the Europeans. "Dick looked around the forest and piped up. Will the savages try and eat us, Da?" (Grenville 2006, 134). As the European settlers form groups and exchange ideas and goods, these irrational assumptions and racist comments become more frequent, even though by that time the main characters are in contact with Aboriginal groups that live near their homes (cf. Grenville 2006, 148ff). The othering of Indigenous people culminates in a violent conflict in which a group of Aboriginal people are poisoned by the settlers (Grenville 2006, 288ff) followed by an armed fight between the group of settlers and an Aboriginal group that ends with a massacre (Grenville 2006, 317f). Staniforth (2013) classifies this escalation as a spiralling conflict that develops from a dispute over food to a massacre (6). One of the participants in the massacre is the character Smasher, who starkly represents violent colonial actions on people and nature. "At one end of the spectrum is Smasher Sullivan, whose brutality to Aborigines is matched by his brutality to the land he occupies […]" (Staniforth 2013, 4). His extreme forms of settler colonial violence affect all species, including humans, animals, and plants. "So much burning had left the place stripped of every tree and bush" (Grenville 2006, 239). Violent actions that also play an important role in *Sea of Poppies*, as well as in the novels *Oil on Water* and *The Wall*, highlight in which ways alterity can exacerbate in the context of ecocritical migration.

In the depiction of Europeans, the othering of nature prevails. When the Thornhills move to 'their own' piece of land, they change nature by clearing the forest, creating fields and a yard (Grenville 2006, 154). Thereby, notions of home are put into relationship with nature. At the end of the novel, William observes 'his' piece of land resembling a piece of land in England. "Looking down at his estate it was possible to imagine it a version of England" (Grenville 2006, 345). "Within its boundary she made something domestic: the fireplace […], the water barrel […]" (Grenville 2006, 154). This shows how the natural environment is altered to fit European concepts. As the text suggests, a boundary is created

between humans and nature. The frontier not only plays an important role in othering that has been described previously but constantly appears as a means of drawing lines between people, species, or worldviews. This is marked clearly by the title of the fifth part of the novel: “Drawing a line” (Grenville 2006, 245). William tries to cultivate European plants in the Australian soil (Grenville 2006, 154/265). This attempt at adapting the Australian country to European living standards is a form of trying to overcome the otherness of nature. In contrast, Indigenous people live in harmony with nature. They know which roots and fruit to eat and how to hunt animals, also by using traditional knowledge of burning the land (Grenville 2006, 203/298). An old Indigenous man even offers to pass some of his knowledge on to William. “He pointed at the roots and spoke again. Finally, he took a bite of one of them. Chewed, swallowed, nodded. Even with the words as meaningless to Thornhill as the cry of a bird, he understood” (Grenville 2006, 203). William reacts with refusal to this offer and invitation: “Monkey food, I would call that, mate, but good luck to you” (Grenville 2006, 203). William cannot accept other forms of living that blur the lines of the nature-culture dualism. One of the reasons for the previously mentioned violent conflict at the end of the novel is the burning of William’s corn patch. “That corn patch was the first thing they had made, half a year before. He had dug that dirt, he had poked in those seeds, had watched them send out their tender tubes of leaf. […]. He might as well have done none of it” (Grenville 2006, 298). In this scene, not only William’s emotional attachment to his work and land is illustrated but also his lack of understanding of why his field was burnt. He interprets it as a form of personal war in which Aboriginal people try to destroy his own work in order to win his land for themselves. More likely, however, the Indigenous people have burnt the corn patch with the rest of the land in that area as a traditional way of making the land fertile again.

The more time the Europeans spend in Australia, the more they seem to make it a new home. The concepts of home and belonging that are central elements in King’s novel *The Back of the Turtle* are also relevant to Grenville’s novel. In the process of finding home and belonging, nature plays an important role, as it offers connecting points to their former home. For example, when William and his family live on their newly acquired land at the secret river, he notices that it is not that different from living next to the Thames (Grenville 2006, 141). Therefore, the river functions as a link between the two homes the family has had. Towards the end of the novel, William has made their piece of land next to the river his place of belonging. When William’s wife suggests returning to England because of the difficulties and problems with Aboriginal people, he responds “I ain’t going back to a

lighterman's life […]" (Grenville 2006, 281). William realises that despite the hardships of Australia, their life is much better there (Grenville 2006, 281f). He has actively made Australia his home, whereas his wife is caught between Europe and Australia and rather considers England their home. Still, the family knows that "they were never going to return to that Home. Too many of the important parts of their lives had happened here. Their children, for a start. For them, Home was nothing but a story. If they were to go to London, they would be outsiders, with their sunburnt skin and their colonial ways" (Grenville 2006, 331). Here William notices that their diasporic experience has othered them also, leaving them in a third, hybrid space. This aspect is also negotiated like in *Sea of Poppies* when the people on the *Ibis* move in between cultures. In both novels, the fluidity of a river functions as a symbol for the starting point of their journey. Making a home in Australia, however, also has a strong impact on the Indigenous population. "Long Jack was the only one left on that part of the river. Such others as there might have been had retreated to the reserve that the Governor had set aside at Sackville, and lived on what the Governor was pleased to provide" (Grenville 2006, 341). Indigenous people are displaced by the colonizers who take over the land, changing it thoroughly.

Another point to focus on is the colonization practices that are depicted through the distribution of land. The term *terra nullius*[19] describes the European assumption that the land on the Australian continent that they colonized did not belong to anyone and was empty, as it was not marked as belonging to someone as it would be on the European continent. Indigenous ways of life and their worldview perceive land and nature as their own entities that cannot be owned but belong to themselves. In short, traditional Indigenous ways of life promote living with nature and sharing the land with other beings, therefore it cannot belong to anyone. In colonizing Australia, European settlers took over the land, marking it and fencing it off, even naming it. This aspect of naming is a central element in *The Secret River*. For example, William gives a creek a name: "It was not called Darkey creek now, but Thornhill's creek" (Grenville 2006, 327). Both names reflect how racism and the ignorance of Aboriginal people inhabiting their country prevail in the settlers' minds. Throughout the novel, European settlers such as William stress that they own the land. "Thornhill gestured at the cliffs, the river glinting between the trees. My place now, he said. You got all the rest.

[19] "The expression terra nullius, literally 'land belonging to nobody', comes from the Latin terra for earth or land, and nullius being no one or nobody. However, the expression is used in two ways: (1) a land where there is no sovereign (law, social order), and (2) a land where there is no recognizable tenure in land (either property rights or cultivation). Although the legal doctrine of terra nullius did not make its appearance until long after early settlement, around the beginning of the twentieth century, it defines the underlying assumptions of early contact. Terra nullius is used commonly in discussions of the attitudes of colonists in the colonization of Australia" (Ashcroft et al. 2013, 257).

He drew a square on the air with his arms, demonstrating where his hundred acres began and ended" (Grenville 2006, 149). As the plot progresses, William begins to notice that the land he now owns may not have been empty terra nullius.

> Even when he saw the lines formed the outline of a fish, his first thought was to admire the way nature could mimic a picture. It was only when he saw the spine on the fish's back, the exact fan of spikes of a beam, that he had to recognise a human hand at work. […] Then he saw it was a picture of the Hope [his boat]. […] It came to him now that this might look an empty space, but a man who walked the length of that fish […] had to recognise otherwise. This place was no more empty than the parlour in London […]. (Grenville 2005, 159f).

By including the occasional recognition of Aboriginal land right, the novel touches on Aboriginal dispossession through colonization processes (Staniforth 2013, 6). The colonization of people and nature is also depicted in the image of the villa built on Aboriginal markings and art mentioned before. "He had stood up on the rock with the fish carved in it and pointed at where the house would go" (Grenville 2006, 328). So, "[u]nder the house, covered by the weight of Mr. Thornhill's villa, the fish still swam in the rock. It was dark under the floorboards: the fish would never see the sun again. It would not fade, as the others out in the forest were fading, with no black hands to re-draw them. It would remain as bright as the day the boards had been nailed down, but no longer alive, cut off from the trees and light that it had swum in" (Grenville 2006, 330). The life and culture of the Aboriginal people who lived on Thornhill's place is buried under his house as a symbol of European culture and colonialism and its superiority. "Built over the site of an Aboriginal rock drawing of a fish, the stone house suppresses any identification with the native and the land. Rather it is designed to impose on the country, to signal ownership, possession and exclusion, and to mimic the English gentleman's home" (Staniforth 2013, 5). However, William feels that the culture he has helped to suppress and overpower is still alive, looming under his floor. Furthermore, the Williams villa functions as an antagonist to Australian nature. The "house [functions] as an alien and unnatural construct, a British import which imposes itself on the land and signals an attempt to transplant British values and standards to an Antipodean setting" (Staniforth 2013, 3). *The Secret River* ends with a scene in which the cliffs look down on William as witnesses of what he did to the Aboriginal people and the land (Grenville 2006, 345ff). Therefore, nature and the cliffs become agents in what William experiences as a punishment. Despite his achievements, William is haunted by the past and cannot find peace (Grenville 2006, 348).

Although *The Secret River* was intended to be a reconciliation novel, it was strongly criticised for reproducing white settler narratives. Grenville dedicated *The Secret River* to

"the Aboriginal people of Australia: past, present and future" (Grenville 2006, frontmatter). Still, its focus is on depicting and understanding white settler history. Staniforth finds that many aspects of the novel "serve to reinscribe rather than rewrite the narratives of white legitimacy, and in doing so undercut Grenville's commitment to the work of reconciliation" (Staniforth 2013, 10). This justified critique shows that despite its intentions the novel fails to include an Indigenous perspective properly. Still, *The Secret River* is a good example of ecocritical negotiations of migration, as it lays open the roots of many issues that evolve around this topic, such as colonialism, involuntary migration, and displacement, which have reinforced matters of alterity and nature-culture dualisms.

The analysis of the second novel of chapter 4 has focused on a literary text from a Nigerian author. *Oil on Water* written by Helon Habila connects ecocriticism and migration through the aspects of displacement and violence. The oil industry causes environmental pollution that displaces many of the local population and creates a conflict with direct as well as slow violence. Thereby, the topic of environmental justice is broached in the context of natural resources and land ownership. The narrator's perspective of the journalist generates a multitude of voices that are enabled to present their views through the seemingly neutral account of the main character. This brings the contrasting ideas that are represented in the novel together. Although *Oil on Water* includes Western perspectives, it focuses on Nigeria's local views on the oil industry on both sides of the conflict. What is especially interesting is the inclusion of the role of media in general, as this aspect points to the significance and power of the medial representation of topics and points of view. Helon Habila was born and grew up in Nigeria. He now lives in Virginia where he works as a professor for creative writing at George Mason University. In 2013, he published an article on the African novel in which he describes his perspective on the continent and literature. In this article, Habila states that it is important for him to speak out for his community and country but also for himself (Habila 2013, 267). He argues for the inclusion of a contemporary sensibility in the African novel: "I must point out here that I am not undermining the importance of the historical element in the African novel, but even if the African novel goes back in time to tackle historical subjects, it must do so with a contemporary sensibility – the eye-end of its telescope must be firmly rooted in the concerns of the here and now" (Habila 2013, 263). Habila critically engages with topics of postcolonialism when finding that: "as if the African novel cannot be relevant unless it continues to obsess about how and why Africans were colonised by Europeans" (Habila 2013, 263). Instead, Habila suggests laying more focus on topics such as travel, urbanization,

globalisation, or environment in the African novel (Habila 2013, 263). Some of these suggested topics are included in Habila's own novels, for example, the previously analysed *Oil on Water* focuses on the environment. About this novel, Habila himself states that while dealing with oil pollution and violence, he found that traditional African ways have been about conservation, which for him exemplifies the recognition that all species have souls and that nonhumans as plants can be homes to spirits and unseen beings (Habila 2013, 266). In this way, he stresses the importance of writers such as himself becoming advocates for nature (Habila 2013, 267).

In Habila's 2019 novel *Travellers*, migration stories are the central element of the narrative. "The novel *Travellers* (2019) by Helon Habila offers a fictional account of people on the move and the precarious situations in which they often find themselves. *Travellers* captures the complex and intricate situations of refugees and migrants in Europe, providing insights about urgent social issues including inequality, racism and discrimination" (Englund 2020, 138). Therefore, in Habila's recent novel concepts of home and belonging are dealt with in the scope of migration, as well as otherness and diaspora. "The novel's portrayal of the refugee/migrant is not just about displacement or struggling to belong in a strange country where one is not welcome, but also aims to make sense of and reconcile the past with the present" (Englund 2020, 138). *Travellers* represents a postcolonial view on migration that centres around the migrant perspective. "Agency and dignity come in many shapes and forms in Helon Habila's insightful novel. The analysis demonstrates the complexity and heterogeneity of the migrant experience and the divisive and disruptive impacts of migration practices and policies across Europe" (Englund 2020, 148). Compared to the other novels analysed in this thesis and his earlier published novel *Oil on Water*, Habila negotiates migration in *Travellers* without laying a major focus on ecocritical topics, merely mentioning environmental aspects in side notes. Therefore, he deals with the topics he suggests including in the African novel separately, with each focus on a different novel. This shows another approach to the topics as compared to, for example, Amitav Ghosh, who continually has established an increased depiction of the interconnections of environmental issues and migration in his literary works.

The Activist by Nigerian author Tanure Ojaide was published in 2006 and again focuses on the interconnections of ecocriticism and migration. The novel centres around the protagonist The Activist who returns to his home in the Niger Delta after living in the US for 25 years and teaching at a university. He returns with the hope that he can induce change in the Niger Delta and takes a job at the Niger Delta State University. He becomes friends

with Pere, the leader of the area boys, a group that engages in often illegal activities to stop the oil companies from exploiting and polluting their villages. As the destruction and violence in the context of the oil industry increase, The Activist participates in protests and forming of organisations that seek to improve the situation. Also, he falls in love with and later marries Ebi, a teacher at the same university who plays a central role in organising women's protests, which not only direct themselves against the oil industry but also get involved in strengthening the rights of women in the area. The novel is divided into two parts; the first part, *The Return*, describes The Activist's impressions and experiences of coming back to his native country, and the second part, *Changing Tides*, focuses on the impact The Activist has on the Niger Delta. Due to its setting, the novel has several similarities to Habila's *Oil on Water*, as it illustrates a similarly polluted natural ecology and the displacement of local people of the Niger Delta. In parts, the novel offers a deeper insight into the conflicts and violence that arise between different groups of people – often between people that either take sides in favour of or against the oil industry – but also between ethnic groups of the local population. This aspect is comparable to Lanchester's *The Wall*, where a clashing of contrasting living conditions and points of view provokes controversies. Furthermore, The Activist reflects on feelings of home and belonging that he has not found in his American diaspora but finds all the more in his native home. Therefore, his return migration movement can be compared to Gabriel's in *The Back of the Turtle*.

As is Habila's *Oil on Water*, *The Activist* includes the role of the media as a means of communicating environmental destruction. In the context of activism, media can help to create awareness of the situation, but it is also depicted as corrupt. "From what the press wrote about the oil companies, one would think they were charitable organizations like Oxfam and Caritas among a displaced people. Also, if the claims of the oil companies were true about their development projects, the Niger Delta would have, over the decades of oil exploration, transformed into a European province or an American state in Africa" (Ojaide 2006, 67). This leads to the very current issue of fake news versus factual news and stands in a long tradition of denying the locals' rights. The media also plays a central role for The Activist when he establishes his own newspaper *The Patriot*, for which he, as a member of the Board of Directors, has an important say in what topics are covered. "What had not been seen before was exposed in *The Patriot*. For its close monitoring of the eco system of the area, the paper soon won the Green Peace Reporting Award […]" (Ojaide 2006, 231). On the one hand, this highlights the importance of having a voice in order to express criticism and make nuisances public. On the other hand, this demonstrates how the conveying of

information through media can have an impact on environmental change. The Activist has learned about activism in different parts of the world through his migration. "He had flown to Europe several times on chartered flights to carry placards against Bell Oil International and the Group of Seven over debt relief for Third World countries. […] The Activist had also been airlifted in a Green Peace plane from Washington, DC, to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. He identified with the concerns of Green Peace for the environment. Its objectives were in line with his for his Niger Delta birthplace" (Ojaide 2006, 23). As the novel's title suggests, activism as a form of agency (cf. chapter 3.3) and revivance (cf. chapter 3.5) is a central element in Ojaide's novel. Thereby, the novel depicts different forms of activism as protests (Ojaide 2006, 275), discussion forums, and mobilization at university (Ojaide 2006, 178) or more extreme forms, such as illegal bunkering, as a form of taking back what was robbed from the local people (Ojaide 2006, 126). Also, *The Activist* points towards the different premises of activism, for example by depicting peaceful protest in European countries (Ojaide 2006, 275) in contrast to protesters being shot in Nigeria (Ojaide 2006, 209). Along with The Activist's commitment to the environment of the Niger Delta, Ebi's activism and its impact on women gaining voice and agency in their country is a central aspect of the novel. First, "[t]he women discussed how to make their environment safe from pollution and attract real development" (Ojaide 2006, 193), later founding the association Women of the Delta Forum (WODEFOR) (Ojaide 2006, 194). This empowerment of women whose situation is otherwise defined by sexism or even rape represents an important means of gaining a voice and participating in societal change that also makes a difference for the environment. "Tanure Ojaide's The Activist is a conscious representation of action and how neglected people of the Niger Delta region have chosen to deal with their own impoverishment by those who exploit and dispossess them of the wealth accruing from their natural resources. Through this narrative Ojaide engages the voices of his characters in order to expose the degree of oil exploration, exploitation and environmental degradation of the people of his Niger Delta Region" (Ngozi Anyanwu 2019, 257).

The natural environment in Ojaide's novel is strongly altered by human extraction practices. "The Niger Delta that the Activist returned to had changed so much from what it used to be, even as it remained the same landmass. It had been seriously scarred by Bell Oil Company whose emblem of a red-rimmed shell of yellow flames was seen all over the area. In the company's inordinate hunger for more barrels of oil to ship out to increase yearly record profits, the landscape was gradually turning into a wasteland" (Ojaide 2006, 46). The novel depicts a similar atmosphere to Habil's novel in which farmers and fishermen lose

their land and sources of their livelihood and the local people are left with water and air polluted by oil slicks, blowouts, and gas flares (Ojaide 2006, 50). “The air used to be cool because of constant rain and the luxuriant forest, but oil slicks, blowouts and gas flares had destroyed that life. Even the rain that fell was so soot-black that no more did anybody drink rainwater, which of all waters, used to be described as God-given water. The people had lost their green refuge as well. Their forests used to have deep green and lush foliage, the pride of the tropics, but that had changed, since fires often followed oil and gas accidents” (Ojaide 2006, 70). The Activist not only makes general observations about the pollution but also experiences the destruction himself when he goes on a boat trip with Ebi (Ojaide 2006, 84f). Through this, the ever-looming existence of the oil company is stressed when The Activist and Ebi enjoy the calmness of a river with birds and insects buzzing around them, and in the next paragraph, the surrounding is described as the following: “Enclaves of oil companies were floodlit and dazzled from a distance. Outside those secluded zones, the indigenous people continued to live under primitive conditions” (Ojaide 2006, 90). This contrast of still intact nature and the impact of the oil company highlights the proximity in which the destructive force lies. The more The Activist learns about the impact of the oil industry, the more he connects the concerns for the environment with the interests of the local people. “The Niger Delta was part of its people and just as the land, air and rivers were being poisoned so were the residents themselves, the Activist believed” (Ojaide 2006, 86). He perceives the people as being poisoned by the idea of becoming rich and wealthy through the oil industry. So, he reflects on the interconnectedness of humans and nature that are equally contaminated.

In addition to the previously mentioned forms of conflict that evolve around the extraction of oil resources, *The Activist* depicts several generational conflicts (Ojaide 2006, 147) and conflicts between people supporting the oil company and those against it. When a don is sent to the University to stop a protest against Bell Oil and convey the views of the company, the situation escalates and the don is violently killed (Ojaide 2006, 157). This shows the frontier (as a boundary) that exists between the groups and their points of view that impedes their communication and results in violence. Additionally, ethnic clashes are depicted when a conflict between Itsekiri, Izon, and Urhobo turns into violence and killings, involving the military and displacing a large number of people (Ojaide 2006, 184ff). Frontiers also are dealt with in the sense of borders, for example when a delegation against the oil industry wants to travel to Amsterdam in order to protest in front of the oil company’s headquarters and is stopped at border controls (Ojaide 2006, 204). Such examples depict the

power networks that try to silence critical voices that stand against exploitation and environmental degradation (cf. Ngozi Anyanwu 2019, 258). On the other hand, the aspect of community is also included in Ojaide's novel in order to show the effects of breaking down borders and cooperating for a collective goal. This is illustrated when The Activist and Pere initiate an alliance against the oil company. "The area boys believed that bringing all the different groups together would be a formidable alliance. They were optimistic that the two rugged mountains would soon be moved or at least shaken" (Ojaide 2006, 170).

At the beginning of the novel, The Activist reflects on his return to Nigeria, describing it as the final return and including himself in the returnee's community (Ojaide 2006, 13). The Activist migrated to the US after a massacre in which soldiers working for the government and the major oil company wiped out his village, for which reason he classifies himself as a refugee of the violence created by the oil industry (Ojaide 2006, 26). "The two parties colluded to wipe out his village because his people had dared to bring in foreign journalists to document the degree of their exploitation and the pollution of their environment" (Ojaide 2006, 26). As Ngozi Anyanwu (2019) states, The Activist's "home coming is to bring his protest experience to bear on his own exploited people and their polluted environment" (258). Back in Nigeria, he begins to feel a sense of belonging when comparing his immigrant country and his native home, and he finds: "Home for him was where his parents had given birth to him and handed to him tales also handed to them by their own parents. Home was his Niger Delta State in Nigeria" (Ojaide 2006, 25f). Apart from The Activist's personal migration story, the novel also deals with migration when describing the displacement of refugee populations that lose their home due to conflicts and violence but also due to the pollution and destruction of their villages (Ojaide 2006, 155). This demonstrates how Ojaide's *The Activist* interlinks ecocriticism and migration, creating an awareness of the situation in the Niger Delta and imagining ways of change. Furthermore, Ngozi Anyanwu (2019) finds that the "experiences of the people of the environmentally degraded communities in the Niger Delta Region authenticate the claim that the residual effects of colonialism still linger with us in Africa" (257).

The effects of colonialism are also found in the Australian context. The analysis in chapter 4 pointed out that Alexis Wright's *The Swan Book* deals with the voice and agency of primarily the main characters but in general of humans and non-human beings. The parallel traumas of Aboriginal people and nature represent another point in which migration and ecocriticism are connected within the field of postcolonialism. Furthermore, climate change leads to many changes in the environment and society, but colonialism has caused

just as many. Through intertwining these topics into one story, marginalized others regain power and agency. The Australian author Alexis Wright belongs to the Indigenous community of the Waanyi nation of the southern highlands of the Gulf of Carpentaria. The previously analysed "*The Swan Book* is a further elaboration of Wright's Indigenous literary universe that emanates from her connection to the traditional country of her people, the Waanyi, located in the Gulf of Carpentaria in remote Northern Australia" (Renes 2022, 1). This stresses that Wright represents an Indigenous perspective, and her writing aims at a "literary effort that employs the particularities of the Waanyi oral traditions to predict the destruction of the Australian continent by the impact of globalization, neo-capitalism, and climate change" (Renes 2022, 1). Not only is the Indigenous perspective important to Wright as an author but also concepts such as postcolonialism and community. "Through developing a steady commitment with Indigenous country and community, Wright's writing foregrounds the inherently political nature of literature and its engagement with structures of power" (Renes 2022, 1f). These features of her novels are developed by her style of writing: "Wright's fiction, then, takes issue with the western interpretation of reality, whose scientific model of objectivity and materiality is at the heart of the traditional realist novel. Wright's prose displays no straightforward chronology of beginning, development and conclusion, but employs laterality, repetition and circularity of plot situations and characters, merging as it were detail and essential information" (Renes 2022, 5). This postcolonial form of writing back from an Indigenous perspective to the centre creates a hybrid in-between space. "Wright carries out this process of adaptation to Indigenous needs, of hybridization of narrative forms to the limits of cultural conventions. She employs difference and incommensurability with mainstream understandings of reality as a strategy to protect her community and focus the scrutinizing gaze back on its non-Indigenous beholder" (Renes 2022, 4). Thereby, "white readers must learn to acknowledge unknown narrative territory and relinquish established reading practices and fictional interpretation" (Renes 2022, 4). Wright's fiction illustrates how different worldviews can be negotiated in literature. "Indeed, Wright's Indigenous reconfiguration of the western genre of the novel goes right against a universalizing Enlightenment conception of scientific rationality and verifiable reality and questions the bases of the western worldview" (Renes 2022, 9). Renes concludes that "[w]ith [her novels] *Plains of Promise*, *Carpentaria* and *The Swan Book*, Wright has successfully engaged in a critical rewriting of the novelistic genre through the application of Aboriginal realism– that is, the world as seen through the Dreaming – to fictional content, form and structure, which explains the difficulty the non-Indigenous reader may find in accessing her

texts" (Renes 2022, 10). Therefore, Wright is a good example of the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in literary fiction on ecocritical migration.

The novel *The Yield*, published in 2019 by the Australian author Tara June Winch who belongs to the Wiradjuri community, is a further example of Indigenous writing on ecocriticism and migration. The Aboriginal protagonist August Gondiwindi returns from Europe for her grandfather's memorial to her rural home in Australia, called Massacre Plains. In her attempt to save her home from a mining company, she discovers her family's past but also details of the colonisation history of the area of Massacre Plains, where her family home is located. Therefore, aspects of migration are dealt with through the depiction of a return migration movement similar to King's *The Back of the Turtle* but also migration movements from colonizers form central elements, as in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies* or Grenville's *The Secret River*. Ecocritical aspects are illustrated through the conflicts with the mining company that can be compared to the conflicts depicted in Habila's *Oil on Water* and through the deep connection of Indigenous people to their land and natural environment, which are also central elements in Wright's *The Swan Book* or King's *The Back of the Turtle*. Ralph (2023) states that "[t]he novel functions as an implicit indictment of the resource extraction industry in Australia in the neocolonial period, and so it ties to and evokes arguments made by ecocriticism, postcolonial ecocriticism, and colonial-settler studies scholars about the role that resource extraction is playing in environmental carnage" (491).

The Yield combines several perspectives in the narrative, as each chapter is written either as a focalizing on the main character August as an excerpt of the indigenous language dictionary written by August's grandfather, or as a letter written by Reverend Greenleaf, the founder of the Mission where August's family now lives, in the 20th century. The novel interlinks different time layers that connect the aspects of the novel: The novel's present time is represented by August. The short information that is given on Indigenous words in the dictionary illustrates the circumstances of two generations before August's. Lastly, the Reverend's narrative depicts a point of view shortly after the independence of Australia from its coloniser. Therefore, the novel negotiates the impacts of colonialism on different levels and time layers. The title *The Yield* highlights several important aspects of the novel: the setting of the main plot next to a wheat field, the different world views of Western perspectives and indigenous ones, and colonization practices. In his dictionary, August's grandfather explains his understanding of yield:

> **yield, bend the feet, tread, as in walking, also long, tall – baanyanha** Yield itself is a funny word – yield in English is the reaping, the things that man can take from the land, the thing he's waited for

> and gets to claim. A wheat yield. In my language it's the things you give to, the movement, the space between things. It's also the action made by Baiame [a spirit that ruled the Gondiwindi (Winch 2019, 245)], because sorrow, old age, and pain bend and yield. The bodies of the ones that had passed were buried with every joint bent, even if the bones had been broken. I think it was bend in humiliation, just like we bend at our knees and bow our heads. Bend, yield – baanyanha. (Winch 2019, 25).

Colonization plays a central role in this description which hints at violence and crimes committed during imperialism. Also, general Western world views that concentrate on owning land and making a profit are mentioned, which stand in contrast to Indigenous perspectives of being given something by the land and living with the environment. The yields as a wheatfield symbolize the land's fertility, the harvest and extraction from nature, and the growing of new plants as a cycle in which the needs of nature and humans can co-exist if it is well balanced. Colonial practices have considerably shaped the life of August's grandfather. In the foreword of his dictionary, he writes: "You could keep reading the dictionary that way – front to back, straight as a dart – or you can get to aardvark and then skip to Africa, then skip to continent, then skip to nations, then skip to colonialism, then skip over to empire, then skip back to apartheid in the A section – that happened in South Africa. Another story" (Winch 2019, 11). Thereby August's grandfather highlights the universal character of colonialism that not only impacts his personal life and local place but can be applied to other regions of the world. As in this example, generally, the novel deals with colonialism very critically. Still, without euphemizing colonial practices, Winch depicts a differentiated picture of colonialism. Although the Reverend practices violence on the Mission, tries to "civilise" Aboriginal people (Winch 2019, 49/67), and forces Christian religion on them (Winch 2019, 49); he also gives them a home (Winch 2019, 99), protects them from racist assaults (Winch 2019, 166ff), accepts some of their traditional ways of living (Winch 2019, 149); and develops a deep friendship to the aboriginal people on the Mission (Winch 2019, 298). Furthermore, the Reverend states that "[s]uch helplessness, such woe, caused by Christian White men! Yet this situation, I soon learned from good authority and from personal observation, was but an index to a ponderous volume of inequity existing throughout the interior" (Winch 2019, 70). In this way, Winch includes a certain recognition of the injustice of colonial practices on the part of the colonizers' culture, although this only refers to a small number of people who acknowledge this without really bettering the situation. "Reverend Ferdinand Greenleaf, who, after decades of his service at Massacre Plains and after having witnessed the growth as well as the decline of the Mission that he established, comes to an awareness that his presence damaged, rather than benefitted the Wiradjuri" (Horakova 2023, 89).

The previously mentioned concept of terra nullius also plays an important role in Winch's novel. The concept that has legitimated colonial land-grabbing practices is negotiated when the main character can only save her family's land by claiming Native Title.[20] "I read about Mabo. That dude, what a smart fella. […] You got to claim the land as ours, Native Title!" (Winch 2019, 141). August discovers that with his dictionary and the connected knowledge of the land, August's grandfather tried to prove the continuous occupation of Indigenous people at Prosperous house and the cultural significance for the Indigenous Gondiwindi family. However, the family cannot provide material objects that prove this: "[T]here's no artefacts. No water in Murrumby, no fish – and fishing would mean Nana, or whoever's living here, would have a cultural connection to the land to maintain, the … well, 'resources'- okay? Another thing, there's no language here. Our people's language is extinct, no one speaks it any more so they can tick that box on their government form that says "loss of cultural connection" (Winch 2019, 145). August learns that her neighbour's father has given several Indigenous artefacts that could prove the continuous Indigenous occupation of the land of Prosperous house to the Museum of Australia (Winch 2019, 211f). "This is where all your culture is! Under fucking glass! […] Submission: Wooden shovel, intricately carved with brolgas, used for digging earth mounds. Number 1, Dated 7,000 years" (Winch 2019, 211). These artefacts together with the letters of the Reverend published in a book (Winch 2019, 226) and his list of Wiradjuri words (Winch 2019, 151), the dictionary of August's grandfather (Winch 2019, 271), and the finding of the culturally significant cemetery of the former Aboriginal Mission residents (Winch 2019, 299) help the Gondiwindi family to claim Native Title and save their land and the environment from being destroyed by the mining company (Winch 2019, 300). These finds are also evidence of Indigenous civilisation. August's grandfather writes that "[t]he books say a civilisation must meet four criteria: it must show house building, domestication of animals, agricultural activity, and reverence for the dead" (Winch 2019, 219). By proving their Native Title, the Gondiwindi family not only achieves protecting their land but also takes a stance against racist comments that depict the ancient Indigenous culture as uncivilised.

[20] "The *Native Title Act 1993* (Cth) established a means whereby Indigenous Australians can make application to the Federal Court for the recognition of their rights to the continental landmass of Australia and its islands and seas. Such rights were identified in the legislation as 'native title rights'. The application is subject to legal process. Those who make the claim (the applicant) have to prove to the court that the native title rights have continued to exist substantially uninterrupted since the acquisition of sovereignty over Australia by the British Crown. They also have to show that the native title rights have not been extinguished by subsequent acts of the colonisers" (Palmer 2018, 1).

Migration is dealt with in several contexts in Winch's novel. It is negotiated in the previously described colonization movements but also in the element of the main character August returning to her native home after migrating to England. Also, migration is understood in a broad sense, for example, when August's grandfather states that he has never seen the sea and has never migrated like his granddaughter August but knows how to migrate in different spheres, for example in time (Winch 2019, 74). Furthermore, *The Yield* describes several aspects of migration experiences and colonization practices, for example, feeling othered in a new environment or actively shaping the process of making a home in a new place. Similar to Alexis Wright, Winch casually mentions different aspects of Aboriginal life and history. For example, alcoholism among Aboriginal people, (Winch 2019, 11), the displacement and trauma of the Stolen Generations (Winch 2019, 23/28/), and different forms of racism (Winch 2019, 56/73/274). Thereby, Winch highlights colonial remains in the present time.

> These mementos include policies of forced removals of Indigenous children by the authorities with the aim of creating a class of dependent, cheap labor and domestic servants; racially motivated violence and frontier brutality of early settlers in remote areas; displacement and assimilation through concentrating Indigenous families and clans in missions, making them dependent on government rations; coerced conversion to Christianity, resulting in the loss of Indigenous languages, cultures, sovereignty; and the land being gradually controlled by settler ownership. (Horakova 2023, 92)

However, migration is also depicted in connection to environmental aspects.

The connection between people and nature is a central element in *The Yield*. For example, this is depicted in the dictionary entry on scaling a fish in which August's grandfather explains that "[t]he ancestors taught me all the things I wasn't taught at the Boys' Home: they taught me men's business; they taught me where to find food, the names and uses of all the plants and animals" (Winch 2019, 45). This highlights how nature and the environment essentially influence people by, as in this example, functioning as a teacher. Also, August has a strong connection to her native land, which she notices after returning from migrating to England: "In the field now her skin prickled, that big organ remembering everything that happened before. […] the bad memories were beginning to seep back into her skin, it still didn't seem right to her to be forced off that place" (Winch 2019, 29). As the narrative progresses, August is able to determine this physical sensation as a feeling of belonging. She finds that "she felt as if she were back home, back on the land she belonged to" (Winch 2019, 163). Therefore, the novel deals with overcoming feelings of otherness and displacement by finding a connection to land. Furthermore, this connection to the land is not only about home and belonging but also about identity (cf. Winch 2019, 184/209). In

contrast to a Western understanding of land, *The Yield* depicts Indigenous points of view. For example, instead of describing August wanting to own her grandparent's property, she notices that "the land still owned them [the Gondiwindis] (Winch 2019, 31). The understanding of belonging and owning land and country deviates from Western perspectives. This is also illustrated by the dictionary entry on *where is your country?* that explains that country is not about maps but about belonging (Winch 2019, 34). To add to this, the importance of people and nature is levelled in Winch's novel, for example, by comparing the extinction of the black Rhino to the extinction of August's grandfather (Winch 2019, 6ff). Both forms of extinction have important meanings no matter to which species the deceased belong. Another example is the death of August's sister. "They told me that the *burral-gang* [brolga], it was Jedda, that she was safe. That she'll always be a brolga" (Winch 2019, 247). This example depicts an inter-species connection and aboriginal beliefs of people and animals being able the change shapes. "I reckon that it's not so hard to imagine the blending of human and animal. We all come from the same soil" (Winch 2019, 200). Furthermore, not only people and animals have agency in the novel. "Out on the old Mission at Prosperous a copse of gum trees had remembered everything for two centuries. August didn't know all that the trees had seen" (Winch 2019, 14). This highlights the different forms of wisdom and knowledge that the environment withholds, as well as the agency of nature.

The most recent threat to nature in Winch's novel is the tin mining company Rinepalm Mining, which wants to claim the land of Prosperous and destroy the natural environment for the extraction of tin. "In *The Yield*, Rinepalm Mining, a name that carries allusions to Gina Rinehart and Clive Palmer, two of Australia's most prominent metal culture figures (and neo-colonial pastoral culture and neo-colonial petro-culture figures), aspires to take over the town of Prosperous and the surrounding region of Massacre Plains" (Ralph 2023, 493). "People need tin. People so scared of not having everything" (Winch 2019, 258). Again, different understandings of being able to own land and the entity of the natural environment are negotiated. "I think all those shiny things *ngunhadar-guwur* [underneath the earth] shouldn't belong to anyone, only our mother" (Winch 2019, 41). In these considerations of owning nature, glocal aspects (cf. chapter 3.2) play an important role, as they show how local interests and understandings stand in relation to global ones. "August had always thought important events happened in every other country except for Australia. That the tremors of their small lives meant nothing" (Winch 2019, 259). The nature of Prosperous land is altered even before the tin extraction begins with the mining company shaping the environment through metal domes that function as drill sites (Winch 2019, 58).

"Winch's novel questions the colonial and neo-colonial resource extraction industry of mining in New South Wales and elsewhere in Australia" (Ralph 2023, 492). When thinking of tin mining, August's aunt has an association with the Tin Man from the *Wizard of Oz* who has no heart because "[t]hat tin don't love anyone or anything back" (Winch 2019, 65). As in other parts of the novel, the importance of feelings of belonging and the perspective of nature is contrasted with unemotional ideas of capitalism. In the context of the mining company, environmental activism plays an essential role that also includes Western aims at protecting nature. Initially, the Gondiwindi family sees activism critically since August's grandmother protested against war or against a river being dammed without any effects, leaving her with the feeling that "[w]e're just a few small people, anyway" (Winch 2019, 90). Also, August starts off being sceptical about the activists who try to stop the mining project of Rinepalm. When she hears that they have no Indigenous background but want to protect the land for environmental reasons, she questions their intentions (Winch 2019, 134). Although fighting for the same cause, this illustrates the deep gap colonization practices have left between Aboriginal people and other Australians. In explaining what 'wrong' means in his dictionary, August's grandfather illustrates another aspect of what a glocal connection means: "I'm looking out on the backyard: the field, the crop, the dam in the distance to the right; the trees, the line, the river in the distance to the left; the kitchen garden beside me. It all seems small and manageable. It's hard to imagine that something so big might swallow this place up soon. Hard to imagine problems coming home here again to roost" (Winch 2019, 156). Towards the end of the novel parts of the Gondiwindi family join the environmental activists and protest together against the mining company (cf. Winch 2019, 289ff). Thereby, they each acknowledge their intentions and form a community. One of the protesters states: "And then we're all migrants here, even those first fleet descendants; we forget we're all in someone else's country. […] we learn that through looking after the land. That we'll all continue not really having a collective identity unless we take a long and hard look back and accept the past and try to save the land we live on" (Winch 2019, 291). This point of view and the communal sense of different people stand for Australian reconciliation that interconnects and approves the colonial past of the country with all of its migration history as well as the importance of protecting the land and natural environment that forms the home to different people, animals, and other non-humans.

As the short overview of the novel's most important aspects has shown, several concepts that link ecocriticism and migration are dealt with. "*The Yield* is a thinly disguised allegory of Australia's colonial and neocolonial resource extraction industries and pastoral

industries. They have only just begun to be recognized for being key drivers of environmental degradation in Australia" (Ralph 2023, 496). Also, *The Yield* contains aspects of revivance similar to King's novel *The Back of the Turtle*, as the Indigenous main characters overcome part of the neocolonial power structures. Therefore, "resilience is used to evoke the positive connotations of adaptation and persistence, highlighting survival, resistance and continuance of Indigenous peoples and their cultures – in Gerald Vizenor's terms "survivance" – despite settler-colonial policies of ex termination and persisting pressure to assimilate" (Horakova 2023, 88).

In *Migrations*, a novel published in 2020 by the Irish author Charlotte McConaghy who lives in Australia, ecocritical negotiations of migration are depicted from a point of view of the Global North. The main character Franny follows the migration route of the Arctic terns from the North Pole to the South Pole in order to study their behaviour, analyse their potential survival, and fulfil her husband's last will. The novel is set in a world shaped by climate change in which almost all wild animals are extinct, especially all birds besides the terns. Franny's husband Niall was an ornithologist who was very dedicated to protecting birds from becoming extinct. As Franny is no scholar herself and has no funding to study the Arctic terns, she persuades the crew of a fishing Vessel, the *Saghani*, to take her on her route, promising to find fish for them through the terns, as fish are also almost extinct and difficult to find. Thus, *Migrations* combines human migration routes with animal ones, highlighting their interconnections. In this way, human-animal relationships play an important role similar to *The Swan Book* or *The Back of the Turtle*. The traumatic experiences of the main character Franny are mirrored in the degradation and pollution of nature as in *Oil on Water* and *The Swan Book*. Furthermore, the motif of the ship as a vehicle of migration and hybrid third space is included as in *Sea of Poppies*.

One of the main topics discussed in McConaghy's novel is animal extinction and the effects this has on the world. The novel begins with the following paragraph:

> The animals are dying. Soon we will be alone here. Once, my husband found a colony of storm petrels on the rocky coat of the untamed Atlantic. The night he took me there, I didn't know they were some of the last of their kind. […] Once, when the animals were going, really and truly and not just in warnings of dark futures but now, right now, in mass extinctions we could see and feel, I decided to follow a bird over an ocean. […] Or maybe I was just hoping the bird's final migration would show me a place to belong. (McConaghy 2020, 3)

Here migration and belonging are connected to animal migration and extinction. The novel's setting is shaped by human impact and the altering of nature. For example, Franny's

awareness of the human impact on nature is shown when she puts trackers on the Arctic terns in order to be able to follow them on their migration route. From her husband, Franny knows that the knowledge of the terns' migration can help to understand their behaviour and climate change in general (McConaghy 2020, 167). "I start to tremble, but keep going, so it's too late now, you have touched her, branded her, pressed your human self upon her. What a hateful thing" (McConaghy 2020, 4). The otherness between the two creatures from two different species is highlighted by the mark the human leaves on the animal. Humans try to force birds to adapt to anthropogenic climate change so they can survive. In a bird conservation project, scholars have trained birds in cages to change their diet so that birds that normally migrate in search of food can survive (McConaghy 2020, 157). Although this project is strongly criticised by Niall for interfering in natural processes, it continues its work (McConaghy 2020, 157f) and is made popular by a professor who is an expert in "human involvement in migration patterns as a possible source of species prolonging" (McConaghy 2020, 210).

For the extinction of animals in the sea, fishermen are one of the main factors next to climate change. "Just as we have been steadily killing off the animals of the land and the sky, the fishermen have fished the sea almost to extinction. The thought of being aboard one of these merciless vessels with people who lay waste to the ocean makes my skin crawl, but I'm out of option, and I'm running out of time" (McConaghy 2020, 5f). The frontier between people who try to save animals and the ones who exploit and extinguish them is a central element of conflict in *Migrations*. This is also shown when Franny is violently attacked by an activist who has seen her with the crew of the fishing vessel (McConaghy 2020, 144f). *Migrations* depicts characters who do not believe in climate change or the extinction of animals, for example when stating that there always have been cycles and changes (McConaghy 2020, 114). This conflict between people who are strongly involved in protecting the environment and those who destroy it is somewhat softened through their interaction and communication. Franny tells the crew that "[t]his is predicted to be the last migration the terns will attempt. It's expected they won't survive it. […] Someone needs to witness how they survive so we can learn from it and help them. I don't believe we have to lose these birds. I know we don't" (McConaghy 2020, 23). As Franny becomes a part of the *Saghani* crew and talks about the terns, the crew begins to feel compassion for the terns similar to Franny's. When the terns land on the ship to rest on their migration route, the crew begins to connect with the animals (McConaghy 2020, 58f). Franny tries to answer many questions the crew has about the birds, stating that "it's simply remembering what it feels

like to love creatures that aren't human. A nameless sadness, the fading away of the birds. The fading away of the animals. How lonely it will be here, when it's just us" (McConaghy 2020, 58f). When the terns continue their migration, the crew comes to say goodbye — some of them even cry (McConaghy 2020, 59). Another example of the dissolving of contrasting points of view of Franny and the crew is a scene in which the crew drops a rare catch of fish because there is a sea turtle in the net that they do not want to kill (McConaghy 2020, 73). When Franny reacts surprisedly to this act of kindness, assuming that for a fisherman, profit is the only thing that counts, the captain of the *Saghani* seems disappointed in this assumption (McConaghy 2020, 73). McConaghy's novel ends with a glimpse of hope when Franny finds a huge colony of Arctic terns in the Antarctic and even other wild animals, for example, a whale (McConaghy 2020, 248). The crew's captain then tells Franny that he does not want to fish anymore: "I stopped wanting to catch them a long time ago. I've just needed to know they're still out here somewhere, that the ocean is still alive" (McConaghy 2020, 248). This highlights how communal acts can dissolve conflicts and can help to soften frontiers between people with different points of view.

Franny has no place she belongs to and cannot find a place of home. "I didn't belong. I wandered" (McConaghy 2020, 12). During her journey on the *Saghani*, Franny connects with the crew and, for the first time, begins to feel a sense of belonging somewhere. Although the sailors are a varied group of people, they are all the same: "They are migrants of the land, and they love it out here on an ocean that offered them a different way of life, they love this boat, and, as much as they may bicker and fight, they love each other" (McConaghy 2020, 76). This aspect can be compared to the third space created on Ghosh's *Ibis*. Although migration is associated with movements of leaving, in McConaghy's novel it is a means of finding belonging. Besides the individual migrations of the different characters, migration is also dealt with in general when Franny summarises that the way of all migrations has either to do with poverty or with war (McConaghy 2020, 77). This aspect also reflects colonialism when Franny notes that "[w]e don't belong there – we came from someplace else and we put our ugly flag in the ground and we slaughtered and stole and called it ours" (McConaghy 2020, 78). As has been shown previously, migration is not limited to the human sphere; animals also migrate. Another aspect of nature and non-human migration is the ocean which "never stops moving around the world. […] It reaches the Southern Ocean and grazes the icy water from the Antarctic, and then it gets flung across into the Pacific and the Indian. […] And then at last it turns for home. North again, all the way to the mighty Atlantic" (McConaghy 2020, 87). This journey takes a thousand years (McConaghy 2020, 88).

Migration including movements away and returning is extended to the natural entity of the ocean which ascribes the agency of nature into the novel. The ocean acts as a migrating agent, similar to humans and animals, and this also highlights that the whole world is in motion. By including different species as the novel's agents, *Migrations* stresses their connection. This is also shown when the species' frontier is blurred by the element of Franny wanting to be a bird (McConaghy 2020, 13) and by her recurrent dreams of choking on feathers in her lungs (McConaghy 2020, 13/126).

Summarizing, McConaghy's *Migrations* contains several concepts that interlink ecocriticism and migration by combining and comparing human and animal migration and by including aspects of belonging, agency, colonialism, frontiers, and conflict.

John Lanchester's *The Wall*, which was analysed in more detail in chapter 4, also connects migration and ecocriticism through the depiction of borders and conflict and surviving in a flooded world. Borders are established in many ways and separate physical, as well as ideological, entities. Through this, questions of safety and home are brought up; different forms of lifeboat symbolism are also employed. Throughout the novel, alterity plays an important role. John Lanchester is a British author who was born in Germany and grew up in Hong Kong (Allardice 2019, online). His parents are South African and Irish (Allardice 2019, online); therefore, his interest in migration stories is also part of the family history. Sandrock states that "[f]or Lanchester, these early years were formative for his conception of border epistemologies" (Sandrock 2020, 164). Migration and borders have influenced his life and novels. Hence, "[f]or Lanchester […] the instability of spatial and spiritual borders is a prevailing condition of this time" (Sandrock 2020, 164). In an interview with Allardice (2019), Lanchester states that for him, the image of a border is comforting and that he cannot understand fears of immigration, as people wanting to migrate to their place means that this place is safe. This aspect also plays a role in the analysed novel *The Wall*. Concerning climate change, Lanchester explains that in his fiction, he negotiates things happening in the world and that "there are all sorts of feedback effects of climate, which means we don't know how fast it is going to happen" (Allardice 2019, online).

In the same way, a further literary example of a novel from Europe must be discussed. Cynan Jones' *Stillicide* from 2019 negotiates ecocriticism and migration in the context of water shortage. The Welsh author describes a future scenario that depicts a world opposite to Lanchester's *The Wall*. Instead of protecting the cold and wet Britain from rising water levels, the novel's setting is shaped by dryness and lack of water. As water is not easily available anymore, it has to be transported by a Water Train that is strongly protected. The

depiction of violent conflict and borders between people, therefore, is also similar to Lanchester's novel. The construction of an Ice Dock that helps to gain water for the inhabitants of a city from ice blocks displaces many people, which causes protests among the population. Activism for nature and against exploitative corporations also play a role in *Stillicide*, as in *The Back of the Turtle*. Displacement not only takes place near the city but also at the coast, as people anticipate rising sea levels.

The title of Jones' novel refers to two important aspects of the narrative. "I'd never heard the word before. Stillicide. Water falling in drops" (Jones 2019, 59). The novel's title refers to a continual dropping of water, as well as a law, a right or duty relating to the collection of water from or onto adjacent land (Jones 2019). The term is drawn from the Latin *stilla* drop and *cadere* fall (Jones 2019). This implies the lack of water that prevails in Stillicide, but also the matter of environmental justice among the different groups of people and inhabitants of the city and the countryside. The lack of water provokes a conflict that separates different groups of people depending on their residency. The novel's setting is shaped by heat. "The way the heat throws itself back off the walls" (Jones 2019, 21). The dryness is also mirrored in descriptions such as "dust", "faint smoke", "dry riverbed", "silver-grey scrub" (Jones 2019, 90). Contrasting these images of heat and aridity is the longing for water that the characters express. "I think of all the water locked up in the cement of the Dock" (Jones 2019, 21). "I've been thinking about swimming. My whole body in deep water" (Jones 2019, 25). These passages show how omnipresent the thought of water is that every item is imagined in its context with water. The impact the pervasive drought has on the everyday lives of the characters is also shown by the description of their changed living conditions, for example, the banning of red meat which uses too much water in its production (Jones 2019, 47). Another aspect is depicted by a Professor who studies insects on rooftops and creates small habitats in which they can live. He believes that: "Give Nature space, and she will take it" (Jones 2029, 86). The small insect habitats he builds in the city show that nature can find a way of surviving if it is given space. Several animals are on a Red List as they are almost extinct (Jones 2019, 85). This shows the concern for the survival of animals. When the professor finds a dragonfly, he muses that "[a] dragonfly could stop an iceberg" (Jones 2019, 86), whereas the protesters in the city cannot stop the building of the Ice Dock. By including the perspective of the Professor, animal agency and animal rights are included in the novel.

Migration is dealt with through the displacement scenarios in *Stillicide*. The water company's plans to displace even more people are met with protests. "But perhaps the

protests will stop the work today. They say half a million people will be on the march. It's not that many, I suppose, in the context of the city. And few of them will be people who are actually affected. But the Mayor has announced that far more families will be moved from their homes than the water company first said. […] More homes will be knocked down. More families will be moved" (Jones 2019, 19). The different perspectives of people working for the water company and the ones possibly being left without a home cause differences and conflict between the two groups. As a result, activism against the water company is criticised for creating tensions in society. "There are always people who will look to destabilise society. […] To create division" (Jones 2019, 62). By leaving out the protesters' point of view, the sense of conflict is heightened, as the opposing perspective cannot explain itself. This conflict leads as far as bombing water pipes (Jones 2019, 148/164ff), for which reason the Water Train is strongly protected by arms and guards (Jones 2019, 5). In Jones' novel, water is gained through technological processes and science but also with the help of nature. This is depicted through water-collecting bags that are hung on leaves (Jones 2019, 38). "There is water in their breath. After a while they breathe enough to make a single coffee" (Jones 2019, 38). In this description, nature can be seen as an agent that is actively involved in the process of making water. Furthermore, it stresses human dependency on natural resources, in this case water, to survive.

Considering novels from many different parts of the world, the analysis in chapter 4 also includes a novel from Canada. *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King deals with home and belonging and its connection to the environment. In this, different migration movements are presented to show movements away and towards a place. The character's roots and Indigenous community play essential roles, as well as environmental degradation and its wide-reaching effects. As in some of the other novels, animals and their agency are included in the narrative. The novel concludes with return movements. Thomas King is an American-Canadian writer of Cherokee and Greek-German descent and lives in Canada. "King's childhood involved a continual movement between communities and across various racial and cultural boundaries" (Andrews et al. 2003, 4). This aspect is important for his literary works in which he includes several perspectives. "Thomas King's biography provides one context for understanding his work; in turn, his 'in-between' position, as a part-White and part-Native writer, affords him a particular perspective into the foundations of borders - not only at the level of nation but also through the complex intersections and divisions between the oral tradition and the printed word" (Andrews et al. 2003, 4). Indigenous points of view strongly influence the fiction of Thomas King. "A central element in this strategy is his

infusing his narrative with Indigenous markers—creation stories, Native motifs, and reinterpretations of Indigenous-white relations—in scathingly humorous way. These markers are evident in King's earlier works, including *Green Grass, Running Water* (2003), *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (2012), and *A Short History of Indians in Canada* (2012)" (Panda 2020, 326). In addition to the importance of Indigenous aspects, King also includes political and societal dimensions in his novels. "King imbues storytelling with political significance when envisioning the possibilities for inter-community solidarity in the age of environmental instability, suggesting that the sharing of stories can build solidarity" (Morrison 2018, 46). The aspect of community, which was pointed out in the analysis of *The Back of the Turtle*, is negotiated in different, often humorous ways that highlight the importance of collectively solving problems. "King emphasizes the importance of stories — especially stories employing humour to heal collective trauma — in creating communities and inter-community dialogue, and in offering hope for building what he calls "a truly civil society" through defining community priorities and guiding individual actions" (Morrison 2018, 49).

Ramabai Espinet's novel *The Swinging Bridge* from 2003 is another novel by a Canadian author that also deals with migration and includes aspects of the natural environment. The novel's focus lies on the migration history of the family of the main character Mona, whose grandparents migrated from India to Trinidad and parents from Trinidad to Canada. In the process of exploring her family's history, she discovers her attachment to her native land. The migration of Mona's grandparents, the *Kala Pani* [voyage across the black ocean], and their life as indentured labourers in Trinidad picks up several topics that are also dealt with in Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*. Mona's life in Canada is defined by othering processes and racism as in Lanchester's *The Wall* that give Mona the feeling of not belonging, which is similar to Gabriel in King's *The Back of the Turtle*.

Espinet's title hints at the instability that goes hand-in-hand with the feeling and experience of diaspora that is tied to the homeland as well as the host land. Mona is othered in Canadian society and often confronted with racist comments (Espinet 2003, 47). "We never spoke of it directly, even on that day we met again, although race was clearly the great wedge that had driven us apart when we were young" (Espinet 2003, 189). Alterity has defined many aspects of Mona's life as a migrant. However, the novel stresses that othering processes and racism are a universal problem when not only parts of the white society act racist, but also Mona's father is also confronted for his racist behaviour (Espinet 2003, 207). Mona questions migration when asking "[w]hy did people leave the place they were born

for an illusion of a better life? […] All of us migrants, the Chinese man, the black waiter, Da-Da never finding a place here, Babs turning into a brittle magazine girl, Kello dying – why did anyone leave?" (Espinet 2003, 26). Here negative aspects of migration are put into the focus. This is connected to colonial practices. "The Canadian missionaries had brought sweetness and light to us on their terms, wrapping us in a tight cocoon while they enjoyed the privileges of whiteness in a colonial society" (Espinet 2003, 81). Differences that originate from colonial practices still prevail Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*. This is also depicted when Mona questions her relationship. "Maybe being surrounded by family made me long for a shared past with another person, a shared history. Roddy's understanding of my life had the stamp of Third World studies or poli-sci course about it" (Espinet 2003, 151). For Mona, the differences between her and her boyfriend become evident when she begins to deal with her family and migration history.

Ecocritical topics are negotiated by mentions of a relation of Mona who dies in the Maracaibo oil fields in Venezuela (Espinet 2003, 17), or the altering of Trinidad by oil revenues (Espinet 2003, 278). When Mona returns to Trinidad after a long time, she notes that "the land had changed and I recognized nothing" (Espinet 2003, 121). Furthermore, notions of home and belonging are connected to aspects of nature and the environment. At the beginning of the novel, Mona feels uprooted. "In a way I understand his obsession fully because I too feel a sense of not being grounded anywhere" (Espinet 2003, 229). Mona discovers that her family has a strong attachment to land. "He had left home a long time ago, long before 1970 when we emigrated from Trinidad to Canada. He never returned to the island, as far as I know, even though I remembered vaguely some talk a few months ago about his buying back our land on Manahambre Road in Princess Town" (Espinet 2003,15). At first, Mona cannot understand why her brother Kello wants to claim back the property and land on which they grew up (Espinet 2003, 53). The navel string of Mona's father is buried beneath a tree on the land in which he was born. "Da-Da did not like the idea of migrating and starting all over, but in the end he decided to leave, even though it meant that his separation from the earth that made him, the earth where his navel string was buried, was now complete. It is true that navel strings mean something" (Espinet 2003, 77). The connection to nature, land, and environment that she describes in her brother and father is something that she experiences herself when she returns to Trinidad and her native land. "I lay face down on the earth, my first earth, breathing it" (Espinet 2003, 270). The connection Mona has felt to nature gives her a sense of home and belonging. "I left Trinidad in the afternoon with a mixture of sadness and excitement. In a strange way, I felt as if I was leaving

home for the first time" (Espinet 2003, 304). In addition to Mona finding a place of home and belonging, she makes peace with her history of migration, stating that she would have become a wanderer anyway (Espinet 2003, 303). In this way, she accepts her multicultural, hybrid self and overcomes colonial forms of othering. "Coming into our own meant celebrating our own culture and not some washed-out white people song and dance sent from England. It was real, this culture of ours, a Creole bacchanal, multiracial, multicultural, cosmopolitan" (Espinet 2003, 67). Mona's interpersonal development frees her from old colonial structures that have shaped her life. Colonial structures also play an important role in the next literary example.

The novel *Split Tooth* published by the Canadian and Inuit artist and singer Tanya Tagaq in 2018 depicts a world that is shaped by violence which the main character flees physically and emotionally. The novel is set in the arctic tundra of Nunavut in Canada, which is polluted and degraded in a way similar to its inhabitants. In contrast to the previously described novels, migration is mostly dealt with through the flight of ideas into the spiritual world that the main character undertakes to escape the realities of her life. This migration into the spiritual world highlights the connectedness to the natural environment but also the main characters' inability to physically move away from the destructive impacts. The violence and inability to escape are also dealt with in Habila's *Oil on Water*. The aspects of fleeing into a spiritual world in which humans also communicate with animals and nature can be compared to aspects of Wright's *The Swan Book*.

One of the main topics of Tagaq's novel is the destruction of nature and climate change. "As in her music, Tagaq's fiction makes explicit the relationship between the abuse of Indigenous women and girls and the destruction of the Earth" (Hulan 2022, 322). "Global warming will release the deeper smells and coax stories out of the permafrost. Who knows what memories lie deep in the ice. […] Earth's whispers released back into the atmosphere can only wreak havoc" (Tagaq 2018, 6). In *Split Tooth*, different aspects of environmental degradation are described often by depicting nature as an agent. As in the previous example, the effects of climate change are connected to the actions of the natural surroundings. Furthermore, nature is imagined as speaking for itself and to humans. "I am coming to save you from yourselves, says the Sun, I am coming to save you from Moon […]" (Tagaq 2018, 76). Another example of this personification of nature is the wind: "Wind screams urgently, shaking the house. Wind sings but carries an axe instead of a note" (Tagaq 2018, 36). These examples illustrate how non-human agency and voice are included in the novel. "*Split Tooth* resists the expectations of literary fiction by creating a fiction in which the everyday and the

eternal, the mundane and the spiritual, cannot be separated" (Hulan 2022, 324). The novel stresses the idea of the importance of non-humans also by focusing on nature and its equal existence. "Not part of this boring old town of twelve hundred souls (if you only count the humans, but whoever said only humans can have the universe living in them?)" (Tagaq 2018, 12). The novel includes passages that humorously mirror the destructive behaviour of human agents. "These foxes will harm school children; better to put them out of their misery. These humans will destroy the earth; better to put them out of their misery. Right now we are Earth Eaters […]" (Tagaq 2018, 61). Following the logic of killing the foxes that harm children, the protagonist imagines killing humans that harm nature. This hints towards the violence that defines the novel's atmosphere and the protagonist's life as neglect and abuse are her daily companions. "Inhale small fears they turn into doubts into words into ideas into anger into hatred into violence" (Tagaq 2018, 10). The protagonist experiences this escalation in the form of sexual abuse (Tagaq 2018, 4/13) and rape (Tagaq 2018, 113f), violent conflict in school (Tagaq 2018, 40/124f), and beatings between adults (Tagaq 2018, 1f/31).

Furthermore, *Split Tooth* negotiates different notions of home. For example, there is Helen's home, which is described as an ideal and comforting place. "Home sounds. Peace sounds. Safety sounds" (Tagaq 2018, 164). Such notions of home are also found in the natural environment. "The plywood becomes home in the vast treelessness. The wood becomes a dark sanctuary safe from all the predators" (Tagaq 2018, 18). This highlights that for the main character, who experiences different forms of violence, home is associated with safety and comfort. However, this sense of home is strongly connected to nature. "The sea seems eternal. She offers comfort in form of Vast Solidarity. Our Original Home" (Tagaq 2018, 54). This passage shows how home and belonging are strongly connected to nature and the environment, which includes Indigenous perspectives in the novel. After mentioning Anglican ministers, the protagonist states "I never understood how foreigners could come and tell us where to die and where to live. Where to be buried and how to breed" (Tagaq 2018, 119). Colonial practices and their effects are negotiated in the context of the narrative which is also highlighted by the dedication at the beginning of *Split Tooth*: "For the Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls, and survivors of residential schools" (Tagaq 2018). The violence the protagonist experiences at her home and the safety nature offers her moves her to constantly flee from places of human impact. "Best to get out of town" (Tagaq 2018, 24). As a child, the protagonist constantly wanders away from home into nature (Tagaq 2018, 24ff). As she gets older, the protagonist's escapes shift to the consumption of substances (Tagaq 2018, 98) and fleeing into her imagination. The protagonist begins to

imagine and experience the spirit world. "Does it [energy] cast itself into the wind and leave our vessels lonely? Do our spirits travel with the wind?" (Tagaq 2018, 132). "They often want me to leave my consciousness and come to them into the spirit world where we can communicate freely" (Tagaq 2018, 133). This form of escape and its Indigenous point of view is comparable to the imagined migration described by the grandfather in Winch's *The Yield*. It highlights the connectedness to nature as well as the inability to physically migrate or move away from a place.

The novels that are analysed in chapter 4 and the novels that are shortly dealt with in this chapter show that there is a strong connection between ecocriticism and migration in many anglophone contemporary novels. All the mentioned novels connect migration and ecocriticism through different aspects and perspectives. This has been pointed out through the multitude of theories that are drawn from several disciplines. To subsume these findings, five conceptual layers can be determined that categorize linking points. These include colonialism and remaining structures, environmental destruction and pollution, displacement and diaspora, violence and conflict, and notions of home and imagining alternative ways of acting. This chapter has shown that besides the different shapes in which connection is depicted, connection seems to be universal in contemporary novels that negotiate these topics no matter where the author is from, in which country the novel is set, or which continent is affected. This shows that the negotiation with environmental matters and migration is found worldwide, and different connections can be found that link these topics. Additionally, the novels have linked local issues with global ones, leading to the concept of the glocal (cf. chapter 3.2). In chapter 2, the separate fields of migration studies and ecocriticism have been put into the context of postcolonial studies, showing that each field has gained importance in literary scholarship. Also, in general discourse and politics, migration and climate crisis are often dealt with separately, although the recent attention to climate refugees has brought focus to a point that links both topics. Literature offers the possibility to depict the connecting factors of ecocriticism and migration in more detail, going beyond climate change and climate refugees but dealing with ecocritical aspects of migration more thoroughly. Also, the tendency of uniting the fields of ecocriticism and migration in each literary work has a different focus that depends on the specific region and its individual history, politics, and current situation. This can be observed in the different novels that each have a unique focus and approach. The international choice of anglophone novels highlights the fact that the English language was implemented worldwide during colonialism, similar to the colonial structures that have played a major role in the damages

that are negotiated in the chosen literary works. Therefore, the globally accepted English language can help to communicate the grievances that remain from colonialism and illustrate alternatives. This functions as an act of decolonization in a double sense, as the language is appropriated by the former colonized subjects and additionally used to deconstruct the effects of colonial practices.

In the introductory chapter, the important concept of anthropocentrism was explained, characterising the shaping of Earth by humans. In his book *Anthropocene Realism – Fiction in the Age of Climate Change*, John Thieme (2023) asks "what happens to fiction when global warming and other consequences of Anthropocene behaviour disrupt supposed geological and meteorological norms, upend the very notion of a stable social order and unsettle epistemological assumptions about the situation of human and non-human life on earth?" (1). As the introductory chapter has already shown, the Anthropocene has far-reaching effects on humans, nature, and animals. Thieme (2023) highlights the role of fiction in communicating the urgency of the crisis and its international consequences (5). This point has also been shown through the analysis of the novels in this thesis. Thieme (2023) finds that "personification of non-human Nature, its attribution of emotions to the sea and its giving voice to mountains and rivers, makes a significant movement beyond human focalization" and "negates the tendency to see the climate crisis as a solely human problem" (172). Therefore, "novels redefine the remit of the realist novel by undermining the notion that humankind occupies a privileged sovereign space, apart from the lives of all the other species on the planet" (Thieme 2023, 174).

This idea of moving away from the exceptional position of humans and instead including Earth as a whole system can be linked to the concept of post-anthropocentrism. Moslund et al. describe post-anthropocentrism as a concept that "displace[s] the human from the centre of reality" (Moslund et al. 2021, 3). Before realising to what extent humans have altered the world, non-humans have not been perceived as important. "Things and objects, all kinds of matter and natural phenomena, climate, geology and the otherness of the body are re-understood as nonhuman dimensions in human life whose reality shaping significance has been overlooked, obscured or ignored – by our everyday utilisations and objectifications of mute matter and objects as well as by the history of thought and theorisations of life and reality" (Moslund et al. 2021, 3). Moslund et al. (2021) state that post-anthropocentric theory is still in the early stage of literary studies, yet increasingly incorporated in readings of fiction (4). Thereby, post-anthropocentrism deals with "how literature may offer a unique space of reflection in which objects, matter and human–reality relations come into play in ways that

are not entirely governed by anthropocentric knowledge and meaning constructions" (Moslund et al. 2021, 16f). This shows that despite being situated right in the middle of the Anthropocene, a post-anthropocentric perspective can help to imagine alternative perspectives that place the focus beyond the human. Another concept that describes this idea is posthumanism, which proposes "an alternative view that understands nature as far from inert, and foregrounding vital materiality" (Sankaran 2023, 1). By referring primarily to Ghosh's *The Great Derangement*, Sankaran (2023) deals with "how politics has played a major role in shaping not only the contours of globalization, but also literary and artistic trends" and how the emphasis on "exclusive human agency have influenced human thought and actions" (2). This reveals several similarities with post-anthropocentrism. "Ghosh introduces us to the idea of the human-nature continuum and how all things on Earth are interrelated. This idea is at the centre of the posthuman concept" (Sankaran 2023, 4). Also, considerations of post-anthropocentrism and posthumanism draw the line to previously explained ideas of nature-culture dualism and connected delineations. "A primary intervention in posthumanism is to interrogate familiar binaries such as 'nature/culture' and 'human/non-human.' For example, Donna Haraway (2003) develops the concept of 'naturecultures,' where these are perceived as entangled, hybrid spaces that operate as continuums" (Sankaran 2023, 6). Looking at humans and non-humans as equals also means further overriding the nature-culture dualism that separates humans from the natural environment. Imagining ecocritical aspects of migration from a post-anthropocentric point of view has been particularly achieved in novels in which the perspective of nature and animals has been explicitly included in the narrative. In this thesis, *The Swan Book*, *The Back of the Turtle*, and *Gun Island* represent the best examples.

New historicism has been explained and defined in chapter 1 as a literary theory that aims to understand history through literature and its cultural context. This postmodern approach to history describes how social discourse and aesthetic discourse are bound up and determine each other (cf. Greenblatt 1989) and offers an important projection on the interwoven aspects that interlink environmentalism and migration. In fiction, different spheres are relevant, among them the historical and cultural context, which has been placed in the forefront by setting the analysed novels into their postcolonial context. As a result, it has become evident that colonialism has strongly affected the natural environment and factors of migration and still continues to do so. Therefore, the historical and cultural context of environmental topics and experiences of migration interlink these two fields by colonialism. Considering this, the inclusion of perspectives from outside of the former

colonial centre, such as the points of view of marginalized groups, Indigenous peoples, or, generally, people from the Global South, is an important means to understand history and literature. As the cultural context in which literature is written, published, and read extends beyond the Global North and, as the previous paragraph has argued, beyond the boundaries of the human, it is essential to include a multitude of perspectives in and on literary works.

6. Conclusion

In this concluding chapter, the structure of this thesis on ecocritical negotiations of migration in contemporary postcolonial anglophone fiction is shortly summarized, and the findings in reference to the research questions are recapitulated. Additionally, further research possibilities are outlined as well as connected aspects to other fields of study. The topic of ecocritical negotiation of migration in contemporary postcolonial anglophone fiction is introduced by linking current political and societal debates on environmental issues and migration. Through this, the interdependence of ecological aspects of human movements and mobility is connected to questions of the relevance for societal and political development. The novels that were chosen in the analytical part of this thesis and their British colonial background represent an important factor as they unite the countries not only in their English language but also in parts of their shared history which forms the basis for several developments that interconnect the fields of ecocriticism and migration. These aspects are mirrored in literary texts from these countries, which form essential means of reflecting on environmental and societal developments and imagining alternatives. The advantage of examining the interconnections of ecocriticism and migration through literary texts lies in the extensive variety of perspectives on the field as well as being involved and involving the reader in individual stories that depict the topics in great detail. The fictional negotiation of the topic reaches an extended audience and possibly evokes a deeper understanding.

The introductory chapter includes short explanations of the terminology of interdisciplinarity, new historicism, and the Anthropocene, as these concepts form fundamental suppositions of the thesis. In addition, the presentation and contextualisation of this work within the broader framework of the subject is important. In this way, it is shown that although some scholarship has touched on the connection between ecocriticism and

migration, a thorough and deeper negotiation is still infrequently considered. The last subchapter of the introduction highlights the importance of including a multitude of perspectives in the negotiation on ecocriticism and migration. This is not only important in the context of decolonizing subjects and objects from the former British colonies but also in order to include voices of the Global South in the general discourse.

The second chapter of this thesis explains and then connects the topics of ecocriticism and migration to the broader framework of postcolonial studies. Postcolonialism refers to the complex notions of considering the period of time after colonialism without neglecting the fact that colonial aspects and/or neo-colonialism still exist. The field of ecocriticism that deals with environmental dimensions of literature has developed in continuing waves that shape and broaden the scope of literary criticism on environmental issues. By combining ecocriticism and postcolonialism, the fields of study offer the chance to examine relationships between humans, animals, and nature in postcolonial literary texts. The long literary tradition of writing on nature not only highlights the human interest in nature and natural phenomena but also stresses the importance of critically engaging in human-nature relationships through an ecocritical perspective. Similar to the long history of the interest of humans in nature, migration is a consistent phenomenon of humanity. What is often described as a problematic, simplified, and imminent process is a complex and multifaceted field that deals with human and non-human movements in various contexts. The variety of definitions of migration emphasises the multiple aspects that play a role in migration. Among them are different concepts that reflect the diverse field of study with a wide scope of approaches. Contextualising migration within postcolonial studies highlights the massive impact colonialism had on migration movements worldwide and continues to have, playing a major role in the connection of the globalization of the world but also by displacing people through the altering of their local native environments. Literary theory has developed a continual interest in human migration movements, more recently as well in the context of postcolonial studies. Literary works on travels, exile, and other forms of migration deal with the contact of different people and cultures and the different outcomes of these exchanges.

In the third chapter, the until-then separately dealt with fields of ecocriticism and migration are put into context with one another by introducing theories that connect the two fields of study. The theories that cover an interdisciplinary scope represent smaller concepts that reveal in which ways environmental topics are interlinked with migration movements. These include alterity and the subaltern in connection with colonization processes and questions of diaspora, identity, and hybridity. Also, environmental justice and forms of

violence are portrayed. Voice, agency, and trauma are further theoretical concepts that connect migration and climate change. Frontiers are discussed in the context of nationalism and conflict and lastly, notions of home and belonging are situated within the fields of ecocriticism and migration. The theories are chosen because of their interdisciplinary origins and their connection to the frame of postcolonial studies. The choice of theories is suited for the analytical part due to their multifaceted character and their openness to interpretation.

In order to answer the research questions, the individual aspects of the theories are exerted on fictional texts. Therefore, the fourth chapter applies the theoretical concepts of chapters 3 to five selected novels and shows in which ways the literary texts link ecocritical topics and migration. The five novels on which the main focus was placed were published between the years 2008 and 2019 and offer a thorough choice of contemporary points of view. *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh (2008), *Oil on Water* by Helon Habila (2011), *The Wall* by John Lanchester (2019), *The Swan Book* by Alexis Wright (2013), and *The Back of the Turtle* by Thomas King (2017) serve as the main examples in the analytical part of this thesis. In *Sea of Poppies*, colonization processes on people and nature are depicted through the migration of colonizers and indentured labourers that create a hybrid identity on their journey of diaspora. The focus of *Oil on Water* is on the violent conflicts that arise from oil extraction practices, which affect people and nature and displace locals from their homes narrated through the perspective of the journalist Rufus. Displacement is also an issue in *The Swan Book* in which voice, agency, and climate change are illustrated through an Indigenous point of view by the mute main character Oblivia. The novel *The Wall* again picks up the matter of violence by negotiating frontiers in a world shaped by disastrous climate change and refugees and in which Kavanagh learns that strict categories cannot be maintained in a complex world. Lastly, *The Back of the Turtle* reflects on notions of home and belonging by drawing connections between displacement, return migration movements of Gabriel and Mara, environmental destruction, and Indigenous revivance.

Additional novels are considered in the fifth chapter to broaden the context of the topic and to illustrate briefly how other literary texts negotiate ecocriticism and migration. These novels originate from the period between the years 2003 and 2020. They include Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island* (2019), Kate Grenville's *The Secret River* (2018), Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist* (2006), Tara June Winch's *The Yield* (2020), Charlotte McConaghy's *Migrations* (2020), Cynan Jones' *Stillicide* (2019), Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge* (2003), and Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* (2018). It is shown that the theories of chapter 3 can

also be applied to a broader choice of contemporary novels, which highlights the importance of interlinking ecocritical topics and issues of migration.

The interlinkages that are described in the course of this thesis reveal the findings that can be drawn. This thesis focuses on whether and in which ways ecocriticism and migration are negotiated in contemporary novels. The introductory chapter asked on what fields these interconnections touch and what relevance this has for our everyday life. To conclude this thesis on ecocritical negotiations of migration in contemporary postcolonial anglophone fiction, the main aspects are summarised and restated in the following. The choice of thirteen contemporary novels shows that ecocriticism and migration studies are connected not only on a theoretical level but also in literary texts. In Amitav Ghosh's *Sea of Poppies*, colonial practices, and diasporic experiences function as the central means of connecting the two fields and additionally making contact with the overarching field of postcolonial studies. Environmental justice and different forms of violence represent the main focus of Helon Habila's *Oil on Water*. The novel *The Swan Book* deals with ecocritical negotiations of migration by setting questions of voice, agency, and trauma in the context of climate change-induced migration. Climate change and violence are also important elements of John Lanchester's *The Wall*, in which the focus lies on different aspects of the frontier. In Thomas King's *The Back of the Turtle*, home and belonging are interlinked with environmental destruction and pollution. This reveals that the connection between ecocriticism and migration touches on the fields of effects of colonialism, processes of identity formation, violence, conflict, different forms of displacement, notions of home, and challenging frontiers. Ecocritical aspects are linked to human and non-human movements that shape the world and influence each other. The additional literary examples in chapter 5 highlight the general tendency to deal with points of contact between ecocriticism and migration in contemporary fiction. Therefore, Amitav Ghosh's *Gun Island*, Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*, Tanure Ojaide's *The Activist*, Tara June Winch's *The Yield*, McConaghy's *Migrations*, Cynan Jones' *Stillicide*, Ramabai Espinet's *The Swinging Bridge*, and Tanya Tagaq's *Split Tooth* are briefly introduced and connected to the research question. The paradigms that interlink the two main topics of ecocriticism and migration reflect the different conceptual layers in which this connection is depicted in literary fiction. In short, these contain colonialism and remaining structures, environmental destruction and pollution, displacement and diaspora, violence and conflict, and notions of home and imagining alternative ways of acting. The analysis has further shown that each region has its own local issues and points of view but that the overarching topics are present universally. This

highlights the connectedness of our globalized world, which shares especially the aspects of environmental degradation and human movement but also stresses the need to consider a multitude of voices and not dismiss other points of view.

By negotiating migration and ecocriticism in each other's context, not only the urgency of the climate crisis and the need for structural changes is highlighted but also the connection to and implicitness of migration. Regardless of whether a movement refers to humans or non-humans, or whether a national border is crossed or migration takes place within a nation, it refers to a natural and normal process. The literary examples have shown that no matter whether people flee from a problematic situation, for example, an eco-system that is altered by colonial practices (as in *Sea of Poppies*), climate change (as in *The Swan Book*), or pollution and environmental degradation (as in *Oil on Water*) or whether their migration movement consists of returning to their roots and possibly a place with challenges in order to improve the situation, for example by reviving Indigenous perspectives (as in *The Back of the Turtle*), claiming Native Title (as in *The Yield*), or invigorating environmental justice locally (as in *The Activist*), migration is a normal human practice that has formed part of human life for thousands of years. Furthermore, animals, such as birds (as in *The Swan Book* or in *Migrations*), turtles (as in *The Back of the Turtle*), or sea mammals (as in *Gun Island*), naturally migrate across the world. These examples stress the importance of reconsidering migration as a complex and multifaceted process in which the movements and the moving agents are diverse. Perceiving migrants only as refugees, asylum seekers, or illegal aliens does not encompass the many-sided realities of migration movements and their intertwined connections to environmental matters. The literary works chosen in this thesis represent good examples for depicting the complexity of the fields and opening up the one-sided image of migration that prevails in current media representations. As the quote of Draga Alexandrou (2017) in the introductory chapter claims, the value of literary works lies in the power of example but also in the capacity of literature to imagine alternative worlds (39f).

In this thesis, a special interest is placed on the consideration of different perspectives in order to compare the anglophone texts from different world regions. Therefore, the novel's settings in the Global North and the Global South are highlighted, as well as the depiction of Western points of view and Indigenous opinions. Rather than regarding different perspectives as two poles or oppositions, this thesis shows that impacts on the natural environment are connected to migration regardless of the perspective that is taken in the novel. However, the inclusion of a multitude of voices pinpoints special interests and

problems of different regions and is an important means of contemplating the interrelatedness of the world. Also, it is essential to deal with different voices and perspectives in order to involve a plurality of the topic and broaden one's understanding. This has special relevance in contemporary societies in which many areas develop tendencies of excluding other opinions and reestablishing exclusionary structures. Right-wing politicians in particular seek to give simple answers to complex questions and thereby exclude a multitude of people and their points of view.

Besides the general assertion of dealing with different perspectives, this thesis also places its focus on animals and nature in the ecocritical negotiation of migration. By recognizing not only their affectedness by changes to their habitats and connected displacement but also their agency, the needs of non-humans are put into the context of the larger topic. Taking perspectives beyond human borders in what has been previously described as post-anthropocentric or posthuman perspective represents an important means of acknowledging their rights and imagining at a fictional level what these rights might include. "The posthumanist goal is to decentre the human" and show that that "the nonhuman and the natural are perceived as endowed with agency" (Sankaran 2023, 6). Moving away from perspectives that place the human at the centre of everything and instead viewing the Earth as a whole in which non-human entities have needs and rights as well offers great opportunities for creating new structures that improve living conditions and help to tackle the climate crisis. This holistic contemplation of the world deepens the understanding of interconnections and interrelations.

Drawing theoretical concepts from different disciplines represents an important tool of this thesis, as it connects theories from two different fields of study. Topics of migration studies and environmental matters are mostly dealt with individually in literary texts and their receptions. However, this thesis has shown in which ways ecocritical concerns are interlinked with different aspects of migration. By combining theories from multiple disciplines, new ideas and approaches arise. Among these interdisciplinary theories is the concept of new historicism, which reinforces the interconnectedness of ecocriticism and migration as it links the historical and literary context of both fields. The overarching literary approach of postcolonial studies not only offers a theoretical framework but also forms the essential basis for understanding literature in its historical context. As the current world is shaped by colonialism and the remaining impacts, aspects of colonisation play an important role in understanding contemporary conditions. Although we live in post-colonial times, the influences of imperialism still have a significant effect on many aspects of this world. This

is mirrored and reflected in literature and, to a great extent, in contemporary literature that seeks to critically engage in decolonizing societies, giving a voice to more people, and including heterogeneous points of view in the general public.

Current news and media have a special interest in issues of migration as well as the climate crisis. Particular attention is given to problems that are ascribed to increasing migration—often without considering and connecting the backgrounds or points of view of the involved. Despite a more reflected portrayal of the climate crisis in which human agency is appointed as the root cause, the topic remains highly debated and controversial in the media. This ranges from statements in which people still deny climate change, often situated in right-wing politics, to extreme claims, advocated by groups such as Extinction Rebellion or The Last Generation. Partially, these fields are considered interrelated in general discourse, for example, when reporting on climate refugees. A recent example in the German context is the flood in the Ahr Valley[21] in 2021, where due to environmental changes, water masses destroyed the local environment and people's homes, displacing a great number of people. In media representations of this event, connections often were drawn between the climate crisis and people displacement. By dealing with the connectedness of environmental topics and migration on a fictional basis, their transfer into the real world can be reimagined. This can help draw general links between these topics and develop strategies for dealing with extreme weather conditions and human displacement but also for preventing further deterioration of the climate crisis. Also, learning from and imagining alternative solutions offers possibilities for broadening the scope of ideas besides the ones that are discussed in political debates.

Summarising the findings of this thesis, the diverse theories and concepts have shown in which ways environmental topics are interwoven with aspects of migration and movement. Colonialism has shaped our connected and globalized world in several ways that still influence many parts of our lives. By viewing ecocritical negotiations of migration through a postcolonial lens, these shaping features become evident. In order to create a more just world and equal rights for humans and non-humans, the structures that determine our world need to be made visible and questioned. Departing from these insights, further research should investigate if other fields interlink environmental topics and migration. For

[21] "In 2021, Germany experienced the biggest natural disaster in its recent history. In the Ahr Valley to the west of Bonn, 134 people died […]. The floodwaters, which ravaged the Ahr Valley during the night of 14 to 15 July following extremely heavy rainfall, injured 766 people and damaged around 3,000 of the 4,200 buildings situated along the River Ahr. The Ahr Valley is home to 56,000 people: 42,000 were affected by the flooding, and at least 17,000 either lost their homes and belongings or suffered considerable damage." (Deutschland.de 2021, online)

example, greater attention should be given to the situation of internally displaced people in refugee camps and connected environmental topics, such as water supply or pollution. Additionally, literary representations of connected social trends should be researched in relation to their time of writing and historical background. Also, applying the questions posed in this thesis to other literary forms and media represents an important field of investigation. For example, short stories, poetry, or non-fiction, as well as films and series, feature important means of negotiating topics such as ecocriticism and migration. The importance of films and series is growing increasingly and reaches an even broader audience that can become involved in the interconnections that the fields offer. Therefore, taking a deeper look into the ways in which other formats depict the interconnections of environmental topics and migration emerges as a further field of research. Also, the posed questions should be expanded to literature and media in other languages in order to further compare the representations of ecocriticism and migration. Considering the importance and urgency of the negotiated topics in recent times, a multifaceted and broad perspective on both fields individually, as well as their connecting points, is essential for developing ideas for improving the situation of the climate crisis as well as increasing migration numbers. Literature, especially in the form of fiction, offers unique and deep insights into experiences that help to imagine alternative ways of living and create awareness and understanding of other points of view. By uniting aspects of past, present, and future into fictional negotiations the significance of interrelations is brought to the forefront, leading to deeper understanding and involvement.

7. Bibliography

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8. Appendix

8.1 Statistics: State of Global Climate 2023 (Source: WMO 2023, online)

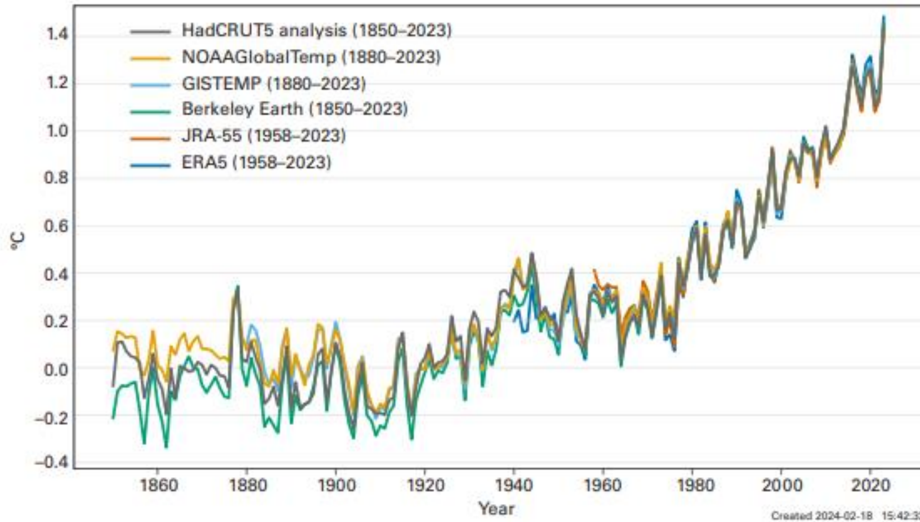

Figure 2. Annual global mean temperature anomalies (relative to 1850–1900) from 1850 to 2023. Data are from six data sets as indicated in the legend, see Data set and methods for details.

Figure 1: Temperature anomalies

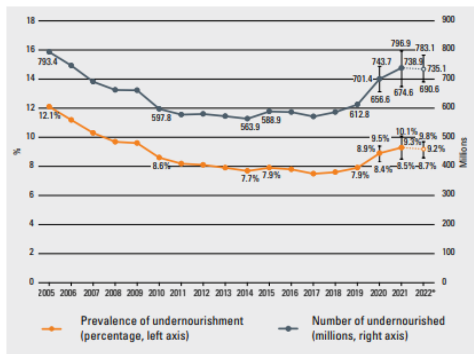

Figure 25. Global prevalence of undernourishment (as a%) and number of undernourished (in millions) since 2005.
Source: The entire series was updated to reflect new information released since the publication of The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2023.[103]

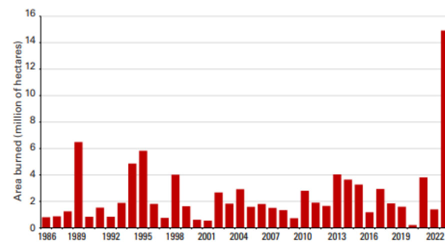

Figure 24. Annual Area Burned in Canada 1986–2023 (millions of hectares).
Source: Jain et al. (2024)[87]

Figure 2: Undernourishment

Figure 3: Burnt Areas in Canada

8.2 Statistics displaced people UNHRC (Source: UNHCR 2023, online).

108.4 million people worldwide were forcibly displaced: At the end of 2022 as a result of persecution, conflict, violence, human rights violations or events seriously disturbing public order.

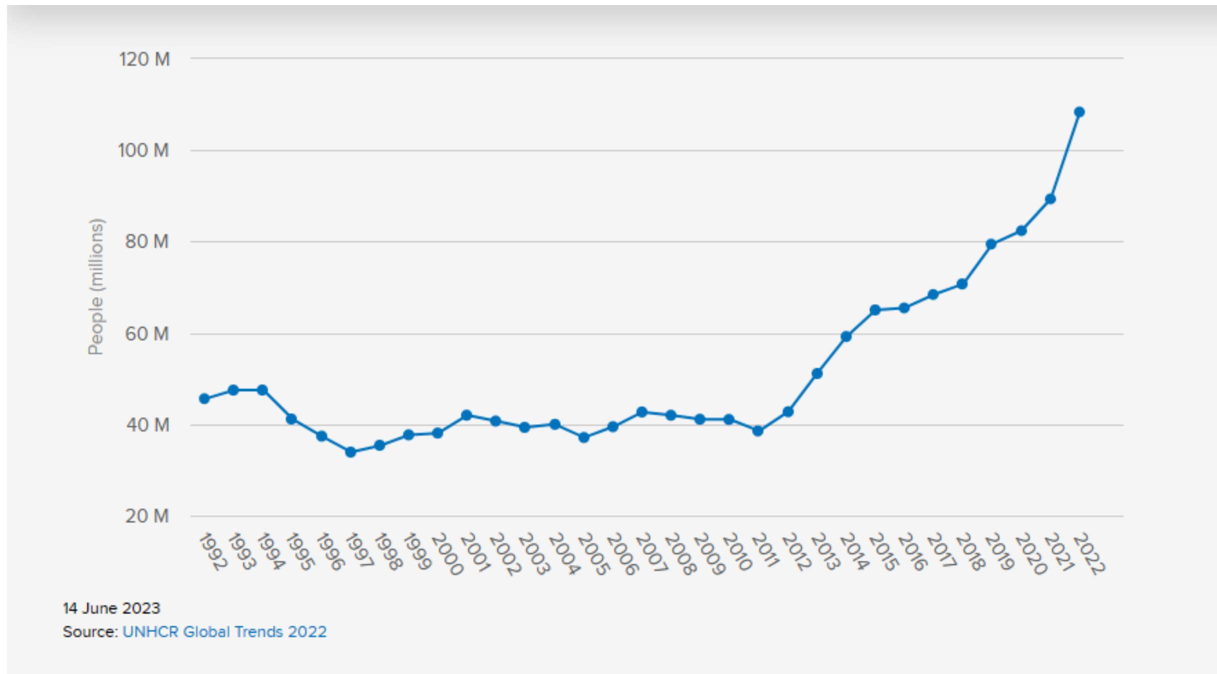

Figure 4: Number of displaced people

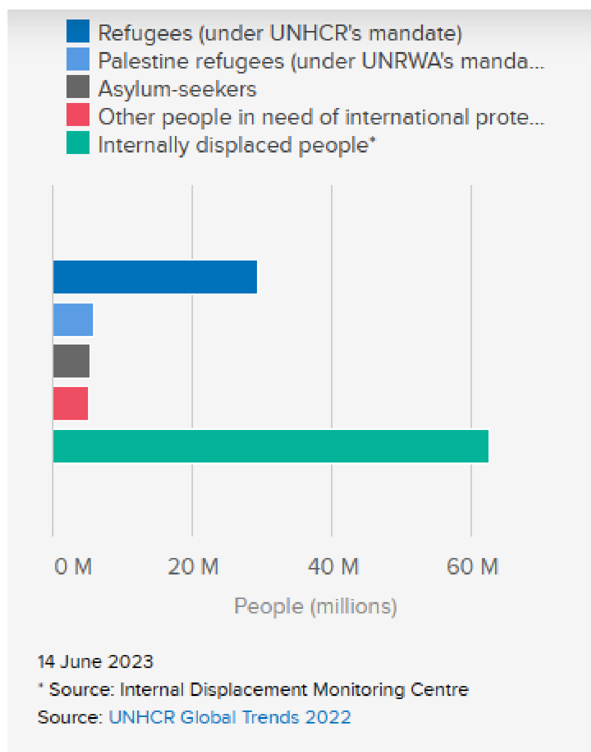

Figure 5: Number of internally displaced

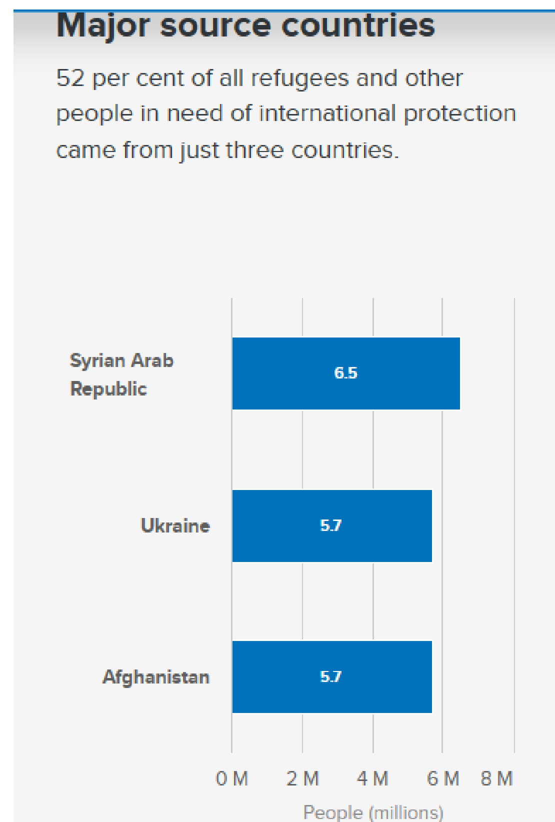

Figure 6: Major source countries of displaced

9. Erklärungen gemäß § 7 der Promotionsordnung

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Erklärungen (gem. § 7 der Promotionsordnung)

Promovend(in): Ballantyne, Hannah
(Nachname, Vorname)

Fach: Englische Philologie

Titel der Dissertation:
Ecocritical Negotiations of Migration in Contemporary Postcolonial Anglophone Fictions

☒ Ich habe bisher noch keinen Versuch zum Erwerb eines Doktortitels einer Philosophischen oder einer anderen Fakultät unternommen und befinde mich in keinem schwebenden Verfahren.

☐ Ich habe einen Versuch zum Erwerb eines Doktortitels einer Philosophischen oder einer anderen Fakultät unternommen:
- ☐ Das Verfahren war erfolgreich
- ☐ Das Verfahren war erfolglos
- ☐ Das Verfahren ist noch nicht abgeschlossen

Entsprechende Unterlagen habe ich beigefügt.

Köln, den 10.04.2024

Ich versichere eidesstattlich, dass ich die von mir vorgelegte Dissertation selbstständig und ohne unzulässige Hilfe angefertigt, die benutzten Quellen und Hilfsmittel vollständig angegeben und die Stellen der Arbeit einschließlich Tabellen, Karten und Abbildungen, die anderen Werken im Wortlaut oder dem Sinn nach entnommen sind, in jedem Einzelfall als Entlehnung kenntlich gemacht habe; dass diese Dissertation noch keiner anderen Fakultät oder Hochschule zur Prüfung vorgelegen hat; dass sie, ggf. abgesehen von einer durch die oder den Vorsitzenden des Promotionsausschusses nach Rücksprache mit der betreuenden Hochschullehrerin bzw. dem betreuenden Hochschullehrer vorab genehmigten Teilpublikation, noch nicht veröffentlicht worden ist sowie dass ich eine solche Veröffentlichung vor Abschluss des Promotionsverfahrens nicht vornehmen werde.
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Die von mir vorgelegte Dissertation ist von Prof. Dr. Heinz Antor betreut worden.

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