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Nature as Feminine: An Eco-Feminist Reading of Selected Latin American
Narrative

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Spanish

by

Marina Najera

June 2018

Dissertation Committee:

Dr. Raymond L. Williams, Chairperson

Dr. Christina Soto van der Plas

Dr. Covadonga Lamar-Prieto

The Dissertation of Marina Najera is approved:

Committee Chairperson
University of California, Riverside

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As Western culture became increasingly mechanized in the 1600s, the female earth and virgin earth spirit were subdued by the machine.

Carolyn Merchant, *The Death of Nature*

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

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Narrative

by

Marina Najera

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Spanish
University of California, Riverside, June 2018
Dr. Raymond Leslie Williams, Chairperson

This project examines representations of feminine subjugation in the natural world in 20th century Latin American narrative, in particular narrative from Mexico and Colombia respectively, through the lens of ecocriticism and, more specifically, eco-feminism. I explore the ways in which some literary works represent the interconnectedness of humans and the environment and how this relationship mirrors the hegemonic patriarchal structures of Western society, paying particular attention to the oppressive structures operating against feminine, marginal beings, human or non-human. I would like to avoid binaries, specifically the binary of man and woman. When referring to the feminine, I include any marginal individuals, regardless of their gender. Most importantly to this project is the two-pronged domination of the earth and the marginal beings who inhabit it. In this introduction, I will examine discussions on feminism and the environment as well as recapitulating criticism regarding environmental reevaluation of literature eventually narrowing it down to ecofeminism in Latin America. In Chapter One I review the literature regarding ecocriticism, a field concentrated on reviewing the

representation of nature in literature, as well as review the field of ecofeminism within a Latin American context. In Chapter Two I explore the impact of globalization and industrialization and its implications on the natural world in *La tierra pródiga* (1960) by Agustín Yáñez and *La parcela* (1898) by José López Portillo y Rojas. I posit that the domination of nature mimics the domination of marginal beings which thus produces a differential in society. In Chapter Three I focus on two urban novels, *Morirás lejos* (1967), by José Emilio Pacheco, and *Paraíso Travel* (2001) written by Jorge Franco. In discussing these novels, I extend the discussion of ecocriticism to include the city, which is to be considered a living and adapting organism. For this novel, my intent is to focus on the domestication of nature that is imposed by the incessant need for humans to control and find order amongst the chaos of the natural world. In the final analysis chapter, Chapter Four, I draw my focus onto the Colombian novel by Jorge Franco, *El mundo de afuera* (2014). For the analysis of all aforementioned novels, I draw from theories of colonization stemming from the studies of Anibal Quijano and Nelson Maldonado-Torres as well as drawing from the ample gender studies of Judith Butler.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to Eco-criticism and Eco-feminism

In this project I examine representations of feminine subjugation in the natural world in 20th century Latin American narrative, in particular narrative from Mexico and Colombia respectively, through the lens of eco-criticism and, more specifically, eco-feminism. I explore the ways in which some literary works represent the interconnectedness of humans and the environment and how this relationship mirrors the hegemonic patriarchal structures of Western society, paying particular attention to the oppressive structures operating against feminine, marginal beings, human or non-human. I would like to avoid binaries, specifically the binary of man and woman. When referring to the feminine, I include any marginal individuals, regardless of their sex. Most importantly to this project is the two-pronged domination of the earth and the marginal beings who inhabit it. In this introduction, I will examine discussions on feminism and the environment as well as recapitulating criticism regarding environmental reevaluation of literature eventually narrowing it down to ecofeminism in Latin America. I will then conclude with summaries of the chapters in my work.

Eco-criticism, also known as ecological criticism, has begun to flourish primarily due to the current strain the natural world finds itself in. The field of literary eco-criticism is a discipline that utilizes Earth-centered approaches to explore the relationship between nature and its representation in cultural artifacts of language and literature. Eco-criticism pioneer, Lawrence Buell, has noted that

in environmental texts, the environment takes precedent as an equally important entity, “The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (Buell 7). Through an ecological literary analysis, literature and the environment are interconnected and one relationship is fomented by the other and vice versa.

Eco-criticism traces its roots back to the 1960s, when environmental issues began to take precedent in the political arena. American marine biologist and conservationist Rachel Carson is often credited with progressing the global environmental movement with her notable book *Silent Spring* published in 1962. *Silent Spring* documents the detrimental effects the indiscriminate use of pesticides has on the environment and ushered in a political movement in which the environment was at the forefront.

Alongside Rachel Carson was eco-critic pioneer Lawrence Buell, whose work has focused on interpreting texts through an ecological perspective. His most significant work, published in 1995, *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*, seeks to explore how literature represents the natural environment. In his introduction to his work, Buell delineates components which lend to the creation of an environmentally geared text. According to Buell, an environmental text must seek to construct a natural environment which is alongside the constructed environment such that “The nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a

presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (Buell 7). Moreover, the human interest should not be the sole interest represented; the natural world is granted its own history leading to an *ecocentric* view versus an anthropocentric view of the world. Additionally, the text must convey a certain degree of human accountability to the natural world. Lastly, there must be “Some sense of the environment as a process rather than as a constant or a given is at least implicit in the text” (Buell 8).

Buell utilizes Henry David Thoreau’s work as his central reference in forming his argument. An ecological imagination is one that recognizes the crisis of the natural world which can be remedied through the use of “imagination” in order to understand nature and its relation to this living entity that is nature. Analyzing the pastoral vision ever present in Thoreau’s work, Buell notes the filters humanity uses to view nature. These filters allow for a disjuncture to occur in relation to how literature is representing the natural ambient. Buell intends to recuperate the natural world from literature, arguing that there should be no division between the world and text.

A number of early ecocritics looked to the movement chiefly as a way of “rescuing” literature from the distantiations of reader from text and text from world that had been ushered in by the structuralist revolution in critical theory. These ecocritical dissenters sought to reconnect the work of (environmental) writing and criticism with environmental experience-meaning in particular the *natural* world. (Buell 6)

Buell intends to have a body of literature that represents nature in its actual state, as a form of imitation. Through discarding filters, literature can be united with the world it seeks to represent.

The human race employs filters in order to make manageable the at times *unmanageable*, in this case the natural sphere. Buell speaks of pastoral vision, often employed in Romantic works, and its concern with portraying a pristine nature, not entirely based on reality. This pastoral perception of nature offers a sense of calmness and serenity that of course is constructed in order to afford humanity with a sense of well-being. The beautification process that nature undergoes serves the interest humanity has in assuming a position of control even over what should be rugged.

Scholars such as Buell and Carolyn Merchant, whom I will expand on later, are considered to be a part of what has been dubbed first wave eco-criticism. Ken Hiltner documents the shift that occurred from first wave eco-criticism to second wave eco-criticism. I align this project with second wave eco-criticism due to the concepts this second wave illuminates. Second wave eco-criticism concerns itself with expanding the idea of an oppressed nature to that of oppressed, marginal *beings*, whether human or non-human. Scholars pertaining to this group associate the environmental crisis to the crises facing marginalized groups. Topics such as race, class, and gender are highlighted and tied to the environmental calamity. One scholar associating herself with second wave eco-criticism is Laura Wright.

In her recent publication, "Wilderness into Civilized Shapes," Laura Wright documents the ways in which authors represent postcolonial landscapes and environmental issues. The title in itself invokes a sense of dominion that society has, and needs to have, over the natural world, that in turn becomes domesticated. She affirms that we must move away from representations of a pristine wilderness, which in and of itself proves to be contradictory and is "quite simplistic and informed by positions of privilege, sentimentality, and entitlement" (Wright 57). Wright contends that the field of eco-criticism may be seen in conjunction with the field of post-colonialism, as the effects of the colonization were not only wrought onto peoples but also nature. Wright notes the way in which frameworks of colonial domination are utilized to understand the domination of nature, highlighting the inferiority of nature to culture. Wright argues that in spite of the correlation many scholars make between the colonization and the domination of nature, the perception of nature is still hailing from the West and thus representations of nature from previously colonized areas are never made evident.

One other scholar who pertains to second wave eco-criticism is Stacy Alaimo. Partnering with postmodern feminist Susan Hekman, Alaimo edited a book titled, *Material Feminisms* (2009), whose work focused on compiling various essays regarding materiality of the body. Alaimo and Hekman argue that the immense focus on social constructionist models do not provide "a way to talk about these bodies and the materiality they inhabit" which in turn leaves out the topic of

agency, human and non-human. According to Alaimo and Hekman, postmodernism privileges the linguistic ignoring the concept of materiality. They reference Karen Barad's essay "Posthumanist Performativity" in which she states, "the apparatuses of bodily protection are part of the phenomena they produce. Matter plays an active-indeed, agential-role in its interative materialization" (Barad cited in Hekman and Alaimo 143). One could infer from Barad's thoughts that humans are thus responsible for the marks they leave on all matter, including nature, culture and nature become inseparable beings. Alaimo and He-man reflect Barad's thoughts saying,

Feminist theorists of the body want definitions of human corporeality that can account for how the discursive and the material interact in the constitution of bodies. They explore the question of nonhuman and post-human nature and its relationship to the human. One of the central topics in this approach is the question of agency, particularly the agency of bodies and natures. Material feminists explore the interaction of culture, history, discourse, technology, biology and the 'environment,' without privileging any one of those elements. (Alaimo and Hekman 146)

In their collective work, Alaimo and Hekman aim to reveal the interconnectedness of body and theory, claiming that utilizing materiality and corporeal experiences will allow for new ways of conceiving identity.

As aforementioned, second wave eco-criticism expanded itself to include topics such as race and gender, initiating a movement in which the struggles of the environment mirrored the struggles marginal groups faced. This new movement became known as ecofeminism, a term coined by French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. The movement aimed to draw attention to current ecological crisis alongside the long standing patriarchal oppression of women. Eaubonne urged feminists to join their cause to that of the environment and lead the way into an ecological and truly humanist revolution. Ecofeminism, however stemming from ecocriticism needs to be read as a distinct methodology for understanding the current global climate because it brings consciousness to not only the ecological crisis but also intertwines this crisis with the subordination of women. One of the first ecofeminist conferences took place in March 1980 at Armherst, where ecofeminist Ynestra King stated:

Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice...We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies...and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its own way.

Adherents to ecofeminism believe that the plight of nature and the plight of marginal groups, especially women, are intrinsically tied to each other.

Ecofeminism is often referred to as the third wave of feminism and blends ecology, feminism and women's spirituality. Eco-feminists have argued that in patriarchal society women have been considered closer to nature than their male counterpart and that this association has validated subjugation of both entities. Patrick Murphy has argued the connection between the environmental movement and the women's movement in the following way:

To be a feminist, one must also be an ecologist, because the domination and oppression of women and nature are inextricably intertwined. To be an ecologist, one must also be a feminist, since without addressing gender and oppression and the patriarchal ideology that generates the sexual metaphors of masculine domination of nature, one cannot effectively challenge the world views that threaten the stable evolution of the biosphere in which human beings participate or perish. (Murphy 48)

The logic of patriarchy is one that supports the subordination of nature and other oppressed groups. Any marginal beings, human or non-human, are "otherized" in order to subject them to hegemonic patriarchal thought, "The natural environment as empirical reality has been made to subserve human interests, and one of those interests has been made to make it serve as a symbolic reinforcement of the subservience of disempowered groups: non-whites, women and children" (Buell 21). Scholar Val Plumwood speaks about this process of subservience defining it as "backgrounding" otherwise known as a process of negation.

According to Plumwood, backgrounding occurs due to the relationship of domination and its effects. The “superior” being attempts to profit from the “lesser” being, organizing its resources and thus benefitting from the other’s work. This in turn creates a dependency on the inferior subject, however the superior will continuously attempt to negate any dependency (Plumwood 48).

Plumwood extends her thought to include feminist ideology, citing Marilyn Frye:

Women’s existence is a background against which phallocratic reality is a foreground...I imagine phallocratic reality to be the space and figures and motion which constitute the foreground, and the constant repetitive uneventful activities of women to constitute and maintain the background against which this foreground plays. It is essential to the maintenance of the foreground reality that nothing within it refer in any way to anything in the background, and yet it depends absolutely upon the existence of the background. (Frye cited in Plumwood 48)

The other is viewed as highly inessential by the superior. It never occurs to the superior that there may be a reality in which he is the background and not the foreground. This could be translated to the current ecological crisis. Society excavates nature and exploits its resources denying any dependency to the natural environment. Humanity believes they are self-sufficient, not realizing that with constant exploitation, resources are bound to be fully exhumed, and that is when the extreme dependency will be made evident.

With her book, *New Woman/New Earth*, Rosemary Radford Ruether was one of the first to foment a relationship between ecology and women's movement, referencing the backgrounding or negation both groups encounter,

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement to envision a radical reshaping of the basic socioeconomic relations and the underlying values of this [modern industrial] society.

(Ruether 204)

Ruether's statement can be and must be extended to move beyond the dichotomy of man/woman, and must include any peripheral being, regardless of gender. Jean Franco emphasizes this necessity by noting the incessant "victimization not only of woman, but of the feminine in all of us" (Franco 77). Traces of the feminine became subject to violence and femininity became the universal mark of inferiority.

Eco-feminism understands the connection between nature and the oppression of women (as well as other subjugated beings) and we may differentiate three levels of the problem:

1. Historical and Causal: The culturally attributed second class status of women in societies.

2. Conceptual: Specific ideologies, symbolizations, and social-structural arrangements pertaining to women.

3. Symbolic: Symbolic indicators of defilement, paying particular attention to the role language has in perpetuating the dominance of patriarchy

Carolyn Merchant explores these three bases in her book *The Death of Nature: Women, Ecology and the Scientific Revolution* (1981). Merchant offers us a historical account of how language and images underwent a change. She remarks:

Beginning in the sixteenth century, our language and images underwent a drastic change which marked the beginning of the great opposition, organic cosmology of old days on one side and Scientific Revolution and rise of a market oriented culture in Modern Europe on the other. (Merchant XX)

She was one of the first eco-critics to make mention of an interwoven relationship between narratives regarding femininity and the natural environment. The study also explores the impact the Scientific Revolution had on the environment and the subsequent "...transition from the organism to the machine as the dominant metaphor binding together the cosmos, society..." (Merchant xx). As culture became market oriented, the feminine earth was displaced and to a certain extent completely abolished.

Merchant attributes the subordination of women to the Scientific Revolution and its commercial and industrial expansion. Prior to the Scientific Revolution the resonating ideology rested on interdependence:

Interdependence among the parts of the human body, subordination of individual to communal purposes in family, community and state, and vital life permeating the cosmos to the lowliest stone. (Merchant 1)

As mechanistic values subdued other values, nature was no longer portrayed as a nurturing entity, but rather as a “wild and uncontrollable nature that could render violence, storms, droughts and general chaos” (Merchant 2). Viewing “nature as disorder” as Merchant deems allowed forth the progression of the modern world as we know it; with this newly created image of a wicked mother earth, there was ushered in an era in which power was assumed over nature. Without attributing to nature characteristics of unpredictability, the dominion over it would have been difficult, this *de-sanctifying* facilitated the process of fecundation, of mastery over the natural world, and thus of feminine bodies. To an extent, it was the image of nature as a kind motherly figure that protected it from harm before the era of modernization, “As long as the earth was considered to be alive and sensitive, it would be considered a breach of human ethical behavior to carry out destructive acts against it” (Merchant 3). The image of nature as a kind and benevolent creature had to be tainted and tarnished in order for it to be conceived essentially as a female organ whose purpose became profit driven “reproduction.” Merchant postulates that, “The changes in imagery and

attitudes relating to the earth were of enormous significance as the mechanization of nature proceeded. The nurturing earth would lose its function as a normative restraint as it changed to an inanimate dead physical system” (Merchant 19). The characterization of women throughout Mexican literature resonates with how nature was characterized, pre and post the scientific revolution. Nature, as well as women, has been characterized as either possessing its virginity or having lost it.

Just as the issue of gender has risen to the forefront within the field of ecocriticism, so has the topic of race. Many scholars contend that the issue of race may be useful to examining the topic of environmental degradation. In his work “On the Coloniality of Being,” Nelson Maldonado-Torres delves into the concept of coloniality and its longstanding effects on contemporary societies. He states that through the process of colonization there emerged an imperial attitude that automatically formed a hierarchy in which certain subjects were marked as dispensable. Maldonado-Torres’ concept of coloniality and its longstanding effects on society are in regards to human populations who have been subjected to the violence of colonization, primarily beings who stand on the margins of society. It is worth exploring this notion in the environmental world as well. The effects of coloniality can not only be seen in the societal structures, but they are also evident in the structures which capitalism forms against nature. Just as certain segments of the population are categorically marked as inferior, so is nature marked as a dispensable being who takes second place to Man. The

dispensability degree was based off the degree of humanity which subjects were granted. Anibal Quijano, who contributed greatly to the concept of coloniality of power, remarks, “The codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of ‘race’, a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to others” (Quijano 533). The coloniality of power is understood to act to dismantle the “other” and its knowledge, as well as being the categorical and discriminatory discourse that is reflected in the social and economic structures of modern postcolonial societies. Quijano’s sense of modernity can be reflected in the following statement, modernity is “the fusing of the experiences of colonialism and coloniality with the necessities of capitalism, creating a specific universe of intersubjective relations of domination under a Eurocentered hegemony” (Quijano cited in Lugones 3). The capitalistic forms of power which diminish the feminine are eurocentered and patriarchal, belonging to the “hegemony of world capitalism” (Lugones 3).

María Lugones, a decolonial theorist, builds upon Quijano’s coloniality of power to establish the coloniality of gender theory through the consideration of gender and its entwined relationship with race. In her essay “Methodological Notes toward a Decolonial Feminism” Lugones defines the coloniality of gender as the “analysis of radicalized, capitalist, gender oppression” (Lugones 77). The process of colonization altered the indigenous sense of self and identity, as well as the understanding of gender relations. In doing so, modernity imposed European understandings of gender and sex, thus erasing the various

conceptualizations of sex and gender that existed prior to the modern colonial gender system. The concept of gender was introduced by these colonizers and became a tool for domination that designated two binary and hierarchical oppositions, one that presupposed women as subordinate in relation to men. The colonization in and of itself was in fact a gendered process, a fact that still persists today. In terms of ecocriticism, the colonization and vanquishing of this fertile land, is as much of a gendered process as the conquest of the Americas. The conquerors in both cases are represented as masculine figures who take possession of entities that are turned into commodities, women for their sexual attributes and nature for her fertility and ability to produce capital.

The works of the aforementioned scholars have resonance in the field of environmental criticism and ecofeminism respectively. It is evident that during the process of colonization there was a Eurocentered hegemonic structure executed, one which emphasized a sex binary in which the non-white male (feminine/marginal) was subjected to domination. A naturalization of certain hegemonic performed actions occurred allowing for “non-ethics, an exception to the ethics that regulate normal conduct” (Maldonado-Torres 247). Delving into the studies of ecocriticism, as I mentioned earlier in the chapter, nature underwent a change in perception, which naturalized the violent acts committed against it, all of which are reminiscent of violent human sexual acts. Maldonado-Torres notes the inscription of words such as “killability” or rapeability” on certain marginal groups of the population and the effects this metaphorical inscription had on that certain

community. The words with which they were inscribed with permitted violence. With the ushering in of hegemonic capitalism, those same words were inscribed on the land. How people perceived nature had to change, it was an absolute necessity in order to carry out profit driven goals of mining and overturning the land. No longer could nature be “Mother” nature, it would be a horrid act to commit those atrocities to someone deemed “Mother” which is why nature became Man’s enemy. The domination must be perceived as the nature of things, otherwise it would be perceived as Merchant states a “breach of human ethical behavior” (Merchant 3). It is important to note the extensive influence this Eurocentric binary of sex serves the implementation of exploitation and domination.

Oppressive conceptual frameworks are where the structures of domination lie. Ecofeminists agree that value hierarchies and dualisms play a great role in the subordination of women and other marginal beings. There is a sphere of otherness that is created that makes it seem as though certain groups inherently, essentially belong there.

For efficient subordination, what’s wanted is that the structure not only not appear to be a cultural artifact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear *natural*- that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of the facts about the beast which are beyond the scope of human manipulation or revision. It must seem that individuals of the one category

are dominated by individuals of the other and that as groups, the one dominates the other. (Frye cited in Warren 41)

The framework of subjection functions to explain, conserve and justify the domination that is occurring. Lugones recounts the colonization period of the Americas in her essay “The Coloniality of Gender” and offers an insight into this framework of subjection. She makes note of the fears the colonizers had of the indigenous population, fears which prompted them to enable hierarchical thinking, “Sexual fears of colonizers led them to imagine the indigenous people of the Americas as hermaphrodites or intersexed, with large penises and breasts with flowing milk” (Lugones 7). Morphing them into individuals with maladies and deformities allowed them to feel superior thus justifying their acts of power. An oppressive conceptual framework consists of value hierarchical thinking, i.e. “Up-Down” thinking, oppositional value dualisms in which each element is seen as oppositional, power that is exercised as “power-over”, a conception of privilege belonging to the Ups and not Downs, and lastly an oppressive conceptual framework which sanctions a logic of domination (Warren 47).

A logic of domination is offered as the moral stamp of approval for subordination, since, if accepted, it provides a justification for keeping Downs down. Typically this justification takes the form that the Up has some characteristic (e.g. in the Western philosophical tradition, the favored trait is “mind”, reason, or rationality) that the Down lacks and by virtue of which the subordination of the Down by the Up is justified. (ibid)

Oppositional dualisms are what in fact allow for colonization of the feminine, in this case nature and other oppressed beings, to not only occur but to withstand the test of time. Some dualisms present in western thought are for example, culture/nature, male/female, rationality/animality, among others (Plumwood 43). With nature, and any element pertaining to emotion rather than reason, minimized the feminine is made voiceless, and thus becomes the silent class that by essence should be appropriated. Val Plumwood makes note of these dualisms and the hand they have in forming such conceptual frameworks whose main purpose is to subject certain groups to domination.

For the issues of ecofeminism, we could draw upon Warren's outline which delineates the reasoning behind man's power over the natural world, and therefore any being labeled Other.

- (A) (1) Humans do, and plants and rocks do not, have the capacity to consciously and radically change the communities in which they live in self-determined ways
- (2) Whatever has the capacity to consciously and radically change the community in which it lives in self-determined ways is morally superior to whatever lacks this capacity.

Thus, (3) Humans are morally superior to plants and rocks.

- (4) For any X and Y, if X is morally superior to Y, then X is morally just

fied in subordinating (dominating) Y.

Thus, (5) Humans are morally justified in subordinating (dominating) plants
and rocks.

This outline depicts how subjugation operates to appear *natural*, as if that were how things should be. As a movement, ecofeminism aims at dismantling such dualistic hierarchies. Greta Gaard in her book *Ecofeminist Literary Criticism: Theory, Interpretation, Pedagogy* (1998) understands ecofeminism in the following way:

Ecofeminism is a practical movement for social change arising out of the struggles of women to sustain themselves, their families and the common unities. These struggles are waged against the maldevelopment and environmental degradation caused by patriarchal societies, multinational corporations and global capitalism. They are waged for environmental balance, hierarchical and matrifocal societies, the continuance of indigenous culture and economic value and programs based on subsistence and sustainability. (Gaard 2)

The leit motif of ecofeminist theories is that the ecological crisis cannot be addressed without first addressing the dualisms Western patriarchal society has enacted. In a series of dualistic oppositions such as mind/body, reason/emotion, culture/nature, feminine bodies are associated with the latter term. Western patriarchal perspectives value analytical and rational qualities rather than intuitive

and emotional ones since they are deemed passive and thus female. Nature is more often than not associated with the feminine, being objectified and devalued by the patriarchal mindset. Furthermore, the field of ecofeminism perceives these dualisms to be the root cause of the imbalance of power.

The third connection which I wish to draw upon is the symbolic. Patriarchal conceptions of nature and women have served as the justification for the repression of both groups, and has enabled “a two-pronged rape and domination of the earth and the women who live on it” (Murphy cited in Warren xiv). Art and literature have long associated the feminine with nature, an association which has proven to be less of a compliment in the long run. The language which is utilized in literature is one that demeans and belittles feminine entities and non-human nature. Language is itself gendered, i.e. “Mother Nature”, and is often used to describe nature as a woman that is raped, mastered and exhumed. The language that is used in most works perpetuates the domination of patriarchal society that seeks to eradicate nature and exploit its resources. Language is evidently sexed and thus can propagate forms of domination by the existing hegemonic powers. What has occurred in regards to the symbolic, i.e. language, is that while one group has shaped the language in order to perpetuate subordination, the other group has been stripped of its ability to possess a language and has been declared a silent being.

Nature is silent in our culture (and in literate societies in general) in the sense that the status of a speaking subject is jealously guarded as an

exclusively human prerogative...the language we speak today...veils the processes of nature with its own cultural obsessions, directionalities, and motifs that have no analogies in the natural world...It is as if we have compressed the entire buzzing, howling, gurgling biosphere into the narrow vocabulary of epistemologies. (Manes 15)

The claim is that language which feminizes nature and naturalizes women does not allow for women to escape patriarchal systems, it is in fact this language that ensures the persisting existence of this patriarchal ideology.

Ecocriticism and ecofeminism in Latin America

The fields of ecology and environmentalism have been absent from the Latin American scene, primarily focusing its view on North America. More recently, there have been various scholars who are perceiving the importance of linking the field of ecocriticism to a Latin American context. Scholars are now interested in undertaking an ecological reevaluation of earlier literary periods within this Latin American context. An article by Jorge Paredes and Benjamin McLean mentions the emergence of ecocritical thought amongst Latin American scholars, noting the surging of “ecological literature” that consists of the following:

un claro mensaje acerca de la necesidad de reexaminar las relaciones entre el ser humano y los demás elementos de la naturaleza, lo que deberá redundar en una toma de conciencia sobre la necesidad de

respetar y defender nuestro entorno...donde el ser humano no tenga privilegios con relación a los demás seres vivos, ni derechos dictatoriales sobre la suerte del planeta. (Paredes and McLean in DeVries 2).¹

Among the recent scholars exploring the conception and representation of nature in Latin American literature is Laura Barbas-Rhoden. Her book, *Ecological Imaginations in Latin American Fiction* (2011), explores the natural settings represented in Latin American novels, from the nineteenth century to the present, and their depiction of environmental changes or crises. Her objective with this work is to “offer a literary analysis of expressions of ecological imagination in contemporary Latin America to produce an innovative text about the broad sweep of environmental history as apprehended through fiction.” Barbas-Rhoden additionally discusses the ways in which the topic of post colonialism can be interlaced with that of environmentalism:

In the late twentieth century a growing number of Latin American authors produced texts preoccupied with natural spaces and they did so as part of a broader critique of economic systems of subjugation. Their discourse of nature represents a specific literary response to neoliberalism in Latin America. (Barbas-Rhoden 7)

¹ a clear message about the necessity to reexamine relationships between human beings and the other elements of nature that should have the effect of a dawning awareness about the necessity to respect and defend the environment, an awareness that human beings do not live a privileged existence with regard to other living things nor possess a kind of dictatorial right of dominion over the planet. (DeVries 2)

Barbas-Rhoden posits that pieces of Latin American literature, of ecological imagination, use nature “to expose and critique human power structures during a moment of growing unease about the global economy” and the authors which she analyzes “all recuperate a sense of place, and some posit an ecocentric agenda that valorizes nonhuman nature” (Barbas-Rhoden 2). Octavio Paz upon receiving the Nobel Prize in literature in 1990 said the following,

El tema del mercado tiene una relación muy estrecha con el deterioro del medioambiente. La contaminación no solo infesta al aire, a los ríos y a los bosques sino a las almas. Una sociedad poseída por el frenesí de producir más para consumir más tiende a convertir las ideas, los sentimientos, el arte, el amor, la amistad y a las personas mismas en objetos de consumo. Todo se vuelve cosa que se compra, se usa y se tira al basurero. Ninguna sociedad había producido tantos desechos como la nuestra. Desechos materiales y morales. ²(Paz)

Uruguayan novelist Eduardo Galeano, in the same suit as Barbas-Rhoden, in his renowned book, *Las venas abiertas de America Latina* (1971), presents an account of Latin American history through the analysis of the effects and causes of capitalistic underdevelopment in Latin America. He recounts the history of

² The subject of the market has a very close relation with the deterioration of the environment. Pollution not only infests the air, rivers and forests, but also souls. A society possessed by the frenzy of producing more to consume more tends to convert ideas, feelings, art, love, friendship, and people themselves into consumer objects. Everything becomes something that is bought, used and thrown to the dump. No society had produced as much waste as ours. Material and moral waste.

exploitation that this region has undergone from the beginning of the colonization period to the present moment. Galeano recounts the oppression certain groups faced in order to fulfill the economic needs of the hegemonic power. Galeano adequately expresses the need for environmental justice, tracing the current crisis to the Spanish colonization of the Americas and their lust for gold and profit.

Mark D. Anderson, whose work explores topics of ecocriticism in a Latin American context, offers an insight into disaster writing and the need for humanity to beautify, control and repress the natural world through the use of technological advances amongst other resources. In his introduction to his work, *Disaster Writing, The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*, he states that a natural disaster is a “moment of disjuncture when nature topples what we see as the natural order of human dominance” (Anderson 1). What is key in that definition is the reaffirmation that humans perceive themselves to be as *naturally* superior to the environment. Thus, when a disaster ensues that questions the established hierarchy between human vs. nonhuman, the identity of the former is placed in crisis. As Anderson notes, the identity of humans is based off of their relation to nature, one’s identity is defined in regards to an “other.”

The natural environment that sustains human populations appears to rebel against us, wreaking havoc on our lives and throwing into question our very identities as disaster reconfigures suddenly and brutally the lifelong

relationships that we have fostered with other people and the places we inhabit. (ibid)

A natural disaster problematizes the relationship between humans and nature, a relationship which is inherently seen as oppositional. In order to soothe the anxiety society has in regards to the uncontrollable aspect of nature, society has utilized, as aforementioned, a way of normalizing nature. Anderson speaks of this concept and explains that due to the daily interactions humans have with nature, there is a “conceptual domestication” that occurs resulting in a third mediating space dubbed by Anderson to be “normal nature” (Anderson 4). The landscaping that occurs with nature is done to cement nature in a relation of dominion with humans. Through the practice of landscaping, nature is introduced into the sphere of social control, and as Anderson claims, is christened as the social stage for humans. The act of landscaping is done to placate fears of the unknown, of the violent Mother Nature. When this social stage becomes one of terror, there is an inversion that occurs, one of rebellion on behalf of the environment, “disaster represents the inversion of the normalized relationship between human and their environments...Disaster unmakes landscapes, estranging nature from the human” (Anderson 5).

Anderson reveals the ways in which pre-Colombian indigenous civilizations incorporated natural occurrences into their beliefs and practices. He recounts the various civilizations and their respective deities who each represented an aspect of nature. Anderson, for example, references the Aztec goddesses of drought,

Atlacoya. In these ancient civilizations nature and higher power were linked together, proving that there was a sense of sanctity in the natural surroundings. These deities had the power to bring forth a natural disaster as a consequence of humanity's neglect however they also held the power to bring fruition and harmony to the land. To reiterate what Anderson established, disasters from nature were not viewed as an inversion of established order due to the fact that humans and nature were not established in a dualistic system of binaries. There was no need to engage in the process of landscaping, since nature was seen as a natural, living entity that was reactive, such as humans react to stimuli. However, as modernity was ushered in, the need to narrate disasters became of importance. There was a shift in perception, from seeing nature as a kind and benevolent Mother Nature to seeing nature as one that needs to be controlled by humans to ensure freedom from harm.

Anderson moreover investigates the theme of disaster and contextualizes it within Latin regionalist novels. The main concern of such novels is representing the relationship between humans and nature as one that exemplifies the capitalistic structures of societies; their intent is to represent the domineering nature of society that is imposed upon the natural ambient.

A key mechanism is the focus on politics: by representing disasters as political rather than natural or divine events, human agency over nature is restored, even if in a nuanced way. Through narrative, humans are able to

harness disaster, converting destruction and mortality into matters of human error (vulnerability)... (Anderson 20)

Conclusively, Anderson asserts that humanity sought to have control over their own lives and humanity and therefore found the need to construct a narrative that allowed for explanations of natural disasters. Without a narration, society would lose control over a powerful, unknowing being. There needed to be put in place a methodology to reason what was perceived as an illogical and irrational entity.

A recent publication from Adrian Taylor Kane, *The Natural World in Latin American Literature* (2010), compiles essays from various scholars and topics span the twentieth century including canonical and lesser known works. The book also responds to more recent calls from the likes of Lawrence Buell, Ursula Heise amongst other scholars. It calls to expand ecocriticism beyond North America but also into urban, race and religious studies, and to continue its expansion into ecofeminism as well.

Kane opens the volume addressing the topics of nature, modernity and technology in twentieth century Latin American fiction. Kane, in his essay "Nature and the Discourse of Modernity in Spanish American Avant-Garde Fiction," discusses the topic of modernity in relation to the subordination nature underwent. The desire to be modern thus allowed for the domination of nature, which was executed in the name of modernization and profit.

Kane also includes an essay by Raymond L. Williams titled, “Nature in the Twentieth-Century Latin American Novel (1900-1967) and in *Cien años de soledad* of Garcia Marquez” in which Williams focuses on the methods cultures use to view the environment. Williams posits that cultures who privilege either oral traditions or writing traditions view technology and nature in distinct ways.

Latin American ecofeminism rose in the 1980s stemming from movements in North America as well as Europe, and blossoming in the 1990s. The ecofeminist movement in Latin America differentiated itself from its counterparts through its emphasis on poor and marginalized Latin women who were also conceived as knowledge producers. Ivone Gebara, a religious sister of the Canonesses of St. Augustine, is a major figure of the Latin American movement; her most celebrated work being *Longing for Running Water: Ecofeminism and Liberation* (1999). Gebara points out the strengths of an ecofeminist framework for addressing environmental issues by addressing matters such as urbanization, industrialization and female bodily integrity. She proposes what she deems a “holistic ecofeminism,” which is characterized by a rejection of a patriarchal hermeneutical approach and seeks a new, inclusive and non-patriarchal theology. Gebara, in her essay “Ecofeminism: A Latin American Perspective”, notes the problem ecofeminism has encountered in establishing itself as a credible field in Latin America. According to Gebara, ecofeminism has had difficulty in being considered anything but heresy due to the tradition of Christianity that permeates the region and which stresses “the dependence of

women on men but also the anthropological superiority of human beings. In our patriarchal culture, where the consequences of colonialist slavery are still present, power is a men's issue, especially public power; because of this, God, considered a super power, has a masculine face" (Gebara 93). Noting the oppression women faced historically, for Gebara's purposes in the Church and the bible, she, along with other latin american ecofeminist theologians, sought to find liberating female role models in the Bible and most importantly has sought to find feminine symbols for God. Gebara lastly proposes an ecofeminist project which bases itself on experience, or as she calls it "between noise and garbage." To carry out a project between those two elements is to be fully conscious of the oppression of the marginal and the degradation of their environment.

Latin American scholars and authors have recently begun to delve into the field of ecocriticism, developing an ample range of studies since the year 2000. Since its inception, cultural texts stemming from this region have represented the natural world and now these representations are being analyzed through the framework of ecocriticism as well as ecofeminism. Latin America lends itself to having its environment be discussed using an ecofeminist framework, mainly due to the colonization that was imposed by the Spaniards. Land was dominated, raped, and made fertile much like the female inhabitants.

In the following chapters I incorporate the theoretical frameworks discussed above and analyze specific narratives relevant to the topic. It is important to note that I align this project with second wave ecocriticism, which concerns itself with

expanding the idea of an oppressed nature to that of oppressed, marginal beings, whether human or non-human. I will explore the intersections between the domination and degradation of the environment and the subjugation of marginal beings, both feminine and masculine, human as well as non-human.

In Chapter Two I examine the connection between the mechanization of the land and marginal beings in two novels where the setting is mainly rural. I begin the discussion by analyzing *La tierra pródiga* (1960) written by Agustín Yáñez. I contend that this novel demonstrates hegemonic masculinity and its forceful imposition on a feminized land. The novel depicts the struggle for land and the initiation of a new era of industrialization in the region of coastal Jalisco, Mexico. The characters in the novel, all hegemonic males, establish a logic of domination between themselves and all “others”, particularly the land and in turn the women of the region. This established logic is evident through various elements Yáñez introduces such as gendered language and sexed economic processes among other factors. In the second section of Chapter Two, I compare *La tierra pródiga* with *La parcela* (1898) written by José López Portillo y Rojas. In a completely rural setting, López Portillo y Rojas recounts, employing techniques stemming from romanticism and realism, the conflict over land occurring between two landowners. The domination and exploitation of the environment in both *La tierra pródiga* and *La parcela* is a symptom of patriarchal society that imposes an oppressive structure operating against traces of femininity or marginality. For

both these novels, I will draw from theories of colonization to demonstrate impact of coloniality on the environment and its marginal beings.

In Chapter Three I focus on two urban novels, *Morirás lejos* (1967), by José Emilio Pacheco, and *Paraíso Travel* (2001) written by Jorge Franco. I will attempt to move beyond the ecocriticism discussion of “nature writing” and seek to discuss today’s urban centers and the role they play in the current environmental crisis. I intend to take into consideration cities as living organisms whose purpose moves beyond that of being a background to the storyline. The novel *Morirás Lejos* presents the idea of domesticating nature and what occurs when nature slowly seeps into and destroys the beautification process. In *Paraíso Travel*, Franco examines the life of an undocumented Colombian immigrant residing in New York City. The narrative unfolds in alternating time frames, shifting back and forth between Colombia and New York. I will draw from Mark D. Anderson and his study on disaster writing which contends that humans have an incessant need to domesticate nature which in turn can revolt and upset the imposed order.

In Chapter Four, I focus on the Colombian novel by Jorge Franco titled *El mundo de afuera* (2014).

The aforementioned novels all demonstrate how the subjugation of nature and that of feminine beings, whether biologically feminine, or stripped of its “masculinity” by hegemonic masculine ideologies, are intrinsically linked. Ecofeminism calls for a destruction of patriarchal discourse with its hierarchical

structuring, and its subsequent dismantling of the paradigm of male over female, reason over emotion, and human over nature. Understanding the connection between the oppression of nature and feminine entities can lead to a further understanding and further discourse on how to approach the far-reaching implications of patriarchy.

Chapter II: The interconnected relationship of subjugation between nature and the feminine in *La tierra pródiga* and *La parcela*

Women must see that there can be no liberation for them and no solution to the ecological crisis within a society whose fundamental model of relationships continues to be one of domination. They must unite the demands of the women's movement with those of the ecological movement. -Rosemary Radford Ruether

In this chapter, I examine two novels stemming from the nineteenth and twentieth century respectively: *La Parcela* (1898), written by José López Portillo y

Rojas (1850-1923) and *La tierra pródiga* (1960) written by Agustín Yáñez (1904-1980). I will employ the field of ecofeminism to demonstrate that the domination and exploitation of the environment resembles the oppression of feminine beings, human and non-human alike. As I discussed in my introduction, I am consciously avoiding heteronormative categories in this study to allow for a more inclusive discussion on the matters of gender and the environment. I am utilizing an ecofeminist approach to first analyze the representation of nature in literature as well as to establish a relationship between nature and gender, in particular the feminine. I argue that both works of Yáñez and Portillo y Rojas establish a connection between the feminine and nature and that this effeminization of nature is dependent on patriarchal heteronormative thought.

The Latin American Modernist Period and Agustín Yáñez

The Modern novel movement spanned from the 1940s to the 1960s, and should not be mistaken with the *modernismo* movement from 1888-1915. Latin American modernist aesthetics began to take precedence in the middle of the twentieth-century. Authors whose works incorporated these aesthetics are Miguel Ángel Asturias, Alejo Carpentier, Juan Rulfo, and Agustín Yáñez, whose publication *La tierra pródiga* (1960) will be examined here.

Latin American modernism began to develop when postmodernism was already surging in Europe and North America, thus causing for a short lived latin

american modernist movement. Dr. Raymond L. Williams indicates in his essay, "Modernist Continuities: The Desire to be Modern in Twentieth-Century Spanish-American Fiction",

An overview of Spanish American fiction of the 1960s does indicate that by 1967 the aesthetics of Modernism were pervasive, and the initial signs of the postmodern were also evident. Indeed, on the international scene, not only were some of the most talented masters of Spanish-American fiction at their apogee, but also several others were writing in ways rarely imagined in Latin America, with the exception of Borges in his *Fictions* (Williams 384).

As was evident, the modernist period in Latin America was short lived due to its delay in fruition. European and North American postmodernism was well underway when modernist aesthetics began to take precedence in Latin America.

Agustín Yáñez, Mexican novelist and essayist of the 20th Century, has been very influential in the development of Mexican literature. Yáñez was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco in 1904 and passed away in Mexico in 1980. He taught literature and spanish in various institutions of Mexico, one of them being the National Autonomous University of Mexico, as well as serving in public office. He served as a member of the Institutional Revolutionary Party as well as serving as the governor of the state of Jalisco from 1953 to 1959. In the year 1973, he received the *Premio Nacional de Letras*.

The literary work of Yáñez includes numerous books and publications which contain stories, novels, biographies, chronicles among other diverse texts. In this abundant production, his fictional narrative excels as it offers the lector a vision of Mexican life, with its customs and language. His most acclaimed work, *Al filo de agua*, published in 1947, is considered to be “indeed, an accomplished modernist novel and a major contribution to the rise of modernist fiction in Mexico and Latin America” (Williams 19). His later publications include *La creación* (1959), *Operas y painted* (1960), *La tierra pródiga* (1960), *Las tierras flacas* (1962), and *Las vueltas del tiempo* (1975). In his works, for example in *Al filo de agua*, Yáñez utilizes modernist novelistic techniques to create the ambiance of his locale and of his collective protagonists. Yáñez notoriously employs interior monologue which allows the reader to gain further insight into the reality of the narrative,

La realidad tanto del pueblo como de sus habitantes está comprendida no solamente por los sucesos objetivos, observables, sino también por el mundo subjetivo frecuentemente transmitido por el monólogo interno o por símbolos poéticos expresivos...(Rangel Guerra 62)

The work of Yáñez has been accredited with influencing many writers, however there is one theme that has not been explored. His work, *La tierra pródiga* provides fertile ground for an ecofeminist reading.

Yáñez situates the novel on the coast of Jalisco, Mexico, occurring between 1958 and 1960. The purpose of the novel is to celebrate the success of

a government initiative known as 'la marcha al mar' first introduced by President Ruiz Cortines in 1953. Cortines, initiated the plan in order to address the agricultural poverty which plagued the Pacific coastline of Jalisco, Mexico. The planning commission of the act had the following propositions, "(i) shifting the population from the central plateau to the newly developed lands in the tierra caliente, and (ii) incorporating the coastal area of Jalisco into the national economy" (Harris 53). During the time of this proposition, Yáñez served as governor of Jalisco while simultaneously overlooking the planning commission.

As literary critic, José Vázquez Amaral notes, *La tierra pródiga* commences mid dialogue, indicating the importance dialogue and action will have in this particular novel. John S. Brushwood notes the structural elements essential to the novels of Yáñez, "Las bases arquitectónicas de las novelas de Yáñez son (1) la predilección del autor por el personaje inolvidable y (2) una tendencia a concebir la obra en dos partes, la segunda de las cuales es una intensificación y exteriorización de la primera" (Yáñez 437). It is a novel regarding the region of La encarnación and the men who arrive to reap commercial value of the virgin land. The first part of *La tierra pródiga* documents the external influence of society however, as Brushwood notes, the action takes place amidst the "mundo medio salvaje de Ricardo Guerra Victoria y las otras "fieras"" (Brushwood 440). The majority of the characters are all revealed in the initial pages, through dialogue, inner monologues, or through the judgements of other characters. The first chapter of the novel reveals what Brushwood calls the

“fieras”, the exploiters of the land, as well as revealing the abundance of natural resources found in La Encarnación:

no hay otro lugar mejor: las playas, las puntas, los palmares, la vena de mar, la jungla y hasta aguas termales junto a la barra, ya no digamos la cantidad de pesca, y entre las peñas, fáciles de agarrar con la mano, ¡unas langostas!, ¡unos ostiones! y langostinos, y los chacales de ríos, en fin, para no hablar de los bosques...(Yáñez 8)

The “conquerors” who have arrived to the region take note of the natural resources present in La Encarnación, and hope to reap economically from it. One of the characters in the novel speaks to the economic enterprise that once plagued the same land a few years back, speaking of the impact globalization had on the land:

tenemos arbolitos, es cierto, pero no tantos, y como yo soy muy respetuoso de las leyes, prefiero que se caigan de viejos, además que soy un convencido del respeto a los bosques, si no puede uno explotarlos como es debido; allí tiene usted cómo han venido acabándolos al troche y moche, haciendo más secas las tierras...ni zacate ha dejado en leguas y leguas. (Yáñez 9)

We have two extremes on either side of the spectrum. The reader is presented with a character who clearly valorizes economic profit through land excavation as

well as a character who finds worth in the natural land and its conservation. The latter of the characters is in the minority and the economic enterprise prevails.

The one true protagonist of a Yáñez novel is found in this particular novel, as Brushwood notes, and he is Ricardo Guerra Victoria. Guerra Victoria is a man of intelligence, although not formally educated per say, as well as being an influential figure in the region. Guerra Victoria is the owner of La encarnación, and he seeks to convert this region into a grand tourist attraction. The novelist continues to develop the storyline of the struggle between the exploiters and Guerra Victoria in the first part of the novel, and in the last four chapters this plot intensifies. The second part of the novel preoccupies itself with revealing the drama solely between the protagonist Guerra Victoria and his enemy Sotero Castillo. Joseph Sommers points out, that this particular novel possesses, “un indudable valor que la coloca entre las mejores...que la identifica con uno de los grandes temas de las letras americanas: el de la violencia” (Rangel Guerra 79). The topic of violence in this particular novel is not one solely restricted to humans, it is evident that in this novel there occurs an immeasurable degree of violence towards the land, as it is subjugated to the domination of patriarchy and capitalism.

Brushwood, in *Mexico in Its Novel: A Nation's Search for Identity* (1966), analyzes the works of Yáñez among other authors in the context of Mexican reality at that time. In regards to *La tierra pródiga*, Brushwood briefly comments

on the similarities between the Spanish conquest and the conquest of the land by the exploiters stating,

La tierra pródiga is a novel of the land, the same land that was discovered by the Spaniards. The story is a kind of twentieth-century re-enactment of the Conquest. The land is a woman, fertile and redemptive. It is there to be dominated, subjugated, exploited, seduced, or raped. The active role is masculine, and the treatment of the land depends upon the interpretation of the masculine role.

The role of nature as a feminine “other” body is the area of concern for this paper. Brushwood’s interconnection between the conquest and the economic enterprise occurring in *La tierra pródiga* is one which deserves more attention, specifically because there is an effeminization which occurs which in turn grants permission for subordination and domination. The creation of the “other” figure in the novel warrants an analysis which can also be extended to include thoughts of colonialism and gender.

Sex and the Jungle

The term coined by Eaubonne describes the violence inflicted on women and nature by man. The act of feminizing nature and its subsequent dominion mirror the process of colonization, a process which involved the subjugation of

both women and nature making the discourse of gender and environmental concerns inextricably related.

Nature does not escape gender. Nature and the environment are repeatedly associated with the feminine, being made parallel to a motherly figure hence the appellation of “Mother Nature.” The moniker “Mother Nature” in itself reveals how in particular Western society has been structured. The practice of utilizing the male generic, i.e. all humans are “man”, “*mankind*”, as Scharff notes, has permeated common English usage as well as Western science. Speaking and thinking in the male generic bears significant weight as it reflects a much larger problematic. The over utilization of the male generic reveals how humans have divided the world into gender categories and selected appropriate behavior based on biological features. Sexual biological differences carry with them social meaning. Nature, similarly to bodies, is sexed. This notion of a sexed nature is evident in the Mexican novel *La tierra pródiga* by author Agustín Yáñez. The male characters within the novel establish a connection between the feminine and nature, perceiving nature and the land as a female body. With this connection the land is not the only entity that is deemed “pródiga”, or lush, now we have “las mujeres pródigas”, who like the land are intended to produce either fruits or simple pleasure. Vandana Shiva explains such a capitalistic relationship in the following manner:

mal development is mal development in thought and action. In practice, this fragmented, reductionist, dualist perspective violates the integrity and

harmony of humankind in nature and the harmony between men and women. It ruptures the cooperative unity of masculine and feminine, and places man, shorn of the feminine principle above nature and women, and separated from both. The violence to nature as symptomized by ecological crisis, and the violence to women symptomized by their subjugation and exploitation, arise from this subjugation of the feminine principle. (Shiva 84)

Donald Worster has defined environmental history as a field which, “deals with all the interactions people have had with nature in past times” (Worster cited in Scharff xiii). The actions of the men in *La tierra pródiga* are motivated by capitalistic gains and the desire to excavate profit from this virgin land. The enterprise of colonizing the land and reaping profit is a gendered enterprise made evident in the ways in which they interact and regard nature. The men explicitly perceive nature as a woman whose body is there to be fecundated. This perception reflects a larger issue of gender. Western society has put in place certain dualisms in which a differential is established between two parts. These binaries are put in place to justify the domination of one group by another. There exists in society certain attributes which are responsible for granting or eliminating degrees of humanity; certain attributes, such as femininity, will make you less-than while others will position you in a dominant stance.

In Yáñez's novel, as I already mentioned, there is clearly a relationship between ecological imperialism and sexual subordination. The economic project

of fecundating the land is one which institutionalizes inequality such as male dominance and imperial conquest. Women, and thus the natural environment, are not seen as legitimate human beings, as they are deemed feminine and consequently marginal. Both aforementioned entities do not have privileges of humanity, one of which is the right to one's own body. Christopher Harris speaks of *caciquismo* and the denunciation Yáñez makes of this. He mentions the way in which the negative characteristics of *caciquismo* are documented in the novel and its subsequent disappearance as part of the system's demise. Harris, along the lines of Brushwood, also noted the way in which the land and women are described in parallel terms:

Yáñez suggests that one intractable characteristic of *caciquismo* in Mexico in the 1950s, indicative of the caciques' insuppressable desire to dominate others, was a high incidence in the psychological and physical abuse of women. (Harris 61)

Harris correlates the treatment of the land to the treatment of women in the novel of Yáñez. The theme of domination and possession is a prevalent one throughout the novel, and Yáñez, himself, addresses the symbol of the feminine body and its important role in the novel:

Estos hombres ven la Tierra Caliente, principalmente en la porción que sirve de escenario a la novela, como la tierra de nadie, de la que pueden convertirse en dueños. Para expresar literariamente ese afán de dominio me he servido del símbolo de una bestia brava que incita la hombría del

domador. Así se conjugan la idea de la conquista de la mujer, la idea de la propiedad de la tierra y el afán de dominación que impulsa a estos hombres. (Yáñez quoted in Harris 61)

It is useful to note the way in which Yáñez constructs his male characters. He builds characters based on the normative models of masculinity and femininity being machismo and marianismo. The highly exaggerated forms of machismo displayed by all seven caciques give insight to how they themselves identify and also sheds light on the elements they consider to be “masculine.” What makes them masculine? The ability to possess, and both the land and women are fair game. Both the land and women are expected to behave in a manner modeling marianismo which entails self-abnegation. Feminine bodies are expected to be passive bodies on which actions happen to; their purpose is to be a mere background to the active and heteronormative masculine being.

There are various instances throughout the novel in which the caciques refer to the women as another part of the land, specifically Amarillo. Harris notes that “the continuing prioritization of industrially-based economic development was at last sounding a potential death knoll for the system of *caciquismo* (Harris 54). With the power shifting from caciques to industrial campaigns, the system of caciques began to decline, but even though Harris does give credit to this occurrence, he fails to mention the impact this “industrially-based economic development” had on the environment. With developmental programs being enacted the coastline of Mexico began to be commercialized and excavated for

capitalistic gains. Raibmon concentrates on illustrating the interconnection between land and sexual violence in William Byrd's *The History of the Dividing Line*. Raibmon speaks of how human relations imprinted on landscapes can lend an insight on that particular society and their relation with the land. She writes:

Swidden agriculture and free-ranging livestock bespoke the presence of independent backcountry inhabitants, settlers who produced for personal subsistence rather than commercial surplus. Byrd's New World Eden, by contrast, would require neatly planted orchards, crops in orderly monoculture fields, and enclosed livestock. (Raibmon 27)

The government initiative seen in *La tierra pródiga* also hopes to construe an idyllic site boasting with tourism. Everything in the jungle had to serve a purpose in order to be considered "civilized." With no economic purpose, it would be considered unruly and a potential threat to the established order. As Raibmon notes, "Changes in the land were integral to the process of civilizing and controlling its inhabitants" as well as "reorienting the relationship not only between people and land but also between men and women" (ibid). This reorienting would thus allow for a hierarchy to be enacted and for outliers to be signaled.

In the case of *La tierra pródiga*, Yáñez creates a new relationship between men and women, one in which men assume a conqueror and "savior" role and where women become the possessed and the other who needs to be incorporated into civil society. Raibmon offers the following definition of

colonialism, “Colonialism is about asserting dominance over far-flung lands; colonialism is about asserting dominance over far-flung peoples” (Raibmon 20). Yáñez outright associates the caciques with colonialism by calling them “conquistadores de la costa” (Yáñez 31). These caciques have two things to conquer: land and women.

Language in *La tierra pródiga* reveals the gender norms of the time as already mentioned. The reader is confronted with an act of parallelism, with Yáñez’s characters, specifically Amarillo, directly correlating nature with women. In the chapter, “Los nombres ilusionados”, it is revealed that every tip of every mountainous region in the jungle bears a name of a woman in the novel. The narrator states, “Entre todas, las mujeres, algunas de las cuales, las más impresionantes, habían bautizado con sus nombres los accidentes más hermosos de la bahía” (Yáñez 65). This is a crucial moment for this study as it is at this moment that land and women become synonymous; “la tierra pródiga” is also la mujer pródiga. These mountains now carry the names of women who have been sexually “conquered” by the caciques of the region, their names were imposed onto the mountains by men who also sought to vanquish the land. The narrator continues:

Punta Elena, punta Margarita, punta Rosada, punta Catalina, punta Ida, punta Marta, punta Elisa. -“Cada una lleva el nombre de alguna mujer.”
Hubiera querido decir: de alguna ilusión. Soterradas casi todas en deseos

que apenas afloraron sin florecer. Sombras casi todas fugitivas de
soñados placeres. (Yáñez 65)

The narration with great detail continues to reveal all of the women who have
passed by the region, either being sexually linked to the caciques or otherwise:

Y con la gran playa de los Árcangels, la reventazón de la Gloria, en
recuerdo de aquella extraordinaria mujer venida del cine a revelar la
pujanza gozosa de la naturaleza. Y la pequeña playa Clara, como fuente
sellada, en memoria de la extranjera que con fama de pianista maravillosa
pasó por La Encarnación como inasible lampo de sol. Nombres, nombres
de mujer. Playa Eunice, playa del Carmen, laya de la Consolación, isa del
Refugio, desembocadura de la Purificación. (Yáñez 65)

As is evident in the above quote, every beach has an association with a
woman. Nature being likened to a woman, and more importantly, nature
assuming a woman's moniker is essential to the forming of oppositions and
binaries which patriarchy thrives on. Ecofeminism's main premise is "that the
ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class,
gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which
sanctions the oppression of nature." The cacique's naming, and possession, of
the land is an authoritarian, power move. The movement of ecofeminism
challenges the exploitation of nature as well as concerns itself with challenging
all exploitation-class, racism, colonialism, imperialism, anthropocentrism, among
other forms of oppression. With naming and assuming ownership, the caciques

distinguish between themselves and the oppressed. The caciques are not to be named, possessed of, since they form the higher up of the dualism. By this dualism, the colonized is appropriated, incorporated into the culture of the mater and thus their identity as inferior is formed. The “lower”, less than entity, has no right to its own body and thus allows for the superior to inscribe itself on it, as is the case with the mountainous tips in *La tierra pródiga*. In this particular case, it is further established that the privileged group are “upper- or middle-class, human, technologically and industrially “developed,” male, and the oppressed are poor or working-class, nonhuman animal, “undeveloped” nature, and female, respectively” (Gaard 1-2). It was these industrially developed men who would carry on this new conquest. The conquest, specifically for Amarillo, released an irreplaceable euphoric high:

Ejercitó la puntería sobre un águila y al primer disparo la cazó. (Buena suerte.) La euforia lo invadió: quería poner nombre a los picachos, a las hondonadas, a los árboles, a los mil pájaros que resonaban en las barrancas. Qué importaba que adelante surgieran más y más montañas. Las dominaría como dueño. (Yáñez 82)

Once again, the topic of domination comes through in the novel. The “thrill of the catch” prompts him to hunt and to continue this habit which is “ahora hecha obsesión” (Yáñez 83). This behavior exemplifies the masculinity with which he identifies himself with; a masculinity based on power as well as subordination of others. In dominant patriarchal cultures, such as the culture portrayed in the

novel, society is divided according to gender, and a higher value, humanness if you will, is placed on those attributes associated with masculinity. The caciques in the novel find a way to first, feminize nature and naturalize or animalize the women which in turn serves as their justification for the domination of both women, animals and the earth. This colonization of bodies echoes the colonization which occurred with the indigenous population of the Americas, something I will expand on later in this chapter.

As I mentioned earlier, the masculinity found in *La tierra pródiga* is one based on dominance and exploitation, and this masculinity has developed in conjunction with the devaluing of nature and feminine values. There is a passage in the novel in which the narrator recounts a trip taken by Amarillo to Chamela, Jalisco. The trip to Chamela proved to be more than he bargained for, as it became increasingly difficult to manage:

aparecieron los pantanos, le cerraron el paso, quisieron asfixiarlo; ...la sed las ganas irreprimibles de dormir los brazos muertos ya sin poder levantar el machete golpear las víboras colores de pantanos atrapado inerme ya entre troncos y ramos bailando al son del sol...chicharras bailándolo a fuerzas bailándolo cantándole burlas “al cabo para ti no hay imposibles-todo esto es tuyo-cógelo. (Yáñez 83)

As it appears in this passage, nature is taunting him and the parameters of masculinity he defines himself with. His ability to dominate seems for a moment to be absent as he is portrayed as a weak and one would say “feminized.” Based

on the masculinity which he propagates, his essence as a male is put into question. He no longer upholds the values of the machista masculine role, as he is shown weak and at the mercy of nature, a being which has been feminized and made inferior by his values. Nature taunts him saying, “-si eres conquistador líbrate de nosotros-alcanza el mar aquí detrás cerquita no más véncenos-querer es poder-si eres rey rompe esta red-”(ibid). Amarillo throughout the novel has been shown as paralleling women and nature, asserting the ease with which you could dominate both, in the aforementioned passage, nature uses Amarillo’s thought to taunt him, “-si dominas la una conquistarás la otra-la una una la una” (ibid). It seems as though nature has taken note and is taking pleasure in his temporary demise; if even for a moment, the dualism is inverted showing the power nature possesses but is stripped of.

The Spanish conquest resonates deeply with the novel. The fact of the matter is that the government initiative is indeed similar to the conquest in the way in which men arrive to a “virgin” land and begin to explore and excavate this unknown terrain. The character of Amarillo, especially, is modeled after a conqueror as the text states:

Qué gran injusticia; después que los conquistadores españoles habían pasado resonando su fuerza en esa zona y la habían dejado allí perdida, olvidada durante siglos, él había vuelto a descubrirla y casi sin medios, sin ayuda cual ninguna, la había conquistado palmo a palmo. (Yáñez 150)

The conquering of new land implicates that there will be a difference formed. Anibal Quijano speaks of the differential that is established between conquerors and conquered, one that is evident within Yáñez's text:

The codification of the differences between conquerors and conquered in the idea of 'race,' a supposedly different biological structure that placed some in a natural situation of inferiority to the others. (Quijano quoted in Maldonado-Torres 243)

Another power which Quijano credits with the initiation of colonialism is:

the constitution of a new structure of control of labor and its resources and slavery, serfdom, small independent commodity production and reciprocity, together around and upon the basis of capital and the world market" (Quijano cited in Maldonado-Torres 244).

The enterprise of converting the region of La Encarnación into a tourist Eden is because of the new modern identity that is being assumed, one that is framed by capitalism and a system of domination structured around the idea of gender.

Amarillo is defined by his extreme masculinity, and through his monologues and conversations with others, it is evident that there is in place a logic of colonization and domination. Marilyn Frye states:

For efficient subordination, what's wanted is that the structure not only not appear to be a cultural artifact kept in place by human decision or custom, but that it appear *natural*- that it appear to be a quite direct consequence of the facts about the beast which are beyond the scope of human

manipulation or revision. It must seem natural that individuals of the one category are dominated by individuals of the other and that as groups, the one dominates the other. (Rye quoted in Plumwood 41)

The domination that ensues from dualisms results in an established difference. Some dualisms in Western thought are: culture/nature, reason/nature, male/female, human/nature, among others. In *La tierra pródiga* the power is institutionalized and naturalized based on these established differences. The dualisms of human/nature and subject/object are ones that have developed with modern consciousness.

Amarillo has established himself as the higher being in these dualisms. He is the one exercising the power and calling upon his subjects, i.e. feminine bodies. Amarillo has come to cultivate the land and to serve as the second coming of the conquest. Albert Memmi in *The Coloniser and the Colonised* demonstrates how distancing is used in colonization to establish a differential:

The colonialist stresses those things which keep him separate, rather than emphasizing that which might contribute to the foundation of a joint community. In those differences, the colonized is always degraded and the colonialist finds justification for rejecting his subjects. Immediately the colonial relationship between the colonized and the colonizer...becomes a definitive category. (Memmi quoted in Plumwood 51)

The attitude of "it is what it is" comes from certain preconceived ideas of the essence of certain people. This construction naturalizes domination, making it

appear as a natural occurrence in society. Women are, *essentially*, inferior beings, present to reproduce and aid in the financial project of La Encarnación. The imperial attitude that is assumed by Amarillo and the other caciques promotes a machista attitude in respect to the women and nature.

Chapter 3 of the novel is where the association between women and nature is clearly established. First, the male characters refer to the land as a woman and the two entities become synonymous with each other. The very first parallel of nature to women comes in Chapter 2, "Otro día":

Presagios de selvas virgenes, de subterráneas tentaciones, de fascinantes peligros, de dominios a fuego, sudor y sangre. Perfumes embriagadores. Vaho de feracidad, caliginoso. Miasmas. La respiración profunda que vivifica y corrompe. Unánime aliento de fecundidad, que se nutre de rápida pudrición, en la matriz del trópico, al horno del viento, al vuelo de insectos ponzoñosos. (Yáñez 57)

The crucial phrase in the above quote is the very last one, "Unánime aliento de fecundidad, ...en la matriz del trópico." Nature in this quote is gendered and the adage of "Mother Nature" is enacted. There is an intense focus on the ability of nature to reproduce, if it does not, the value is nulled, just as it would be in a woman. La Encarnación is seen as completely fair game because it lacks an owner. Nature more often than not is seen as a free floating agent in the search to be possessed. This bears similarities to the female body. In traditional patriarchal societies, a woman is born to be "possessed" by her father, to later be

handed down to her husband. If she does not prove to be fruitful in marriage, her value as a woman is denied. Her value lies in the ability of reproduction, as does the land's. Amarillo states, "Ésta sí es la mera tierra caliente...tierra de nadie, desperdiciada como esas mujeres abandonadas que podrían tener muchos hijos" (Yáñez 84).

Ecofeminists argue that women's association with nature is because of the reproductive function and roles women assume, just as is evident in *La tierra pródiga*. In similar fashion, men are associated with culture and reason since culture universally attempts to dominate nature therefore men universally dominate and subordinate women. The binary oppositions resulting from the hierarchical discourse where man and civilization are privileged and synonymous entities and females viewed as the 'Other' illustrate the seemingly silent effects of patriarchal rule. The solution to this problem lies in dismantling this thought of binary oppositions and hierarchies.

The perception that women's humanness is based on their ability to reproduce stems from Marianismo. Marianismo is a construction of the feminine gender based on the traditions of Catholicism, and modeling the figure of the Virgin Mary and her attributes, "virgin, humble, sincere, selfless, intimately associated with the suffering of her son" (Sequeria 30). Jane F. Collier identifies Marianismo as one model of femininity which privileges the maternal, defining women by the relations she has with her offspring. Once again, this means that women thus are defined by their reproduction, "Women's bodies appear as

gateways to all privileges. But women's bodies are gateways any man can enter. Women's penetrability is their most significant feature" (Collier 101).

Amarillo is questioned by a character called "Dientes de Oro" when he states that land does not belong to anybody and is free to possess and dominate.

Dientes de Oro questions, "¿Tierra de nadie?" to which Amarillo responds:

-Sí, de nadie; mejor dicho: del primero que la agarre y sepa retenerla a como dé lugar, tal como las mujeres, que son llevadas de la mala. Tierra rica, ella trabaja por uno. No más óigala cómo crece, cómo fecunda. Con tantito cuidado, como las mujeres, rinde mil por uno. Es reagradecida. No digo que las mujeres sean agradecidas; pero chicoteándolas, bien que le rinden a uno; así la tierra. (Yáñez 85)

Here it is illustrated that the woman's main purpose is to work for the advanced, superior man. Before reproduction occurs, especially since women are deemed inferior and not capable, she must be domesticated, something that is illustrated in the novel as well, "desmontándola, cintareándola, quitándole lo vicioso a que es tan afecta; digo la tierra caliente, que al menor descuido ya esta llena de maleza..." (ibid). She has to be "humanized" in order to be suitable for reproduction, in a way she has to be domesticated to serve her purpose. The masculine bodies treat the land all in self-interest, "Entregarse a la tierra, vivir con ella para vivir de ella, explotándola" (Yáñez 112). Amarillo agrees with this, "Lo mismo que algunos hacen con las mujeres o lo que sucede con las bestias:

hay que aguantarlas para que den de vivir, y hasta quererlas: mientras más, mejor, más productivas” (ibid).

I am Woman, Hear Me Roar-Nature as a Threat in *La tierra pródiga*

The thought of domesticating nature, and “humanizing” her is something which happens often with environments. There is what is dubbed “constructed” environments, Eden like spaces built to provide pleasure to man. Mark D. Anderson, whose work explores topics of ecocriticism in a Latin American context, offers an insight into disaster writing and the need for humanity to beautify, control and repress the natural world through the use of technological advances amongst other resources. In his introduction to his work, *Disaster Writing, The Cultural Politics of Catastrophe in Latin America*, he states that a natural disaster is a “moment of disjuncture when nature topples what we see as the natural order of human dominance” (Anderson 1). What is key in that definition is the reaffirmation that humans perceive themselves to be as *naturally* superior to the environment. Thus, when a disaster ensues that questions the established hierarchy between human vs. nonhuman, the identity of the former is placed in crisis. As Anderson notes, the identity of humans is based off of their relation to nature, one’s identity is defined in regards to an “other.”

The natural environment that sustains human populations appears to rebel against us, wreaking havoc on our lives and throwing into question our very identities as disaster reconfigures suddenly and brutally the lifelong

relationships that we have fostered with other people and the places we inhabit. (ibid)

A natural disaster problematizes the relationship between humans and nature, a relationship which is inherently seen as oppositional. In the chapter titled “El último de los males: la esperanza” Yáñez presents the reader with a natural disaster that threatens to ruin the region.

El amontonamiento de nubes bajas caídas desde todos los rumbos, impuso al mediodía el reinado de las tinieblas. Crecía el furor del aire y del océano, momento a momento...El mar brincaba su barrera eterna...Los relámpagos añadían espanto al pavor. Había llegado la hora de morir. (Yáñez 169)

Nature decides to avenge the industrialization that has taken place thus far in the region. Here the reader is presented with the secondary image to that of “Mother Nature”, one of danger and volatility. This second image of nature is useful to modern man because it justifies the domination of the environment. In order to soothe the anxiety, society has in regards to the uncontrollable aspect of nature, society has utilized, as aforementioned, a way of normalizing nature. Anderson speaks of this concept and explains that due to the daily interactions humans have with nature, there is a “conceptual domestication” that occurs resulting in a third mediating space dubbed by Anderson to be “normal nature” (Anderson 4). The landscaping that occurs with nature is done to cement nature in a relation of dominion with humans. Through the practice of landscaping, nature is introduced

into the sphere of social control, and as Anderson claims, is christened as the social stage for humans. The act of landscaping is done to placate fears of the unknown, of the violent Mother Nature. When this social stage becomes one of terror, there is an inversion that occurs, one of rebellion on behalf of the environment, “disaster represents the inversion of the normalized relationship between human and their environments...Disaster unmakes landscapes, estranging nature from the human” (Anderson 5).

Agustín Yáñez with his novel *La tierra pródiga* offers insight into a patriarchal society that bases its model of masculinity on machismo and its model of femininity on marianismo, respectively. Upon a close reading of the novel, it becomes evident that there is not only a logic of domination but also one of colonization. The novel deals with the colonization of new land with the intent in developing the land for economic purposes, specifically tourism. The caciques of the novel all parallel women to nature, at times referring to nature as they would a woman, and vice versa. The environment and feminine bodies become synonymous. Consequently, an ecofeminist reading of the novel reveals the dualistic nature of Western thought and the patriarchal hierarchy that is in place, one in which man and reason prevail over all other subjects.

The Porfiriato and *La parcela*

The work of José López Portillo y Rojas (1850-1923) is very extensive and diverse, consisting of poetry, drama, literary criticism and of course stories and

novels. The Mexican writer has been consistently regarded as the principal novelist of his generation, due to the narrative techniques he employs in his works. Before he published one of his most recognized work, *La parcela* (1898), he had already published 8 other books making him “un escritor maduro, en la plenitud de su oficio, el que una generación después, adopta y aplica de manera sobresaliente las ideas expresadas por Altamirano en 1868 y 1870” (Mata 83). Predominantly known as a novelist, it is useful to note that most of his novels, due to their length, are actually considered short stories or cuentos. Some of his works that fall into this category are the following: “La horna de su zapato”, “El primer amor,” and “En diligencia” among others. These novels can be found in the work *Novelas cortas*.

His short stories are worth noting, as are his novels, in particular, *La parcela* (1898), *Los precursores* (1909) and *Fuertes y débiles* (1919). These three novels have been associated with three important time periods in the history of Mexico. The first pertaining to the Porfirio epoch, the second to the Reform, and the third to the Revolution, respectively. *La parcela*, is viewed by some as a precursor to the novel of the revolution, while others believe it to be utterly not so. *La parcela*, especially when read in an ecocritical/ecofeminist fashion, is a novel which falls into the complacent place of patriarchy. It does not step outside of the binary model nor offer a solution to the problems facing society. Emmanuel Carballo rejects the notion that *La parcela* assumes a reformist attitude, “menos aún la de

un revolucionario” and continues stating that the novel “predica una doble sumisión: a Dios y a los hombres que lo representan” (Carballo 77).

In the prologue to *La parcela*, López Portillo outlined a description of authorial responsibility that emphasized documenting and portraying the diverse cultural practices of Mexico. On the subject of nationalism and Mexican literature, López Portillo y Rojas has said:

Nuestra literatura, en cuanto a la forma, debe conservarse ortodoxa, esto es, fidelísima a los dogmas y cánones de la rica habla castellana. No por esto, con todo, ha de presundir de su facultad autonómica de enriquecerse con vocablos indígenas, o criados por nuestra propia inventiva y como resultado de poderosas corrientes de carácter, naturaleza, clima y temperamento que nos son exclusivas; pero aun en estas mismas novedades, hemos de procurar no apartarnos del genio de nuestra lengua materna y de no romper sus clásicos y gloriosos moldes. (López Portillo y Rojas 3)

He has always kept his dear Mexico in the forefront in his writings and his ideologies. Nationalism, to the writer, was understood as the following:

por lo que ve a su misma sustancia, conviene que nuestra literatura sea nacional en todo lo posible, esto es concordante con la índole de nuestra raza, con la naturaleza que nos rodea y con los ideales y tendencias que de ambos factores se originan. (ibid)

López Portillo y Rojas rejected metropolitan narratives that falsely imagined Mexico City as an extension of Paris; instead, he urged writers to engage more directly with the indigenous and mestizo elements of the Mexican people:

Dominados por la magia de los libros europeos, nuestros poetas y novelistas hacen poesías y novelas de puro capricho, sobre asuntos extraños a la realidad de nuestra vida y de nuestras pasiones actuales, produciendo así creaciones falsas, que ni corresponden aquí a nada verdadero, ni copian tampoco, sino deformado y monstruoso, lo exótico y refinado. (López Portillo y Rojas 6)

He believed that the Mexican writers of the time had an abundance of resources from which to draw inspiration from. According to López Portillo y Rojas:

Nuestra vida nacional está aún tan poco explotada por el arte, como nuestra naturaleza por la industria; todo es virgen entre nosotros, las selvas y las costumbres, la tierra maternal y el mundo moral que nos rodea. (López Portillo y Rojas 7)

The aforementioned quote shows the thought influencing the writer: modernization. If one pays close attention, he mentions the importance of modernizing and of exploiting the resources. The mention of “virgin” lands and of the jungles lends to the ecocritical and ecofeminist analysis this study will enact. *La Parcela* is considered to be a rural novel, past the period of romanticism, however there could still be traces of romanticism lingering throughout the novel.

The novel was written towards the end of the Porfirio Díaz regime (1876-1909), otherwise known as the porfiriato. The political goal of the regime was “internal peace and external credit” as Mario Martín Flores mentions. The regime is most commonly divided into three stages: 1. Díaz assumes power, 2. “very little politics and too much administration”, and 3. the demise of the regime (Mata 83). During this time period, foreign debts were renegotiated and payments were set up in order to fulfill financial obligations. Foreign loans were also obtained for the renovation of the communication infrastructures as well as the agriculture industry. Relations of peace were offered to all countries, and new immigration policies were enacted in which doors were open to foreigners with the intent that these foreigners would serve as colonists and thus modernize the agricultural sector. This plan, and its failure, served to strengthen the exercise of an autocratic, and authoritarian regime which is made evident in *La parcela*. Society was in a way immobilized as only a certain few benefitted from this new strategy:

“Progress,” except in the area of communications, was concentrated in the cities, which included no more than 25 percent of the total population.

Commerce grew vigorously in the cities, and one out of every four citizens who formed part of the incipient and heterogeneous middle class was involved in that sector. (Martín-Flores 114)

What ensued with this dictatorship was the implementation of what was known as the Law of the Land (1893) which allowed for adjudication of available lands with the requirement that they be farmed or even inhabited. This law provoked

conflicts over the possession of lands, such as the one detailed in *La parcela* with Monte de los pericos. This new enactment resulted in many independent peasants losing their properties because of their inability to provide legal documentation, as they were considered quasi citizens in the legal process. This here brings up the issue of marginality and of de-humanizing. Within law systems, and hierarchical societies, there is a tendency for the dominating power to dictate humanness. This superior power chooses who can speak and who stays silent based on socioeconomic factors and rigid racial and cultural prejudices. By 1910 Mexican society become disgruntled as they saw the minimal benefits they received in comparison to the urban few, hence the Mexican Revolution of 1910. Mexico, in its attempt to be modern, marginalized anyone and anything that did not fit the mold of an ordered Mexico.

La parcela quickly secured a dominant position in the Mexican literary canon and has been the object of substantial critical attention. Given the rural setting and the costumbrista descriptions of the novel, readings have frequently interrogated the novel's representation of the Porfirian social order prior to the Mexican Revolution. In the novel's portrayal of rural Mexican family life and business interests, the author explicitly set out to create a realistic representation of social life and customs as a way of inspiring his audience to make moral decisions that aligned with traditional values.

***La Parcela*: Machismo and Mother Nature**

La parcela tells the story of a dispute between two landowners, Pedro Ruiz, an indigenous man, and Miguel Diza, who engage in a conflict over a property of land, called “El monte de los pericos.” An interesting fact about this dispute, is that these men are fighting over a property that does not have great monetary value. While the dispute of land is occurring, their children, Ramona and Gonzalo, fall in love and ultimately marry, rising above the parental feud. Don Miguel, envious of don Pedro Ruiz’s wealth, seizes a lot of land adjoining his own property. When the matter is taken to court, the judge is bribed in don Miguel’s favor. However, in a higher court, the same tactic is utilized to secure the property for don Pedro. Don Miguel then engages in retaliation, attempting to injure don Pedro, with acts such as breaking a dam that impounds water for the latter’s mills. The novel lies in the realm of romantic realism and treats the Mexican identity as Antonio Castro Leal mentions, “El asunto es mexicano; los sucesos narrados y los personajes descritos están tomados de la realidad mexicana, con puntual y elocuente sobriedad, retocando apenas sus perfiles” (Leal x-xi). Stereotypical characterization positions landholders and politician types in a morality play staged in the rural Mexican countryside and allows the narrative to explore several problems that emerge from industrial and cultural modernization. The conflicts represented in the novel threaten the stability of tradition, but their resolution reinforces the conservative belief that Mexico’s path

to progress follows a familiar trajectory which emerges from the country's traditional culture.

The narrative structure of *La parcela* invests in the narrator the power to subjectively interpret the events associated with Don Pedro and Don Miguel's territorial dispute. The narration of the familial drama follows chronologically with several extended pauses in which the narrator inserts physical descriptions of characters and landscapes. The narrator is an omniscient, omnipresent figure, a "chatty author" who often explicitly communicates his detailed familiarity with the story, the characters, and the expectations of his readers. Frequent interruptions in the narrative explicitly direct the reader's attention from one aspect of the story to another, drawing attention to the narrator's presence and his control of the narration, a typical feature of many nineteenth-century narratives in Western fiction. At the beginning of the novel, for example, after Don Miguel presents his initial challenge to Don Pedro, the narrator interrupts a description of Don Pedro's physical reaction with a detailed aside in which he describes the appearance and reputation of both men. Or later in the novel the narrator's colloquial tone accompanies a shift in the narrated action from one space to another: "Dejemos a los gendarmes y a Gonzalo guarecerse bajo los árboles del camino, mientras pasa la tempestad, y volvamos a la hacienda del Palmar, donde a aquellas hora se realizaban sucesos de importancia" (López Portillo y Rojas 353). Controlling the time and space of the narration is a powerful tool for the realist narrator of *La parcela* because he can direct the reading public's

attention to specific events that represent the view of society that he would like to appear most “real.”

These end of the century writers found influence in Europe and the likes, as did López Portillo y Rojas, however this particular writer also looked to his own native land for inspiration:

Aunque no tengamos por acá, sino a título de excepción exóticas, refinados bulevarderos, nobles tronados, grande damascasquivanas, Nanás corrompidas, palacios opulentos y trenes a la Daumont; poseemos en cambio otras mil cosas dignas de ser observadas y de servirnos de numen para cantar amores, angustias y júbilos con acento palpitante de vida y de verdad. La belleza es múltiple y brilla por donde quiera, hasta en el estado primitivo, hasta en los paisajes más tristes y estériles. (López Portillo y Rojas 7)

The very last line of what the writer says is noteworthy. He states that even in the most primitive, in relation to modernity, and in the most sterile places there is beauty to be found. What is important here, is the fact that to him it was important to mention the infertility of the land, and not simply recognize it as simply land. Whether knowingly or unknowingly, López Portillo y Rojas is demarcating the civilized vs uncivilized utilizing the reasoning of modernity. He is promulgating the patriarchal structure put in place by the Mexican ideology of the time.

In the novel, the writer presents the reader with two models of hacendados, or landowners. There is the unjust figure of Miguel Díaz and the indigenous

landowner, don Pedro. Miguel Díaz exercises his power in an unjust and arbitrary form, invading the land of don Pedro. Díaz is able to do so, because of the power he holds with court superiors, “Don Santiago...estaba estrechamente unido a don Miguel Díaz, de quién recibía, siempre que el caso lo demandaba, poderoso contingente de votantes.” He bribes the judge in order for the court to rule in his favor as is demonstrated in the text, “Por supuesto que habrá que gastar algún dinero en el juicio; de otra manera sería inútil emprenderlo.-Ya lo sé, señor licenciado...Estoy dispuesto a gastar hasta el último centavo de mi fortuna, por tal que mi compadre no se ría de mi.” The disagreement about the rightful ownership of the small parcel of land rapidly consumes local affairs, including the romance between Don Pedro’s son, Gonzalo and Don Miguel’s daughter, Ramona. Both men hire lawyers and pursue their conflict in the court system. Don Pedro’s mercy and charity resolve the conflict in the final moments of the novel, restoring peace to the region and ensuring a happy marriage between Ramona and Gonzalo. Brushwood’s judgment of the novel sums up a consensus of *La parcela*’s representation of hacienda life: “López Portillo’s main purpose was to show how men can get along with each other, and the general impression left by the novel is of a happier society than was probable at the time” (144). Though many images of the novel evoke the rustic beauty of the Jalisco countryside, the narrative itself does not merely chronicle observations of local customs and behaviors; it projects a specific set of moral values onto the Mexican landscape.

There seems to be a great air of machismo circulating throughout the novel. It is strongly evident that both these men do not want to give up El monte de los pericos simply because doing so would put their masculinity into question. Don Miguel and don Pedro have been friends for quite some time, both stemming from poor families and having to build their reputation from the ground up. When they both receive some form of power, in this particular case financial power, their friendship becomes strained and there ensues a power struggle.

Both men do not have impressive, masculine features and possibly due to this they are forced to rely heavily on machista ideals and the execution of them. Don Pedro Ruiz, as the writer documents:

no valía gran cosa. Pequeño de estatura, trigueño de color, y un tanto grueso, parecía un humilde sirviente de la casa; nadie, al verle, hubiera creído que era el propietario de aquel vasto inmueble y de aquel rico ingenio.

López Portillo y Rojas goes on to describe his origins, which proves to be of a disadvantage in the court system, something I will address later on in this chapter:

Descendiente de un antiguo cacique en Citala, tenía en el rostro los rasgos característicos de la raza indígena: cabellera lacia y negra a pesar de sus cuarenta y cinco años, nariz corta, dientes blancos, labios carnosos y un ruin bigotillo que le bajaba por los extremos de la boca en

forma de coma, dejando casi imberbe la parte céntrica del labio superior.

(López Portillo y Rojas 15-16)

In this rural drama Don Pedro is a larger-than-life hero, a man who, despite his functional illiteracy and humble origins, accumulates vast wealth and commands substantial respect. The narrator stresses that his character cannot be impugned, setting him apart as an ideal businessman, father, and citizen: “Era don Pedro una de aquellas personas que sienten confianza en sí mismas, y logran inspirarla a los demás. Se sabía que lo que él mandaba era acertado siempre” (81).

His counterpart, don Miguel also does not have an impressive demeanor as the reader is demonstrated:

Don Miguel Díaz tenía un exterior imponente. Parecía más joven que don Pedro, a pesar de ser dos o tres años más viejo. Era de estatura mediana, esbelto talle, blanca y sonrosada tez, grandes y bellos ojos y nariz aguileña y bien perfilada...Don Miguel cuidaba de ir conforme a la moda. Sus calzoneras de color oscuro, ajustadas a la pierna, lucían botonaduras y cadenillas de palta; mirábase la rica faja de seda aparecer bajo su chaleco, blanco casi siempre...(López Portillo y Rojas 19)

Associating the other hacendado's malevolent behavior with the corruption of his tastes. The moral distinction between the two hacendados is plainly expressed in contrasting styles of dress. Whereas Don Pedro routinely adorns himself with simple clothing (“siempre andaba de negro, con chaqueta de tela

ordinaria, chaleco sin abotonar y botas sonoras de grandes cañones”), Don Miguel is famous for keeping up with the style of the time and amassing a large collection of extravagant hats (19). Distinguishing the characters based on their wardrobe not only reassures readers that internal motivations manifest themselves in observable ways; the distinction also associates modern taste with moral corruption while preserving the virtue of traditional Mexican garb.

The way in which these two characters are formulated, unimpressive in physical stature and stamina, does not reject the notion that a masculinity informed by machismo is entirely present throughout the text. *La parcela* reinforces and re-articulates a vision of Mexican identity rooted in tradition and Catholic virtues.

Machismo sexual behavior is a source of pride for males and men must prove their manliness by upholding their sexual dominance. In this way, reputation is one of the driving forces behind machismo. Hirsch et al. makes the argument that reputation is the central element of sexual identity. The overemphasis on sociosexual reputation explains why males often act in socially safer yet physically more risky ways (Hirsch, 987). Gender, a social construction, is a consistently acted performance. One is always performing gender at all times even though one is not aware of this performance.

The gender system is socially constructed. Political, educational, occupational, and religious institutions, along with the family, create and enforce expectations for how women and men should behave in all known

societies. Although the gender rules vary from one cultural setting to another, all settings have such rules, and most of these rules are rooted in patriarchy...Within these institutions, people are systematically socialized to become women or men via complex processes of learning...(Disch 27)

The ways in which both men describe the land in *La parcela* denotes a certain kind of machista attitude, one in which the mere fact of owning the land is superior to the quality of the land. As aforementioned, the land which they are disputing over has no value as it cannot produce and thus does lack financial value. The opening scene introduces the reader to the dispute, as don Miguel confronts don Pedro in regards to the plot of land and its ownership:

-Conque ¿qué anda haciendo por acá tan temprano? (don Pedro)

-No me agradezca la visita; vengo a tratar de nuestro negocio.

-¿Qué negocio?

-¿Luego el Monte de los Pericos? ¿Tan pronto se le ha olvidado? Que quiero me resuelva de una vez, si me lo entrega o no me lo entrega.

Don Miguel approaches don Pedro in a confrontational manner, explicitly establishing a hierarchy of power. Don Miguel's masculinity is based on an abuse of power and domination. It is even furthered, by the associations he has made with the legal system. Through the tone in which he approaches don Pedro, who again is portrayed as a more gentele hacendado, implies a ranking system, in which don Miguel feels superior to don Pedro and entitled to his land. Don Pedro's indigenous background, feminizes him, and puts him in a place of

inferiority and subjection to injustice on behalf of the dominant system. Coloniality is maintained through the interactions between don Miguel and don Pedro, as even in the end of the novel don Pedro resigns his fight. Coloniality, as Maldonado-Torres states, emerges in a particular setting:

that of the discovery and conquest of the Americas. For it was in the context of this massive colonial enterprise, the more widespread and ambitious in the history of humankind yet, that capitalism, an already existing form of economic relation, became tied with forms of domination and subordination that were central to maintaining colonial control first in the Americas, and then elsewhere. (Maldonado-Torres 243)

The indigenous population suffered greatly during the Porfiriato regime, being seen as nullified beings and not allowed to partake in certain spheres of society. This is reflected in *La parcela*, when don Pedro attempts to provide documentation demonstrating rightful ownership to El monte de los Pericos:

-Pero hombre ¿qué propiedad va usted a tener en ese terreno! Lo compré con mi dinero. Ya le enseñé mis papeles.

-No valen nada sus papeles. El licenciado los vio y dice que no valen nada. (López Portillo y Rojas 23)

The author's description of don Pedro reveals that he has indigenous features. This description serves as a racial profiling of a historically marginal figure. Dating back to the conquest, certain characteristics were categorized as inferior while others were associated with higher rank.

New identities were created in the context of European colonization: European, white, Indian, black, and mestizo. A characteristic feature of this type of social classification is that the relation between the subjects is not horizontal but vertical in character. That is, some identities depict superiority over others. And such superiority is premised on the degree of humanity attributed to the identities in question. The 'lighter' one's skin is, the closer to full humanity one is, and viceversa. As the conquerors took on the role of mapping the world they kept reproducing this vision of things. The whole world was practically seen in the lights of this logic. This is the beginning of 'global coloniality'. (Maldonado-Torres 244)

Don Miguel insists various times throughout the text that don Pedro should simply give up his land as it does not belong to him, contrary to the documents he possesses. The cultural hegemony at the time of *La parcela* imposed their certain cultural values and subsequently became the norm of society. Don Pedro's humanity becomes questioned by not only don Miguel but also the hegemonic powers in society. His self becomes negated by the political apparatus as is seen when his documents of ownership become void. What is illustrated here follows the lines of misanthropic skepticism which:

...doubts in a way the most obvious. Statements like 'you are a human' take the form of cynical rhetorical questions: Are you completely human? 'You have rights' becomes 'why do you think that you have rights?' Likewise 'You are a rational being' takes the form of the question 'are you

really rational?’ Misanthropic skepticism is like a worm at the very heart of modernity. (Maldonado-Torres 246)

This “imperial attitude promotes a fundamentally genocidal attitude in respect to colonized and racialized people. Through it colonial and racial subjects are marked as dispensable” (ibid).

Maldonado-Torres does not consider how the imperial attitude affects the environment. He simply mentions that it affects “colonized and racialized people” leaving out the colonized lands. The land also is impacted greatly by colonists, and bears similarity to the colonization of women. The possession of women, and “claiming” them is the thrill, after the possession takes place, in a way the novelty is lost. Don Pedro, as much as the villain don Miguel, both are desiring this land to simply own it, they both are completely aware that the land is not fruitful and will not reap any profit. Don Pedro states this, and reveals the sole reason for not giving the land to don Miguel is because of the tone he took in asking him:

-Si mi compadre me pidiese el Monte dado, se lo regalaría con mucho gusto, como le regalé el Príncipe aquel caballo tan precioso que me trajeron de Kansas, y le vendí el toro bramino, sólo porque me indicó que le gustaban. ¿Para qué quiero ese cerrito? Tengo montes de sobra en la sierra, que me dan toda la leña que he menester. Pero ¡pretender que es mal habido el Monte de los Pericos y pedírmelo con altanería, como quien tiene derecho! (López Portillo y Rojas 37)

Ecocriticism pioneer, Carolyn Merchant argues that logic of domination is able to exist because historically the oppressive frameworks that have justified the domination of women (and nonhuman nature), have been patriarchal. These oppressive frameworks sanction and maintain the domination of feminized beings. The logic of domination is the “moral stamp of approval for subordination, since if accepted, it provides a justification for keeping Downs down” (Warren 47). Don Pedro and don Miguel are able to treat the land as an object because by essence it *should* be dominated. This value hierarchy that is established in the novel originates from the dualistic nature of society.

According to Plumwood, a dualism is “the construction of a devalued and sharply demarcated sphere of otherness” which occurs when the “colonized are appropriated, incorporated, into the selfhood and culture of the master, which forms their identity” (Plumwood 41). As previously mentioned, some major forms of dualism include, but are not limited to, “reason/nature, male/female, master/slave, human/nature (non-human), and civilized/primitive (nature)” (Plumwood 43). Viewing José López Portillo y Rojas’s in an eco-feminist light, it is clearly evident that the author establishes a value hierarchy, one in which the dualism of man/nature is established. There is a power-over relationship in the novel which allows for instrumentalism to be done, “it is apparent that those on the lower side of the dualisms are obliged to put aside their own interests for those of the master or centre, that they are conceived of as his instruments, a means to his ends” (Plumwood 53). Plumwood also speaks of backgrounding or

denial, which also contributes to the construction of dualisms, stating that, “Denial can take many forms. Common ways to deny dependency are through making the other inessential, denying the importance of the other’s contribution or even his or her reality, and thru mechanisms of focus and attention” (Plumwood 48). Denial in the novel does not only apply to nature in the case of *La parcela*, but also to don Pedro, who adamantly is denied his rights to property and to speak, as was often the case for indigenous peoples during the Porfirio Díaz regime.

In the two novels I have analyzed, I have shown an interconnection between the environment and gender. The two novels I have utilized are from two different time periods, *La tierra pródiga* being published in 1968 and *La parcela* in 1898, respectively. Both novels treat the topic of environmental issues and their tie to feminist issues. *La tierra pródiga*, being set in the jungle of Mexico, explores the ways in which globalization exploits nature for profit building enterprises. Mexican writer, Agustín Yáñez, demonstrates exquisitely how nature can be seen through gender. His male characters refer to nature and women almost interchangeably, converting them into synonymous beings. *La parcela*, a work by Mexican writer José López Portillo y Rojas, reflects largely the regime of Porfirio Díaz as it treats the topic of landowning and the infamous hacendados. This work reveals the Mexican idea of masculinity, which bases itself on machismo. In this work, both characters, don Pedro and don Miguel, desire to own El Monte de los Pericos simply to satiate their desire to possess. The land is seen as an inanimate object which could be exploited, and taken. *La tierra pródiga* and *La parcela* are two

classic Mexican novels that reflect the extensive relationship environmental issues have with feminine issues making even more so the belief that there could be no hope for environmental issues to be resolved without the resolution of feminine ones and vice versa.

Chapter III: Not *Au Naturale*: An Ecocritical Reading of Urban Spaces in *Morirás lejos* and *Paraíso Travel*

The field of ecocriticism is defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty xviii). Another strand of literary ecology stems from the insight that, as Buell has put it, the “environmental crisis involves a crisis of the imagination,” and explores the ways in which nature is imagined and rendered in cultural media, aiming for, in the end, a re-articulation of “humanity’s relation to” the non-human world (Buell 2). Starting from his influential definition of what constitutes an “environmental text”, Lawrence Buell’s *The Environmental Imagination* initiated a literary ecology that sought to re-consider (canonical) texts in which nature “is present not only as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (7-8), thus re-claiming the “setting” of a literary text and the aesthetic mode of its presentation as well as its influence on the narrative as a focus of critical analysis. Accordingly, literary ecology has, in one form or another, always to do with the concept of space and place as the extra-diegetic and material base of the interaction between humans and their environment, studying the manifold ways in which meaning becomes ascribed to abstract space and how the experiential base of the place-world can affect environmental consciousness or behav-

ior. This approach has been complemented by (eco-)cosmopolitan literary ecology, as expounded by Ursula Heise (2008) and Scott Slovic (2008), which underlines the need to re-align local conceptions of “place” with the “global” in order to come to terms with our current environmental crisis. Literary ecology, in sum, has so far developed along the lines of functional approaches grounded in post-structuralism and cultural anthropology as well as in the exploration of literary modes of place-making.

With urban ecology one can see what happens when ecocriticism takes the subway and ends up in Los Angeles. Since the late 1990s, the field of ecocriticism has expanded to be more inclusive of the subjects it analyzes. Glotfelty notes the frontier, animals, cities, technology and the body as the most recently introduced subjects (xxiii). Andrew Ross attributes the beginning of urban ecological studies to the work of the Chicago School in the 1920s. Ross delineates:

The basic thesis, as formulated by Park, Burgess, and Mackenzie, was that the growth of cities was analogous to principles of plant ecology. Just as plant ecology is determined by the struggle of species for space, food and light, so too the spatial organization of city life can be explained as the products of competition and selection. (Ross quoted in Bennett and Teague 17)

The idea of the city as a living organism expanded from the aforementioned basic premise.

Bennet and Teague expand the concept of environment to include the effects of human involvement in the natural environment, i.e. cities. They attempt to expand the ecocritical movement which had long been devoted to analyzing nature writing, pastoralism and literary ecology. They note that urban ecology has been slow to make its way to the forefront. Second wave ecocriticism was said to be more inclusive of non-traditional landscapes, however in practice, ecocriticism continues to long for a romanticized notion of nature. Lee Rozelle states that, “the terms urban and ecology, when placed together, seem a most dangerous oxymoron; to make such easy semantic fusions, however intriguing the academic result, leaves the door open for the referent-voiceless nature-to become critically restricted” (Rozelle 109).

The majority of the vocabulary which one uses to describe nonhuman natural environments remains firmly rooted in Romantic and Victorian views of nature. This impasse, as well as the complexity of contemporary natural landscapes, invites an interdisciplinary approach that work towards a more inclusive scope, more attuned to the complexities of modern day human-nature relationships. Urban scholars argue that cities do not destroy nature but rather are simply a stage or phase in the development of landscape: “urbanization is not merely a linear distancing of human life from nature, but rather a process by which new and more complex relationships of society and nature are created. All natural relations now seem to be produced inside the reach of social activity” (Keil 729).

However, as Roger Keil is quick to note, this does not mean that nature is subsumed by the social aspect of society. Rather, nature and society co-mingle. In respect to culture and nature, then, “cities do not obliterate nature, they transform it, producing a characteristically urban natural environment” (Spirn 42).

Extending ecocriticism through urban studies results in a fundamental shift: whereas much ecocriticism and environmentalism remain premised on the image of an ideal and romantic nature; urban studies allows for a full and unprejudiced engagement with urban and humanized nature by focusing on the possibilities and engagements these spaces offer. The field of ecocriticism has often taken a passive role, leaving out the problematic matter of human involvement with the natural environment. Urban studies emphasizes engagement with nature as a foundational aspect of urban nature—to put it differently, in urban studies, nature is defined through human experience and engagement, rather than through its absence.

In so far, cities have been ignored from the panorama of ecocriticism, treating these spaces as man made constructs which interfere with the natural arena. Christopher Schliephake reviews how cities and urbanized spaces have been perceived within ecocriticism, stating:

Cities have been seen as self-adjusting or even closed ecosystems that are sealed off from the larger surroundings in which they are situated and that function according to their own, for the most part, anthropocentric rules. Rather than challenging the dichotomy between city and country or

culture and nature, this view has re-enforced binary thinking. It has also contributed to narrow conceptualizations of the “urban” per se, as a sphere that can be easily defined and that stands in clear contrast to its (natural) surroundings. (Schliephake 1)

As world-wide urbanization is increasingly important, it is imperative that the field of ecocriticism consider the connection between the world’s ecosystem and its urban zones. Considering the interconnection between these two seemingly different entities, the impact of urban zones on the global environment will be able to be further examined. It seems to be a logical option for ecocriticism to include cities and urban spaces as metropolitan areas are growing at an expeditious rate, “...although urban areas account for only 2 percent of the Earth’s land surface, they produce 78 percent of greenhouse gases, thus contributing to climate change” (Grimm 572). Therefore, there is an intrinsic relationship between the natural land and the man made constructs. Urbanization must be managed appropriately in order to not disrupt the future of the ecosystem.

The two entities of “nature” and “city” are not seen as nature *and* the city. They are posed against each other, a position fomented by the nineteenth century binary of civilization and barbarie, civilization/nature. It is this binary that is responsible for the non-integration of urban spaces into the field of ecocriticism. Historically, nature has been seen as a pristine body where “In Wildness is the preservation of the World” (Thoreau quoted in Shumway 255). Kate Soper notes this distinction by saying, “In its most commonest and most fundamental sense,

the term 'nature' refers to everything which is not human and distinguished from the work of humanity" (Soper quoted in Shumway 255). In other words, nature is an entity in its purest form and free from human interference. Soper recognizes this oppositional binary when she acknowledges the fact that culture has always been associated with urbanization and with humanity. Nature on the other hand, is associated with the non human, far from the reach of humanity and its impact. Soper says "for the most part, when 'nature' is used of the non-human, it is in a rather more concrete sense to refer to that part of the environment which we have had no hand in creating" (ibid).

Cities are often perceived as an escape from a wild and uncontrollable nature. They protect, shield, and separate the human from the non-human, the civilized from the wild. In such a scenario, the city's liberatory promise rests in its potential "to overthrow the tyranny of nature" (Benton-Short & Short 5). As is already stated, urban spaces have been pitted against nature since the beginning of modernization. Nature and everything that inhabited it, was perceived as a wild, and uncivilized being. Cities were the epitome of modernization, progress and civilization. This conflict of country/city is often reflected in nineteenth century works, such as the Colombian Jorge Isaac's *María* (1867).

With the new movement of urban ecology, there comes a purpose to revisit ecocriticism and understand that humans have a part in nature, it is not appropriate to render human spaces unnatural and thus negate humanity's place in

the natural world. Modern novels tend to have urban settings as their primary locale throughout the development of the novel. However, within these urban spaces, the natural world is not done away with. In these novels, the reader is presented with the mingling relationship between urban and natural. There is a need for a new “nature writing”, one which discovers contemporary landscapes. Twenty-first century realities require us to develop a language and an aesthetic attuned to the uniqueness of humanized landscapes, as mere landscapes, not remnants of a nature that once was.

Although ecocritics have long underlined the need to integrate urban systems into their research on a theoretical level, relatively few have devoted themselves to this topic, focusing on such concepts as “wilderness” or on pastoral landscapes seemingly untouched by human influence. It was only with the advent of studies like Michael Bennett’s and David W. Teague’s *In the Nature of Cities* or Lawrence Buell’s *Writing for an Endangered World* that the urban came into the field of vision of ecocritical scholars. Bennett and Teague pointed “to the self-limiting conceptualizations of nature, culture, and environment built into many ecocritical projects by their exclusion of urban spaces” and argued for the need to “remind city dwellers of our placement within ecosystems and the importance of this fact for urban life and culture” (Bennett and Teague 6). Similarly, Buell called for a shift of attention to “the interdependence between urban and outback landscape, and the traditions of imagining them” (*Writing for an Endangered World* 8). Recent studies have broadened the scope further, merging the established

disciplines of urban ecology in the social and natural sciences as well as the “new materialisms” into the complex framework of a “cultural urban ecology” which seeks to trace the material fabrics of our urban worlds and their effects on the environment by analyzing their findings through contemporary culture.

Morirás Lejos and contemporary landscapes

J. Ann Duncan states, “The replacement of plot by the exploration of the nature of literary communication and the substitution of the definitive work of art by a work in the process of elaboration no longer constitute literary innovations.”

Jose Emilio Pacheco is often credited with contributing to this now dominant feature of the contemporary experimental novel in Latin America. Pacheco’s work, *Morirás lejos*, published in 1967, is more often than not regarded as an experimental text, as the narration is constantly interrupted through various inserted stories which seemingly have no correlation between them. Secondly, the Mexican author’s work has been identified as such due to its non-linear approach to storylines. As one storyline is developed, it is quickly interrupted by another non-congruent story which thus leads the lector down various paths. Russel Cluff suggests adhering to the timeline proposed by Livia Soto in order to fully comprehend Pacheco’s work. Soto suggests grounding his work in the following manner, “Jerusalén, 67 A.D.; Toledo-Salónica, 1492-1527; Alemania, 1939-1945; Vietnam, 1960s: cuatro relatos de cuatro mundos distintos durante cuatro épocas, en cuatro idiomas” (Soto cited in Cluff 20).

The stories developed in *Morirás lejos* revolve around two characters, eme-written with a lowercase E, and Alguien-beginning with an uppercase letter. Alguien is in a Mexico City park, circa the 1960s, reading a newspaper, *El Universal*, while eme, finds himself in a nearby house entranced by the presence of Alguien. However, as the novel develops it is established that Alguien is in fact spying on eme. As the storyline develops, one can deduce that eme was a doctor for the Third Reich during World War II, and Alguien is inserted into the story to represent righteousness. Pacheco alongside the storyline of eme and Alguien, inserts other narratives which reflect certain points of modern history such as: the persecution of the Jews, the destruction of the Jewish temple on behalf of Tito Flavio Vespasiano, the concentration camps during the Second World War, among other historical moments all pertaining to the Jewish population. As Russell M. Cluff so adequately titles his article, *Morirás lejos* is a “mosaic intemporal de la crueldad humana.”

Luis Leal notes the novelty of Pacheco’s novel stating:

En verdad, ningún escritor hispanoamericano había tratado de escribir una novela sobre el exterminio de los judíos en los campos de concentración nazi, o sobre la destrucción de Jerusalén por las legiones romanas de Tito. Pero también es cierto que a ningún escritor en el mundo se le había ocurrido sincronizar las dos historias desde una perspectiva contemporánea, como lo hace Pacheco...La superposición de dos mundos...y el desenlace abierto que obliga al lector a participa en cuanto a la

naturaleza de los acontecimientos y los cambios de relaciones entre los actuantes. (Leal quoted in Cluff 20)

Morirás lejos can, therefore, be seen as something of a pioneer work and one which still contains valuable suggestions for us regarding literary technique, as well as provoking us to a reconsideration of one of the basic moral issues of our time. Pacheco, similar to the nouveau romanciers, uses the novel as a means of exploring the strategies of literature and examining the unreliability of evidence, given the manipulation inherent in an author's use of style, structure and narrative viewpoint. *Morirás lejos* is, in fact, an invitation to participate in an open-ended experiment. It is not, however, an experiment which is contained within the text; it is a document, which we are urged to complete from extraneous information and memories.

Pacheco has taken these tactics and introduced a moral aspect to his novels. Whereas a murder is a neutral episode, in Pacheco's work this violence is central to the storyline. In Pacheco's work, there is no mere representation, for the six million murders which this book commemorates really did take place; they are not just a pretext for its structural and stylistic ingenuities. On the contrary, the versatility of the narrative technique, which constantly draws attention to itself, is obviously intended to point to another issue. It reflects the author's dilemma faced with the need to stimulate and provoke the reader into thought about a subject he will find difficult, coupled with the suspicion that the various ways he might

choose to do this will all meet with objections from his public. Pacheco in the novel states:

Esta ya no interesa-Está muy visto-Está muy dicho...no hay derecho en perder tiempo en estas pendejadas cuando hay tantas injusticias...y tantos muertos de hambre en el país. (Pacheco 64-65)

However, unwillingness to face the problem only makes him feel it is all the more urgent to remind people of it, as well as reminding them of the other, more recent injustices they are also ignoring:

redobla en el la voluntad de escribir sin miedo ni esperanza...venciendo el inútil pudor de escribir sobre lo ya escrito y las dificultades para encontrar documentación. (Pacheco 66)

Pacheco tackles the problem by using the text to provoke discussion of the scope and method of literature. He presents it as a series of problem, mysteries, attempted solutions and revised versions, which involve the reader through his curiosity and provide a springboard for collaboration between author and reader. This discussion of the ambiguities of the creative process seems initially to be the main purpose of the book, and to relate to a fiction which has nothing to do with Pacheco's controversial subject matter. Only gradually does the reader realize that the continual references to the difficulty of distinguishing between truth and fiction, to the distortion of evidence implicit in style and viewpoint, are concerned less with the validity of literature as such than its authenticity as a means of communicating facts.

The narration of facts and the narration of a fiction therefore represent one theme in *Morirás lejos*, but they constitute various themes, in terms of the structure of the book. On the one hand, there is a tenuous fiction, reduced to the barest of outlines: a man is seated on a park bench reading a newspaper; he is being watched through a window by another man. Diverse speculations about the identity of the two men and details of the scene replace fixed characterization and linear plot. Alternating with these passages are various narratives, testimonies and documents relating to the persecution of the Jews, divided into four main sections: the siege of Jerusalem by Titus's Roman legionaries, the destruction of the Warsaw ghetto in 1943, life on the Nazi concentration camps and Hitler's death. The poetic concision of the narrative can be appreciated by the fact that the entire text occupies no more than 158 pages, many of which bear only a few lines of print, and yet a feeling of depth and detail is conveyed.

Pacheco has been attributed with being a pioneer of experimental texts in Latin America, particularly Mexico. He has brought to his pieces social consciousness, such as the tragic history of the Jewish population. *Morirás lejos*, aside from treating the tragic history of the Jewish population, also lends itself to an ecocritical reading, despite the fact that the novel takes place in a largely urban setting. There are recurrent images of asphyxiation which create a link between the historical and fictional sections. There are continual allusions to the pollution in Mexico City, suggesting an atmosphere in which people cannot breathe freely, and also underlining the theme of visual distortion, since the smog

frequently renders it impossible to distinguish the mountains in the distance. The atmosphere of destruction and suffocation hovering round Mexico City in the second half of the narrative mirrors the atmosphere in the concentration camps, described in alternating passages:

El aire envenenado corroe y desgasta todo. Las sustancias tóxicas flotan sobre la ciudad. Las montañas impiden su salida...Ya no hay en la cuenca ponzoñosa vegetación que pueda destruir al anhídrido carbónico.

(Pacheco 81)

Through these allusions to a pollution nearer home, Pacheco widens the critical perspective of his work, indicating that the abuses of technology do not only concern war and dramatic cases of torture but the insidious action of industrial pollution, and that the atmosphere in Mexico City may be stifling for moral as well as physical reasons.

Can't Hold Me Down-Nature's Refusal to be Subdued in the Man-Made

Dominated by steel, wood, brick, glass, and concrete, this vista shows no traces of living matter, no plants, no animals, not even any human beings engaged in the frenzy of their daily business. It seems the quintessential spatial representation of urbanity, a space defined by architecture and language, not by nature or geography. Traditionally, the city is associated with processes of replacing rather than harboring the natural and the wild. In such an imaginary, urban spaces are conceived as bulwarks against the violence and undependability

of nature. They protect, shield, and separate the human from the non-human, the civilized from the wild. In such a scenario, the city's liberatory promise rests in its potential "to overthrow the tyranny of nature" (Benton-Short & Short 5). This very distinction between the urban and the undomesticated or wild, between environments created and inhabited by humans, and environments created by natural forces and inhabited by non-human animals, plants, and other living creatures, is an expression of anthropocentrism.

There is a separation that was proposed by these man-made structures, be they buildings or man made parks. Cities were built to divide the civilized from the uncivilized, however in *Morirás lejos*, this division is quite blurry. Man attempted to constrain nature to certain areas of the city, but nature seems to be seeping through the crevices. Diana Lee Dodson points out the interesting case of the sewer system Pacheco outlines in his novel. Lee Dodson mentions that the imperative purpose of sewers is to divide the grimy, dirty state of humanness from the pristine and clean state we wish to live in. Man moved from the country to the city to essentially forget his or her roots, to combat nature with reason and civility. These sewer systems were implemented to dispose of the unruly side of the population and to carry it off into lesser respected areas.

It is important to note, as Lee Dodson has, that the system that was designed to keep the filth from the city fails at numerous points, as he documents at various points in the narrative. Nature, no matter how subdued, always rears its

head. This division of bodily function from the “humane” lives allows for the human population to establish themselves as separate, and thus superior to those in marginal spaces. Pacheco, aside from being an innovative author in the experimental tactic front, is also pioneering as he inadvertently treats the topic of the environment in his text.

Pacheco details the siege against the city of Jerusalem by the Romans and the disastrous effects it had on the city. The natural environment was wrought havoc on in order to fulfill the needs of the political agenda:

para construir sus nuevas máquinas de asalto los romanos talaron todos los árboles que crecían noventa estadios en derredor de Jerusalén. Bosques y huertas quedaron convertidas en páramos. La guerra transformó en desierto uno de los paisajes más hermosos de Oriente” (Pacheco 33).

Once more, the agenda of the political economy supersedes the importance of preserving the natural environment. War also affected not only the population directly, but indirectly as well. If you were spared by the Romans, you had to suffer the consequences of the atrocious battle. Pacheco details the horrors of the aftermath:

las calles se poblaban de muertos y de hombres como fantasmas. Nadie tenía ya fuerzas para enterrar a los cadáveres, ni siquiera para arrojarlos

a los barrancos de extramuros- y los vivos codiciaban su paz. El olor de la corrupción torturaba a sitiados y sitiadores. (Pacheco 32)

The foulness of bodily decomposition is now literally evading the city. A space which was built to be separate and essentially a harbor against human foulness was transformed into a dire and repugnant space. There was no separation between humane and uncivilized, nature did not want to be subdued.

There is another man-made natural space in Pacheco's novel which refuses to be completely pristine as was intended. The present setting of the novel takes place in a park in Mexico City. In the field of urban ecology, the space of a park is significant as it contributes to the natural environment although it is essentially a construct not found in nature per se. Bennett and Teague in their volume remind one that nature is not always what one has in mind:

The word "nature" usually comes to mind open spaces, perhaps with a few trees, wild animals, or bodies of water. We often forget that these gifts from Mother Nature are also found in the midst of cities. (Bennett and Teague 5)

To reiterate, Mark D. Anderson writes that a natural disaster is a "moment of disjuncture when nature topples what we see as the natural order of human dominance" (Anderson 1). What is key in that definition is the reaffirmation that humans perceive themselves to be as *naturally* superior to the environment. Thus,

when a disaster ensues that questions the established hierarchy between human vs. nonhuman, the identity of the former is placed in crisis. What disaster is occurring in Pacheco's constructed park? The repudiating smell of vinegar. The odor of vinegar works against the purpose of what was intended to be a haven like space.

[E]n el parque donde hay un pozo cubierto por una torre de mampostería, el mismo hombre de ayer está sentado en la misma banca leyendo la misma sección, 'El aviso oportuno,' del mismo periódico... Todo huele a vinagre. (Pacheco 11)

In order to soothe the anxiety society has in regards to the uncontrollable aspect of nature, society has utilized, as aforementioned, a way of normalizing nature. Anderson speaks of this concept and explains that due to the daily interactions humans have with nature, there is a "conceptual domestication" that occurs resulting in a third mediating space dubbed by Anderson to be "normal nature" (Anderson 4). The landscaping that occurs with nature is done to cement nature in a relation of dominion with humans. Through the practice of landscaping, nature is introduced into the sphere of social control, and as Anderson claims, is christened as the social stage for humans. The act of landscaping is done to placate fears of the unknown, of the violent Mother Nature. When this social stage becomes one of terror, there is an inversion that occurs, one of rebellion on be-

half of the environment, “disaster represents the inversion of the normalized relationship between human and their environments...Disaster unmakes landscapes, estranging nature from the human” (Anderson 5).

In every passage of the park, Pacheco ensures to mention the foul odor of vinegar. Eme does not seem to mind the smell as he takes in the pleasure of reading his newspaper. The character of Eme is supposed to be reveling in the leisurely pleasures of life in a space intended for serenity, but instead is welcomed by the repudiating smell of vinegar. The fact that the smell is of vinegar, a bitter and harsh liquid, is significant in and of itself. Pacheco describes the space as an industrialized space which pre-modernization was a green lush area. Modernity converted the area into an urbanized space:

Y ya no están las casas, los jardines donde siempre era otoño, las calles empedradas, el montículo central por el que pasaba el tranvía, la corriente una vez límpida y luego corrompida a fuerza de basura, lodo, escombros; sus orillas de musgo. Apenas quedan árboles y ya no hay casas, no hay jardines, no hay río: sólo avenidas abiertas sobre la destrucción y automóviles incesantes, siempre en aumento. (27)

The sour stench in the air, as noted by Lee Dodson, also commemorates the atrocities committed against the Jewish population. Pacheco links the atrocities of the holocaust to the smell of vinegar in the park and the overall degradation of nature. The atrocities committed against the Jewish populace is reflected once

more in the violence committed against nature. It is interesting to note that both of these atrocities were committed against beings deemed marginal and inferior. As theories of colonization state, there are certain models which are created which in turn create bodies inscribed with the word "violence." The structure of society deems certain groups to have more value than others, and thus certain abnegations are seen as valid as long as they occur against groups deemed unworthy.

Although exclusively set in cities, *Morirás lejos* does lend itself to an ecocritical reading. There are man made constructs detailed in the narrative, such as parks and sewers, which ironically do not serve the purpose of separating the grime from the picturesque city. In describing the degradation of the environment, Pacheco commemorates the atrocities against the Jewish people. His tactic of arbitrary fiction throws into relief the reality of the moral issues; yet at the same time, the historical perspective given to the documentary side suggests that the choice of subject matter for this aspect of the work was also open. Pacheco's parallelism between the Jews and nature reveal the intrinsic relation people have to nature and thus strengthens the argument that ecocriticism must expand itself to include what appears to be not ideally natural.

Paraíso Travel: The Immigrant and the Hostile Environment

Colombian novelist Jorge Franco interviewed numerous undocumented Colombian migrants in New York and on the U.S.-Mexico border as part of the research for his novel *Paraíso Travel*. This novel centers its narrative on the fraught experiences of Colombian migrants and functions as a fictional form of testimony about those who make the journey into an unknown land. The novel details the experiences of the protagonist Marlon Cruz and his girlfriend Reina as they travel clandestinely from Medellín, Colombia to the United States, their separation in the states, Marlon's year long search for Reina as well as his integration into the local Colombian community in Queens, and the couple's reencounter in Florida at the novel's finale.

The novel is narrated in an oral, colloquial mode. Seemingly a reflective address to the reader, Marlon's first-person perspective is intermittently broken by various characters who interrupt his narrative with questions, comments, and their own recollections, revealing that the reader is not, in fact, Marlon's explicit audience. Instead, his friends Giovanny, Patricia, Pastor, Caleña, Roger and Milagros are the addressees of his tale as well as his newly found community.

The novel is a series of fragments and episodes in Marlon's personal life story, which he importantly pieces back together with the help of these different interlocutors. A communally constructed individual narrative thus emerges as

Marlon reconstructs his story by incorporating his friends' comments and memories, making his story an interdependent one. The novel's form is structurally built around this inter-dependence, which formally reflects how Marlon establishes new kinship ties in New York City that shifts his sense of national belonging.

Within the novel, there are three temporal modes through which events unfold, therefore the novel is not strictly chronological. There is the near past in which the novel begins, with Marlon and Reina's arrival in New York City and his year long search for her; there is the more distant past interspersed throughout the novel, with Marlon and Reina's romance in Colombia and their journey north to the United States, and there is the present that ends the novel, with Marlon travelling to Florida to find Reina. These temporalities create a simultaneous movement between nation spaces in Marlon's memory, which highlights the transnational subjectivity of migrants.

Paraíso Travel is an important novel to consider not only within Latina/o cultural production, but also because it deals with the topic of bodies transitioning and moving between lands. More often than not, migrants are moving towards cities which are seen to have more economic opportunities. These migrants who come from rural backgrounds are moving into a space that is urbanized and industrialized, a drastic change. Novels such as Franco's lend themselves to the field of urban ecology and shed light on the experiences of migrants and the way in which they maneuver their new-found space. *Paraíso Travel* is an engaged

narrative that demands the reform of the socio-economic forces in Colombia that drive people to migrate, that testifies against the migration industry that exploits the undocumented migrant, and that criticizes the United States for its immigration policies, and its hierarchies of race and class. And it does so not just from the perspective of los de abajo, but also those who come, as one character says “por abajo” (Franco 105).

In order to migrate, Marlon and Reina must pay someone to guide them however instead of receiving guidance, they encounter an elaborate structure of exploitation. The migration industry can range from travel agents to labor recruiters. In the case of Marlon and Reina, they contact the travel agency Paraíso Travel that gives the book its ironic travel. Both characters use tourist visas to fly to Guatemala where they then move via bus through Guatemala and Mexico. All along the route they encounter a “cadena de mentiras y abusos” with agency employees, transportation workers, and smugglers bribing them into paying additional fees and threatening them with exposure, abandonment and brute violence if they hesitate (Franco 194). Throughout the journey their experiences are not exceptional; in fact, many undocumented migrants crossing through Central America and Mexico fall victim to robbery, beatings, rape and desertion at the hands of coyotes, gangs, Mexican police as well as border patrol officials. Marlon warns Reina, “tendría que hablarte de Muertos, de huecos, y de ataúdes” (ibid.). By linking these three together, Marlon intuitively links el Hueco with the literal deaths that occur with the figurative death he and Reina undergo as they pass

over nation state borders. The land for them becomes a possible death threat. Every step they take could potentially lead them to their downfall.

The novel represents their migration through the hueco by materializing it as a kind of burial. As they cross over the border between Guatemala and Mexico, the coyotes force them to throw all their identification documents into the river, which they do, “como si arrojáramos flores sobre la fosa de un muerto dolido” (Franco 179). Symbolically shedding their national identities into a river and mourning their prior selves, they attempt to pass as Mexicans to avoid being harassed by Mexican authorities. Later, in order to cross over the U.S.-Mexico border, they must hide in a long truck with huge wooden logs in the back that form coffin-like spaces. Marlon describes:

La madera iba extendida en el camión, pero desde atrás podías ver unos huecos...Que por detrás del camión la madera parecía un queso, con agujeros profundos donde supelemente teníamos que meternos. Haz de cuenta que tenías que entrar en los nichos de un cementerio. Una fosa por persona donde quedaríamos tendidos y apretados, como si nos hubieran enterrado boca abajo...Taparon el hueco como si pusieron una lápida. Allí solo faltaron flores y un pariente que nos llorara. (Franco 203-205)

By wedging themselves in the gaps or holes between the wooden logs, they pass through hidden and buried within the wood in confined positions. The confined

space resembles the cavity dug in the Earth for a coffin, making the crossing into new territory into a form of burial. When they throw their Colombian passports into the river at the border between Guatemala and Mexico, the novel describes this moment using a simile that positions them standing over the grave of a loved one whom they are mourning. In contrast, in order to pass over the border between Mexico and the United States, they do not stand above the grave of another; instead, they are inside their own graves, being buried alive alone, and though the loved ones who would mourn their deaths are invoked, they are absent from the scene, which symbolizes how kinship networks and social relations are fractured by undocumented migration.

It bears significance to note that the natural environment which they encounter throughout their journey is a threatening force. Nature, in this novel, sheds the surreal and ideal cloak and reveals a force which may greet you with death. The concept of the hueco is also an interesting and problematic concept. They must pass through this underground vessel if you will, and come into the country undetected. The country can thus be viewed as a feminine being whose body is a vessel for individuals. They do not pass through the hueco and then exit the other side when arriving in the States; rather, they must now live in and forge a life out of the hueco. As the character Orlando tells Marlon, “Ni tu ni Reina existen en este país. Ustedes entraron por el Hueco y las computadores no saben nada de ustedes” (Franco 139). As Orlando puts it, they do not officially exist in the United States because they came through “El Hueco” and thus do not appear in any

governmental databases because the computers-which symbolize the State regulatory regimes-do not know about or recognize their existence as subjects. Orlandp's phrasing highlights the the contradiction that even though Marlon and Reina exist as living, breathing, laboring migrants, they do not exist according to State records. They are essentially nulled subjects.

Immigration restriction produced the illegal alien as a new legal and political subject, whose inclusion within the nation was simultaneously a social reality and a legal impossibility-a subject barred from citizenship and without rights...The illegal alien is thus an 'impossible subject,' a person who cannot be and a problem that cannot be solved.

El hueco provides an image for this condition of being an impossible subject. As undocumented migrants, Marlon and Reina exist in a hostile environment that generates their nonexistence and nulls their rights. The land of the free proved to be a prison for both these characters.

Marlon and Reina constantly encounter death. The trope of death is not something they first encounter in the United States; their former lives in Colombia was also filled with disparity and death. Reina is known for declaring that they should simply commit suicide because of her lack of options in her home country. Marlon and Reina form a part of the lower middle class, but they lack the economic and cultural capital to attain U.S. tourist visas. Marlon captures the situation thus: "La circunstancia era para sentir dolor y rabia con una patria que no

ofrece nada que no sea sangre y muertos y un futuro de pobreza. This suggests that migrating through the hueco does not begin when they start their physical journey; rather, it begins with the decisions they make in Colombia that lead them to become undocumented migrants. In other words, the social death imposed by U.S. immigration law is inextricably intertwined with the death of socio-economic opportunities in Colombia. Living in the hueco is a transnational experience marked by limited opportunities and mobility, but living in the hueco can also produce alternative kinds of attachments.

As Marlon becomes familiar with the city, he begins to generate a critical reading of New York City and, implicitly, the United States from his perspective as an undocumented migrant. Giovanni, a fellow undocumented migrant from Colombia, teaches Marlow how to survive in the belly of the beast. Giovanni leads Marlon into the subway tunnels, telling him “Estas son las tripas del animal” (Franco 76) and then onto the roof of a building, saying as they gaze out at the cityscape, “Esta es la bestia que tenés que domar” (Franco 72). In both these instances, the city and its environment is portrayed as one that is hostile and non-nurturing, a grand distancing from the attributes nature is typically given. Giovanni explains that Marlon must do so not with “fuerza sino con maña” that is, not with force or strength but with skills, and that he must remain vigilant because the apparatus of authority is constantly watching. Following Giovanni’s advice, Marlon later claims, “como un parasite aprendí a habitar en sus entrañas y a co-

mer de ellas, siempre atento a no provocar la bestia” (Franco 141). Both Giovanni’s and Marlon’s choice of words are interesting. Both require tactical strategies for socio-economic survival, but Marlon’s use of “parasite” suggests that he himself has internalized the anti-immigrant discourse that constructs migrants as threats and marginal beings.

Paraíso Travel offers an illuminating glimpse of the multi-faceted and confusing world of undocumented immigrants in the United States. An integral member of the literary movement known as “McOndo”, Franco’s work focuses on the country’s problems with drugs, corruption and violence. In this particular novel, Franco turns his lens outward to examine the life of an undocumented couple in New York City. The narrative unfolds in two alternating time frames, shifting back and forth between lower-middle class Colombia and immigrant New York, a storytelling technique handled aptly by Franco. Extending the field of ecocriticism to include the urban ecology allows us to see how the environment is portrayed as hostile and antagonistic. The migrant experience is reflected directly with the portrayals of the environment and the way in which death is a constant trope through Franco’s work. In this particular novel, nature is far removed from the ideal and serene nature displayed in romantic novels. The environment represents the un-receptive immigration policies enforced today in the States.

Chapter IV: Representations of the Natural World in *El mundo de afuera (2014)*
by Jorge Franco

“We belong to nature on the grounds of our bodily existence, and to the extent that the totality of our organic life is governed by biological and biochemical processes, we do not differ from other living organisms which partake of the great chain of being. And yet, on the other hand, Nature keeps confronting us with the experience of something completely different from ourselves.”

-Atle Kitland

Colombian writer Jorge Franco is known for tackling themes of social welfare, such as gender, immigration and violence. Franco’s novels flourish in the city of Medellín, Colombia, his childhood origin and a city plagued with violence. Jorge Franco’s corpus situates itself in postmodern Latin America. Franco is one of the most noteworthy representative of Colombian narrative and as well as one of the most prolific writers in South America. In this chapter, my analysis will reveal that this is an environmentally oriented text. In addition, I engage the text in an eco-feminist manner.

His most recent novel, *El mundo de afuera* (2014), was the 2014 recipient of the Alfaguara Novel Prize, a coveted literary award for novelists writing in the Spanish language. As Sergio Villamizar informs, the work is based on a reality Franco himself experienced, "...[es] una novela inspirada en hechos de la vida real, que se desarrolla en la Medellín de los años 60 y 70, en donde hay un personaje que vivía en un castillo del que yo fui vecino, y un antagonista, quien lo tiene en cautiverio" (Villamizar). Franco's work is situated one of the most emblematic territories of narcotics trafficking, "que en la década siguiente destruirá cuanto de paraíso pudiese haber en aquella tierra" (Basanta). The novel recounts the story of the kidnapping of don Diego, a Colombian well to do man, and that of his kidnapper, who goes by the moniker of "Mono." Franco utilizes alternating narration to recount two stories. In a series of chapters, the tale of the kidnapper and the kidnapped is told in a linear, chronological order; secondly, Franco, taking more liberty with the chronology, tells the story of Mono and the adventures of a young don Diego in 1950s Berlin, Germany. The plot develops through the use of the aforementioned parallel stories as well as is enhanced through the employment of flashbacks. Through Franco's use of flashbacks and polished prose, the novel maintains a high level of suspense and the reader is actively engaged in constructing the story.

El mundo de afuera begins with a notice that informs the reader of the kidnapping of don Diego Echeverría Misas. With this notice, the lector is immediately

immersed in a chaotic and violent Medellín. As the storyline of the kidnapping develops, one is made aware of the life of don Diego. Don Diego, during a stay abroad in Germany, becomes enamored with Dita, a German woman, whom he wishes to bring back to Colombia. He fantasizes about building a castle for Dita, one modeled after the French romanticized edifices. He recruits German architects to assist in the building of the castle in Medellín. This romantic castle becomes a prison for their daughter Isolda. Don Diego makes it a priority to protect Isolda from the “mundo de afuera.” Thus, she creates a mystical and imaginary world for herself in the woods surrounding her home. As previously mentioned, the novel tackles themes such as violence in the city, and the denigration of a once magical environment. Franco analyzes the transition of Medellín, from a city of his childhood to a city inundated with violent crime. María Cristina Restrepo says works which reveal the global violence occurring serve as “el espejo de una realidad dolorosa [...] algo que ha sucedido tantas veces en el pasado y que lamentablemente sigue ocurriendo” (Restrepo).

The topic of violence has been studied numerously in Franco’s novels, as it is one of his most resounding themes. However, the topic of the environment has been overlooked. If examined closely, *El mundo de afuera* can serve as an environmentally oriented text, in particular when studying the passages containing don Diego’s daughter, Isolda, as well as when considering the construction of the castle and what seems to be a magical forest. Gabriela Polit Dueñas points out that “today we have to acknowledge that we live in a reality undeniably shaped

by the [...] forms of violence” (Polit Dueñas). Violence forms a part of one’s everyday life, and don Diego, out of any character, acknowledged this grim norm. To shield Isolda from the surrounding violence, don Diego, assisted by his German architects, manipulated nature, constructing pristine and idyllic gardens.

Nature in Franco’s novel is represented in extreme polarities. On the one hand, nature is firstly seen as a source of punishment and danger, hence the manicured gardens and the castle which serves as a metaphorical prison. Secondly, nature, through the eyes of an enchanting young girl, is seen as a mystical and magical living entity.

Don Diego’s Garden of Eden: The Domestication and Humanization of Nature

Then God said, “Let the land produce vegetation: seed-bearing plants and trees on the land that bear fruit with seed in it, according to their various kinds.” And it was so. ¹² The land produced vegetation: plants bearing seed according to their kinds and trees bearing fruit with seed in it according to their kinds. (Genesis 1:11)

The reader is first introduced to the landscape in Chapter 1. Here it is revealed that there is a grand castle atop a hill which overlooks the city. The hill on

which the castle sits atop, is described as looking down onto the city in a diminutive form, “la loma del castillo es empinada y se aleja con arrogancia del bullicio diario” (Franco 52). The separation between chaos and pristine constructed peace is clear from the first few pages. The narrator is in disbelief about don Diego’s life, perceiving don Diego to be an anomaly, “Yo no conozco a nadie que se vista como él...ni mucho menos que viva en un castillo como los de Francia, ni que tome el té en una terraza rodeada de fuentes, con monstruos de cemento que botan agua por la boca” (Franco 196). Don Diego’s life and habitat is romanticized to an extreme and does not befit the environment that surrounds him. When he embarked on his mission to erect an edifice of such magnitude in Medellín, architect Arcuri was hesitant and found it in great distaste:

-Tal vez el valle del Loira lo que me molesta-dijo Arcuri-. Lo han convertido en una especie de parque de recreo, parece una mesa repleta de pasteles decorados. ¿Quién nos entiende? Hicimos una revolución pero conservamos la veneración por lo monárquico. No hay una lección en ese valle...(Franco 1253)

Disregarding the architects sentiments, don Diego proceeds to implement his plans of building a castle in Colombia.

Don Diego sought to create a refuge for his family from the violence of the city thus extending this project to include beautifying nature. He sought to manicure nature in such a way to resemble the gardens of French castles. In other words,

he wanted to develop a certain image of nature that did not compromise his living. Don Diego, before matrimony, had conceived of the idea of creating a home, telling his friend Mirko, “Estoy pensando en serio, quiero formar una familia y quiero construir un lugar importante para ellos” (Franco 740). He begins to ponder over what kind of house he will have built and asks his friend, “Mirko, ¿nunca soñaste vivir en un castillo cuando niño?” (Franco 769). From that question his dreams of constructing a castle begin to flourish.

Don Diego sought to emulate the style of French architecture with his castle. He spoke to his architect Arcuri, and explained his wishes:

Era el castillo perfecto. Con solo recordarlo, el castillo de Chambord, en el valle de Loira, dejaba sin aliento a don Diego. De frente o por detrás, desde cualquier ángulo, bajo cualquier luz. Su cuerpo central, con cuatro torreones, del que se erguían una torres y chimeneas que contrastaban grises sobre el cemento claro, su magnitud y su imponentia, lo hacían, como decía don Diego, un castillo de cuentos. (Franco 1204)

He wanted to create a refined castle in Colombia, alter the terrain, and refine nature. There is something to say about his alteration of the native land, inclusively the foreign man he brought to manipulate the natural land on which they were to excavate and erect this castle. Don Diego wanted to live in a castle that was modeled after the homes of European high society. His desire to do so, was in part motivated by the need to distinguish himself from lower class society, the

castle symbolized much more than just a home. It was a symbol which demarcated socioeconomic class. Acknowledging this, don Diego did not overlook nature either. He ensured to modify and humanize everything in his power, lest he be thought of as an uncivilized man. Anderson in his preface states the following:

One could certainly argue that nature plays a constitutive role in the construction of human subjectivity through processes of identification: that is to say, that humans define themselves through nature, and therefore it is nature, as humanity's primordial other, that stimulated the human invention of culture in the first place in order to mediate the relationship and create meaning from it. (Anderson 3)

Thus, Anderson postulates that humans define themselves through nature and they do so by putting in place a system that denotes them as superior to nature in every aspect. Humanity tends to position themselves above the natural world, perceiving itself to be above the laws that govern the natural world. This nature-human binary is the founding base of Western culture and it is primarily this thought which justifies the injustices wrought upon the environment. In the case of Franco's character don Diego, he wanted to define himself as a refined, cultured man and thus he manicured nature in such a way to uphold those exact values. Don Diego ensured nature encompassing the castle was first tamed and then made productive. Nature had to undergo a transformation, from untamed to tamed, which then transformed the relationship it had with man. Nature was subjected to a cleansing process that removed all unwanted characteristics. Since

man had to encounter the environment on a daily basis, they took to landscaping and created what is called “normal nature”:

The daily human experience of the natural environment has certainly led to identification with some aspects of nature, a kind of conceptual domestication that has resulted in a third, mediating space between what we consider human and nonhuman, what might be referred to as “normal nature.”
(Anderson 4)

“Normal nature” does not prove to be a threat to man; it has been manipulated in order to serve the needs of humanity. The garden in the case of *El mundo de afuera* has been converted from a simple space to a place. The argument of space versus place outlines that space is a simple geographical area, whereas place is a space to which meaning has been adhered. As Agnew points out, social relations must be carried on in a certain place. Place is not merely a location, it also encompasses the occurrences and interactions performed in that certain area. The actions that are completed in the certain terrain accompanied with the place itself, reveals the type of life that is carried there. Place reflects much more than just a spatial area. This conception of place,

reinforces the social-spatial definition of place from inside, so to speak.

The identification with place that can follow contributes yet another aspect to the meaning of place: one place or “territory” in its differentiation from

other places can become an “object” of identity for a “subject.” (Agnew 27-28).

Don Diego wanted to seamlessly identify with the place and the objects he chose to construct. His terrain reflected who he was essentially as a male. The landscapes of the castle, and any places, were to “serve as pegs on which people hang memories, construct meaning from events, and establish ritual and religious arenas of action” (Stewart and Strathem 3). As the narrator of the novel commented, everything in don Diego’s castle was extremely well planned and organized. This had to be the case because don Diego was not merely building a home, he was building a status symbol. Daniels notes the extensive detail and planning that is required by the act of landscaping:

Planting accentuated the impression of power in the land. Avenues, ridings, belts, clumps, and screens were arranged to emphasize the apparent as well as the actual extent and unity of an estate. Formal styles of parkland planting, with long vistas radiating from the country house, expressed a military sense of command. (Daniels 45)

The concept of landscaping imposes on nature an orderly structure which otherwise would not be there, in a traditional sense of the word. Since there is no apparent order in nature, humanity takes the freedom to impose orders and regu-

late nature. The narrator notes that don Diego “tiene todo tan puesto, tan armonioso, tan perfecto” in his home, as he knew how to allocate his resources and control them. The manicured gardens of the castle indicate an intersection of nature and culture. The foliage was all appropriated into the culture of humans by the domestic sphere of the caretakers and don Diego. As such, the natural is humanized thus distancing it from the unruly and free nature which in this case is found in the city.

The regulation that occurs of nature diminishes the perceived sense of violence and lessens the perceived danger of the natural world. The order imposed regulates and humanizes nature which becomes “society’s stage rather than its other” (Anderson 5). Landscaping was developed in the efforts to develop a way of seeing land so that it may be appropriate by an individual to whom an illusion of order and control is offered through a certain planned composition. The landscape surrounding Mono’s habitat is one that is not controlled and free of order. The scenery which encompasses his home is described as the following, “Las montañas de Santa Elena, al oriente de Medellín, eran empinadas y muy verdes, la naturaleza brotaba como en los tiempos jurásicos, y florecían azuleas, crisantemos...En medio de un jardín silvestre, entre helechos...” (Franco 478).

The visual landscape of the French inspired castle was one of opulence and control. The gardens, the fountains, the scenery all lent to a vision of high society, one which contrasted greatly with the reality of the city. The castle seemed to be

on a different plane than the rest of Medellín, detaching itself from the squalid conditions that lie just a few miles away.

What happens when nature cannot be tamed? What occurs when violence extends to the natural world and nature becomes a threat or a danger to humanity?

Franco offers a strikingly differing perspective of nature within *El mundo de afuera*, one that contrasts greatly with the picturesque, landscaped nature of the castle. This nature is soiled and reflects the violence that is impacting Medellín.

Tainted Urban Nature

The topic of violence is not one that has left modern society. To this day, the world is plagued with violent acts committed by varying agents. As aforementioned, Franco speaks of violence in his novels, making it a particular interest of his. Polit Dueñas remarks, “today we have to acknowledge that we live in a reality undeniably shaped by the forms of violence” (13). Violence forms part of life in every way possible, whether one experiences violence directly or indirectly, physically or emotionally. In reality, violence as a theme in Latin American literature is abundant. The topic of violence in Franco’s novel extends to include violence towards the environment. Thinking as an ecofeminist, I posit that the violence towards marginalized beings reflects the violence that is committed towards the natural world. There are various authors, such as Franco, that embark on the

mission to reflect the times anguish. Readers are able to connect with those works because of the close proximity they have to the topics. As Jean Franco has stated, “novels take us back to the primitive states where violence was the necessary tool of survival” (3). In the novels of Jorge Franco, one finds various forms of violence, not just the blatant forms of violence towards humanity. Indeed the novel contains violent acts done by humans to humans, but it is also worth considering the violence that is committed towards the natural environment.

The natural world outside of the castle’s perimeter is seen as a source of punishment and negativity. This is evident through the descriptions of nature and the way in which people regard nature. Isolda, a character which I will address forthcoming, is constantly spending time in the forest much to everyone’s dismay. They all seem to be disappointed and quite weary of her time spent there. In a demeaning and tiresome tone Isolda’s nanny, Hedda, states, “se la pasa metida en la selva” (Franco 78). These snide comments continue throughout the novel, as Isolda decides to pass her time submerged in a fantastic forest despite everyone’s disapproval. The family and employees of the estate all wish Isolda would restrict herself to the pristine castle her father had built for the family’s pleasure, wondering how anyone could enjoy the wretched life beyond the castle’s walls. There is a striking difference in the way the castle and its nature is described in comparison to how the natural world of the outside is described. The way in which both are described alludes to one nature, the man-made construct, being superior and better than the nature that is *au naturale*. What we see in Franco’s

novel is that the violence that encapsulates Medellín extends to violate nature. Violence plagues the city and its natural environment.

Just a few descending feet from the castle offer an entirely different world in and of itself. What lies below the castle is wrought with crime and violence which thus extends to taint the natural ambience. The difference between environments is further cemented when the reader is offered a description of the castle's neighborhood, "En el vecindario del castillo hay dos colegios para señoritas, una iglesia, un convento donde las monjas venden recortes de hostias, y nuestras casas: amplias y modernas, entre solares y canadas. A los arboles llegan tuca- nes de montaña, barranqueros, azulejos..." (Franco 63). Contrasting with the squalid neighborhood of the vast population, the castle's inhabitants and the neighbors are offered a pleasurable existence. Don Diego is attempting to shield his family from the conception of nature as repugnant and as punishment.

Bennet and Teague have stated: "The word 'nature' usually calls to mind open spaces, perhaps with a few trees, wild animals...We often forget that these gifts from Mother Nature are also found in the midst of the cities" (Bennett and Teague 5). What occurs when these "gifts" are tainted? When the rivers and city streets are tainted with violence and waste?

As Mark Anderson states, "Disaster unmakes landscapes, estranging nature from the human" (Anderson 5). One can extend that statement to include not only disaster, natural or not, but also the violence impacted on landscapes, or nature. The impacts of violence on nature can distance nature from humans as well.

Once nature begins to be violated and stripped from its natural and original state, the connection may be lost between the two. A river no longer looks like a river if it is overflowing with trash. These are the dilemmas facing the 21st century and what concerns environmental issues. Franco utilizes nature in *El mundo de afuera* to reflect the ongoings of dangerous Medellín. Just as the city is corrupt and overflowing with disturbance so is the natural world.

The dirty and inconceivable portrayal of nature parallels the socioeconomic status of the population. Since it was already mentioned that place reflects how humanity identifies as people, it can be deduced that this polluted place offers a glimpse into the daily lives of the people who live in this particular area of Medellín. The castle's population is surrounded by order, and pleasure due to the status they occupy in Colombian society. The city dwellers below the castle are seen as lower in status and thus their place reflects this. Since their humanity is questioned, and they are seen as inferior to other groups, then the fact that they live in such conditions is justified. One can think of this as a type of formula, one that has been said so many times that it begins to sound right despite the moral dilemma: If one is of lower class then their subordination is justified, and their living conditions ignored, if x then y.

The city is continuously portrayed as a violent urban space. One of the most obvious forms of violence plaguing the city Franco depicts is one caused by Mono and his gang friends. These characters dedicate themselves to felonious crime such as robbery as well as they are the ones carrying out the kidnapping of

don Diego. Franco describes these characters as having violent tendencies, willing to “capotear necesidades, alegrías y tristezas” (Franco 234). However, utilizing the theory that people reflect their environment, it can be said that this particular group of people has experienced violence done to them by the elite class. That being said, the reader can deduce that Mono and his companions belong to a social disadvantaged group of society, economically speaking, and thus are banished to live in squalid conditions. Gabriela Polit Dueñas states, “Colombians mistakenly accepted the violence in the comunas as if it were part of common delinquency, disregarding the complex social situation of displacement and exclusion experienced in those areas” (113). Thus, Mono and his social sphere are both victims of violence and doers of violence.

The population located below the castle is placed as inferior to the upper class population in the castle’s town. Minorities are forced to succumb to inferior living conditions which often include environmental degradation. These minorities then “must defend themselves against hostile external forces that shape land-use decisions and environmental policies” (Bullard 156). The city below the castle offers a stark contrast with the almost heaven like vicinities of the castle.

Abajo, al fondo, el valle se parte en dos por un río que suelta olores y sobre el que revolotean los gallinazos atentos a lo que salga de las alcantarillas. La corriente lenta arrastra basura, excrementos y espumas, y a lado y lado vivimos un poco mas de setecientas mil personas en barrios simple

y tranquilos. También hay fabricas que ensucian el aire con humo.

(Franco 56)

Diana Lee Dodson has studied the mechanics of the city, how cities organize themselves to essentially hide unwanted aspects, such as waste. Dodson studies the mechanics of sewers and the observation made by Raymond L. Williams that sewers are alternate versions of urban rivers. As Dodson has stated, sewers are installed in cities in order to carry out the undesirable facets of human nature. However, in *El mundo de afuera*, this unwanted aspect of life has made its way to the actual river that flows through the city. No longer is waste hidden underground, the waste and pollution has made itself visible and is co-existing with humanity; the urban ecological system has been broken. This urban river in the city of Medellín is carrying human waste through the neighborhoods. Couple that with the pollution and smoke that fills the air, this set of people are having to withstand environmental degradation and implorable conditions.

Ted Steinberg urges us to consider:

Such daily and obvious routines as securing enough food and getting rid of bodily waste, essential practices that must occur in ways that do not undermine a culture's ecological base...Indeed, one of the questions that might be asked is how the ecological consequences of eating and flushing becomes so invisible, so enmeshed in the wish to forget. (Steinberg 802)

Steinberg argues that historians have long concerned themselves with issues of race, gender and class, as it is within those three arenas that power inequalities

unfold. However, Steinberg urges historians to consider the natural environment in the task of analyzing relationships of power. He seeks for historians to focus on “how different groups within a culture went about transforming nature to feed themselves and the struggle that ensued to shape how that happened, we can create a more usable past, one more relevant to the everyday lives of people today” (Steinberg 803).

In the light of Steinberg’s proposal, it can be said that the transformation of the environment in Franco’s novel can reveal significant information about the population. The upper class society sought to create a society of order and regulation. They have implemented a structure which separates them from the dirtiest of human realities, therefore creating an illusion that nature is clean and pristine. Organized peace exists within the castle’s vicinity in comparison to the unruly and polluted environment of the city below.

The city and all that it embodies is portrayed as sordid. In one of the scenes of the novel, friends associated with the kidnappers, one in particular named Twiggy, travels through Medellín and her behavior reveals just how wretched nature has become, “Cruzaron Medellín de oriente a occidente...Pasaron sobre el río y Twiggy se tapó la nariz. Eso no es el río, es la Ombligona” (Franco 529). The character dubbed Ombligona, is a character with terrible personal hygiene. Twiggy disliked being around Ombligona because of her lack of hygiene, “le disgustaba sentarse tan pegada a la Ombligona, porque siempre tenía el pelo sucio, sudor en las axilas y se vestía como un hombre” (Franco 516). To associate

and mistake nature for someone who is grotesquely described is astounding. Twiggy believed that the sour aroma was coming from the river, proving once more that the natural environment afforded to these people is tainted and has been violated by a corrupt government who belittles this group. They continue through Medellín, “por entre fabricas, por barrios pobres, barrios de clase media hasta que aparecieron las casas grandes, con jardines y piscina” (Franco 525). Before arriving to a landscaped and orderly place, they had to traverse the city and its poverty. There exists an order that separates the unruly space and its inhabitants and the space which was designed to offer pleasantries to its inhabitants. It goes beyond a simple conceptual separation, there literally is a separation between these two groups. The highest class is located at the top of the hill, and as one descends, you descend into a space of violence and degradation, both environmental and moral.

El mundo de afuera offers two strikingly different visions of nature. Nature is introduced to the reader of the novel as an entity that serves humanity and its needs. Don Diego implemented order and rule in the vicinity of his home by transplanting a European castle above the city of Medellín. The environment is landscaped in order to transform it into a stage for life, a stage which supports human existence and does not compromise it. Descending from the castle, one finds themselves in a city. More often than not, urban spaces are neglected from eco-critical studies, on the basis that nature as we understand it is not present in that space. However, nature is all around us, whether man-made, “constructed

environments,” or all natural. Cities have abundant spaces of nature, some designed to provide clarity from the hustle and bustle of everyday life, i.e. parks or gardens. All of these spaces, man-made or not, provide an insight to how humans interact with nature. In *El mundo de afuera*, the nature found in the city is a nature that has been corrupted and violated. The violence that the city finds itself dealing with extends to harm the natural world. The river that flows through the city has been polluted with excrements and waste. The city streets are also tainted with violence, with the kidnapping itself and violent incidents occurring outside of bars. Nature as we have seen in Franco’s novel is more than a mere backdrop, if examined closely it can reveal the woes of society.

Femininity and the Magical Forest

Western culture has a rich tradition in tales of the fantastic, such as fairy tales. Jorge Franco’s novel, *El mundo de afuera*, has touches of mysticism and fantasy which are particularly evident in the passages where Isolda is present. Franco’s novel portrays nature as an entity that is sordid, grotesque and violent. In the passages containing Isolda, nature transforms itself into an enchanting living being. Elements of the fantastic are found within Franco’s work especially when considering the outlying forest surrounding the castle. Todorov defined the fantastic as occurring:

In a world which is indeed our world, the one we know...there occurs an event which cannot be explained by the laws of this same familiar world.

The person who experiences the event must opt for one of two possible solutions: either he is the victim of an illusion of the senses, of a product of the imagination-and the laws of the world then remain what they are; or else the event has indeed taken place, it is an integral part of reality-but then this reality is controlled by laws unknown to us. (Todorov 25)

Concerning the field of eco-criticism, these fairy tales cement the interconnectedness of nature and culture as well as give the readers a sense of responsibility and moral consciousness. These fairy tales, just as many literary pieces, offer more than a simple *representation of*. More often than not, the imagery created by authors serves as a reflection of the current state of the world. Eco-critic Peter Barry states that, "eco-critics reject the notion...that everything is socially and/or linguistically constructed." As a counter-argument, Barry proposes instead that "for the eco-critic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept, but actually present as an entity which affects us, and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it" (Barry 243). Taking Barry's proposition, it can be deduced that there is present a connection between humans and nature, and furthermore that the binary of nature and culture does not stand. Nature influences cultural standpoints and vice versa, for better or for worse.

Nature is not a mere representation that points to a metaphorical meaning, rather representations of nature can be reflections of the environment in which we live. Anthropocentrism, or human-centered perspectives, has been rejected in

the field of eco-criticism. Eco-criticism instead yearns for an approach where humanity lives among and interconnects with the environment and everything “non-human.” Humanity is living within the ecosphere and all of its systems, and therefore it is imperative that one realize the far reaching effects it can have on vast ecosystems. Nature is not impervious to the lives of humans; as a group, humans, have the potential to alter any systems and possibly destruct them. As in recent news, the global environment is suffering from years of neglect and torture, i.e. climate change.

Nature and femininity have long been associated with each other. Nature is commonly referred to as “Mother Nature” being represented as a benevolent being. Woman has been commonly linked to nature, being portrayed as the beings who are more in tune with the natural world. The women in *El mundo de afuera* lack any form of agency. They are all tied to and serve a male figure. It is true of all of the female figures, including Isolda. Nonetheless, Isolda is a special case. She does indeed live in a patriarchal society, with a father who imposes rules upon her, but she is able to free herself of these rules in a certain place: the forest. Her demeanor changes when she is in the forest and when she is in the castle grounds where she suffers from the effects of patriarchy.

Isolda lives trapped in what seems like a snow globe. Her entrapment seems to be the second kidnapping that occurs parallel to the kidnapping of don Diego. Isolda’s father has kept her captive in his castle, protected from the qualms of the

outside world. Isolda is described as a princess, a sort of damsel in distress who watches life go by her.

Los aviones sacuden la tranquilidad de la montaña cuando vuelan pegados a la cordillera. Si alguien va en el derecho del avión, puede ver desde el aire el castillo y sus jardines. Y si tiene suerte, puede ver a la princesa saludando con la mano a los que vuelan sobre ella. (Franco 54)

The melancholic description of Isolda within the castle is one that portrays her lack of agency, and one can assume that things happen *to* her, robbing her of any choice, any power. The reader becomes aware that Isolda is being held against her will through the conversation between Mono and his captive, don Diego. Mono tells don Diego:

Ese día, cuando salió al jardín, ya estaba llorando. Caminó hasta un árbol, se sentó, se abrazó a las rodillas y lloró otro rato. A mí me partió el alma, doctor, sobre todo porque ella ya estaba grandecita y si salía sola a llorar era porque se sentía muy triste. (Franco 442)

The narrator then recounts the numerous times don Diego had to console Isolda because of his strict and unnecessary restrictions:

Consoló a Isolda muchas veces...Ella quería salir del castillo, que la llevaran al circo o a un cine, a cualquier parte más allá de la casa de sus primos...quería ir a donde iba la gente, pero don Diego no daba su brazo a torcer y compensaba el rigor con afecto. (Franco 442)

Don Diego's numerous attempts to console Isolda because of the anguish he inflicts on her demonstrates a violence that stems from patriarchal society. Isolda is only capable of escaping this reality and finding her liberty through her imagination, something which I will speak about later in this chapter.

It is revealed through the narrator that the neighbors of the town began to comment on Isolda and her mental state, "...dijeron que Isolda se había enloquecido por el encierro" (Franco 1832). They also comment on her seemingly strange composure, "La gente dice que su rareza no es más que soledad" (Franco 2292). Additionally, the town remarks on her isolation from life, "También volvieron a insinuar que Isolda estaba loca por el encierro, que había heredado los genes atrevidos de su mamá alemana, que se había vuelto hippie" (Franco 2948). It is through the neighbor's constant chatter that Franco suggests Isolda's entrapment in a patriarchal and violent society. One can define the violence imposed on Isolda as a form of intrafamilial violence which is defined as:

Una situación de abuso de poder o maltrato físico o psicológico, de un miembro de la familia sobre todo. Puede manifestarse a través de golpes e incidentes graves, como también abuso sexual, aislamiento de familiares y amistad, prohibición a trabajar fuera de la casa, abandono efectivo, humillaciones o no respetar las opiniones. (Martinez Eduardo 2)

The castle and the forest are two different places that produce two differing versions of the young princess. In the castle she is portrayed as rarely speaking, being spoken about and spoken for by her father don Diego. Not all is lost however; as I mentioned before, something that I will be discussing at a later point is the glimmer of hope that nature offers Isolda. However, before I discuss nature as an escape and source of empowerment, it is useful to establish its counterpart.

Isolda's lack of agency speaks to an aspect of Latin society, that of patriarchal rule. Don Diego's discourse throughout the novel makes it evident that he is the head of the household, the masculine voice who speaks and determines all. The novel takes place in 1969 Colombia and exemplifies latin machista culture, one that still remains today. Don Diego and Mono both reflect the values of such a society, one in which men possess agency and women are mere objects. Mono is an interesting character in the novel because he assumes the role of a heteronormative male. He represses his homosexuality in order to maintain his social status among his group of friends, as well as to avoid the discrimination that would ensue in a society that values heteronormative sexuality. Homosexuality is considered to be a "desviación del orden social, una transgresión que relega a un hombre al rango más bajo de su sociedad" (Wise 40). Homosexuality is seen as a betrayal to machista masculinity. Mono acknowledges this fact in Colombia and in order to maintain his status as leader, he is required to deny his sexuality and assume the heteronormative values of society.

Mono although he imposes violence on fellow city dwellers is a victim of violence himself. He, on a daily basis, has to deny his being and construct an alternative self, one that abides by heterosexual man's rules. Mono's sexuality is first alluded to in chapter 3 of the novel. His sexual preferences are never explicitly said, although they are alluded to constantly throughout the novel. Mono is at times accompanied by a young man who is referred to as "el muchacho." It is interesting to note that his male love interest remains anonymous, something which in a way nulls this being and makes him invisible to society. Mono, instead of revealing his love interest, pretends to be in a relationship with the character Twiggy. In a few passages, Twiggy is portrayed as being unsatisfied sexually with Mono because they consistently fail to engage in sexual behavior. Mono fails, yet again, to provide Twiggy with sexual pleasure:

El Mono le dio la espalda a Twiggy y se cubrió con la cobija. Ella estaba sentada contra el espaldor de la cama, con los pechos al aire y las manos entre las piernas. (Franco 977)

Twiggy upset by this occurrence confronts Mono remarking:

-Cuando no es una cosa, es la otra

-Hablá pasito-le dijo él

-Puesque cuando no es por el trago es porque estás cansado, o preocupado. Y ahora es dizque porque hay gente...No podés ahora-dijo ella-,

pero antes de meterme al cuarto, te diste ínfulas y les dijiste que me ibas a hacer ver estrellas.

-Que hablés pasito, ¿sí? (Franco 977-978)

After that scene, Mono ensured that Twiggy would not reveal this to his fellow friends:

-Twiggy-dijo el Mono-. Ya sabés. Ella levantó los hombros como si no supiera nada.

-No les comentés nada de esto a los muchachos, ¿sí?

Twiggy caminó hasta la puerta y antes de salir le dijo, pero qué voy a contar si aquí no pasó nada. Eso, precisamente, dijo el Mono, pero ella ya estaba afuera. (Franco 1014)

Soon after that scene where Mono does not engage in sexual behavior with Twiggy, there is a scene in which Mono succumbs to the pressure of heterosexual desire and it is alluded that he will have sex with Twiggy:

El Mono que ya tambaleaba por los aguardientes, le dio la espalda y se quedó mirando a Twiggy.

-Vení, monita-le dijo-. Agarrá esa botella y vámonos para allí-se apretó las bolas y remató-: Ya que estás acá, no te voy a hacer perder la venida.

(Franco 2941)

Mono's homosexuality is lastly made evident through the comments made by don Diego. These comments are made in a joking and demeaning fashion:

-Mi hija no nació para cobardes como usted...Hasta sus propios hombres lo ven como un pelele, no se imagina lo que se burlan de usted, de sus ínfulas de poeta, hasta de su masculinidad se burlan. (Franco 3817)

The masculinity that is imposed on Mono is one that violates his true sense of being. He is urged by norms to assume a sexuality that denies his very being. Mono succumbs to the pressures of heterosexual society and its demands in order to maintain his social status. In effect, Mono is a victim of the violence of the patriarchal order.

The ideology of patriarchal order demands, as Laura Mulvey has stated, that women be raw and passive material for the active male gaze. Mulvey studies traditional narrative film and utilizes theories of gender to inform her readings. She analyzes visual pleasure and gender and recounts the role which females assume in traditional narrative cinema. Mulvey states that:

the function of woman in forming the patriarchal unconscious is twofold, she first symbolizes the castration threat by her real absence of a penis and second thereby raises her child into the symbolic. Once this has been achieved, her meaning in the process is at an end, it does not last into the world of law and language except as memory...Both are posited on nature (or on anatomy in Freud's famous phrase). (57-58)

Woman is defined by her sexual body, she is constrained to the image of bearer and cannot transcend it. She is inclusively defined as the counterpart to man, she does not have the ability to stand as a free agent in a patriarchal society:

Woman's desire is subjected to her image as bearer of the bleeding wound, she can exist only in relation to castration and cannot transcend it. Woman then stands in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order in which man can live out his fantasies and obsessions through linguistic command by imposing them on the silent image of woman still tied to her place as bearer of meaning, not maker of meaning. (Mulvey 58)

Bearing in mind Mulvey's remarks, it is clear to see that Isolda, and the women of the novel, is bound to the norms don Diego has implemented. Isolda is the object for not only don Diego, but also Mono. There are a few instances in the novel where Mono confesses to secretly watching Isolda play in the castle's gardens. Isolda hence becomes the object of visual pleasure, once again being stripped of her agency. Mono seems to know a lot about Isolda, from her pleasures to what she does in her leisure time.

Yo les cuento que Isolda sale de noche por la puerta de servicio, con su pijama blanca abotonada hasta el cuello, y con el pelo suelto, sin esos moños apretados que la torturan. Deja la puerta medio ajustada, corre hacia arriba y entra al bosque. (Franco 646)

Mono continues to reveal what he has discovered about Isolda by watching her, “A mí no me gusta tanto porque sea princesa sino porque es rara. Canta en voz alta en la casa de muñecas, baila sola en el jardín envuelta en un reloj y se mete en el bosque durante horas” (Franco 2291).

In response to occurrences of watching, Mulvey summarizes Freud’s work in his *Three Essays on Sexuality*. There are circumstances in which watching another subject provides pleasure for the viewer, this Freud categorizes as scopophilia. With scopophilia, people are taken as objects, subjecting them to a controlling and curious gaze (Mulvey). Secondly, the traditional narratives are influenced by the sexual imbalance that occurs within society:

In a world ordered by sexual imbalance, pleasure in looking has been split between active/male and passive/female. The determining male gaze projects its phantasy on to the female figure which is styled accordingly. In their traditional exhibitionist role women are simultaneously looked and displayed, with their appearance coded for strong visual and erotic impact so that they can be said to connote *to-be-looked-at-ness*. (Mulvey 62)

Isolda is the object of visual pleasure within the novel. She provides comfort to don Diego, as he knows she is safe within the confinements of the castle and its premises, meanwhile providing Mono with pleasure as he watches her in amazement with much curiosity. Isolda becomes a sexualized object and provides viewing pleasure for Mono as well as for other men in Chapter 32 of the novel. On a

shopping trip with her mother, Isolda left to her own devices, tries on a red mini skirt in one of the store's fitting rooms, "Ve a un lado su uniforme de princesa, lila y esponjado como un ponqué, y al otro lado la minifalda indecente que le hace guiños desde el perchero" (Franco 2306). She proceeds to taking off her socially acceptable dress to try on the mini skirt:

Ella se quita el vestido lila, toma la minifalda y se la pone. A cada centímetro que le sube por las piernas le crece la emoción. Cierra la cremallera a un lado y la falda le flota en la cintura. Es dos tallas más grande. Se la ajusta con las manos y se mira en el espejo. Sonríe encantada.

Temblorosa, se remanga la falda en la cintura, para ajustarla mejor, y encima se pone el vestido con el que llegó. (Franco 2313)

She steals the mini skirt from the store and wears it later, much to the dismay of her parents. This skirt symbolizes her sexuality, unchained from the restrictions imposed on her by society. Later in the novel Mono reveals to don Diego that his daughter had exhibited herself to him and to other men. Following Mulvey's theory, Isolda in this scene becomes the object of sexual pleasure. She is made a sexual object through the way in which Franco describes her movements and clothing, as well as through the way in which the males perceive her. Mono recounts the day:

Pone el tocadiscos en el suelo y con el mismo volume de antes, suena la canción que habíamos oído hace un momento. El jardín se llena de música caliente e Isolda empieza a moverse con los ojos cerrados. Voltea las manos, dobla las rodillas y balancea la cabeza. Menea tímidamente la cadera, pero cuando suenan las trompetas suelta los pies, abre los ojos, sube los brazos, sacude el pelo y arranca a contonearse sin freno.

(Franco 2617)

This image of Isolda contrasts with the refined image Franco has created thus far. She is assuming her female sexuality, gaining for an instance agency. She becomes the active character, since it is of her own free will that she takes the mini skirt, puts it on and celebrates what this new item of clothing brings to fruition. Isolda's celebration ended abruptly as the groundskeeper Guzmán realized what was happening, Mono relates the information to don Diego saying:

Y antes de que yo pueda entender qué me dice con su Mirada, detrás de ella aparece Guzmán con un machete en alto y grita, ¡fuera, lárgense, fuera de aquí!...La toma del brazo y la escolta hasta el castillo. (Franco 2637)

The groundskeeper appears with a machete, a phallic symbol that symbolizes the re-institution of the violent patriarchy and its ideology. Mono tells don Diego that the other men were able to see her more closely as she celebrated her body and enjoyed being seen for once as a sexual being:

Ellos pudieron verla más cerquita. Yo me deslicé hasta la punta de la rama pero empezó a torcerse y hasta ahí llegué. De todas maneras pude ver cuando alzó los brazos y se levantó la blusa. Le vi la cintura y el ombligo... Los redondos capullos de su seno, brotes de grana y de nevado armiño, violentaban el raso del corpiño que sujetaba su contorno heleno.
(Franco 2651)

Mono correlates Isolda to the prostitutes of the city saying:

Parecía una putica del barrio Lovaina. No me mire así, que si la hubiera visto me habría dado la razón... Más bien imagínese lo que sentí cuando la vi con esa faldita y en esos movimientos, mostrándole a los muchachos que la fisgoneaban. Yo, que la conocí desde chiquita y que siempre la vi como una princesa de cuentos. (Franco 2632)

Isolda was associated with a certain image, an image formulated by her father and the normative standards imposed on the feminine body. Isolda's dancing and celebrating her female body was seen as a transgression by everyone especially her father, don Diego. He commented that women simply do not act in such a manner, proving that he possessed a certain belief regarding women's behavior. This behavior was based on the idea that women should not symbolize anything other than a devout mother, symbolizing a sexually conscious woman was not comprehensible.

As Mulvey states, the meaning of the woman within narratives is sexual difference. Her meaning is inherently based on the man's existence, she is known solely as the man's woman and patriarchy keeps her in that entrapment. Women are the objects of man's gaze, since they are the ones traditionally deemed to be passive beings. A man completes the action, no action is done unto him because of his symbol as an active doer:

...the male figure cannot bear the burden of sexual objectification...Hence the split between spectacle and narrative supports the man's roles as the active one of forwarding the story, making things happen. The man controls the film phantasy and also emerges as the representative of power in a further sense: as the bearer of the look of the spectator. (Mulvey 63)

Fairy tales and biblical texts seldom offer depictions of active women. A majority of the women portrayed in said texts are women whose meaning is defined in relation to men. The ideology of the patriarchal order demands that women be the passive beings, existing for man's purpose. Achberger has noted the lack of assertive feminine figures in these tales:

Certainly neither the Bible nor folktales as they have been passed on to us today are plethoric with active, assertive, self-defining females...From Eve, who derives from Adam and bears the burden of the "fall," to Mary and the countless other women, whose primary worth lie in their relationships to men, either as wife or as the mother of sons... (212)

All of these women mentioned, including Franco's female characters, live under oppressive patriarchal rule and its conditions. They are not authentic subjects as they have to adhere to rules that deny their existence as independent human beings.

Isolda is indeed a violated object within don Diego's regime; however, Franco offers a magical escape for Isolda. Nature is not exclusively described as a source of punishment and pain. Upon further analysis of the imagery of nature, it can be said that nature is also portrayed as a form of restoration. In nature Isolda can assume her own identity and become an independent subject with agency. She enters the forest and encounters all of the company which she has been deprived of by don Diego.

Franco projects an image of an enchanted forest in the novel. The forest contains magical creatures such as the almiraj, an animal described as, "un conejo con orejas largas inclinadas hacia atrás, dos dientes grandes y un cuerno en espiral que le sale del centro de la frente" (Franco 88-89). The realm of magic comes to life within this space and it is within this place that Isolda comes into her own. Through the novel it is made evident that Isolda prefers to spend her time within the forest, her own secret world. Isolda's mother, Dita, becomes aware of her daughter's alternate reality in the forest and ponders where this secret world could be:

Dita miraba por la ventana abierta sin importarle los golpes en la puerta ni el entusiasmo del pariente. Frente a ella estaba el bosque donde se la pasaba Isolda en sus recreos...Se preguntaba en qué lugar de ese bosque estaría la entrada al mundo íntimo de su hija. (Franco 2444-2445)

Hedda, her nanny, is constantly complaining that she fails to arrive to any of her classes, “-No aparece, siempre se esconde cuando le toca la clase de bordado. Tampoco llega a la lección de aritmética, no se esmera en geografía, se la pasa metida en la selva (Franco 77-78). There is a tension between Isolda and the patriarchal order, as Isolda seeks to gain personal autonomy but is struggling to do so. She is depicted as being receptive to nature’s message and through the empowerment she gains in the forest she is able to discover her own being and becomes aware of her own female sexuality. The novel maintains the idea that women and nature are related but not necessarily as a method for preserving the subjugation of the two. Rather, *El mundo de afuera* encourages a reading that challenges the structures which oppresses both.

One of the most insurmountable reasons for the distance between humans and other animals is the fact that they cannot effectively communicate with each other. Humans’ lack of understanding of other animals’ lives and roles in their ecosystems often leads to a sense of superiority in humans and a disregard for nonhuman lives. This superiority that is established between humans and nature mimics the relationship of superiority established between the masculine and the feminine. Ynestra King states:

Ecofeminism is about connectedness and wholeness of theory and practice ... We see the devastation of the earth and her beings by the corporate warriors and the threat of nuclear annihilation by the military warriors as feminist concerns. It is the same masculinist mentality which would deny us our right to our own bodies ... and which depends on multiple systems of dominance and state power to have its own way. (1983: 10)

The field of ecofeminism valorizes the connection between women and the natural world. The main arguments of ecofeminism is that patriarchal values are harmful to marginalized beings, whether masculine or feminine. Parallels are drawn between the subjugation and violence towards the environment and feminine bodies. Feminine bodies also include any body that does not fit into heteronormative categories of being. In her article, Starhawk asserts that, "ecofeminism challenges all relations of domination; that its goal is not just to change who wields power, but to transform the structure of power itself" (77). Their resistance to patriarchal values inherently signifies that there is a resistance towards the destruction of planet Earth. Ecofeminists believe that Western patriarchal ideology flourishes on the domination of both "wild" females and nature.

Ecofeminism's objective is to destabilize patriarchal order which in turn can eliminate the subjugation of women and nature. As I have established in previous chapters, the main argument of eco-feminism is that the domination of women is essentially tied to the domination of the environment. This movement, aims to

dismantle the harrowing dichotomies of male/female, culture/nature, human/animal, among binaries. Gaard's definition of eco-feminism is as follows:

Ecofeminism is a practical movement for social change arising out of the struggles of women to sustain themselves, their families and the communities. These struggles are waged against the maldevelopment and environmental degradation caused by patriarchal societies, multinational corporations and global capitalism. They are waged for environmental balance, hierarchical and matrifocal societies, the continuance of indigenous culture and economic value and programs based on subsistence and sustainability. (Gaard 2)

Western patriarchal order esteems reason, logic, and analytical ways of thinking and therefore rejects the emotional, intuitive and earthy qualities that are essentially considered to be feminine and passive. Franco's character Isolda, possesses the latter set of qualities. She is in tune with Mother Nature, hence being thought of as a wild and unruly child who does not seek to mold herself into society's expectations of what a "good" female should be. Isolda possesses an ability to communicate with nature which is seen in various points in the novel.

One is first introduced to Isolda's fascination with the natural world in Chapter 1, when the nanny Hedda complains to Isolda's parents of the child's incessant need to escape class and revel in the forest. Later on, it is revealed through Mono that Isolda escapes daily at night to the forest where she spends countless

hours. Isolda is mesmerized by the enchanted forest and the possibilities within this realm of her own:

Ella atraviesa el bosque como un astronauta suelto en el espacio abierto, maravillada por el centelleo de las luciérnagas y escoltada por cinco almirajes que hurgan con el cuerno entre los arbustos para espantar los bichos que puedan asustarla. Isolda lleva un frasco de vidrio con su tapa perforada, y a él entran las luciérnagas sin tener que cazarlas. Son solo un prestamo, así se lo ha prometido a los almirajes. Más tarde, ...quitará la tapa para que salgan volando mientras ella duerme, y en la mañana abrirá la ventana para que regresen al bosque. (Franco 224)

Through this passage the reader can see that Isolda and nature have a connection. Nature has formed a bond with Isolda, one of nurturer and companionship. Giving attention to the seemingly small detail of how Isolda is able to catch fireflies without actually having to hunt them reveals the interconnection present between Isolda and the natural world. This small detail demonstrates a mutual respect between the princess and nature. Nature does not feel threatened by Isolda, perceiving her to be a friend and not a foe. This parallels the argument of eco-feminism which again reinforces the bond between the feminine and the environment. Isolda promises the almiraj that she will release the fireflies in the morning. Isolda understands that nature does not exist as a mere resource, that it must be free and untamed. Her ideology differs from the ideology of the West-

ern paradigm which has conceptualized nature as a feminized and exploitable resource. The Earth, in the light of patriarchal ideology, is seen as an object that could be manipulated and controlled. Women were also placed within the same category, as dispensable beings. Eco-feminism posits that there exists an interdependence among all creatures, human and non-human, a thought that is non-existent in traditional Western thought.

Isolda outside of the enchanted forest is a young woman who abides by the laws set forth by her father. There is a resistance surging within Isolda, one that resists the normative laws that encompass her. Isolda, however, transforms into a different woman when she enters the forest. She is visibly free from the social constraints imposed on her in her quotidian life, “Yo les cuento que Isolda sale de noche por la puerta de servicio, con su pijama blanca abotonada hasta el cuello, y con el pelo suelto, sin esos moños apretados que la torturan” (Franco 646). Isolda leaves behind the poised image of a proper woman and literally lets down her hair. This simple hair adornment proves to be much more than that if looked at closely. The landscaping of nature resembles the beautification of women and the adornments they don in order to be more appealing to the opposite sex. In a similar fashion to the forest which is untamed and unruly, Isolda is also able to take pleasure in her unprocessed self. Instead of the adornments society deems fit for a young woman Isolda becomes one with nature, being adorned by nature:

En el bosque, el pelo de Isolda se va transformando en una espiral que crece a medida que los almirajes le trenzan los cadejos. Y se lo adornan con dragonarias y pensamientos morados, amarillos y blancos. Ella, plácida, disfruta que ellos la peinan con su cuerno hasta dejarle el pelo como el copete cremoso de un helado. (Franco 657)

In another occasion, Isolda returns from the forest and arrives at the castle where her parents were hosting a gathering. Her appearance shocks the guests, prompting attention from her father:

La apariencia de Isolda es más extravagante que tierna. Tiene el vestido sucio de tierra, los cordones sueltos y sobre los hombros, briznas de hierba. En la cabeza lleva una diadema trenzada con su propio pelo, adornada con margaritas y hojas de laurel, y de la diadema hacia atrás le brotan siete mechones crespos, decorados con pistilos de sanjoaquines. (Franco 1940)

Isolda has incorporated herself into nature. Nature and Isolda become one entity, as nature wraps herself around her, literally encompassing Isolda and her being. The way in which Mother Nature incorporates herself into Isolda, adorning her hair into a “diadema”, a crown-like style, suggests that perhaps there will come a time in which femininity is not subjugated but instead is celebrated. The connection between women and Mother Nature could not be made more literal than the

scenes in which Franco presents nature intertwining itself with Isolda's body. The foliage wraps itself around Isolda presenting itself as one body, one entity.

The connection between Isolda and nature seems to be more than simply physical. The reader becomes aware that Isolda and nature can in fact communicate, although not in a conventional way. Isolda converses with nature and nature seems to be receptive to her callings. Isolda enters the forest with great delight signing:

Por entre un sender de nogales, de castaños, almendros, jaguas y pomos. Pisa confiada un camino hecho de pasos que ya conoce de memoria. Levanta las puntas de su falda y guarda las cinco manzanas en la hamaca que forma con el vestido. Se adelanta más y empiezan a escucharse ruidos inquietos sobre la hojaresca. (Franco 1116)

As Isolda is entering the forest, the forest responds to her presence and seems to be anticipating anxiously her arrival. The scene continues:

Hola, dice ella, en voz baja y dulce, hola, hola, repite, muy atenta a los matorrales. Toma una de las manzanas y la lanza bosque adentro. Se oye como un punzón atravesara la fruta antes de caer. Isolda sonríe. Hola, hola, dice de nuevo, y el monte se llena de más ruidos. (Franco 1117)

There are two compelling aspects to note about this interaction: firstly, that Isolda is able to communicate with the natural world and its inhabitants, as if it were an

innate quality of hers, and secondly, that she preoccupies herself with presenting nature with apples, or a source of food. The representation of nature in literature is crucial to humanity because it can lead “toward an understanding of the inner through its parallel in the outer” thus humanity can gain an understanding of the relationship of reciprocity that it has with nature. Humanity can consequently reject the notion that nature is beneath us and accept that we are living alongside nature. Isolda’s compassionate nature to provide food for the forest’s inhabitants reflects her disposition to co-exist with nature.

Isolda in Chapter 18 ventures out into the city to a locale called the Club Unión for swimming lessons. Her driver decides to take a different route to the classes and they encounter a violent brawl in which a woman, stabbed by her love interest falls against Isolda’s car, leaving Isolda terrified and inconsolable. After this incident, Isolda’s demeanour changed. She was withdrawn and suffering from post-traumatic stress. Her mother attempted to utilize the arts in attempts to draw the anguish from Isolda to the surface. Isolda did not venture out into the forest, instead she resorted to passing her time in the garden her father had so carefully designed.

Isolda ha vuelto al jardín, aunque ya no persigue ardillas ni Saluda a aviones que vuelan sobre ella. Se encierra en La Tarantela a jugar juegos nuevos con las muñecas. Ahora ellas son el público al que le canta Yesterday con los ojos cerrados y la mano en el pecho. (Franco 1861)

It appears that Isolda's spirits have been broken by the violent reality of Medellín. The reality of the city has for a moment made her lose her hope in anything magical, thus she secludes herself to the tamed environment of the garden. In this controlled setting she passes her time and enacts plays in front of dolls instead of the living beings that reside in the forest. Once she has recuperated from the event Isolda returns to the forest after a long absence:

También regresa al bosque luego de no ir por un tiempo. Entra confiada y canturrea, como siempre. Algunos rayos de sol atraviesan las ramas. Ella se sienta sobre una raíz gruesa y para de cantar. Entonces oye las chicharras, los zancudos, las polillas y los grillos, los escarbajos, las ranas en el humedal, los gorgojos en la madera y las mariposas negras que alatean en lo alto. Después los oye a ellos entro los arbustos, excitados y felices de verla después de su ausencia. Ve los cuernos, como pirulíes, asomados entre las hojas. Se acercan y la rodean. (Franco 1868)

This interaction depicts the relationship between the human and the natural world as mutually beneficial. Isolda and nature have a relationship of dependence and respect, and stressing this cultural and social dependence of humans on nature is important because “the liberating power of realized interdependence of man and natural world provides...the ground for a peculiarly romantic conception of singleness incompatible with isolation” (Kroeber 56). The notion that nature and culture are inextricably tied to each other should urge the efforts to reconnect na-

ture and humanity. This interdependence not only depicts the responsibility humanity has towards nature, but also this interdependence relates to the depiction Franco later offers of nature as a restorative force.

Isolda manages to break out of the restrictions patriarchy imposes but is not able to transcend it fully. Her escape is merely temporary, always having to return to the dominant ideology and its space as was evidenced by her many returns to the castle and through the impediment of her female sexuality. However, the forest offers a glimmer of hope to the reader, as it provides one to Isolda. Nature becomes allied with a young woman and their relationship fomented through a relationship of mutual respect and appreciation. The character of Isolda proves ever so strongly that there is an interdependence between nature and humanity. One is not isolated from the other, and therefore humanity must acknowledge this as it must also acknowledge that man is not separate from woman.

To summarize, the previous chapter has explored the thematic of nature and the environment in the novels of Colombian author Jorge Franco. In the novel nature's portrayal has been twofold: one of violence and one of restoration. We are introduced to the environment through the construction of a castle and manicured gardens. Don Diego, the patriarch of the family, implements certain rules that align with the ideology of Western patriarchal order and thus seeks to control and subjugate everything around him, including the natural world. He implements order in nature by landscaping nature into pristine, immaculate gardens mimicking the Biblical Garden of Eden. Franco juxtaposes the idyllic castle and its gardens

by positioning the city below the castle grounds. The city offers a contrasting portrayal of nature. As the novel takes place in 1969 Medellín, it reflects the occurrences of said time. The city was plagued by violence and thus this violence is reflected in nature. Just as the city is polluted, the nature that runs through the city is tainted as well. Franco's novel does not solely portray nature as a source of punishment. He furthermore portrays nature as a source of restoration, particularly in the passages including Isolda. Nature becomes a magical and, more importantly, a living entity. Isolda is associated with nature and her connection is evidenced by the interactions she has with the forest and its creatures. Isolda reinforces the argument of ecofeminism, which posits that women and nature are inextricably tied. The topic of violence has been studied numerously in relation to Franco and his works. The above chapter dealt with violence through the lens of eco-feminism. The violence seen was violence done towards the environment, and towards feminine beings.

Chapter V Conclusion

In this thesis, I have explored the representation of nature in the novels under study and specifically how ecofeminism informs the readings of these novels. The novels under study provide ample representations of how the subjugation of nature mirrors the subordination of marginal groups, specifically women. In the analysis of these works I have posited that a unification of feminist and ecological interests is necessary because the logic of domination affects both women and nature. The premise of ecofeminism is that women and nature share a subordinate and instrumental relationship with men, both are subjected to patterns of abuse and dominations and both are gendered feminine to justify their domination.

In Chapter One I introduce the fields of ecocriticism and ecofeminism, two equally important factors in this thesis. When ecocriticism first arrived, it addressed mainly rural and pastoral landscapes, as outlined by Lawrence Buell and his study on Thoreau. More recently, the field has begun to expand its grasps and include various forms of environments, such as modern cities. The issues brought on by globalization are also prevalent in ecocritical discourse as well. Donald Worster sums up the ecological crisis by stating:

We are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function...Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists and philosophers cannot do the reforming of course, but they can help with the understanding. (Worster 15)

Ecofeminism stems from the field of ecocritical studies and according to Gaard is a theory that “has evolved from various fields of feminist inquiry and activism: peace movements, labor movements, women’s health care, and the anti-nuclear, environmental and animal liberation movements” (Gaard 1).

Ecofeminism came to serve as a theoretical discourse to analyze the ‘link’ between the oppression of women and nature. This intersection demonstrates the power dynamics of patriarchy in which women, in particular, are treated as a subaltern. With its own methodology, ecofeminism brings together feminist thought, environmentalism, politics of race, gender, and other forms of oppression. It brings awareness to not only the ecological crisis facing the globe but also how this violence against Mother Earth stems from the ideologies of Western patriarchy.

Ecofeminism has two main tenets: one is the recognition of the link between social dominance and feminism, and the notion that humans and nature are intertwined. Speaking to the first tenet, ecofeminists urge to evaluate oppressive power structures in order to gain a new standard for human/nature dynamics. Ecofeminists argue that the inequality perpetuated by a modern and patriarchal

social structure are the root causes of environmental degradation. The second tenet of interconnectedness proposes that all living matter, human or non human, are connected and belong to a reciprocal system.

Ecofeminists understand human beings as not being separate from or above nature. They are one small part of a whole, rather than the pinnacle of nature. In separating nature from persons, humanity creates a concept of nature which is made up of dead, unintelligent matter. (Besthorn and McMillen 226)

In the anthology, *Ecofeminism: Feminist Intersections with Other Animals and the Earth*, Lori Gruen and Carol J. Adams offer this conclusion regarding the ideology of ecofeminism:

Exposing dualistic frameworks operating in oppressive situations did not mean that ecofeminists valorized the non-dominant parts of the dualism nor viewed the characteristics of the non-dominant part as 'natural.' In arguing relationally and developing a care tradition in animal ethics, ecofeminists were challenging, not accepting, the essentializing structure of the division between men as rational and women as emotional.

Ecofeminism thus seeks to dismantle the dualistic and oppressive frameworks imposed by patriarchal discourse.

In Chapter Two I discuss two novels, *La parcela* (1898) and *La tierra pródiga* (1960). *La parcela* portrays nature in a rural setting. It reflects the regime of

Porfirio Díaz and addresses the topic of landowning and hacendados. The prevalent machista culture which the novel depicts imposes itself on the natural world. The natural world is depicted as the object of man which in turn can be exploited and manipulated. The machista culture allows for appropriation of the environment and thus enforces the imbalance of power enacted by patriarchy.

The narration of *La tierra pródiga* takes place in the jungle of Mexico and depicts the effects of globalization. Brushwood has stated that the novel is a re-enactment of the Spanish conquest. This conquest is not only a conquest of the land, but also of women. The land and women in this novel by Yáñez become synonymous beings, thus allowing for an ecofeminist reading. The representation of women and nature reveals the logic of domination established by the hierarchical structures and links together the argument that ecocritical and feminist plights are one.

I discuss this topic by exploring how Yáñez's work emphasizes the power relationship between the men and women/nature. The novel tells the story of a group of men who have arrived to the region of La Encarnación with the goal of industrializing said region. They aim to bring commercial success to the unpopulated region. *La tierra pródiga* demonstrates the dualistic opposition and imperialistic, patriarchal attitude found in Western society. Theories of colonialism inform this reading as the men in the novel attempt to not only assert dominance over nature but also the women. There is a codification of differences which is established, one perpetuated by the model of patriarchy, between the masculine and

feminine. In the novel, an imperialistic attitude forms women/nature to be nothing more than resources to be expunged. By essence, women are seen to be resources and their existence is nulled.

In Chapter Three I examine the Colombian novels *Morirás lejos* (1967) and *Paraíso Travel* (2001) written by José Emilio Pacheco and Jorge Franco respectively. In discussing these novels, I extend the argument of ecocriticism to include the urban spaces these novels have to offer. I base my analysis on eco-cosmopolitan theories which consider the city as a living and adapting organism. Ecocriticism has recently introduced more subjects to its analysis, subjects such as frontiers, cities and technological advances. Cities should not be thought of as depleting nature, rather they should be conceived as elements which transform nature and produce an urban nature. Pacheco's novel takes place in the urbane environment of Mexico City. The natural environment within the novel is depicted as a park setting, a constructed environment. Pacheco illustrates the park as a sordid environment, which goes against the reasoning of why parks were installed in cities. Parks and similar recreational areas were installed in city spaces to promote a peaceful environment among the chaos of the city. In the situation of Pacheco's novel, a sour stench of vinegar and decrepitude fills the air, contaminating any solace the park may offer. The degraded environment reflects the effects of globalization as well as revealing humanity's efforts to placate nature. Humanity is concerned with exhibiting control over elements which are otherwise uncontrollable, such as nature. With the establishment of parks, humans can

manicure nature thus protecting themselves from any violent outrage on behalf of Mother Nature. Pacheco's work illustrates the connection between humanity and nature, revealing the reciprocal relationship that is in order.

Paraíso Travel also develops within an urban setting. This novel recounts the story of Colombian migrants and functions as a form of testimony. Novels of this sort illustrate the topic of bodies transitioning into unknown lands and lend themselves to an urban ecological reading. The frightening experience of immigrants is reflected in the portrayal of the environment. Bearing similarity to their immigration journey, nature is portrayed as hostile and dangerous.

In the final analysis chapter, I discuss *El mundo de afuera* (2014) by Jorge Franco which relates the narrative of a young princess confined to castle. Franco's tale assumes elements of fairy tale stories, promoting magical elements within the story such as a magical forest and its magical creatures. In *El mundo de afuera* the reader is presented with two polar depictions of nature: one of harm and one of enchantment. The topic of violence has been analyzed extensively in Franco's body of work, however in this chapter I argue that *El mundo de afuera* lends itself to an ecofeminist reading due to the relations depicted between patriarchy and nature/woman.

The reader is introduced to the natural environment through the construction of a majestic castle. Don Diego, the patriarch, has embarked on a plan to construct a castle for his family. The reasoning behind this construction is to shield

his family, specifically his young daughter Isolda, from the “mundo de afuera.” In this novel the reader sees the domestication of nature and the attempts to placate the natural world into something manageable and controllable. The vicinities of the castle is contrasted starkly with the description of the city and its environment which lies merely a few feet below. The city’s environment is portrayed as grotesque and sordid, as the river which flows through the city is tainted with pollution and human waste. Contrasting with this image, the reader is shown an image of nature which is magical and enchanting. This nature flourishes within the forest surrounding the castle. The only person who can unlock the mysteries of this natural world is Isolda, a young woman who is portrayed as being receptive to nature’s message. Franco utilizes a feminine body to demonstrate the connection between femininity and nature. Furthermore, the disparities that Isolda is subjected to mimic the disparities the natural world is subjected to as well. Both suffer from patriarchal discourse and thus there is a connection established between the two. This novel exemplifies the argument of ecofeminism which argues for a unification of both plights.

This dissertation focuses on five specific pieces of narrative that I have chosen to explore in ecofeminist and ecocritical manners. I have analyzed novels which take place in Mexico and Colombia, respectively. All of the novels analyzed demonstrate the relationship between the oppression of marginal beings, specifically women, and the subjugation and domination of the environment. I recognize that much more needs to be considered about the environment and

feminist thought as well as there are other novels which could have been included. In the future I hope to address further the topics of gender and colonization as well as expand further into ecofeminism as it pertains to Latin America, since the structures of patriarchy are ever so present within that region. I believe perspectives of ecofeminism can illuminate the struggles of the feminist and ecological movements respectively, and highlight the reciprocal relationship humanity truly has with nature.

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