



HAL
open science

Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy on Climate Change: A Pedagogical Approach to Awakening Student Engagement in Ecocriticism

Suhasini Vincent

► **To cite this version:**

Suhasini Vincent. Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy on Climate Change: A Pedagogical Approach to Awakening Student Engagement in Ecocriticism. *Literature as a Lens for Climate Change: Using Narratives to prepare the Next Generation*, Lanstad, pp.53-76, 2022, 978-1-4985-9411-0. hal-03911999

HAL Id: hal-03911999

<https://hal.sorbonne-universite.fr/hal-03911999v1>

Submitted on 23 Dec 2022

HAL is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

Copyright

**Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy on Climate Change: A Pedagogical Approach to
Awakening Student Engagement in Ecocriticism**

Suhasini Vincent

Vincent, Suhasini. "Amitav Ghosh & Arundhati Roy on Climate Change: A Pedagogical Approach to Awakening Student Engagement in Ecocriticism", *Literature as a Lens for Climate Change: Using Narratives to prepare the Next Generation*, New York, Lanstad, 2022, p. 53-76.

Postcolonial ecocriticism examines the relationship between humans and non-human communities and strives to imagine new ways in which these ecologically connected entities can co-exist, transform and reconfigure themselves. Even though postcolonial environmental issues are often linked to the colonizer's invasion, settlement and depletion of natural resources, forced migration of peoples, fretting of animals and plants throughout the European empires, the ecosystem challenges that are faced by postcolonial countries today are due to non-egalitarian government policies and corporate-capitalist dominance. Students today are aware of the North-South divide and wonder if there are means of reconciling the Northern environmentalism of the rich and the Southern environmentalism of the poor. History textbooks reveal the ever-present ecological gap between the colonizer and colonized and the disparities that continue to exist.

Ecocritical readings as seen through the lens of Amitav Ghosh¹ and Arundhati Roy² reveal the need to bring postcolonial and ecological issues together and challenge imperialist modes of social environmental supremacy.

Both writers have considered the complex interplay of politics and corporate capitalism in the use of water, land, energy and habitat. Their fictional and nonfictional ecocritical writing trace the social, historical, political, economic and material co-ordinates of forests, rivers, bioregions

and species. It is interesting for a student to explore the myriad relationships between material practices and cross-cultural contexts in the postcolonial world. For example, an American student's curiosity would be awakened by how day-to-day life is lived in postcolonial India. This chapter will reveal how futures are governed in the developing world. An ecocritical reading of works by Ghosh and Roy will examine how the policies of decision-makers and ideas from proponents of climate change can lead to a transference from a 'red' to a 'green' politics. The field of ecocriticism is large as it encompasses domains of Economics, Anthropology, History, Geography, Geopolitics and Environmental Science. Thus, this chapter will instigate students in high school and college levels, as well as researchers in different disciplines, to analyze texts by considering how the authors advocate different means of dwelling authentically and responsibly on our planet Earth.

Ghosh's *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* aims at exploring how long-term ecological crises have been ignored in serious fictional writing.³ Ghosh wisely reflects on how "different modes of cultural activity: poetry, art, architecture, theater, prose fiction ... have responded to war, ecological calamity, and crises of many sorts: why then, should climate change prove so peculiarly resistant to their practices?"⁴ He muses further, "What is it about climate change that the mention of it should lead to the banishment from the preserves of serious fiction? And what does this tell us about culture writ large and its patterns of evasion?"⁵ He foretells a scenario of a world where cities' forests like the Sundarbans would be replaced by seascapes; megalopolises would become uninhabitable; future generations would try to find answers in literature and art for the damaged world they had unwittingly inherited. He imagines future generations concluding that our present generation is rather deranged and oblivious to the hazards, risks, vulnerabilities and perils of climate change:

In a substantially altered world, ... when readers and museum goers turn to art and literature of our time, will they not look, first and most urgently, for traces and portents of the altered world of their inheritance? And when they fail to find them, what should they – what can they – do other than to conclude that ours was a time when most forms of art and literature were drawn into the modes of concealment that prevented people from recognizing the realities of their plight ... this era which so congratulates itself on its self-awareness, will come to be known as the time of the Great Derangement.⁶

In this work of nonfiction, Ghosh probes into possible reasons for the postcolonial writer's imaginative failure in the face of overwhelming evidence. He examines the inability of the present generation to grasp the violent scale of climate change and posits that this is reflected in the literature of our time, in the recording of history and in the political ambience of our day. Ghosh posits that the extreme nature of today's climate changes has resulted in making writers immune and resistant to contemporary modes of thinking and imagination. He points out that certain phenomena like destructive storms and meandering rivers do not figure in serious literary fiction but get relegated to other genres like science fiction or fantasy. Ghosh suggests that politics has suffered the same fate as literature and has become a matter of personal moral reckoning rather than an arena of collective action. He further argues that to limit fiction and politics to individual moral adventure comes at a great cost. Through his writing Ghosh has shown how fiction is the best of all cultural forms to voice ecocritical awareness.

Arundhati Roy's political nonfiction⁷ has often been viewed with a disdainful eye⁸ and considered as "objectionable writings."⁹ In her essay,¹⁰ Roy voices dissent against repression, globalization, economic progress, environmental exploitation and dams proposed in the name of greater common good. Roy's political essays insist on the need to make a 'material turn' and considers how materialistic activity in the name of progress affects human and non-human environments. The term 'material turn' is used by Serenella Iovino in her work *Material Ecocriticism* in which she describes an enterprise of writing that is replete with "a material mesh of meanings, properties and processes, in which human and non-human players are interlocked in networks that produce undeniable signifying forces."¹¹ Roy's essays challenge government policies, discuss varying viewpoints of global and local concerns in India, criticize corporate philanthropy and propose a new ecocritical perspective. Through her essays Roy expresses distrust of materialistic forces and encourages readers to take part in the new emerging paradigm of making a 'material turn,' thus considering possible ways of avoiding the depletion of our planet's resources through ecocritical advocacy and aesthetics. But one wonders why she writes about climate change in nonfictions, opting for the mode of the essay. Amitav Ghosh echoes the same idea by insisting that this practice is not due to a lack of information - "A case in point is the work of Arundhati Roy: not only is she one of the finest prose stylists of our time, she is passionate and deeply informed about climate change. Yet all her writings on these subjects are in various forms of nonfiction."¹² Ghosh also provides potential reasons for this sleight of writing by contending that "the discrepancy is not the result of personal predilections: it arises out of peculiar forms of resistance that climate change presents to what is now regarded as serious fiction."¹³ In her "Arthur Miller Freedom to Write" lecture, Roy poses a series of questions on what it means to be a writer in today's world:

So, as we lurch into the future, in this blitzkrieg of idiocy, Facebook “likes,” fascist marches, fake-news coups, and what looks like a race toward extinction—what is literature’s place? What counts as literature? Who decides? Obviously, there is no single, edifying answer to these questions.¹⁴

By musing on who decides, she concludes that there are no enlightening answers to these questions. She posits that the time is right to think together about a place for literature and the role it will play in climate change. In the same lecture, Arundhati Roy muses on what it means to be an ‘activist-writer’ in a world where the delicate web of interdependence of Man and Nature is dictated by Capitalism and International treaties. Roy’s essays in India are often regarded with a baleful eye as she disagrees with political decision making, arouses dissent among the youth and writes forcefully on topics other writers do not explore. She acknowledges that some did not count her nonfiction as writing:

The writing sat at an angle to what was conventionally thought of as literature. Balefulness was an understandable reaction, particularly among the taxonomy-inclined—because they couldn’t decide exactly what this was—pamphlet or polemic, academic or journalistic writing, travelogue, or just plain literary adventurism? To some, it simply did not count as writing. “Oh, why have you stopped writing? We’re waiting for your next book.”¹⁵

Though some considered her a mere “pen for hire,”¹⁶ others were open to the call of change as her essays in the form of pamphlets were translated into other Indian languages, distributed freely in villages that were under attack, on university campuses where students were realizing that they were being lied to. The readership concerned those on the frontlines who understood her brand of literature.

Both Arundhati Roy and Amitav Ghosh believe that literature contributes to change and that it is built by writers and readers. Literature in their opinion occupies a fragile place that needs constant shelter and nurturing. With a pedagogical approach that harnesses the attention of readers, arouses ecocritical awareness of climate change and prepares the youth of today to conserve our planet for the next generations, the present generation may not be doomed to the derangement Ghosh laments.

Introduction: Exploring the Writer’s Lived Experience

Postcolonial writers mine their own lived experiences to create a fictional ground that reflects the reality of their times. Amitav Ghosh has a doctorate in Social Anthropology¹⁷ and his novels bear ample evidence of the ethnographic research and fieldwork he has conducted. His fictionalized narratives often draw from his own personal experience of migration and displacement. Arundhati Roy, an architect¹⁸ involved in political activism, is a spokeswoman of the downtrodden and vehement critic of neo-imperialism,¹⁹ fascism, corruption and communalism. Her essays aim at laying bear the shortcomings in governmental decision making and inspiring the youth of today react. While using the works of Ghosh and Roy in a classroom, teachers should guide students to explore the fictional space by encouraging an analysis of select quotations referred to in this

chapter. Teachers could choose a section for detailed study, surf the authors' websites²⁰ which contain excerpts of newspaper reviews and authors' notes. They could complete a detailed reading of a work and analyze it through the following three-step lens: figuration of the natural and material lay of the land; configuration of the writer's inherited experience in the form of stories, myths, legends, culture and art; and the reconfiguration of the fictional or nonfictional space to inspire young readers to engage in the politics of climate change.

Mining and Recasting Childhood Stories for the Fictional Ground

In *The Great Derangement*, Amitav Ghosh mines his own experience, draws inspiration from stories of his childhood and reconfigures the fictional ground. As he notes,

No less than any other writer have I dug into my own past while writing fiction. ... In essence, narrative proceeds by linking together moments and scenes that are in some way distinctive or different: these are, of course, nothing other than instances of exception ... It is through this mechanism that worlds are conjured up, through everyday details, which function 'as the opposite of narrative'. It is thus that the novel takes its modern form, through 'the relocation of the unheard-of toward the background ... while the everyday moves into the foreground'.²¹

He recalls childhood family accounts of his ancestors who had been ecological refugees displaced from their roots on the banks of the River Padma²² in the mid-1850s. When the mighty river on a whim decided to change course, the few vagrant inhabitants traversed forests and dry land moving

westward to settle once again on the banks of another civilization-housing river, the Ganges.²³ Ghosh warns us that the river, a stable presence in the lives of his forefathers, had transformed into a meandering force that could not be relied on, nor taken for granted like the air we breathe. In his novel *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh writes of the fickle nature of the landscape where mangrove forests of the Sundarbans²⁴ appear and disappear, merge and submerge, surprise and disrupt human lifestyles. He muses in *The Great Derangement*, “Even a child will begin a story about his grandmother with the words: ‘in those days the river wasn’t here, and the village was not where it is...’”²⁵ The fictional ground of *The Hungry Tide* is set in the fickle tidal landscape or *bhatir desh*²⁶ of the Sundarbans where the passage of the ebb tide leaves an ever mutating and unpredictable terrain with “no borders to divide fresh water from salt, river from sea as the water tears away entire promontories and peninsulas; at other times it throws up new shelves and sandbars where there were none before.”²⁷ In this indeterminate fluid fictional space of the Sundarbans, Ghosh takes the reader-voyager on a literary journey across the Gangetic delta. The voyage reveals the varied quests, travels, expeditions, and voyages of the protagonists in the eco-narrative. The mighty River Hooghly²⁸ dictates the literary journey in the novel as it meanders, changes course, reshapes land before sunrise and reconfigures them with new paths before sunset. During its ever-shifting course, the River Hooghly intertwines with the River Meghna,²⁹ thus setting the theme of transformation and displacement for the human and animal inhabitants who adapt to the capricious river trajectories and deal with the challenging task of naming new, fresh, ever-emerging islands each day.

The character of Fokir, a local fisherman, recites a “legend passed on from mouth to mouth, and remembered only in memory.”³⁰ The legend of Bon Bibi³¹ features the relationship between human settlers and tiger predators in the Sundarbans. It describes an epoch when Bon

Bibi had the divine task of rendering the Sundarbans fit for human inhabitation. In a battle between 'good' and 'evil,' Bon Bibi emerges triumphant, divides the country of eighteen tides into two inhabitable zones for 'humans' and for 'demon-tiger' hordes of Dokhin Rai,³² thus changing the time-set laws of the 'survival of the fittest' to a new-named 'law of the forest.' The rich and greedy are aptly punished while the poor and righteous reap just rewards. In Fokir's river song, Dokhin Rai takes the form of the Ganges tiger with an insatiable craving for human flesh, and the fearsome tiger stalks Dhukey, a fisher boy, thus chanting an ever-living myth to affirm the hostilities between 'death-bearing,' 'demon' tigers versus 'precious,' 'precarious' humans. Through the inclusion of the myth of Bon Bibi, Ghosh sets his novel in a twofold time zone of the present and the past that is influenced by a mythical time of incessant mutiny between 'humans' and 'animals,' both species being constantly threatened by the vagaries of the river and the sea tide. By using the recurring chant of the Bon Bibi song, Ghosh highlights how myth influences and affects people's existence in the Sundarbans. Through the inclusion of the myth of Bon Bibi, he portrays the Sundarbans as a living entity endowed with the capacity to nurture 'human' and 'animal' protagonists who claim equal land, space and territory thanks to an entitlement to land that can be traced back to roots in myth. Creation myths, Nature fables and Family Stories exist in many cultures and families. Teachers can ask students to engage in an investigation or research project of such myths, legends, anecdotes and stories that may have been passed down to them through their parents or grandparents. Like Ghosh who remembers his grandmother's accounts of meandering rivers and migration induced by a quest for other civilization-housing river zones, students may unearth similar tales of lost forests, farmlands that now accommodate skyscrapers, changing weather conditions, disappearing plant and animal life, and changing relationships with our planet Earth.

Figuring the Material Lay of the Land and Mining the Arts for Material Gain

In her second novel *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*,³³ Roy writes “People – communities, castes, races and even countries – carry their tragic histories and their misfortunes around like trophies, or like stock, to be bought and sold on the open market.”³⁴ In her essay “Power Politics,” Roy shows how the ruling elite in India, bureaucrats and multi-national companies, welcome foreign dignitaries and present India as an investment conducive haven. Roy describes how Delhi was transformed, scrubbed and cleaned to welcome Bill Clinton and his delegates in March 2000: “... whole cities were superficially spruced up. The poor were herded away, hidden from the presidential gaze. Streets were soaped and scrubbed and festooned with balloons and welcome banners.”³⁵ In *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, Roy criticizes the Indian Government strategy of creating an aura of “Good Investment Climate”³⁶ and describes how Rand and Enron ended up owning Indian earth, air and water. She questions the motives behind the drive to beautify Delhi for the Commonwealth Games when ephemeral laws were passed to present Delhi as a beautiful capital without any marring disfigurement. She describes how

... street vendors disappeared, rickshaw pullers lost their licenses, small shops and businesses were shut down. Beggars were rounded up, tried by mobile magistrates in mobile courts, and dropped outside the city limits. The slums that remained were screened off, with vinyl billboards that said DELHiciously Yours.³⁷

Through metaphors of cleansing, Roy highlights how the capital city was purged of unwanted elements that marred the perfect scene staged to impress foreign investors. By eliminating the presence of street vendors, beggars, slums and the poor, Delhi was reconfigured into a city that was inviting for foreign investment.

Further, Roy remarks on how main mining conglomerates mine the Arts—film, art installations and literary festivals—to gain popularity as patrons of artistic and literary enterprise. She gives instances of how they exploit the arts for material gain: the bauxite mining conglomerate Vedanta sponsors a film competition named ‘Creating Happiness’ encouraging the youth to make films on sustainable development;³⁸ Jindal Group,³⁹ the stainless steel giant, has a contemporary art magazine and supports artists who work with the same medium of stainless steel; Indian energy giant Essar, despite its mining scandal,⁴⁰ boasts of being the principal sponsor of the Tehelka Newsweek Think Fest⁴¹ with its mind-stirring discussions by major writers and activists; the involvement of Tata Steel⁴² and Rio Tinto⁴³ in the Jaipur Literary Festival⁴⁴ where the right to free speech in the style of Salman Rushdie is much publicized as voices “talking about the house, about everyone in it, about everything that is happening and has happened and should happen.”^{45,46} Despite the public display of embracing the arts, these miners of resources both natural and creative ignore “journalists, academics and filmmakers working on subjects unpopular with the Indian Government.”⁴⁷

Exploiting India for Material Gain

Postcolonial writing aims at revealing areas of colonization and its impact on the contemporary postcolonial world. The fiction and nonfiction of Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy reveal the

ambivalent themes and issues of colonial legacy that have shaped the so-called developing BRIC⁴⁸ countries of today. Ghosh's fiction examines the material gain of the colonists, and analyzes the dynamics of colonial trade, including its environmental impact on the indigenous population of colonial times. Arundhati Roy's fiction bears on the contrary less reference to colonial times, but gives a stark account of contemporary power politics, where richer countries dominate in international forums as experts on environmental development. She highlights also the imbalance of power politics in India where privatization has resulted in material wealth being held in the hands of a few mega corporations that thrive on material gain. While presenting the work of postcolonial authors, it is thus imperative to have a knowledge of the colonial past and engage in an exploration of the Opium Triangular Trade conducted by the British East Indian Company, which can be an eye-opener for students. The contemporary power politics in the Indian postcolonial context may be investigated by researching each one of the mega corporations mentioned in the ensuing sections.

The Opium Triangular Trade of the British East India Company

In the Ibis trilogy, Ghosh gives an account of the materialistic intent behind the British East India Company's Opium Trade in India and their trade settlement in the Chinese province of Canton in the 19th century. Ghosh's eco-narrative depicts the resistance mounted by the Chinese authorities in protest against the lucrative British trade in the Golden Triangle.⁴⁹ The Golden Triangle refers "to a broadly triangular area with vertices with Burma, Laos and Thailand, where opium production was concentrated."⁵⁰ Ghosh's fictions highlight the empire-sized fortunes earned by the materialistically oriented British traders and pictures the suffering faced by the indigenous

Indian and Chinese populations who stagger under the stupor of the potent somniferous drug of opium.

In the first novel of the *Ibis Trilogy*, *The Sea of Poppies*, the Black Water of the Sundarbans in the novel is seen as an expanse of water without “a boundary, a rim, a shore, to give it shape, and hold it in place.”⁵¹ Not only is the countryside blanketed with the parched remains of the poppy harvest, the debris of poppy leaves, dumped on the shore makes its way to the Black Andaman Sea.⁵² Through the drastic change in the landscape from rich and fertile irrigated plains to that of swamps and marshes with no potable water, Ghosh highlights the effects of greedy colonial enterprise on nature. In the second novel, *River of Smoke*, Ghosh’s narrative takes the action forward from the cities, harbours, and plains of India to the Chinese trading outpost and opium destination of Canton. In the tiny foreign enclave of Fanqui-town,⁵³ the Cantonese outpost is populated by traders of the British East India Company⁵⁴ and surrounded by a flotilla of boats that ferry smuggled goods and serve as eating and pleasure houses. The West’s fascination for the East as seen in the Orientalist-initial quest for spices like nutmeg, cloves, pepper, coffee, cacao, sugar and tea lead eventually to the discovery of the addictive narcotic drug ‘opium.’ In *Opium, Empire and the Global Political Economy*, Carl Trocki posits that “the British Empire, the opium trade, and the rise of global capitalism all occurred together ... Gold and silver from the West crossed the Atlantic or the Pacific, it ultimately found its way to Asia (east of Suez) to purchase the ‘riches of the East’ and to allow the otherwise deprived inhabitants of the northwest Eurasian peninsula to share in the fabled Oriental splendours.”⁵⁵ This “ineradicable distinction between Western superiority and Oriental inferiority”⁵⁶ described by Edward Said⁵⁷ is evident in Ghosh’s postcolonial textual response in the *Ibis Trilogy* where the margins write back and lay bare materialistic colonial intent of the past by reconfiguring and reliving the opium trade in the

fictional space.⁵⁸ In *Flood of Fire*, the final book in the Ibis trilogy, Ghosh describes how the British mobilized force on a large scale, unleashing the firepower of their advanced warship called Nemesis.⁵⁹

Baboo Nob Kissin raised a hand to point to the Nemesis, which was steaming past the burning forts, wreathed in dark fumes. Dekho – look: inside that vessel burns the fire that will awaken the demons of greed that are hidden in all human beings. That is why the British have come to China and Hindustan: these two lands are so populous that if the greed is aroused, they can consume the whole world. Today that great devouring has begun. It will end only when all of humanity, joined together in a great frenzy of greed, has eaten up the earth, the air, the sky.⁶⁰

The novel is aptly named a *Flood of Fire*, as fire engulfs the Indian vessels. The incessant flood of fire prompts the Indian soldier Kesri to reflect, “So much death; so much destruction — and that too visited upon a people who had neither attacked or harmed the men who were so intent on engulfing them in this flood of fire.”⁶¹

Ghosh’s fictional enterprise of reliving the colonial trade is typical of what Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin claim to be “the rereading and the rewriting of the European historical and fictional record” (that) “is a vital and inescapable task at the heart of the postcolonial enterprise.”⁶² He depicts how the British citizens of a global imperium dominate the world through a false doctrine of free trade. Ghosh shows that “despite all their cacklings about Free Trade, the truth was that their commercial advantages had nothing to do with markets or trade or more advanced business practices – it lay in the brute firepower of the British Empire’s guns and boats.”⁶⁴ During this era of triangular trade that enabled the three-legged journey of exchanging slaves in Africa for

guns and brandy, the Middle Passage across the Atlantic to sell the slaves in the West Indies and North America, and the final cargo transportation of rum and sugar to England, opium served as the means of conducting business. It should be remembered that colonial trade conducted by these British opium barons contributed to colonial empire-building, large-scale opium production and trading in the colonies, which led to the creation of the Golden Triangle⁶⁵ of Burma, Laos, Thailand and the Golden Crescent of Afghanistan, Iran and Pakistan.⁶⁶

Privatization and the Dynamics of Power Politics

In *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, Roy reminds readers that 800 million impoverished Indians “live side by side with spirits of the nether world, the poltergeists of dead rivers, dry wells, bald mountains and denuded forests.”⁶⁷ This enumeration of dead resources essential for the survival of mankind serves to highlight significant figures: while 800 million impoverished Indians live on an average of twenty rupees per day, the top 100 richest industrialists in India possess wealth that amounts to one-fourth of the country’s GDP of \$300 billion. Material wealth in India is concentrated in the hands of a few. Roy juxtaposes her enumeration of depleted resources with the assets of India’s richest billionaire Mukesh Ambani, whose 27-storey residence houses “three helipads, nine lifts, hanging gardens, ballrooms, weather rooms, gymnasiums, six floors of parking, and the six hundred servants.”⁶⁸ Ambani’s Reliance Industries Limited is typical of the market scenario in India where corporations like Tatas, Jindals, Vedanta, Mittals, Infosys, Essar are engaged in a race for supremacy in India’s private sector. As Roy notes,

they own mines, gas fields, steel plants, telephone, cable TV and broadband networks, and run whole townships. They manufacture cars and trucks, own the Taj Hotel chain, Jaguar, Land Rover, Daewoo, Tetley Tea, a publishing company, a chain of bookstores, a major brand of iodized salt and the cosmetics giant Lakme. Their advertising tagline could easily be: You Can't Live without Us.⁶⁹

Roy labels this corporate race as 'Gush-Up Gospel' and posits that "the more you have, the more you can have."⁷⁰ Roy details that the motive behind the foreign visits was to sweet-talk India into importing products which the country could manufacture on its own. In her essays, Roy warns readers that foreign investors were stalking big, varied game in the form of dams, mines, telecommunication, public water supply and the dissemination of knowledge.

Roy notes that in the present trend of privatization, "India's new mega-corporations Tatas, Jindals, Essar, Reliance, Sterlite, are those who have managed to muscle their way to the head of the spigot that is spewing money extracted from deep inside the earth."⁷¹ She contends that massive corporations, both multinational and domestic, are the principal agents of the concentration of wealth, and exploit the government's present policy of creating Special Economic Zones to have access to precious land and resources, resulting in the dispossession of millions. Whole scale privatization has spurred massive corruption and resulted in massive displacement of poor people who were promised inexistent jobs. She explains that with reference to Water Politics where "all over the world, weak, corrupt, local governments have helped Wall Street brokers, agro-business corporations and Chinese billionaires to amass huge tracts of land."⁷² This is a reference to Roy's essay *Power Politics*, where she comments on the farce behind the meeting of International World Water Forum in March 2000 at The Hague. While 3,500 proponents like bankers, businessmen,

politicians, economists, and planners pressed for the privatization of water, a handful of activist-opponents expressed dissent against the appropriation of a national resource by private multinationals. While the forum engaged in upholding false interest in issues regarding “women’s empowerment, people’s participation, and deepening democracy,”⁷³ the need to preserve the life-giving resource was pushed to the background. She exposes the existence of a lobbying effort at The Hague, where cliques of consultants specialized in preparing dossiers for the Third World presented concocted data and virtual facts and figures. She states that they “breed and prosper in a space that lies between what they say and what they sell.”⁷⁴ She thus shows how privatization thrives through the incomprehensible jargon of government dossiers and hostile takeover bids. Roy explains that privatization of India’s mountains, rivers and forests necessarily entails war, displacement and ecological devastation. She refers to the signing of MOUs by the State Governments of Chhattisgarh, Orissa, Jharkhand⁷⁵ in 2005 when private corporations mined material gain worth trillions of dollars from mining bauxite, iron-ore, and other minerals for “a pittance, defying even the warped logic of the Free Market. (Royalties to the government ranged between 0.5% and 7%).”⁷⁶ Her essay is written with the intention of protecting India’s power reserves and seeks to reveal the dynamics of power politics to the world at large.

Encouraging Social and Environmental Advocacy in Literature

Postcolonial ecocritical writing focuses on the political and geopolitical tensions that exist between the colonizer and the colonized during the 20th century. Amitav Ghosh’s fictional account reveals the efforts of colonists to create material prosperity detrimental to the colonized; on the other side, he configures how eco-friendly communities sprout in the fictional space to discover, identify,

protect and conserve threatened inter-connected ecosystems and eco-societies. While exploring Ghosh's environmental advocacy, students should be encouraged to analyze how his fictional enterprise falls within the sphere of postcolonial ecocriticism that considers the problems of conserving biodiversity and distrusts the grandeur of empty materialistic quests. An ardent activist, Arundhati Roy's writing is a result of her field work and involvement in environmental issues. She criticizes the Indian government's strategy of engaging in development at the cost of uneducated villagers' losing their livelihood and land. While discovering Roy's account of postcolonial India, teachers should encourage students to analyze how literature, both fictional and nonfictional, hold the key to environmental advocacy as it reveals the author's perspective of how development is not always for the greater common good. Teachers may encourage students to investigate their own country's governmental practices, policies and decision-making. There may be recorded instances of how a government's environmental strategies created more harm than good. The goal is not to resurrect the forgotten stories of history to create shame or throw blame on students for inaction but to encourage a more contextualized understanding of injustice. This pedagogical approach aims at discovering the alignment of a green paradigm through an eco-narrative and environmental critical advocacy. This attempt to unite fictional aesthetics and advocacy is typical of postcolonial ecocriticism that seeks to advocate social and environmental justice in today's postcolonial world.

Establishing a green paradigm through an Eco-narrative

In Ghosh's eco-narrative *The River of Smoke*, the troubled waters of the South China Sea witness the tryst between two storm-tossed vessels: the Anahita, a sumptuously built cargo ship laden with

opium, and the Redruth, a two-mast vessel with a Cornish botanist and his assistant Paulette, an orphan who collects rare flora during the stormy journey. Paulette catalogues the Plants of Bengal and contributes to the body of collected knowledge called the *Materia Medica*.⁷⁷ She joins forces with the protagonist, a famous plant hunter, Fitcher Penrose to search for a rare camellia⁷⁸ and seek newer vistas through botanical exploration. Ghosh also pens the route of pilgrimage undertaken by early horticulturists to the Pamplemousses garden in his eco-narrative. He writes of the existence of a chaotic botanical garden where a wild and tangled muddle of greenery showed the existence of a primeval jungle “where African creepers were at war with Chinese trees, nor one where Indian shrubs and Brazilian vines were locked in a mortal embrace. This was a work of Man, a botanical Babel.”⁷⁹ Thus, Ghosh reconfigures new spaces of postcolonial identity through an eco-narrative that enables the reader to identify himself with the central premise of articulating resistance against materialistic forces. Paulette and Penrose voice the need to protect greenery and nature from forces that strive to destroy the landscape. As a child of nature, Paulette had been taught by her father Pierre Lambert to love nature and consider it as a kind of spiritual striving whereby the quest was to comprehend the inner vitality of each species:

If botany was the Scripture of this religion, then horticulture was its form of worship: tending a garden was, for Pierre Lambert, no mere matter of planting seeds and pruning branches – it was a spiritual discipline, a means of communicating with forms of life that were necessarily mute and could be understood only through a careful study of their own modes of expression – the languages of efflorescence, growth and decay: only thus he had taught Paulette, could human beings apprehend the vital energies that constitute the Spirit of the Earth.⁸⁰

During the passage through the North China Sea, Paulette identifies a large variety of plants and tends them like a priestess performing a spiritual ritual. Ghosh lays stress on the interconnected nature of different life forms and Paulette's quest to name un-named flora from Chinese territory that can be considered as a creative endeavor to consider how these ecologically connected groups can be creatively transformed. The mundane tasks of planting, pruning, and watering them become acts of discipline and a means of communication with mute forms of existence that manifest different kinds of vital energies that constitute the spirit of the Earth. She carefully observes the procedures and protocols on board during times of storms. At the same time the eco-conservationists in the fictional space have to deal with the discontent of the seamen on board who regard the plants as threats to their existence and deny them water in times of scarcity or empty the pots of precious water when menaced by storms. The reader encounters a multiplicity of voices that express the problems that the world faces today and discovers a plethora of issues that speak of the need to assert a green paradigm⁸¹ free of the stamp of lucrative colonial trade.

Fighting against Dams in the Name of Greater Common Good

In *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, Roy criticizes the building of dams in the name of Common Good. She wonders, "How can they stop a dam?"⁸² referring to the Kalpasagar project⁸³ that has ambitious plans of supplying water to SIR and SEZ projects that Roy labels as a self-governed corporate dystopia of "industrial parks, town-ships and mega-cities."⁸⁴⁸⁵ In an earlier political essay-manifesto titled "Greater Common Good," Roy defends the *Adivasi* tribal people,⁸⁶ who lost their homes and livelihood to the construction of the Sardar Sarovar Dam in the Narmada valley.⁸⁷

This essay's preface is dedicated to the River "Narmada and all the life she sustains."⁸⁸⁸⁹ The opening lines – "If you should suffer you should suffer in the interests of the country"⁹⁰ – are a nod to a speech made by India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru⁹¹ who described dams as temples of modern India while addressing homeless villagers who had been displaced by the Hirakud dam construction in 1948.⁹² She reminds readers that displacement and evacuation of villagers will be inevitable once again with the Kalpasagar dam. Her essays aim to "puncture the myth about the inefficient, bumbling, corrupt, but ultimately genial, essentially democratic, Indian state."⁹³ In the power struggle between the protagonists of Common Good who support development ventures and adversaries who favor a pre-industrial dream, she accuses both groups of resorting to "deceit, lies, false promises and increasingly successful propaganda"⁹⁴ to configure a sense of false legitimacy. She implies that the 'Iron Triangle' composed of politicians, bureaucrats and dams work hand in glove with British consultants of the world to devise Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) that mask and hide the unavailability of water statistics, the destruction of flora and fauna, and the mass exodus of uneducated villagers. Roy accuses the Indian government of violating the human rights to a normal standard of life of innocent people as they "stand to lose their homes, their livelihoods, their gods and their histories."⁹⁵ She states that this quest for modernity, as demonstrated in the creation of the Dholera SIR,⁹⁶ where there is the risk of an extinction of rare fish species, is typical of the selfish human decision to survive at the expense of wildlife. She insists on the need to find means of "exploiting nature while minimizing non-human claims to a shared earth."⁹⁷⁹⁸ Roy's essay, with its hidden agenda of social and environmental advocacy, is imaginative and serves as "a catalyst for social action and [...] a full-fledged form of engaged cultural critique."⁹⁹ With time running out, Roy insists that words can prove to be the best arms to protect India's chemical polluted rivers. Her

fight against the dam does not involve just the tryst with the Iron Triangle, but also encompasses the struggle to preserve a whole ecosystem of cropping and breeding patterns of humans and animal species. Through Roy's account the reader discovers a clear lay of the land defining "what happened where and when and to whom."¹⁰⁰ She alerts readers that the Narmada valley containing fossils, microliths of the Stone Age, and the history of the *Adivasis* was doomed in the Name of Common Good.

Conclusion: Making the Material Turn

This pedagogical approach considers the theoretical framework of the material turn which conceives matter as an agentic force with an effective and transformative power over human and nonhuman environments. Amitav Ghosh and Arundhati Roy explore the problems of conserving environmental biodiversity, distrust materialistic intent that crushes ordinary people and take part in advocating the new emerging dynamics of making a material turn. Thus their texts offer possible ways of analyzing language and reality, human and non-human life, mind and matter, without falling into dichotomous patterns of thinking. Both authors probe into the reasons for the postcolonial writer's imaginative failure in the face of global warming. They insist on the need for the younger generation to take part in environmental politics and posit that this should be reflected in the literature of our age, in historical accounts and in political decision making of contemporary postcolonial governments. Ghosh and Roy resist stasis¹⁰¹ and campaign for change by advocating new contemporary modes of thinking and imagination. This pedagogical approach of analyzing the material turn will enable students and teachers to contemplate how Ghosh's and Roy's ecocritical writing is the best of all cultural forms to voice ecocritical awareness.

Eco-narrative versus Eco-materialism

Ghosh's narrative in the Ibis trilogy strives to remember the materialist colonial past, but at the same time criticizes contemporary geopolitics. He highlights the fact that the Indian Ocean welcomes sailors from India, China, Mauritius, Europe and the United States, but the trade was colonial with the terms being dictated by the British Empire. Even today, the ocean remains the lieu of maritime trade affecting politics on land, agricultural production and environmental policy making. This archive of unfair trade is evident in the IOR-ARC treaty signed by countries that share the Indian Ocean. Though created with the intention of being a platform for the peoples of the Indian Ocean Region to reconnect with each other, to discover their common heritage and deep-rooted affinities, to celebrate their shared cultural history and chart their own destinies, the free trade association has been criticized for having pitched 'too high' or 'too low' its tariffs and customs barriers. In India, the cultivation of opium poppies is now regulated with farmers producing mainly for medicinal or research purposes. Governmental proposals to create a drug free state at the expense of poor farmers has resulted in these farmers losing their livelihood. He insists that mere eco-friendly policy labelling will not solve the world's problems. He calls on writers to recall and to write on issues that affect the world and to consider new eco-narratives that speak of the need to preserve life, encourages environmental advocacy, and brings ecocriticism closer to the material turn by highlighting how narratives and stories contribute to making meaning of the material forces and substance that rule the world. Ghosh's ecocritical writing shows that ignoring climate change and environmental hazards will certainly make future generations contemplate why their predecessors encouraged this time of Great Derangement.

Roy refers to the disparity between the rich and the poor as “this confederation of loyal, corrupt, authoritarian governments in poorer countries to push through unpopular reforms and quell mutines.”¹⁰² Through an enumeration of the TATA empire’s material influence on our daily life, Roy contends that the ordinary man is ‘under siege:’ “We all watch Tata Sky, we surf the net with Tata Photon, we ride in Tata taxis, we stay in Tata Hotels, sip our Tata tea in Tata bone china and stir it with teaspoons made of Tata Steel. We buy Tata books in Tata bookshops. *Hum Tata ka namak khatey hain.*¹⁰³ We’re under siege.”¹⁰⁴ The essay-manifesto is the ideal mode for Roy’s ecocritical enterprise of underlining the need for social and political change. It speaks of Roy’s envisioning of a ‘postcolonial green’ that campaigns for the transference from ‘red’ to ‘green’ politics and the need to take the material turn and dwell as responsible inhabitants who believe in global justice and sustainability on our planet Earth. Roy posits that the world needs a “new kind of politics. Not the politics of governance, but the politics of resistance. ... The politics of forcing accountability.”¹⁰⁵ She advocates writing that contributes to climate education and encourages the youth to join hands across the world and prevent the destruction of the planet Earth.

Amitav Ghosh advances the idea that a writer’s imagination plays a vital role in shaping the minds of young readers. He states that “Fiction, for one, comes to be reimagined in such a way that it becomes a form of bearing witness, of testifying, and of charting the career of the conscience.”¹⁰⁶ Through her writing, a form of non-violent dissent to change the world, Arundhati Roy rightly advocates that “the only thing worth globalizing is dissent. It’s India’s best export.”¹⁰⁷ The pedagogical approach of analyzing the climate change and sustainability challenges of the century through the lens of making a material turn in fiction and nonfiction is the ideal mode to capture the attention and interest of the youth at large.

¹ Amitav Ghosh has a doctorate in Social Anthropology from the University of Oxford. His works reveal his study of the ways in which people live in different social and cultural settings across the globe. His other works of fiction are *The Circle of Reason* (1986), *The Shadow Lines* (1988), *In an Antique Land* (1992), *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery* (1995), *The Glass Palace* (2000), *The Hungry Tide* (2004), the Ibis Trilogy comprising *Sea of Poppies* (2009), *River of Smoke* (2011), *Flood of Fire* (2015) and *Gun Island* (2019).

² Arundhati Roy (born November 24, 1961) is an Indian author, actress, and political activist-writer who was awarded the Booker Prize in 1997 for her semi-autobiographical-debut novel *The God of Small Things*. This essay will highlight her involvement in environmental and human rights causes.

³ Ghosh's other works of non-fiction include *Dancing in Cambodia, at Large in Burma* (1998), *The Imam and the Indian* (2002), and *Incendiary Circumstances: A Chronicle of the Turmoil of Our Times* (2005).

⁴ Amitav Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable* (Chicago Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2016), 10.

⁵ Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 11.

⁶ Ibid, 11.

⁷ Arundhati Roy's political essays have been compiled into the following collections: *The End of Imagination* (1998), *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (2001), *Power Politics* (2002), *War Talk* (2003), *An Ordinary Person's Guide to the Empire* (2005), *The Shape of the Beast* (2008), *Listening to Grasshoppers: Field Notes on Democracy* (2009), *Broken Republic* (2011) and *My Seditious Heart* (2019).

⁸ In a legal affidavit entitled “On Citizens’ Rights to Express Dissent” in her work *My Seditious Heart*, Roy quotes an extract from the Supreme Court Order dated 15th October 1999 that accuses Roy’s writing of violating the dignity of the court and polluting the stream of justice.

⁹ Arundhati Roy, “On Citizens’ Rights to Express Dissent,” in *My Seditious Heart: Collected Nonfiction* (Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), 156.

¹⁰ Arundhati Roy has received awards for her essay writing, like the Lannan Award for Cultural Freedom in 2002, the 2003 Noam Chomsky Award, the Sydney Peace Prize in 2004, the 2005 Sahitya Kademi Award, which she declined, and the Norman Mailer Prize in 2009 for Distinguished Writing.

¹¹ Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann, *Material Ecocriticism* (Indiana University Press, 2014), 1-2.

¹² Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 8.

¹³ Ibid, 9.

¹⁴ Arundhati Roy, “Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture,” *The Guardian*, May 13, 2019, par.2-5. <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/13/arundhati-roy-literature-shelter-pen-america>.

¹⁵ Ibid, par 8.

¹⁶ Ibid, par 8.

¹⁷ Ghosh holds a PhD in Social Anthropology from the University of Oxford. He also received honorary doctorates from Queen’s College in New York and the Sorbonne.

¹⁸ Roy has a degree in architecture from the Delhi School of Architecture. She is also a screen play writer and has wrote the screenplays for *In Which Annie Gives It Those Ones* (1989), a film based on her experience as a student of architecture.

¹⁹ Roy criticizes the dominance of richer nations over developing countries by means of unequal conditions of economic exchange. She claims that neo-imperialism results in richer nations restricting poorer ones from stepping out of the roles that the former had defined for them, like for instance reducing the latter to providers of raw materials and cheap labor.

²⁰ <https://www.amitavghosh.com/>; <https://www.weroy.org/>

²¹ Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 15-17.

²² The meandering River Padma is one of the major rivers of Bangladesh. Evidence from satellite imagery reveal that it has been constantly gaining volume and changing its trajectory during the last decade. The river's source is at the junction of the Ganges and Jamuna Rivers in India. It then merges with the Meghna River in Bangladesh and ultimately empties into the Bay of Bengal.

²³ The Ganges River (*Ganga* in Hindi) is the great river of the plains of northern Indian sub-continent. It rises in the Himalayas and empties into the Bay of Bengal. As it flows through the Indo-Gangetic Plain, it irrigates one-fourth of the country, and has been the cradle of successive civilizations from the Mauryan empire of Ashoka in the 3rd century BC to the Mughal Empire, founded in the 16th century.

²⁴ In *The Hungry Tide*, Ghosh speculates on the origin of the name of the mangrove forests and the anthropological, botanical, geo-tidal and historical influences in the bearing of its name.

‘Sundarbans’ means ‘beautiful forest.’

²⁵ Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 6.

²⁶ *Bhatir Desh* means ‘land of the low tide’ or ‘tidal country’. Ghosh explains “... in the record books of the Mughal emperors this region is named not in reference to a tree but to a tide – *bhati*. And to the inhabitants of the islands this land is known as *bhatir desh* – the tide country – except

that *bhati* is not just the “tide” but one tide in particular, the ebbtide, the *bhata*: it is only in falling that the water gives birth to the forest. To look upon this strange parturition, midwived by the moon, is to know why the name “tide country” is not just right but necessary” (Ghosh, 2004, p.8).

²⁷ Amitav Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide* (New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 2004), 7.

²⁸ Hugli River, also spelled Hooghly, is a river in West Bengal state, in north-eastern India. It is an arm of the Ganges (*Ganga*) River. It branches off the Ganges and provides access to Kolkata (Calcutta) from the Bay of Bengal.

²⁹ The Meghna River is the major watercourse of the Ganges in Bangladesh. It receives the combined waters of the Padma and Jamuna (the name of the Brahmaputra in Bangladesh) rivers near Chandpur in Bangladesh.

³⁰ Ghosh, *The Hungry Tide*, 246.

³¹ Bon Bibi or Ban Bibi is a reference to the guardian spirit of the Sundarbans who protects woodcutters, inhabitants, and travelers from tiger attacks.

³² Dokhin Rai or Dakshin Rai is a revered deity in the Sundarbans who rules over beasts and demons. He is the arch enemy of Bon Bibi.

³³ After a 20-year gap of novelistic silence, Roy’s creates a fictional space in *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* that reveals the lives of *hijras* (eunuchs) who live in communities that have created alternative structures of kinship, resistance, and romance.

³⁴ Arundhati Roy, *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness* (New Delhi : Penguin, 2017), 195.

³⁵ Roy Arundhati, “Power Politics,” in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 147.

³⁶ Arundhati Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story* (London: Verso, 2015), 13.

³⁷ Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 2.

³⁸ Ironically Vedanta's tagline is 'Mining Happiness.' Its British-based parent company Vedanta Resources, a natural resources conglomerate, aims at creating long-term shareholder value through research, discovery, acquisition, sustainable development and utilisation of natural resources. The company mines natural resources, but Roy muses on whether they really mine happiness.

³⁹ In 2014, the Jindal Group Jindal was under investigation in connection with the allocation of coal mining rights in a scandal called 'Coalgate' by India's media.

⁴⁰ The Pollution Control Board of the State of Madhya Pradesh has imposed a fine of 50 lakh rupees (approximately \$70275) towards farmers' compensation. The Essar plant was responsible for crop damage caused by overflowing ash water from one of its power plants in Singrauli.

⁴¹ Think Festivals were organized during the period 2011-2013 and aimed at creating thought-provoking, egalitarian ideas from across the globe.

⁴² It was begun in 1907 by Jamshedji Tata, India's pioneer industrialist. It is today one of the world's most geographically diversified steel producers with operations and commercial presence across the world.

⁴³ The Anglo-Australian multinational is engaged in diamond mining in the Indian state of Madhya Pradesh.

⁴⁴ JLF is an annual literary festival held in the Indian city of Jaipur. It is a five-day festival where writers, thinkers, politicians and entertainers meet on one stage to engage in thoughtful debate and dialogue.

⁴⁵ Salman Rushdie, "Is Nothing Sacred?," in *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-91* (London: Vintage Books, 2010), 428.

⁴⁶ In his essay “Is Nothing Sacred?” Salman Rushdie leads the reader into the unassuming little room of literature tucked away in a corner of the large rambling house of world activity. The room is alive with ideas and dialogues. Rushdie articulates the dire need to preserve this privileged arena of creative enterprise and includes readers in the enterprise of assuring the survival of the little unassuming room of literature by putting forth the idea that creating a literary masterpiece is not an affair of individual creative genius, but a joint endeavor.

⁴⁷Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 19.

⁴⁸ An acronym coined by Jim O’Neill of Goldman Sachs in 2001. The BRIC countries comprising of Brazil, Russia, India and China are not a political alliance like the European Union or a formal trading association. They assert their power as an economic bloc by signing formal trade agreements together and attending summits together. In 2010, South Africa joined this group and they now concert with each other’s interests as BRICS countries. By 2050, these countries will probably be wealthier than most of the current economic powers.

⁴⁹ In the 1950s, the name ‘the Golden Triangle’ was given to the area of Mainland Southeast Asia where most of the world’s illicit opium originated. This name ‘Golden Triangle’ was first coined by the United States Vice-Secretary of State, Marshall Green, during a press conference on 12 July 1971.

⁵⁰ Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy, *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010), 23.

⁵¹ Amitav Ghosh, *Sea of Poppies* (London: John Murray, 2008), 12.

⁵² The Andaman Sea takes its name from the Andaman Islands, a union territory of India. It is situated in the North Eastern Indian Ocean. It is the sea link between Myanmar and other South Asian countries. It is on the shipping route between India and China, via the Strait of Malacca.

⁵³ A reference to the old Foreign Enclave in Canton (Guangzhou) which was also known as the ‘Thirteen Factories’ (Saap Sam Hong). Fanqui-town does not exist today as these factories were burnt down in 1856 and were never rebuilt again.

⁵⁴ The novel’s diegesis reveals how the British imposed their trade in Indian opium upon China through the two so-called Opium Wars (1839-42 and 1856-60), thus not only monopolizing the delivery of the narcotic to the European market, but also changing the course of economic and political relations between the East and the West.

⁵⁵ Carl A. Trocki, *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: a Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950* (London: Routledge, 1999), 7-8.

⁵⁶ Julie Rivkin, Michael Ryan, and Edward Said, “Orientalism,” in *Literary Theory, an Anthology* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 881.

⁵⁷ Edward Said in his work *Orientalism* describes ‘Orientalism’ as the Western attitude that views Eastern societies as exotic, primitive, and inferior.

⁵⁸ It is interesting to make a reference to *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*, where Pierre-Arnaud Chouvy explains how a triangular trade developed between Britain, India and China in which Indian opium provided the silver required to buy tea legally from China for shipments to London. He speculates on how opium ensured the profitability of colonial trade by enabling the British to balance their trade deficit with China: “Fearing that payment for Chinese imported goods (tea consumption was growing fast in Britain when only China produced the leaves) would deplete their silver reserves, the British resorted to opium, a product of their Indian colony, as a means of payment”. It is interesting to know that through the opium trade of the English East India Company and the tax on Malwa opium, the British made a profit of \$15,488,000.

⁵⁹ Nemesis is the first British ocean-going iron warship. It was launched in 1839 by the British East India Company to take part in the Opium Wars. It was also known as ‘The Devil Ship’ due to the havoc it stirred up during attacks.

⁶⁰ Amitav Ghosh, *Flood of Fire* (London: John Murray, 2016), 509-10.

⁶¹ Ibid, 505.

⁶² The phrase ‘The Empire Writes Back to the Centre’ was originally used by Salman Rushdie in his article “The Empire Writes Back with Vengeance.” Rushdie’s pun is also from the film *Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back*. In his article, Rushdie referred to the erstwhile British colonies as the Empire as they regained independence and wrote back to the former colonizer. Many diasporic writers in the United Kingdom have used various literary strategies of decolonization to set the record straight by writing back to the Centre or the former British Raj. Australian critics, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin entitled their work *The Empire Writes Back* to highlight the powerful forces acting on language in the post-colonial text and show how these texts constitute a radical critique of Eurocentric notions of literature and language.

⁶³ Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures* (Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services, 2011), 221.

⁶⁴ Ghosh, *Flood of Fire*, 484.

⁶⁵ The area of Southeast Asia encompassing parts of Burma, Laos, and Thailand, significant as a major source of opium and heroin.

⁶⁶ The name ‘Golden Crescent’ is of unknown authorship and is similar to that of ‘Golden Triangle and can be considered as the Southeast Asian alter ego. “Its ‘Crescent’ refers to the Muslim dimension of this opium-producing region comprising the countries of Afghanistan,

Iran, and Pakistan ... Afghan and Pakistani opium was first marketed for Persian and Indian consumers” (Chouvy 28-9). So, the name ‘Golden refers to the Muslim dimension of this opium-producing region comprising the afore-mentioned countries. Interestingly, Afghan and Pakistani opium was first marketed for Persian and Indian consumers.

⁶⁷ Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 8.

⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 7.

⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

⁷¹ *Ibid*, 9.

⁷² *Ibid*, 9.

⁷³ Roy, “Power Politics,” 150-1.

⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 152.

⁷⁵ Three mineral-rich Indian states mineral-rich Orissa where hundreds of indigenous tribespeople are battling to stop London-listed Vedanta Resources Plc from extracting bauxite from what they say is their sacred mountain.

⁷⁶ Roy, *Capitalism: a Ghost Story*, 11-2.

⁷⁷ A Latin term from the history of Pharmacy. It is the branch of medical science that deals with the sources, nature of plants, properties, and preparation of drugs.

⁷⁸ The dried young leaves of *camellia sinensis* have been used since ancient times to make green tea. It contains a high concentration of antioxidants known as polyphenols as the leaves are not fermented.

⁷⁹ Amitav Ghosh, *River of Smoke* (London: John Murray, 2011), 39.

⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 82-3.

⁸¹ The green paradigm refers to the quest of embracing social and ecological values that protect the planet.

⁸² Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 15.

⁸³ The building of Kalpasar dam in Gujarat is still underway. Once completed, it will be 34 kilometers long stretching across the Gulf of Khambat. There are plans to configure a ten-lane highway and a railway line on top of it. This sweet water reservoir of Gujarat's rivers has a further confluence and network of 168 dams that are mostly privatized and have been planned across war-hit and tension-prone zones of Kashmir and Manipur.

⁸⁴ Special Investment Region (SIR) refers to an investment region of 100 sq. kms in Gujarat region of India. The aim is to set up world class hubs of economic activity. SEZ refers to Special Economic Zones where government agencies including private companies may be assigned powers and functions to promote the development of a Special Investment Region.

⁸⁵ Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 16.

⁸⁶ The Adivasis are the earliest inhabitants of the Indian sub-continent, who are considered as the indigenous tribes who occupied the hill and mountainous regions of India. The term *Adivasi* was coined in the 1930s to give a sense of identity to the various indigenous tribes of India. In Hindi *adi* means 'of earliest times', and *vasi* means 'inhabitant'.

⁸⁷ The Sarvar Sarovar Project across the Narmada is being built at an estimated cost of Rs. 392.4 billion (approximately 8 billion USD). It is the world's second largest concrete gravity dam, with the world's third highest spillway discharging capacity of 87,000m³, and will be the largest irrigation canal in the world after its completion, irrigating Kutch and Saurashtra. The government of India calls it an 'eco-friendly' indigenous hydropower reservoir.

⁸⁸ Roy Arundhati, “Greater Common Good,” in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (New Delhi: Penguin, 2002), 46.

⁸⁹ The river Narmada is the fifth longest river in the Indian sub-continent and flows through Central India, through the state of Madhya Pradesh. 30 mega-dams are being constructed along the river basin, which is home to teak forests.

⁹⁰ Roy, “Greater Common Good,” 47.

⁹¹ The ironic reference to suffering for the cause of common good mentioned in Nehru's 'dam' speech has inspired the title of the essay “Greater Common Good”.

⁹² The Hirakud dam is India’s first river valley project after India’s independence (14th August 1947). It is India’s largest dam and the world’s fourth largest barrage. It provides hydroelectricity to villages along the Mahanadi river.

⁹³ Roy, “Greater Common Good,” 69.

⁹⁴ Ibid, 52.

⁹⁵ Roy, “Power Politics,” 155.

⁹⁶ The Dholera Special Investment Region (DSIR) covers approximately 920 sq km and covers 22 villages that are strategically situated between the industrial zones of Ahmedabad, Baroda, Rajkot and Bhavnagar in Gujarat State. This industrial hub will have a 6-lane-access-controlled expressway, metro rails and an international airport.

⁹⁷ Graham Huggan, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment* (London: Routledge, 2015), 5.

⁹⁸ Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin in *Postcolonial Ecocriticism* examine the relationship between humans, animals and the environment in postcolonial literary texts. They hold that human societies need to consider their relationship with non-human species with whom they

share the planet. They insist on the need to imagine new ways of creating awareness of these ecologically connected groupings.

⁹⁹ Huggan, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*, 12

¹⁰⁰ Roy, “Greater Common Good”, 109.

¹⁰¹ This echoes Rushdie’s preference for an aesthetics of inconstancy in writing. He claims: “Stasis, the dream of eternity, of a fixed order in human affairs, is the favoured myth of tyrants;¹⁰¹ metamorphosis, the knowledge that *nothing holds its form*, is the driving force of art” (*Imaginary* 291).

¹⁰² Arundhati Roy, “Confronting Empire,” in *My Seditious Heart: Collected Nonfiction* (Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2019), 223.

¹⁰³ Meaning ‘we eat TATA salt’ in Hindi.

¹⁰⁴ Roy, *Capitalism: A Ghost Story*, 20

¹⁰⁵ Roy Arundhati, “The Ladies Have Feelings,” in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* (London: Flamingo, 2002), 215.

¹⁰⁶ Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, 128.

¹⁰⁷ Roy “The Ladies have Feelings,” 215.

Bibliography

Ashcroft, Bill, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin. *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures*. Brantford, Ont.: W. Ross MacDonald School Resource Services, 2011.

Chouvy, Pierre-Arnaud. *Opium: Uncovering the Politics of the Poppy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2010.

Ghosh, Amitav. *The Hungry Tide*. New Delhi: Ravi Dayal, 2004.

---. *Sea of Poppies*. London: John Murray, 2008.

---. *River of Smoke*. London: John Murray, 2011.

---. *Flood of Fire*. London: John Murray, 2016.

-
- . *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*. Chicago Illinois: The University of Chicago Press, 2016.
- Huggan, Graham. *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*. London: Routledge, 2015.
- Iovino, Serenella, and Serpil Oppermann. *Material Ecocriticism*. Indiana University Press, 2014.
- Rivkin, Julie, Michael Ryan, and Edward Said. "Orientalism." Essay. In *Literary Theory, an Anthology*, 873–85. Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998.
- Roy, Arundhati. "Greater Common Good." In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, 46–141. New Delhi: Penguin, 2002.
- . "Power Politics." In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, 143–84. New Delhi: Penguin, 2002.
- . "The Ladies Have Feelings." In *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, 187–215. London: Flamingo, 2002.
- . *Capitalism: a Ghost Story*. London: Verso, 2015.
- . *The Ministry of Utmost Happiness*. New Delhi : Penguin, 2017.
- . "Arthur Miller Freedom to Write Lecture." *The Guardian*, May 13, 2019, <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2019/may/13/arundhati-roy-literature-shelter-pen-america>.
- . "Confronting Empire." Essay. In *My Seditious Heart: Collected Nonfiction*, 221–26. Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2019.
- . "On Citizens' Rights to Express Dissent." Essay. In *My Seditious Heart: Collected Nonfiction*, 150–59. Toronto: Hamish Hamilton, 2019.
- Rushdie, Salman. "Is Nothing Sacred?" Essay. In *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism, 1981-91*, 415–29. London: Vintage Books, 2010.
- Trocki, Carl A. *Opium, Empire, and the Global Political Economy: a Study of the Asian Opium Trade 1750-1950*. London: Routledge, 1999.