

**Eco – Terrorism – A Nation’s Threat : A Study In The Novels Of Winona La Duke’s
Last Standing Woman And Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria*****B. Sridevi****Ph.D Scholar, Pachaiyappa’s College, Chennai.****ABSTRACT**

Eco-terrorism is the recent threat to the world and the people. Unlike Eco-criticism, Eco-terrorism is a powerful terminology which briefly describes the terrorist activities done to destroy the land for the purpose of making profitable money. The people who are addicted to earn and double their invested money use land as an instrument to scrape and abrade her. To stop Eco-terrorism, Eco-sabotagical activities are done which repels against the Eco-terrorists. This paper studies about the two novels from two different backgrounds: Winona LaDuke’s *Last Standing Woman* and Alexis Wright’s *Carpentaria*. The ecological threats over the lands are dealt and the eco-tagical deeds are explored along with the outlook of culture and tradition. This study categorizes Eco-terrorism in both the nations and novels in the Post-Colonial period.

KEY WORDS:

Eco-terrorism, Eco-tage, culture, Eco-logical threat, Post – Colonial period.

FULL PAPER

The Earth is no wanton to give up all her best to every comer, but keeps a sweet, separate intimacy for each. (Dreese 71)

Eco-Terrorism is a term used to denote the damage and destruction caused to the nature and the nation’s natural resources by the human beings. The term ‘Eco’ signifies environment and ‘Terrorism’ stands for harm and disturbance caused to the normal life of any living being. James F. Jarboe defines Eco-terrorism in these following words:

“...the use of threatened use of violence of a criminal nature against innocent victims or property by an environmentally oriented, subnational group for environmental-political reasons, or aimed at an audience beyond the target, often of a symbolic nature.” (Summer – Thomas and Weidman 858)

The nature is responsible in saving the people whereas certain groups of people or individuals are anxious to destroy the nature for their growth. This illegal act includes waging war amongst countries, deforestation, using logging companies to destroy the natural resources, allowing Mining Corporation to ruin the land and killing the fauna recklessly. After World War I and II, the people in the world faced many traumas and issues. The people who participated in the war lost their limbs and legs and most of them were dead. During the time period of World Wars, not only the people were immobilized, but the nations (where the British people resided to seek shelter) were also crippled. The Europeans extended their empire wherever they settled. This extension affected all the regions of the world. This was reflected in the lives of Red Indians and the Aboriginal people of Australia. The Native people were prone to suffer the aggressive nature of the English people. They were destined to lose their land and belongings. But the Aboriginal people tried to save the land from the English people.

The Native people of America and the Aborigines of Australia acquired many similarities amongst them. Both the nations were abducted by the British settlers during the similar time period (i.e) after World War - II. After the French lost its power and control over the Americans, the British decided to expand their empire to America. Their lands were abducted by the British people after World War – II, as the settlers were economically and financially stronger than the Native people. The British colonized America from the years

1763-1812 (Augustyn 1-5) whereas the Australians were colonized in the year 1788 (Stewart-Maxwell 1-8).

Though the natural resources do not act as a hindrance to the people, the settlers were keenly interested in exploiting them. They brought in logging equipments to scrape and remove the land. They introduced mining in the land which destroyed the top nourishing layer of the soil. This resulted in the damage of the crops, fields and the destruction of the essential requirements of the people. The British people acted as Eco-terrorists, in ruining the land that had always belonged to the Native people of America and Australia respectively. They were the groups of people who had involuntarily entered the land and controlled the land along with its people. They used all the norms to disturb the regular chores and the needs of the people.

This paper represents the Native American Novelist Winona La Duke's work, *The Last Standing Woman* and the Aboriginal Australian Novelist Alexis Wright's *Carpentaria*. The two novels resemble in their common characteristic trait of the British settlers tormenting the land and the native people. The land of the Natives is looked as a mere product for which the British people wanted to invest money and make their profits double and much more than they had invested. The British laid a strong foundation in the Native people's land by introducing their profit securing device such as Mining Corporation, etc. Moreover, the British treated the Native people as slaves or they must deterritorialize their own land.

The dogma and principles of dreaming and story-telling is traced in the Australian novel *Carpentaria* and in Winona LaDuke's *Last Standing Woman* where the novelists have interspersed dreaming along with the landscape of the novels. The land is linked to the people and the stories of land depict the significance of the evolution of land, flora and fauna. According to the British settlers, the land is only an object, which is taken as their forceful property; whereas the Aboriginal people associate themselves with the land they live in.

(Barrett 29) The unflinching hope towards the land rendered the Aborigines to have belief and faith and fight untiringly with the British for their land. This is witnessed in the following given illustration from the novel *Carpentaria* :

One evening in the driest grasses in the world, a child who was no stranger to her people, asked if anyone could find Hope. The people of parable and prophecy pondered and prophecy pondered what was hopeless and finally declared they no longer know what Hope was. The clocks, tick-a-ty-tock, looked as though they might run out of time. Luckily, the ghosts in the memories of the old folk were listening, and said anyone can find Hope in the stories, the big stories and the little ones in between. ...(Wright12)

From this illustration, it is understood that a hope for a change and betterment in their livelihood has become a challenging task. The Aboriginal people possess dreams and stories for their culture to be known and spread to the forth-coming generations. According to the Aborigines, dreaming leads them to have a balanced life with the people around and the nature; if the people take adequate care and affection on the land and save her, the land too stretches her wings to safeguard the people from their problems.

The Native people of the two nations achieve a union with nature by following rituals and ceremonial practices, which are regarded to be outdated and irrational for the settlers. The British people, after their permanent immigration to the new country considered the Native people as uncivilized and barbaric. The British people reterritorialized the Native America and Australia by implementing the norms and regulations followed in their nation and culture. The British expected that the Native people of America and Australia will deterritorialize the land. The Native people of the two nations are nationalistic in spirit and loyal to the land. Both the novels replicate the patriotic attachment in the following situations.

In the novel *Carpentaria* the British introduce the Mining companies to be constructed in the land. Mining perturbs the land by scraping the top-most layer of the soil resulting in soil erosion and many sinkholes are formed on the ground. This results in weakening of soil and the contamination of ground water. The British who are not bothered about the aftermath circumstances of the land plan to construct the Mining Corporation in the land. The Aborigines oppose this proposal of the British. The British move ahead and construct the Mining Corporation. Will, the son of Norm Phantom protests against the ill deed and attempts for a strike opposing the British. Will receives multiple responses from the people for safe-guarding the land; few of the people support, whereas many of the people rebel. Will serves as a source in avoiding the destruction of the land. Thus, he serves as a tool to stop the environmental terrorism occurring in the Gulf of Carpentaria. This following excerpt depicts the emotional attachment the Aborigines have on the land:

“We don’t own the land, the land own us. The land is my mother, my mother is the land. Land is the starting point to where it all began. It’s like picking up a piece of dirt and saying this is where I started and this is where I’ll go. The land is our food, our culture, our spirit and identity.” (K.S. Night.13.).

(Chapter – V – Discourse of Ethnicism – Carpentaria)

Once the Mine is built, which is against the Nature and the Aboriginal people, the Nature creates a natural disaster – flood and destroys the Mine completely. The place where the Mine was erected with brick and cement and more of the British’ dream, is devastated and the Gulf of Carpentaria regains its peaceful atmosphere. The novelist has portrayed land to be a human as well as a character in the novel.

Similar to this in Winona LaDuke’s *Last Standing Woman*, the grave tombs of the dead ancestors of the nation are re-located initially to the White Man’s land from Minnesota,

the White Earth (where it had been present at). Such an illicit act of replacing the tombs from the native land to that of church priest's is committed by Father Gilfillian. The land where the dead bodies of the ancestors were buried belonged to Namaybin Minnogeeshig (husband of Ishkwegaabawiikwe) from whom the land was abducted by the English people. The land was hence allotted to Warren Danielson, a White Chief. Moose Hanford takes initiative in bringing the dead bodies, bones, and artifacts to the land, from where it was seized. Later, after the incessant struggles of Moose Hanford and the people of White Earth, the tombs are brought back safely to their own land. The emotional attachment of the Anishinaabeg tribe with the land is witnessed in these lines:

“We are born here, and we have a certain time to be here. ... When our time comes, we give back to the Earth and to the Creator. Our spiritual being goes to the Creator, and our physical being goes to our Mother. That is our returning to our Mother, and that is how we reciprocate for the gifts of life that have been given to us during our time on Earth. We give our lives then.” (LaDuke 280-281)

Eco-terrorism is associated with Eco-tage, which is the term referring to the people who work in order to damage the property and the people who cause the environmental dangers or attacks. Eco-tage is done by either individuals or a group of people who undergo a detailed study on destroying the measures taken for environmental disturbance or ecological destruction. In the novels, *Last Standing Woman* and *Carpentaria*, Ecosabotage is done by individuals namely Lucy St. Clair and Elias Smith. There is a sharp contrast between Lucy and Elias whereas the former stands as a bold, rebellious and courageous woman, while Elias has a subtle role to define his nature and meets his fate unfortunately.

Lucy St. Clair's Eco- sabotagical exploit is when Lance Wagosh, an English tribal Chairman summons a truck filled in with logging equipments and he brings it to the White

Earth for destroying the land. Being a tribal Chairman, Lance Wagosh does not value the land as he is a British. He rejects the ideas of Protect Our Land Coalition and forcibly brings the truck into Minnesota. Lucy devises a plan to evacuate the truck and when the truck is parked in a shed, she pours a bottle of kerosene around the truck and lights up her cigarette to throw on it which destroys the truck completely.

Elias Smith's identity is associated with nature and sea, as his origin is kept surreptitious. Though he is initially accepted by the English people at Uptown, it does not constantly stay stable and longer for Smith. He is doubted and sent to Desperance, the town of the indigenous Australians, where he befriends Normal Phantom and his son Will. Elias Smith does his eco-tagical deed by saving Will's family from the murderers in the Mining Corporation and Elias sacrifices his own life, when he does the same. Elias saves Will Phantom who is the prime source in conserving the land and destroying the Mining Corporation.

Thus from the two novels, *Last Standing Woman* and *Carpentaria*, the sole identical unification among them is the land. From the study, it is revealed that the bondage between the people and the land is strong and it is evident that the land holds the people as its possession and vice-versa. The British people have disturbed and demolished the land and its regions and as a result of it, they are re-treated in the same manner. The Native people of both the nations have regarded the land with high respect, attachment, affection and dedication. Hence the Native people are rewarded with the invaluable land and its resources. The land expresses the balanced nature towards the human beings and the influence of Nature is depicted in the novels. The resources of Nature can be used, re-used and recycled by men, but it can never be demolished. Man can never exhibit his supremacy over the Nature or Land. If he rules the land or over-power or out-throw the land, Nature uses its nuances and finally makes its wish and dream come true. Thus, being humans, one has to lead a balanced life by

providing equal strengths to the Land and Science. This will effect in the land safe-guarding the people in it whereas the people protecting the environment and its resources.

Ecological terrorism prevails when the land is crucially abraded by the people residing on it. Ecology does not remain as a threat if the people rightly, efficiently use the land and its resources. If the Native and the English people value money, profit and revenue more than the land, then the nature's gift will be disastrous.

WORKS CITED

LaDuke, Winona. *Last Standing Woman*. Voyageur Press. 1997.

Augustyn, Adam., et.al. *American Colonies – British and United States History*. 5-11-2019. 22-10-2019. 1-5.

Stewart-Maxwell, Hamish., et.al. *Convicts and the Colonisation of Australia, 1788-1868*. Digital Panopticon Version 1.1 August 2018. 22-10-2019. 1-8.

Dreese N. Donelle. *Ecocriticism – Creating Self and Place in Environmental and American Indian Literatures*. Peter Lang Publishing Inc., New York. 2002. 23-10-2019.

Susan Barrett. "This land is me": Indigenous Australian story-telling and ecological knowledge. *ELOHI*, 3 2013. 29-40. 25-10-2019.

Molloy, Diane. *Finding Hope in the Stories: Alexis Wright's Carpentaria and the Carnavalesque Search for a New Order*. 1-8. JASAL 12.3 27-10-2019.

Summer-Thomas, David, Weidman M. Lisa. *Eco-terrorism or Eco-tage : An Argument for the Proper Frame*. ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment, Volume 20, Issue 4, 22/10/2013. 855-876. 27-10-2019.