

Worldmakers and Worldwreckers

Worldmakers and Worldwreckers

in Decolonial and Developmentalist Imaginaries of
Environmental Justice from Western Europe and
North America in the 2010s

Rut Elliot Blomqvist



UNIVERSITY OF GOTHENBURG

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Except ”Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness” and ”I
Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti”
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Abstract

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This dissertation investigates imaginaries of environmental justice from Western Europe and North America in the 2010s. It explores the relevance of research on predominantly Global South environmental movements and writer-activism for a part of the Global North. A contribution to the cross-pollination of political ecology and literary studies, it develops decolonial, ecofeminist, and cultural materialist theory, and constructs an ecopolitical narratological method—an econarratology for political-ecological analysis of how the power to make and wreck worlds is imagined.

The study teases apart colonial and decolonial conceptions of being and knowledge in six Anglophone texts: the pop music album *ORDA: This Is My Land* by Sofia Jannok; the creative nonfiction *The Mushroom at the End of the World* by Anna Tsing; the science fiction novel *New York 2140* by Kim Stanley Robinson; the investigative journalistic book *This Changes Everything* by Naomi Klein; the design fiction *The World We Made* by Jonathon Porritt; and the textbook *The Age of Sustainable Development* by Jeffrey Sachs. These texts approach the intersections of sustainability and justice from different professed political positions and different forms of knowledge production.

Part I presents a theoretical and methodological framework for the analysis of environmental justice imaginaries (Chapters 1 and 4), and also contextualises the study through an overview of academic-political debates on political concepts, ontology, and epistemology in environmentalism—research in political ecology, the environmental humanities, and ecocriticism that has previously not been synthesised (Chapters 2–3). Part II (Chapters 5–7) turns to the comparative analysis of the six texts, and identifies divergent conceptions of the makers and wreckers of sustainable and just worlds, and of the ways of knowing that can be part of worldmaking. This divergence is understood as producing two poles on a spectrum of imaginaries: ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development. Part III (Chapter 8) further discusses this through a distinction between decoloniality and developmentalism, and considers the implications of the study for political ecology and the environmental humanities, as well as for social movements with an environmental justice orientation.

Sammanfattning

Doktorsavhandling vid Göteborgs Universitet, 2023

Titel: Världsbyggare och världsförstörare i dekoloniala och utvecklingsideologiska föreställningar om miljörättvisa från Västeuropa och Nordamerika under 2010-talet

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Denna avhandling undersöker föreställningar (*imaginaries*) om miljörättvisa från Västeuropa och Nordamerika under 2010-talet. Den utforskar vilken relevans studier av miljörörelser och författar-aktivism i huvudsakligen det globala Syd skulle kunna ha för en del av det globala Nord, samt bidrar till att sammanlänka politisk ekologi och litteraturvetenskap. Den utvecklar dekolonial, ekofeministisk och kulturmaterialistisk teori och konstruerar en ekopolitisk narratologisk metod – en vidareutveckling av ekonarratologi för politisk-ekologisk analys av framställningar av makten att bygga och förstöra världar.

Studien särskiljer koloniala och dekoloniala idéer om vara (*being*) och kunskap i sex engelskspråkiga texter: popmusikalbumet *ORDA: This Is My Land* av Sofia Jannok; den kreativa ickefiktionen *The Mushroom at the End of the World* av Anna Tsing; science fiction-romanen *New York 2140* av Kim Stanley Robinson; den grävande journalistiska boken *This Changes Everything* av Naomi Klein; design fiction-verket *The World We Made* av Jonathon Porritt; och kursboken *The Age of Sustainable Development* av Jeffrey Sachs. Dessa texter tar sig an mötet mellan hållbarhet och rättvisa utifrån olika uttalade politiska positioner och olika former av kunskapsproduktion.

Del I presenterar ett teoretiskt och metodologiskt ramverk för analys av föreställningar om miljörättvisa (kapitel 1 och 4), samt kontextualiserar studien genom en översikt av akademisk-politiska debatter om politiska begrepp, ontologi och epistemologi inom miljöpolitik – perspektiv från forskning inom politisk ekologi, miljöhumaniora och ekokritik, vilka tidigare inte har syntetiserats (kapitel 2–3). Del II (kapitel 5–7) utgörs av jämförande analyser av de sex texterna. Här identifieras olika idéer om vem eller vad som kan bygga respektive förstöra hållbara och rättvisa världar, samt om vilka kunskapsformer som kan vara del av världsbyggandet. Det visas hur dessa olika idéer konstruerar två poler på ett spektrum av föreställningar: ekologisk dekolonisering (eller avkolonisering) och hållbar kapitalistisk utveckling. Del III (kapitel 8) diskuterar detta vidare genom en distinktion mellan dekolonialitet och utvecklingsideologi, samt reflekterar över vad studien betyder för politisk ekologi och miljöhumaniora, såväl som för sociala rörelser med en orientering mot miljörättvisa.

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PART I

1. Introducing Worldmaking and Worldwrecking

An Indigenous land and water protector and the chief communications officer of a multinational mining corporation walk into a bar. Though they probably do not walk in together, nor do they sit at the same table. Perhaps more likely—and more appropriately for the story because this is not a joke—they encounter each other on a mountainside where the land and water protector’s community in coalition with environmentalists has set up camp to block a rare-earth mine. One way or another, in any case, these two people happen to strike up a conversation. And it is a conversation that revolves around environmental justice, in a sense.

“Water is life. This land is our body,” says the protector.

“That’s all very good, but we need safe mining, local job creation, and zero-carbon technology for the transition away from fossil fuels,” the CCO retorts.

The two imagine an environmentally sustainable and socially just future—the combination of concerns that underpins environmental justice—in very different ways. The same thing could really be said about how they imagine the very phenomenon of living, of being human together with the other beings on this planet, and about how they imagine its opposite, the lack of and undermining of life. The land and water and the relations to them that the Indigenous community and the environmentalists see as the very stuff of life can, from the point of view of the mining corporation, make no real contribution to the making of a good world but rather hamper its construction. And the kind of world the corporation would build and that the CCO markets as sustainable and socially responsible is, from the point of view of those blocking the mine, in fact not about making but about wrecking a living world.

The result is two divergent *imaginaries* of environmental justice. An imaginary in this sense is a way of both depicting and concretely organising socio-environmental relations; a way of conceiving of the making and wrecking of worlds that intersects with and supports and criticises different practices. The land and water protector and the corporate CCO illustrate two extreme positions in the imagining of what I will be calling *worldmaking* and *worldwrecking* in imaginaries of environmental justice. And it is the teasing apart of such divergent imaginaries within environmental justice, both in their extreme and in their more nuanced and complex forms, that this thesis is about. More specifically, it is about the analysis of divergent depictions of worldmaking and worldwrecking in texts that potentially construct and partake of imaginaries of environmental justice in contemporary Anglophone Western Europe and North America (or WENA for short).

By talking about worldmaking and worldwrecking, I want to direct our attention not just to what is often in focus in discussions of environmental issues, namely ecological devastation and its causes (that is, worldwrecking), but also to another dimension of environmentalist imaginaries that is always present as well, namely *ideas about what constitutes the making of good worlds* for humans, for other species, or for both together. Even in imaginaries where discussions of worldmaking are not overt, the topic is present by inference, such as when climate and environmental scientists describe the *wreckage* caused by a “great acceleration” of human environmental impact and by implication also describe the *making* of a certain kind of world, a form of society and of human relations to ecology that is variously termed modernity, industrialism, and capitalism. At times, such imaginaries also gesture towards other worldmaking projects that are seen as preferable.

Although the terms worldmaking and worldwrecking are starting points here, they in fact originate in my analysis of imaginaries. The concepts gradually emerged as analytical categories when I was doing the research for this thesis and considering discussions in environmental politics through literary and narrative analysis, both when analysing the specific texts that I have focused on and when following general environmental political discussions. The concepts highlight something that narrative analysis, with its focus on characters that act with and against each other in different ways (as I will discuss further below and in Chapter 4), helps us see: environmentalist political thought often depicts a tension between creative and destructive figures and the forces they make up. For instance, to draw on the scene above, some imagine the institution of the corporation and new industrial technologies as protagonists and those standing in their way as antagonists, whereas others imagine a human community living with land and water as a collective protagonist and extractive industry as the antagonist. These protagonists and antagonists are what I call worldmakers and worldwreckers.

By focusing on the region of WENA, I want to see whether important research by literary scholars like Rob Nixon (2011), Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014), and Erin James (2015) on writers in predominantly Global-South environmental (justice) movements, or what is sometimes called environmentalist *writer-activism*, can also be of relevance for an understanding of texts written in the Global North. To focus on WENA specifically is interesting because, on the one hand, this transatlantic region is dominated by and dominates globally hegemonic Western Anglophone culture and may as such be expected to be a site of what I will be calling dominant culture, while the region is also, on the other hand, culturally and politically diverse with a long history of Indigenous, Black, feminist, queer, workers’ movements, and so on subverting dominant culture and building alternatives. The analysis of imaginaries from WENA can

thus help us gain insights into what constitutes the hegemonic imaginary in global Western and Westernised culture, as well as into the ways this imaginary may be negotiated and subverted within a geopolitical region that is often, perhaps simplistically, seen as culturally Western-hegemonic through and through.¹

I call my exploration of worldmaking and worldwrecking in environmental justice imaginaries a form of literary political ecology, where political ecology is defined as the study of, among other things, environmental justice and injustice, and its literary branch as the study of imaginaries on this topic. My study takes the form of a comparative narrative analysis of six different texts whose writers contribute to discussions in politics, the arts, and academia on the intersections of social and environmental issues, and who come to such discussions from different angles in terms of the professed politics and forms of expressions and knowledge production they are part of. The texts are: the Indigenous Sámi pop music album *ORDA: This Is My Land* (2016) by Sofia Jannok; the anthropological creative nonfiction *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015) by Anna Tsing; the science fiction/climate fiction novel *New York 2140* (2017) by Kim Stanley Robinson; the investigative journalistic text *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014) by Naomi Klein; the design fiction *The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050* (2013) by Jonathon Porritt; and the sustainable development textbook *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2012) by Jeffrey Sachs. The rationale for the selection of these texts, the delimitation of the period they are from, the 2010s, and the choice to focus on this period are topics I will discuss later in this chapter. I will here already

¹ I use the terms Global North and Global South alongside Western and non-Western, the former pair denoting, as succinctly explained by Aaron Vansintjan (2021), “politically and economically dominant countries versus relatively poor, unevenly developed countries” (meaning that North and South in this sense are geopolitical, not geographical, concepts), and Western denoting “a culturally and socially hegemonic context, which doesn’t always map on to Global North and Global South” (19, fn 5). It is important to keep in mind that North and South are analytical simplifications. Through the work of decolonial theorists (a school that will be introduced below) like Ramón Grosfoguel (e.g. 2002), one gets a sense that there is both a North in the South and a South in the North—meaning there are elites in the South who contribute to the maintenance of a colonial power structure, among other things, and there are all kinds of underprivileged people in the North, including those with an origin in the South who are racialised as non-white and often work precarious and at times seasonal jobs with low pay in agriculture, forestry, construction, hazardous industries, and rich people’s homes. I would also add that an interesting addition of detail to the North/South geopolitical analytical division of the world can be found in world-systems theory (e.g. Wallerstein 1974), which not only conceptualises the core (the North in the current world system) and its periphery (the South in the current system), but also differentiates parts of the periphery through the concept of semi-peripheries (countries like China and Brazil since the late twentieth century) where labour tends to be valued somewhat higher than in the peripheries and where more products end up for consumption. As I am concerned with imaginaries from a part of the Global North (or a part of the core), this differentiation is not of central importance for my analysis, however.

introduce the authors, however, as many readers may not be familiar with all of them.

Sofia Jannok is an Indigenous Sámi land protector, reindeer owner, songwriter, and Honorary Doctor of Philosophy at Luleå University of Technology in Sweden.² Anna Tsing is Professor of Social Anthropology at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in the US. She did her PhD under the feminist theorist Donna Haraway and focuses in her work on ecological devastation, precarious labour, human-environment relations, and posthumanist thought. Kim Stanley Robinson is a left-wing science fiction author, one of the most productive contemporary writers of climate fiction, and a frequent commentator on environmental politics in Anglophone media. He has a background as a Marxist literary scholar and was a PhD student of the Marxist literary theorist Frederic Jameson. Naomi Klein is a left-wing writer, debater, and educator, trained as a journalist, who has lately turned her attention to environmental issues and in particular climate change as a chronicler of land protection movements and a notable voice in debates over a socially just transition. Jonathon Porritt is an environmentalist lobbyist and educator and formerly both chair of the UK Green Party and director of Friends of the Earth Britain. Jeffrey Sachs is Professor of Economics at Columbia University in the US, with academic training in neoclassical economics from Harvard. He is a current Sustainable Development Goals Advocate for the United Nations and President of the UN Sustainable Development Solutions Network of universities, and the former sustainable

² In using the term Indigenous, I follow the UN's definition: "Indigenous peoples have in common a historical continuity with a given region prior to colonization and a strong link to their lands. They maintain, at least in part, distinct social, economic and political systems. They have distinct languages, cultures, beliefs and knowledge systems. They are determined to maintain and develop their identity and distinct institutions and they form a non-dominant sector of society" (the UN, n.d.). The Sámi are the only ethnic group in Europe that is granted the status of Indigenous by the UN. They speak a group of Finno-Ugric languages. (I use North Sámi spelling in this thesis because this is the Sámi language that Sofia Jannok speaks and uses in her songs.) The traditional lands of the Sámi, known as Sápmi, stretch across the Northern half, roughly, of Scandinavia and Finland (or the Nordic region) and the Kola Peninsula in Russia. But Nordic nation-state colonialism has also oppressed other minorities for several hundred years. In the case of Sweden, there is a Meänkieli-/Tornedalian Finnish-speaking minority that shares its traditional territories with the northernmost groups of Sámi. I would stress that a discussion of and work for land rights and land back that includes both groups—and does not leave out those people of Sámi and Tornedalian-Finnish heritage who have been deprived of their traditional livelihoods by decades or even centuries of state-driven cultural genocide through assimilation—is pressing, as a counterforce to a historical and ongoing tendency to divide and conquer that facilitates the Swedish state's extraction of resources from the North. It is also important to think of how to involve other groups in the North as well in this kind of social change: the disenfranchised in Sápmi and the part of it that overlaps with Meänmaa/the Torne Valley are culturally diverse, with people with origins not just from Sápmi, the Torne Valley, and Sweden but also to a large extent from Middle-Eastern and African countries like Afghanistan, Syria, Somalia, and Eritrea. This diversity and the divisions and coalitions that can arise from it feature in Jannok's songs, as we will see.

development advisor to the UN Secretary-General. These six writers all engage with questions of social justice and environmental sustainability and their texts all depict forms of political action and imagine political change—from Jannok’s appeal to Indigenous people around the world to “never be silent” in her introduction to the album, to Robinson’s fictional exploration of possible dynamics of social movements and political negotiations during a climate catastrophe, to calls by Sachs for state and corporate leaders to take the lead and create an age of environmental sustainability and widespread social wellbeing. As such, these writers are possible environmental justice writer-activists from WENA, with the caveat that some of them at times speak more to state and corporate leaders than to and from social movements and thus come closer to what could be termed writer-lobbyism than to writer-activism, as I will return to below. That it is still relevant in this study to consider texts that come closer to lobbyism than to activism follows from an uncertainty about how to position different texts and thinkers politically within or in relation to environmental justice, a topic I will discuss at length both later in this chapter and in Chapter 3.

This thesis is shaped by my engagement with the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs through an analysis in decolonial theory of *coloniality* and *decoloniality*, fused with a distinction between *dominant* and *emergent* culture from the Welsh literary critic and cultural theorist Raymond Williams’s cultural materialism.³ Combined, these frameworks suggest that there is a dominant culture of coloniality and an emergent culture of decoloniality. As I will elaborate on later in this chapter, dominant colonial culture constructs social classes through the notion of race (a racialisation that is also about gendering, as we will see in Chapter 4) whereby some people become seen as more and some as less, or less than, human and as the producers of more and less legitimate and true knowledge. I thus explore how the texts posit various humans together with various nonhumans (the latter including not just other species and whole ecologies but also inanimate entities like technologies) as possessing *being*, as having meaningful, real existence and the capacity to make good worlds—and how they posit other entities as lacking being, as unable to contribute to worldmaking or as worldwreckers.⁴ In this, I also unpack how the imagining of being is entwined with the imagining of *knowing*, of the kinds of figures who can know the world and how to live in or with it, including the aesthetic or formal

³ Williams also suggests a third term for a kind of culture, the *residual*. I will discuss how this term fits into my analysis in the section on cultural materialism below, and also return to the topic in the discussion of the meaning of the results from my study in Chapter 8.

⁴ I refer to the imagining of being in relation to the human with the term *human being* as an uncountable, abstract noun (which should not be confused with the more common usage where the term refers to our species and is countable—there can then be *a* human being or human beings in the plural). Likewise, I talk of the imagining of being in relation to the nonhuman as *nonhuman being*.

dimensions—the forms of expression—of their knowledges. This is informed by the conception in decolonial theory of *the coloniality of being* and *the coloniality of knowledge*. Worldmakers are the *beings* and *knowers* of an imaginary (or its most important beings and knowers); worldwreckers generally lack being and knowledge (or are insignificant for the worldmaking projects that are of central importance in an imaginary, or even negate such worldmaking). In the scene that opened this chapter, the land and water protector, for instance, sees the people of their community and the land and water as beings and the extractivist project as negating this; in the argument between this activist and the corporate CCO we encounter two different knowledges and two ideas about what makes a knower.

In imagining forces of worldmaking and worldwrecking, the texts that I analyse can be read as constructing worlds, and I approach this through the concept of *storyworld* from ecocritical narrative theory, or econarratology, and through a development within storyworld analysis of the concept of *actants*—denoting textual functions, like protagonist and antagonist—from formalist literary theory. I thus analyse worldmaking and worldwrecking forces as comprised of different kinds of worldmaker and worldwrecker actants. In the analysis of the texts, I find that they set up different relational structures where actants are imagined as acting with and against each other to make and wreck worlds—I term these structures *conviviality*, *confrontation*, *consumption*, and *competition*—and that the structures are combined in different ways in the texts.

A key aspect of the terms worldmaker and worldwrecker that the reader needs to understand is that the characterisation of certain entities as actants of worldmaking or of worldwrecking is largely a matter of perspective; what is a worldmaker for some is a worldwrecker for others. In the scene from the mountainside above, we see how it is possible to place very different entities in worldmaker and worldwrecker roles within thinking that is related to environmental justice: for some, worldmaking actants are Indigenous and environmentalist land and water protectors collaborating with land and water, and for others, they are corporations creating jobs and sustainability by wrestling resources from the earth for a green transition. What are the worldmaker or worldwrecker roles in different imaginaries of the institution of the corporation and its owners, leaders, and managers? Of land protectors and their social movements? Of different states and state institutions and their political leadership? Of movements and communities that do democratic politics in ways that exceed liberal representative democracy? And, considering actants as knowers too, what are the roles of economists using charts and graphs to depict resource use and its distribution among humans? Of spoken word poets and musicians at activist blockades elaborating on why they are saying no and celebrating what they are protecting? Of ecological scientists estimating and

1. INTRODUCING WORLDMAKING AND WORLDWRECKING

promoting biodiversity? And so on. The point is that we should always ask *whose and what kinds of worlds* are given space to be made and whose worlds might be wrecked in the process, and *who gets to have power over and a say in* worldmaking choices. This does not mean that all ways of imagining worldmaking and worldwrecking are equally valid, so that our only conclusion about divergent perspectives on the social and ecological consequences of certain worldmaking projects can be that the proponents of divergent perspectives must agree to disagree. On the contrary, the comparison of different imaginaries serves to find the lines of conflict where different desires about what worlds to make become mutually exclusive. Because the realisation that there is at times no win-win situation for all interests that would direct the making of worlds is the foundation for the choice of which projects to support and which to oppose.

All of the terms and theories that I have mentioned so far will be further elucidated throughout this thesis: some in the theoretical and methodological discussion in Chapter 4; some in the textual analyses in Chapters 5, 6, and 7 (or Part II). But some of them also need to be introduced in more detail in this chapter. This category includes the key concepts of *environmental justice* and *imaginaries* and the theories and academic fields through which I approach environmental justice imaginaries, namely *cultural materialism*, *decolonial theory*, and *literary political ecology*. I will first provide a framework for the study by elaborating on the fusion of the distinctions between dominant and emergent culture and coloniality and decoloniality. After this, I will briefly introduce environmental justice social movements and their study as a form of political ecology, and then discuss literary criticism on writer-activism in connection to such movements as a form of cultural materialism. Both of these two topics involve the question of where and to what extent environmental justice movements and writer-activism are to be found in WENA. Finally, in the last part of the chapter, I turn to the question of the design of the study, discussing my aim and research questions, textual analysis as a research approach in political ecology, the delimitation of the time and space that is WENA in the 2010s, the selection of texts from this period and region, and the possibility of comparative analysis of these in some ways very different texts.

1.1 Divergent Imaginaries: Dominant Colonial Culture and Emergent Decolonial Culture

The starting point in how I approach the identification and comparison of imaginaries with different conceptions of worldmaking and worldwrecking is shaped by two theoretical schools: decolonial theory and cultural materialism. And these schools share two important features: they have emerged as critiques of capitalism and they understand culture as integral to social power in both its hegemonic and counterhegemonic forms. I introduce both schools below, with an emphasis on how I combine them in proposing that decolonial cultural analysis fits well within and can be enriched by cultural materialism. I also explain how I use the term imaginaries within this framework.

1.1.1 Decolonial Theory on Power, Knowledge, and Being

In decolonial theory, distinctions have emerged between three central and intersecting dimensions of coloniality referred to as *coloniality of power*, *of knowledge*, and *of being*. While I draw in particular on theorisations of the latter two in my analysis of cultural conceptions of worldmaking and worldwrecking, it is important not to forget that these theorisations are always situated within a wider conception of the coloniality of power as a key component of capitalist modernity. To make sure that this aspect of decolonial theory is front-and-centre, I recount the history of the development of the theory from the conceptualisation of the coloniality of power to the addition of the concepts of coloniality of knowledge and being as denoting cultural aspects of the coloniality of power.

Coloniality of power

The term *coloniality* was first introduced by the sociologist Aníbal Quijano (2000, 2007). Quijano focuses on what he calls *the coloniality of power*, a power structure centred on the idea of race which “became the cornerstone of a Eurocentred world” with the rise of colonialism but has also “proved to be more profound and more lasting than the colonialism in which it was engendered and which it helped to impose globally” (45-46). Coloniality has, then, as the philosopher Nelson Maldonado-Torres (2007) puts it, persisted “well beyond the strict limits of colonial administration”; the concept does not denote “the aftermath or the residual form of any given form of colonial relation” but a power structure that has persisted over time (243).⁵ In the definition of the coloniality of power put

⁵ It is important not to understand the term coloniality as meaning that some form of “colonialism proper” has ended and that we now find ourselves in a postcolonial era: as Leah Temper (2019) writes, Indigenous scholars working on resurgence like Glen Coulthard and Leanne Betasamosake Simpson “view settler colonialism not as a past historical event to be reconciled but

forth by thinkers like Quijano and Maldonado-Torres, the entanglement and co-dependence of coloniality and capitalism is important. Maldonado-Torres (2007) explains that with the colonisation of the Americas, “capitalism, an already existing form of economic relation, became tied with forms of domination and subordination that were central to maintaining colonial control” (243). Quijano (2000) identifies how, in the colonisation of the Americas, coloniality became a central tenet of the ensuing global capitalist system: “all forms of control and exploitation of labor and production . . . revolved around the capital-salary relation and the world market. These forms of labor control included slavery, serfdom, petty-commodity production, reciprocity, and wages” (535). An important point for Quijano is that the specificities of these forms of labour in globalised capitalism were new; it is not simply that slavery, for instance, *continued* to exist within capitalism, but that capitalism *constructed a new kind of slavery* together with other forms of labour—all of which were “constituted around and in the service of capital” (535). Coloniality of power is then, Quijano writes, “the social classification of the world’s population around the idea of race” (533) and “a new global structure of the control of labor” with racially oriented assignment of “social roles and geohistorical places” in the service of capital (536). The colonial articulation of a racial hierarchy is inseparable from the construction of differentiated class roles in imperialist capitalism. *The coloniality of power is the Eurocentric or Western-centric and capital-centric global power structure that arose during European colonial expansion and is hegemonic still to this day.*

Coloniality of knowledge and being

Although Quijano (2000) focuses on the formation of the coloniality of power, he also explores the connection between different dimensions of or modes of domination: he describes how repression of colonised people’s “knowledge production, the models of the production of meaning, their symbolic universe, the model of expression and of objectification and subjectivity” was an important feature of historical colonialism (541). Thus another decolonial theorist, María Lugones (2007), sees the theory as analysing the whole complex of the coloniality of “relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing” (187)—often, so Nina Álvarez and Brendan Coolsaet (2020) suggest in their analysis of colonial and decolonial environmental justice, with a focus on “cultural, epistemological and ontological mechanisms of subjugation” (53).

The exploration of the role of epistemological subjugation in the coloniality of power was first explored in greater detail by the sociologist Ramón Grosfoguel

as an ongoing structure of relations predicated upon the elimination of Indigenous life and culture” (95). The kind of decolonial theory that emphasises a historical continuity from European colonial expansion to the present day is compatible with this—and Temper indeed also builds on both theorists of resurgence and decolonial theory in her analysis of Wet’suwet’en resistance to pipelines.

(2002, 2007), who also first used the phrase “the coloniality of knowledge.” Grosfoguel analyses the geopolitics of knowledge and critiques its Eurocentrism, starting from the perspective of what he calls “subaltern experiences.” Central to the coloniality of knowledge is, Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020) explain, “the difference made between European and non-European knowledges and symbolic systems” and how non-European knowledges “are deprived of scientific validity” through being seen as “inferior,” “traditional,” and having only “practical and local applicability” (53). Building on this theorisation of the coloniality of knowledge together with Franz Fanon’s analysis of the psychological aspects of colonial domination and phenomenological philosophy, Jason Maldonado-Torres (2007) has conceptualised another closely related ontological dimension of coloniality: the coloniality of being.⁶ He shows that it is not only the ways of knowing of the colonised subjects that are viewed as less valid than the coloniser’s dominant knowing, but that the colonised are also ascribed a different ontological status in coloniality so that, in the colonial view, they “lack being, should not exist or are dispensable” (252). He demonstrates that this coloniality of being works through the connection of mind/body dualism (or what is often called Cartesianism) and coloniser/colonised dualism (245). In other words, the colonised-as-body is seen as a dehumanised entity lacking full realness or lacking being, whereas the coloniser-as-mind alone is granted full status as human or is seen as possessing being or, in the terms I use, as a being. An important point in work on ontological means of subjugation that is derived from Fanon’s thinking is that coloniality works in part through psychological internalisation. Glen Coulthard (2014), a theorist of Indigenous resurgence—meaning the revival and remaking of Indigenous ways of life, social institutions, and culture as a response to colonialism’s ongoing project of eradication of the same—discusses this, pointing out that colonial domination relies on the internalisation by the colonised of racist conceptions of the human (31). We could add to this that there is also an internalisation of such racism by Europeans and people of European descent so that the coloniality of being becomes reproduced psychologically by people who are ascribed all kinds of roles within global capitalism, either viewing themselves as self-evidently fully and supremely human or as dehumanised.

Decolonial theory thus tends to analyse not only economic, political, and military power but forms of cultural power too. But the question of how exactly to approach this cultural dimension of power is by no means settled. A

⁶ Although phenomenology is important in Maldonado-Torres’s philosophy, it is not a tradition I engage with in the textual analyses or the discussions of their implications. But it would certainly be possible to build on my analysis of conceptions of being in environmental justice imaginaries to continue the kind of interrogation of phenomenological philosophy that Maldonado-Torres undertakes.

prominent strand of decolonial theory objects to some theories of colonial power that emphasise culture in the wrong way. Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020) work within this strand of decolonial theory. They summarise a critique directed at “postcolonial work [that] has largely drawn on French theory and post-structuralism (particularly on the work of Derrida, Deleuze and Foucault), and tends to over-emphasize culture as a determinant for colonialism, hence inverting economicist tendencies of orthodox Marxism” (52). When it comes to understandings of culture, Álvarez and Coolsaet (2020) argue for a decolonial theory that draws instead on “the lived experience, thinking, places and locations of those communities that have suffered from colonialism” (52). In the kind of decolonial theory they bring out, it is important that this focus on culture is *combined with* an analysis of capitalism as a system of globally asymmetrical power.⁷ An example of this is how Quijano’s (e.g. 2000) work of articulating decolonial theory built on and further developed Immanuel Wallerstein’s (1974, 1980, 1989, 2011) theory of the modern world system; Quijano maintains world-systems theory’s Marxist critique of capitalism but specifies that this capitalist system is at its core also colonial. In working within decolonial theory, I thus construe ontological and epistemological forms of subjugation neither in economicist terms as merely added onto economic or political subjugation nor in culturalist terms as the primary sites of power, but *as constitutive elements of the whole that is the coloniality of power*. This translates into a cultural materialist theory of the role of culture, which can be used to further elaborate a decolonial framework for cultural studies.

1.1.2 Cultural Materialism

Cultural materialism, developed by Raymond Williams, is a framework for the study and analysis of culture that combines a sociological and anthropological perspective on cultural practices with the kind of attention to detail in individual works of cultural expression that is common in literary studies and similar disciplines in the humanities. There are two aspects of cultural materialism that make it suitable for research based in decolonial theory: first, its concept of culture; and second, its analytical distinction between dominant and emergent culture, which I, as mentioned above, combine with the coloniality/decoloniality distinction.

⁷ Other examples of decolonial theory instead come closer to the kind of analysis that Álvarez and Coolsaet associate with the earlier postcolonial theoretical tradition. One example is the work of Walter D. Mignolo (e.g. 2000), a scholar whose work often becomes abstracted in its cultural analysis and has no clear ties to the movements and experiences it is about. This kind of decolonial theory has been critiqued by among others Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) for appropriating decoloniality as a rhetoric for academic career purposes.

Culture as part of what makes worlds

As Craig Calhoun (1990) explains, culture to Williams is “neither the passively accepted, tacitly enveloping whole of old-fashioned anthropology, nor the specialized, elite preoccupation of ‘highbrow’ students of literature and the arts”; instead, it is *both* “‘ordinary’ (in Williams’ term), the stuff of everyone’s daily life, *and* . . . manifested in creations of extraordinary beauty or brilliance” (502; emphases added). Cultural materialism, Calhoun continues, thus synthesises a narrow and a broad concept of culture: culture as “a whole way of life and common meanings . . . and [as] special processes of discovery and creative effort” (504; see also Williams 1977, 17-18; Williams 1981, 11).⁸ In specifying what exactly we study when we study culture, Williams (1981) (thinking here about the many varieties of culture in the West) defines cultural materialism as the study of “all the ‘signifying practices’—from language through the arts and philosophy to journalism, fashion and advertising” (13). The analysis of any instance of cultural expression, be it a signifying practice in the everyday life of people in a village or city like folk and popular music, or one of institutionalised importance in the modern West like what we often refer to as literature, is always an analysis of an aspect of culture in the broad sense as a whole way of life and can be properly understood only as such.

In this sense, Williams’s cultural materialism posits the study of culture as the study of interrelated aspects of a whole social world (see Milner 1994, 50); there is no “outside” of cultural practice to which culture can be related, because culture is an integral part of the making of societies.⁹ Here Williams’s foundational theory of and concept of culture were developed in reaction to the orthodox Marxist division between base and superstructure where culture and ideology are demoted to being mere passive reflections of an economic base where real power is exerted, as pointed out by Andrew Milner (1994, 46). This is the same point that decolonial theory makes concerning epistemological and ontological forms of subjugation as constitutive of the whole complex of the coloniality of power. And this similarity between decolonial theory and cultural materialism is perhaps no coincidence: both have emerged through the thinking

⁸ One could add that there is in this kind of cultural analysis a long history of intellectual work on the sociology and politics of cultural expression to build on, from Aristotelean poetics in Ancient Greek philosophy to the waves of political cultural criticism in the twentieth century (to mention only the Western tradition)—all of which understand literature and cultural expression as part of a larger cultural, social, and political world that must not be overlooked in the interpretation of individual works of cultural expression. Williams also draws on many examples from this history in his formulation of cultural materialism.

⁹ This notion of there being no “outside” culture differs from the poststructuralist claim that there is no outside-text (Derrida 1998). Williams does not propose that all we know is “text” and that the world is inaccessible and unknowable, but that culture is fully integrated into material social relations. Culture and human beings are immersed in a world at all times, not cut off from it through a language that has no relation to reality.

of people living on the borders between cultures (between Wales and England and rural working-class and urban academic cultures for Williams, and between English, Spanish, and Indigenous cultures in the Americas for many decolonial theorists); people who are, in Gloria Anzaldúa's ([1987] 2012) term, *border thinkers*. Through their positioning, border thinkers have experiences of the importance of cultural difference that highlight the absolutely central role of culture in the construction of societies and in power asymmetries between social groups.

Cultural materialism explains what it is I am analysing by focusing on my diverse collection of texts: different signifying practices, from Indigenous pop music to economics textbooks, that are part of the whole of culture—and specifically of environmental justice culture in WENA in the 2010s—and that are as such of importance in the reinforcement and contestation of power. It follows from this that I am interested not only in the texts I study as individual works of artistic, academic, and political expression but also in how the texts partake in wider cultural tendencies. To approach this, I turn to two concepts proposed by Williams for distinguishing cultural tendencies with different positions in relation to established power: dominant and emergent culture.

Dominant and emergent culture

Cultural materialism and decolonial theory share an emphasis on *the possibility of resistance and change*. Williams (2010) asserts that “no mode of production, and therefore no dominant society or order of society, and therefore no dominant culture, in reality exhausts the full range of human practice, human energy, human intention” (48). María Lugones (2010) likewise underlines that it is important not to think “of the global, capitalist, colonial system as in every way successful in its destruction of peoples, knowledges, relations, and economies” but “to think of the process as continually resisted, and being resisted today” (748). Worlds have always been made otherwise, and they continue to be. Actually existing culture always *exceeds* what is stipulated by any dominant culture.

To capture how societies are always made up of a diversity of cultures where some cultural elements prefigure a possible emancipatory social order, Williams (1977) proposes a distinction between *dominant*, *emergent*, and *residual* culture as elements that always coexist in any social context (121-27). The two terms that I focus on are, as I have mentioned, dominant and emergent. The reason for this is that they capture the particular tension between types of culture that I am interested in when it comes to how texts imagine sustainable and socially just futures: the tension between hegemony and counterhegemony. The dominant is the culture of the ruling class(es) and forms part of the hegemonic social order of a time and place, whereas the emergent is the potential beginning of a new counterhegemonic social order. Williams's third term, residual, in contrast, refers to culture that is still part of a society in the present but used to have a more

prominent social role in the past. One example is Christianity and the Church in Europe, which from feudalism to early capitalism were central both institutionally and to people's worldview but which during secularisation have become less and less part of the dominant. Although this description indicates that the residual for Williams is no mere passive residue but an active component in the present—unlike what he calls the *archaic*, meaning traces of old culture with no such active role—the distinction between residual and emergent suggests a fundamental separation between past and future alternatives to the dominant. Such a perspective does not work well with the fact that some of the texts that I analyse are rooted in or depict marginalised cultures with a long history as the foundation for future alternatives. What my research means for cultural-materialist terminology is something I will assess in the discussion of the results in Chapter 8; for now, the dominant/emergent distinction serves as an analytical simplification that helps us see important differences between hegemonic and counterhegemonic elements in imaginaries of environmental justice.

This brings me to an explanation of how I use the concept of imaginaries within a cultural-materialist framework: my use of this concept is informed by the dominant/emergent distinction. In this I draw on the post-Marxist cultural theorist Cornelius Castoriadis's (1987) work on *the imaginary*, which echoes the points about culture and power made above in the introduction to decolonial theory and cultural materialism. There is, Castoriadis writes, an “uninterrupted circular feed-back between the methods of production, social organization and the total content of culture” (20), and therefore “there is not, nor has there even been, an inertia of the rest of social life, nor a privileged passivity of ‘superstructures’” (20).¹⁰ Hence, imaginaries do not merely reflect a world

¹⁰ The oft-used term *ideology* could also be defined in accordance with this perspective on culture and the imaginary: for instance, John B. Thompson (1984) follows Castoriadis and defines ideology as “partially constitutive of what, in our societies, ‘is real’. Ideology is not a pale image of the social world but is part of that world, a creative and constitutive element of our social lives” (5-6). Defined in this way, ideology is interchangeable with imaginary. Another term that seems at least on the surface to be similar to imaginaries as defined here, and that some might argue should be foundational for this thesis because of my concern with worldmaking/-wrecking in imaginaries, is *worlding*. It originates from the work of the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak, where it denotes the processes of knowledge production and representation through which the colonised come to perceive their world from the Master's point of view as a colonised space existing for the Master (see Raja 2019). This use of the term is akin to what I discussed above under the label of the coloniality of being and knowledge. But the term worlding as used more recently in new materialism has a broader meaning. There it denotes the processual nature of a world continually created through “a particular blending of the material and the semiotic that removes the boundaries between subject and environment” (Palmer and Hunter 2018)—and this is the version of the term that seems to be similar to imaginaries. However, imaginaries as defined within a cultural materialist framework partake of socio-ecological worldmaking as constitutive elements of this worldmaking through their role in specifically human social practices, not because they co-constitute all practices of all entities without analytical distinction between the material and the semiotic as in the new

produced elsewhere; “the imaginary of which I am speaking is not an image *of*” (3; italics in original).¹¹ Imaginaries are part of how social power is enforced and contested. In the words of the political ecologists Richard Peet and Michael Watts (1996b), “the environmental imaginary emerges . . . as a primary site of contestation” in ecological politics, with “critical social movements hav[ing] at their core environmental imaginaries at odds with hegemonic conceptions” (263). This gestures towards the connection between the concept of imaginaries and the dominant/emergent culture distinction. Williams’s dominant culture is equivalent to what Castoriadis calls *the dominant social imaginary* or at times simply *the imaginary* (in the singular). But Castoriadis’s elucidation of the imaginary with the hope of bringing about social change and the emergence of another imaginary, equivalent to Williams’s emergent culture, suggests that there is in a society never just one imaginary but several *imaginaries* (in the plural) and that these can be in conflict with each other. I use the plural form to signal this diversity, and the more detailed term dominant social imaginary in the singular.

What I am analysing in this thesis, then, is a field of contestation between imaginaries where the dominant social imaginary becomes critically scrutinised and possible emergent alternatives are explored. In particular, the focus is on the tension between colonial and decolonial imaginaries, or between dominant colonial culture and emergent decolonial culture.¹² When it comes to how to approach this distinction in cultural analysis, I need to pay heed to a crucial point made by Williams (1981) about how “no analysis is more difficult than that which, faced by new forms, has to try to determine whether these are new forms of the dominant or are genuinely emergent” (205), because “certainly the dominant can

materialist conception of worlding. In other words, I conceive of imaginaries in a *dialectical* sense. The political ecologists Richard Peet and Michael J. Watts’s (1996b) elaborate on such a perspective on socio-environmental dialectics, discussing the “active role of the social relations with nature in creating . . . an . . . imaginary” through a dialectical process where “a specific natural environment . . . limits yet projects the creative aspect of the imagination” so that imaginaries emerge in close relation with the materiality of “labor and residence” (267). When it comes to an understanding of what texts, like the ones I analyse, do in the world, this posits texts not as equivalent to worldmaking—it is not that writing in itself makes the world differently—but that writing as a social practice with effects in social relations partakes of socio-ecological worldmaking. To avoid confusion, I therefore do not use the term worlding, neither in Spivak’s original sense nor in the more recent new materialist one.

¹¹ In addition to opposing a classical Marxist conception of the imaginary (or culture and ideology) as part of a superstructure determined by a base, Castoriadis also distinguishes his concept from that of Lacanian psychoanalysis in which the imaginary denotes fantasy or the unreal, a Platonic shadow (3).

¹² It is important to keep in mind that emergent culture is not by definition a good alternative to a dominant culture that is by definition problematic. In our current historical moment, the globally dominant culture is coloniality. The alternatives to the dominant that are emerging in this moment range from the fascist to the emancipatory. I focus on decoloniality in emergent culture: the emergence of possible environmental justice futures.

absorb or attempt to absorb” emergent culture (204). In the analysis of environmental justice imaginaries, this means that we need to be careful not to confuse new iterations of a dominant colonial imaginary that use the language of environmental justice with emergent decolonial imaginaries that are part of something new and profoundly different. That it is difficult to make such a distinction springs from the complexity, even messiness, of actually existing culture; the political affinities and implications of different imaginaries are rarely as obvious as the neat distinction between the dominant and the emergent would have it, because this distinction is an analytical simplification. The distinction between truly emergent culture and new iterations of the dominant is therefore always a judgement call. It is this kind of analytical distinction and simplification that I make by juxtaposing the two extreme perspectives on sustainable and socially just worldmaking in the scene with the corporate CCO and the land and water protector that opened this chapter. How to position the work of writers like Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs in relation to this distinction is a more complex question, as we will see in the coming chapters; the texts by these six writers exist on a spectrum between these ways of imagining environmental justice, rather than are expressions of only one or the other extreme.

Cultural materialism with a focus on coloniality/decoloniality is what fundamentally informs my work on worldmaking and worldwrecking in imaginaries of environmental justice. This is what I have so far introduced in this chapter. But I have not yet defined the term that even more fundamentally informs the thematic focus of this thesis: environmental justice. The next part of the chapter revolves around this.

1.2 Environmental Justice: From Political Ecology to Literary Political Ecology

Though my focus is on imaginaries that appear in texts, it is important to understand that environmental justice is not an abstract textual theme but something grounded in social movement politics. To give the reader an understanding of the roots of the concept of environmental justice that informs my thematic focus, I begin below with a brief history of and introduction to environmental justice as a social movement, and situate my study within the broad field of political ecology which studies, among other things, such movements. Turning then to the focus in this thesis on *imaginaries* of

environmental justice, I consider what could be termed a literary political ecology found in postcolonial ecocriticism on environmental justice writer-activists—and arrive at a conclusion about a gap in literary political-ecological research on imaginaries that my own research will make a contribution to filling.

1.2.1 Environmental Justice Movements and Political Ecology

Environmental justice social movements

Environmental justice has emerged in recent years as an umbrella term in academia, and to an extent also in political networks and organisation, for social movements that work for environmental sustainability and social justice in conjunction with each other and that construe these two struggles as inseparable. The term environmental justice originated in the struggle of Black communities in the US against toxic waste dumping, famously chronicled and theorised by Rob Bullard (1990), but the term has been broadened since: environmental justice scholars emphasise that it is now “a framework to organise and link the claims of resistance movements” opposing many kinds of resource extraction and pollution (Rodríguez-Labajos and Özkaynak 2017), or “a rallying cry for communities and social movements across the world struggling to protect their environment and ways of life against the appropriation, transformation and dispossession of nature” (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020, 50). As the latter quotation indicates, environmentalism is defined by such movements as *land protection*, something several scholars also underline (Guha 2000, 80; Barca and Leonardi 2018, 488; Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 743; Scheidel et al. 2020)—one conclusion being that such movements are not so much “protest” movements as “protection” movements (Gooch, Burman, and Olsson 2019, 16).

Environmental justice as defined in this body of research is a politics of social movements, and it is this notion of environmental justice as emerging from collective grassroots organising that I start from. This begs the question of what social movements are. Håkan Thörn and colleagues (2017) define the social movement as “a field of collective action that challenges a social order” (9). A key dimension of what it means to challenge a social order is specified by Brian Doherty and Timothy Doyle (2006), who write that movements work towards “social and political change that goes beyond policy change” (703). The concept of “field” in Thörn and colleagues’ definition is important: it emphasises that a movement is not a distinct organisation (though it can lead to the creation of social movement organisations) but a wider cultural process. Both Doherty and Doyle (2006, 702) and Thörn and colleagues (2017, 9) stress that part of what makes a movement come together is its construction of a “collective identity.” Another social movement researcher, Viviana Asara (2017), specifies this constitution of the movement by listing three of its core characteristics: 1.) its

collectivity in terms of both organisation and identity; 2.) its temporal continuity, as opposed to ephemerality; and 3.) its primarily non-institutional form (13). Part of the collective identities of movements and their challenges to the social order, Doherty and Doyle (2006) write, is how they “challenge some feature of dominant cultural codes or social and political values” (703)—that is, they challenge the dominant imaginary, as I suggested above concerning the importance of culture or imaginaries in social power and social change. This understanding of social movements explains what it means to study environmental justice imaginaries: to study cultural dimensions of such movements, and culture that is potentially related to them.

Environmental justice as a global movement of movements—including in the Global North?

Definitions of environmental justice often stress that the leaders of these kinds of movements are not specific individuals but rather the countless peasants and Indigenous people, often women, who have opposed and fought the social and ecological destruction imposed by the expanding industrial-capitalist order (Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, 25, 33; Caminero-Santangelo 2014, 7, 13; Robbins 2012, 177; Guha 2000, 197; Martínez Alier 2012, 56).¹³ A popular term for such movements that has been picked up by several researchers who work on environmental and climate justice (e.g. Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 745; Gooch, Burman, and Olsson 2019, 17) is *Blockadia*, derived from Naomi Klein’s (2014) work. Some discussions of such movements focus on Indigenous people protecting their lands, water, and ways of life as frontline activists (Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 747; Norman 2017). But as Scheidel and colleagues (2020) have shown, land protectors include “Indigenous people, peasants, fisherfolks, environmental activists, social movements, journalists,” and more (3). This means that environmental justice movements should not be defined as Indigenous movements, but as movements that are *often Indigenous-led*.

As there are people of diverse social positions and cultural backgrounds within environmental justice movements, one can expect there to be power dynamics between groups within movements and between different local movements that have divergent conceptions, or imaginaries, of what the making of an environmentally just world would entail. In the literature on environmental justice, possible tensions between such imaginaries are discussed in connection to the North/South divide, as researchers often define environmental justice in part by locating it geopolitically.

Comments on the locating of environmental justice geopolitically point in two different directions. Some find that land protection is a global phenomenon

¹³ The work of the historian E.P. Thompson (1991) on peasant and local community resistance against enclosure of the commons during the industrial revolution in England could be seen as part of this research as well.

(Scheidel et al. 2020, 3; Devlin 2020), a fact that leads Martínez Alier and colleagues (2016) to assert that there is a diverse global environmental justice movement of movements in the making. However, Beatriz Rodríguez-Labajos and colleagues (2019) have shown that it is Southern movements that are driving the formulation of theories and practices of environmental justice today—even though the term originated in the US—and they argue that scholars and activists of the Global North need to learn from and support them (175). Histories of environmental justice often centre on the Global South too. Two relatively recent movements that are often referenced in such histories are the *seringueiros* (rubber tree tappers) in Brazil in the 1970s and the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People (MOSOP) in Nigeria in the 1990s (e.g. Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, 34). The former was an ecosocialist or ecosyndicalist movement: the rubber tree tappers' union fought for their livelihoods and for the conservation of the Amazon. Their labour union leader Chico Mendez was assassinated in 1988 (see e.g. Barca 2012, 75). The latter movement organised the Ogoni people and solidarity activists, both nationally and across the globe, in the fight against the Shell oil company and its pollution of the Niger Delta. MOSOP's president Ken Saro-Wiwa, who was also an author, was executed by the Nigerian military government in 1995 (see e.g. Caminero-Santangelo 2014, 133-51). In short, the locating and thus definition of environmental justice based on observations about historical and recent movements provides no clear picture of the status of such movements in parts of the Global North—something that fundamentally informs the focus of this thesis.

Political ecology as research on and for environmental justice

As can be inferred from the above discussion, the present investigation of environmental justice imaginaries is also positioned *within* a politics of environmental justice; it is an academic thesis, but one motivated by my wish to contribute something of use to those social movements that I am also involved in and care deeply about. In this, I align my research with *political ecology*—a field spanning across the environmental social sciences and (some of) the environmental humanities.¹⁴

Political ecology crystallised as a field of study in the 1980s—having first begun to emerge the decade before—around the “main premise,” Roderick Neumann (2005) writes, “that ecological problems were at their core social and political problems, not technical or managerial, and therefore demanded a

¹⁴ My work could also be considered to be aligned with *social ecology*, a movement and form of environmentalist thinking that is something of a precursor to political ecology. The term social ecology originates in Murray Bookchin's (1962, 1971; [1987] 2006) work, and is proposed as a third alternative to mainstream environmentalism and deep ecology (two varieties of environmentalism that will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3).

theoretical foundation to analyse the complex social, economic, and political relations in which much environmental change is embedded” (5). Furthermore, as Paul Robbins, the author of the widely used textbook *Political Ecology: An Introduction* (2012), contends, political ecology studies “social and environmental changes with an understanding that there are better, less coercive, less exploitative, and more sustainable ways of doing things” (20). Political ecology thus marks a shift from a depoliticised understanding of the relationship between politics and socio-environmental research. For instance, the environmental historian John Opie (1983) considered his field to be haunted by what he called the “specter of advocacy”; compare this to Robbins’s (2012) statement—in a paraphrase of Karl Marx—that an axiom in political ecology is that academic research should attempt “not only to describe changing human-environment interactions, but to change them as well” (46). Robbins lays out the argument behind this: it is not that political ecology is “‘more political’ than . . . other approaches to the environment,” but it is “simply more *explicit* in its normative goals and more outspoken about the assumptions from which its research is conducted” (19; italics in original)—and it is therefore conceived as more honest for the researcher to take “a normative approach rather than one that claims the objectivity of disinterest” (13). Although other approaches are not less political than political ecology, Robbins uses the label *apolitical* for them; what this term denotes is thus how there is a *depoliticised air* in much environmental thinking due to how the “objectivity of disinterest” masks and naturalises what in effect are *political* assumptions.¹⁵

In political ecology, then, the researcher’s politics is not a spectre lurking suspiciously in the shadows around them, but a trusty companion guiding them through difficult terrain. My companion in my research is environmental justice. And this environmental justice orientation is common in political ecology; the field is often understood as the study of environmental injustices, or of “ecological distribution conflicts” (see e.g. Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, 31; Barca 2012)—how the impacts of environmental change as well as of proposed solutions to it are very often unevenly distributed and entangled with political power structures. The ecological distribution conflict par excellence is perhaps how climate change disproportionately impacts people who have barely contributed to the problem and whose vulnerability to climate-induced disasters is exacerbated by social and political factors. Think for example of how increasingly severe and frequent hurricanes hit a Haiti impoverished in large part by the historical payment of an “independence debt” to its former coloniser (accrued because of enslaved Haitians’ audacity of successfully rebelling against France), which means that Haiti’s infrastructure and housing are much less

¹⁵ A similar term is *post-political*, used for instance by Eric Swyngedouw (2010) in his critique of certain strands of environmental academic theory.

resilient than those of the Dominican Republic on the other half of the same island. In studying such injustices and linking environmental change and its effects to power structures in human societies, political ecology becomes an ally to and academic branch of environmental justice movements.

In recent years, contributions from intersectional feminist and decolonial theory, among others, have influenced political ecology, a tendency discussed under the label of *feminist political ecology* by Farhana Sultana (2021). She shows that some feminist political ecology critiques the prioritisation of Western epistemological perspectives and forms of research in the field and proposes a political ecology rooted in epistemologies and practices that are often “relegated to the margins” (157)—a concern with knowledge from the margins that the reader may recognise from the discussion above of decolonial theory. Connecting this to my earlier observation about the lack of clarity on the status of environmental justice in the Global North, I would suggest that this thesis can contribute to decolonial feminist political ecology with empirical research on what types of knowledges and imaginaries more broadly can be found in environmental justice thinking from a part of the world that is frequently seen as the epitome of the centre. How are the epistemic and ontological assumptions of dominant colonial culture reproduced or subverted within WENA, and what possible emergent decolonial epistemologies and ontologies might be found?

1.2.2 Environmental Justice Writer-Activism and Literary Political Ecology

If political ecology can be construed (among other things) as research on and for environmental justice, literary studies within political ecology, or what might be termed a *literary political ecology*, can be one venue of research on and for *imaginaries* of environmental justice. And indeed there are several literary scholars in postcolonial ecocriticism who can be understood to work within political ecology and to map imaginaries that relate to environmental justice and injustice.¹⁶

¹⁶ If what I needed to explore for the purposes of my study was not a specific branch of literary political ecology, focused on imaginaries of environmental justice and the cultural output of writer-activists, but a more general political ecology of culture, I could here return to cultural materialism as well, because Williams’s thinking about culture integrates culture, politics, and ecology in ways that make cultural materialism a sort of precursor to political ecology. Rod Giblett (2012), David Harvey (1995), and Stefania Barca (2019) have explored this dimension of Williams’s work, showing among other things that culture in Williams’s thinking is not just an integral part of the whole *social* world but of a *socio-ecological* world. This is not the place to discuss this in greater detail, but I would point out that the compatibility of cultural materialism with political ecology as well as with decolonial theory is what makes it so suitable and useful for my work.

Postcolonial ecocriticism on environmental justice writer-activism

In a study of African environmentalist literature, Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014) suggests that literary scholars need to pay attention to teachings from political ecology about how conceptions of environment and environmental protection are never politically neutral, and that political ecology would for its part benefit from literary scholars' expertise in the analysis of "language, genre and rhetoric" (8).¹⁷ I follow the first part of this suggestion in situating my research within political ecology, and the second part in exploring—briefly in this chapter and then further in the discussion of theory and method in Chapter 4 and in the use of the method in Part II—how literary theory and method can contribute to political ecology. I have already shown how I draw on political ecology in focusing on environmental justice. But what about the way I bring literary studies into political ecology, in focusing specifically on the study of imaginaries?

The inter- or transdisciplinary work of postcolonial ecocritics like Byron Caminero-Santangelo, Erin James (2015), and Rob Nixon (2011) guides me in this. Caminero-Santangelo (2014) is the only one of the three who explicitly brings together literary studies and political ecology, but the other two could be said to do so implicitly (and precursors to the three can certainly be found across postcolonial and ecocritical work as well).¹⁸ James and Nixon do not use the term political ecology, but their explorations of African environmentalist writing (James) and "writer-activism" within "the environmentalism of the poor" (Nixon) are very similar to Caminero-Santangelo's study of African environmentalist literature. All three could be said to contribute to the theorising of *environmental justice writer-activism*: literary production that is entangled with movement building so that, as Nixon (2011) has pointed out, writer-activists often become "autobiographers of collective movements" (23). Thus, it is in a broad sense possible environmental justice writer-activists that I look for when engaging in a literary political ecology of environmental justice imaginaries. But what does literary criticism specifically contribute to a literary political ecology? James's work can help us elaborate on this.

Econarratology in literary political ecology

In her work on environmental themes in African postcolonial fiction, James develops *econarratology* through a combination of ecocriticism (ecologically oriented literary criticism) and narratology (the systematic study of storytelling).

¹⁷ A similar claim could be made about the relevance of other humanities disciplines specialising in the analysis of forms of cultural expression, like those studying film, music, theatre, and the visual arts.

¹⁸ Indeed, the ecocritics Lawrence Buell (2011, 94-95) and Ursula Heise (2006, 508; 2017, 1) both point out that environmental justice thinking has been influential in literary studies since the early 2000s.

In this, her work embodies one way in which detailed analytical tools from literary studies can be brought into political ecology. Because James does not discuss political ecology, she does not argue that her project makes a contribution to the field, but she makes a proposition about the use of econarratology in the environmental humanities that in a sense echoes Caminero-Santangelo's point about literary studies in political ecology. Econarratology, James (2015) writes, can "provide environmental humanities scholars with a *clear methodology*" for the exploration of different narratives (26; emphasis added), thus being a useful response to calls in the environmental humanities for "narrative unsettling and exploration" (meaning a critical interrogation of problematic narratives that are entwined with environmental degradation and a quest for better ones). What James proposes for the environmental humanities, I would also propose for the closely related field of political ecology. To be more specific, James's exploration of fictional narratives through the concept of *storyworld* can inform the kind of literary political ecology that I undertake. Storyworld is a narratological concept that highlights how storytelling not only relates a sequence of events in time but also invokes a whole spatial world for the reader to imaginatively inhabit—and this concept gestures towards a possibility of using narrative analysis to approach how worldmaking (and its opposite, worldwrecking) is imagined in texts, including in the six very different kinds of texts that I focus on. What is more, econarratology, like any analytical approach from literary criticism, directs our attention not just to the constitution of imagined worlds (or what could be termed a text's content) but also to *how* the textual construction of worlds works (or what could be termed a text's form). This is of particular importance in the present thesis because of my concern with conceptions of knowledge and ways of knowing; the forms of expression of the texts I analyse are part of how the texts imagine and argue over what constitutes valid and useful knowledge. Through econarratology, it is possible to analyse how the six texts I work with construct narrators—which they all do in an explicit sense, using first-person or "I" narration and shifting between this and other forms of narration—and authoritative perspectives, and to compare their ways of doing so.¹⁹

I will elaborate on econarratology and storyworld analysis in Chapter 4, where I assemble a method specifically geared towards the analysis of political-

¹⁹ I should emphasise that the way I use narratology to approach these texts is suited to *these particular texts* because they all imagine worldmaking and worldwrecking (thus the usefulness of storyworld analysis) and because they all construct narrators and use this together with their forms of expression within the construction of authoritative perspectives (hence the usefulness of analysis of narrative techniques). I am not making a general argument about the uses of narratology extended beyond the analysis of fictional storytelling, though I am not opposed to such an extension if it is rigorously done (just like I am not, as I will discuss in the next part of this chapter, making general claims about the comparability of texts in different genres across the fiction/nonfiction divide).

ecological relations and the theme of environmental justice—an *ecopolitical narratology*.

Environmental justice writer-activism in the Global North?

The postcolonial ecocriticism I have discussed here provides a practical conceptualisation of environmental justice imaginaries and can be used to define literary political ecology as the study of such imaginaries. A caveat is necessary, though, about the position of research focusing on WENA in this, because Caminero-Santangelo, James, and Nixon all focus predominantly on movements and activists in the Global South, from India and parts of Africa (the exception being that Nixon discusses a historical example of a writer-activist in the environmental movement in the West, namely Rachel Carson). Are similar things to what they describe and analyse happening in the Global North today? In what ways might the insights of such critics about environmental justice writer-activism apply to WENA as well? These questions, built upon the more basic question of what the status of environmental justice movements in WENA might be, are on a foundational level what motivates and informs my inquiry into possible environmental justice imaginaries from WENA.

With this definition and mapping of environmental justice and imaginaries of it, together with the earlier introduction to dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture, we have what we need to consider how to design a study of environmental justice imaginaries from WENA. This is in focus in the third and final part of this introduction.

1.3 Imaginaries in Texts from WENA in the 2010s: About the Study

It is time to return to the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs; time to explain how these texts fit into the thematic focus on environmental justice imaginaries, what the delimitations of the study are that bring me to the selection of these texts, and how I approach the comparison of them and the imaginaries they construct through the tentative distinction between dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture. In other words, I will now discuss the study design, the aim of the study, and the research questions that structure it. I will also present the six texts in more detail—and make the case for why it is possible to compare these in some ways very different texts.

1.3.1 Aim, Research Questions, Study Design, and Selection of Material

Aim

The aim of the study is to provide an analysis of how worldmaking and worldwrecking are imagined in texts by possible writer-activists from present-day WENA who are concerned with both environmental sustainability and social justice. Within this, I focus on teasing apart expressions of dominant colonial culture and emergent decolonial culture in conceptions of being and knowledge.

To further explain this aim, let me relate it to the fictional scene that I opened this chapter with. Among people who make some kind of appeal to environmental sustainability and social justice together, there are tensions between how ways of living or ways of making socio-ecological relations are imagined. The scene offers one example: the social movement of Indigenous and environmentalist land and water protectors imagines worldmaking and worldwrecking very differently from the profit-driven corporation seeking to dig out rare-earth minerals from the ground. But this kind of tension between imaginaries does not only materialise in such a clearly conflictual context where the same place, the same mountain, is imagined in two mutually exclusive ways. The scene is constructed to clarify a divergence between perspectives that occurs in more subtle ways within a complex terrain of environmental social movement-related writing. This complex terrain, where we find candidates for environmental justice writer-activists, is what this thesis aims to navigate.

In a broader sense, I thus aim to offer analyses and discussions that can be useful and relevant for a number of different kinds of readers: readers with an interest in political ecology, ecocritical literary studies, and the crosspollination of these two; readers who wish to deepen their understanding of environmental justice imaginaries in WENA; readers who work with decolonial theory, for whom this thesis may offer interesting perspectives on coloniality/decoloniality in contemporary culture; those who work in cultural materialism or cultural sociology in general, as I develop some terminology from this field; and those who think about the relationship between politics and questions of ontology and epistemology, since my study provides an empirically-based intervention into debates in political ecology and the environmental humanities on this matter. What is more, in political terms, I hope the study might also support social movements with an environmental justice orientation in their self-reflection.

Research questions

1. How are sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them imagined in the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs?²⁰

To answer this question, tools from literary analysis are useful: narratology is a way of unpacking the details of the worlds that are constructed in texts, as well as the details of the ways of knowing and forms of expression that the texts argue for and embody. Without the addition of theories that enable us to analyse power structures, however, a technical literary analysis cannot tease apart possible expressions of dominant and emergent culture from each other. It is through the addition of a political-ecological dimension to narrative analysis (through theoretical concepts from a combination of decolonial-feminist and ecofeminist theory, as will be elaborated on in Chapter 4) that it becomes possible to analyse the social justice dimension of how the texts imagine sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them. In this, I turn to a second question:

2. What are the environmental justice implications of these texts' imagined worlds and knowledges?

The reason why I proceed from these two questions and not simply from one about how environmental justice is imagined is that the cultural terrain I am interested in contains texts that are *candidates* for being contributors to environmental justice imaginaries or may *contain elements* of such imaginaries in tension, perhaps, with other elements. I do not assume that the texts I focus on imagine environmental justice, but instead analyse them from the perspective of a concern with environmental justice. This approach stems from the uncertain status of environmental justice movements and thinking in WENA, while there is at the same time a large body of work from the region that considers the social dimensions of environmental issues (as we will see in Chapters 2 and 3); this means that it is unclear where one might find texts that imagine environmental justice and that it is therefore reasonable to search widely for them.

Finally, I ask a third question that relates to the wider implications of the study:

3. How can the results from the analysis inform theories on politics, ontology, and epistemology in political ecology and the environmental humanities?

Textual analysis as approach

To base research on readings of individual published texts is the most common approach in literary studies. Before discussing this approach further, however, I should define *text*. When I am talking about text, here and elsewhere, the reader will gather that I am employing a narrow concept of text as denoting a form of

²⁰ To clarify what is meant by knowledge “of” and “for,” I mean how knowledge *about* sustainable worlds is also a matter of knowledge *that can support* the project of making such worlds.

cultural expression based on linguistic signification where written language is central (though not necessarily the exclusive form of signification). Thus, while the texts I am analysing mix several media (in addition to printed text, some feature audio and some images), I focus on the linguistic aspect of the texts—but I also at times, and in particular in the discussion of forms of expression in Chapter 7, consider how this aspect interacts with the non-linguistic elements of image and music.²¹

In any case, from a cultural-sociological point of view, there is a strong case to be made for an approach based on readings of individual published texts. Such an approach is a practicable way of delimiting the object of study when we are interested in wider social imaginaries, and it is an interesting one too because individual texts that are published or otherwise circulated in cultures with widespread literacy can contain condensations of cultural tendencies and of ongoing discussions and debates due to how the process of writing, editing, and publication can encourage a combination of conscientious demarcation of the subject explored and attention to detail in the exploration. More specifically concerning the relevance of the analysis of individual published works in relation to environmental justice, you will recall that Nixon points out that individual writer-activists often write as movements' autobiographers, which means that published works can also be concrete expressions of movements' thinking. Thus, political ecology would do well to explore textual analysis alongside other common approaches like ethnographic fieldwork. Paul Robbins's (2012) definition of political ecology as a field (or, in his terms, "a kind of argument or text") that "surveys both the status of nature and stories about the status of nature" (viii) would seem to indicate precisely this—and yet Robbins, who uses the terms "stories" and "narrative" many dozens of times in his text, does not discuss literary-studies methods for textual analysis as part of political ecology.²²

There are clearly merits, then, to the kind of qualitative textual analysis that is common in literary studies. But one should keep in mind that there are also certain limitations to a qualitative, text-based study like the one this thesis is based on. A text-based approach, in contrast to, for instance, ethnography,

²¹ In employing a narrow concept of text, I am not arguing against the kind of broadened concept of text that is common in some forms of literary and cultural analysis where visual and auditory elements, and sometimes even phenomena that are not human-made cultural artefacts like ecology and matter itself, may also be termed text—such a concept of text may be merited in certain instances, although I would argue that the extension of this and other concepts from cultural theory should be rigorous and may not *always* be merited or instructive.

²² Conversely, it would be relevant for literary scholars with a sociological and political approach to culture to explore forms of research that can complement textual analysis, such as fieldwork through participatory observation and workshops where people are encouraged to tell stories (as has also been done in the school of Cultural Studies). It would be particularly interesting to develop collaborations between literary scholars and other researchers like sociologists, anthropologists, archaeologists, and historians.

interviews, and reader-response studies, does not study environmental justice movements themselves and the imaginaries their activists construct, relate to, and discuss. Although the imaginaries I analyse are likely to occur within environmental (justice) movements—since several of the authors are influential thinkers in environmentalism in WENA (Sachs as the president of the UN’s Sustainable Development Solutions Network, for instance) or in parts of WENA (Porritt as a long-time advocate for environmental politics in the UK, for instance) and since several of them are also connected to or part of social movements (Sámi movements and Sámi-environmentalist coalitions for Jannok, for instance)—I cannot say exactly what influence these imaginaries have or how they are shaped in and give shape to movements.²³ This does not take away from the merits of the approach, however; it is merely important to consider what conclusions can and cannot be drawn on the basis of this kind of research.

Delimitations: the cultures of the 2010s in Anglophone WENA

It is easier to ascertain *that* it is interesting and can be important to study texts in a political ecology of environmental justice than *what* texts to focus on in a study of imaginaries from the large transatlantic region of WENA during the possibly extensive period of the contemporary. This brings us to the question of further delimitations. Two first steps in choosing texts to study are to define WENA and the part of it that I home in on, and to delimit in more concrete terms the period of study.

As a scholar of English literature, it is texts in English by writers from WENA that I focus on. What does this mean for how to delimit the WENA cultural sphere of interest? With North America it is fairly straightforward: the region is dominated by the two large nation states of Canada and the US, where English is the principal language; North America is thus a part of WENA that is distinctly dominated by Anglophone culture.²⁴ It is less clear where to draw the lines around Western Europe and its Anglophone sphere. Historically, Spain and Portugal were the leaders of the West as the pioneers of European colonial expansion; today, however, they are part of what Max Ajl (2021) calls “Europe’s

²³ It would be interesting to build on and complement my study with fieldwork within and archival studies on such movements and interviews with activists, both in connection to contemporary movements and—following my discussion of the history of WENA environmental justice in the next chapter—under-researched historical ones. This is also something I hope to be able to do in the future.

²⁴ By “dominated,” I mean exactly this and not that North America is essentially and solely Anglophone. Even within its Anglophone states, there is a continued existence of both pre-Columbian languages and the languages of non-Anglophone settlers, together with more recent immigrant languages. (Moreover, within the Anglophone parts of North America, there are many English dialects and sociolects influenced in part by the other languages that English has long existed alongside.) This together with the fact that smaller states in North America are generally not Anglophone makes the region multilingual.

own third world” as an internal European divide has become accentuated after the financial crash of 2008 and the Euro crisis (3). The leaders of Western culture in Europe today are the continent’s wealthiest states like Germany, the Netherlands, Switzerland, France, Ireland, the UK, and Scandinavia (Sweden, Norway, and Denmark) or the whole Nordic region (adding Finland and Iceland as well). Since only the UK and Ireland are officially Anglophone, it might seem like Western Europe’s Anglophone sphere equals the British Isles. However, many countries in North-Western Europe are becoming thoroughly integrated into globalised Anglophone culture, particularly the Netherlands and the Nordic countries where there is, for instance, a low degree of voiceover in the media, a good deal of local popular culture produced in English, and a widespread willingness to speak English. To consider cultural output in English from the Nordic region is also of particular relevance in a study of imaginaries of environmental justice from Western Europe because it offers the possibility of interrogating the received image in much Anglophone academic and political thought of the Scandinavian or Nordic states as frontrunners in environmental politics (e.g. Dryzek 1997, 137; Callaghan 2000; for critical commentary, see Mann and Wainwright 2015, 127; Anshelm and Hultman 2015, 9; Lawrence and Åhrén 2016, 172-73), through a juxtaposition of this image with a very different depiction of the Nordic states that comes from the Indigenous people of Western Europe, the Sámi.

How about the period of the contemporary? In clearly demarcating a time period to focus on, I have selected the 2010s, as I have already mentioned. It is an interesting period between two decisive and more thoroughly researched waves of environmental social movement organising. The first wave led up to the COP15 (the 15th Conference of the Parties to the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change or IPCC) in Copenhagen in 2009 and then ebbed out as disappointment with the failures of the meeting meant many movements became (to mix metaphors) deflated (see Anshelm and Hultman 2015, 150).²⁵ That a new wave was gaining momentum—and began to be granted much attention—in the Global North and also to an extent in the South became clear at the very end of the decade, with the emergence of organisations and networks like the UK-originated Extinction Rebellion (see e.g. Booth 2019) and #FridaysForFuture sparked by Greta Thunberg’s school strike in Sweden (see e.g. Thackeray et al. 2020); this wave has come to characterise Western environmentalism in the early 2020s. During this wave, Anglophone WENA saw a proliferation and increased mainstreaming of imaginaries emphasising the importance of social justice concerns in environmentalism, such as degrowth—

²⁵ Anshelm and Hultman (2015) discuss how activists saw signs of an emerging radical ecosocialist or global justice-oriented climate movement in connection to the Copenhagen COP, but the authors conclude that projections like this had not come true in 2015 (144-50).

which then started to be explored more in North-Western and Anglophone Europe, having emerged earlier further south and in particular around Barcelona in Catalonia—and the Green New Deal—formulated first as a programme for a just transition in the US and quickly spreading to many other parts of the world.²⁶ That social justice became important in environmentalist imaginaries around the new wave of movements in 2018-2019 and onwards should perhaps not come as a surprise, since the beginning of the 2010s is marked not only by the ebbing out of one wave of environmental social movement organising after the Copenhagen COP but also by the 2008 financial crash and an ensuing surge of thinking and movements opposing the hegemonic imaginary of steady improvement through capitalist globalisation—something Eric Cazdyn and Imre Szeman (2013) identify in an analysis of and argument over what might come “after globalisation.” In any case, in the middle of the decade, right between the two much-discussed waves of environmental social movements, we have the COP21 meeting of 2015 and the resultant Paris Agreement on limiting climate change. After the meeting, three “Special Reports” from the IPCC followed, and these got ample attention, with the effect of increased mainstream acceptance in Western culture of the severity of the climate breakdown and at times also—as the special reports point in this direction (albeit indirectly)—of its challenge to the capitalist status quo.²⁷ This latter aspect of the IPCC reports is related to and

²⁶ Concerning degrowth: Martínez Alier (2012) has identified it as a small movement beginning to take shape in the Global North at the beginning of the 2010s (54) and Eversberg and Schmeltzer (2018, 264) as well as Rodríguez-Labajos and colleagues (2019, 176) point to it as an emerging movement from 2014 onwards. However, it was only at the very end of the decade and in the 2020s that degrowth was beginning to gain serious attention in Anglophone culture, with a number of English-language texts published (e.g. Tyberg 2019; Hickel 2020; Kallis et al. 2020; Burkhart, Schmelzer, and Treu 2020; Schmeltzer, Vetter, and Vansintjan 2022)—earlier imaginaries and burgeoning movements around degrowth were developed first in France and then in Barcelona (Martínez Alier 2012, 60). Concerning the Green New Deal: this term, denoting proposed policy packages for comprehensive societal transformation, began to be used as a framework for socially oriented environmentalism early in the 2010s (e.g. Aşıcı and Bünül 2012), but it was not until the end of the decade that it began to gain in popularity, first in North America and rapidly elsewhere too. As part of the editorial group running the political ecology and environmental justice website *Uneven Earth*, I followed these developments in the late 2010s closely, as two of my co-editors contributed many important critical resources about it for our monthly readings newsletter and as I myself edited a series of articles on the topic (see the categories “Monthly links” and “GND series” at <http://unevenearth.org>).

²⁷ For instance, the Special Report on Climate Change and Land (IPCC 2022), first released in 2018, explains that the land use of industrial monoculture in farming and forestry is unsustainable and argues that it must stop or be radically diminished; the report depicts a dramatically unequal world where millions are under- or malnourished despite increases in agricultural productivity, largely because 25-30 percent of all food produced is thrown away. The IPCC does not clearly spell out the implications of this, which are, the agroecologist David Hardwick explains, that it is necessary to confront “the market-based paradigm” in land management (Johnston 2019, n.p.)—and, one might add, in food distribution—for these problems to be counteracted (Hardwick

feeds into a process of integration of social and environmental political concerns in Western culture.

Thus, if we periodise the 2010s from a social movement perspective and with a focus on WENA, the decade as a historical period (as opposed to a numerical one) should be construed as running from 2008/2009 to 2018.²⁸ It is a period that starts with the economic collapse of 2008 and the collapse of climate negotiations in Copenhagen in 2009, as well as the movements' loss of momentum in connection to this, and it is characterised by awareness of the ongoing climate (and broader ecological) collapse—three forms of collapse that together form a profound challenge from *within* Western culture to the faith in the stability of Western-style societies. This encourages thinking anew about worldmaking possibilities in Western culture: if people cannot trust the world they find themselves in, what might they imagine instead? A proliferation of discussions of and publications on environmental issues with a distinct social justice dimension should be understood at least in part as a product of and response to this, as should the movements emerging in 2018-2019. To get a sense of what is going on during the 2010s, when the first responses to the escalation of combined environmental and social crises are emerging, is relevant not just for the history of social movements and environmental justice in this particular period in WENA, but also for both earlier and more recent movements that the politics and imaginaries of the 2010s exist on a continuum with.

All this makes the 2010s an interesting period to study for those who care about social movements and the intersections of environmental sustainability and social justice in WENA, and it explains what exactly we are focusing on when we study this period.

Selection of material

The delimitation of focusing on the 2010s in WENA still gives us plenty of possible cultural material to analyse. As mentioned above, the texts that I compare are:

suggests a regional planning approach instead). But even though the IPCC does not explicitly state that the problems are intimately linked to industrial capitalism and its leading food and forestry corporations, its critique inexorably points in this direction. This makes Dennis Eversberg (2019) describe the report as using “unusually blunt language” concerning the scale of transformation necessary (1-2).

²⁸ I want to stress that this periodisation makes sense from the point of view of WENA and in particular its Anglophone parts; other periodisations will probably be more appropriate in other parts of the world.

- *ORDA: This Is My Land* (2016) by Sofia Jannok
- *The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins* (2015) by Anna Tsing
- *New York 2140* (2017) by Kim Stanley Robinson
- *This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate* (2014) by Naomi Klein
- *The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050* (2013) by Jonathon Porritt
- *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2012) by Jeffrey Sachs²⁹

I will now begin to discuss why this selection of texts is interesting and relevant, a discussion that will then continue in the background and review of previous research, in Chapters 2 and 3 respectively.

An important starting point in the selection of texts has been that they should give the reader a substantive amount of material for imagining a world (or worlds) and the forces that make and wreck worlds, and that they should within this have a focus on the possibility of worlds made otherwise—worlds made beyond environmental injustice, beyond ecological and social collapse. All the six texts I have chosen to compare do this, as can be glimpsed already from the titles. You will note that two of the texts, those by Tsing and Porritt, use the word “world” in their titles, thus suggesting that the imagining of such spaces is central, and that two other texts, those by Jannok and Robinson, direct our attention to specific spaces, specific worlds in the form of the land called *orda* (meaning “tree line” in North Sámi) for Jannok and the city of New York for Robinson. Klein’s and Sachs’s titles can also be interpreted as referring to worlds, and to the wrecking of a world too in the case of Klein. Sachs’s title suggests that what is imagined in the text is a coming era of sustainable development, which means a future world made in this manner. The second part of Klein’s title gestures towards the world of the geological era of the Holocene with its stable climate and places this in opposition to a force—capitalism—that threatens to wreck it. You may also note that the *making and wrecking* of worlds is present in some of the titles too: for instance, Porritt’s world is one “we made,” whereas a world is in Tsing’s text becoming a wreckage—a “ruin”—wherein she finds a “possibility” of making anew. Alongside this world and worldmaking/worldwrecking orientation, I have also taken an interest in particular in texts that make suggestions about ways of knowing in connection to the ways that worlds are made and wrecked: texts imagining makers and wreckers also as knowers and/or as lacking knowledge, in their content or through their form of expression or both together.

²⁹ As the reader will note, the texts were all published around the middle of the decade, between the years 2013 and 2017. The lack of gaps between the years of publication is intended to avoid an accidental grouping of texts that were published during different periods of the decade—because such possible group differences should then perhaps be attributed to political shifts during the decade.

Within this focus on worlds and on worldmaking and knowing, I have sought to include texts that have different professed politics within a concern with both environmental sustainability and social justice, and that differ too in terms of the ways of knowing they partake of. The reader should keep in mind that the texts are selected because they are interesting cases and not because they are representative of an exhaustive number of professed political positions and ways of knowing within socio-environmental thought.

Upon a surface reading, the politics of these writers could be defined as spanning from critique of fundamental aspects of colonial capitalism (Jannok, Tsing) through Marxist/socialist critique of market solutions (Robinson, Klein) to liberal-democratic reform within capitalism (Porritt, Sachs). In other words, the texts might be expected to span from radical to moderate rethinkings of how to make good worlds in the face of social and ecological crises or, to speak with Raymond Williams, from the emergence of new to the reiteration of dominant imaginaries. However, this does not mean that it is a forgone conclusion that the texts should be positioned as a surface reading would indicate and that we find only thinking placed within the dominant colonial imaginary on the moderate end of the spectrum and vice versa. My choice to cover a wide spectrum of socio-environmental thinking follows from the uncertainty about where and to what extent environmental justice imaginaries can be found in WENA and from the simultaneous proliferation of thinking that combines a concern with environmental sustainability with some kind of attention to social justice issues during the 2010s; in order to look for environmental justice texts and to begin to understand the nature of the socio-environmental imaginaries that are becoming more and more widespread, I consider not just texts that explicitly use the term environmental (or climate) justice or whose author's work is tied to land or water protection movements, but also texts that have a strong emphasis on the intersections of social and environmental issues in their imagining of possible sustainable worlds.

Among the writers I study, Jannok and Klein make explicit connections to environmental justice movements in their work and position themselves as writer-activists. Klein (2014) does this by relating the movements she calls Blockadia to "the environmentalism of the poor" (202-03), by referring to the oft-mentioned environmental justice struggle of the Ogoni in the Niger Delta (306-09), and by proposing that the origins of climate justice thinking are to be found in environmental justice movements "on the toxic frontlines of extractive industries" (155). That Jannok is a writer-activist (and singer-activist) in land protection movements is evident in much of her work, from her featuring of Sámi claims to land and opposition to extractivism in her lyrics throughout her music career to her role in political movements both within Sápmi and

internationally.³⁰ I first came across Jannok and her music in activist contexts, when she spoke and sung at climate marches and in anti-mining land protection in the early-to-mid-2010s and when her music was shared online during the same period by Sámi activists. It is not far-fetched to relate Tsing and Robinson to environmental justice writer-activism too. Even though their work does not display connections to movements as clearly as does Jannok's and Klein's, they are radical thinkers whose work discusses social movements and socially marginalised groups and forms of justice. In the case of Robinson, we see this in his imagining of socialist politics; in the case of Tsing, it is apparent in her engagement with ethics in multispecies relations and with economic precarity together with racial injustice. Tsing and Robinson, as well as Klein, are also frequently mentioned in activist and academic-activist contexts in Anglophone WENA (and probably elsewhere too), such as in the transition movement, among ecosocialists, and at political ecology conferences and seminars—contexts where I myself first encountered their work.

The writings of Porritt and Sachs have, in contrast, much less of a connection to social movements, though Porritt has in the past had a leading role in the social movement organisation Friends of the Earth Britain, as I mentioned above, and in fact also mentions the term environmental justice in *The World We Made* albeit in reference to a philanthropic organisation whose relationship to movements is unclear (Porritt 2013, 283). Both Porritt's and Sachs's writing is aimed mainly at government and business leadership, and they should therefore be labelled *writer-lobbyists* rather than *writer-activists*. In considering environmental and social issues together, however, the work of Porritt and Sachs at times overlaps with that of environmental justice writer-activists—and can also pop up in social movements and activist-academic contexts. In fact, I first came across both design fiction (Porritt's genre) and Sachs's text in the latter kind of contexts in the early 2010s and have since continued to hear social movement activists and activist academics expressing an interest in (though at times also an ambiguous attitude to) both the UN Sustainable Development Goals to which Sachs's book is related and design fiction or similar ideas about the planning and engineering of alternative futures. This is what makes their work

³⁰ Some examples of songs that centre on land protection, in addition to those from *ORDA: This Is My Land*, are “Váralaš” (2008; English song title “Dangerous”), which Jannok performed at the blockade of Beowulf Mining's prospecting for iron ore in Gáallok in 2013 (Tourda 2017), and “Áhpi: Wide as Oceans” (Jannok 2013b), the video (Jannok 2013c) for which shows us various forms of infringement on Sámi lands, including mining, hydroelectric damming, and wind turbine parks. In addition to the performance in Gáallok, some of Jannok's activism that could be mentioned is her work on a campaign for forest protection on the lands of the reindeer herding community Luokta-Mávas against proposed logging by the state-owned company Sveaskog in 2020, and a visit to the Standing Rock water protectors opposing the Dakota Access Pipeline in the US in 2016 together with two other Sámi activists, Inger Biret Kvernmo Gaup and Sara Marielle Gaup Beaska.

interesting; as will be shown in more detail in Chapters 2 and 3, it is important to understand the political positionality and environmental justice implications of the different strands of socio-environmental thinking that have become widespread in environmentalism in WENA in the 2010s. The inclusion of Porritt and Sachs alongside more obvious writer-activists enables me to discuss whether and in what ways their writer-lobbyism might be inimical to or might in some ways align with environmental justice writer-activism. Furthermore, the comparison of texts positioned at different points on a spectrum ranging from the more radical to the more moderate rethinking of how to make good worlds in the face of social and ecological crises serves to bring out possible elements of emergent culture that we might find in texts seemingly positioned within the dominant and, conversely, to find out whether professedly critical, emergent thinking may bear the mark of dominant culture nonetheless. That this is important in relation to the texts I analyse will become clear in Chapter 3, where I will discuss the lack of consensus about the politics of Klein and Robinson in the previous research that has engaged with their work. The comparison of their radical-framed thinking to the moderate-framed thinking of Sachs and Porritt can be instructive in an unpacking of the politics of Klein's and Robinson's texts.

As I am also concerned with ways of knowing as part of the politics of the texts, I have sought to include texts that in different ways combine political argumentation, appeals to and performance of science, and artistic or creative exploration, and that belong to different knowledge communities across academia, social movements, and the arts. Crucially, these differences in knowing, including differences in forms of expression, do not directly map onto the political differences that a surface reading suggests; instead, differences in knowledge forms occur both within a shared politics and between political positions. I have selected three texts that lean more towards the argumentative and academic (Sachs, Klein, Tsing) and three that lean more towards the creative and artistic (Porritt, Robinson, Jannok), with one text of each kind from each tentative political position (Porritt coupled with Sachs; Robinson with Klein; Jannok with Tsing). As with the wider politics of the texts, these distinctions between text types are tentative—and admittedly very simplified. For instance, Tsing's text is academic but also criticises some forms of and ideas about science and explores creative writing techniques, while Klein's text builds a political argument based on references to both climate science and people's personal stories from the frontlines of climate and environmental justice struggles. Still, the tentative and simplified distinction between text types is instructive as a starting point and as a framework for the selection of text that exhibit formal and knowledge differences.

I should note that I have prioritised the coverage of a combination of professed political positions and forms of expression because this allows me to

discuss the complexities of what constitutes emergent decolonial and dominant colonial culture when it comes to how being and knowledge are imagined, and that this priority has meant that I have accepted a North American bias in my selection, with Sachs, Tsing, and Robinson all living and working in the US and Klein in Canada and the US. That this came about is not surprising seeing as there is so much more Anglophone cultural production in North America than in Western Europe, with North American culture constituting a large part of broader Anglophone WENA culture. Because I do not focus on whether there might be a divide in imaginaries of environmental justice between the two sides of the Atlantic in Anglophone WENA, the overrepresentation of writers from one part of the region is not a direct problem—but we should keep in mind that a study focusing only on Western Europe might have given us a somewhat different picture of how environmental justice is imagined.

I should explain in more detail, however, why I have chosen to analyse a text by Jannok when there are texts by Indigenous (like First Nations and Native American) land protectors who are more obviously part of the Anglosphere.³¹ The main reason why Jannok is an interesting choice is related to the argument presented above for including the Nordic region in Anglophone thinking about environmentalism and environmental justice. Jannok's work is relevant in the light of both points made there—the one about the integration of the Nordic region into global Anglophone culture and the one about claims in much Anglophone theory that the Nordic states are leaders in a green transition. Jannok uses English alongside North Sámi (and, less so, Swedish) on *ORDA*, which makes the album an interesting example of global English (specifically connected to Indigenous internationalism) from beyond the previously established Anglosphere. And she is part of a climate and environmental justice movement that reacts not only to the situation of Sámi people as one of the frontline communities of climate change (due to the rapid warming of the Arctic region), but also to what has recently been termed green colonialism. The Sámi are one of the frontline communities of environmental injustice caused by a prospective green transition, as they struggle and have long struggled against industries that are now claimed to be central to climate action such as mining, forestry, large-scale hydroelectric infrastructure, and most recently also wind turbine parks (struggles that I will introduce in Chapters 2 and 3).³²

³¹ In a different study, it would have been interesting to include texts by Indigenous land and water protectors from both sides of the Atlantic, but in the present one it would not have made sense to include another text similar to Jannok's given my wish to cover various professed political positions and forms of expression in order to look for possible imaginaries of environmental justice in different types of culture.

³² There is also a more personal reason why I would pick out a voice like Jannok's. As a Swede, I have grown up immersed in a kind of dominant colonial culture that specialises in, among other

In sum, these six writer-activists and writer-lobbyists are interesting voices in a complex terrain of environmental justice imaginaries in WENA in the 2010s, where worldmaking and worldwrecking, and knowledge and lack of knowledge, are conceptualised by corporate interests, grassroots movements, and everything in between, as illustrated by the story and discussion that opened this chapter.

1.3.2 Introductions to the Texts

I have introduced the writers already; let me now introduce their texts. The reader will of course learn much more about them in my analyses in Part II but, given that it is unlikely that readers will be familiar with all six texts, a basic introduction is necessary too. The following brings out some differences between the text types that I work with, differences that I comment on so as to explain why and how it is possible to compare these texts and what they after all have in common as texts by writer-activists and writer-lobbyists working on environmental sustainability and social justice together.

Sofia Jannok's text

ORDA: This Is My Land (2016) is a pop music album with musical influences from Western and Indigenous Sámi culture. It is connected to land and water protection and decolonisation movements both through the themes explored on the album and through Jannok's activism beyond this particular release. The album consists of 11 songs, including the two bonus tracks "Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness" and "I Ryggen på Min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti"³³ which were released in 2015, the year before the album, and are not part of the physical release but included in *ORDA* on online streaming services. Printed inside the album cover, there is also an introduction to the album revolving around its central concept, *orda* (tree line). One of the songs on the album is a *yoiik* without lyrics (*yoiik* being a Sámi non-lexical vocal style). The ten other songs all feature *yoiik* but have lyrics too: five in English, two in Swedish (with a few summarising lines in North Sámi in one of them), two in North Sámi with English choruses, and one—a poem by the well-known Sámi poet Paulus Utsi—in North Sámi only. There are official translations into English of the North Sámi and Swedish lyrics; all English lyrics that I cite are either originally in English or are Jannok's

things, the silencing of Sámi culture. It could be argued that the unlearning of this colonial perspective and the learning about past and present Swedish and Nordic colonialism (in part by listening to and amplifying the voices of Sámi people) is a particular responsibility of scholars from this part of the world. For me, the process of unlearning and learning started 13 years ago when I first met my father-in-law and my partner's extended family in Sápmi and Meänmaa/the Torne Valley in Sweden's colonised north—a family of Sámi and Tornedalian-Finnish heritage who have lived in the area at least as far back as there are church records to consult (the eighteenth century).

³³ *Gákti* (in North Sámi) is the traditional clothing of Sámi people.

official translations.³⁴ Where dimensions of meaning that are relevant for my readings are lost in translation or where there is no translation into English, I add my own direct translations into English. This is the case for a few lines from the two Swedish songs as well as when the North Sámi and the English titles of songs do not mean the same thing or have different nuances of meaning.³⁵ In addition to the songs, the recording includes four tracks with samplings from a court case on fishing and hunting rights between the Sámi reindeer herding community Girjas, from which Jannok's paternal grandmother came, and the Swedish State, in Gällivare Lapland District Court, June 2015 ("Court 150602: 1," "Court 150602: 2," "Court 150602: 3," "Court 150616: 1"). The court case became an important event in the struggles for the rights of Sámi people, and in particular of reindeer-owning Sámi, in Sweden.³⁶ The songs and the introduction to the album have a speaker or poetic persona who is often referred to in the first-person singular pronoun (North Sámi *mon*, English *I*, Swedish *ja*) or as part of a wider first-person plural (*moai/mii*, *we*, *vi*), so that both the songs and the introduction often employ first-person narration. The samplings from the court case are of course not spoken by the same voice as the songs and the introduction: three of the samplings are of the Swedish state attorney's voice, and the fourth is of Girjas's attorney and a witness called by the state. There are several images on the album: photos of Jannok wearing a combination of traditional Sámi clothing and contemporary European street fashion on the front and back covers, and artwork depicting an "Ice Empress" together with Arctic animals and surrounded by ice formations and northern lights inside the album.³⁷

³⁴ I am grateful to Sofia Jannok for sharing her official translations of the two Swedish songs with me and allowing me to print them in the appendix as these were not available in print or online when I was researching and writing this thesis. The English translation of the lyrics from "Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness" has since been published in the multilingual Sámi anthology *Bágoš báhkeju/ Sámistat sátnái/Baakoste baakose/Ordagrant* (Hansson and Sandberg McGuinne 2022).

³⁵ I have a rudimentary knowledge of North Sámi after taking an introductory university course in it, and I have read and listened to Jannok's Sámi lyrics carefully accompanied by a dictionary. I do not claim to understand the North Sámi lyrics on the same level as the English and Swedish ones, but Jannok's poetic and evocative translations into English and her explanation of key concepts in the text within the album cover do much to bridge the gap in understanding.

³⁶ The case was appealed and went to the Supreme Court where Girjas won, a verdict setting a potentially important legal precedent.

³⁷ Concerning the multimedia aspects of Jannok's album, it would be relevant to mention as well that the songs "Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness," "We Are Still Here: Mii Leat Dás Ain," and "This Is My Land: Sápmi" have official videos that could be considered part of the album. In analysing Jannok's songs, I have sometimes reflected on the videos too, but this ended up not being part of my discussion because the questions and themes this led me to consider were generally tangential to the focus of my discussion (e.g. concerning hope and utopianism, something I hope to publish on elsewhere in the future).

Anna Tsing's text

The Mushroom at the End of the World: On the Possibility of Life in Capitalist Ruins (2015) is an anthropological study and theoretical work of posthumanist philosophy focused on environmental and social precarity and written in the form of creative nonfiction. Structured around the picking and selling of the matsutake mushroom, the text is based on a few different studies and explorations: the central one is a field study in Oregon in the US where precarious workers, including US war veterans and Southeast Asian migrant workers, pick matsutake; others take Tsing and her readers to both Japan and China. The text often uses first-person narration and in this constructs Tsing as the text's narrator-persona, but it also shifts between this form of narration and something more akin to third-person narration (the absence of any clearly identifiable narrator). In addition to text, Tsing's book contains photographs from her fieldwork and drawings of mushroom mycelium and spores, the latter used as paragraph break symbols and showing up here and there in the page margins. What makes *The Mushroom at the End of the World* a creative nonfiction is, in addition to its inclusion of artistic elements such as these, the experimental structure of the text as a whole; rather than being organised in accordance with norms about academic writing, it is thematically structured and offers a collection of different stories of people and ecologies around matsutake mushroom picking and trade, merging these stories with discussions of anthropological, cultural, and political theory. The text thereby comments on norms in Western academic knowledge production not just through arguments on the topic but also by means of the way the text itself is designed.

Kim Stanley Robinson's text

New York 2140 (2017) is a climate fiction and science fiction novel with a combined focus on left-wing social movements and parliamentary politics. The text invites the reader into a future world impacted by sea level rise. The centre of the story is a flooded New York City: a resilient, messy New York adapted to the new environment; a sparkling, flooded metropolis with streets turned into canals and skybridges connecting the skyscrapers. Manhattan has been divided into the dry upper Manhattan and the flooded lower Manhattan, but with some of the latter being an "intertidal zone"—intermittently flooded as the tide comes and goes. The intertidal zone is where much of the action in the novel takes place. Here the reader meets the group of protagonists Gen, Charlotte, Amelia, Franklin, Jeff, Mutt, Vlad, Stefan, and Roberto who live in or around "the Met co-op"—cooperative housing in a high-rise building—and whose fight to save their building from "regentrification" (a new wave of gentrification as capital returns to the area after having earlier abandoned it) structures the plot. There are also two subplots, one about how the computer coders Jeff and Mutt are

forced to go on the run after Jeff has tried to reprogramme finance to make it anti-capitalist, and one about the two young homeless boys Stefan and Roberto who, aided by an old homeless man called Hexter, hunt for a treasure at the bottom of New York harbour's waters.³⁸ The novel has three narrators: a third-person narrator, who narrates most of the chapters where the plot progresses and who includes fragments with lists and references between chapters; a first-person narrator in the character Franklin, who narrates some of the chapters where the plot progresses; and a narrator called "the citizen" (and, once, "the city"), who narrates chapters set apart from the progression of plot (Robinson 2017, 32-36, 139-45, 205-10, 262-64, 318-20, 377-82, 439-41, 495-97, 601-04) that instead comment on "the bigger picture," as "the citizen" himself puts it. To use a term from science fiction theory, the fragments and lists between chapters and the "citizen" narrator do *infodumping*: they explain important aspects of the world of the story. With the exception of the cover, there are no images in the book.

Naomi Klein's text

This Changes Everything: Capitalism vs. the Climate (2014) is an investigative journalistic book which engages with left-wing politics and land protection social movements. The text is an extended argument about the incompatibility between climate action and the continuation of the capitalist status quo. It is based on a number of journalistic research trips, interviews, and other published texts, forms of journalistic research that are carried out by Klein together with her research assistants (see Klein 2014, 527). Thus, the work as a whole is made up of a number of different stories from contexts like a climate denialist conference, a boat trip with a team looking into fish death in a polluted lake, and social movement actions against extractive industries—stories that are interspersed with references to other texts and to activists and political leaders commenting on climate action and climate justice. Klein mixes different styles and narrative techniques in the text, including straightforward journalistic reporting from the field, personal reflection, similes, and political argument. In passages where Klein offers personal reflection, she uses the first-person singular pronoun, and this "I" narration constructs Klein as a narrator-persona. Elsewhere, she uses third-person narration. There are no images in the book.

³⁸ As you will note here, I use the term *plot* to denote the central sequence of events in a novel and *subplot* for other sequences of events that are placed in relation to the main plot. In narratology, these terms are rarely used; it is common practice instead to talk of *story* and with this to refer to the complete sequence of events that a novel involves, including not just a possible central plot but also any subplots and any details from a backstory. The reason why I use the terms plot and subplot is because they capture how Robinson's novel is structured, whereas the broader narratological story becomes too unspecified in this context.

Jonathon Porritt's text

The World We Made: Alex McKay's Story from 2050 (2013) is a design fiction with a focus on making a green transition seem feasible and desirable to politicians, private enterprise, and people in general. The main part of the text is a fictional story told to the reader by a schoolteacher, Alex McKay, who shifts between third-person narration and a few instances of personal reflection in first-person narration. The story of the world that people have made in 2050 is narrated in reverse through the design fiction technique of backcasting—a method for the step-by-step construction of a path towards an imagined future scenario—so that the issues of the reader's present which the story revolves around are narrated from the point of view of an "after" when they have, at least to some degree, been successfully dealt with. The story is made up of 49 short reports on different themes and topics, all of which are comprised of both text and images—the latter including drawings and digitally generated visuals of imagined technologies that are at times superimposed on photos of actual places.³⁹ All individual reports are framed as part of the same overarching story through some reports that paint a more general picture, working as introduction (9-14) and conclusion (266-71), and through a timeline summarising the changes that have taken place between 2014 and 2049 (7-8). The whole of the design fiction is then further framed through a nonfictional postscript that is narrated by Porritt's first-person narrator-persona, and through a section called "Connections & Inspirations" in which this narrator-persona comments on some of the content of each individual fictional report and directs the reader to references and resources on the topics dealt with in the entries.

Jeffrey Sachs's text

The Age of Sustainable Development (2012) is a textbook on development and the turn towards an imagined future sustainable variety of it, connecting this to the UN Sustainable Development Goals, or SDGs. The book was first written and published in connection to a MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) on the topic. It offers a detailed introduction to, first, economic development in a bit more than the first half of the text and, after this, to how to make this development sustainable. Its explication of development is based in neoclassical economics, and its explication of threats to development and of how to make it sustainable relies on this economic framework together with earth system science. The text

³⁹ There are a few short videos posted online that are connected to Porritt's book. These do not add any details that are not present in the printed text but serve as teasers for the whole text or as short accessible explainers of aspects of it, and they are therefore not discussed. Though it is beyond the scope of this study, it would be interesting elsewhere to consider the multimedia aspects of Porritt's environmentalism in greater detail (I briefly comment on his use of images in Chapter 7), comparing the kinds of videos that are part of his design fiction project to other kinds of videos used in environmentalism.

constructs Sachs as a narrator-persona through a few instances of first-person narration, and often uses a first-person plural narration that includes the narrator-persona and readers in a general “we.” It also frequently shifts to the passive voice and to third-person narration in relating academic and political perspectives on the issues discussed. In addition to prose, the text features many graphs and statistical maps that represent data—and this data forms part of the foundation for the discussion in the body text. Such graphs and maps are the most common images in the book, but there are also a number of pictures of people and places.

On comparison across these different genres spanning the fiction/nonfiction divide

I compare texts whose imagined worlds might seem odd to consider alongside each other, because readers will expect different things from the different genres, and in particular from the two fictional texts (Robinson’s and Porritt’s) compared to the other four nonfiction ones (Jannok’s, Tsing’s, Klein’s, and Sachs’s). In terms of genre expectations, the way the different genres I have included are construed in globalised Western culture means that readers and listeners will think it more likely that they will get something like aesthetic pleasure, entertainment, or emotional movement out of music and fiction than information and political argument, whereas with textbooks or journalistic prose the expectations will be reversed. And when it comes to fiction/nonfiction genres in particular, readers cannot take for granted that the way a fictional story’s world relates to the world of its readers will be comparable to how nonfictional texts comment on the world we live in. Still, in the specific cases that I study, it does in fact make sense to compare the texts as largely doing the same thing, namely producing knowledge of forms of worldmaking and worldwrecking that could constitute and undermine environmentally sustainable and socially just future worlds. In arguing as much, I am not making general claims about how genres like pop music and textbooks, novels and academic theory, fiction and nonfiction can be compared; I simply propose that the kind of comparison I undertake can be done in these specific cases.

The reason why the texts’ imagining of worldmaking and worldwrecking can be compared across genre difference is that all of the texts are *mimetic*, meaning that their imagined worlds are of concrete, direct, or literal relevance to the reader’s (or listener’s) world.⁴⁰ I should substantiate my argument for this

⁴⁰ I use mimetic here in a broader sense than in the common diegetic/mimetic distinction in literary theory. In the common usage, diegesis refers to the retelling of and mimesis to the enactment of a story; the examples that are typically used to illustrate this difference are narration, such as in the novel, and dramatization, such as in theatre. As I use the term mimesis, it refers instead to how some texts propose that the reader should understand the logic of their imagined worlds as literally corresponding to that of the reader’s own world—and this applies regardless of the narrative technique used (diegetic telling or mimetic imitation).

concerning Jannok's, Porritt's, and Robinson's texts, because their writers work with genres that are less evidently mimetic than are the textbook (Sachs), investigative journalism (Klein), and academic writing (T'sing).

With Jannok and Porritt, the case for understanding their genres as mimetic is fairly straightforward. Jannok's album is part of two traditions where songs will tend to be seen as sites of the production and expression of knowledge (and not primarily as entertainment or as objects of beauty considered through an abstract aesthetic): Indigenous knowledge, where other forms than conventional Western-scientific writing such as oral storytelling are common, and the protest (or protection) music tradition, where songs are—as we will see in Chapter 2—an integral part of political movements. The concrete commentary in Jannok's lyrics on real-world phenomena is also emphasised by her inclusion of samplings from the court case, which serve as a contrasting perspective and counter-text to Jannok's lyrics. Thus, her textual Sápmi, for instance, though it does not directly correspond to the Sápmi that exists outside of her text, *asks to be taken seriously as a way to understand what Sápmi in the real world can be*. Porritt's use of fiction can be understood through a definition of the genre of design fiction: a design fiction is, as explained by the cyberpunk author Bruce Sterling (2012) who coined the term, “the deliberate use of diegetic prototypes to suspend disbelief about change” (n.p.).⁴¹ Sterling's “diegetic prototypes” are tangible objects that serve to make the future creation of such objects seem feasible. What this means is that the use of fictionality has a very specific, direct, deliberate, and didactic purpose in design fiction, namely to imagine aspects of a future that might then be built in the real world. It may be more adequate, then, to call design fiction prototypes *future-mimetic* rather than diegetic, because they are meant to make the reader consider the possibility of their realisation in the real world's future. That Porritt's text should be read as making claims to the possibility of future-mimesis becomes clear in the “Connections & Inspirations” section at the end of the text, where Porritt's narrator-persona refers to resources for the reader to turn to should they wish to take part in the making of the kind of world that the fiction imagines. Thus, when Porritt's fiction features major changes to technological infrastructures and new speculative technologies, when it discusses developments in a country like China, or when it imagines future social movements, the point of the construction of these future entities in the fictional world is that *such things could also come to pass in the reader's world*.

An argument as to why we can also read Robinson's novel as a mimetic commentary on actual possibilities in the real world requires some more elaboration. This is because Robinson's text does not employ fictionality for as

⁴¹ Suspension of disbelief is a central term in science fiction and fantasy theory. It denotes a necessary attitude on the reader's part when they read stories where the world diverges in substantial ways from the reader's own world (featuring speculative science or magic, for instance).

clear a didactic purpose as does Porritt's, and because it has, as is common in novels, a number of *focalisers*, in a term from narratology—different characters and narrators offering their perspectives on the world of the story—so that it is not obvious that it constructs any one authoritative perspective, in contrast to the other five texts.

Concerning the first point about the use of fictionality to explicitly comment on real-world possibilities relating to the topics explored, there are indications that Robinson's climate fiction should be and often is read as doing just that. Robinson writes not just fiction but also nonfictional essays about climate change, socialism, and other topics he deals with in his novels, often commenting on his fiction in his nonfiction so that his essays and fiction become two parts of the same project of exploration of topics he finds important. The thematic overlap between Robinson's fiction and nonfiction has been engaged with by the political theorist Mathias Thaler (2022), who analyses one of Robinson's novels while also tracing the author's ideas about "half earth" (emptying half the earth of humans) and geoengineering in his nonfiction texts (177). Another example of this overlap is an essay by Robinson quoted by Klein (2014) in the epigraph to *This Changes Everything*; the position of the quote as introducing Klein's whole text stresses a reading of Robinson's thinking at the intersection of fiction and nonfiction as having real-world relevance. The quote talks of Robinson's attempts to imagine technological and political change in his climate fiction and is used to emphasise Klein's idea that it is exceedingly difficult yet necessary to imagine something beyond capitalism. I therefore understand Robinson's exploration in his fiction of new speculative technologies, political change in the US, social movement organising, among other things as *literally commenting on future possibilities in the reader's world*. One of the functions of Robinson's climate fiction (though by no means the only one) is thus to suggest a direction for real-world worldmaking to take.

But, to turn to my second point, the multiple focalisations that are featured in the novel of course complicate a reading of it as mimetic because it is not immediately clear *which aspects of the novel* the reader should see as reliable in its commentary on the reader's world. However, it is possible to understand this individual novel and Robinson's oeuvre as a whole as mimetic commentary because of the specific way that Robinson's fiction—*New York 2140* as well as most of his other novels—uses multiple focalisers and narrators: the novels' combination of perspectives in fact constructs one authoritative perspective. In *New York 2140*, the focalising characters and the different narrators (Franklin, "the citizen," and the third-person narrator) are all reliable. I interpret it this way because the work as a whole encourages the reader to sympathise with and seek to understand all the focalising characters and their search for answers in a complex reality, so that the divergence at times between the different characters'

answers leads to a conversation between complementary perspectives that together make up a single authoritative one. For instance, the characters Franklin and Charlotte talk of Keynesianism in optimistic terms while the character Jeff instead has a pessimistic outlook on such political reforms, and this constructs the text's perspective as a whole as one of uncertainty about what to make of Keynesian reform within capitalism—a note of uncertainty that the work ends on through a heavily symbolic scene (all of which will be discussed in more detail in the analysis in Part II). The novel thus features focalisers with different takes on the same issue and through this creates a confused authoritative perspective that is to be relied on. By approaching the novel through narratology, with its long tradition of study of the rhetorical strategies of fiction (like its analysis of the common use of multiple focalisers), as I have begun to do here, it becomes possible to identify its “sum-total” perspective. This overarching perspective is then possible to compare to other texts that do not employ a combination of perspectives in the manner of a novel.

Both my points above are underlined if we read *New York 2140* within Robinson's oeuvre. The socialist-utopian Mars trilogy ([1992] 2009, [1993] 2009, [1996] 2009); the near-future story of gradual political reform towards sustainability in the US in the *Science in the Capital* trilogy, also published as *Green Earth* (2015) in one volume; the story of similar but global change in *The Ministry for the Future* (2020); and *New York 2140* all include a leading male character named Frank (or Franklin in *New York 2140*) who is trying to understand himself and his society and whose personal journey is a story of how to get on as a human being in this world and perhaps be able to do something good in it. The choice of this name is significant: it denotes earnestness, suggesting that the efforts of this character to understand and act in the world are commendable (even if aspects of the character's masculinity are sometimes tentatively questioned). That Frank focalisers are important in many of Robinson's novels creates a sense of coherence across his fictional worlds, so that the authoritative perspective of an individual work becomes connected to an authoritative perspective in his oeuvre as a whole.⁴² This can be interpreted as an indication of sincere engagement on the part of the author with the topics discussed, like climate change and socialism, that is also echoed in his nonfiction writing; the authoritative perspective in Robinson's fiction is thus part of Robinson's more general perspective as a

⁴² Other similarities between Robinson's novels further underline this. Most of his novels have multiple protagonists and narrators who seek to understand the world and themselves through a mix of historical materialism and evolutionary biology and psychology. And many of them also have the kind of structure that we find in *New York 2140*, with fragmented bits of text—like lists, short sentences, and quotations from other texts—interspersed between the chapters and with explicit commentary by an externally focalising narrator in passages, and often whole chapters, set apart from the narration of the plot.

writer-activist—a perspective that finds its expression in fiction and nonfiction alike.

Hence, as long as we keep in mind that it is necessary to analyse the complementary perspectives in Robinson's fiction and not to take any single statement by a focaliser or narrator as the whole voice of the novel, *New York 2140* can be compared to the other five texts as a mimetic—direct, literal—commentary on real-world issues.

1.3.3 Outline of the Thesis

The present introductory chapter has provided a general context for the study by presenting environmental justice imaginaries, cultural materialism, and decolonial theory, which amounts to a broad theoretical framework for the thesis. The more specific context will be outlined in the following two chapters. First, in Chapter 2, I give some background on environmental justice movements in WENA and on academic-political debates on ontological and epistemological dimensions of environmental politics. This chapter covers a long temporal span, arching from the origins of WENA land protection in resistance to industrialisation in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to the challenges for WENA environmental justice in recent years. Its discussion of ontology and epistemology in environmentalism focuses on the period leading up to the decade I am studying, the 2010s. Moving on from this background to a review of the previous research on environmental justice imaginaries from WENA in the 2010s, Chapter 3 discusses political conceptualisations of environmental justice and closely related forms of environmentalism in this region and period, as well as academic-political debates over how questions of ontology and epistemology, the latter including forms of expression, relate to environmental politics. The chapter after this, Chapter 4, presents a more specific theoretical framework, discussing concepts from decolonial feminism and ecofeminism that will be important in the textual interpretations, and also outlines an ecopolitical narratological method for the analysis of textual functions, or actants, that make up worldmaking and worldwrecking forces in a storyworld. These chapters, 1-4, make up Part I.

The next part of the thesis, Part II, contains three analytical chapters based on readings of the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs. Chapter 5 discusses each individual text separately with a focus on how human being is imagined, and it concludes with a brief comparison of the texts and an identification of four relational structures that will be further analysed in the following chapter. Chapter 6 turns to how human and nonhuman being together are imagined, and is organised through the four relational structures that I identified in Chapter 5; it concludes with a comparison of the overarching imaginaries that have emerged in the interpretations so far and a discussion of

how the imaginaries and the texts build on different combinations of relational structures. Chapter 7 analyses the different conceptions in the texts of what constitutes good, reliable, relevant knowledge and its expression, organised around a distinction between knowing in coloniality and in decoloniality. These three chapters revolve around the first two research questions (How are sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them imagined in the texts? What are the environmental justice implications of these texts' imagined worlds and knowledges?). Chapter 5 and 6 focus on the imagining of worlds and of the making and wrecking of them; Chapter 7 focuses on the imagining of knowledges.

Finally, Part III is constituted by one chapter, Chapter 8, where I further discuss the results from the study. I turn there to the third research question: how can the results from the analysis inform theories on politics, ontology, and epistemology in political ecology and the environmental humanities? After considering the meaning of my results for these fields, I conclude with a final section which builds on the study and its narratological method to propose some ways that writer-activists can approach the future imagining of environmental justice.

2. An Eclectic Historical Background on WENA Environmental Justice and the Politics of Nature

I was a Swedish left-leaning environmental activist for nearly a decade before I encountered the concept of environmental justice. In the environmentalism I was part of in contexts like the established Swedish Green Party, a prospective new Green Party reacting to the mainstreaming of the established one, the Swedish Nature Conservancy, and a number of looser networks and groups in Scandinavian and Anglophone contexts, we mainly debated how “deep” the ecology of these organisations should be, not how social and environmental political concerns intersected. We were concerned, in other words, with conceptions of being and knowledge as relating only to what will in the following emerge as a politics of nature: a question of how to understand an imagined general human being in relation to that which we call nature.

In the first part of this chapter, we will see that this experience reflects an alienation between left-wing and environmental concerns and movements in WENA, but also that this should not be taken to mean that Sweden, Western Europe, or Western culture more broadly are not home to environmental justice movements. I will discuss divergent theories in academic-political work on what constitutes environmentalism and on how to understand the history of environmental social movements, bringing out empirical research as well as theoretical interventions based on such research which together suggest that environmental justice as a form of emergent culture is a force to be reckoned with in WENA, yet one that is constantly threatened by silencing and marginalisation in dominant culture. The focus in this part of the chapter is on the long history of WENA environmental justice, and this amounts to a background to the more specific concern of this thesis with how environmental justice is construed in this region in the 2010s.

In the second part of the chapter, I consider a related academic-political debate over the politics of nature in the period leading up to the 2010s, where the main positions are about how “deep green” movements should be, or about how humans should relate to and know (or “value”) what is referred to as nature—a debate that my early experience of Swedish environmentalism reflects as well. The main positions in the debate spell out the ontological and epistemological implications of the kinds of theories and political practices that the first part of the chapter depicts as aspects of dominant culture. There are also, however, as we shall see, those who question the most common positions in this

debate, indeed those who question the very terms of the debate, and who thus gesture towards possible emergent-cultural approaches to questions of ontology and epistemology in environmentalism. In terms of ontology, the focus in this chapter is on the concept of nature in the debate; in terms of epistemology, it is on arguments for different forms of expression in relation to the ontological question, because this is the most concrete form that conceptions of knowledge, or of ways of knowing, take in the debate. The kind of thinking about being and knowledge that occurs in the politics of nature debate is in one sense tangential to discussions of environmental justice and its imagined worldmakers and worldwreckers, because the dominant positions in the debate do not relate at all to the problem of the colonality of being and knowledge. But a recounting of the debate still offers an important background, for two reasons. Firstly, because those engaging in the debate developed ideas about the politics of being and knowledge that were then being renegotiated, including through more explicit engagement with non-Western worldviews and the question of colonality, in the period I study, the 2010s (to be discussed in Chapter 3). And secondly, because the material I cover in this chapter, from the politics of nature debate and from work on the long history and challenges of environmental justice in WENA, clearly situates the study within the academic fields I work in: ecocritical literary studies, the environmental humanities, and political ecology.

Together, these two parts of the chapter form a background to, or set the stage for, the more specific review in Chapter 3 of the previous research on environmental justice imaginaries from WENA in the 2010s in and around the six texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs that I analyse in Part II. The present chapter sketches the conditions for the developments during the 2010s, a background that helps us better understand those later developments. This chapter is thus a first step in a contextualisation of the ways in which the six texts imagine sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for such worlds, as my first research question puts it. Furthermore, it begins to introduce those theories in political ecology and environmental humanities that my textual analyses enable me to interrogate—that is, those theories that my third research question is concerned with. Since the focus in this chapter is on the background to the period that my analysis of texts focuses on, I do not refer to the texts and writers that I analyse. In the next chapter, the texts and writers will be positioned within the academic-political discussions taking place in the 2010s and they will thereby also be related to the background that is provided in the present chapter.

2.1 Environmental Justice in WENA

2.1.1 Environmentalism as a Western, Post-Materialist New Social Movement

Many people in Western culture (and anyone thinking through a Western-centric imaginary) will probably associate environmentalism not so much with environmental justice protection of livelihoods as with nature conservancy groups working to save ecosystems or individual species as something set apart from human societies. This imaginary of environmentalism centres *modern Western environmentalism*, a dominant type of environmentalism in Western culture that has emerged since the 1960s and 70s both in movements and in academic interpretations of movements. Looking at tendencies in movements across the globe, Guha and Martínez Alier (1997) explain that modern environmentalism in the West is founded on the theory of *post-materialism* (xiii-xv). One of the leading academics interpreting and contributing to the construction of environmentalism in this way was Ronald Inglehart (1977) who first formulated the *post-materialism hypothesis*. The hypothesis states, as summarised by Guha and Martínez Alier (1997), that nature was an enemy and obstacle to human prosperity in the past, but that with the advent of material security in modernity nature can—and, some people believe, *should*—be protected (xiii-xv). Post-materialism thus tends to blame the poor for degrading the environment: the idea is “that the poor are not green either because they lack awareness (with no taste for environmental amenities when faced with more immediate necessities), or because they have not enough money (yet) to invest in the environment, or both reasons together” (xiv)—characteristics Anna Davies (2009) shows tend to be associated with non-Western cultures (570). In other words, a healthy environment is conceptualised as a luxury good, something people can only attain and are only able to desire once they have their basic material needs fulfilled, and one that consequently has only begun to be desired recently in the developed Global North. This notion is central to Inglehart’s (1977) theory; it elaborates on the modernisation hypothesis—the idea “that societies progressively move through various states of modernization” (White, Rudy, and Gareau 2016, 99)—by proposing that modernisation makes possible a gradual shift from “materialist” to “post-materialist” values.

In an article based on historical research on other tendencies in environmentalism, Fabian Locher and Jean-Baptiste Fressoz (2012) comment on how several widely cited works in social theory build on this theory, by sociologists like Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens. Locher and Fressoz explain that such “landmark writers of social theory have coined new labels to name our epoch and express its radical novelty: risk society (as opposed to industrial

society), reflexive modernization, second modernization, or high modernity” (581). The explanation for the novelty is the supposedly ubiquitous exposure to “risk” in modern society. As Beck (1992) famously put it, “smog is democratic,” as opposed to being distributed unequally in society as were those “risks” that drove older political struggles like the labour movement. The theory is that this generalised “risk” can lead to the rise of a more well-managed kind of modern industrial society (Beck 1992, 1998; Beck, Giddens, and Lash 1995).⁴³ Applying this to environmental politics specifically, and seeking to make sense of environmental reforms in primarily Western European nation states in the 1980s and 90s, theorists of *ecological modernisation* developed a framework that argued for the possibility of solving environmental problems through “far-sighted” reform within capitalist political economy (Dryzek 1997, 142-43).

Post-materialism and ecological modernisation have been influential in social movement theory, and environmentalism as a social movement has predominantly been understood through it; environmentalism is, in this view, a *new social movement*, so the social movement researcher and anarchist political organiser Jeff Shantz (2004) explains.⁴⁴ Like post-materialism, new social movement theory argues for a break between, on the one hand, the materialist interests driving an old politics of class struggle and, on the other, the supposed post-materialist interests driving “the women’s movements, the gay and lesbian movements and the environmental movements” which then “represent truly novel sources of change” (691-92). This imaginary proposes that environmental movements transcend a left/right divide; thus, for instance, the political scientist Liam Leonard (2008) argues, in a study of the environmental movement in Ireland, that the contestation over the ownership of the means of production or over class relations is not what is at issue in green movements (9), and the environmental sociologist Dryzek (1997) offers a foundational distinction between *environmentalism* and *industrialism* with “liberalism, conservatism, socialism, Marxism, and fascism” all huddling under the non-environmentalist, industrialist umbrella (12).

Thus, the dominant imaginary of environmentalism construes it as a recent, post-materialist new social movement. As I started to learn about environmental politics halfway into the first decade of the 2000s, this was the kind of environmentalism I encountered. But many political ecologists and other environmental social scientists have shown—through a good deal of empirical research on actual movements and through theoretical interventions based on this—that this imaginary invisibilises alternative forms of environmentalism, and

⁴³ For a longer discussion of Beck’s work on risk and reflexivity, see White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016, 127-28).

⁴⁴ For examples of research on environmentalism based within new social movement theory, see e.g. Dalton (1994, xiii-xiv, 4-5) and Callaghan (2000).

that these alternatives can be found if we look beyond the environmentalism of dominant culture.⁴⁵

How the dominant imaginary invisibilises socio-ecological movements

In the mid-2010s, as I was starting my doctoral studies, I was beginning to find more and more examples of alternative types of environmental movements. The fact that it took so long for me to encounter them is testament to their marginalisation, a tendency that has been granted much attention in recent research.

The environmental historian Stefania Barca is one of the researchers who has done a lot of empirical research on actual environmental social movements across the globe. Based on this, she has argued that “non mainstream varieties of environmental struggle . . . are the object of various forms of cultural, social and political silencing” (Barca 2012, 64). The same wording is used in a critical interrogation of common academic theories by Erik Swyngedouw and Henrik Ernstson (2018): they point out that an alternative account of environmentalism in modernity “continues to be scripted out and silenced” (9). An important site for this *silencing*, or *invisibilisation* as others label it, is academia: in their comprehensive introduction to environmental social theory, Damian F. White, Alan P. Rudy, and Brian J. Gareau (2016) show that “large swathes of the environmental social sciences . . . have tended to render invisible the

⁴⁵ Readers familiar with texts surveying varieties of environmentalism will note that my approach to the study of divergent imaginaries of environmentalism in this chapter calls such generalised overviews into question as they tend to place all varieties of environmentalism alongside each other without engaging in critical discussion about the relationship between hegemonic and counterhegemonic varieties. Two such texts are Dryzek’s *Politics of the Earth* (1997), in environmental sociology, and Garrard’s *Ecocriticism* (2012), in ecocriticism. The former categorises four main environmental “discourses”: *problem solving*, *sustainability*, *survivalism* (including its opposite *Prometheanism*), and *green radicalism* (Dryzek 1997, 14). They are then further divided into subordinate subcategories on the basis of details in how they envision change and a better future, producing a very detailed chart of environmentalisms. Garrard’s *Ecocriticism* offers an almost identical categorisation to Dryzek’s, albeit without Dryzek’s levels of subcategorisation. Garrard’s (2012) notion of *cornucopianism* corresponds to Dryzek’s Prometheanism—it amounts to denial of the existence of environmental problems (20). *Environmentalism* in Garrard’s terminology signifies moderate environmentalism (223), like Dryzek’s sustainability. And four of his five forms of radical environmentalism are discussed by Dryzek under the umbrella of green radicalism: *deep ecology*, *ecofeminism*, *social ecology* and *eco-Marxism*, and *Heideggerian ecophilosophy* (23-36). In addition to the lack of discussion of the power relations between the varieties of environmentalism which Dryzek and Garrard outline, a shortcoming of these two categorisations is that they are based neither on original empirical research nor on comprehensive overviews of studies of movements. (Some of the discourse analyses in Dryzek’s text are an exception, but as a whole *Politics of the Earth* is not based on the kind of comprehensive overviews of material that would be required to support its author’s claims to generalisability.) While theoretical arguments can of course provide some insights, they also risk repeating commonly construed imaginaries of environmentalism that are not—to echo Marxist critiques of liberal-idealist history—founded on studies of the actual history of social movements.

contributions of [early political ecologists or social environmentalists]” by focusing on dominant types of environmentalism (84).⁴⁶ But social environmentalism has certainly not disappeared, as a group of environmental humanities researchers proposes—it is rather that many natural scientists and people in general in Western societies are unaware of its presence and relevance (Rose et al. 2012, 1). It is therefore, I would argue, appropriate to consider the imaginarity of environmentalism that is oriented towards post-materialism as part of dominant culture, and to turn our attention to possible emergent culture and its counterhegemonic—or non-mainstream, as Barca writes—imaginaries that confront the dominant view.

An illuminating effort to do just that is Swyngedouw and Ernstson’s (2018) article on the long history of environmental concerns in modernity, which shows that there has always been a struggle between dominant and emergent culture in environmentalism—long before the birth of the modern Western environmental movement in the 1960s and 70s. They start from an observation about the long history of environmental consciousness in modernity, wherein a socio-ecological strand of thought has been prominent:

Modernity has been marked by a continuous battle unfolding between, on the one hand, advocates of . . . mankind’s manifest destiny to be master and commander of its external conditions of existence, and, on the other hand, proponents of a more modest and socio-ecologically sensitive mode of conduct and engagement. (9)

Evidence of this is derived in part from the article by Locher and Fressoz (2012) cited earlier. Locher and Fressoz present examples of environmental consciousness predating the 1960s, such as Georges-Louis Leclerc de Buffon’s *Epoques de la Nature* which spoke of global environmental change in 1778 and the discussions of climate change in European societies as bad harvests followed a volcanic eruption in 1816 with consequent dimming of the sun (579-80).⁴⁷ On the basis of this, Locher and Fressoz, and with them Swyngedouw and Ernstson, argue that the idea of “environmental consciousness” as a recent phenomenon *simplifies and depoliticises the long political-ecological history of environmental degradation* and conveniently enables us in the modern Western world who have recently become concerned about climate and environmental change “to emphasize our own excellence and reflexivity” (Locher and Fressoz 2012, 581).

⁴⁶ See also White, Rudy, and Gareau’s (2016) entire chapter on “Social Environmentalism and Political Ecology” (71-91).

⁴⁷ By the same token, J. Donald Hughes (2016) argues in his introduction to environmental history that even though it may appear as if environmental problems “have appeared only recently, . . . there is no doubt about their tremendous effect during the twentieth century”—and that it seems “most of them had antecedents in all the previous historical periods” (3). An effort to consider this long history of environmental change from a political-ecological perspective is *Rethinking Environmental History: World-System History and Global Environmental Change* (Hornborg, McNeill, and Martínez Alier 2007).

Other political ecologists find similar evidence of a much longer and more politicised history of environmentalism than dominant culture with its hegemonic imaginary of environmentalism allows for. As White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) explain,

even at the beginning of the modern environmental debate and indeed up to the present day, one can identify many dissenting currents [in environmental thought]: from social ecologists and eco-socialists to feminist environmental scientists, from social activists, critical social scientists, environmental campaigners, to many diverse voices from the Global South. (xvii-xviii)

An imaginary centring this longer history of socio-ecological thought opposes the theory of a recent reflexive modernity that underpins the post-materialist hypothesis and ecological modernisation, because this imaginary invisibilises actually existing socio-ecological thought and movements. An important fact that is obscured, White, Rudy, and Gareau point out, is how the now common “jobs versus the environment” framing of environmental issues and the estranged relations between labour and environmental movements only became hegemonic in Western countries around the 1980s (144-47).⁴⁸ Barca (2012) explains that the hegemonic view instead posits the conflict between the two strands of social movements as a timeless essence, yielding an imaginary that, in Barca’s (2012) words, “prevent[s] the formation of alliances between the social movements [of labour and environmentalism]” (76). The post-materialist hypothesis and the new social movement framework have made important contributions to this imaginary. Shantz (2004) explains:

Even movements that are mostly clearly expressive of “new values,” such as environmentalism, have important intersections with class movements. . . . That these intersections have been conceptually separated from “environmentalism” proper in much new movement writing is purely arbitrary. (696)⁴⁹

Thus, the dominant imaginary of environmentalism tells only part of the story even of the Western environmentalism that it centres: the *outcome* of a power-laden process—the dominance of post-materialist environmentalism in Western and Westernised culture—is depicted as the whole story of *the entire process*. In opposition to the dominant depiction of the situation, Swyngedouw and Ernstson (2018) write that what now passes for *the* environmentalism marks “the

⁴⁸ On the jobs vs. environment framing, see also Brand and Niedermoser (2019, 174).

⁴⁹ It should be noted that this and other recent critiques are not the first to call into question new social movement theory. For instance, in the 1990s when new social movement theory was dominant, Christopher Rootes (1992) reinterpreted the meaning of the “new politics” and the “old politics” it reacted to: new social movements, in his view, objected not to a general focus on an “old” politics of *class* but to the very specific tendencies of Western European politics being oriented towards *economic management and military security* (171). Moreover, Roots shows how older forms of political movements in the UK remained influential within the “new politics” of the era.

ideological victory of one side in a fierce confrontation between radically opposing views”—socio-ecological thought being its opponent (9).

The above arguments about how the hegemonic view obscures existing alternatives, including alternatives within Western culture, represent one way that political ecology can counteract this imaginary and open up the possibility of explorations of emergent culture in environmentalism. As part of such an effort, several political ecologists use the concept “modern environmentalism” (Davies 2009, 565; Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, xiii-xv; Guha 2000, 3) to denote the environmentalism that emerged in the West in the 1960s and 70s, consigning this variety to its proper cultural, historical, and geographical place. This is also the rationale for my use of the concept of *modern Western environmentalism*—the addition of “Western” locating the phenomenon more clearly in time and space.

2.1.2 Emergent Culture in Protection Movements and Alternative Livelihoods

Another equally crucial way that political ecology can counteract the hegemonic imaginary is by visibilising the histories that are hidden by the focus on modern Western environmentalism; where dominant culture states that environmental movements and reforms are evidence of a new, post-materialist reflexive modernity, historical evidence suggests otherwise. In social movement research, Schlosberg (2020) and Schlosberg and Coles (2016) emphasise the historical prevalence of forms of materialist environmentalism across the globe, as environmentalist political action “is often, and everywhere linked to materialist concerns such as health, safety, and community functioning” (Schlosberg 2020, 4). Focusing on Western culture specifically, Bengi Akbulut and colleagues (2019) similarly write that, “in the industrialized world of the 1960s, the environmental movement was largely born from very ‘material’ concerns, such as the risk of nuclear energy and other health issues. . . . Post-materialism was a misnomer, as DDT and nuclear radiation implied very material risks” (3). Viviana Asara (2016) agrees, and demonstrates in an article on “sustainable materialism” that it is not accurate to distinguish movements from each other based on their concern with either “material” or “symbolic” values: material needs are entwined with cultural values, and both are part of all movements and their imaginaries.

It is therefore not surprising that, as Barca (2012) writes, “empirical research has demonstrated how the subaltern classes, manual workers, indigenous peoples and the poor in general are often the first to defend the environment in which they work and live, or from which they get their livelihood” (65). It is important, she also contends, that this includes

working-class people [who] are the most threatened by the destruction of the environment because they work in hazardous environments, live in the most polluted

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neighborhoods, and have fewer possibilities to move to some uncontaminated area or buy healthy food. Therefore, they hold the greatest vested interest in developing sustainability policies. (76)

Indeed, this was the case even in the initial wave of opposition to the ravages of industrial capitalism. In a review of environmental justice movements in Western Europe, Heike Köckler and colleagues (2017) show that this region “has a long tradition of dealing with interlinkages between social inequity, environmental quality and health outcomes”—a particularly pronounced trend “during the periods of industrialisation and urban growth in the 19th and 20th centuries” (1). A major contribution to the unearthing of the history of early opposition to industrial capitalism is E.P. Thompson’s (1963, 1991) work: Thompson did extensive archival studies on the overlooked or discredited history of early English resistance against industrialism and the enclosure of the commons.⁵⁰ Thompson and others have also looked at the Romantic intellectual and political movement as a complex and in part very rigorous—as opposed to simplistically reactionary—critique of the expansion of industrial capitalism (Thompson 1997; Löwy and Sayre 2001; Becker et al. 2005).⁵¹ Across the globe, including in the Global North and WENA, materialist environmentalism has long been prevalent.

Environmentalism as protection of land and livelihoods; environment as a matter of inequality and injustice

These kinds of movements are more about protecting land and livelihoods than about post-materialist conservation; the core of environmentalism as it emerges if we focus on these kinds of movements is environmental justice, as environmentalism always was and still is, in Barca’s (2012) words, a “plural social movement” and not a single-issue one (64). Barca therefore argues that the term “environmentalism” is something of a misnomer as it signals a single-issue approach (62). It follows from this that “there has been no lack of ecological distribution conflicts in the history of humankind,” as Guha and Martínez Alier (1997, 25) put it. And the prevalence of such conflicts in both the past and the present means that risk has never been evenly distributed, which is at odds with Beck’s characterisation of smog as democratic; the opposition to sources of

⁵⁰ A great example of how this history has been discredited is how the term “Luddism” has come to denote technology-related stupidity and an irrational fear of technology, when the Luddites in reality were not irrationally afraid of an abstract “technology” but organisers of a political movement for worker or popular control over technological development.

⁵¹ That the Romantic Movement was the origin of environmentalism in the West is frequently pointed out even by thinkers who view environmentalism proper as beginning in the 1960s (see e.g. Dryzek 1997; Leonard 2008; Bothello and Djelic 2018). It is interesting that they identify resistance to industrialisation as the origin of environmentalism without tracing connections between early anti-industrialism and similar movements in the present, for instance in the Global South. This is one of the contradictions that arises in attempts to equate environmentalism with modern post-materialist environmentalism in the West.

pollution instead often becomes a matter of environmental justice.⁵² The unequal distribution of environmental impact occurs along the intertwined lines of race and class, according to Stefania Barca and the labour sociologist Emanuele Leonardi (2018): they argue that the supposed opposition between workers and environmentalists leads to an acceptance of a poor environment and its impact on community health “as a ‘natural’ fact of life for working-class people” (489), a feature they call “job blackmail”—and they show that this is tied up with racialisation, as certain bodies and places become construed as acceptable sacrifices (490). Observing the pervasiveness of this across the globe, Navas, D’Alisa, and Martínez Alier (2022) coin the term *environmental health conflicts* for a distinctive kind of ecological distribution conflict where human health is a central concern; they show, through an analysis of over three thousand cases from the Environmental Justice Atlas database, that these are most common in working-class communities.⁵³ Moreover, the unequal distribution of environmental impact is not only related to pollution, but to natural disasters too. In response to the common assertion—which echoes Beck’s conception of risk—that climate change means that we are all in this fix together as a species, as expressed in Dipesh Chakrabarty’s (2009) notion that privileged people cannot escape climate change in lifeboats, Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg (2014) discuss examples of unequal vulnerability to climate change and argue that “for the foreseeable future—indeed, as long as there are human societies on Earth—there *will* be lifeboats for the rich and privileged” (66). Of course, as climate and ecological crises escalate the degree of safety that can be achieved for the privileged is decreasing, as we have seen in recent years when flooding, wildfires, droughts and crop failure, and conflicts and wars related to and exacerbated by climate change and state and corporate competition for resources have impacted WENA and other parts of the Global North more and more severely. But Malm and Hornborg’s argument still holds nonetheless, because there continues to be a differentiation of people’s vulnerability to disasters both globally and along lines of class (which are often related to race) regionally. Even though there will be nowhere safe for even the richest of the rich in a privileged region like WENA to go in their lifeboats in the final instance, the point is that the blows of disasters will be possible to cushion for the privileged all the way until the end.

A brief history of recent environmental justice movements in WENA

These kinds of critical perspectives have had a presence in WENA throughout the period when modern Western environmentalism has been hegemonic. A

⁵² I recommend the summary of research on the uneven distribution of environmental impact and its health consequences in Navas, D’Alisa, and Martínez Alier (2022, section 1) as an introduction for those interested in reading more on the topic.

⁵³ The database is available at <https://ejatlas.org/>.

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telling example is how activists built and convened around counterhegemonic imaginaries in connection to one of the central events in the emergence of modern Western environmentalism, the UN conference on the human environment in Stockholm, Sweden, in 1972. “10,000 people formed a People’s Forum that gathered together to protest a range of issues from mercury poisoning to the US use of Agent Orange in the Vietnam War” (White, Rudy, and Gareau 2016, 162), and alternative meetings were organised by socialists in opposition to the corporate-friendly environmental policies dominating the discussions between nation states (Anshelm and Hultman 2015, 81). A couple of decades later, the international activist network the European social forum carried on this tradition of radical political meetings (Doherty and Doyle 2006, 704), as a new wave of socio-environmental political organising and thought emerged in the global justice movements around the turn of the millennium (Barca 2012; Gooch, Burman, and Olsson 2019, 16). And another decade on, such a wave built up again with the movements following upon the financial crash of 2008, including the Indignados in Spain, which Asara (2016) argues is a socio-environmental movement (175), and the Occupy movement, which Gooch, Burman, and Olsson (2019) discuss together with the alter-globalisation movement of the 2000s and also place alongside land protection and anti-extractivist movements (16). As Gooch, Burman, and Olsson put it, these movements are all “resistance movements of the Capitalocene, seeing the capitalist system as the main culprit and attacking it head on” (16; see also Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 748).

Academic research and texts written by movement actors identify a number of specific movement organisations within this. These include The Red Nation—anti-capitalist, anti-colonialist, feminist “Indigenous revolutionaries” (The Red Nation n.d.)—and the Climate Justice Alliance and Cooperation Jackson (Smith and Patterson 2019, 254) in the United States; Idle No More, led by Indigenous women, working for Indigenous resurgence (meaning the turn away from inclusion into the settler-colonial state and towards the revitalisation of Indigenous institutions and autonomous culture) and environmental justice in Canada (Barker 2015; Coulthard 2014, 159-79); and the World Social Forum (Smith and Patterson 2019, 254) and the international peasants’ movement La Vía Campesina (Doherty and Doyle 2006, 704; Di Chiro 2011, 232; Martínez Alier 2012, 60; Smith and Patterson 2019, 254) on an international level.⁵⁴ Another movement that is frequently mentioned in research as the Western environmental organisation most aligned with environmental justice and

⁵⁴ La Vía Campesina is often associated with the Global South, where its member organisations do gather more people—but it has member organisations across WENA and was founded at a meeting in Belgium in 1993 (La Vía Campesina 2021).

solidarity with the Global South is Friends of the Earth (Doherty and Doyle 2006, 698; Rootes 2006; Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 744).

Moreover, there are scores of specific land protection movements across WENA that we could consider as part of a large anti-capitalist movement of movements; protecting land, water, health, and livelihoods, these movements oppose many kinds of extractive industries and infrastructures, including forestry, mining, hydroelectricity, wind turbines, and—last but certainly not least—everything relating to fossil fuels such as pipelines, coal mining, and fracking (hydraulic fracturing for non-conventional oil and gas extraction).⁵⁵ I cannot survey all these movements here, much as I would like to,⁵⁶ but I will pick out two examples that are of particular relevance for this dissertation: the Standing Rock water protectors and Sámi land protection. The Standing Rock water protectors who opposed the Dakota Access Pipeline (DAPL) are part of a long tradition of Indigenous water protection, and their blockade became a site of solidarity among Indigenous people and non-Indigenous allies and environmentalists across the globe (Estes 2019). In Sápmi, there is an equally long tradition of land protection, where Sámi people have always contested colonial land grabs by the nation states of the Nordic region and the Kola Peninsula. To take the example of Swedish Sápmi, as this is the part of Sápmi where Sofia Jannok is based, a distinct Sámi movement in Sweden began to take shape after the passing of *the Reindeer Grazing Act* of 1886 which radically altered the conditions for Sámi communities (Lantto and Mörkenstam 2008). At this stage and until the 1950s, Patrik Lantto and Ulf Mörkenstam explain, the movement was largely *reactive*, based on “spontaneous activism and passive resistance,” but in the 1950s it became *active*, “articulating well-formulated political claims” and working for Sámi rights more broadly (28). A key event in

⁵⁵ On forestry, see for instance Jäggi (1996) and Temper (2019, 103) on Canada; and Lawrence and Raitio (2006) on Finland/Finnish Sápmi. On mining, see for instance Lawrence and Åhrén (2016) and Persson, Harnesk, and Islar (2017) on Sweden/Swedish Sápmi; Brown and Spiegel (2017) on anti-coal in the UK in an international comparison; and Kulchyski and Bernauer (2014) on anti-uranium mining in Canada. On hydroelectricity, see for instance Össo and Lantto (2011) and Össo (2021) on Sweden/Swedish Sápmi; and Estes (2019, 12-13) on a case in the US. On wind power, in a comparison with environmentalist opposition to other industries that are often termed “clean” such as hydropower and biomass, see Anshelm and Simon (2016). On fossil fuels, see Kulchyski and Bernauer (2014) and Temper (2019, 100) on Canadian anti-pipeline cases and Estes (2019) on a US one; Ladd (2018) and Cotton (2017) on anti-fracking in the UK; and Gooch, Burman, and Olsson (2019, 17) for a general consideration of the “keep it in the ground” movement imaginary. It is notable that most of these examples are of Indigenous(-led) land and water protection movements.

⁵⁶ A comprehensive history and contemporary overview of environmental justice movements would certainly be merited, but this falls outside the scope of the present research project and would take up too much space. I have begun compiling articles and books on WENA environmental justice movements, focusing on land and water protection, and I hope to publish an overview based on this in the future.

the formation of a Sámi movement across the nation states that divide Sápmi was the opposition to the construction of a hydroelectric dam in Alta, Norway (Andersen and Midttun 1985; Paine 1982; Dubec 2020).

Although these movements are often defined as being *against* certain forms of production and extraction, a crucial component of them is what they are fighting *for* in protecting land and water; while they are saying no, they are also, Estes (2019) explains, fighting for “something greater: the continuation of life on a planet ravaged by capitalism” (15). Silvia Federici (2019) identifies this as central to the Standing Rock camp against the DAPL, where a movement led by Indigenous women built an immense commons supporting up to seven thousand people (4). In seeking to make sense of and support this kind of political activism, some Indigenous thinkers, like Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011) and Glen Coulthard (2014), have proposed the framework of Indigenous cultural and political *resurgence*, which I have mentioned a couple of times in this and the previous chapter. In brief, resurgence is the rebuilding of Indigenous worlds despite ongoing colonialism and the conception of this as an important aspect of how to confront colonial power. Many Indigenous peoples are on the frontlines of rebuilding alternatives, just as they are in land protection countering extractive and polluting industries. But in the resurgence of alternatives just as in resistance, Indigenous groups are joined by many others. Two kinds of sites in WENA (and elsewhere) where there is a dire need to rebuild alternative worlds are urban areas and the industrialised countryside, and there are movements working for this. Schlosberg (2020) and Schlosberg and Coles (2016) identify a “sustainable materialist” environmentalism in movements around food, energy, and transformed production in Western countries. Gooch, Burman, and Olsson (2019) emphasise diverse practices from “eco-villages or cohousing” to projects for “re-commoning through sharing land, labour and resources” (18), such as the Transition Towns network and activities converging around degrowth (19-20). Cooperation Jackson and the Red Nation, which I mentioned above, could also be included here, as could La Vía Campesina, a leading force in countering industrialised agriculture which combines opposition to capitalism with the building of alternatives by focusing on food sovereignty through agroecological farming, peasant control over seeds, and women’s land rights.

The overview in this and the previous few sections of some alternative environmentalisms in WENA, from the rise of industrial capitalism to the post-financial-crash 2010s, provides a robust foundation for work on environmental justice imaginaries from the region; there are certainly movements and political thought to build on for WENA people interested in environmental justice. But there is also research on the political status of environmental movement organisations from the 1980s to the turn of the millennium that show that the situation remained challenging for counterhegemonic movements during the

period leading up to the 2010s—the decade that is in focus in this thesis and that I will turn to in the next chapter.

2.1.3 The Challenge of Movement Institutionalisation

The above overview of environmental justice movements provides a powerful counterexample to the mainstream imaginary of environmentalism in dominant culture, contradicting the claims about how environmental politics is of a different order than left/right politics which we encountered earlier. It becomes clear that theories of environmentalism as a new, post-materialist political development view their object of study—actual historical and contemporary movements—through a distorting lens which produces an image of environmentalism that confirms the theory regardless of what the evidence from actual movements should be able to support. If we do not look through this lens, we find a much greater legacy of environmental justice than is often assumed—including in WENA, as the previous two sections have made abundantly clear. In this sense, it is reasonable to brush off the hegemonic imaginary.

But there is an important caveat to add: the hegemonic imaginary is not a prop but a very real political achievement and it has influence in movements, meaning that there is a force for depoliticisation of environmentalism that constructs and reproduces it as the kind of post-materialist single-issue movement that the theories imagine. This explains my experience of encountering this kind of environmentalism when I started looking for political organisations to be involved in. To contribute to imaginaries of environmental justice requires us to look beyond the hegemonic one and focus on what it excludes, while also paying critical attention to how it may continue to constrain environmental politics. Or, to speak in Raymond Williams's (1977, 2010) terminology, which I introduced in the previous chapter: while dominant culture is not total but can be exceeded so that there are always sprouting seeds of emergent culture, and while an important part of counterhegemonic politics is to care for those seeds and nourish them into seedlings and plants, it is important to keep in mind as well that dominant culture is of course still dominant and that it exerts real power over movements and their imaginaries.

From the 1980s onwards, there is evidence that the hegemonic imaginary has been influential in connection to a process of *institutionalisation* of environmental social movements in several Western nation states (Guha 2000, 83). For instance, around the turn of the millennium the environmental movement in Sweden had been very thoroughly institutionalised—and in this process, ecological modernisation became dominant within movement organisations (Thörn and Svenberg 2016). We should understand this in relation to a shift that Anshelm and Hultman (2015) identify whereby Western capitalist institutions and states began to accept environmental issues as fact and as something to take seriously

(8), a result of which, they explain, was that an earlier focus on a general planetary crisis was replaced by a focus on the manageability of the specific issue of climate change (5). This shift made sustainable development—a term that was popularised in the so-called Brundtland report, *Our Common Future*, in 1987 (Dryzek 1997, 123)⁵⁷—the dominant paradigm for environmental politics (Anshelm and Hultman 2015, 8). There are indications that this tendency is particularly pronounced in the non-Anglophone West. Thörn and colleagues (2017) note that the degree of institutionalisation of environmentalism is lower in “Anglo-American . . . liberal market economies,” which amount to a form of capitalism distinct from the “organized capitalism” of several Western European countries (and Japan) in which there are “consensual relationships between state and civil society” to a much higher degree (19). Similarly, Hay and Haward (1988) have discussed how the UK has seen less of the kind of environmental reforms that have been significant in other parts of Europe.⁵⁸ But as I showed in the previous chapter, Anglophone conceptions of environmentalism—perhaps because of the characteristic of Anglo-American societies identified here—tend to focus on the non-Anglophone West, centring North-Western European countries like the Nordic countries or Scandinavia as well as Germany, the Netherlands, and Austria (e.g. Dryzek 1997, 137; Callaghan 2000). Hence, the tendency towards a managerial focus on climate change and the framework of post-materialist ecological modernisation is not limited to the non-Anglophone cultural sphere; the hegemonic imaginary is cross-cultural as its adherents from the US, Canada, and the UK look to the non-Anglophone West for inspiration.

Research on movement institutionalisation forms an important background to discussions of imaginaries of environmental justice in the 2010s. When the overview of radical movements in this chapter, which shows that environmental justice movements have persisted in WENA during the period of institutionalisation and into the 2010s, is placed alongside this research on movement mainstreaming, we get a sense of what the conditions were like for environmental justice in WENA during the 2010s: there was a tension between hegemonic and counterhegemonic imaginaries; between forms of dominant and emergent culture within environmentalism. To put this in the terms that inform the analysis of the dominant/emergent culture distinction in this thesis: there are traces of a coloniality of being in how environmental movement subjectivity is

⁵⁷ The report took its name from the former Norwegian prime minister Gro Harlem Brundtland who was tasked by the UN with chairing a commission on environmental problems and sustainable development.

⁵⁸ In the case of the UK, the lack of both the kind of transformation of social democratic environmental policy seen in other parts of Europe and of Green Party influence has been attributed to the “first past the post” electoral system, which makes it more difficult for new parties to enter parliament in the UK than in many other countries in Western Europe (Hay and Haward 1988, 434).

construed in dominant culture, since post-materialism obscures the worldmaking of people who protect land and water and (re-)build alternative sustainable livelihoods, and there is conversely something like a decoloniality of being in the persistence of environmental justice movements and thinking in WENA despite the forces of mainstreaming. This forms an important background to my review in the next chapter of the literature on political concepts in the 2010s related to environmental and climate justice—we will see that the tension between politicised and depoliticised views that has characterised environmentalist movements and imaginaries historically remains central.

Before moving on to this discussion in the next chapter, I turn to the debate in the period leading up to the 2010s about the politics of how nature and human-nature relations are understood, wherein we encounter entwined ideas about ontology and epistemology in environmental politics.

2.2 Being and Knowledge in a Politics-of-Nature Debate

2.2.1 Academic-Political Views on the Politics of Environmental Ontologies

In *What Is Nature?*, written nearly three decades ago, the philosopher Kate Soper (1995) overviewed a Western academic debate on the ontology of environment. The topic at the centre of this debate is *what* and *whether* nature is; how the concept should be defined and whether it should be used at all. As Soper's study attests, the topic was debated vigorously in the research that laid the foundation for the environmental humanities and in part also for political ecology. I here recount how this debate developed over the period when modern Western environmentalism was mobilising and leading up to the 2010s. Contributions to the debate were made in a wide range of academic disciplines, from anthropology to history to philosophy to literary studies; theoretical schools on the ontology of environment have not emerged in disciplinary silos, but there are plenty of cross-references between disciplines, just as there have been in the development of many other schools of thought like Marxism, poststructuralism, and feminist, queer, and postcolonial theory. My review here focuses on ecocriticism, as this is where my own work is the most clearly positioned since I am a literary scholar, but it also brings in references from environmental history and philosophy.⁵⁹ A review starting from a different discipline in the environmental humanities or from one of the disciplines that came to form political ecology would not diverge

⁵⁹ For readers interested in a summary of the ecocritical and environmental humanities debate on ontology as well as on epistemology, section 2.2 in the present chapter can be read together with section 3.2 in the next one.

much from what I delineate here (except in terms of the exact dating of the different developments).

Nature endorsers and the radical/reformist, deep/shallow ecology distinction

Since ecocriticism emerged as a branch of literary studies only in the 1990s, however, when the debate in environmentalism over the politics of nature had been going on for a good while, let me first offer a general introduction to an area of conflict that a large body of research across disciplines has been devoted to since the 1970s—the one that I was presented with as *the* conflict over forms of environmentalism in my first encounter with environmental activism. It has been formulated in different specific terms, with the most influential ones being put forth by the Norwegian philosopher and activist Arne Naess, who distinguished between *deep* and *shallow ecology* (see e.g. Davies 2009, 566). A key text in placing this at the centre of political discussions of varieties of environmentalism is *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* (1985) by Devall and Sessions. Other terms for the same distinction are *ecocentrism* and *anthropocentrism* (Eckersley 1992) or *ecocentrism* and *technocentrism* (O’Riordan 1971). Terminological specificities aside, these theorisations propose an opposition between worldviews that relate to and know or value nature “in itself” and those that value nature as a resource to be used by human society, or between ontologies that posit nature as having *intrinsic value* and ones that approach it through *instrumentalism* (Garrard 2012, 24; Davies 2009, 567; Killingworth and Palmer 1992, 11). Researchers have further connected this distinction to more concrete political programmes, captured in the much-used terms *reformism* and *radicalism* (e.g. Dryzek 1997; Garrard 2012) and often exemplified by the conflict between the *realos* and *fundis* (moderates and fundamentalists) of the German Green Party *Die Grünen* (Dryzek 1997, 174).⁶⁰

When ecocriticism began to crystallise as a specialisation within literary studies in the 1990s, deep ecological or ecocentric perspectives were influential.⁶¹ Lawrence Buell (2011) has discussed this period in ecocriticism in terms of a “first wave” during which many ecocritics focused on Anglo-American nature writing (89) and on literature and literary studies as potentially forwarding nature

⁶⁰ A number of thinkers use similar terms to define divergent political approaches in environmentalism. Dobson’s *Green Political Thought: An Introduction* ([1990] 2007) proposes the categories of *conservationism*, *reform environmentalism*, and *radical ecologism*, with the author himself arguing for a deep green, radical ecologist mode of environmentalism (see Leonard 2008, 6). Dalton (1994) too talks about *conservationism* and *ecologism* but depicts these as two consecutive waves of Western European environmental politics with conservationists’ acceptance of the social structure as it is being gradually replaced by ecologists’ efforts to remake the social world (47). Lewis’s *Green Delusions: An Environmentalist Critique of Radical Environmentalism* (1992) argues for a technocentric view, celebrating *moderate environmentalism* and dismissing other positions as *extremist*.

⁶¹ For a detailed account of the emergence of ecocriticism, see Heise (2006, 504-05).

conservation (94; for an example of this view, see Glotfelty 1996, xxi). Buell (2011) proposes that there are two somewhat different strands of thought within this first wave: a spiritually-oriented one covering post-Heideggerian,⁶² deep ecological thought, and a scientifically-oriented one with interests in research in conservation ecology (89-90) (and later, as I mention below, also in the application of evolutionary-psychological theory to literary production). The deep ecological tendencies in ecocriticism were generally oriented towards ideas about limits: in the introduction to the foundational ecocritical anthology *The Ecocriticism Reader* (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996), Glotfelty (1996) writes that early ecocritics were driven by “the troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits” (xx).

Nature sceptics in two kinds of critique of deep ecology, and retorting nature endorsers

Alongside deep ecological forms of ecocriticism in the 1990s, however, a “second wave” of ecocritical theory began to take shape. It critically contested the environmental ontology of ecocentrism:

First-wave ecocriticism typically privileged rural and wild spaces over urban ones. Against this, second-wave ecocriticism contended that that wall of separation is a historically produced artifact, that throughout human history nature itself has been subject to human reshaping, and that especially since the industrial revolution, metropolitan landscape and the built environment generally must be considered as at least equally fruitful ground for ecocritical work. (Buell 2011, 93)

Soper (1995) uses the term “nature scepticism” for the theories which ecocritics drew on in this contestation, and “nature endorsing” for the perspectives they opposed. As can be gathered from Buell’s summary, nature-sceptical thinkers in ecocriticism from this period called into question the ideal of untouched nature inherent in much wilderness conservation and deep ecology. Paradigmatic texts that have been influential in both the environmental humanities and political ecology are the environmental historian William Cronon’s “The Trouble with Wilderness: Or, Getting Back to the Wrong Nature” (1996) and the environmentalist Bill McKibben’s *The End of Nature* (1990), both of which argued against the preference for the pristine or the wild. But even though both authors can be understood to draw on a poststructuralist, postmodernist distrust of binary pairs such as nature/culture, nature/human, or nature/society, following the philosopher John O’Neill’s (2002) distinction between an *environmental justice line* and a *constructivist line* in critiques of nature I argue that there is an important difference between the two kinds of nature scepticism that Cronon and McKibben represent.

⁶² Post-Heideggerian ecophilosophy builds on the work of the phenomenological German philosopher Martin Heidegger.

The environmental justice line in a sense objects to the ecocentrism/anthropocentrism or deep/shallow ecology binaries, proposing instead to understand the political uses of a dominant kind of ecocentric thought, namely that which celebrates the wild. For Cronon (1996), the central point of the critique of “nature” was to reveal that the wilderness ideal is part of a problematic aspect of Western conservation efforts, as it overwrites how pre-European conquest environments were not wild but shaped by Indigenous peoples over centuries or even millennia, and that the wilderness ideal may thus serve to enforce the displacement and dispossession of Indigenous groups. There is evidence, for instance, from research on anti-logging activism in Canada that the questioning of the notion of protecting empty wilderness has proven important for the making of successful alliances between Indigenous groups and environmentalists (Jäggi 1996). In ecocriticism, Buell (2011) makes a connection between a critique of ecocentrism that draws on poststructuralism and socially oriented environmentalism (94-95). These examples belong to the environmental justice line of critique, which aligns with the imaginary of environmentalism as materialist that I discussed in the previous part of this chapter.

But O’Neill (2002) proposes that not all nature scepticism, to use Soper’s term, is conducive to environmental justice politics. In contrast to Cronon’s environmental justice critique, McKibben’s *The End of Nature* belongs to the constructivist line as it argues that because there is no untouched nature, there is no nature—and that is all that needs to be said on the topic. This signals a move from the critique of the preference for the wild to the construction of generalised nature-sceptical ontological theories. Such constructivism has been common in ecocriticism too (Buell 2011, 94). A precursory study in this vein is the literary critic Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America* (1964). Leo Marx argued against what he saw as “a simple-minded wishfulness, a romantic perversion of thought and feeling” (9) in pastoral literature, and for literary accounts which move from “a conventional tribute to the pleasures of withdrawal from the world,” through an acknowledgement of “the interruption of the machine” into any world to which one might attempt to withdraw, to “a far more complex state of mind” (15)—leading to a “complex pastoral” mode of storytelling which focuses on such hybrid environments. The complex pastoral is preferable, he claims, because the interruption of modernity and industry is part of “that flow of unique, irreversible events called history” (28). Construing anything that could be termed “natural” as irrevocably lost, Leo Marx argues for gradualist political progress within an industrial-capitalist and largely urban environment, positing this as the only option because all other worlds have forever disappeared into the pre-modern past. In the view of Leo Marx, McKibben, and other constructivists, an aesthetic and/or political preference for rural, non-industrial, or non-capitalist environments is irrelevant

and unrealistic. It is hard to find a place in this kind of thinking for the materialist environmentalism of land and water protection which often seeks to stop the intrusion of the machine and industry.

The constructivist line of nature scepticism has been granted much attention, and the politics of nature debate is shaped by how it has come to define the nature-sceptical position. Reacting to nature scepticism of this kind, nature endorsers argued that the philosophical position was applicable only in abstract thought and not in the real world where nature sceptics lead their lives and do believe in the reality of things like natural law, and that nature scepticism was relativist and as such not useful, or even actively harmful, for environmental protection; an example of such a counterargument can be found in the ecocriticism of Glen A. Love (2003, 8, 16, 21, 26, 87). This nature-endorsing riposte, making no distinction between types of critiques of concepts of nature, operates in as general a mode as the nature-sceptical constructionist arguments. Love's work can also serve to illustrate how nature-endorsing thinkers gradually came to be associated less with the spiritually oriented vein of deep ecology and more with a certain vein of ecological science together with evolutionary psychology, influenced by socio-biological research such as that of E. O. Wilson (1984).

A problem with the terms of the debate?

The ecocritical chronology, with an initial dominance of nature-endorsing ecocentric ontology, its contestation by two kinds of nature scepticism, and the ensuing retort by nature endorsers is part of the debate that Soper (1995) has studied, her survey showing that the ontology of environment is a central concern for research in the disciplines that later came together to shape both the environmental humanities and political ecology.⁶³ Considering how fervently the topic of ontology is debated and the prevalence of an ecocentrism/anthropocentrism distinction in much research, it would seem attractive to posit the ontology of environment—or ideas about nature—as *the* defining feature of environmentalist politics. But Soper (1995) concludes that “very differing discourses or theoretical perspectives on nature may be deployed in support of a shared set of political values” (5; see also 175), so that generalised conceptions of that which we call nature do not in themselves suggest a certain politics. What is more, political ecology suggests that the choice between these two ontologies and their associated politics is a false one: Robbins (2012) explains that political ecology opposes both positions, called *ecoscarcity* and *ecomodernism* in his work (19), as they both tend to blame the poor and local people who are thought to “destroy

⁶³ For further discussion of the concept of nature and its contestation in political ecology, see Robbins (2012, 122-42).

ecosystems out of ignorance, selfishness, and overpopulation” (106).⁶⁴ In the light of the discussion in the first part of this chapter, we could understand the debate as dominated by two forms of post-materialist environmentalism: one arguing for extensive conservation of nature set apart from the human, and one for the capacity of reflexive, ecological-modernisation governance to safeguard (enough) such nature. Both sidestep the kind of discussion of ontology and epistemology that would be conducive to environmental justice as their conceptions of *human* being become rather simplistic: they both generalise the human into one homogeneous category, leaving out the interconnections between how human *and* nonhuman ecological being are imagined in dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture. The more concrete and less generalised environmental justice critique of the Western preference for the wild, however, gestures towards alternative formulations of questions about ontology, however: questions about *whose* worldmaking is supported and legitimised when certain ideas about nature become hegemonic.

Despite the problem with the dominant positions in the debate, a clash between nature endorsing and nature sceptical perspectives continued with full force into the 2010s—but it also went through an interesting transformation. I will turn to this in the next chapter, where I focus on the period within which the texts I analyse in Part II are positioned. But first, one dimension of the debate over the politics of nature remains to be covered: its more explicit discussion of way of knowing, which revolves around questions of aesthetics and forms of expression.

2.2.2 Related Views on Forms of Expression as Ways of Knowing

Ideas about knowledge are implied in the above, such as in the divergence between ways of “valuing” nature. A few researchers connect this to forms of expression and in this comment more explicitly on what ways of knowing are preferred by different positions in the politics of nature debate.

The most pronounced tendency in the debate is that deep ecologists favour poetic and experimental forms. The ecocritic Greg Garrard (2012) observes this: deep ecology, particularly in the vein influenced by “post-Heideggerian philosophy,” promotes poetic or difficult language as a path to a better human relationship with nature (or being-in-the-world, in Heideggerian terms) (34-35). We saw earlier that a constructivist critic of the concept of nature like Leo Marx

⁶⁴ There is other sociological research that, like Robbins’s, analyses these two ontologies and forms of politics alongside a number of other alternatives in environmentalism, such as Dryzek’s (1997) wide-ranging study of environmental discourses (where the two positions are referred to as survivalism and Prometheanism) and White, Rudy, and Gareau’s (2016) critical evaluation of environmental social theory (where the terms used for the two are Malthusianism and Prometheanism).

(1964) also dismisses something he calls “romantic” thinking and sentiment and that he prefers a disillusioned literary form that he calls the “complex pastoral,” by implication suggesting a connection between the deep ecology he opposes and some kind of fantastic romantic form. And the text by Cronon (1996) that I cited above as illustrating the environmental justice line of critique of concepts of nature in its form indicates a preference for critical-theoretical academic explication rather than poetic experimentation.

Trying to make sense of these kinds of examples to the extent that they relate to radical environmental social movements, Dryzek (1997) offers a clear theorisation: he proposes a distinction between radical movements that are “romantic” and “rationalist.” According to Dryzek’s analysis, the latter category encompasses movements that rely on the kind of knowledge produced through analyses of political economy and social structures, among which he counts environmental justice struggles against toxic pollution, social ecology, and social ecofeminism. His category of the “romantic” instead includes all those approaches that he calls “idealist,” such as deep ecology and other spiritually oriented movements—that is, forms of radical environmentalism that rely on the notion that it is “ideas, not material forces, that move history: so the key to changing the world is to change ideas” (164). He further argues that the poetic use of metaphors and personal stories is romantic and is seen by idealists as intrinsically transformative (166) and that such a “vivid and colorful” form of expression is in conflict with rational thinking which means that green rationalists tend to reject it (186). Green rationalists are also described as “inclined to offer argument, rather than appeal to the emotions” (187). Thus, Dryzek’s theory suggests a contrast between the rational-scientific and the romantic-spiritual or -affective as two ways of knowing, and only the former is seen as part of and capable of supporting environmental justice.

Interrogating the rational/romantic distinction through other research on cultural expression and politics

If we look more broadly at research on cultural expression and social critique, however, it becomes less clear which forms of knowledge and expression should be associated with which kinds of politics. In fact, it has been observed by political ecologists that mystical, popular- or folk-cultural, spiritual, and religious forms of expression and thought are common in cultures of resistance to environmental injustices (Peet and Watts 1996b, 263; Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, 75; Di Chiro 2011, 232). Let me offer three illustrations that are of particular relevance for this thesis: one from the Romantic period, because it is appropriate to consider the forms of expression and politics of actual Romantics in a debate that tends to use (as we will see further in the next chapter) the term “romanticism”; one from the protest movement in music from the 60s and 70s

onwards, because it emerged alongside the social movements of the time (including environmentalism) and because popular music is one of the forms of expression that I analyse; and one from the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory, because this debate is among the most detailed and explicit ones over the politics of forms of expression in Western academia.

When engaging in depth with the Romantics of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, it is much more difficult to define Romantic forms of expression than someone like Dryzek lets on; just as the Romantics, as I showed earlier, were politically diverse, their intellectual work was formally diverse. The literary critics Robert Löwy and Michael Sayre (2001) show that the Romantic intellectual John Ruskin merged “cultural criticism and economic criticism” and “aesthetics and social protest” (128). Another similar example is the debate between Wordsworth—known to students of literature as one of the major Romantic poets in Britain—and Malthus on economy and (the human place in) nature (Becker et al. 2005). Wordsworth as we encounter him in this debate is no detached poet-idealist seeking to effect change through linguistic experiment; a more accurate description of him is as an intellectual working in different genres in ways which deter sharp distinction between poetic and argumentative style. The Romantics (with a capital R) themselves were not all romantics in Dryzek’s sense.

Research on protest music and music in land protection movements poses a similar problem for neat definitions of creative cultural expression as idealist-romantic and as the binary opposite of materialist social movements’ imagined scientific forms of expression. The protest music of the 60s and 70s had a role in “rationalist” movements—movements oriented towards changing social structures, with social justice as a core concern (e.g. Kutschke and Norton 2013). That singers and songwriters were part of this wave of movements, including land and water protection movements, is a point made by Sofia Jannok: when I interviewed her for *Uneven Earth*, she explained that art and culture have always been integral to Sámi political movements, mentioning the culture that emerged around the opposition to the Alta dam and musicians like Nils-Aslak Valkeapää, nicknamed Áillohaš, and Mari Boine (Blomqvist 2016, n.p.). Valkeapää and Boine were part of a Sámi cultural movement that gained momentum during the period when protest music grew big in the Anglophone world. The movement combined traditional Sámi yoik with folk, pop, and rock music (Edström 2010), and research has pointed out how important these cultural experiments have been for the resurgence of Sámi culture and the creative remaking of Sámi identities (Morset 2009; Jones-Bamman 2001). Although this research talks of culture in Indigenous struggles rather than in environmental ones, it is also directly related to environmental justice because of the position of Indigenous land protectors within environmental justice movements discussed earlier in this

chapter as well as in Chapter 1. There is also research specifically on environmental social movements and singer-songwriting that suggests something similar to the above: Ross Collin (2013) analyses the role of singer-songwriters and music in a US environmental movement, where songs contribute to the construction of a collective identity and of connections between people both within the group and between the group and the general public.

And finally, turning to the Frankfurt School debate over which forms of expression are conducive to and could support radical anti-capitalist politics, we can extract no clear answer on which forms of expression should be considered aligned with which politics. The Frankfurt theorists did not reach any agreement on the topic; for instance, Georg Lukács ([1938] 2007) argued for the realist novel and against avant-garde aesthetics, and Theodor Adorno ([1945] 1996) argued for avant-garde aesthetics and against “radio music.”⁶⁵

These three illustrations give us an idea of how complex the question of the intersection of politics and knowledge forms and forms of expression is. This topic certainly merits further investigation, not least because this debate is still ongoing, as we shall see in the next chapter.

In this chapter, I have shown that environmental justice movements have long been present in WENA, but that hegemonic types of environmentalism and the hegemonic imaginary push them into the margins. This is the foundational political situation that needs to be reckoned with in an investigation into possible imaginaries of environmental justice from the region. We have seen both that it is important to transcend the conception of environmentalism as a post-materialist new social movement because it excludes actually existing environmental justice, and that it is equally important to pay attention to the impact on movements and imaginaries of the forces of mainstreaming of dominant culture. The latter tendency is apparent in recent years in the tendency towards institutionalisation of environmental social movements in Western Europe in particular and in the wider Western imaginary of environmentalism based on experiences from this region. This sets the stage for a discussion in the next chapter of the political concepts evolving in conjunction with social movements in the 2010s. We have also seen in this chapter that the exact relations between political analysis, ontology, and epistemology are more complicated than the earlier debate on the topic often admits. It is important to

⁶⁵ For a collection of essays where the different positions and the debate between these positions are represented, see *Aesthetics and Politics* (Adorno et al. [1977] 2007). The debate revolved around what constituted “false consciousness,” or cultural ideas that are understood as inimical to revolutionary class consciousness.

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bring with us the insight that most of the contributions to this debate are not concerned with being and knowledge in the sense that these terms are used in decolonial theory today—although critiques of the wilderness ideal as a justification of Western dispossession of Indigenous peoples can be seen as precursory to a decolonial critique of the erasure of Indigenous ways of being and dismissal of Indigenous knowledge.

Against the background provided in the present chapter, the next chapter proceeds to identify important points of contention in and around WENA imaginaries of environmental justice in the 2010s and to situate the work of Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs within this terrain of conceptions of environmental justice in WENA during the decade that I focus on. What happens in the 2010s in WENA to the tendencies that we have begun to see in this chapter through its long historical overview of imaginaries of environmentalism and of environmentalist ontologies and epistemologies in such imaginaries? How are the tensions observed here—between politicisation and depoliticisation in environmentalism and environmental justice, and between ways of approaching the politics of ontology and epistemology in environmentalism—approached and potentially transformed in and around the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs?

3. Previous Research on WENA Environmental Justice Imaginaries in the 2010s

A decade or so after I had begun to explore environmental activism in Sweden, I encountered the international political-academic world of political ecology and thus became aware of types of environmental politics that brought together the social and the ecological. This awareness meant that I gradually came to see that such politics *did* exist in Sweden and WENA, even though it got much less attention in dominant culture than the various forms of post-materialist environmentalism—both deep ecology and ecological modernisation—that were discussed in the previous chapter. That a politics of environmental justice exists and has long existed in WENA is a powerful foundation for possible contemporary imaginaries of environmental justice from the region. But the historical and ongoing silencing of environmental justice also impacts environmental political imaginaries to this day, even in the thinking and practices of people who may not consciously root for a mainstream view, as we shall see. Thus, among political ecologists who pay attention to environmental justice in WENA in the 2010s, there are discussions of tensions between hegemonic and counterhegemonic strands of environmentalism and how these tensions occur around and even *within* movements and imaginaries that are oriented towards environmental justice. The imagined scene of a conflict between Indigenous and environmentalist land and water protectors and a mining corporation represented by its CCO that opened Chapter 1 draws on and illustrates extreme—and admittedly simplified and stereotypical—positions within this tension field of imaginaries of environmental sustainability and social justice together. Political-ecological research on such tensions identifies and proposes a number of social movement concepts to denote the political positions in question; positions that are messier and more complex than what we encounter in my simplified scene and that can be understood to exist on a scale between the extremes that the scene depicts. What conceptions of socially oriented environmentalism, with possible dominant colonial and emergent decolonial characteristics, emerge in and around WENA environmental justice movements in the 2010s? This is the topic of the first part of this chapter.

There is also in the 2010s an ongoing academic-political debate about the politics of ontologies and epistemologies in political ecology and among environmental humanities scholars (the latter both with and without an orientation towards environmental justice), a debate that continues where the

one in the decades leading up to this period left off. This debate in some ways repeats the common positions on ontology and epistemology in environmental politics that I accounted for in the previous chapter, and in other ways offers, or professes to offer, new standpoints. In charting the positions in this debate, I pay particular attention to claims about the relevance of certain perspectives for social movements and point to the contributions to the debate that would be interesting to look at in more detail in analyses of conceptions of being and knowledge in environmental justice imaginaries. The ongoing academic-political debate in the 2010s on the politics of ontologies and epistemologies is the topic of the second part of this chapter.

I should comment on why the survey of previous research covers these two distinct research areas, instead of simply covering (postcolonial) ecocriticism and political ecology on conceptions of being and knowledge—or worldmaking—in imaginaries of environmental justice, and in particular in the six texts that I focus on in my analysis. The simple answer is that there is very little research specifically on this. Aspects of this topic are touched upon, however, throughout the material surveyed here: notions of who can drive a politics of environmental justice are implied in particular in the research on the politics of social movement concepts; and research on ontology and epistemology in environmentalism entails notions of how to understand such political agency in ontological terms and what its forms of knowledge and ways of knowing are. Moreover, the research I cover from these two areas includes many widely influential academic-political thinkers, which means that the discussion of this body of research is a good way of situating my thesis, and in particular my empirical study in Part II, within some of the most important ongoing theoretical developments and disputes in socio-environmental research—those developments and disputes that my third research question, on theory in political ecology and the environmental humanities, directs our attention to.

In the overviews in both parts of the chapter, I will situate the work of the writer-activists/writer-lobbyists Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs within the formation in the 2010s of social movement frameworks, conceptions of human and nonhuman being, arguments over whose worldviews and knowledges are politically relevant, and ideas about forms of expression as ways of knowing in relation to political positions. I thereby continue the discussion from Chapter 1 about why these texts are interesting and relevant to analyse, and what dimensions of the research questions about the imagining of sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them (question 1) and the environmental justice implications of this (question 2) can be answered through the analysis of each specific text. In doing so, I position the six texts as part of an ongoing contestation of the meaning of environmental justice and its worldmakers and

worldwreckers. This chapter thereby forms the next step, following on the first step taken in Chapter 2, in the contextualisation of the six texts and their imaginaries.

3.1 The Politics of Social Movement Concepts

Among the political concepts in WENA in the 2010s that entangle social and environmental concerns, which ones could be understood as part of emergent decolonial culture and which might rather be seen as expressions of dominant colonial culture? I approach this question and consider what political concepts the works of Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs may be connected to through three interrelated tensions that characterise a spectrum of environmental justice imaginaries: between anti-capitalism and green social democracy; between decoloniality and coloniality; and between conceptions of reformist environmentalism (and sustainable development in particular) as antagonists and as allies of environmental justice.

3.1.1 Different Imaginaries within Environmental Justice, from Anti-Capitalism and Decoloniality to Reformisms

The 2010s are characterised by a breadth of movements with an environmental justice focus, as the many examples of political mobilisation and organisation that I cited in the previous chapter indicate. In considering the politics of this period, Brand and Niedermoser (2019) identify “a new politicization of the ecological crisis, comparable to that in the 1970s and 1980s” (173), which would mean that there is a counterforce against the mainstreaming that I referred to at the end of the previous chapter. They contend that the 2008-2009 financial crisis was a turning point in this (175). While they comment on the ecological crisis as a whole, much research on political ideas in and around environmental movements in the 2010s has focused on the climate movement. Some researchers find evidence within the climate movement of something like the politicisation identified by Brand and Niedermoser, as global climate justice is becoming part of the movement’s agenda:

At the 2013 United Nations climate summit in Warsaw (COP19), 800 people – representing leading environmental movement organizations (EMOs) in the Global South and North, unions, and other organizations and networks deeply committed to global climate activism – walked out of the meeting under the banner ‘Polluters talk, we walk.’ A statement issued in connection with the action expressed solidarity with countries in the Global South, advocating a “just transition” consistent with the “climate justice” slogan, which demonstrators had declaimed outside the conference venue five days earlier. (Thörn et al. 2017, 1)

Thörn and colleagues propose that the global climate movement is thus in one sense united around the concept of climate justice. But, they add, in another sense it remains divided as *climate justice is understood to mean different things by different branches of the global movement* (3).⁶⁶ Similarly, Debra Salazar and Donald Alper (2011) have found that there is a conflict between *divergent conceptions of justice within the environmental justice movement* in North America (782). A concrete example is offered by Nick Estes (2019) in his analysis of the Standing Rock water protectors: proponents of the Dakota Access Pipeline have co-opted the environmental justice concept and claim that they have made sure there will be no disproportionate impact of the pipeline on ethnic minorities (11)—a co-optation that produces a watered-down (or, perhaps more accurately, oil-soiled) imaginary of environmental justice. The trend, therefore, is not simply that a politicised justice-centred approach to environmental issues is gaining ground; instead, it seems that increased politicisation and a proliferation of environmental justice concerns is leading to a conflict between more and less politicised and more and less radically justice-centred imaginaries. Recalling the analysis in the previous chapter of the situation for environmental justice in WENA in the run-up to the 2010s, these recent developments should be seen as part of an ongoing contestation over what environmentalism is and can be—a contestation that is also playing out *within* the politics of environmental justice in the 2010s. Thus it is that conflicts between land and water protectors and industries like mining corporations can be framed as conflicts over what environmental justice means, as I suggested in the opening scene in Chapter 1 where an Indigenous activist and a corporate CCO speak about their proposed worldmaking projects on a mountainside. And thus it is as well that tensions can arise within land and water protection movements between the many different social groups that they are made up of—like Indigenous people, environmentalists, workers, journalists, and more—and even within social groups whose members may have different views of what sustainable and socially just worldmaking would entail.

Between anti-capitalism and green social democracy

We see this clearly in the research that discusses the positionality of different conceptions of political change that are emerging within and in reference to social movements, for which researchers are using concepts that suggest a

⁶⁶ Thörn and colleagues (2017) also point out that the “broad-based global climate mobilization in the run-up to the 2015 Paris COP” meant a temporary turn away from internal conflicts in the climate movement (1), but their discussion a few pages later, which I cite here, underlines just how temporary this was. The division between conceptions of justice within the global movement seems to be an important characteristic of it despite this temporary unity around COP21 in Paris. It would be interesting to study this dynamic within the climate movement in more detail and to see what it might reveal about the politicisation/depolicitisation tension as well as about a possible North/South conflict in the movement.

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conflict between centre-left reformism and far-left anti-capitalism. The anthropologist Hans A. Baer (2011) has identified this kind of conflict in the climate movement:

The climate movement in both its international and national manifestations is broad and disparate and exhibits three tendencies: (i) a *green social democratic* one that seeks to call for ecological modernisation and to regulate capitalism; (ii) an *anticapitalist and radical* one which believes that, ultimately, capitalism must be transcended to achieve a safe climate; and (iii) an *in-between* one that recognises climate justice issues but is not explicitly anticapitalist. Whereas groups that belong to the first tendency generally do not give a great deal of attention to social justice issues, those that belong to the latter two tendencies do. (256-57; emphases added)

Baer evidently does not see green social democracy as part of the climate justice movement, and he considers climate justice to be divided into one strand which is anti-capitalist, and one which sits between social democracy and anti-capitalism and supports climate justice rhetorically but perhaps not in any more profound sense. The two major categories of social—or left-wing—environmentalism that Baer brings up here occur in a number of other texts on positions within environmental movements. White, Rudy, and Gareau's (2016) theoretical intervention into Anglophone debates over forms of environmentalism identifies, on the one hand, *UN global internationalism, sustainable development and social democratic visions of ecological modernization*, and, on the other hand, *ecopopulism and the environmentalism of the poor* (160-61). Like Baer, White, Rudy, and Gareau maintain that climate justice goes well beyond social democratic thought and seeks deeper structural change globally (206). The climate movement activists and researchers Geoff Mann and Joel Wainwright (2018) comment on the same tension within left-wing environmentalism and maintain that climate justice opposes bourgeois democracy and its “unspoken ‘common sense’ conception of the political” which is “a product of more than two centuries of liberal hegemony” (80). A study by Jonas Anshelm and Martin Hultman (2015) of Swedish environmental political debates around the early 2010s (as I periodise the decade) uses similar terms: there are two left-leaning discourses of global climate change, *green Keynesianism*, promoting public investment and some social change, and *eco-socialism*, imagining a wholly different social order. This body of research suggests a different tension between imaginaries than the deep-ecological radicalism/ecomodernist reformism one; a tension between radicalism and reformism that is not about deep/shallow ecology as much as about the classical revolution/reform distinction in the so-called “old” politics of class.

Research comparing labour movements and their environmentalism across the globe has identified this tension between two forms of leftist environmentalism as well. Barca (2019) identifies a conflict between two blocs of labour organisations globally: while “some unions do endorse an Environmental Justice

or even an anti-capitalist agenda” (227), it is clear when looking at the European context that most unions there do not but instead align themselves with ecological modernisation (228) and favour visions of green growth (233). Barca analyses the Rio +20 summit and the alternative “People’s Summit” that gathered in opposition to the mainstream meeting and issued an alternative document to that of the official meeting, and finds that “a number of workers’ organizations (such as La Via Campesina, or the Landless Movement of Brazil) . . . positioned themselves with the counter-hegemonic bloc” and the alternative meeting, but that European unions as part of the “international trade-union confederations . . . aligned themselves with the hegemonic bloc” of the mainstream summit (227; see also Brand and Niedermoser 2019, 176).

This tension between conceptions of left-wing environmentalism has been observed to occur in the work of both Naomi Klein and Kim Stanley Robinson, whose visions fluctuate between green social democracy and anti-capitalist eco-socialism. One interpretation of Klein’s work emphasises her radicalism: she has been considered a central thinker in environmental justice (Barca 2019, 227), an anti-capitalist degrowth thinker (Robbins 2020, 3), and a socialist thinker who sketches a “radical reformist program” which can form “a part, at least, of a ‘transitional strategy’” away from capitalism (Leahy 2018, 62). Another interpretation sees Klein’s work as containing two irreconcilable positions, with the anti-capitalism of “Blockadia” (which we encountered in Chapter 1) sitting uneasily next to a reformist vision—and the latter being dominant (Out of the Woods 2020, 195-206; Ajl 2021, 86-90). Robinson, whom Klein quotes in the epigraph to *This Changes Everything*, seems to follow a similar pattern. His work—in particular the Mars trilogy—has, on the one hand, been picked out as a unique effort in recent years to imagine socialism (Swidorski 2001). On the other hand, Robinson has positioned himself as a middle-way thinker, claiming in an interview that his version of utopianism is more something like “optopia” (“the best that you can get given the situation you’re in now”) (Heise 2016b, 32), and imagining a catastrophically flooded New York City in the novel *2312* as a site of marvel (Christensen and Heise 2017, 459) although we encounter what is certainly still a capitalist city and world in this novel.⁶⁷ I have previously analysed the tension between reform and revolution in Robinson’s *Green Earth* (2015) (or *Science in the Capital* trilogy, as the earlier three-volume version was dubbed), arguing that its ending in one sense supports reformism but in another sense—although this reading requires us to interpret certain events and relationships in

⁶⁷ This capitalist characteristic of the society depicted is clearly to be seen in *2312*’s (Robinson 2012) foundational worldbuilding: the imagined future is characterised by an accelerated solar system-level version of present resource-intensive capital-driven exploitation, something that could be interpreted through world-systems theory as an extrapolation of the capitalist world system into a capitalist solar-system system.

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the story symbolically—gestures towards the ultimate desirability of revolutionary change (Blomqvist 2019, 243-45). It is therefore unclear what kinds of environmental justice imaginaries Klein and Robinson alongside other thinkers on the eco-socialist/green social democratic spectrum should be seen as constructing, and this merits further investigation.

Between decoloniality and coloniality

A closely related distinction between imaginaries of environmental justice that emerges in the research is one between decoloniality and coloniality *within* environmental justice. Lina Álvarez and Brendan Coolsaet (2020) have found that “environmental justice scholarship is too geographically and conceptually bound to a hegemonic-Western idea of modernity and Western-inspired political ideals,” producing what they term a “coloniality of justice” (55). Gordon Walker (2014) connects these kinds of limitations to how the environmental justice framework has spread from the US to other parts of the Global North and later to the Global South (225-26); it thus often reflects the Western culture within which it originated. Because of this, political ecologists and Indigenous activists have argued that conceptions of environmental justice in the Global North are in need of *decolonisation* (Temper 2019; Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020) and that they need to be *indigenised* (Gilio-Whitaker 2019).

I have found no previous research that explicitly talks of how the conflict between coloniality and decoloniality plays out within specific texts from WENA in the 2010s that could be construed as partaking of environmental justice imaginaries. Texts that could be studied in research on this include the work of Indigenous thinkers who are part of and write about land and water protection, like Nick Estes (2019), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011, 2017a, 2017b), and Sofia Jannok (2016); the work of someone like Naomi Klein (2014), who focuses at least in part on the political power of Indigenous-led land protection movements (and who in this, among other things, interviews the activist and theorist of Indigenous resurgence Leanne Betasamosake Simpson, as acknowledged by another Indigenous thinker doing similar work [Coulthard 2014, 170]); and critical academic work that questions Western assumptions about what a good life and a good society is, like Anna Tsing’s (2015) challenging of conceptions of progress and writings on “post-development” such as contributions by authors from WENA and the Global North to the anthology *Pluriverse: A Post-Development Dictionary* (Kothari et al. 2019). The possible decolonial dimensions of these texts and others like them may contribute to the construction of desires beyond dominant colonial culture and direct political struggles towards other aims; they may be part of efforts to decolonise and, to the extent that they are written by Indigenous writers, indigenise environmental justice. To study such texts alongside texts on the anti-capitalist/green social

democracy spectrum allows for an interrogation of how this spectrum may overlap with the decoloniality/coloniality one.

Between conceptions of reformisms as antagonist and as ally of environmental justice

Although the research discussed in the previous two sections places reformist thinking like green social democracy in opposition to environmental and climate justice, there is in fact no agreement in the research as to whether such reformism is necessarily inimical to more radical political projects. The possibility that reformist environmentalisms could be allies of anti-capitalist ones has been discussed at length in connection to a term that partially overlaps with green social democracy according to White, Rudy, and Gareau's (2016, 160-61) categorisations cited above, namely sustainable development—an overlap that is confirmed by the sustainable development proponent Jeffrey Sachs's (2015) references to Keynesianism (73-74, 143). I will now briefly summarise arguments over whether sustainable development and similar reformisms are antagonists or allies of environmental justice.

There are interesting arguments in political ecology about the prospects of something like alliances between environmental justice and sustainable development and other reformisms, suggesting that environmental justice imaginaries need not necessarily dismiss the sustainable development concept.⁶⁸ The study of environmentalist discourses by White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) that I have cited in this and the previous chapter provides thorough reviews of possible positions on a number of varieties of environmentalism, discussing them from a politicised perspective but without being guided by preformed opinions about which kinds of social theory can and cannot be useful for socio-environmental movements. Their study has been one of the sources of inspiration for the way I approach reformist imaginaries that may be both useful and harmful to environmental justice. In the following, I will first give the case for considering sustainable development and similar kinds of reformisms as antagonists of environmental justice, and then show how there might nonetheless be ways (though with many caveats) in which they can be allies of it.

As indicated above, one way to interpret sustainable development is to posit it as a kind of social democratic governance framework. But White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) also interpret the emergence of sustainable development as a transitional step towards neoliberalisation and depoliticisation of environmental politics (164, 168), pointing out that neoliberal, market-oriented modes of

⁶⁸ There are also similar arguments to those I recount in this section about the positionality of ecological modernisation, with Harvey (cited in White, Rudy, and Gareau 2016, 207) suggesting that there is an opening in ecological modernisation for more radical perspectives and that social movements can use this to their benefit, whereas Locher and Fressoz (2012) and Barca (2019, 227) define ecological modernisation as clearly antagonistic to radical socio-environmentalist thought and as blocking real transformation.

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governance were being promoted, for instance, at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (165). Anshelm and Hultman (2015) also identify this tendency for neoliberalisation and depoliticisation during a period when sustainable development was a buzzword, in the aftermath of the COP15 in Copenhagen in 2009: the urgent concern with climate change in mainstream industrial-capitalist culture then began to decline and a business-as-usual mood settled in (130-31). White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) further show that post-materialism—the problems with which were covered in the previous chapter—remains an influential frame during the period that Sachs calls “the age of sustainable development,” entwined with and present in the two popular concepts of the environmental Kuznet curve (the notion that resource use intensifies with some economic development but then, in a U-shaped curve, declines with more development) and the dematerialisation thesis (that economic growth will gradually be “decoupled” from material throughput) (102). Moreover, political ecologists have been sceptical about a term that is related to sustainable development, namely “the green economy” (the term was launched alongside “sustainable development” in the official document from the Rio+20 Summit [Aj] 2021, 24): Goodman and Salleh (2013) consider it pure capitalist ideology inimical to radical perspectives. Sustainable development can even be seen defending neo-colonial land grabbing: Harvey (1993) writes that “while few would now dare to be so blatant” as to put forth explicitly colonialist arguments for Western control of African resources,

there is a strong strain of this kind of thinking in World Bank arguments and even in such a seemingly progressive document as the Brundtland report [on sustainable development]. Control over the resources of others, in the name of planetary health, sustainability of [*viz.*] preventing environmental degradation, is never too far from the surface of many western proposals for global environmental management. (25)

Though it is unclear whether sustainable development should be considered to be social democratic or neoliberal, the critique is clear in depicting it as incorrigibly capitalist and colonialist. Something along these lines is suggested about Sachs’s thinking specifically by Andani Thakhathi (2019): analysing the “master narrative” about Africa’s sustainable development in texts including Sachs’s *The Age of Sustainable Development*, he finds that the implied “storyworld” of the master narrative depicts Africa as “lacklustre” and as an impediment to sustainable development.⁶⁹

The case for an analogous take on related strands of reformist environmentalism—such as that of Jonathon Porritt—is strong as well. Harvey

⁶⁹ Thakhathi uses the concept of storyworld, as he draws on narratological storyworld analysis in his article. This makes his study particularly interesting for this thesis, as I will discuss further in the next chapter.

(1993) voices a critique of such reformist green thinking too: he writes that there are ambiguities in the political thought of many environmentalists, citing Porritt's and David Winner's 1988 book *The Coming of the Greens* as an example, and that these ambiguities make him doubtful about viewing them as allies to anti-capitalist politics as "it becomes almost impossible to pin down their socio-political programmes with any precision even though their aim may be 'nothing less than a non-violent revolution'" (20). Also writing about Jonathon Porritt and the unclear position of environmentalists, White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) find evidence of a move from radical ecological thinking to bright green reformism with former limits-to-growth adherents now arguing for "ecotechnical innovation" and "market mechanisms" (65). They explain that Porritt was clearly oriented towards concerns with limits to growth in the 1970s and 1980s, but then in his 2007 book *Capitalism—As if the World Matters* instead makes the case for economic growth with the reservation that it needs to be of the right kind and benefit the poor. This shift in his thinking comes with an increased interest in the concept of sustainable development, as seen in his publishing of texts on the concept from the 2000s (e.g. Porritt 2003). However, rather than a simple shift from one to another kind of environmentalism, the changes in Porritt's thought could be seen as an attempt to amalgamate radical and reformist green thought: the title of Porritt's 2007 book, *Capitalism—As if the World Matters*, combines pro-capitalism with a nudge to the radical ecological thought of the 1970s, as the latter part of the title may allude to the works *Small Is Beautiful: A Study of Economics As If People Mattered* by E.M. Schumacher ([1973] 1993) (Porritt has written the introduction to the 1993 Vintage edition of Schumacher's book) and *Deep Ecology: Living as if Nature Mattered* by Devall and Sessions (1985). This is, indeed, ambiguous. In an article on how to unite ecological and class movements, Shantz (2004) explains that he has little patience with these tendencies: "By accepting the structure of existing society rather than directly confronting its underlying assumptions and class antagonisms the potential for co-optation is a pervasive and serious danger" (706). He posits Greenpeace—an organisation that, as Doherty and Doyle (2006) have pointed out, has a tendency "to frame its campaigns in moral rather than ideological ways" (698)—as an example of this.

Such, then, is the case for viewing sustainable development and similar reformist environmentalisms as antagonists of environmental justice. But an open mind towards the possibility of seeing these imaginaries as allies of environmental justice can also be argued for, on the basis of precisely those ambiguities that lead some to dismiss them.

Concerning sustainable development, research frequently points out that there are multiple and sometimes conflicting views on what the term means (Leonard 2008, 14; Dryzek 1997, 123-25; Jerneck et al. 2011, 75)—and the same thing has been remarked concerning the closely related term *sustainability* (Olsson and

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Gooch 2019, 2), which increasingly replaced the term sustainable development in institutional discourse during the early twenty-first century (Bothello and Djelic 2018). About the ambiguities of the prominent sustainable development thinker Jeffrey Sachs in particular, Doug Henwood (2006) has commented—although through an analysis of his earlier work on development—on how Sachs expresses critique of Western imperialism and dominant forms of development policy while also having been an architect behind neoliberal shock doctrines in Bolivia and parts of post-communist Europe. There might thus be at least strands in Sachs’s work that could support a decolonial environmental justice-oriented understanding of sustainable development, but these strands might be counteracted by expressions of dominant culture in the work. In any case, the ambiguities of the terms sustainable development and sustainability have led some to propose a distinction between *weak* and *strong sustainability*, with proponents of weak sustainability seeking to maintain most aspects of the status quo while those who work for strong sustainability seek more far-reaching, systemic change (Olsson and Gooch 2019, 2). The following suggestions could be understood to build on the possibility of a radical, “strong” conception of sustainability and sustainable development. The environmental justice scholar Giovanna Di Chiro (2008, 286) proposes that social movements can use the widespread appeal of sustainable development thinking strategically, arguing that even through it currently seems like the politics of sustainability is maintaining structures of inequality and that it is not preventing environmental degradation, the concept’s integration of social, economic, and ecological concerns also potentially aligns with environmental justice. Lending support to such an argument, Gooch, Burman, and Olsson (2019) have found examples of overlaps between the transition movement and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (20). A related argument is Agyeman and Evans’s (2004) about how “just sustainability,” which combines sustainable development with social justice concerns, has emerged as an important framework for environmental justice politics in the UK. Coming at the issue from a more critical angle, Menton and colleagues (2020) write that decolonial environmental justice could potentially inform a critical reevaluation of the SDGs.

White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) make a similar argument, based on in-depth textual analysis, about those environmentalisms that they label “bright green” (182-85). “Reading beneath the green business uplift narrative” that permeates texts of this kind, they write, “many bright green authors acknowledge that much more radical regime change will be required to make their visions possible” (187). Thus, the ambiguities in Porritt’s thinking that I discussed above do not only mean that it can lend support to continued capitalist exploitation of land and people, but also that there may be an opening for more radical interpretations of his work. Indeed, it is interesting to note that Porritt was director, between 1984

and 1990, of Friends of the Earth Britain⁷⁰—an organisation that, as we saw in the previous chapter, has aligned itself with Southern environmental justice concerns. White, Rudy, and Gareau also highlight the species of thought that Porritt is working with in the design fiction *The World We Made*—thinking on how to alter social structures through design and urban planning, or “a systematic redesign of urban forms” (185)—as one of the kinds of bright green imaginaries that are particularly interesting from a radical, anti-capitalist point of view.

The question of how to position sustainable development and related bright green thinking remains open. What is the relationship in works on sustainable development between the hope for (very minor) reforms within capitalism and the potentially radical and socially oriented environmentalist horizon in this kind of thinking?

A gap in the research field and the relevance of the analysis of the six texts, #1

So far in this chapter, I have considered how to understand some prominent political concepts in the 2010s around which environmental justice imaginaries are constructed, identifying a tension between emergent decolonial and dominant colonial culture *within* environmental justice. We have also seen that there is no agreement on how to position specific concepts like sustainable development, green social democracy, and anti-capitalism/eco-socialism in relation to each other, nor on how to position the work of thinkers engaging with those concepts, such as the texts that I am focusing on in this thesis.

It is against this background that it becomes instructive to compare the politics of the texts that I am working on in the empirical part of this thesis. Jannok as a voice from land protection movements and Tsing’s attempt to think beyond Western progress by focusing on precarious multispecies worldmaking are two ways in which the hegemony of a dominant colonial imaginary is contested from within WENA. One of Klein’s voices, the one talking about Blockadia, aligns with this, as may Robinson’s eco-socialist tendency—but Klein and Robinson could also perhaps serve as contrasting examples as they are both also seen as moderate social-democratic thinkers. Klein and Robinson are therefore positioned between, on the one side, the explicitly reformist thought of Sachs and Porritt and, on the other side, Jannok’s decolonial thought and the challenges to foundational assumptions about Western-style progress voiced by Tsing. Sachs and Porritt are interesting because they can serve both as contrasting examples to counterhegemonic positions and as sites for investigating potential openings for counterhegemonic views within sustainable development and green reformist thinking. The positions of the texts and thinkers are not easily pinpointed, and comparing them may help us understand more about both their

⁷⁰ See the Wikipedia article “Jonathon Porritt” (https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jonathon_Porritt) for a brief account of his work within Friends of the Earth.

respective positions and about contestations of imaginaries of environmental justice in WENA.

In this part of the chapter, I have at times alluded to differences in worldviews in relation to varieties of environmentalism—in particular in the section on decoloniality/coloniality. It is now time to explore this in greater detail and reflect on how the politics of ontology and epistemology was discussed in the 2010s, in and around the texts that I am focusing on.

3.2 The Politics of Ontologies and Epistemologies

In the discussion in the previous chapter of arguments over the politics of nature and of ways of knowing in connection to this, we saw that prominent theories on how to tease apart varieties of environmentalism have in the past focused on conceptions of nature and that there has also been a suggested division between forms of expression in this. What was suggested as being conducive to environmental justice by the research that has earlier discussed ontology and epistemology in environmentalism was a critique of the Western wilderness ideal and a rational-scientific form of expression. But I also introduced some other research on culture and politics that complicated this picture. Moving on now to the decade I am focusing on, I will consider both how this debate is rehashed and how its terms are perhaps altered by new theoretical developments. Might these developments in ecocriticism, the environmental humanities, and political ecology produce or help to identify ways of approaching ontology and epistemology that could align with environmental justice? The first few sections in the following focus on research that revolves around the ontology of environment, around conceptions of human and nonhuman being, and around the term ontology, some of which becomes a debate on worldviews and knowledges as well. Towards the end of the chapter, I more clearly tease out some divergences between conceptions of ways of knowing by focusing on claims about forms of expression in relation to environmental politics and ontology.

In the previous chapter, I accounted for these arguments primarily through research in ecocriticism, pointing out that it holds relevance beyond these fields as theories are developed in a cross-disciplinary context. This is still the case with recent theoretical developments. In the following, I first continue with a focus on ecocriticism, showing how researchers in the field position themselves in the 2010s, and then gradually bring in examples from a broader political ecology,

including work from both the critical social sciences and the humanities, in order to cover the diverse positions of the reshaped debate.

3.2.1 From the Politics of Nature to Conceptions of Agency and the Ontological Turn

To recap what I recounted about the debate on the politics of nature in Chapter 2, the positions in the debate can be divided into what Soper (1995) calls nature endorsement—covering deep ecologies of both scientific and spiritual kinds—and nature scepticism—critique of nature endorsement encompassing both “end of nature” thought and critical interrogations of Western, colonialist imaginaries of the wild. Against this background, let us now consider what happens in the 2010s, and look for possible candidates for imaginaries that both relate to the theme of environmental justice and consider the politics of being and knowledge.

A rebashed debate between nature endorsers and nature sceptics

In the 2010s, one tendency is that the debate over the politics of nature is still going on, with a repetition of the same kinds of arguments as those that were prominent in the period leading up to this decade. In terms of nature scepticism, the distinction by O’Neill (2002) between two kinds of critiques of concepts of nature—a constructivist one and an environmental justice one—still holds. Among the environmental justice thinkers, we find postcolonial ecocritics like Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014) and Rob Nixon—the influence of the latter’s seminal study *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (2011) stretching well beyond literature departments to political ecology and popular media.⁷¹ As Caminero-Santangelo (2014) explains, postcolonial critics confront ecocritics with the imperial context of environmental issues (9-10). His own work on African literature and political ecology exemplifies this: it discusses the disastrous effects of conservation projects that displace local human communities (30-31) and argues that the perceived validity of such projects “cannot be separated from . . . forms of desire (for the ‘freedom of the wild’) associated with relatively privileged positions shaped by four hundred years of European imperialism” (7). Caminero-Santangelo traces these forms of desire to earlier literary works by authors like Karen Blixen, Elspeth Huxley, and Paul Theroux, who construct an ideal (African) nature as that which is separate from and untouched by humans (21-23). This kind of work in postcolonial ecocriticism continues to highlight the problems of post-materialist environmentalism. In relation to this kind of nature-

⁷¹ He has been cited by Martínez Alier (2014) and the political ecologist Andreas Malm (2016, 9), and the connection Nixon makes between “slow violence” and storytelling—using storytelling as part of a strategy for counteracting slow violence—has been explored by the Toxic Bios Project (<http://toxicbios.eu/>) and discussed by its initiators Marco Armiero and Ilenia Iengo (2018; see also Armiero et al. 2019).

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scepticism, one could also consider Greta Gaard's (2014) analysis of some common US climate change narratives and of alternatives to them (in fiction and nonfiction), which draws on ecofeminism, environmental justice, and the environmental humanities. Gaard critiques common stories that base their depictions of the climate crisis and of possible solutions to it on technoscience, and that imagine heroic technological interventions; in contrast, she emphasises ecofeminist alternatives by artists of colour and of minority sexualities that have been overlooked by many ecocritics. Among the constructivist nature sceptics who pronounce nature to have ended, we find the ecocritic and poet Terry Gifford (2012) who, in the same vein as Leo Marx (1964) with his "complex pastoral" that I mentioned earlier (the machine interrupting the peace of the garden), has proposed that a "post-pastoral" thematic is the most adequate response to ecological crisis.

Turning to recent nature endorsers, there are both those leaning towards deep ecology and those building on varieties of ecological science together with evolutionary psychology. A proponent of deep ecology who got much attention in the early 2010s was S.K. Robisch, with the so-called Estok-Robisch controversy (see Garrard 2011) sparked by Robisch's vitriolic critique of "theory" in ecocriticism as a response to Simon Estok's (2009) writings on ecophobia. Robisch (2009) offers a poetical, nature-endorsing roasting of a nature-sceptical preference for end-of-nature environments and the careerism of some of its adherents: "'Theory' is the Monsanto of a native grassland . . . 'Theory' is the whaler, not the Sea Shepherd [activist]. It loves TV and technological hybridization and monoculture posing as diversity. It loves the power of named chairs and academic lineage" (703). Not all nature endorsers are so ferocious, though: Nancy Easterlin (2012), who represents the kind of combination of evolutionary-psychological literary criticism and ecocriticism that Glen A. Love (2003) developed before her, opposes nature scepticism less sweepingly and in a calmer rhetorical mode, while still sketching an ontology and epistemology based firmly within Western science. She calls her approach "pragmatism" and positions it between the extremes of "naïve realism"—which equates epistemology and ontology so that "mental representations correspond exactly to external phenomena"—and "strong constructionism" or "radical scepticism"—which omits ontology since it holds that "the mind's representations have no greater or lesser degree of reference to mind-independent realities" (94).

From an environmental justice perspective, both of these nature-endorsing perspectives are somewhat thin on political analysis, however. While S.K. Robisch (2009) does consider his own view to be aligned with that of the social ecologist Murray Bookchin, which would indicate that it may be oriented towards environmental justice, the way he cites Bookchin undermines such a reading of

his work: Robisch merges all forms of vaguely nature-endorsing perspectives, siding with the evolutionary-psychological theory of Love (702), the social ecology of Bookchin, *and* the deep ecology of Devall and Sessions (704)—the antagonisms between the perspectives being overwritten, with the proponents of the latter two even named in the same sentence. In Robisch’s indiscriminating logic, the enemy (social ecology) of his enemy (mainstream environmentalism and end-of-nature thinking) is his friend—but in fact Bookchin fervently opposed *both* deep ecology and mainstream environmentalism (see Bookchin [1987] 2006).⁷² This overwriting of the profound differences between deep ecology and social ecology is a symptom of a lack of analysis of these theories as being entangled with very different political programs: deep ecology tends to support post-materialist conservation whereas social ecology is a branch of socially oriented materialist environmentalism. Easterlin’s work is not problematic in this way, because it does not muddy the waters like Robisch’s. Easterlin does not position her approach politically, and in this it remains open to many kinds of environmental politics, including forms of environmental justice—but on its own, it offers little that can be useful in the political assessment of conceptions of nature. There are indications, though, that it can be combined with the kinds of critical perspectives that are developed in postcolonial ecocriticism, as Erin James’s (2015) econarratology draws in part on Easterlin’s work.

Transformations of the debate: natureculture hybridism and the ontological turn

The nature endorsers and nature sceptics above are part of the first tendency that I have identified in the academic-political debate on the politics of nature in the 2010s. The second tendency has emerged as this debate has gradually transformed throughout the decade. One aspect of this transformation is how the central topic of contention in discussions concerning ontology has become how to understand *agency*, rather than what, and whether, nature is. Ursula K. Heise, a literary critic and one of the most productive commentators on the environmental humanities, summarises the state of the debate in the introduction to *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities* (Heise, Christensen, and Niemann 2017): she considers there to be a “productive conceptual tension between humans’ agency as a species and the inequalities that shape and constrain the agencies of different kinds of humans, on the one hand, and between human and nonhuman forms of agency, on the other” (2017, 6; see also

⁷² Robisch is not alone in misunderstanding Bookchin’s work in this manner: Leonard (2008) also interprets social ecology as an ecocentric approach and groups it with deep ecology on the basis of Bookchin’s criticism of mainstream environmentalism (8). This is the effect of a binary conception of varieties of environmentalism where the only alternatives are ecocentrism and technocentrism-anthropocentrism.

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Neimanis, Åsberg, and Hedrén 2015, 79).⁷³ The second part of the tension she identifies is to do with the politics of nature; I will consider this first and then return to the point she makes by placing it in tension with the question of social injustices.

The discussion of human versus nonhuman “forms of agency” amounts to something like a recurrence of the distinction between anthropocentric-technocentric and ecocentric theories, but in a transmuted form. Those who attribute agency to forms of the nonhuman, like posthumanists and new materialists, often describe other perspectives as anthropocentric (e.g. Morton 2013, 21; Oppermann 2019, 461) and their thinking in this bears some resemblance to ecocentrism—but they do not only posit living beings in ecologies as having agency but often, in particular in new materialism, also ascribe agency also to inanimate entities like technologies and to matter itself (see also Bennett 2010).⁷⁴ A popular term in this new post-ecocentrism is *naturecultures*, which has been employed by Donna Haraway and Bruno Latour since the 1990s and has more recently been picked up by new materialists (e.g. Iovino and Oppermann 2012). The concept signals that what is centred is not nature but a hybrid human-nonhuman world (or a human and *more-than-human* world, in a term that is sometimes preferred in this branch of academic theory), the nonhuman including but not limited to ecologies and other species. Although this position opposes anthropocentrism in the vein of nature-endorsing theory, it also resembles nature scepticism in its preference for hybrid, “contaminated” nature. The position of this ontological outlook relative to the social and political concerns of environmental justice is unclear, as will be discussed in more detail shortly.

Another aspect of the transformation of the debate about ontology, which overlaps with the development of posthumanism and new materialism, is how the so-called ontological turn in anthropology has formulated a theory of ontological pluralism (Blaser 2013).⁷⁵ The ontological turn is a reaction to the problem that anthropologists from Western culture face when encountering cultures with conceptions of what exists and what makes worlds that differ from their own. How should researchers from the West approach that difference?

⁷³ It is likely that Heise’s identification of this conceptual tension is inspired by the historian Dipesh Chakrabarty’s “The Climate of History: Four Theses” (2009)—an article which she cites both in the text referenced here and in *Imagining Extinction* (2016a). Chakrabarty (2009) writes: “The task of placing, historically, the crisis of climate change thus requires us to bring together intellectual formations that are somewhat in tension with each other: the planetary and the global; deep and recorded histories; species thinking and critiques of capital” (213).

⁷⁴ The seminal work in this tradition is perhaps Barad (2007), published just before the period I focus on, but the rise to prominence of this theoretical school occurred during the 2010s.

⁷⁵ This development in the 2010s draws on earlier work in the same vein; see e.g. Viveiros de Castro (1998).

More specifically, the problem arises because there are asymmetrical power relations between people who conceive of reality in different ways as Western-scientific ontology is hegemonic; there are, as Blaser (2013) puts it, “ontological conflicts.” The emphasis on power asymmetries would seem to align the ontological turn with social justice concerns and with the kind of critique of Western-centric thinking that underpins theorisings of the coloniality of knowledge, but there are, as we will soon see, divergent opinions on this among researchers in political ecology.

What is clear from an environmental justice point of view, in any case, is what Heise (2017) highlights through the formulation of the first part of her conceptual tension: that it is necessary to contest the terms of a politics-of-nature debate. Some researchers in the environmental humanities (and in political ecology, though this is not what Heise discusses) exemplify this, as they are not only concerned with how to understand “human and nonhuman forms of agency,” but also with how “the human” itself as harbinger of ecological cataclysm is not unproblematic, seeing as social structures mean that the ecological crisis is in many ways a matter of conflicts between groups of human beings.⁷⁶ This caveat about a politics-of-nature debate aligns with O’Neill’s (2002) insistence that it is important to keep environmental justice critiques of concepts of nature apart from constructivist ones; rather than abstracted arguments about ideas about ontologies, environmental justice perspectives offer *grounded critiques of how ontological outlooks are tied up with power structures*. But this does not automatically mean that questions of human/nonhuman agency and of ontological pluralism are insignificant—they may still be relevant together with the question of inequalities within the category of the human. To what extent and how exactly they can be so is a topic of heated debate in political ecology.

A heated argument over the politics of recent theories, and reservations about this argument

I have so far demonstrated two things about the politics of ontology and epistemology during the 2010s: in the continuation of an earlier type of nature-endorsing/nature-sceptical debate, the position that is clearly aligned with environmental justice is the critique of certain concepts of nature developed by postcolonial ecocritics, but this might also be combined with moderate kinds of Western-scientific nature-endorsing thought; and in recent theoretical contributions from schools like new materialism and posthumanism as well in the

⁷⁶ That the tension between perspectives and approaches discussed here is present not just in the environmental humanities in general but also in the specific field of ecocriticism can be seen in James and Morel’s (2020) overview of the field: they cite a wide range of scholars, from evolutionary critics like Nancy Easterlin and Brian Boyd, to new materialists like Serenella Iovino, Serpil Oppermann, and Stacy Alaimo, to ecofeminist philosophers like Deborah Bird Rose and Val Plumwood, to the herself eclectic ecocritic Ursula Heise, to work building on Guha and Martínez Alier’s North/South distinction between varieties of environmentalism (2-6, 10, 13).

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ontological turn in anthropology, there may, at least at times, be a similar kind of environmental justice critique. But there is little agreement about this in political ecology and the environmental humanities, neither concerning the older nor the more recent theories. Let us look more closely at the heated argument over this—and then at how some socio-environmental theories call the argument itself into question.

One part of the transformed debate on ontology in the 2010s focuses on ontological outlook as *the* key part of environmental politics. The strongest cases for ontology as the defining element of subversive environmentalist politics were made by new materialists and their opponents. Many new materialists view their philosophy as intimately connected with environmental justice rather than in tension with it, like new materialist ecocritics who consider new materialism's ontology to be inherently politically transformative and justice-oriented (e.g. Alaimo 2010; Oppermann 2011). Such claims could be traced back to Barad's (2007) assertion that new materialism transcends historical materialism which she considers to be insufficiently materialist and too human-centred, and that new materialism offers a more profoundly ethical philosophy (226). Timothy Morton's work makes similar claims about the inherent political relevance of ontological philosophy. Morton, a philosopher and literary critic, is perhaps the most productive writer of this kind of theory: they have built on and developed phenomenological "object-oriented ontology" together with new materialist philosophies (2010a, 2013, 2017).

Against this view, there are those who dismiss the ontological philosophies proposed by new materialists and others and argue that a classical nature-endorsing perspective is the best foundation for political thinking. Andreas Malm's polemical *The Progress of this Storm* (2018) dismisses all kinds of social constructionist, new materialist, posthumanist, and natureculture hybridist theories wholesale as inimical to a politicised understanding of environmental change. Johannes Persson and colleagues (2018) analyse a number of theories negotiating the divergent analytical approaches of natural and social scientists—including, among others, resilience theory from the natural sciences and ecological economics from the social sciences—and conclude that all fall short. In their discussion towards the end of the article, they direct particularly strong criticism against "the ontological turn" in anthropology—a criticism one of the co-authors, Alf Hornborg (2017a) had earlier developed alongside a critique of posthumanism and Bruno Latour's actor network theory. Hornborg (2017b) has further published a vitriolic joint review of three books by Donna Haraway, Jason W. Moore's, and Anna Tsing that also argues against these kinds of theories. The case against the ontological philosophies in question by Malm, Persson and colleagues, and Hornborg is centred on their supposed relativism—said to reside both in their dismissal of a universalist ontological framework and

in their critique of the nature/culture or nature/society distinction—which is seen as eschewing political positioning.

Both sides in this debate consider their proposed approach to ontology and ontological outlook to be a necessary foundation for political movements; in this sense, they are both proponents of an updated form of the politics of nature. Although the terms of the debate have been somewhat altered since Soper did her study in 1995, a basic conflict between two takes on how to construe “nature” persists. Hence, White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) identify a still-existing division within environmental social science between what they term *realists* and *social constructionists* (9-10). But this division, they go on to explain, is problematic, because although “many currents of social thought have swung rather violently between two equally problematic forms of reductionism [naturalistic and sociological] over the last century and more” (17), the fact is that “*there have long been third, fourth and fifth dimensions to this discussion*” (xx, 71; emphasis added). Looking back to earlier debates, they also point out that forms of “social environmentalism” have always called into question the perceived conflict of “technocentric versus ecocentric currents” (91) or between “Promethean” optimists and “Malthusian” pessimists (xvii, 52-70). Some new materialists may comment that this is precisely the point that new materialist philosophy is making, following Barad’s (2007) depiction of her own “agential realism” as a way of transcending the binary of realism and constructionism. And some of their opponents, like Malm and Hornborg, would claim the same thing: Malm (2018) by exploring “critical realism” as an alternative framework; and Hornborg (2017a) by arguing for a perspective that *analytically* distinguishes between the categories Nature and Society while maintaining an *ontological* monism (that is, that Nature and Society are made of the same substance). But rhetorically, these debaters stress not the middle ground they could be understood to sketch, but the radical difference between their position and that of their depicted opponents. Moreover, it is interesting to note that these debaters do not tend to engage with earlier manifestations of third, fourth, and fifth positions on the politics of ontology, such as the work of the social ecologist Murray Bookchin (1971, [1987] 2006) and of the ecofeminist philosopher Val Plumwood (1993, 2002).⁷⁷ There appears to be a similar tendency within ecocriticism: even though the nature-endorsing/nature-sceptical debate has at times been heated and the dividing line between the two theoretical schools has been a central theoretical issue in the environmental humanities, as Soper’s study shows, ecocritics have also suggested that neither nature-endorsing (Buell 2011, 91) nor nature-sceptical (Heise 2006, 511) extremes have been among the most influential perspectives in the field. To

⁷⁷ A caveat: Malm (2018, 183-84, 199-200, 205, 209-10) interestingly discusses similar early work by the environmental historian Carolyn Merchant—but he does this while still maintaining a polemical either-or nature-endorsing view.

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focus on these extremes becomes, then, another instance of silencing of alternative, socio-environmental perspectives, even when one professedly supports precisely a socio-environmental form of thinking.

Explorations of alternative ontologies, worldviews, and knowledges within a critical political-ecological framework

To instead centre alternative socio-environmental thought means paying attention to questions relating to ontology, worldviews, and knowledges alongside other questions, including the question of how environmentalist imaginaries construe *human* being in colonial and decolonial ways. Something like this is White, Rudy, and Gareau's (2016) approach, as they interrogate ideas pertaining to social power and not only those pertaining to what nature or environment is in relation to the human.⁷⁸ In reference to Soper—whom I cited in the previous chapter on how different ontologies “may be deployed in support of a shared set of political values” (Soper 1995, 5)—they argue that “we need critical social sciences because ‘Nature’ cannot tell us unambiguously what is an environmental problem. . . . ‘Problems’ are by definition *social categories*” (White, Rudy, and Gareau 2016, 7; italics in original; see also Swyngedouw and Ernstson 2018). Thus, they suggest as well, “while we may live in entangled [naturalcultural] worlds, this observation perhaps does not do all the critical work that is often claimed for it” (xix). The same notion that certain new philosophies of ontology are relevant or accurate but that they need to be incorporated into a critical political framework underpins the activities of the network Politics Ontologies Ecologies (POE), which brings together political ecology and concerns with ontology. One of the key figures in POE, Luigi Pellizzoni, demonstrates in *Ontological Politics in a Disposable World* (2019) that new materialist and hybridist ontologies that are seen as inherently emancipatory by some, as we saw above, are in many ways expressions of an ideology established by neoliberal governance; the diffusion of power that such ontologies depict matches the neoliberal system's depiction of itself as a matter of deregulation and lack of concentration of power (an ideology which obscures the way “deregulation” is

⁷⁸ In fact, something like this is perhaps gestured towards by Malm (2018) as well, since he introduces his polemic by saying that engagement in this theoretical debate “does not seem like the most exigent business” in the face of climate disaster (16), and concludes it by proposing that theory can play but “a very limited part” in the mobilisation and organising of political movements (231). As this and the previous footnote indicate, there is a lot going on in *The Progress of this Storm*, and Malm's approach to the politics of ontology and epistemology could certainly be discussed at much greater length than I have space for here. A review essay that unpacks some of the tensions in the text and builds on this to suggest a slightly different understanding of political agency to that of Malm is “Nature Defends Itself” by Dayton Martindale (2018b).

rather a specific kind of regulation which still relies on centralised power).⁷⁹ But Pellizzoni is not categorically opposed to ontology in politics; the point is rather, he writes elsewhere, that the ontology of the “material turn” on its own does not stipulate a certain politics but is “compatible with quite different stand-points” (Pellizzoni 2016, 6). In response to the same realisation, White, Rudy, and Gareau propose a *critical hybridist theory*—a way of engaging with the work of theorists like Donna Haraway, among others, without letting musings on ontology replace rigorous analysis of power structures; ontological philosophy *does not transcend* the need for critical social theory (as new materialism claims about its relationship to historical materialism), but it *can be combined* with it.

Some new materialists could be interpreted as critical hybridists, like Bennett (2010) who develops a “political ecology of things”—a new materialist political ecology. However, I find it difficult to support this kind of interpretation of Bennett’s (and similar) work because it harbours no rigorous engagement with critical social theory. Instead, this form of new materialism still favours what has been called “flat ontologies”—a lack of differentiation of the power to impact worldmaking of very different entities and beings, from the inanimate to nonhuman ecological beings to humans with their complex forms of social organisation. In Bennett’s case, this emerges because of her choice to focus on inanimate entities which thus become the protagonists of politics (stem cells, metals, trash, landfills, and so on); the effect is a lack of consideration of power asymmetries among humans and between humans and other ecological beings. This focus is probably motivated by a wish to transcend the received human-centred conception of politics, where the roles of nonhumans, from animals and plants to matter to technologies, are neglected. But the result of turning this norm on its head is not a socio-ecological conception of politics but a neglecting of the dynamics of social power concentration and its contestation. Thus, as political theory, Bennett’s political ecology of things is unfinished.⁸⁰

⁷⁹ This compatibility between capitalism/neoliberalism and kinds of academic-theoretical experiments has been observed by others too: Hornborg (2016) identifies similarities between neoliberalism and actor network theory (172, n. 10) and Rekrut (2016) finds that new materialism is “a philosophy that is not incompatible with contemporary capitalism” (240). In an earlier example of the same tendency, Graeber (2001) argues that postmodernism is in part an expression of neoliberal ideology (x-xi). What they all have in mind is what I briefly described in the parenthesis in the body text: how neoliberal or recent capitalist ideology describes power as no longer being concentrated in institutions like states, but as being equally distributed among individuals, so that people in general (as consumers) and capital owners (as managers of businesses) are all equally capable of impacting “the market.”

⁸⁰ A precursor to Bennett is Barad (2007) who claims, as we saw above, to offer a better form of and more properly materialist historical materialism, and who writes about political situations like shop floor resistance (see Chapter 6 of her book). The same tendency as in Bennett’s thinking can be observed in Barad’s. Instead of building a socio-ecological theory of power and resistance, Barad’s analysis of worker resistance on the shop floor depicts this political force as produced by

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For this reason, I do not analyse new materialist texts in this thesis. The texts engaging with new ontological philosophies in Western academia that I do consider are those by Anna Tsing (2015) and Kim Stanley Robinson (2017) (and other examples could be Jason Moore's [2015] and Timothy Morton's [2017] combination of Marxism and ontological experimentality). Tsing's posthumanism explores both nonhuman and human agency in social ecologies around the matsutake mushroom and in the making of life in capitalist ruins, and in this it cites some forms of science and critical social theory. Robinson's work combines Western natural science, historical materialism, and theorisations of nonhuman agency—the latter apparent in passages of his novel, as I will discuss in Part II, as well as in his endorsement of Timothy Morton's work with a blurb in *Hyperobjects* (2013) and his referencing of Latour's actor network theory (see Martindale 2018a, n.p.). In combining science, critical theory, and new ontological philosophies, they become candidates for the kind of critical hybridism that White, Rudy, and Gareau argue for.

A related argument about engagement with alternative ontologies and the ontological turn in anthropology is put forth by Anders Burman (2017). Based on research on climate justice organising in the Bolivian Andes he argues, partly in response to Hornborg, that the imperative of taking Indigenous ontologies seriously in the ontological turn does not necessarily lead to a relativist kind of ontological pluralism, and that it is important not to dismiss it offhandedly given that the evidence from actual movements shows that Indigenous ontologies can be compatible with a critical political ecology. There are a couple of studies on Sámi land protection which indicate the same thing: Sámi resistance to exploitation of land in Norway is also a matter of resistance to Western ontology with its nature/culture divide (Kramvig and Avango 2021); and alternative practices and ontologies are part of what motivates resistance to mining in Finnish Sápmi (Lassila 2021). Temper's (2019) discussion of environmental justice and Indigenous movements in Canada shows what happens when such ontologies or worldviews are not taken seriously: Indigenous people struggling against extractivism face a form of epistemic injustice called "hermeneutical injustice" when their "ways of doing, being and knowing" are not acknowledged because of limitations to "the hearer's capacity and willingness to understand and respond" within an established Western legal system (98). In other words, the dominance of a Western-scientific ontology and epistemology can be part of the production of environmental injustice. But the Lakota political activist and thinker Nick Estes (2019) asserts that it is still not enough to focus on these aspects of Indigenous thought—the example he uses is how water in the

the "agency" of inanimate machines. The human-centred norm is turned on its head and technology becomes a protagonist.

Indigenous language Lakotayapi “is animated and has agency”—because although this worldview is certainly part of resistance and the suppression of it is part of environmental injustices, “knowledge alone has never ended imperialism” (9). Burman (2017) concludes something similar: taking alternative non-Western ontologies and worldviews seriously must still be done in ways which avoid the kind of relativist pluralism that says that anything goes and that eschews political analysis and critique. What is more, the Métis anthropologist Zoe Todd (2016) argues that the way Western academia constructs schools of thought that seem to align with Indigenous ontologies has a problematic dimension: the ontological turn and posthumanism often “make it easy for those within the Euro-Western academy to advance and consume arguments that parallel discourses in Indigenous contexts without explicitly nodding to them” (8), or to “use Indigenous cosmologies and knowledge systems . . . all the while ignoring the *contemporary* realities of Indigenous peoples vis-à-vis colonial nation-states” (15-16); in other words, to both ignore and appropriate Indigenous thought.

In connection to this aspect of the politics of ontology and epistemology, it becomes interesting to analyse the work of thinkers like those I mentioned in the previous part of this chapter, in connection to land and water protection movements and the question of the coloniality and decoloniality of environmental justice: Indigenous thinkers like Nick Estes (2019), Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (2011, 2017a, 2017b), and Sofia Jannok (2016)—and someone like Naomi Klein (2014), who engages with such movements and thinkers and through this questions the hegemonic Western worldview in some respects. Tsing’s and Robinson’s text with their potential critical-political version of ontological exploration, as mentioned above, should also be considered in relation to this aspect of the politics of ontology and epistemology: what is the position of Tsing’s posthumanism and Robinson’s engagement with new ontological philosophy vis-à-vis non-Western, Indigenous ontologies, worldviews, and epistemologies?

This follows from how there are, as we have seen, critical political-ecological explorations of questions of ontology and epistemology, which means that there are reasons to view such questions as important for environmental justice imaginaries—but not as sole concerns and not explored apolitically or in ways that align more with coloniality than with decoloniality. In particular, following the research discussed above, something to keep in mind is that the politics of ontology pertains not only or primarily to what and whether “nature” is, but also to conceptions of the human in dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture: conceptions of the human as an ontological category and, relatedly, conceptions of the legitimacy of the ontologies, worldviews, or knowledges of different humans. In other words, we have arrived here at the kind of

formulation of the problem of ontology and epistemology in environmental justice imaginaries that is offered by decolonial theory on being and knowledge. In the textual analysis in Part II, I approach this by analysing conceptions of human and nonhuman worldmaking; ideas about the beings and knowers that can make sustainable worlds.

Although I have so far in this part of the chapter started from the question of the politics of ontology, the question of epistemology has come up as well, since ontology and epistemology often float into each other in the debate I have recounted. But to explore the politics of knowledge in more detail, let us briefly consider how the participants of the debate also make connections between knowledges and forms of expression.

3.2.2 Old and New Positions on Forms of Expression as Ways of Knowing

Just as there is in the 2010s both a continuation and a transformation of an earlier debate on the politics of nature, the kind of arguments over the merits of rationalist versus romantic or scientific versus poetic forms that I identified leading up to the 2010s in the previous chapter are both repeated and rehashed too.

Two positions: rationalism versus romanticism

Among those who dismiss the exploration of alternatives to Western-scientific ontology and an ontological pluralism, there is a tendency to tie this also to a dismissal of romanticism construed as irrationality and fuzziness. For instance, Hornborg (2016) claims that ontological anthropology is “neoromantic” (111), and part of what he dislikes about this “neoromanticism” is how it opposes what he construes as rationalist formal characteristics: concerning the experimental anthropological writing of Tsing, he asks, “How do you argue with a poet? The terror of the Anthropocene can obviously inspire poetry as well as analysis, but poems alone will not suffice to guide students who hope to engage in political activism” (Hornborg 2017b, 6). A sharp distinction is proposed here between rational-scientific and romantic-poetic knowledge and formal characteristics, where only the former is believed to contain systematic thought, conscientious argument, and similar features. Hornborg’s objection to the poetical should be seen against the backdrop of the distinction between romantic and rationalist environmentalism from the previous chapter; his assertion that poetry cannot adequately guide students towards activism seems to echo the kind of theorisation of poetic, romantic idealism that Dryzek (1997, 164-66, 186-87) offers. There are also still those who dismiss deep-ecological perspectives as “romantic.” White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) consider theories that are in

opposition to the ones criticised by Hornborg for being romantic, agreeing with Bruno Latour's critique of "romantic" dualist ontology (119) and considering new materialism and posthumanism to be challenging certain kinds of "romantic" environmentalism (142, 200) like the "neo-Malthusian" (50).⁸¹ They do not explicate, in this, what the romantic means, but it seems that they have in mind a way of thinking that is similar to what Hornborg critiques: something idealising and intellectually misguided. It thus appears that the term "romantic" is applied to any form of environmental thinking that an author would dismiss, from the classical ecocentric kind of deep ecology to more recent explorations of alternative ontologies and ways of knowing.

Many who seek to challenge aspects of hegemonic Western ontology instead embrace experimental knowledge production and forms of expression. In the previous chapter we encountered such ideas in deep ecology, and recent deep ecologists have produced work in the same vein. The ecocritic Michelle Niemann (2017) shows that formal experimentalism is brought out as one way of challenging the imaginaries that are central in modern Western society by Dougald Hine, former member of the Dark Mountain project (a website and periodical publication exploring the topic of "uncivilisation") and one of its instigators; Hine seeks to explore the role of "the improvisational storyteller" as a counterforce to the hubris of modernity (255). Similar arguments about form are also put forth by posthumanist thinkers. One example is Tsing (2015), who states that "my experiment in form and my argument follow each other" (viii) and thus claims that the experimental language and structure of her book are inseparable from its exploration of alternatives to the hegemonic Western-scientific worldview that constitutes the content. We can also observe the same conception of ways of knowing and forms of expression in the work of thinkers mentioned above, like Jason W. Moore (2015), Donna Haraway (2016), and Timothy Morton (2017): they all write in an experimental poetic-philosophical style, thus making the same connection as Tsing between form and content although without stating this explicitly. One example of this is a line by Haraway (2016): "it matters what stories make worlds, what worlds make stories" (12). Sometimes claims in this vein seem to be recent reiterations of the idealist claim in deep ecology, as identified by Dryzek (1997) in the previous chapter, about poetic language being intrinsically transformative. For instance, the new materialist Oppermann (2011) contends that the problems created by industrial capitalism can be ascribed to "the advent of instrumentalist reason" as a mode of thought (163) which "*has given rise to* such formations as ecophobia, speciesism, racism, and sexism" (165; emphasis added)—and it follows from this that the alternative mode of thought that philosophies like new materialism offer can in

⁸¹ The same use of the term "romantic" occurs in Paul Robbins's (2020) critique of the kind of environmental thought that he considers to be "regressive," such as degrowth.

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the same manner give rise to another, more ethical world. But it is not always so clear that this is what experimental academic writers would argue. Some of the thinkers that I have mentioned in fact combine this kind of experimental writing with critical theory; for instance, as I mentioned above, both Moore (2015) and Morton (2017) work with Marxism.

And this brings us to the possibility of other positions than the two I have discussed so far—alternative positions that are perhaps where some of the thinkers I have mentioned here belong, if we do not only consider their polemical opposition to each other’s preferred ways of knowing and forms of expression but look also at the details of their work beyond their rhetorical positioning.

Third, fourth, and fifth positions, beyond the rational/romantic binary

In assessing the politics of thinkers who may be termed both romantic and rationalist, it is important to consider something White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) point out (despite their sweeping critique of “romantic” thinking elsewhere in the same text) about the prevalent Enlightenment/Romanticism distinction: a dichotomy radically separating the two is problematic, as there are affinities among critical, politicised versions of both Enlightenment science and Romantic protests against “instrumental rationality” (18-20). In fact, a number of studies on specific uses of forms of expression in environmental political movements and thinking can be understood to illustrate as much.

There is research on artistic expression connected to land protection that cannot be made sense of through a binary division between the rational-scientific and the romantic-poetic. One study on Indigenous “arts” of land and water protection in the Americas connects questions of the organising of political resistance, ontology, and forms of expression (Gómez-Barris 2021). An example of this kind of exploration is Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s work (2011, 2017a, 2017b) work: Simpson combines the recording of music, song, and spoken word with the publication of longer works of written text—printed works that are sometimes companion texts to her music albums. Thus, her style does not choose between creative writing, performance, and what could be termed theoretical or argumentative prose, but mingles them all. In terms of research related to Sámi land protection specifically, there are a few works that explore artist-activists—Moa Sandström’s (2020) doctoral dissertation on Sámi “activism” connected to land protection and Indigenous rights, and Gabriel Kuhn’s (2020) interviews with a number of Sámi activist artists and culture workers about the politics of decolonisation—where artistic and activist work emerge as entangled cultural practices (see also Cocq and DuBois 2020; Liliequist and Cocq 2017). Jannok, who like Simpson mingles styles—she does both artistic and activist work and does not clearly separate the two, as described in Chapter 1—is an example of an artist-activist and writer-activist from this specific context. What

this research and these examples show is that it is not meaningful to see the artistic and the activist aspects of land protection movements as separated through a division between rational-scientific and romantic-poetic form. This kind of social movement-related cultural expression could potentially be considered part of the form of thinking that the Marxist cultural theorists Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre (2001; Sayre and Löwy 2020) explore as Romantic with a capital R (meaning it is part of a specific movement of anti-capitalist knowledge and politics that started in the late eighteenth century). In *Romanticism Against the Tide of Modernity* (2001), they explore the political diversity of both early and more recent Romanticism, as the movement has always contained both conservative and radical left-wing strands. Building on this, *Romantic Anti-Capitalism and Nature* (2020) discusses a number of radical anti-capitalist Romantic thinkers—including some from the 2010s, like Naomi Klein.

Another venue to explore is research on literary texts and the genre of science fiction that discusses these as possible contributors to knowledge production. Alexandra Nikoleris, Johannes Stripple, and Paul Tenngart (2017), three researchers from environmental science, sociology, and literary studies respectively, discuss the IPCC's five anticipated future scenarios called the "socioeconomic pathways" (see O'Neill et al. 2017) and contend that these abstract scenarios can be animated by and interrogated through "literary scenarios" from fiction, as the latter can add an existential understanding. They also argue that "through literary devices like narrative voice and situatedness, the reader can engage with . . . reasons [for acting on climate change] from different perspectives, either as sympathetic follower of the protagonist or as critical examiner of the protagonist's view" (317; see also Tyszczyk and Smith 2018). Focusing on science fiction specifically, Heise (2016a) argues that such literary texts can be of help for people who would create a better future because the texts "ask by their very structure how we might achieve their utopias or prevent their disasters and dystopias" (218); they depict possible worlds and futures that critically comment on the reader's present, and this can be politically powerful. And these perspectives lead one to consider related research on storytelling and science fiction-inspired narrative techniques, namely critical design research on the genre of design fiction. This genre generally draws on forms of Western science while it also engages in creative explorations and uses alternative forms of expression; it would thus seem to defy the rational/romantic binary. As several researchers have discussed, it is interesting to study how the genre imagines futures in order to make it possible to plan how to get there step by step in the real world through "backcasting" (Broms, Wangel, and Andersson 2017; Ilstedt and Wangel 2014; Wakkary et al. 2013). It is in connection to these tendencies that Robinson's and Porritt's texts are interesting; they are two different examples, with different political framing (as discussed in the previous part of

this chapter), of how science-fiction speculation is employed to imagine possible sustainable futures.

This diverse collection of studies and analyses that transcends the rational-scientific/romantic-poetic divide complicates ideas about romanticism and rationalism as forms of expression prioritising the poetic and the scientific respectively, and about the two as radically opposed ways of knowing that are in irresolvable conflict. Might there be other ways to understand different ways of knowing and forms of expression and their political positionality? This question is something that my analysis of the six different texts, with their different forms of expression, is able to explore.

A comment on terminology: why “Romanticism”?

Before concluding this part of the chapter by summarising the tentative positions of the six texts I focus on in ontological and epistemological terms, I want to comment briefly on my choice to use the term *Romantic*. I acknowledge that using the term to refer to non-Western thought is inadequate, a kind of both temporal and spatial anachronism vis-à-vis Indigenous and other non-Western critiques of capitalism, as these began to be developed in places far from Europe’s industrial-capitalist core nations well before the Romantic Movement and have continued to develop on their own terms since. But there are two reasons why I have opted for this term nonetheless. The first is that it is used frequently in discussions of the field of tension that I have identified between rationalism and its counterpart. In these discussions, the term is often used derogatorily and without reference to research on the actual Romantic Movement and its complexities. Using the term is a way to contribute to a more rigorous approach both to the concept of Romanticism in general and to the historical period and movement that it specifically denotes. In extending it temporally and spatially, I draw on Löwy and Sayre (2001; Sayre and Löwy 2020), who use it to refer not only to the Romantic Movement of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but to a continuation of this traditions’ critique of capitalist modernity as well, comprising twentieth-century thinkers like Ernst Bloch, Walter Benjamin, and Raymond Williams—and, as mentioned above, also more recent thinkers like Naomi Klein. The second reason for using the term Romanticism is that there is no other all-encompassing term matching “rationalism” that I think is suitable.⁸² I cannot use “Indigenous,” because I am not only concerned with Indigenous thought, and Indigenous thought is by no means necessarily Romantic (whatever we conclude the term to mean). The other obvious candidate would be “affect” or “feeling,” which is indeed often considered to be an important part of Romanticism, but

⁸² I would venture to guess that Dryzek (1997), who divides radical environmentalism into “green rationalism” and “green romanticism,” faced the same problem, and that he like me found Romanticism to be the most adequate term to accompany rationalism.

in the works I have cited here—both those opposing and those siding with Romanticism—there are no references to feeling as the way of knowing that counters rationalism but rather to experimental approaches to knowledge production and creative, poetic forms of expression. For these two reasons, Romanticism is the best option available, short of inventing a new term. Perhaps a detailed analysis of texts that negotiate the conceptions of knowledge, ontology, and form of expression that have been discussed here might suggest other terms, or a different way to understand the relations among sciences and arts and other knowledges and forms? I capitalise the term to make it clear that I am using it to refer to a tradition of thought extending from the Romantic Movement and similar critiques of capitalist modernity rather than as a lay concept (as it is often used in day-to-day language when you might accuse someone of “romanticising” something when they depict something in a simplistically idealised way).

A gap in the research field and the relevance of the analysis of the six texts, #2

This second part of the chapter has added some details to the gap in the research on environmental justice imaginaries in WENA in the 2010s that I sketched earlier: uncertainties about the kinds of ontologies and epistemologies that might be considered part of environmental justice imaginaries. In relation to questions of ontology and epistemology, worldviews and knowledges, it is relevant and interesting to compare works that in different ways talk about and draw on both Western-scientific ontology and epistemology and alternatives to this from non-Western cultures as well as from within academia—and works that use different forms of expression in this.

Jannok is interesting as an Indigenous land protection writer-activist who draws on an ontological and epistemological tradition on the border of Western culture and who works with creative, artistic forms of expression. Klein’s work is partly related to this too: she draws on and would support these kinds of movements and their political thought, including their worldviews, and she has been considered a Romantic thinker (as we saw above)—but she also positions herself as a more classical Western left-wing thinker, and she refers to climate and ecological science so that her text, perhaps, combines different knowledges. Relatedly, it is relevant to consider Tsing’s engagement with posthumanist ontological philosophy in combination with critical social theory and ecological science. Robinson’s work perhaps does something similar to this in combining Western science and historical materialism with theorisations of nonhuman agency. The two texts have somewhat different political framings—Robinson’s work being associated with socialism and Marxism, whereas Tsing’s text is presented as an interrogation of Western conceptions of progress—and this makes it interesting to analyse both texts. It is interesting too that Robinson works in the creative fictional genre of science fiction, a form of expression

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considered by some to be powerful for environmental politics, as we have seen. And this brings us to Porritt's work in design fiction, which explores science fiction-inspired techniques for thinking about sustainable futures, and which combines this creative form of expression with a very clear positioning within a Western-scientific worldview—and which is, as mentioned above, also positioned differently from Robinson's in political terms. Finally, Sachs's text is interesting in relation to all this as a text that combines a reformist sustainable development framing with a conventional, as opposed to experimental, type of Western academic knowledge production written in a standard textbook form.

In this chapter, we have seen two interrelated things about the political positionality of concepts used in and around social movements, interpretations of environmental justice, and approaches to ontological and epistemological questions. Firstly, that there is a spectrum of environmental justice imaginaries from the colonial to the decolonial, with uncertainties about the political positionality of specific social movement concepts on this spectrum; and secondly, that there are similar uncertainties about the politics of different (approaches to) ontologies, worldviews, knowledges, and ways of knowing and forms of expression. These uncertainties are what I am able to approach and provide some empirically based commentary on through my readings of Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs. But these readings need to be informed by theoretical concepts for the analysis of conceptions of being and knowledge in dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture, and a method for interpreting texts on the theme of environmental justice. This is the topic of the next chapter.

4. Decolonial Ecofeminist Theory and Ecopolitical Narratological Method

How can we analyse imaginaries of environmental justice that oscillate between dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture? Or, put differently, how can we analyse the coloniality and decoloniality of being and knowledge, or who is imagined to have meaningful, real existence and the power to make sustainable and just worlds, and whose way of knowing is imagined as valid and relevant in this? In this chapter, I offer answers to these questions through theoretical concepts from *decolonial ecofeminism*, building on the work of the decolonial feminist María Lugones and the ecofeminists Val Plumwood, Deborah Bird Rose, and Silvia Federici, among others; and through an *ecopolitical narratology*, a method for cultural interpretation within political ecology and decolonial ecofeminism which focuses on how the capacity to make worlds is imagined as well as on how cultural expression argues for and embodies certain forms of expression and ways of knowing in connection to this.

4.1 Theoretical Concepts about Being and Knowledge from Decolonial Ecofeminism

What are the characteristics of dominant colonial and emergent decolonial conceptions of being and knowledge? What kinds of entities are ascribed the capacity to make worlds and make knowledge in imaginaries divided by the coloniality/decoloniality distinction—ranging from different categories of people and their forms of social organisation and institutions to forms of the nonhuman like artefacts, other species, and more? In Chapter 1, my introduction to decolonial theory as part of the framework for this thesis sketched the beginnings of theoretical concepts for the analysis of this. There I discussed the work of decolonial thinkers like Quijano, Maldonado-Torres, and Grosfoguel—work which conceptualises the differentiation in dominant colonial culture between being and lack of being, and between knowledge and lack of knowledge, as a matter of a class structure that hinges on the idea of race. In the following I combine decolonial feminism with ecofeminism to offer more detailed concepts for the beings and knowers imagined in both coloniality and decoloniality.

Something that is important to note before I get into the details of this is that much of the research I discuss here has a historical rather than a contemporary focus. Decolonial feminism, like the broader decolonial theory it is part of, has largely concerned itself with the emergence of coloniality during the European colonial expansion; while also maintaining that coloniality is a power structure

that remains to this day, as we saw in Chapter 1, the theorists I will be discussing mostly analyse early historical manifestations of the coloniality of being and knowledge and not so much its more recent iterations. The ecofeminist thought that I draw on approaches the same cultural tendencies but analyses both historical and recent culture, thus offering some concepts that can help us understand the details of a contemporary coloniality of being and knowledge. But in relation to the research I discuss here, the reader should nevertheless keep in mind that some of the concrete expressions of coloniality and of its opposite, decoloniality, that are identified might not exactly correspond to more recent culture; my textual analysis, drawing on this, thus looks for potential recent iterations of coloniality—new iterations of dominant culture—and likewise for recent forms of decoloniality that might emerge in opposition to this.

4.1.1 Decolonial Feminism and Ecofeminism

I have already introduced decolonial theory and the notions of the coloniality of power, knowledge, and being (see Chapter 1). But the conceptualisations of dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture that I work with are derived from decolonial *feminism* specifically, because it offers an intersectional analysis of the construction of a global capitalist class structure. Moreover, I merge decolonial feminism with ecofeminism, two philosophical frameworks that have much in common and often overlap, because I need a more explicit consideration of ecology together with social divisions among humans.

Decolonial feminism adds a dimension to the analysis of coloniality: ideas about gender are essential in the constitution of categories of race. The decolonial feminist María Lugones (2007) shows that Quijano assumes a male perspective when he discusses “the organization of sex, its resources, and products”; he considers “the dispute over control of sex [to be] a dispute among men” over “resources which are thought to be female” (194). To remediate this, Lugones (2007) combines intersectional feminism, developed mainly by “Third World and women of colour feminists,” with decolonial theory—two frameworks that she finds have too seldom been brought together (188-89). On this basis, she “propose[s] the modern, colonial, gender system as a lens through which to theorize further the oppressive logic of colonial modernity” (Lugones 2010, 742). If decolonial theory approaches the theorisation of colonialism and capitalism together, decolonial feminism broadens this to consider the intersections of what Boaventura de Sousa Santos and Maria Paula Meneses

(2020) call “the three modern forms of domination: capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy” (xv).^{83, 84}

In combining this with ecofeminism, we acquire a theory of these forms of domination not just as social but as socio-ecological; as matters also of dominant humans’ exertion of power over other species and over ecologies at large. To combine these theoretical schools is to realise an ecofeminist potential in decolonial feminism and an anti-racist potential in ecofeminism, and to allow the two theories to enrich each other. Decolonial feminism points in an ecofeminist direction when it discusses changes in human relations to and imaginaries of land in coloniality. Lugones (2010) connects the disintegration of precolonial communal relations to both “the instrumental modern concept of nature central to capitalism, and the colonial introduction of the modern concept of gender” (745).⁸⁵ Some forms of ecofeminism theorise similar interconnections. The feminist Marxist Silvia Federici (2019) has shown that the constitution of a private and a public sphere with a gendered division of labour was a condition for the rise of capitalism in Europe and that this division was “coeval with the separation of the peasantry from the land and the formation of a commodity market” (17). She further contends that something akin to this is still going on today as capitalism works to erase from people’s worldviews and ways of living

⁸³ While capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy cannot be reduced to each other and while they can exist in some forms irrespective of each other, their co-emergence is a distinctive characteristic of the constitution of capitalism as a globally hegemonic system (or what Quijano simply calls coloniality), and they continue to reshape into mutually enforcing formations in the present day.

⁸⁴ I am aware that since the spring of 2023 there has been a discussion among decolonial and feminist theorists about whether to cite Boaventura de Sousa Santos, due to allegations of sexual and moral harassment by women he has worked with—mostly women of colour and Indigenous women. Regardless of the outcome of any legal or internal academic processes following from this, the question of whether or not to cite him is complex. On the one hand, it can always be argued that it is a good politics of citation to prioritise less cited writers from minorities and to look for alternative sources to those written by leading (often Western male) scholars. On the other hand, one should also consider the question of whether an author’s biography always impacts the meaning and relevance of their work. I find merits in Santos’s analyses and arguments, and the intersectionality in his work together with his activist orientation has made his writings useful for me in my research. In any case, it is deeply ironic that a scholar who writes about the intersections of capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy and the need for decolonising academia (Santos 2017) has now been accused of harassing people from precisely those groups that his work professes to support. There could hardly be a better case made for the need to thoroughly decolonise academia: to question the positions of those who become leaders within the institutional structure of universities and acknowledged as leading writers and thinkers in a field, because such positions can always be abused.

⁸⁵ Quijano (2007) actually also comments on conceptions of nature in coloniality, arguing that the people construed during European colonial expansion as belonging to the so-called “primitive” races (like Black and Indigenous people) were also construed as closer to nature than the so-called “civilised” race (white Europeans) (52), but this is not an exploration of what the association says about colonial conceptions of nonhuman nature, nor is it a fully-fledged theory about how the exploitation of people and of other parts of ecologies intersect and are related.

“anything that might constitute a tie with the land and the history of past struggles and cultures” (6). A related way that she connects gendered exploitation and exploitation of land is through the observation that capitalist patriarchy controls women’s sexuality and bodies so that the enclosure of land finds its parallel in how “our own bodies are being enclosed” (30)—a long historical and ongoing process by which the body becomes mechanised as capitalism seeks to turn those capable of childbearing into reproductive machines that can effectively make more workers for capitalist production (Federici 2004, 12). Federici (2019) is attentive to the racist dimension of the system she analyses too: turning to recent historical developments, she identifies the same mechanisms of control in structural adjustment programmes in Africa and in a global division of labour. Lugones (2007) spells out more clearly what such a division of labour meant in early coloniality: “Colonialism did not impose precolonial, European gender arrangements on the colonized. It imposed a new gender system that created very different arrangements for colonized males and females than for white bourgeois colonizers” (187). This gender system, she writes, has a “dark” and a “light” side: on the light side, white women are cast as “reproducers of ‘the (white) race’ and ‘the (middle or upper) class,’” whereas on the dark side, the system is “turning people into animals” who lack the refined gender characteristics of the white bourgeoisie (201), a racialised gendering of women of colour as objects to be used both sexually and for hard labour (203). A theoretical concept that brings these kinds of perspectives on class, gender, race, and ecology together in seeking to understand and support the practices and politics of Indigenous and peasant women in Latin America is *body-land*, or (*territorio*) *cuerpo-tierra* in Spanish (see Rodríguez Castro 2021, 37-40). The concept denotes how “decolonial and communitarian feminists” from the Global South (20) see human bodies and the body of the land as inseparable, which means that capitalist, colonial, patriarchal violence against human bodies becomes entwined with violence against land.

4.1.2 Beings and Knowers in Coloniality and Decoloniality

Within this decolonial ecofeminist theorisation of coloniality, it is possible to further identify the conceptions of being and knowledge that have been characteristic of dominant colonial imaginaries, as well as what their emergent decolonial counterparts can be. The following is a first sketch of this. While the theoretical concepts introduced here are important starting points in the textual analyses in the next part of this thesis, they are not fixed categories but may be altered, complicated, and enriched by the study—something that is particularly important to keep in mind following my earlier comment about how decolonial

theory often focuses on historical manifestations of coloniality and decoloniality.⁸⁶

Hyperseparation of Self and Other

A concept that can bring together decolonial feminist and ecofeminist perspectives on the kinds of entities that are construed as possessing being is the ecofeminist Val Plumwood's notion of *hyperseparation*. In her seminal ecofeminist work *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), Plumwood develops a theory of the dominant capitalist, patriarchal imaginary around this concept. Another ecofeminist, Deborah Bird Rose (2011), explains that "hyperseparation is the stretching of dualisms so that the two poles have nothing in common" (12)—it is a form of thinking where "difference is oppositional and extreme" (47). Plumwood (1993) uses the concepts of Self and Other to denote what we could call the imagined character types and relations of hyperseparation: the imagining of a hyperseparated Self relies on absolute denial of dependence and a complete alienation from relations to Others, both humans and nonhumans (142-44). The same phenomenon that Plumwood observes in hyperseparation is discussed by decolonial theorists: Lugones (2010) observes that colonial modernity "organizes the world ontologically in terms of atomic, homogeneous, separable categories" and that the modern colonial gender system operates through "hierarchical dichotomies and categorial logic" (742), something the decolonial literary critic Walter D. Mignolo (2000) calls "to transform differences into values" (13). As suggested by the terms Lugones uses, this is a matter of the coloniality of being, of an ontological form of domination, something we saw in Chapter 1 that Maldonado-Torres (2007) has explored.

So what are the general hyperseparated categories of Self and Other(s) filled with in dominant colonial culture?

Hyperseparation in coloniality: White Bourgeois Man, and all other humans and land

Lugones (2007) discusses in great detail what in Plumwood's terminology would be termed the hyperseparated Other. She contends that the modern colonial gender system "introduced many genders and gender itself as a colonial concept and mode of organization of relations of production, property relations, of cosmologies and ways of knowing" (187). In this gender system during the era of European colonial expansion, non-white women were "understood to be

⁸⁶ What I outline here could be termed an abductive (combined inductive and deductive) research approach: although beginning from certain theoretical propositions, it engages theory and empirical material in conversation instead of merely applying theory to the empirical data (Johansson Wilén 2019, 80-82). Another term for this could be a *dialectics* of theory and empirical work. The term dialectical is perhaps to be preferred, since there is another meaning of abductive reasoning, namely to seek plausible and workable, not absolutely generalisable, explanations (Douven 2017), a conceptual overlap that might cause confusion.

animals in a sense that went further than the identification of white women with nature, infants, and small animals. They were understood as animals in the deep sense of ‘without gender,’ sexually marked as female, but without the characteristics of femininity” (203). Hence, the system reserved “sexual dimorphism for white bourgeois males and females” and ascribed a promiscuous lack of dimorphism—a lack of a clear man/woman gender distinction connected to a lack of control of sexual impulses—to the colonised (195). Lugones (2010) explains that she therefore “understand[s] the dichotomous hierarchy between the human and the non-human as the central dichotomy of colonial modernity” (743). The human/nonhuman dichotomy in the gender system historically constructed two types of women: Woman of Colour-as-Animal and White (Bourgeois) Woman who is placed in an in-between position as a human yet less-than-male entity who bears the mark of civilisation in her dimorphism and controlled sexuality. What this ontological denial of the humanity of the colonised enables is, according to Maldonado-Torres (2007), for “killability” and “rapeability” to be inscribed as part of their essence (255). And following Lugones’s analysis, these characteristics are particularly attached to the Woman of Colour-as-Animal, whereas colonised men—Man of Colour—may at times be given a slightly higher rank in order to be “co-opted into patriarchal roles” in the service of European power (200).

From an ecofeminist point of view, the fact that the way to deny the colonised the status of being is to categorise them as animal is poignant: that it is degrading to view a human being as an animal says a lot about how the system considers animals and nonhuman nature. Rose’s (2011) ecofeminist philosophy demonstrates that an ontological denial of similarities across species is at play in the construction of a hyperseparated human/animal boundary: starting from a discussion of the Abrahamic commandment “thou shalt not kill,” she proposes that European philosophy has dealt with the untenability of this principle in actual lived life on this planet by setting up a human/animal boundary and defining animals as those “who can be killed with impunity” (142). And, we can conclude, if animals can be killed with impunity, all the other beings making up the ecological world and the compound ecological entity that is the land are unlikely to face a kinder judgement: forests can be felled and their trees, grasses, mosses, lichens can be erased with impunity; marshes can be drained with impunity; topsoil can be eroded with impunity. The Animal and Land are construed as lacking being.

In decolonial ecofeminism, the operation of hyperseparation can thus be defined as construing those human bodies that are denied the status of being in the modern colonial gender system, animal bodies, and land as fit to appropriate and to ruin because, as hyperseparated Others, they do not have meaningful, real existence.

But the birth of coloniality meant the constitution of not just the colonised and the idea of America but equally of the colonisers and the idea of Europe, as Quijano (2000, 537) points out. In Plumwood's (2002) terminology, hyperseparation imagines not just Other(s) but Self as well, constructing the latter as the "centre" or the only entity perceived to have agency (28-29). Lugones (2010) describes how coloniality gave rise to a certain hyperseparated Self: "the European, bourgeois, colonial, modern man became a subject/agent, fit for rule, for public life and ruling, a being of civilization, heterosexual, Christian, a being of mind and reason" (743). Plumwood (2002) describes something similar, positing "reason as the leading character in a modern rationalist narrative of domination of the Others" (19). She continues:

From this narrative we derive the myths—still strongly persisting—of women's more emotional and unstable nature, as well as the contemporary myth of an invincible and heroic male-coded techno-reason that will solve our current problems and wrest a shining future from the jaws of crisis. (19)

In analysing capitalist thinking in the 2000s, Plumwood specifies that this male-coded techno-reason can take the form of the figures of "Business Man" (28) and "Rational Economic Man" (31). Reading Lugones and Plumwood together, we can call this figure, this being, White Bourgeois Man, and he is defined through his radical separation from other human bodies and from land.⁸⁷

It is interesting to note that Lugones and Plumwood define this imagined being as knower as well; they talk of the coloniality of being and knowledge in conjunction with each other. That the coloniality of being and knowledge intersect is evident in the terminology of dualistic ontology, as introduced in Chapter 1 in reference to Maldonado-Torres (2007): it is a matter of mind/body dualism (245), which suggests that the characterisation of the hyperseparated Self as knower is a central part of its ontological status as being. The coloniser-as-mind, marked as white, bourgeois, and male, is the sole entity with full subject status and as such the sole being capable of action—capable of making anything of relevance—and likewise the sole true knower.

In short, the hyperseparation of White Bourgeois Man from People of Colour (in particular Women of Colour) and Animals and Land constructs the former as being and knower and the latter as dispensable nonentities lacking being and

⁸⁷ This is not to say that masculinities that are not part of Western, capitalist, ruling-class masculinity are by definition exempt from feminist criticism. There is of course both pre-colonial and pre-capitalist patriarchy in cultures across the world. Moreover, non-white men, as I briefly mentioned, are often posited in coloniality as a different kind of entity to both Woman of Colour and White Bourgeois Man and can in this be implicated in White Bourgeois Man's exploitation of Others. The decolonial ecofeminist identification of the stereotyped figure of White Bourgeois Man as the sole being with true agency captures *the specific intersections of class, race, and gender in coloniality*, and is not posited as a timeless and absolute definition of dominance along lines of class, race, and gender.

capacity for knowing. Thus, in the dominant imaginary that is coloniality, worldmaking power is thought to reside in White Bourgeois Man, not in those He controls. *This is a colonial imaginary of the power to make worlds.*

A critique of hyperseparation and delineation of an alternative imaginary

In dominant colonial culture, the kind of imaginary described above is the norm and is often taken for granted—though its recent iterations may vary in some ways from the parts of the above that are based on historical analysis. In decolonial ecofeminism, in contrast, this imaginary is approached critically. The description of the imaginary that I have so far offered through the work of Lugones, Plumwood, and Rose already implies such a critique. To spell this out more clearly, we can turn to Plumwood’s (2002) explanation of hyperseparation’s profoundly inaccurate conception of what I am calling worldmaking: hyperseparation “re-presents the joint product [of socio-ecological relations] in terms of the agency of the master subject” (28), something she considers a key characteristic of a “centric or colonising system” (28-29). This means, she proposes in reference to the feminist Elizabeth Gross, that the hyperseparated subject “simultaneously relies on and disavows its material base” (4). Hence, hyperseparation is a paradoxical worldview: it denies the existence of a relation in order to construct a relation of domination; it associates power with the dominant and powerlessness with the dominated *in order to facilitate and legitimise exploitation* of the worldmaking powers of the dominated. The hyperseparation paradox is characteristic of the relation types imagined in coloniality: coloniality both associates power with White Bourgeois Man as maker of the world (denial of relation) and depicts a hierarchy wherein some entities, like Woman of Colour-as-Animal and Land, can be used unscrupulously (construction of a relation of domination). *This is the colonial imaginary of the power to make worlds as critically depicted by decolonial ecofeminism.*

A contrasting decolonial conception of being and knowledge is implied in the above as well, though it often gets less attention than the critique of coloniality in decolonial theory. To elaborate on it means to centre “the colonial difference” in order to “unveil what is obscured,” in Lugones’s (2010, 747) words; to start from the beings and knowers that are denied their reality within the modern colonial gender system. Maldonado-Torres is concerned with this possibility for emergent decolonial culture as well, proposing that “if coloniality dehumanizes humanity and objectifies nature, then decoloniality refers to ‘efforts at re-humanizing the world, to breaking hierarchies of difference that dehumanize subjects and communities and that destroy nature’” (cited in Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020, 53). From an ecofeminist perspective, the addition “that destroy nature” is indispensable and the term re-humanisation therefore needs to be complemented by something like re-ecologisation, denoting a process whereby

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all humans and all ecology together come to be seen as full beings of the same nature. This is the relational socio-ecological alternative to hyperseparation's dualistic ontology. Decolonial ecofeminism thus centres the relational worldmaking of humans and other ecological beings together: an ecofeminist community of colour, or a figure we could call Body-Land. *This is a decolonial imaginary of the power to make worlds.*

Understanding coloniality/decoloniality in the twenty-first century

In analysing early twenty-first century environmental justice imaginaries, as I have stated, it is important to be sensitive to how dominant colonial culture may have changed since its institution during European colonial expansion. In the texts I analyse from the 2010s, we are not likely to encounter racial biological conceptions of “primitive” women of colour as animals and of “lesser races” as inherently killable and rapeable, and as incapable of worldmaking and knowing. Indeed, Quijano (2000) points out that the racial biological idea of inherent biological difference between “races” is no longer in fashion—but he goes on to state that wage differences in globalised capitalism are still very much about race (539) (and, Lugones would add, about gender and race together). This ties in with something we saw in the previous chapter: there are indications that aspects of (sustainable) development can take the form of white man's burden thinking and support colonialist land-grabbing, even though blatantly racist arguments about the necessity of white people's control over “primitive” people's land are no longer widely accepted. Thus, in imaginaries that bring together environmental sustainability and social justice, like the ones in the texts that I analyse, we might find new iterations of dominant colonial culture where White Bourgeois Man and “primitives” come in new guises—perhaps even being artfully disguised, so that a crucial part of the analysis will be to tell apart such new iterations of the dominant from expressions of emergent decolonial culture.

So far in this chapter, I have discussed decolonial ecofeminism. I will now turn to the question of how to do textual analysis within a political ecology informed by this theory.

4.2 Ecopolitical Narratology: A Method for Interpretation in Literary Political Ecology

Drawing on what I have discussed so far in this thesis, a method for the interpretation of texts that potentially offer imaginaries of environmental justice needs to be: 1.) geared towards the analysis of conceptions of worldmaking and worldwrecking, including of ways of knowing within this, with an eye to the intersections of the social or political and the ecological; and 2.) attentive to details in textual forms of expression (as part of what makes conceptions of ways of knowing). This specification of what is required by a method for the present thesis also draws on and echoes the discussion of my first two research questions in Chapter 1. The first question, about how sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them are imagined, was connected there to econarratology as a method making the analysis of this question possible. The second question, though, adds the concern with the environmental justice implications of the imagined worlds and knowledges, and this question of justice, I suggested, requires a political-ecological form of narratology aided by theoretical concepts from decolonial feminism and ecofeminism.

Econarratology is a method that makes it possible to analyse conceptions of agency and an ecological thematic in a systematic way and with a focus on both the content of texts and the way they are narrated—the *what* and the *how* of storytelling, as I will further explain below. With the addition of the kind of attention to power that a political ecology informed by decolonial ecofeminism offers, this becomes an *ecopolitical narratology*: a form of narratology that is specifically designed for literary political ecology. For literary critics, this method should be seen as a clarification of the social justice concerns of econarratology and as one way of combining political ecology and literary studies. For political ecologists, ecopolitical narratology should be seen as a complement to the discourse-analytical framework that is commonly used among those who focus on culture, imaginaries, and ideologies.⁸⁸ Ecopolitical narratology adds important

⁸⁸ On forms of (critical) discourse analysis as a method for cultural analysis in political ecology, see the overview of research methods in political ecology in Neumann (2005, 1, 7). For an example of critical discourse analysis as a method for approaching environmental imaginaries, see Peet and Watts (1996a). The method I propose can also be understood as a form of (critical) discourse analysis. What I discuss below based on narratology has a striking resemblance to, for instance, the discourse analysis of environmental political thought in Dryzek's (1997) *Politics of the Earth*. Dryzek considers how discourses construct ideas about "agents and their motives" and "basic entities whose existence is recognized or constructed" (16-17)—or what I am referring to as being and as worldmaking and worldwrecking. And he analyses "key metaphors and other rhetorical devices" (16-17) and connects his inquiry to "aesthetic questions" (3)—or what I discuss as the *how* of narration. One thing that econarratology adds to discourse analysis of environmental imaginaries is, following the argument by James (2015), cited in Chapter 1, a *clear methodology*. What is more, the

tools for understanding conceptions of being and knowledge by developing distinct concepts (both in the delineation of the method below and in the textual interpretations) for the analysis of worldmaking and worldwrecking, or what I will also be referring to as forces in storyworlds, and for carefully unpacking textual strategies and narrative techniques so that it becomes possible to discuss the politics of forms of expression as ways of knowing.

4.2.1 Narratology: A Background

The kind of narratology that we are concerned with when we work with political and ecological perspectives and themes is termed *postclassical* (see e.g. Nünning 1999); it is with the developments in postclassical narratology that a kind of narratology has emerged that works well together with political ecology and decolonial ecofeminism. To understand why this is, it is helpful to first define classical narratology. The school developed during the 1960s and 70s as an attempt to study patterns in storytelling scientifically and to identify a universal narrative grammar equivalent to the grammar of natural languages (Rimmon-Kenan 2002, 10-12). This effort was inspired by structuralist linguistic and anthropological theories (Saussure [1916] 1960; Dumont [1966] 1980), as well as by Russian formalism in literary theory (e.g. Shklovsky [1925] 1990; see also Bakhtin 1981). Postclassical narratology, in contrast, as Alber and Fludernik (2010) have proposed, has subjected the “structuralist core [of narratology] to severe critical scrutiny, lopping, modifying, revising, or redesigning the foundations of the discipline” (5). Phelan and Rabinowitz (2005) suggest that the result is that narratology after structuralism is becoming a non-universalist study of narrative, where claims to the ontological generalisability of identified narrative structures are downplayed or relinquished (2). Postclassical narratology thus understands itself not as a science of universal narrative structure but as a historically and culturally situated interpretive practice in which analytical concepts for the study of narrative—if approached with an openness to the possible need for their modification—can be put to use as a method.⁸⁹ Before going into the details of what this means, I want to introduce the specific type of

clear methodology offered is based on a long tradition of research on the imaginative construction of agents (the drivers of change in stories), entities (the components of storyworlds), and—not least—the use of different metaphors, types of aesthetic, and so on (narrative techniques). This adds a degree of robustness to the concepts used that is sometimes lacking in discourse analysis (though there is of course a long tradition of research there as well).

⁸⁹ This and many other contrasts between classical and postclassical narratology are systematically mapped by Nünning (1999). See also Rimmon-Kenan’s (2002) “afterthoughts” to the second edition of *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics*, where Nünning’s table is reproduced and where Rimmon-Kenan discusses the new directions her own and others’ research have taken since the 1980s (139-54).

postclassical narratology that I draw on, econarratology, which I understand as one form of political narratology.

Econarratology as political narratology

Econarratology, as defined by Erin James and Eric Morel (2020), is concerned with how “narratives can convey environmental understanding via building blocks such as the organization of time and space, characterization, focalization, description, and narration” (1). The point, I would argue, is that econarratology *combines* an orientation towards environmental themes with attention to narrative technique and structure, the unpacking of the *how* of texts being as important a feature of analysis as—indeed entirely tied up with—a thematic focus on the *what* of the environment in texts. It can be understood as a form of ecocriticism that sees the systematic and rigorous methodology of narratology as indispensable. An econarratological study of Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* (1962 [2002]) or E.O. Wilson’s *Biophilia* (1984), for instance, would investigate the texts’ delineation of environmental imaginaries, such as their arguments about what could bring about sustainability (a precautionary principle guiding the regulation of pesticides for Carson, and a posited innate human love for biodiverse environments for Wilson), in conjunction with things like how the texts produce these imaginaries and their truth claims through the construction of narrators (based on the authority connected to scientific training for both Carson and Wilson), the use of specific narrative techniques (like Carson’s fable in the opening chapter of her text, which, for didactical purposes, condenses the effects of pesticides experienced across the US into the story of a single fictional town where birds die and children fall mysteriously ill), and so on.

Econarratology is, like many other forms of postclassical narratology such as the varieties inspired by feminist and postcolonial theory, politically oriented. This means that it is a form of political narratology. Political narratology, broadly construed, is the study of what makes storytelling political and should be distinguished, Mieke Bal (2004) argues, from the kind of political literary criticism that has “an emphatic preoccupation with political content”; political narratology instead engages with “the political power of narratology *qua* theory” in interrogating more subtly “‘what it is that makes a text political,’ regardless of its specific politics” (4). I take this to mean that the interest of political narratology is not so much in discussing the explicit politics of texts as in using narrative analysis to understand how texts always, including supposedly apolitical texts, make assumptions and have implications that are political. This resonates with the notion in political ecology that all ways of approaching environmental issues are political, even those that often pose as and are construed as apolitical. It is not only relevant, then, to study overtly political texts—like the novels *Atlas Shrugged* (1957) by Ayn Rand, which argues for unbridled US capitalism and

against planned economy, or *Looking Backward: 2000-1887* ([1888] 1996) by Edward Bellamy, which imagines the US as a state-socialist heavy-industrial utopia—but also to consider what makes other kinds of texts political too—like the epic fantasy trilogy *The Lord of the Rings* (Tolkien [1954] 2020c; [1954] 2020b; [1955] 2020a), where there is not an allegorical, one-to-one relationship between the fictional story and the real-world political issues that it in part responded to (like the rise of fascism and its destruction of other social and ecological relations).⁹⁰ And if explicitly politically oriented texts are analysed, as I am doing in this thesis, attention to their politics should be founded on careful scrutiny of the components of their narration, including their form of expression, and how this might uncover things like the unstated assumptions that inform the overt political agendas of the texts or possible tensions in them whereby the professed politics might partly be subverted. This is important in the analysis of environmental justice imaginaries because it allows us to see that the politics of texts about environmental sustainability and social justice cannot be exhaustively accounted for by a surface reading of their political messaging.

In short, and to paraphrase James and Morel and Bal together, what makes a text ecopolitical is not whether it has a professed environmentalist agenda, but more subtly how it through the building blocks of narrative conveys an understanding of the politics of environmental issues or a *socio-environmental* understanding—and in the case of my study specifically an understanding of the intersection of environmental sustainability and social justice.⁹¹ For instance, we can gather something about the ecological politics of a text from how it constructs human and nonhuman characters capable of affecting change, either for the better or for the worse—what I am calling the making and wrecking of environmentally sustainable and socially just worlds—or from how it through the construction of a narrator embodies a way of knowing and argues for this as authoritative. I will soon outline methodological concepts for the analysis of such elements of texts. But first, there is one more aspect of the kind of econarratology that I build on that needs to be introduced.

⁹⁰ Tolkien ([1954] 2020c) writes in the foreword to the second edition of the trilogy that the story of the Lord of the Rings is not an allegory of the Second World War—and he convincingly argues as much by presenting an alternative story that would have been such an allegory—as the author “cordially dislike[s] allegory in all its manifestations” and “much prefer[s] history, true or feigned, with its varied applicability to the thought and experience of readers” (xiii). He further proposes that “many confuse ‘applicability’ with ‘allegory’; but one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author” (xiii).

⁹¹ This is similar to James’s (2015, 2020) use of narratology as a method in postcolonial ecocriticism, but my ecopolitical narratology could be construed to tweak an econarratology like hers for its specific use in the analysis of political-ecological power relations. The details of this are outlined in the next two sections.

Econarratology as storyworld analysis

The foundation for my ecopolitical narratology is Erin James's econarratology, which centres on the concept of *storyworld*. It is a concept that was first proposed by David Herman and that has then been elaborated by a number of narrative theorists (Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 2016, 3; James 2015, 209; James 2020, 188). As James (2015) explains, Herman “draws a distinction between the structuralist notion of ‘story’ and the more complex notion of ‘storyworld,’ the latter of which he argues better accounts for the immersive potential of narratives” (209). The point, James (2020) also writes, is that storytelling constructs worlds, not just characters and events: narrative “is a mode by which humans write worlds in which to immerse themselves—a mode by which we create and then emotionally and cognitively inhabit new time- and spacescapes and experiences” (188).⁹² This concern with space alongside time is not unique to econarratology and storyworld analysis: it has a parallel in the “spatial turn” in narrative analysis (Friedman 2005; Tally 2012; Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 2016), as well as in ecocritical concerns with place (Heise 2008; Glotfelty and Fromm 1996) and postcolonial (Said [1978] 2003) and world-systems (Niblett 2020) analyses of global socio-spatial relations in narratives. The turn towards spatio-temporal narrative analysis shows why it is appropriate to use narratology to analyse the kind of material that I work with—texts where worldmaking and worldwrecking and thus *worlds* are imagined; texts that do not always have as clear a temporal story as a classical plot-driven novel does but that narrate events and construct worlds—because it means that methodological concepts from narratological studies of stories in narrative fiction can help us identify the components of texts’ imagined spatio-temporal worlds as well. In using the storyworld concept to analyse not just novels but other texts too, including nonfictional ones, I also draw on Andani Thakhathi’s (2019) use of the concept of storyworld in his analysis of Jeffrey Sachs’s writings on sustainable development. What James’s storyworld analysis does that Thakhathi’s does not, however, is pay close attention to the *how* of narration. My ecopolitical narratology is therefore inspired by James and Thakhathi together.

Within econarratology as storyworld analysis, there are a number of analytical concepts that are useful for an ecopolitical narratology. I now turn to the delineation of this method.

⁹² While the idea that storytelling makes worlds is new to narratology, it is old news to writers and theorists of speculative fiction like fantasy and science fiction who consider *worldbuilding* to be an important component in these genres—a great example of which is the world constructed by J.R.R. Tolkien prior to his writing of the actual story of *The Lord of the Rings*.

4.2.2 Ecopolitical Narratology: Analytical Concepts

Like econarratology and other kinds of postclassical narratology, ecopolitical narratology on the one hand builds on and develops concepts and perspectives from older narratology, and on the other hand challenges them and proposes alternatives. In defining central methodological concepts in ecopolitical narratology in this section, I will also discuss how these concepts transform classical narratological ones.

Storyworld-telling as relational organising of elements in time and space

I have mentioned that the storyworld concept replaces the structuralist concept of story. This has repercussions for narratological analysis of storytelling, or more accurately *storyworld-telling*. Let me explain by giving a background on the concept of story in classical narratology.

Story in classical narratology is part of a conceptual pair originating in the work of Seymour Chatman (1978), who posits *story* as the *what* and *discourse* as the *how* of narrative: story denotes all the events that are represented through an act of narration as they would actually have occurred chronologically, and discourse denotes how the act of narration selects from among those events and represents them in an order that is not necessarily chronological.⁹³ As James (2020) explains, classical narratologists emphasised how “the timeline of the told (story time . . .)” diverges from “the timeline of the telling (discourse time . . .)” (192). Some of the most obvious examples of how story and discourse time can diverge are to be found in experimental modernist texts, like William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury* ([1929] 1995), where four narrators tell the story on four different dates placed in a jumbled order. But it also operates in most texts—fictional and nonfictional alike—as a perfect chronology is rare. For instance, Tolkien’s largely chronologically organised quest narrative in *The Lord of the Rings* is partly divided into two parallel stories (and gradually into more than two as well), where we first follow the journey of one set of characters and then jump back in time to follow that of another group. Or consider the temporal structure of some of the texts that I focus on in this thesis: Sachs and Klein, for instance, both have passages where they give a background, or backstory, to present-day climate and ecological breakdown and the challenge of sustainability and social equity (Sachs 2012, 355-56; Klein 2014, 170-77), but these backstories do not introduce the texts; the texts are instead thematically organised, so that the chronological story from past to present to projected futures is told in a jumbled order.

⁹³ This conceptual pair was central for most classical narratologists (though they sometimes use different terms for it). A well-known example of an analysis based on it is Gerard Genette’s (1980) interpretation of Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*, where Genette understands the production of discourse time (though he calls it narrative, or *récit* in French) as operating through the arrangement of the order, duration, and frequency of events.

When story is replaced by storyworld, the question is what happens to the classical conceptual pair and to narratological analysis of texts and their devices and techniques of narration. The ecocritic Ursula Heise (2020) argues that the storyworld concept signals a need for rethinking the conceptual pair, though she does not elaborate on what this means (204). So how can we understand the *how* of discourse—or what I will be referring to as narration and story(world)telling—in relation to the *what* of storyworld?⁹⁴

We should clearly turn our attention to the way all the elements of the storyworld, not only the events and sequences of events making up a temporal story (and plot and plot-driving characters in the case of novels and similarly structured texts), are imagined and arranged through the act of telling. Let us consider *The Sound and the Fury* again. The temporal jumbling of dates is not the only thing the act of telling does to build the novel's pandemonium of sound and fury; the narration constructs numerous scenes (not just events), and both the positioning of these in the novel as a whole and the way space is imagined within the scenes contribute to the meaning of the text. The scene placed at the very end of the novel is an instructive example: here the sound and the fury of the character Benjy's desperate howling is violently driven away from the square—from the centre of *the space* that is the novel's US-American South—by the abusive white man Jason so that everything is restored to “its ordered *place*” (Faulkner [1929] 1995, 273; emphasis added). The scene is emphasised through its positioning at the end of the novel, and it is both the space of the scene and the events occurring that are important. This shows that a storyworld is constructed not primarily through how the act of narration produces a timeline of the telling but through how it organises all spatio-temporal components of the text, from characters to places to scenes.

To understand this, we can turn to another narrative theorist, Kent Puckett (2016), who writes about storytelling in terms of *relationality*: “Narrative . . . is what results from the effort to make real or imagined events and objects meaningful in relation to one another” (2). For the analysis of storyworlds, this means that a storyworld is constructed imaginatively through how different elements are placed in relation to each other in its imagined time- and spacescape. The very stuff of a storyworld are such relations: between characters, between places, between scenes, and between other possible components. They are what they are, they gain emphasis and de-emphasis, and so on, *because of their relationships to each other*.

⁹⁴ The motivation for this shift in terminology is that it avoids confusion, as a different discourse-analytical concept of discourse is widely used in political ecology.

The scene as narrative device and analytical category

Implied in the above is also that a specific concept that can be useful in storyworld analysis is that of the *scene*. The scene is a narrative device in texts and works as an analytical category in their interpretation; to focus on scenes and unpack their components (characters, places, events, and so on) as well as their positioning in a text as a whole is a way to structure the analysis of texts and approach the question of what their components do and could be understood to mean in the text as a whole. In storyworld analysis, the scene as a compound category—where we find a collection of other textual elements, to be discussed below—can thus substitute for the focus on event sequences in classical story analysis.

This is of particular use in the present thesis with its analysis of texts that span across rather different genres, because it is a device that is used in all kinds of texts regardless of how central the narration of a temporal story is. It is an important device not just in a novel like Kim Stanley Robinson's *New York 2140*, with its large number of consecutive scenes that make up the plot and where we learn of the storyworld, but in all the other text types as well. In Jeffrey Sachs's (2012) textbook, we encounter a scene of industrial revolution in England where we are told of how scientific innovators make a new world and of how economists make sense of it (74-79), scenes of peasant farming in present-day Ethiopia (28) and historical Europe (51) where farmers are imagined to struggle to survive, and more. Scenes from Sápmi are depicted on Jannok's (2016) pop music album, such as one of Sápmi's "lakes, rivers, hills and woods" that should not be ruined by "big wounds in the mountain" by the colonisers ("This Is My Land: Sápmi"). Klein's (2014) journalistic text depicts scenes from a geoengineering conference (256-61), a boat trip in the Mississippi River Delta where the narrator encounters oil spill-related extinction (425-27), and so on. Porritt's (2013) design fiction is divided into a large number of entries that sometimes act as individual scenes but more frequently contain several scenes in their turn; an example of the former is the introductory entry where we encounter the protagonist and narrator Alex McKay and his family (9-14), and one of the latter is an entry on farming and food where we are presented with scenes from the narrator's community farm in the UK, urban gardening in Detroit in the US, and more (168-73). Tsing's (2015) creative nonfiction, meanwhile, takes us to scenes like one of a meeting between Tsing and Japanese scientists (231-32) and several from matsutake picking in Oregon (13-14, 18-19, 57-58, 72-83, 126-27).

But if the scene is a compound category, what are the elements of the storyworld that come together in it? I will now propose concepts for the analysis of these elements from a specifically ecopolitical perspective.

Actants and their relationships as the forces in storyworlds

I construct tools for the analysis of the environmental politics of narration and of the relational networks that form storyworlds by building on and modifying concepts from classical narratology together with concepts from historical materialist literary criticism. How exactly these concepts need to be modified is stipulated by the theoretical framework of decolonial ecofeminism as well as by political ecology, both of which point the analysis of storyworld-telling towards a focus on power relations in a socio-ecological world.

Like earlier literary criticism based on a historical materialist analysis of class (Eagleton 1986; Jameson [1981] 2002), ecopolitical criticism focuses on the narration of *material social relations* and *conflicts*. However, it also calls into question how historical materialism has often construed material social relations as exclusively human—as constituted only by political-economic relations—and how it has been primarily concerned with relations that take the form of (class) conflict, or what I am calling confrontation (a term that will be introduced towards the end of the next chapter). Ecopolitical narratology analyses material social relations as *political-ecological relations*, understanding “the material” as a question not only of economic power among humans but also, to borrow a phrase from Paul Rekret (2016), of “the logics by which nonhuman nature enters into social relations” (237). And it analyses these relations through an openness to other relational structures than conflict or confrontation. Both critiques also apply to classical narratology and the Western storytelling tradition that early narratology drew on and co-constructed. In this kind of research and storytelling, the power to drive change in stories is predominantly understood as human-, individual-, and conflict-centred; a case in point is the literary scholar Joseph Campbell’s ([1949] 1993) theorisation of the “monomyth” and the archetypal human (and often male) hero as universal features of all storytelling. Another telling example of how classical narratology centres human characters is to be found in the conventional understanding of space as a backdrop rather than as a driver of plot and of time propelled forwards by the actions of human characters as *the* stuff of narrative, as narratologists in the spatial turn have highlighted (Friedman 2005; Ryan, Foote, and Azaryahu 2016, 1).⁹⁵ Ecopolitical narratology goes beyond classical conceptions of often individual human character types as the drivers of change in a story, or as the makers of the world in a storyworld, and of conflict as the quintessential relational structure of story(world). Instead, the power to drive story and produce storyworld can be located among a variety of socio-ecological beings. Thus, following decolonial ecofeminist theory on how

⁹⁵ This view is evident in the classical narratological work of Seymour Chatman (1978), in which “characters” and “setting” are distinguished through a definition of character as one who “performs plot-significant action” and a definition of setting as constituted by everyone and everything that does not perform such action (32).

dominant colonial culture construes a hierarchy of being, with different bodies allocated different roles in the reproduction of capitalism, ecopolitical narratology pays close attention to how storytelling attributes power to different beings and phenomena (like humans, ecologies, and technologies) across political-ecological relations: who and what is depicted as having the power to make, and to wreck, worlds?

It is possible to draw on and further develop a model from classical narratology in this: the *actantial model* of the functionalist literary theory of A.-J. Greimas ([1966] 1983), with its concept of *actants*. Heise (2020) picks out this concept, which is seldom used in contemporary narratology though it has become widespread in academic theory through the work of Bruno Latour, as a useful one for ecocriticism and econarratology to explore (207). In Greimas's actantial model, actants are roles or functions in stories; Heise explains that these actants can be individual characters but that they can also be made up of several characters, and that they can be nonhuman and inanimate—and she proposes that the capacity of the concept of actant to include collectives and nonhumans makes it suitable for econarratology (207). Ecopolitical narratology draws on this and employs actant as a neutral catch-all term for the drivers of change and the makers and wreckers of worlds; for anyone and anything ascribed the power to make and wreck things through the narration. But ecopolitical narratology does not simply apply Greimas's actantial model to texts, but modifies it and looks for other possible actant functions than Greimas's rather stereotypical ones. In Greimas's model, the actant functions are *subject* (the hero of the quest) and *object* (the hero's potential reward), *helper* and *opponent*, and *sender* and *receiver*. In other commonly used terms, the subject could be called *protagonist* and the opponent *antagonist*. As I am concerned with the imagining of worldmaking and worldwrecking as creative and destructive forces in storyworlds and not with a single active hero's quest for a passive object (like a prince out to win a princess who is waiting in a tower to be rescued), the actant functions to start from are not subject and object but rather protagonist and antagonist and the tension between their interests and aims. In connection to these, I consider what other functions might appear, much like Greimas does in relation to the subject-hero on its (or mostly his, because the stereotypical hero is male) quest for the object. In my analyses, as we will see, this leads to the identification of specific figures or characters who perform textual functions; these characters are what I call *actants*, whereas the actant types (protagonist, antagonist, etc.) are referred to as *actant functions* or *textual functions*. Drawing on the decolonial ecofeminist analysis of conceptions of beings and knowers in the previous part of this chapter, ecopolitical narratological analysis capitalises the names of these actants, so that they appear as personifications of conceptions of being and knowledge.

Decolonial ecofeminism suggests that we might encounter, among others, actants like White Bourgeois Man and Body-Land.

In addition to the need to modify the actantial model, there are two pitfalls to avoid for ecopolitical narratology in using the term actant. First, ecopolitical narratology must steer clear of the functionalist definition of actants, which always centres an individual protagonist hero (Greimas's "subject") and considers all other actants only as functions in relation to this protagonist. In ecopolitical narratology, by contrast, we should define actants as *all beings and phenomena that drive change and make worlds*. Actants can take the form of an individual hero as protagonist, a helper functioning solely as their aid, and so on, but it is important to keep in mind that a storyworld structure based on these functions and the ways they are commonly construed is not the only possibility, not a universal storyworld grammar. Through such an openness, my textual interpretations develop the concepts of worldmaking and worldwrecking forces, as well as more detailed concepts to denote the actant functions and actant relations that make up these forces, as we will see.

Second, it is important to distinguish between the Latoureaan concept of actant and the formalist, narratological one. If Latour (2005) takes the concept of actant from the study of functions in texts and transfers it into other realms, so that laboratory equipment or the building blocks of matter can be actants and have agency in the real world just as such qualities can be ascribed to them imaginatively in texts—thus suggesting that a textual function is ontologically equivalent to a real-world capacity—I return the concept of actant to textual analysis and study how narration *constructs* actants and *attributes* agency within an *imaginatively invoked* storyworld.⁹⁶ That Carson's *Silent Spring* ([1962] 2002) could be understood to posit harmful chemicals as actants characterised as invisible infiltrators in people's daily lives (2-3) does not mean that the text argues that pesticides themselves are the agents of environmental change; on the contrary, Carson explains in her opening "fable" that the villain is not any invisible "witchcraft," though it appears as a "grim specter," but the actions of people who use harmful chemicals (3). The text as a whole then places the blame on companies and regulatory agencies in particular. Therefore, we should understand the characterisation of chemicals as a textual strategy for making the threat seem palpable and relatable rather than as a literal claim about the agentic capacities of chemicals. The ways such textual strategies are part of truth claims in story(world)telling are more complex than Latoureaan literalness would have it.

⁹⁶ Nor do I, unlike some new materialist ecocritics (e.g. Sullivan 2017), understand textual functions or texts themselves as having agency. This is not to say that texts are unimportant, but that they, as part of social imaginaries, work in complex ways through the people who engage with them and not simply by merit of their internal characteristics and their being put out into the world—a point I made as well in the discussion of the concept of worlding in a footnote to Chapter 1.

Interpretations of textual actant functions as literal truth claims (or claims to mimesis) need to be concretely argued for, on a case-by-case basis.

Focalisation and narration

Ecopolitical narratology can make use of a number of concepts developed in classical narratology that relate to narrative strategies. The concept that is important in my analysis is *focalisation*—a term coined by Genette (1980) that will here be understood to denote the textual construction of the perspective(s) through which the storyworld is presented to the reader, as I mentioned in Chapter 1, and which can help us understand how texts construct different kinds of narrators. Narratology theorises two kinds of focalisation: internal and external. Internal focalisation is when a text or part of a text is written from the point of view of a character or narrator who is part of the storyworld; typical examples are the brothers Benjy, Quentin, and Jason Compson, each of whom narrates one of the first three sections of *The Sound and the Fury*. External focalisation instead offers the reader the point of view of a narrator who is not part of the world. But such a narrator can also combine external focalisation and move between internal focalisers; an example is the third-person narrator of the fourth section of *The Sound and the Fury*, who combines internal focalisation by focalising through in particular the character Dilsey and external focalisation in offering reflections that do not come from any of the characters in the story.⁹⁷

Although Genette's theory and my illustrations both relate to fiction, the terms *internal* and *external focalisation* can be helpful in the analysis of the perspectives and narrators constructed in the texts I work with that span the fiction/nonfiction divide. They can serve as methodological concepts in the consideration of the kinds of perspectives and ways of knowing that are constructed as authoritative in a text, alongside the question of who is imagined to be an actant with the capacity to make storyworlds. An obvious way that the texts that I work with propose authoritative perspectives is through the construction of narrators. As mentioned in the introductions to the texts in Chapter 1, the texts all use first-person narration in combination with other forms of narration. The concept of focalisation can help us understand the points of view that are thus constructed in the texts. But there is also a wider sense in which focalisation may operate in the texts, which I would approach through the

⁹⁷ In Genette's narratology, a narrator capable of external focalisation is also termed *extradiegetic* (meaning external to the world of the story), and one constrained by internal focalisation *intradiegetic*. Extradiegetic and intradiegetic narration are termed *narrative levels*. Genette also has two other terms for narrative levels: *homodiegetic* (a narrator who is part of the plot) and *beterodiegetic* (a narrator who is not part of the plot). These technical terms can be useful, but they can also make an analysis appear heavy on jargon for a reader who is not versed in narratology. As this terminology for narrative levels is not necessary for my analysis, I employ only the concepts for the two kinds of focalisation which are rather straightforward.

following question: to what extent and in what ways do the ideas in the texts about worldmakers as beings and knowers find expression in how the texts themselves embody or perform ways of knowing, such as in their construction of perspectives for the reader to understand the storyworld through? The kind of construction of perspectives that I have in mind here works through what could be termed the aesthetic aspects of the texts, or their forms of expression. The point is that a text's form of expression is part of its proposal about adequate and reliable ways of knowing. By this, I mean that a text constructs a perspective or perspectives for the reader to inhabit in part by means of different forms of signification; for instance, a text can invite the reader to view the topics discussed through signs associated with science, like graphs, or with the arts, like metaphors explored in creative ways. In my analysis of the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs, this also becomes related to how the texts' concrete or mimetic claims to relevance for the reader's world (as discussed in Chapter 1) are construed as reliable and authoritative. When a text understands knowing in a certain way, and also through its form of expression offers a perspective on the topics it discusses that aligns with such knowing, the reader is by implication encouraged to understand the claims of the text as reliable.

Thus, ecopolitical narratology approaches the politics of narration not just by paying attention to the actants of worldmaking and worldwrecking that are constructed in texts, but also by considering the narrative strategies whereby texts perform and comment on what are construed as reliable ways of knowing.

How the method organises the textual interpretations

To close this discussion of method and to give the reader a sense of what is to come, let me outline how the method gives the analysis in Part II of this thesis its shape. Chapter 5 identifies key scenes in the texts as a starting point for the analysis, and then analyses the human actants we encounter in them. The criteria for what counts as a key scene are to do with repetition and other forms of emphasis: key scenes are scenes of types that are often repeated, or scenes that cover the components—the actant relations—that are often repeated, or scenes that are given emphasis by being part of turning points or similar pivots in a text. I identify and name both specific actants (whose names are capitalised, as mentioned above) and the functions of these actants in the texts. In concluding the chapter, I consider how the human actants are placed in relation to each other and thus form relational structures, and I propose terms for these structures. In Chapter 6, I continue the analysis based on the relational structures that I have identified, focusing on how human and nonhuman actants act with and against each other in different ways. The conclusion of this chapter proposes that we can understand the texts as producing two different imaginaries related to dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture respectively. Chapters 5 and

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6 are about how the capacities to make and wreck worlds are imagined, something that is constitutive of the conception in these texts of human and nonhuman being and its opposite, the lack of being. In Chapter 7, I continue to work with the actant concept, together with the concept of focalisation. I focus on the texts' conceptions of valid ways of knowing and the actants to which these ways of knowing are connected, as well as on how the texts enact these conceptions through their forms of expression. The concluding part of this chapter returns to the distinction between two overarching imaginaries from Chapter 6, considering the results in this chapter from the perspective of the emergent decolonial imaginary. Throughout the analysis in Chapters 5-7, I take care to be systematic in the identification and analysis of interesting aspects of the texts. This means that I try not to be guided by any preformed opinion about what kinds of actants and forms of narration might be present in the different texts and instead make sure that I consider strands of the works that possibly contradict the analysis I make. In fact, I actively look for possible contradictions in how being and knowing are imagined, seeking to bring out tensions not just between texts but within individual texts as well.

The present chapter has outlined decolonial ecofeminist theory and ecopolitical narratological method. With this, the first part of this dissertation has now come to an end, and it is time to move on to the second part, where I put this theory and method to use in analysing the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs—and continue where the background and previous research in Chapters 2 and 3 left off in looking for environmental justice imaginaries in WENA.

PART II

5. Human Makers of Sustainable Worlds, from the Multitude to White Bourgeois Man

Who can make sustainable worlds? And what are they up against? In the terminology of ecopolitical narratology, an analysis of this focuses on *actants* as making up the foundational forces in storyworlds—forces of both constructive worldmaking and destructive worldwrecking. And these actants can be both human and nonhuman. In this chapter, I will focus on the human actants in the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Naomi Klein, Kim Stanley Robinson, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs, turning in the next chapter to a consideration of how these human actants are related to nonhumans of different kinds that also function as actants. I identify and propose terms for a number of actant functions that are important in the texts—actant functions that do not exactly map on to the classical actantial model that I introduced in the previous chapter. And, as I explained in the previous chapter, part of my ecopolitical narratological analysis is to condense the specific imagined figures or characters that have important actant functions into personifications with capitalised proper names. In the presentation of decolonial ecofeminism in Chapter 4, we encountered a few such condensed characters, or actants, such as Body-Land and White Bourgeois Man. Do these kinds of actants feature in the texts? And what other actants, related to colonial and decolonial conceptions of being, might we identify in the same manner? As these questions gesture towards, the analysis pays particular attention to colonial and decolonial conceptions of the human, unpacking ontological suppositions about what it means to be a human with real being—the kind of human who can act as a maker of a sustainable world. Building on this analysis, I also draw out the environmental justice implications of the ways in which human worldmaking is imagined: how is the justice dimension of environmental sustainability construed in the texts? This chapter thus engages with aspects of the first two research questions presented in Chapter 1, asking how sustainable worlds are imagined (whereas the part of this question that relates to knowledge will wait until Chapter 7) and what the environmental justice implications of this are.

In the following, I consider each text separately, saving comparative analysis for the brief conclusion to this chapter and the next two chapters; I wish here to first offer introductory overviews of the individual texts. I also refer only to the six texts themselves, though they are considered through the lens of decolonial ecofeminism outlined in the previous chapter. This means that I approach the

actants that emerge in my interpretations through the theorisation of dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture, where the former may understand being through some notion of a hyperseparated Self, whereas the latter may explore something like ecofeminist, communitarian alternatives to this.

The analysis starts from an identification of *key scenes*—individual scenes from a text that offer important insights into its storyworld as a whole—and a breakdown of the texts into *key scene types*—types of scenes that are repeated throughout a text and as such form part of a central pattern in it. As defined in Chapter 4, key scenes are scenes of types that are often repeated, or scenes that cover the components—the actant relations—that are often repeated, or scenes that are given emphasis by being part of turning points or similar pivots in a text. The scenes I focus on serve as condensed bits of narration where we encounter actants in relation to each other. From one text (Jannok’s), I lift out one scene that summarises the whole storyworld well, and from the other texts I frame the discussion through several key scenes. When there are different kinds of scene types in the same text—scene types that either follow chronologically upon each other or represent different perspectives on or aspects of a storyworld—I label them A and B (and, in two texts, also C). The epigraphs in each part of the chapter are quotations that narrate key scenes or are important in the construction of scene types; I encourage the reader to read them carefully and to return to them while reading the analyses, in this chapter as well as in the following two chapters.

5.1 Sofia Jannok, *ORDA: This Is My Land*

*I’m grieving the wide-open wound that I see
 When will they understand when to let be?
 I’m grieving for her because she lost it all
 Under your kitchen floor, buried is her soul
 . . .
 I sing for the healing of ancestors’ soil
 For future sisters I’m singing this song
 (“Grieving: Oappáide”)*

The actants on *ORDA: This Is My Land* (2016) are all present in the song “Grieving: Oappáide” (“Grieving”).⁹⁸ The song constructs a diorama-like scene of a mining town and the world that exists there despite the wreckage caused by colonial worldmaking, with actants placed clearly in relation to each other.

⁹⁸ When citing from Jannok’s album, I refer to the songs by title within parentheses and to the introduction to the album by the title *ORDA*. I introduce shortened versions of the song titles the first time I mention them.

“Grieving: Oappáde” can thereby offer a summarising perspective on *ORDA*’s storyworld. My analysis of the actants on *ORDA* starts from this scene and adds further detail to it by relating passages from other songs to this scene.

In “Grieving: Oappáide,” what we encounter is a scene of ruin: *they* have made a wide-open wound in the land so that *she* has lost it all, her soul buried under *your* kitchen floor, and the *I* of the song is over grieving this and yearns for the healing of the land so that sisters (*oappát* in the North Sámi title), included in a *we* that is central on *ORDA*, as we will see, can live. In this chapter, I will discuss the *I*, *we*, *you*, and *they*; the *she* will be considered in the next one. That the scene in the song is of a mining town is suggested by how the description of wounds in the land recurs in “This Is My Land: Sápmi” (“This”), specified there as “big wounds in the mountain,” and by how mining is generally depicted as a core colonial enterprise on the album: the colonisers seek “gold and iron” (“We Are Still Here: Mii Leat Das Áin” [“We”]) and are “crushing, shackling with iron, covering us with mining” (“Čuđit: Colonizer” [“Čuđit”]), creating “a land torn asunder by mines [that] equals a genocide” (“I Ryggen På min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti” [“I Ryggen”]). This reflects how mining has been and is key in Swedish colonialism in Sápmi and Meänmaa (the Torne River Valley, traditionally home to hunters, fishers, and peasant farmers speaking Finnish dialects); a commonly used name in Swedish for a large part of Sápmi and most of Meänmaa is *malmfälten*, “the ore fields.”⁹⁹ But the specific scene of a mining town is also connected to other instances of colonial extractivism, as I will soon relate; the scene is about mining not as an isolated issue but as part of the extractivist logic of colonialism, the source of environmental injustice on *ORDA*. And the scene crucially features not only the forces of colonisation but also an alternative world, buried underneath colonial land uses but still the source of future possibilities of healing—of environmental justice—for the sisters the song is dedicated to (and for the land itself, as I will return to in Chapter 6).

So who exactly are the *I*, *we*, *you*, and *they* from “Grieving” and how are they characterised on the album? I will first consider the actants of worldmaking and then those of worldwrecking.

⁹⁹ At a concert in Gothenburg, Sweden, on 3 November 2016, Jannok made an explicit connection between the song and a specific mining town, Jiellevárre/Gällivare Malmberget (also called Váhčir/Váhtjer in North and Lule Sámi), where Jannok went to high school, as she introduced “Grieving” by telling the story of how the Swedish state-owned mining company LKAB’s iron ore mine has caused fissures and break lines in the bedrock so that many parts of the town have had to be closed off and sinkholes have opened up. Gällivare and Malmberget are two towns that have grown together. The Lule Sámi name *Jiellevárre* is thought to mean “cracked mountain,” whereas the newer Swedish name *Malmberget* means “the ore mountain.” On the Sámi and Finnish place names in Gällivare municipality, see Falck and Korhonen (2008).

5.1.1 A Queer Community of Indigenous Sisters and Allies

There is a *protagonist* function on *ORDA*, but one that is not filled by a single character but by a collective comprised of those referred to by the pronouns *I* and *we*. And there is also a *helper* function related to the protagonist, a function potentially filled by those referred to as *you*.

The *I* in the lyrics is Jannok's poetic persona, an autobiographical character. She is characterised as an Indigenous woman—*urfolkskvinna* in the Swedish original of “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness” (“Snölejoninna”). She is “a feminist, an eco warrior” (“Snölejoninna”)—an activist. She is a powerful being, “a native empress” and “a snow lioness” (“Snölejoninna”), one who cares for her sisters (“Grieving”) and who needs her people (*olmmoš* in North Sámi) (“Who Are You: Olmmoš” [“Who”]). And she is “queer,” a word that in Jannok's lyrics denotes how one person can have a multitude of identities: no matter which label is applied to the Indigenous woman, she is always “something more” because she is queer (“Snölejoninna”; see also “This”); her full self cannot be captured by any specific label, by any limiting “norm” (*ORDA*). This queerness as transcending normative categorisations of people is fleshed out through references to nonbinary conceptions of gender in both “This Is My Land: Sápmi” and “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness.” Jannok's lyrics create a strong connection between Sámi being and queerness by tying North Sámi language to (gender) non-conformity in “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness”: the statement “I am queer”—“mon lean queer”—is made in North Sámi in lyrics otherwise in Swedish, and the North Sámi third-person pronoun *son* which is always gender neutral is placed next to the Swedish masculine *han*, feminine *hon*, and the recently added neutral third-person pronoun *hen*, translated into English as “*son*, he, she and ze,” which suggests that unlike Swedish and English, Sámi does not need modification to have a place for queerness. That queerness as a multitude of ways of being is an important theme on *ORDA* is evident as well in the recurrence of imagery related to the common LGBTQ symbol of the rainbow (“Who”; “Snow Grouse: Ii Leat Ivdni Mus” [“Snow Grouse”]; “Snölejoninna”).

The Indigenous queer feminist is an *I* that is part of a *we* that appears again and again in almost all of the songs on *ORDA*. She seeks to bring this *we* together, by singing for her sisters (“Grieving”) and by saying “to all my indigenous relatives around our mother—may we never be silent” (*ORDA*). Her voice is a continuation of the voices of the ancestors who struggled to make life possible for future generations (*ORDA*); it is the collective voice of a *we* made by the tough “sinews of kin” (“Čuđit”; *ORDA*). A key phrase capturing this collective being—and one that is used by many Indigenous activists—is “we are still here,” which Jannok repeats in the chorus to the song with the title “We Are Still Here: Mii Leat Das Áin.” The *we* are Indigenous people still living despite colonialism, who have “been here since time immemorial, and we choose to persist”

(“Snölejoninna”). If we were to summarise this collective into one actant, one character, we could call it the Multitude, in a term that captures its openness. Or it could be termed the Queer Community of Indigenous Sisters, to be more specific about the characteristics of this Multitude.

This community can also include kinds of actants that could be named Allies: there is a potential to act as helper (and in this even to become part of the collective protagonist function) for the *you* of “Grieving: Oappáide,” who also overlap with the *you* in a number of other songs. *You* are “not grieving the loss of your home sweet home,” with “walls that for all times are gone” (“Grieving”): the homes in the mining town—and more broadly in a colonial society facing extinction because of environmental and climate change—are crumbling, falling into the abyss. Because “Grieving: Oappáide” separates *you* from a *they* who are, as I will discuss in the next section, ultimately responsible for colonialism—a use of *you* and *they* that recurs on “Čuđit: Colonizer”—there is an openness in the characterisation of the *you*. Interpreted as the same *you* as the one the song “This Is My Land: Sápmi” is directed to, this *you* should be seen as faced with a choice: fall into the abyss as colonial society spreads destruction, or learn to live differently. By using a number of “if” clauses, the lyrics call on the listener to make a choice: “if you want to ruin it all with big wounds in the mountain” or “if you say that this girl’s not welcome in this country,” then the *you* can leave—but “if you open up your eyes,” then you can be “welcome to my hoods,” where “we live in peace, I’ll teach you how.” “This Is My Land: Sápmi” is thus an attempt to teach the *you* the truth about the land—about it being Indigenous land, and about what the land and the community need to live well—and it interpellates the *you* as a potential ally (which would place the *you* in a helper actant function) and as one who could, if they are open to change, even be included in the queer feminist community of the Multitude (thus partaking of the collective protagonist function). The *you* is thus an open rhetorical category in the lyrics, one that creates an imperative for listeners who have at least one foot in dominant colonial culture (in Sweden, the Nordic region, and the Western world more broadly) to make a choice about how to position themselves in relation to the kind of making of a sustainable and socially just world that the Queer Community of Indigenous Sisters proposes.

5.1.2 Colonisers (*Čuđiid*) and Settlers

The clear *antagonist* in “Grieving: Oappáide” is *they*: “when will they understand when to let be”; when will they stop extracting more and more from the land. The name given to this *they* is *čudit*, a character from Sámi folklore translated as “plunderer” within the lyrics of the song and as “colonizer” in its title. *Čuđiid* are characterised as “offenders” who “get rich” by stealing (“Čuđit”); as “thieves” with “greedy hands” (“We”). This characterisation of colonisers as plunderers

coming in from the outside to take, to build their lives on the theft of the life of others, could be understood as a concrete example of how a hyperseparated Self acts in its exploitation. The further characterisation of this actant depicts it as “the norm” and “the misters” (*ORDA*)—a simplified, male-coded way of being that is the opposite of the Multitude. And an individual example of one of them is a “minister” in a “so-called democracy” whose “longwinded legal debates” leave no room for Sámi concerns (“Snölejoninna”). Relatedly, this kind of antagonistic actant is also characterised as someone who includes the Indigenous woman as “a cutesy symbol put on a shelf / when you’re busy selling metals and promoting yourself”—something that leads the Indigenous woman to conclude that “I guess being politically correct is only for some things” (“I Ryggen”), and not about “recogniz[ing] the people from whom you’ve stolen all your cash” (“Snölejoninna”). *They* are the colonising forces past and present, in places like the USA and Peru and Sápmi (“We”). In particular, *they* are present on *ORDA* in the form of the Swedish colonial state and its extractivist projects, with mining as the most commonly used example. We encounter the Swedish State through the condescending voice of a state attorney in samplings from a court case between the Girjas reindeer herding community and the Swedish State over the management of hunting and fishing rights on reindeer pastureland (“Court 150602: 1”; “Court 150602: 2”; “Court 150602: 3”), a colonial voice that denies that Swedish history is colonial and that the Sámi are an Indigenous people (Swedish *urfolk*) (“Court 150602: 1”; “Court 150602: 2”; “Court 150602: 3”). The hyperseparated Self we encounter here is Western, industrial, and male, and it works in and through the institutions of a Western form of democracy: we could call this actant White Liberal Industrial Man, or simply Coloniser.

But “Grieving: Oappáide” also introduces two other actant functions that are part of the worldwrecking force: the roles of the *gainer* and the *abettor* of colonialism. The rhetorically open *you* is associated with these two potential positions, as well as with the helper function discussed above. The construction of settler-colonial livelihoods has ruined other ways of being: “your house was built on an old woman’s home” so that “under your kitchen floor, buried is her soul” (“Grieving”). The problem of colonialism is thus divided into two: on the one hand, the settlers and extractive workers who may now be losing their homes but still refuse to see the problem, and on the other hand, those who are in charge of extractivist projects like mining companies and the Swedish state. Whereas the *they* who actively lead colonial extractivism are clear antagonists, the *you* is faced with a choice. *You* actants can be helpers if they act as allies, or *gainer* actants benefiting from colonialism in the short term if they keep living in the settler-colonial house that is killing other livelihoods—or even *abettor* actants, actively supporting the colonial antagonist, if they choose to be an active part of resource extraction and racism. Both these kinds of actants could be named Settler. The

abettor function is fleshed out in “This Is My Land: Sápmi” through the “if” clauses mentioned above: if the *you* chooses to “ruin it all with big wounds in the mountain,” they are “not worthy of listening to this song,” and if they “say that this girl’s not welcome in this country / If she must leave because her face is brown,” then this *you* can “go first, ‘cause frankly this is my land” (“This”; see also “Čuđit”). As abettor, the *you* is clearly excluded from the lyrics’ worldmaking community. This *you* as abettor can also become an antagonist proper: “I Ryggen på Mìn Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti” is directed to a *you* that is blamed for the continual making of coloniality; this song does not separate a *you* from a *they*, but makes the *you* an all-encompassing figure of colonial culture. At the same time, this song also emphasises that there is a division within this culture: it tells us that colonial power, by producing settlers as abettors and gainers of colonialism, works to create and uphold divisions among local people, Indigenous and of other origins, who could otherwise be “loving neighbors” (“I Ryggen”; see also “Snölejoninna”). Thus, even where the *you* as Settler has the potential to become a leading worldwrecker, like White Liberal Industrial Man, the rhetorical category remains open and the imperative for the listener to choose their affinities and potentially become part of the Multitude still stands.

Imagining the making of a sustainable world not as centred on any individual but as driven by an Indigenous-led, queer, feminist community, or the Multitude, Jannok’s lyrics place a collective with a diversity of ways of being in the role of protagonist. In terms of environmental justice implications, the imagined worldmaking of this Multitude posits environmental sustainability as inherently about social justice for Indigenous people, people of colour, women, gender nonconformers, and queers, and anyone who does not fit into the norms of dominant colonial culture. The worldwrecking antagonist is a Western colonial project of resource extraction led by extractive industries and powerful men in parliamentary politics and in the legal system, or White Liberal Industrial Man—an antagonist whose occasional tokenistic inclusion of Indigenous people in its (or his) project has nothing to do with justice. The actants in Jannok’s text have the functions of protagonist and helper, forming a force of worldmaking, and antagonist, abettor, and gainer forming the worldwrecking force.

5.2 Anna Tsing, *The Mushroom at the End of the World*

Imagine “first nature” to mean ecological relations (including humans) and “second nature” to refer to capitalist transformations of the environment. . . . My book then offers “third nature,” that is, what manages to live despite capitalism. (viii)

After the [Second World War], the promises of modernization, backed by American bombs, seemed bright. Everyone was to benefit. The direction of the future was well known; but is it now? . . . Even as the promises of development still beckon, we seem to have lost the means. (3)

In asking the reader to imagine first, second, and third nature, the preface to *The Mushroom at the End of the World* (2015) suggests three scenes. These follow upon each other in the sense that second nature cannot exist without or before first nature: capitalist transformations of the environment only occur within a world that already exists outside of capital; likewise, third nature—the making of life in capitalist ruins—only occurs once capitalist ruination has made the world differently. The storyworld in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* is centred on the two consecutive scenes of *the making of ruins* and *the making of life in ruins*, in the following called scene B and scene C. But the narration of the making of ruins implies a preceding scene to the one of ruination: a precapitalist scene A of *the making of socio-ecological worlds*. The nature of scene B’s capitalist world-ruining and the characterisation of antagonists and protagonists is somewhat ambiguous, however; whereas it is clear that those who make capitalism are the text’s overarching antagonists and that those engaging in alternative worldmaking, both before and after capitalist ruination, are its protagonists, the characterisation of these two types of actants points in two directions, suggesting two rather different possibilities of sustainable worldmaking.

5.2.1 A Capitalist System Making Ruins of Socio-Ecological Worlds

One of the most frequently repeated kinds of scenes in Tsing’s text features capitalism as an *antagonist* that ruins a world of social and ecological relations for the sake of accumulation, the scene type that I term scene B: “second nature” as “capitalist transformations of the environment” (viii). In it, we encounter “capitalism [as] a system for concentrating wealth, which makes possible new investments, which further concentrate wealth” (62)—the social class that amasses such wealth are the implied antagonists. The result of this is “ruins, spaces of abandonment for asset production,” as capital constantly moves on to new places that are more profitable (6). This suggests hyperseparation: a way of being that hinges on exploitation of a world that the protagonist detaches themselves from. This makes the world as we know it today, a world of widespread

environmental devastation: “global landscapes today are strewn with this kind of ruin” (6), in an era some refer to as the Anthropocene (19). But capitalists do not achieve this on their own. They have an *abettor* actant in Western states; ruination is a question of “state and capitalist devastation” (20), the state type being the one that arose with European capitalism in the colonial era with its “unprecedented profits” (40). This antagonist is further associated with “Christian masculinity” (vii) and described as a “self-contained individual actor, out to maximize personal interests” (28) (or what is often termed *homo economicus*, economic man). The hyperseparated Self we encounter in Tsing’s text is thus a Western, capitalist, patriarchal figure, and could be named White Bourgeois Man. This is a more specific characterisation of White Liberal Industrial Man: the qualities captured by “liberal” and “industrial” are associated with the capitalist, bourgeois orientation towards business competition and profit maximisation.

From the point of view of those in ruling positions in this system, for whom second nature as capitalist transformations of the environment is the good life, the relevant actants—the *protagonists*—are they themselves. But *The Mushroom at the End of the World* does not position this capitalist actant, this supposedly self-contained hyperseparated Self, as protagonist. Instead, this would-be protagonist of scene B is recast as an antagonist in Tsing’s narration, because White Bourgeois Man produces only ruins and is entirely dependent on the worldmaking that precedes his ruinous accumulation—the “unacknowledged commons” (271) of the socio-ecological worldmaking of first nature, in an implied scene A. Capitalist power is understood as methods for appropriating “*value produced in unplanned patches*” (5; italics in original), in patches that are not planned and controlled by capital. Capital makes only ruins, whereas living worlds are made by collaborations (4, 19, 28, 157, 280)—collaborations that capital is dependent on. The antagonist’s hyperseparation is feigned. Crucially, the collaborations where worlds are made are not about some kind of pre-ruins purity, but about a different, pre-capitalist kind of “disturbance” (160-61)—a kind of worldmaking that is in one instance characterised as “queer” (231). In short, the protagonists, the worldmakers, of scene B are the same ones as those who participate in the socio-ecological collaboration of scene A; depicted as a single actant, they could be called the Commons.

5.2.2 The Makers of Life in Capitalist Ruins

Alongside the critique of capitalist ruination of scene B and of the capitalist narration of it, *The Mushroom at the End of the World* focuses on—as suggested by the title—the *possibility of life in capitalist ruins*. It looks for alternatives at “*the edges of capitalist governance*” (61; italics in original), where there are “pericapitalist” livelihoods (63, 65); this is “third nature” as “what manages to live despite capitalism” (viii), the stuff of *scene C*. In this scene, we learn that “many

preindustrial livelihoods, from foraging to stealing, persist today, and new ones (including commercial mushroom picking) emerge” (22). This means that ruins “can be lively despite announcements of their death; abandoned asset fields sometimes yield new multispecies and multicultural life” (6). As always, it is in collaborations that worldmaking occurs, but in capitalist ruins such collaborations are impacted by a specifically imperialist and capitalist kind of human contamination (6, 29, 50, 161); the protagonist is a Pericapitalist Commons. The livelihoods surrounding the matsutake mushroom, the centre of Tsing’s storyworld, are part of such ecologies of contamination. Even though matsutake picking is a precarious job within capitalism, Tsing’s text depicts it as partly pericapitalist because mushroom pickers make their own meaning out of their work and have power in relation to buyers in local matsutake-picking settings (75), and because the Indigenous Klamath tribe in the US, who are working for the restoration of landscapes and livelihoods, pick and sell mushrooms as a way of getting by in the meantime (197-99). These human protagonists are contrasted with the colonial, patriarchal, capitalist antagonist we encountered in scene B: the force for change is what the first-person narrator calls “our riotous presence” (vii), namely, the presence of all those who have been categorised as Others by White Bourgeois Man, a riotous collective within which Tsing, as a Chinese American woman and a feminist thinker looking for alternative ways of knowing, includes her own narrator-persona. They are people who engage in socio-ecological collaborations through “an ongoing labor of love” (183). The Pericapitalist Commons could thus also be called the Feminist Commons of Colour.

5.2.3 An Ambiguous Characterisation of Capitalism and of the Human

In the epigraph to this part of the chapter, I have highlighted not just the construction of scenes around first, second, and third nature but also a passage that depicts the problem of the making of ruins in an ambiguous way; this passage points to a tension in Tsing’s text in the characterisation of capitalism as the antagonist and a relatedly ambiguous characterisation of those human protagonists who can make third nature. The text’s definition of possibilities for the making of a sustainable world as potentially arising through the making of “third nature” hinges on this characterisation.

The short quotation about “the promises of modernization” contains both a reference to how capitalist progress for all was never a real promise because in reality it relied on “American bombs”—on violent imperialism—and a suggestion that the promise of progress may once have held but that a general human *we* now “seem to have lost the means.” Did not this conception of progress once make sense for everyone or not? The discussion of the text’s critical narration of the making of ruins above supports a view of the capitalist

promise of progress for all as always phony: in no way can a colonial-capitalist system led by the exploitative hyperseparated Self be a force for generalised good. On the basis of this, the text defines Western-style development as colonial through and through: “civilization and progress turn out to be cover-ups and translation mechanisms for getting access to value procured through violence” (63); they are part of an imaginary of a worldmaking project based on the extraction of worldmaking powers outside of itself, an imaginary that hides the true nature of this project in order to mask its extractivism. But at times, the construction of scenes of types B and C points in a different direction. This is particularly pronounced in the chapter on “two kinds of Asian Americans” (97-106). Here we encounter a version of scene B wherein capitalism is not such a generally ruinous force: set after World War II, the scene features Japanese Americans who “did their best to become model Americans” and hide their Japaneseness (99), for which there were rewards of inclusion into a welfare state (101)—they were *receiver* actants benefiting from the capitalist protagonists’ progress. Proceeding to the chapter’s version of scene C, set in the early twenty-first century, we meet Southeast Asians who are part of a different contract between the US and migrants, one of “neoliberal multiculturalism” (100), which means assimilation to a new kind of social contract between the US state and its citizens, a precarious one (101). As a result, even if Southeast Asians “managed to become perfect copies of white Americans, there would be few rewards” (102). These versions of scenes B and C suggest that there was *once* a possibility of progress for all within capitalism—that capitalists were then the protagonists of such a story of progress—but that neoliberalism—with capitalists turned antagonists—has meant that this social contract is *no longer* on offer, so that people now face “the end of global progress’s easy summer” (2).

The text’s ambiguity on how villainous capitalism actually is related to another ambiguity: about who can be the protagonists in change working towards the making of a sustainable world in the form of third nature. In connection to the characterisation of capitalism as a once-protagonist sharing the benefits to receivers across the globe, the text gives us a generalised human *we*, who now need to learn to think beyond the expectation of progress (viii, 21-22, 29). But in connection to capitalism as by definition a force of ruin, Tsing’s text objects to precisely such generalisations about the human, criticising US research on sustainable resource management for its false assumption that sustainability is about the “defense against greed-based popular destruction” (222), and centring specific groups of human Others as protagonists: peasants restoring landscapes (180-90), an assemblage of precarious white American and Southeast Asian American workers building pericapitalist livelihoods in mushroom picking (74), and Indigenous people working for the resurgence of their culture (197-99) (although a blind spot about Indigenous Northern Europeans is apparent in how

a story about the forest in “Lapland” in Finland makes no mention of Sápmi and the Sámi people whose reindeer nonetheless feature in a picture and in the text [166-67]).

The making of a sustainable world in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* is fundamentally about new possibilities for good livelihoods despite and within the ruins made by capitalism. While the text in general suggests that those who can act for this as protagonists are all those Others—a Feminist Commons of Colour—who have been excluded from the planning of worldmaking by colonial, patriarchal capitalism (or White Bourgeois Man), it is also unclear about exactly how antagonistic capitalism is to the endeavours of these Others. What are the environmental justice implications of this? The text certainly has a leaning towards characterising capitalism as a force of ruin that never creates real benefits for anyone except the privileged few who manage to secure their position as hyperseparated White Bourgeois Men, but the text’s ambiguities make it possible to interpret it in two different ways with different implications about justice. One interpretation makes it an anti-capitalist, decolonial text that depicts radical social justice as the very stuff of sustainable worldmaking, with such worldmaking driven by Indigenous people, peasants, and precarious workers as protagonists. The other interpretation focuses on the text’s call for a general human protagonist to confront the particular iteration of capitalism that is neoliberalism, and here justice is conceived as a matter of making more people receivers—actants benefiting from a capitalist protagonist’s worldmaking—of modern capitalist progress again. In the first interpretation, justice is about affirming the power of the Commons to make a sustainable world; in the second, justice is about this Commons as Others being granted some degree of access to the fruits of worldmaking rooted in the hyperseparated Self. The actants in Tsing’s text come in different formations because of this ambiguity. The anti-capitalist, decolonial strand of the text features the functions of protagonist and antagonist, whereas the anti-neoliberal strand features the function of protagonist—who is not the same specific actant as the one in the other strand of the text—coupled with the function of receivers.

5.3 Naomi Klein, *This Changes Everything*

A different, older way of relating to the earth . . . fights back. This has been true from the earliest days of industrialization, when English and Irish peasants, for instance, revolted against the first attempts to enclose communal lands and it has continued in clashes between colonizers and Indigenous peoples throughout the centuries, right up to . . . the Indigenous-led resistance to extreme fossil fuel extraction gaining power today. (177)

One possible bright spot is Scandinavian-style social democracy, which has undoubtedly produced some of the most significant green breakthroughs in the world. (179)

5.3.1 Capitalism versus Climate Justice

That the *antagonist* of sustainable worldmaking projects is capitalism is made clear already in the title: “capitalism vs. the climate.” Throughout the text, there is a consistent narration of capitalism as antagonist and people engaged in alternative politics as *protagonists*. Capitalism as antagonist is characterised as tied up with a societal model fixated on economic growth (Klein 2017, 21, 81-82, 86, 88), a model that is derived from “the fundamental, growth-based, profit-seeking logic of capitalism” (89). This logic is pushing the extractive frontiers in the fossil-fuel industry ever onwards (145, 147)—this is how capitalism is the creator of constantly escalating environmental devastation. It gives us projects like oil and gas pipelines (303, 315, 324) and fracking (hydraulic fracturing for shale gas) (347).

Because of its growth-based, climate-changing characteristics, capitalism acts as antagonist to climate action through denialism (31-44) as well as through the touting of techno-fixes that would demand no political change (230-55). The latter rely on false assumptions about “the wonders of green tech, or the ‘decoupling’ of environmental impacts from economic activity” (89), centring proposed solutions like nuclear power and geoengineering such as “Solar Radiation Management,” both of which repeat the same “reckless, short-term thinking” that got us into this mess in the first place (58; see also 137, 256-90). Examples of this are projects led by CEOs and philanthropists like the billionaires Bill Gates, the co-founder of the IT corporation Microsoft, and Richard Branson, the founder of the multinational venture capital conglomerate Virgin Group (230-55). Denialism and risky gambles with technologies as solutions mean that “the crisis” may be “seized upon to hand over yet more resources to the 1 percent” (8) through a perpetuation of a capitalist power structure and global injustices in an era of climate change. In connection to this overarching focus on the problem of capitalism and growth, Klein’s text criticises institutions like the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank as well as “the economic orthodoxy imparted to elite students at schools like Harvard and

the University of Chicago” (81) with their unwavering quest for economic growth (81-82, 86, 88). Although this antagonist is mostly characterised as a system, constructing an actant that could be called Capitalism, terms like “the 1 percent” and examples of individual capitalist leaders also gesture towards a more concrete expression of this system in the form of a certain kind of human being, a certain way of being human; these more concrete human actants could be called Capitalists or the Ruling Class.

The protagonist who occurs in numerous scenes from specific struggles and who can counteract capitalist denialism as well as false capitalist solutions is the people acting in social movements (6, 10, 61, 120-21, 157, 229, 450, 452, 465-66, 459)—described as the human species’ greatest accomplishment (61)—and in public institutions (96-160). A name for this actant could simply be the People. As the movements that are explored the most in the text are those gathered under the label of “Blockadia” (293-336), a term coined by Klein for land protectors who oppose extractivism, another name for this actant could be the People as Blockadia.

Within the storyworld’s clash between climate-changing Capitalism/Capitalists and the climate and environment as defended by the People (as Blockadia), there are two different scene types that offer divergent characterisations of both actants. The two scene types are in tension with each other, forming the basis for two different conceptions of a sustainable world and two different imaginaries of environmental justice that the text oscillates between.

5.3.2 Age-Old Imperialist Capitalism versus the People as Protectors of the Commons

The antagonist in scene type A is made up of Capitalism as a Western imperialist system built on “centuries of serial thefts—of land, labor, and atmospheric space” (416) and of enclosure of the commons (9, 177). Imperialist capitalism relies on the “extractivist” creation of “disposable peripheries being harnessed to feed a glittering center,” a process “bound up too with notions of racial superiority” (169). The antagonist as a system is thus one based on hyperseparation. In a key scene of type A, the extractivist, imperialist model is described as having originated in European colonial expansion and the scientific and technological progress of that period: capitalism, colonialism, and technologies based on coal were perfectly suited as companions in the domination of nature and non-Western peoples (173). In this scene, we encounter a few specific white, bourgeois or aristocratic men who were important figures in this project of domination. Klein’s text proposes that if extractivism “has a patron saint, the honor should probably go to Francis Bacon,” the seventeenth-century propagator of scientific progress for the domination of nature (170). But Bacon’s vision, she continues, was only realised with the industrial adoption of James

Watt's steam engine (171-72); with this invention, "while making Europe richer, [Watt] also helped make many other parts of the world poorer" (175). Bacon and Watt are joined by another likeminded man, Adam Smith, with his theorisation of the rising market economy as a force in societal development (173). The personification of the system based on hyperseparation takes the form, then, of White Bourgeois Man.

In other scenes of type A, we encounter more recent examples of the same tendencies—because these inequalities "persist to this day" (175). The scenes are centred on large-scale extractive land uses, such as the destructive impacts on rural Africans of the Western aim of engineering a "New Green Revolution" (135)—a food security scheme based on agricultural industrialisation, and in particular on the use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides combined with crop breeding targeting high yields; the devastation caused by the Alberta tar sands in Canada, with their "tailing ponds visible from space" (139); the pollution of the water of Chinese villagers by coal plants as the frontiers of capitalist accumulation are pushed ever onwards (83); carbon offsetting that serves to give Western high-emission industries a clean conscience while displacing Indigenous people who are living sustainably with the land (222-25); and fossil fuel extraction harming fertility and causing "a massive multi-species miscarriage" (427).

Scene type A does not let anyone off the hook. Supposedly "green" countries like Norway are criticised for their oil extraction (179). All those people, mainly in the Global North, who are living "high consumer lifestyles" share responsibility for climate change (2), and they are depicted in this as *gainers* and *abettors* of capitalism; it is a big problem that many people in materially privileged parts of the world "are products of our age and of a dominant ideological project" (460). Some workers are gainers and abettors too: extractive workers like those who subscribe to the philosophy to "tough it out in Fort Mac (or Fort McMoney as it is often called) [in the Alberta tar sands], then get the hell out and begin your real life" (343) are not exempt from criticism just because they are workers. As the wording "tough it out" suggests, these workers are part of the philosophy of male domination, with its hyperseparation-based exploitation that wrecks the world it lives by. Relatedly, some people devoted to left-leaning politics can be abettors too: labour unions based in extractive industries together with "the overwhelming majority of center-left Keynesians" are working to preserve a society based on extractivism and are therefore part of the problem rather than the solution (178). And the same thing goes for some forms of environmental politics, namely mainstream environmental organisations that focus on "collaboration, rather than confrontation" in relation to capitalist interests and describe themselves as "entrepreneurial" (205). In short, the functions of gainer and abettor are filled by actants who imitate or seek to approximate aspects of

White Bourgeois Man's way of being; they could get names like White Extractivist Man, the White Consumerist, and the White Liberal.

The actants who fill the protagonist function of opposing imperialist, capitalist power in scene A are numerous. They are summed up in the term "Blockadia," characterised as a movement of movements against extractivism (119) that is saying "neither here, nor elsewhere" (335) and is fighting for "a world with no sacrifice zones" (187)—fighting against any hyperseparated entity's exploitation of the world of Others, fighting against the foundational principle of hyperseparation itself. Decentring politics done in established institutions, this characterisation of Blockadia considers the movements themselves to be the key drivers of change: "politicians aren't the only ones with the power to declare a crisis. Mass movements of regular people can declare one too," as has been the case historically with opposition to slavery, racial discrimination, sexism, and apartheid (6). Blockadia's resistance is a matter of love—love for the other world that people are protecting (342-43). The beginnings and continuation of this history of Blockadia are narrated in the first passage cited in the epigraph to this part of the chapter, where we encounter peasants in England and Ireland opposing enclosure during early industrialisation and Indigenous resistance to colonisation and extractivism throughout the centuries (177). Blockadia is thus a term for the long history of land-based resistance to extractivism. Today, Indigenous people are the leaders of many such movements (376, 379): they are the Heiltsuk Nation on Bella Bella and Klemtu (340), the Mi'kmaq (299), and the Tsilhqot'in (345) in Canada; the Navajo in North America (398-99); the Sarayaku in Ecuador (388); the Ogoni in Nigeria (305-09); the Inuit and the Sámi in the Arctic (375). They are joined by farmers in Pungesti, Romania (347) and herders in Inner Mongolia (301). Indigenous peoples can also lead by teaching a different way of life to people who have lost their connection to land (370). The countries leading such struggles are not superficially "green" ones in the Global North, but rather Southern countries like Bolivia and Ecuador—but with the caveat that they need to truly oppose extractivism, not only nationalise it and share the profits among the people (180-81). The text also includes Klein's narrator-persona in the anti-extractivist protagonist function, a persona that emerges in the chapter titled "The Right to Regenerate" (419-48) where Klein writes in the first-person about her own fertility problems as analogous with environmental degradation. All this means that the broad category of the People, in the more detailed characterisation of this actant in the text, becomes specified as politically confrontational, as Indigenous- and peasant-led, as caring, and as associated with female fertility.

5.3.3 Recent Neoliberal Fossil Capitalism versus Social-Democratic Green Technologies

In scene type B, the antagonist is recent neoliberal capitalism, which successfully replaced social democracy in the 1980s and 90s (62); without this turn to deregulation, capitalism might have reformed itself away from fossil fuels (55). In the twenty-first century, neoliberalism still hampers climate action through its downplaying of “government spending” and emphasis on “consumption and trade” (92). The underlying problem is the “monetary power of the fossil fuel industry” (149; see also 198) with its devotion to fossil-fuelled “super-profits” (457) and that “a tiny band of global oligarchs controls half the world’s wealth” (154). The text calls those oligarchs Big Oil, a term that includes ExxonMobil (111), Enbridge (331-33, 340), Chevron (347), Shell (358), and British Petroleum (331). Big Oil can thus be one name for the antagonist actant. Rather than the special interest of a ruling class, fossil-fuelled industry is described as a phase in societal development (24). To prevent society from shifting to a new basis for development, Big Oil has powerful ideologues who are producing climate denialism (38). This has huge power in parliamentary politics, and nowhere more so than on Capitol Hill in Washington DC (151) where conservatives like the Tea Party Movement are influential (38). But there are also neoliberals who are not denialists but rather peddle weak, capital-friendly climate action in the form of the “cautious centrism” of former US president Barack Obama (22) and of the campaigner Al Gore who got many environmental organisations, labelled “Big Green,” on board with trade agreements that are in fact inimical to societal transition (85; see also 196-201). This actant called Big Green also serves the greenwashing purposes of corporations like Walmart who try to improve their reputation by supporting organisations like the Environmental Defense Fund, Conservation International, and the Marine Stewardship Council (209). All of this is attributed to how corporate money is ruling society (119; see also 460). An actant name that could summarise all of the above actants is Big Business.

There are two protagonists who are up against this. The first is people in general when they act in public institutions for transition to new clean technologies; governance in the form of planning, banning, market regulations, and green job creation (39, 85, 94-95, 119, 120-60, 127, 130, 355). This actant could be called Social Democratic People. On the global level, this means a “Marshall Plan for the Earth,” whereby Northern countries would aid the South with finance and technologies (5, 458). Social movements have a role in this anti-neoliberal political work as *helpers*; movements are important because “the political class will have to respond” when there are mass mobilisations (6). The second protagonist, whose work becomes possible through good regulations and who can contribute to green job creation, is the figure, or actant, of the

Renewable Energy Entrepreneur. We encounter them in the form of “an elegant Italian businessman” who has tried to produce solar panels in Toronto but failed because of international trade agreements (65-69) and “a Lakota educator and entrepreneur who trains young Native people to become solar engineers” (24), characterised also as a “solar entrepreneur” (226). This actant could be called Business Man, or perhaps Small Business Man.

These protagonists are located primarily in countries with a high level of industrialisation combined with strong state governance, meaning primarily a certain part of the Global North: Western Europe. Transition role models are “Scandinavian-style Social Democracy,” exemplified by the urban planning of the Swedish capital of Stockholm and Denmark’s “community-controlled wind power revolution” (179; on Denmark, see also 398), and the German *Energiewende*, with one local implementation described as a successful transitional programme based on opposition to neoliberal privatisation of the electricity grid (97-100; see also 398). These Western European countries are joined by another heavily industrial country with a strong state: China, said to be moving towards a post-fossil economy (352). In short, the protagonist opposing neoliberal fossil-fuel conservatism is industrial-technological Western(ised) humans, a character reminiscent of White Bourgeois Man.

Through its construction of dual scene types, *This Changes Everything* oscillates between two imaginaries of the making of a sustainable world. The imaginary of scene type A is decolonial, as it questions the foundations of Western capitalist society with its imperialist institutions and construes climate change not as a single issue but as part of a wider environmental crisis. The environmental justice implications of this imaginary reside in how the making of sustainability is understood as contingent on and equal to the protection of the Commons; it is sustainable worldmaking by the People, led by Indigenous people, peasants, and women driven by love and care. The imaginary of scene type B, in contrast, narrows the problem down to recent neoliberalism and climate change, captured in the actant called Big Oil. This imaginary posits a sustainable world made by Western states and through Western-led global diffusion of the Western model of development; the implied conception of environmental justice in this imaginary is centred on the inclusion of more people into the kind of worldmaking that is driven by and made possible by Western capitalism. The actants in Klein’s text come in two formations: a decolonial one, with one version of the protagonist that is up against an antagonist and its gainers and abettors, and a colonial one, with another kind of protagonist and its helpers as well as another kind of antagonist. In the decolonial imaginary, White Bourgeois Man is

the antagonist; all those in the West in particular who accept or support the antagonist's project are gainers or abettors; and the People (as caring, Indigenous-led, and so on) are the protagonist. In the colonial imaginary, the protagonist is White Bourgeois Man, in the form of the elegant entrepreneur—Business Man—who wants state-led transition initiatives; the closely related actant of the Social Democrat as a politician in Western liberal democracy and the People in social movements are the helpers of this protagonist.

5.4 Kim Stanley Robinson, *New York 2140*

“Actually there were people [in what became New York] already. . . . The survivors joined this community and taught the newcomers how to take care of the land so that it would stay healthy forever. . . . You had to love the land the way you loved your mother, or in case you didn’t love your mother, the way you loved your child, or yourself. Because it was you anyway. . . . Every single element of this land, right down to the bedrock, was a citizen of the community they all made together . . . and they all made a good living, and they all had everything it took for total well-being for everything.” (296-97)

“More like Karl Marx.”

She snorted. “If only. I think at best it’s Keynes. But that’s okay. It’s a Keynesian world, always has been.” (588)

“We’ve got good tech, we’ve got a nice planet.” (5)

These three quotations together give us an overview of the components that are important in different kinds of key scenes in Robinson's novel. The first quotation is from one of the passages that most clearly constructs a scene of the type that I will call scene A, whereas the second and third illustrate what is instead important in scene type B. As in Klein's text, the two scene types that I identify characterise protagonists and antagonists in different ways and are in tension with each other. In analysing these scene types, I identify the human actants that are central in the storyworld of *New York 2140* (2017)—and not just the ones that are central to its plot. This means that the definition of actants such as protagonists as functions in the storyworld diverges from the more conventional definition of protagonists in a novel as the group of characters that drive the plot. In the novel's storyworld, functions related to worldmaking and worldwrecking are filled not solely by individual characters in the plot but also by what individual characters stand for and the forces they partake of in the storyworld as a whole.

5.4.1 Capitalism as the 1 Percent versus Collective Action for the Commons

A key scene of type A is one constructed by Mutt telling a story to comfort Jeff when the two are in a difficult situation and Jeff is despairing of the world ever becoming better. The first quotation in the epigraph is from this story. The scene gives us early New York as a community of Indigenous people and immigrants living well together and caring for the land (297). In the novel's present, a similar community, described as a "commons" (119), is made in the intertidal zone by "Squatters. The dispossessed. The water rats" (210). This worldmaking *protagonist* could therefore be called the Commons. The specific commons of the intertidal zone is an underground world where people experiment with living beyond social norms, including beyond binary conceptions of gender (183); this makes their world a queer commons. In the plot, a project of defending the commons is undertaken by a collective human actant as worldmaking protagonist when people engage in a financial strike through the Householders' Union (348-49), a strike that contributes to saving the Met co-op and that is connected to changes in the storyworld's larger political context too (602-03). It is an example of when widespread radicalisation among people in general (145) leads to their mobilisation in mass social movements, whereby democracy opposes capitalism (204, 527-29). Other names for this actant, this Commons, could thus be Democracy, the Movement, or the People.

The *antagonist* threatening the world of the commons is a force of enclosure (210, 398), occurring in the plot as the "regentrification" of the intertidal zone (88). The actants making up this force are related to capitalism, a system mentioned often as the central problem by several characters and narrators (3, 7, 33, 74, 144, 160, 189, 339, 400). Capitalism is characterised by "the citizen" as a system governed by the "one percent" (140); by Jeff as governed by "capital" (as in the capitalist class) (339), "the ruling class" that is "worse than the worst gods in Homer" (189), "assholes who think they can steal everything and get away with it" (400), and the World Trade Organization and the G20 countries (5); and by Charlotte as "oligarchs, plutocrats" (160). These examples all fit within a naming of the antagonist actant as Capital or the Ruling Class, and it is an actant characterised by hyperseparation—it exploits the world of the Commons from a distance. Jeff suggests that this Ruling Class, instead of depicting themselves as exploitative, are falsely touting themselves as benefactors of the world, "tooling to Davos to tell each other how great they are, how much good they're doing" (189), a view which coincides with how "the citizen" sarcastically talks about regentrification as "the march of progress! Sustainable development!" (205-06). This same description of capitalism is present in instances of narration of climate change: telling us about escalating climate crisis in the novel's past, "the citizen" states that "never had so much been done to so many by so few!" and explains

that the climate-changed world is heavily shaped by capitalist responses to sea level rise, so that people are living in a world of climate chaos *and* increased austerity and authoritarianism (144). Both capitalist lack of climate action and the specific ways in which capitalism has responded to climate change—including the drive to re-enclose areas it has abandoned where people have then made commons—are tied to social injustice in the novel.

5.4.2 Capitalism as Humanity versus Good Finance for New Tech

Important scenes of type B are produced in the first-person narration of Franklin. In early scenes, he is characterised as obsessed with a certain kind of masculine identity—he narrates how he zips satisfyingly along the waters of New York’s rivers in his fast boat with its prow rising out of the water like “some kind of nautical hard-on” (16)—and as looking for existential satisfaction through the fun game of hedge fund trading (70). Gradually, however, Franklin changes and begins to doubt whether playing that game the way he is doing it is okay (415). This change is driven by how his sympathetic and vulnerable side is brought out by his attraction to and romantic feelings for two women, first his fellow trader Jojo (67, 125), who also introduces him to the idea that finance can help the community (219), and then the chair of the Met co-op, Charlotte (577). Franklin eventually plays a key role in the saving of the Met co-op by designing a clever way to use the financial system to get assets for the protection and technological development of the cooperative economy (120, 219, 277, 287, 338-39, 416-18, 556), something that is called “Robin Hood Asset Management” in a fragment between chapters (290).

Franklin thus comes to stand for what could be called Finance Done Right as a *protagonist* in political change for sustainable worldmaking. Scenes that are related to Franklin’s achievements in this regard are about the regulation and control of finance: Charlotte pitches the idea, developed by herself and Franklin (427), of nationalising the banks when there is a new financial crash, to her ex-husband who is the chair of the Federal Reserve (433), and she then runs for Congress for the US Democratic Party on a platform of the nationalisation of finance (553-54). The US president is described as being onboard with some sort of attempt to rein in capitalism (231). When Franklin asks Charlotte, in the passage included in the epigraph above, if her ideas are from Marx, she replies that they are from Keynes, because “it’s a Keynesian world. Always has been” (588)—but that is okay because Keynesianism is revolutionary, as Jeff (151) as well as Jeff and Charlotte together (398) have earlier suggested. In relation to Finance Done Right through Keynesian regulation, the actant of the Movement organising the financial strike is a *helper* rather than a protagonist: the prospect of a 2140s equivalent to “a civil war over slavery” is described as an “opportunity” for governmental action (231).

In scenes of type B, the *antagonist* seems in one way to still be capitalism, but in another way the antagonist becomes the human in general. When the antagonist is capitalism, it is a different capitalism—one characterised differently—from that found in scenes of type A. In relation to Keynesian regulation as solution, the antagonist actant is named Neoliberalism and characterised not as capitalism in general but as a specific variety of capitalism which prioritises privatisation (11, 47, 76), an antagonist who is to blame for blocking new clean technologies—technologies that humanity has already got, as Jeff proposes in the line of dialogue quoted in the epigraph above—and thus for runaway climate change (139, 378-79). The possibility for some varieties of capitalism to be beneficial is further supported by the way a capitalist institution like the IMF is not characterised as villainous but rather as a reliable source of information by the externally focalising narrator in a fragment between chapters (64, 116).¹⁰⁰ In relation to the kind of existential satisfaction Franklin is looking for in trading, capitalism is characterised as a system that is not about the power of a ruling class but about human nature and human psychology. And it is when capitalism is characterised in this manner that the antagonist becomes the General Human, as opposed to a hyperseparated Ruling Class. Franklin proposes that the market that he sees on his computer screen is a manifestation of human psychology (122), a “global mind. The hive mind” (589), and Amelia’s mentor from university suggests in a lecture that the capitalist system is indeed an expression of human psychology, as humans want to feel safe in a complex reality and do this through simplified “master rules” like “profit” (360). This characterisation of capitalism as the General Human overlaps with how an unspecified “people”—in contrast to the specified People as Commons discussed above—are at times cast in Robinson’s novel as the antagonist who is causing environmental degradation or the rise of the “Anthropocene”: “people” want global trade, “people” do not think twice about burning carbon, and “people” are unable to imagine “a catastrophe will hit” them (139-40; see also 361, 561).

¹⁰⁰ This kind of external focalisation is a form of extradiegetic narration, to use a term I mentioned in a note when introducing the forms of focalisation in Chapter 4, and it is generally *omniscient*—capable of overlooking the whole of the storyworld and of commenting on it from a perspective that the characters who are part of the plot and world cannot offer. In postmodern fiction, the reliability of this kind of narrator and the clear distinction between external and internal focalisation are often subverted, but in Robinson’s novel—as I explained in Chapter 1—the perspectives in the characters’ internal focalisation and in the narrators’ external focalisation overlap and together form a reliable, yet often uncertain and searching, overarching perspective on the topics discussed in the novel.

5.4.3 The Characterisation of the People, as Diverse or US-Centric

A collective of actants we could call the People of New York (a category that includes the human characters who are the protagonists of the plot) are the overall *protagonists* in the novel's storyworld. They are a diverse crew judging by the protagonists in the plot: many of them are women; there are diverse ethnicities and social classes represented; and at least one of the leading characters is gay (Gen), and two others might be or are alternatively two men with a very close friendship bond (Mutt and Jeff). The only white male character among the protagonists on the level of plot, and the only one of them who is in a privileged social position, is the hedge fund trader Franklin—and he is described as changing and moving away from self-centredness and a certain type of masculinity, as I discussed above. On this basis, the collective of protagonists could be called Diverse People. At the same time, the representation is not quite so broad when we consider that New York is the centre; for instance, the melting of the Greenlandic glacier is referred to as a disaster for coastal cities like New York (143), whereas Kalaallit Nunaat (Greenland) and its Indigenous Inuit population are not mentioned at all. While one of the narrators, “the citizen,” critically comments on the centring of New York, saying it amounts to “representation error” (495; see also 400), they also excuse this choice in a way that contributes to New York-centrism: they state that this story of New York could have been a story of any city—“This focus on New York is not to say that it was the only place that mattered in the year 2142, but only to say that it was like all the cities in the world” (495)—suggesting that the local US experience is universally generalisable. That New York's events and beings are representative of the novel's whole global storyworld is further enforced by how the third-person narrator towards the end of the novel explains that global political change has been driven by the occurrence in many other places of the same kinds of political events as the ones in New York (602-03). Following this, the collective of protagonists could instead be called US-American People.

New York 2140 oscillates between two depictions of the making of a sustainable world—two depictions that have different environmental justice implications. Sustainable worldmaking in scene A, led by the collective actant called the Movement or the Commons who protects the commons by confronting the capitalism of the Ruling Class, is inherently about justice, because its struggle for sustainability cannot be separated from its social justice struggle. The protagonist of this scene fits well with an interpretation of the novel's New York as home to an actant called Diverse People. But scene B, where capitalism is either

Neoliberalism or made by the General Human and can be counteracted by Keynesian regulation so that Finance Done Right can save and technologically improve the commons, rather points towards a lack of concern with justice within sustainable worldmaking, as it presents this worldmaking as a managerial, top-down project implemented by politicians in reformed Western-capitalist institutions with the Movement as helper and not protagonist. Its New York is universalised, the US-American People actant representing the whole world in a Western-centric manner. There are thus two formations of actants in the novel's storyworld: one that could be considered decolonial, where the protagonist is the Movement and the antagonist the Ruling Class; and one that is colonial, with Finance Done Right as a Western-centric protagonist and the Movement as this actant's helper.

5.5 Jonathon Porritt, *The World We Made*

What makes Africa's farming triumph all the more remarkable is that it's been driven primarily by small farmers. . . . That productivity revolution had many different elements to it: an IT revolution that transformed farmers' lives and the markets on which they depended; a profusion of renewable energy sources . . . that transformed on-farm energy in Europe and the US a decade earlier; thousands of miles of new roads (built primarily by the Chinese!); a hugely significant change of heart on the part of big investors in accepting that small really was beautiful as far as African agriculture was concerned; and, finally, optimal crop-breeding based on the open-source genetic sequencing of all key African crops.
(164, 167)

Telling the story of how food security in Africa has been achieved, Porritt brings together in one entry all the components that make up the future sustainable world imagined in *The World We Made* (2013). The storyworld as a whole contains only one scene type, albeit one that is reiterated numerous times in the 49 entries. Starting from the narration of "Africa's farming triumph," I identify worldmakers and worldwreckers within a scene depicting how Western capitalist institutions started to do right and to move towards the adoption of new clean industrial technologies. I also consider the characterisation of a recurrent *we* actant—the general human—in the overall storyworld, a *we* that is divided into protagonist, receiver, and antagonist functions in an interesting way.

5.5.1 Runaway Fossil-Capitalist Greed versus Moderate Capitalism for New Tech

The *antagonists* causing environmental and social problems and preventing action on them are big investors who have not (yet) come to the "change of heart" described in the African farming scene (167): conservative industries and

corporations (255), in particular in oil (37) and food (45), and the corrupting political influence of such “greedy profit-maximizers” (135), and their money (151, 243-44) and “vested interests” (288). The result is a stalwart political maintenance of “old-style capitalism” (56; see also 135) and its model based on economic growth and consumerism (9, 12-13, 34, 67, 70, 90, 147, 198, 205, 209, 302)—even though “the old social contract (‘get qualified; get a good job; get on in the world’) was clearly dead and buried” by the end of the twenty-first century (35; see also 79). We could call this antagonist, made up of many conservative, greedy people, Old Capitalism.

What is needed is a “change of heart” from capitalists and politicians—an effort of “cleaning up capitalism” to make it work for people and alongside other forms of ownership and production (57; see also 13-14, 34, 36, 54-56, 216). People working for this are *protagonists*: they are “governments, big businesses and start-up entrepreneurs” (290; see also 281) offering a balanced mix of private (16, 19, 33, 41, 56, 117-18, 167) and public financial investment (19, 50, 70, 224-25, 240)—exemplified by a national programme in the US called “Rebuild America” (50, 70) and “a Global Recovery Programme” modelled on the post-war Marshall Plan (224). Specifically, they introduce taxation, fees, and market regulation (34, 50-51, 56, 133-34, 135, 204-05, 209), global agreements and conventions (139, 151-52, 227), and industry-led product certification systems like the Rainforest Alliance, the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC), and the Marine Stewardship Council (MSC) (294). The central role of entrepreneurialism is also indicated in how one of the key skills taught in an imagined new educational system is “how to be entrepreneurial” (85). We could call this protagonist, made up of creative entrepreneurs and political leaders, Moderate Capitalism.

Another group of protagonists are those scientifically-minded human beings who are responsible for infrastructure construction and “breakthroughs” in technology from Europe and the US being bestowed upon African farmers (167). Such scientific protagonists recur in many scenes. People trained in natural science are capable of understanding threats to development and the risks of global environmental change: “The great Norman Borlaug”—one of the contributors to the Green Revolution—understood the risk of the black stem rust fungus on wheat early on (90) and an IPCC report is key to raising awareness about climate change and bringing about social change (35). China is described as a frontrunner in the transition to renewable energy because, unlike in the US, “most Chinese politicians are scientifically trained, and a lot of them are engineers” (116). Engineers are also depicted as important negotiators in an Israeli-Palestinian conflict over water resources (27). But much like a new, balanced version of capitalism is necessary, technological-scientific humans need to be cautious in their application of technology: the text dismisses techno-

optimists touting false solutions like nuclear power, a technology that can never be safe and environmentally friendly (59-61), the more dangerous kinds of geoengineering for climate change mitigation (93, 121, 135-38, 256), and genetic engineering used without any consideration of risks (42, 77, 102-03, 175-76, 181-82, 262-63). When people act for and through balanced capitalism and balanced technoscience, however, the result can be a game-changing great transition in technology “from the Age of Fossil Fuels to the Solar Age” (121). These protagonists could be called Techno-Scientists.

Alongside these protagonists, we encounter another important actant: a social movement called “Enough!” (32-36) whose call for a reformed capitalist system (34) has meant that “concerned entrepreneurs” and “billionaire gurus” at last “woke up to the realization that capitalism had to be actively defended against the greed and corruption of those who had messed it up for everyone else” (54). This actant could be called the Movement. Although *The World We Made* features this youth-led (35-36, 246, 303) social movement that converges around the anti-capitalist Occupy Wall Street slogan “We are the 99 per cent” (35), the text does not position those engaging in politics in this manner as protagonists—they are rather *helpers*, calling for action by capitalists (34) and political institutions (50). NGOs like Greenpeace (158) and whistleblowers (228) have the same helper function.

5.5.2 The Characterisation of the Human: The Western(ised) World versus the Rest

In addition to featuring the kinds of actants I have identified above, both the scene of transformed African farming and *The World We Made* as a whole rely on a general characterisation of the General Human as an actant both for bad and for good.

The General Human in the text is in one sense a general *we* that first fails to transition to the new and then eventually comes to its senses and embarks on a path of change. As *antagonist*, the human causes trouble because of population growth (22-23, 41, 77, 88-89, 112-15, 188, 160, 209), which is one important factor behind the advent of the Anthropocene (267). Another factor is fossil fuel use, described as a general human endeavour for the betterment of humankind (38). The General Human thus came to cause global environmental change which poses a threat to “us all” (266; see also 276)—a threat that “the world” (23) and “humanity” (240) were then slow to act on in the first decades of the twenty-first century. After a turning point in the 2010s, however, the same *we* started acting for change: people came together across differences as “the world,” “the world’s countries,” and “a family of nations”—in the form of international institutions like the UN (22, 35, 226, 248) and a new International Court for the

Environment (ICE) (227)—for this purpose (1; see also 6, 90, 240, 266). This is the General Human as *protagonist*.

In another sense, however, the aspect of the human that can act for change is characterised differently from aspects of the human that have the function of *receivers*—less able to drive the necessary change—or as *antagonists* unless they change their ways. This differentiation occurs along subtly but undeniably racial lines. We see this in the entry on food security and African farming that has been the starting point for my analysis. Although African small-scale farmers are, on the surface level, characterised as the leaders of the farming revolution, the passage in effect posits forces outside their power as the *protagonists* acting for change: rather than specifying how African farmers transformed their own world, the passage tells us of the transformative power of technologies developed in the US and the EU, of Chinese construction of roads in Africa, and of “a hugely significant change of heart on the part of big investors in accepting that small really was beautiful as far as African agriculture was concerned” (167). This passage constructs a group of actants we could call Africans or People of Colour as receivers whose agency is contingent on Western(ised) agency. These actants come in the shape of hyperseparated Others; entities depicted as lacking being, as lacking worldmaking power, and therefore in need of the beneficial action of the hyperseparated Self from whom they are radically distinguished.

Such characterisation of receivers and protagonists is common in the text. The power to achieve change is located in the developed Western(ised) world, in capital, and in predominantly male leaders. Important investors in change are the World Bank (19, 33, 56, 167); large companies and industries (45, 259, 285); big individual investors (167) like Richard Branson of the Virgin corporation (201); the fossil fuel corporation ExxonMobil (93); the food industry multinational Unilever, which launched the MSC certification system (155); charitable foundations like the Apple Foundation (190) and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (180, 220, 269); the EU (19, 205); states like Japan (14), China (15-16, 120, 157, 169, 184-88, 297), the Scandinavian countries (263-65) and specifically Sweden (30, 38, 132) and Denmark (38, 45, 69, 148-49), the US state of California, South Korea, Australia, Western European countries like Germany (23), and a US federal government that has eventually turned to public investment and planning schemes (50, 70) in particular under President Barack Obama inspired by John F. Kennedy (189). The story’s narrator, Alex McKay, is also Western, but not clearly gendered in the text. Porritt’s persona, constructed in the “Connections & Inspirations” section which is not part of the fictional world, however, becomes gendered as male through the author’s gender—and the ways that the perspectives and voices of this narrator and of Alex McKay overlap mean that Porritt’s gender can influence how the reader understands

Alex's too.¹⁰¹ Characterisations of Africans, Asians, and Arabs as receivers—as capable of action only through assistance—abound in the text too: progress in “poor countries” is enabled by big investors (167), billionaire philanthropists (112-14, 217-20), capitalist foundations (190), and micro-credit schemes (217, 300), two examples of which are how a Kenyan reforestation movement pioneered by “an amazing woman called Wangari Maathai” is “funded in part by carbon credits sold to the World Bank” (167), and that a group of children in India participating in the fight against malaria are part of a project made possible by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation (180). The only image in the text depicting a Black person as an individual in charge of a process is of a Black man in Uganda dressed in a lab coat working in a hyper-efficient brewery (194)—the Black person in charge is a Techno-Scientist using industrial equipment, brought closer to the Western protagonist ideal in the same manner as the small-scale farmers who are enabled to sort out African food security through Western investment and technology transfer.

There are also instances in the text when the non-Western becomes an *antagonist*. This is the case in the locating of the problem of corruption: although described as an issue in all countries and not least in the US, the story suggests that it is most difficult to combat in Bangladesh and Pakistan (243-44), and that it is prevalent too in the Democratic Republic of Congo (151). Unlike the US which eventually, as we just saw, comes to act for good, these countries in Asia and Africa are not characterised as changing. Even more clear in constructing an antagonist we could call People of Colour, and in particular Women of Colour, is the characterisation of the humans who are central to the problem of population—a problem that is, as I showed above, a crucial aspect of global environmental change in *The World We Made*. Population is depicted not just as a general human problem but as located in the Middle East (22), the Philippines (41, 115), Uganda and Bangladesh (112-13), and Mongolia (188). The pictures of women of colour in the book are related to this issue, and the women are there described as “unable to manage their own fertility” (112) and as too uneducated to oppose the Catholic Church's teachings on contraception (114); the entry in question commends Melinda Gates for her work in helping poor women take control of their fertility (114), and in connection to this shows us an image of a Black woman in Uganda holding a condom and a packet of birth control pills with English-language packaging, standing in front of a group of Black people, and below this an image of four Bangladeshi women in headscarves being

¹⁰¹ I first read the narrator as a woman but began to see them as male after reading the whole text including the postscript and after watching online film clips connected to the printed book (GreenTV 2013a, 2013b, 2014) where Alex McKay speaks in a deep male voice. Since the narrator's name is gender neutral and no pronouns are used for them anywhere in the text—and their partner is not gendered either—it is likely that Porritt has attempted to make it easy for readers of any (or at least of both male and female) gender to identify with the narrator.

instructed by another Bangladeshi woman without a headscarf (113). In order to transition from being antagonists in this issue, the group of actants that could be called Women of Colour need to become receivers of Western assistance: the Black women need to be given access to pharmaceuticals and condoms and the Muslim women need education on family planning from someone less traditional, all of which is made possible by the white bourgeois woman Melinda Gates.¹⁰² The work of Gates, as well as that of China's one-child policy with its violation of women's rights described as unfortunate (184-88), is contrasted with the unwillingness of environmentalists and the left in the West to talk about population growth (112). Westerners need to face up to the need for them to be protagonists in the combatting of population growth rooted in the fertility of Women of Colour antagonists; they need to act as kind versions of the hyperseparated Self, for it is in their being that good worldmaking power resides.

World We Made understands sustainable worldmaking as achievable through Moderate Capitalism—a balanced version of capitalism beyond the economic growth paradigm; a capitalism transitioning smoothly away from fossil fuels. There are several ways that protagonists and antagonists are characterised in Porritt's storyworld, but the overarching characterisations suggest a single formation of actants based on the function of protagonists, antagonists, and receivers. The power to achieve change is depicted as residing in a Western, industrial-technological, capitalist, and predominantly male protagonist—who could be summarised as White Bourgeois Man, who is sometimes joined by White Bourgeois Woman—whereas the forces that prevent such change are depicted as residing in antagonist-actants called People of Colour and in particular Women of Colour. In order to be part of sustainable worldmaking instead, these latter actants need to gain assistance from the Western protagonist, something that places them in the function of receivers. Hence, the environmental justice implications of this imagining of a sustainable world are about a relative inclusion of underprivileged people into an already established—but somewhat moderated—male, Western, capitalist worldmaking that people of colour are not contributors to. In other words, justice is about a kind of hyperseparated being sharing the fruits of its (or often his) worldmaking with the less fortunate.

¹⁰² There are a few possible exceptions to this characterisation of Western(ised) people as protagonists and people of colour as receivers and antagonists; I discuss those examples in Chapter 6. The overall characterisations that I have discussed here remain dominant in the work as a whole, however, and is difficult to reconcile with the exceptions.

5.6 Jeffrey Sachs, *The Age of Sustainable Development*

One of the most complicated unsolved problems of sustainable development is how the world will feed itself. The problem is an ancient one. Yet many people thought it had been solved with the great breakthroughs in food productivity based on scientific advances. Especially after the Green Revolution of high-yield crop varieties that took off in the 1960s. . . . Now we have some serious doubts. (317)

We are going to need another Green Revolution. (349)

The story of food security is one of many iterations of the same story template in *The Age of Sustainable Development* (2012), a template constituted by two consecutive scenes: one of development and one of sustainable development. That the story in the food security chapter is representative of the text as a whole is explicitly proposed in the text: commenting on the conclusions he draws from it, Sachs states that the solutions are the same ones “as we have noted time and again” throughout the text (353). The food security chapter offers two scenes—scene A and scene B—of Green Revolution featuring the same worldmakers; scene B introduces a worldwrecker as well. After discussing these two scenes, I turn—as in the analysis of Porritt’s text—to how the characterisation of the protagonist of “the human” throughout the text works with inclusions and exclusions of different ways of being human.

5.6.1 For-Profit Techno-Genius in Early Development

The *protagonists* of the first Green Revolution were three twentieth-century scientists: the “two great chemical engineers, Fritz Haber and Carl Bosch,” who developed the “Haber-Bosch process” for making nitrogen fertiliser “in a large-scale industrial progress” (342-43), and Norman Borlaug, “a highly skilled agronomist who used his great ingenuity and determination” to build a Green Revolution in India (161-63). These kinds of technological geniuses feature prominently in other iterations of the same scene type in the text; the protagonist could be dubbed Techno-Genius. The most detailed construction of such a scene of technological breakthrough centres the invention of the steam engine as the starting point of modern development. The scene’s human protagonist is the “wonderfully creative and fiercely targeted genius . . . James Watt” (76). To understand Watt, Sachs turns to the father of neoclassical economics Adam Smith’s explanation of how “it is the motivation of meeting our own wants and needs, via market transactions, that gives rise to the division of labor and the workings of the modern economy” (77): working within the division of labour, like the iconic butcher who sells meat out of self-interest in Smith’s much-cited story, Watt was driven by “profits and the patent” and “his aims included

intellectual property, glory, and riches” (76). Techno-Genius is thus joined by Economic Genius, a fellow protagonist who understands the nature of Techno-Genius—and whom we encounter as well in Sachs’s narrator-persona, as his bio on the cover tells us he is an economist at the Ivy League university Columbia (meaning one trained in the neoclassical school founded by Smith among others). The theory of progress offered by Smith is the foundation for the storyworld in *The Age of Sustainable Development*, so we learn both in the scene with Watt and the steam engine and elsewhere: modern civilisation was built through “markets and technological advance” (79; see also 73, 146). To specify, then, the protagonist of scene A is *for-profit* Techno-Genius.

5.6.2 Mature Techno-Genius on a Regulated Market versus Free-Market Big Oil

In the successive scene, a problem is described to the reader: the development brought about by these kinds of Techno-Geniuses has been unsustainable because it leads to global environmental and climate change (27, 43). The adverse effects are related in particular to the use of fossil fuels (38), but also to other dimensions of industrial technologies which mean that society comes into conflict with multiple “planetary boundaries” (40-41); the text constructs similar scenes around the adverse effects of agricultural chemicals (188-89) and industrially produced nitrogen fertiliser (344), threats to fisheries (461) and to biodiversity (452), and—last but not least—the issue of climate change which means that, despite the benefits of fossil fuels, “yet now the CO₂ emissions from fossil fuels pose an unprecedented threat” (186).

This realisation means, the text suggests, that it is necessary to go from development to *sustainable* development, meaning “*socially inclusive and environmentally sustainable economic growth*” (3; italics in original; see also 69)—widespread economic growth “decoupled” from environmental impact (217). In the second type of scene (B), the aim is to achieve development as already defined in the first scene (A), but with social and environmental tweaks. Thus, in relation to food, scene type B raises the issue of the unsustainability of the Green Revolution (317) only to conclude that what is needed is a new Green Revolution (349). More specifically, the tweaks needed are both that rich countries—those that “had the economic good fortune” (91) to develop early—should help the poor with aid and loans to get modern economic growth started everywhere (156, 171-75), and that the problem of how “technological mastery, alas, does not mean intelligence, responsibility, or foresight” (460) needs to be counteracted. Both, but in particular the latter, require that “we are clever and apply ourselves to the study and design of new sustainable business practices and technologies” (43). In the example of the Green Revolution, this means the development of

new agricultural technologies, including GMOs (349-50), that “must emphasize not only crop yields (tons per hectare) but increased crop efficiency in the low use of water, fertilizers, and other inputs” (167). The protagonist we have encountered is thus further characterised in two ways: Techno-Genius is more clearly defined as being Western and industrial, but also called on to become more *mature* than its older, for-profit version was.

For these kinds of changes towards sustainable development to occur, there is a need for efforts “to drive innovations in a targeted direction” through “public financing of R&D [research and development], direct research in public laboratories, regulations, prizes for new innovations, and modifications of patent law” (11; see also 271-72, 476, 496-99), and more broadly for a good regulatory framework and “good governance” (3-4, 42-43, 497-99, 502-04)—a balance between markets and government (460). This means good “participation” for all kinds of “stakeholders” (504; see also 42), something that can be achieved around “a big roundtable” of market, state, and civil society actors (496). The economist John Maynard Keynes was a forerunner in promoting such a model of combined government planning and market freedom to achieve technological advancement (73-74, 143). A precedent is the “ICT revolution” (241, 494-95) (ICT standing for information and communications technology), which “succeeded through a combination of” three things: “individual genius,” “industry competition,” and industrial visioning and planning (495). Political Leaders who wisely regulate markets somewhat thus act as *helpers* to the Techno-Genius protagonist with its (or his) profit drive, helping Techno-Genius direct its (his) efforts more prudently. The effect can be the emergence of the kinds of agricultural innovations that we have already encountered (161-67, 317-56, 349-50) as well as of new and improved technologies for what is characterised as fossil-free energy generation and energy use (202-04, 423).

In this scene type that I am calling B, we also encounter an *antagonist* that is blocking change: the greed of some CEOs (241), of Wall Street (130-31), and of “Big Oil” (506). In particular Big Oil’s touting of fossil fuels gets in the way of alternative technologies (86). All these antagonists adhere to “‘free-market’ sentiment,” an enemy of Keynesian planning and distribution efforts that is “startlingly misguided” and can “create havoc” (476). This antagonist’s corrupting “corporate lobbying” (131, 396, 476) is influential especially in US politics (475). This antagonist could be called Old Capitalism, Big Oil, or Big Business.

5.6.3 Techno-Genius Humanity as White Bourgeois Man versus People of Colour

The protagonist we have encountered is further characterised throughout the text. We learn that the development in scene A is a matter of human success in

overcoming natural constraints, which has made it possible for our population to grow (21, 343, 456). Therefore, agriculture based on chemical fertilisers and certain crop breeding methods as pioneered by Haber, Bosch, and Borlaug has been and is “of profound benefit for *humanity*” (188; emphasis added; see also 342-344). The *protagonist* is thus the General Human. What happens in scene B, though, is that *we* as aggregate human population give rise to the Anthropocene, “our era” (37; see also xiii), and thus this *we* becomes its own enemy by threatening to return humanity to a situation of poverty (208-14, 333, 347, 459). The General Human as Techno-Genius is both hero and villain; the actant both causing the situation and responsible for taking action is named “humanity,” “we,” and “the world” (e.g. xii, xiv, 1-3, 8, 34, 40, 182, 184, 195, 203, 342, 452, 453-74, 481, 483). In the destructive, worldwrecking role, the General Human is the *antagonist*. The General Human as the protagonist who can achieve change is embodied in the UN with first the Millennium Development Goals (144-49, 178, 180, 490) and then the Sustainable Development Goals or SDGs (3, 481-511).

In one sense, this actant as both hero and villain is characterised as a unified humanity. In another sense, the human is differentiated through the inclusions and exclusions that make up Techno-Genius—along lines that are as subtly yet undeniably racial as in *The World We Made*.

The source of modern development is England (89). More recently, the same type of English-style development has diffused (e.g. 87, 102), spearheaded as a socially just project by Northern Europe which “has chosen a pathway of becoming wealthier with considerable social equality” (57)—Sachs in particular talks of “the impressive Scandinavian countries” as Keynesian role models (59; see also 271) and as generous foreign aid payers (174)—and by China with its success in catching up with the West (23-25, 27, 68-69). The makers of development who can flourish in such conditions are, as we have already seen, Techno-Geniuses like Watt (76) and Haber and Bosch (342-43) and Economic Geniuses like Smith (77) and Keynes (73-74, 143). These genius men are joined by a number of other similar characters. One of the people who contributes a blurb to the book’s back cover is Paul Polman, then CEO of the food multinational Unilever (and formerly also chief financial officer [CFO] of the food multinational Nestlé). In most of the pictures of important people in the text, we see men wearing modern Western business-world fashion or other types of formal Western-style clothing, like the former US president John F. Kennedy (492), Norman Borlaug (162), and Sachs himself—introduced as a Columbia University economist inside the cover of the book. Similar men from earlier periods are pictured as well: Francis Bacon (75), Thomas Malthus (183, 207), and Jeremy Bentham (225). These important characters are Western men of science of aristocratic or upper middle-class backgrounds, all in positions of power

within bourgeois culture. They are, in short, White Bourgeois Man—this is the aspect of the human that acts as *protagonist*.

In contrast, people with other physical attributes and in other kinds of social positions are frequently characterised as the *receivers* of the actions of White Bourgeois Man—in need of his aid—and sometimes also as *antagonists*.

Concerning the latter actant function, although the human as antagonist is connected to generalised human population as indicated above, the issue of environmentally harmful population growth is in fact specifically located: in the index under “population,” the two geographical areas mentioned are Africa and Bangladesh (537). Moreover, the text posits high fertility rates as a cause of poverty (122-23, 157), thus pinning the blame for social inequalities in part on people of colour for having too many babies. The actants we could call People of Colour here occur in the antagonist function, as people blocking sustainable development. People depicted as receivers in need of help are similarly characterised and positioned; People of Colour actants can occur in this function too. We encounter African farmers in hardship, stuck in a kind of scene that precedes development: they are still fighting against nature for survival (28, 67); “still stuck in a poverty trap” (149). That such people have no relevant agency is emphasised by how the caption to a picture of a donkey tells us that this picture in fact represents a smallholder farmer in Ethiopia who is “hidden behind a great bale of grain carried by his donkey” (28)—this Black farmer is literally invisibilised. Included in a chapter on why some people have stayed poor, the picture illustrates poverty and lack of development. For the situation of such people to be remedied, what is needed is action by the Global North: monetary aid to help countries take a first step towards growth is important (105, 108, 153, 167-69, 244, 252, 258, 300)—something pioneered by the post-war Marshall Plan (171)—as is unidirectional technology transfer from “technological leaders” to all other parts of the globe (87-88; see also 489). There is also a need for the diffusion of knowledge about family planning and increased access to “modern contraceptives” (159).

For Africans, people of colour generally, and women to be considered capable of meaningful action instead—for them to become possible protagonists of sustainable worldmaking—they need first to be transformed by taking steps towards the form of being that I call White Bourgeois Man. We see this in the instances when the actants People of Colour and Women in the text are characterised as part of the protagonist function. The only woman who is positioned as an individual authority is the NGO profile and lawyer Kerry Kennedy, daughter of former US president John F. Kennedy’s brother Robert F. Kennedy, who contributes a blurb to the back cover—a woman with an educational and class profile aligning her with the male geniuses in the text. When it comes to people of colour, there are a number of telling pictures in the text.

Two are of Borlaug's collaborators on the Green Revolution in India, the agronomist M.S. Swaminathan and former Indian minister of agriculture Chidambaram Subramaniam, characterised as geniuses just like Borlaug—the three together form a “historical triumvirate” (162-63). Another picture shows us Ban Ki-moon, then-secretary general of the UN, dressed in a Western suit (485). We also see Black people as medical professionals in Africa (108, 179) and Black women commended for their “participation in politics” defined as liberal-democratic parliamentarism (128): the female members of the Rwandan parliament are pictured wearing traditional clothes, exempt from the fashion code of the text as a whole but standing around the president Paul Kagame who is dressed in a Western suit.¹⁰³ This characterisation of People of Colour and Women as actants for good only when cast in the mould of White Bourgeois Man is most striking in discussions of how to empower women of colour. The road to “female empowerment” is about the reduction of fertility entwined with the enabling of every woman to become an “income” earner who can “invest more in each of her children” (169; emphasis added), a road that becomes available through formal schooling of girls (125, 159); the empowered woman of colour is an Entrepreneur-Mother, or Mother-as-Business Man, educated for the labour market, planning her investments well and putting out only the products (children) she can fund the production of (see also 125, 127, 159, 258, 263). As Woman of Colour or as Black Farmer, a person is a passive receiver or even an antagonist in the storyworld of *The Age of Sustainable Development*; to occur in a protagonist actant function, they need to transform into some iteration of White Bourgeois Man.

This characterisation of the aspects of the human that function as worldmakers and worldwreckers is based within the ontology of hyperseparation, just like the equivalent characterisation in Porritt's text. In depicting one version of the human as possessing being and the capacity to make a sustainable world and another as lacking such being and power, and in doing this in racialised and gendered terms, the text sets up a distinction between two kinds of humans, hyperseparated as Self and Others.

A sustainable world in *The Age of Sustainable Development* can be made through the decoupling of development from environmental impact. Despite some variations in the characterisation of the actants who can make such a world, with a tendency

¹⁰³ Just like in Porritt's text, as I pointed out in the previous footnote, there are potential exceptions to the centring of this, but ones that are parenthetical in the work as a whole; this too will be discussed in Chapter 6.

at times to depict the General Human as both protagonist and antagonist, the text still produces a clear set of actants where the human is differentiated. Sustainable worldmaking is driven by an actant we can call Techno-Genius or White Bourgeois Man and by this actant's maturing to sustainability and generosity. This maturing requires a regulatory direction of the profit drive by Political Leaders as helpers, so that Techno-Genius turns from fossil-fuelled to clean technologies and from self-centred greed to kind sharing with the less fortunate. The environmental justice implications of this are that environmental sustainability hinges on the tempered continuation of the worldmaking project of Western industrial capitalism and that social justice is a matter of the diffusion of development as defined through English or more broadly Western fossil-fuelled capitalism. Justice, in other words, is possible when the social position of White Bourgeois Man becomes available for People of Colour and Women and they, through being receivers of its (his) assistance, manage to cast themselves in the White Bourgeois Male mould.

5.7 A Tentative Comparison of the Texts and their Imaginaries

In this chapter I have identified several recurrent actant functions that can feature in imaginaries of environmental justice: *protagonists* as worldmakers who contribute to the storyworld through creation, *helpers* who assist them, and *receivers* who benefit from their work; and *antagonists* as worldwreckers who contribute to the storyworld through destruction, *abettors* who assist them, and *gainers* who benefit from the work of worldwrecking. These two sets of actant functions, forming one force of worldmaking and one of worldwrecking, are structurally parallel and both consist of active and passive functions. Protagonist, antagonist, helper, and abettor are active—they do important things in the story and storyworld—whereas receiver and gainer are passive—they impact the world not through their capacity to do things but because they need to or are able to obtain something from the active actants. In the six texts, these actant functions are filled by different specific actants—and some of those actants recur across the texts either in the same function in texts that in other ways diverge, or in different functions. This is visible both in several concrete examples and in more general tendencies across the texts.

5.7.1 Recurrent Actants Across the Texts

The most obvious way that specific actants recur is in the form of individual people and entities that have proper names—as well as in the form of nouns that capture the phenomena these are related to. The Swedish state is the central

colonial antagonist in Jannok's storyworld, whereas Sweden and Scandinavia are role models of sustainability and social equity in Sachs's, Porritt's, and Klein's. China is depicted as a similar frontrunner in the texts by Klein, Sachs, and Porritt. State power in general is viewed with scepticism and cast as tied up with colonialism and/or capitalism in the narration of Jannok and Tsing, but is in contrast seen as key to reversing climate change and creating a socially just world in the works of the other four authors. Jannok, Klein, and Robinson depict Indigenous cultures that have caring relations with land, though their three texts also diverge in other ways. In Porritt's storyworld future, ExxonMobil and Richard Branson have become pioneers in developing new clean forms of energy, whereas in Klein's storyworld they are blocking change and touting false solutions. Similarly, Porritt's and Sachs's texts both commend Unilever, the former for its launching of the MSC certification and the latter for its then-CEO's expertise on sustainability, whereas Klein's text dismisses Unilever's MSC certification as greenwashing. The term Big Oil for powerful fossil-fuel corporations is used in the texts by Klein and Sachs—two texts that in some other ways do not share a conception of the antagonist. In the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson, Keynes is a social-democratic thinker to learn from and follow, whereas in Klein's he is a problematic centrist. Klein's storyworld offers a critical perspective on economists trained at universities like Harvard—an Ivy League university like the one where Sachs works.¹⁰⁴ A future Marshall Plan for sustainability is imagined in Klein's storyworld as part of anti-capitalism and in Porritt's as part of reformed capitalism. Klein's and Porritt's texts talk of economic growth as problematic, whereas Sachs's depicts it as a prerequisite for human wellbeing (with Klein's text dismissing and Sachs's text celebrating "decoupling" of economic growth from environmental impact). Porritt and Tsing, who otherwise do not overlap on many points, both narrate how a post-war social contract of secure employment and welfare in Western countries had ended by the early twenty-first century. Francis Bacon, James Watt, and Adam Smith are cast as important early antagonists of environmental justice in Klein's text and as geniuses to be admired for their contributions to technological and social progress in Sachs's. In Sachs's and Porritt's storyworlds, the Green Revolution is commended, though it needs some tweaks, whereas in Klein's it is inimical to sustainable and just food production and to ecosystem health.

Based on these specific examples, it is difficult to come to any definitive conclusion about how the six texts should be positioned politically relative to each other. But if the examples are considered as part of different general tendencies in how worldmaking and worldwrecking forces are characterised, as

¹⁰⁴ Sachs's in fact also holds a degree in economics from Harvard, as I mentioned when introducing the writers in Chapter 1.

I have been doing throughout the analyses above—differences that can be present even *within* one text, as has been gestured towards—it would be possible to compare the overarching imaginaries that emerge within the texts. Let me then identify and compare the general important worldmaking and worldwrecking actants that recur across the texts.

Two overarching tendencies in the imagining of central actants

One of the actants is a diverse human community led by Indigenous people and/or people of colour and including all kinds of people living precarious lives. We could call this actant the Multitude, using the term I proposed in the interpretation of Jannok's lyrics. This is the protagonist in Jannok's and Tsing's texts, and partly also in Klein's and Robinson's. Among these authors, Jannok and Klein depict the protagonist as feminine and/or feminist. This protagonist-collective is characterised by all four authors as driven by love, and by Jannok (and partly by Robinson and Tsing, although the characterisation is more detailed and complex in Jannok's text) as queer. The definition in Jannok's lyrics of queerness centres a multitude of ways of living as the alternative to colonial worldmaking, and this characteristic in some ways applies to the community of worldmakers as imagined in Tsing's storyworld, and partly in Klein's and Robinson's too. The worldmaking collective in question acts in the form of social movements, or the actant I have called the Movement, in Klein's and Robinson's texts, while Tsing's and Robinson's texts overlap in defining the protagonist-collective's worldmaking as a project undertaken in a world wrecked by capitalism. There are related similarities in how these four texts construct the central worldwrecking character(s). Jannok's lyrics talk of powerful men in parliamentary politics, in the legal system, and in extractive industries (or of an actant called White Liberal Industrial Man), and this largely aligns with Tsing's and Klein's depictions of the foundations of Western imperialist, capitalist society and its male ideologues (who can be summarised in the actant called White Bourgeois Man). Tsing's and Klein's characterisations of this actants are more specific than Jannok's, as "Liberal Industrial" is replaced with "Bourgeois"; Tsing's and Klein's texts thereby more clearly connect colonial, patriarchal power to capitalism. Jannok also depicts this antagonist as one who can include Indigenous people in his project in a tokenistic manner while simultaneously refusing to acknowledge how this project is a matter of worldwrecking from the point of view of Indigenous people.

The same actant that Jannok and Tsing and partly also Klein and Robinson depict as a central worldwrecker is featured as a worldmaker instead in Sachs's and Porritt's texts, as well as to an extent in Klein's and Robinson's. This character here becomes articulated as White Bourgeois Man, a being characterised by technological genius and who could also be called Techno-

Genius. Sachs and Porritt both specify that good worldmaking needs a *mature and more generous* version of White Bourgeois Man, one who is not a profit-driven Techno-Genius but one guided by good nation-state Political Leaders, and one who shares his social position with people of colour and women (and stops being committed to economic growth, for Porritt)—a version of White Bourgeois Man that also occurs as protagonist in the texts by Robinson and Klein. The texts by all four of these authors put forth the idea that capitalism needs to be regulated to some extent and that technological progress needs to be directed towards new clean industrial technologies. They apply different labels to this: Porritt calls it capitalism done right (Moderate Capitalism as an actant), Sachs calls it Keynesianism posited as a saner version of capitalism, Klein calls it anti-capitalism, and Robinson calls it Keynesianism posited as a realistic way forward for left-wing movements. An antagonist positioned in opposition to this mature White Bourgeois Man is the obstinately old-style version of the same actant, called Old Capitalism and Neoliberalism and comprised of those who support free-market capitalism—and this is a characterisation of the capitalist antagonist that is in fact also featured to an extent in Tsing’s text. When People of Colour and particularly Women of Colour occur as actants in relation to this protagonist in Porritt’s and Sachs’s texts, they are antagonists and receivers, depicted as unable to control their fertility and therefore as worldwreckers through overpopulation unless they change to become more like the protagonist; people of colour thus lack being for Sachs and Porritt and must be assimilated to White Bourgeois Man’s way of being in order to matter. Klein and Robinson do not conceive of people and women of colour in this manner. Robinson does depict the general human as causing environmental degradation in the same way as Sachs and Porritt, but he does not cast this in racial terms.

5.7.2 Relational Structures in the Storyworlds

The different conceptions of being and the capacity for worldmaking that have emerged in the interpretations of the texts in this chapter can, following the theorisation in Chapter 4 of storyworlds as organised through the relationships between the elements depicted, be understood to suggest different relational structures. Storyworlds are in this sense constituted by how actants make and wreck worlds by acting with and against each other in different manners. I will conclude this chapter by identifying these structures and offering terms for them. The identification of relational structures is not exhaustive; there may be other structures in the texts—perhaps even ones that could be construed to partake of other overarching imaginaries than the ones I emphasise—but I have chosen to highlight four structures because they bring out important similarities and differences between the texts’ storyworlds and because they are central to the texts’ combined imagining of environmental sustainability and social justice.

They can thus help us gain a more in-depth understanding of the kinds of relations that can drive change and the making and wrecking of sustainable worlds in these texts.¹⁰⁵

Conviviality

The relational structure that underpins storyworlds made by the actant I have called the Multitude—diverse communities and a multitude of ways of being—could be termed *conviviality*: the collaborative making of worlds. We are told stories about convivial relations when Jannok’s lyrics depict a world made by Sámi people living with the land through thousand-year-long care (“Čuđit”; “Snölejoninna”; “I Ryggen”; “This”); when Tsing’s text discusses the Indigenous Klamath Tribes, who write on their website that “their lifestyles and economies provided abundantly for their needs and their cultural ways for over 14,000 years” (197), and when the text proposes that all worldmaking occurs in “collaboration” (4, 19, 28, 157, 280), “interactions” (5), and “assemblages” (22); when Robinson’s novel, through the character Mutt, tells a story of an early New York community led by Indigenous people living well with the land (296-97); and when Klein’s text depicts practices of regeneration (419-48). The term used in the texts by Tsing, Klein, and Robinson to denote these forms of worldmaking is commons, as we have seen. It is a term that could be used to denote the relational structure that I am calling conviviality, but since commons is a term invoking not just making-together but specific institutional arrangements and cultural practices around such worldmaking, I prefer to call the relational structure itself conviviality; commons is a human cultural and political arrangement that is underpinned by and favours conviviality. The term conviviality is derived from the work of Ivan Illich ([1973] 2009), who defines it as “autonomous and creative intercourse among persons, and the intercourse of persons with their environment” (11). This combination of the socially relational and human-environment relational in the term makes it particularly suited for the relational structure I analyse here, as will become clear in the next chapter where I turn to

¹⁰⁵ There is a theme that is significant in some of the texts and that could at times be understood as an additional relational structure organising actants, namely *compromise*. Sometimes, for instance, what I will below discuss as competition between market-driven fossil Techno-Genius and Keynesian-guided Techno-Genius for renewables is at times depicted as compromise instead, though I find a strong case for interpreting it as driven by the two versions of Techno-Genius jockeying for position and acting as a force of worldmaking through this competitive quality. Two other examples of compromise are how some form of tempered confrontation—another relational structure to be presented below—arises in the texts (Porrirt’s, Klein’s, and Robinson’s in particular) where social movements work with the dominant system through reform instead of following their yearning for revolutionary change; and how an in-between position on high-tech and low-tech alternatives to farming is presented as the solution in Porrirt’s text (173). Both these examples could be understood, however, as a matter of compromise *with competition*—a perspective that is compatible with an interpretation of relations of competition as the foundational worldmaking force.

the question of how human and nonhuman being together are imagined in the texts.

Confrontation

But the storyworld of a multitude of ways of being does not exclusively feature convivial relations. An important form of relationship making their world is *confrontation*: the practice of opposing that which could harm the convivial world. We encounter this relational structure in Jannok's narration of how Indigenous voices are "in the front line" of nature protection (*ORDA*), and in Klein's narration of how "the extractive project clashes directly with a different, older way of relating to the earth—and that older way fights back" (177; see also 295, 377-80). In these cases, confrontation is the clash between the protectors of the convivial world and centuries-old colonial capitalism. We encounter confrontation too in action against regentrification in Robinson's novel, where the Householder's Union acts as "a vanguard party for a mass action" (506-07)—this is the confrontation between capitalism as the one percent and collective action for the commons. In short, confrontation is the acting back against hegemonic power. The term confrontation is used in a couple of instances in Klein's text and contrasted there with inadequately meek forms of politics, which is partly where I get this term from; another source is critical social theory on movements opposing capitalism, colonialism, and patriarchy and the importance to such movements of engaging to an extent in "confrontational" politics (Santos 2018, vii).

Consumption

The conceptualisation in the texts of this hegemonic power and its effects on the convivial world takes the form of the narration of relations of *consumption*: how colonisers and capitalists and all those who are implicated in colonial and capitalist systems of power wreck the world made through convivial relations. Thus, Jannok's lyrics tell of how land is "stolen" and "ruined seas to seas" so that "the offenders get rich" by "tak[ing] from our hands ("Čuđit"), with the ultimate effect of extermination of Indigenous peoples—"they want me to die" ("Snow Grouse"). Klein's text summarises this as "centuries of serial thefts—of land, labor, and atmospheric space" (416), and Tsing's talks of "the secret of property's continuing theft" as "private assets most always grow out of unacknowledged commons" (271). Robinson's text talks of something similar when his externally focalising narrator laments that "wherever there is a commons, there is enclosure" (210). This line is repeated by the character Jeff later in the novel (398), and Jeff depicts capitalism throughout as a system taking from people and the planet (3-4, 74, 189, 339)—a point seconded by Charlotte (160). In the novel's plot, this is seen in the "regentrification" (88) of the intertidal

zone. The source of this usage of the term consumption is Alf Hornborg's (2014) analysis of unequal world-system relations as a matter of some people's metaphorical eating, or consumption, of other people's lives.

Competition

While conviviality, confrontation, and consumption are relational structures that complement each other, constituting different aspects of worldmaking and worldwrecking in the storyworlds of some of the texts, there is an additional relational structure in some texts that is in tension with the other three structures. This is *competition*: the making of worlds by actants superseding each other. Competition is the most obviously present in narration of industry competition generating new "clean" technologies; for instance, as Porritt writes, different kinds of solar technologies are emerging by "competing furiously with each other" (17; see also 147-50). Such narration is central in Sachs's text, just as in Porritt's, and has an important role in Klein's and Robinson's too. Business competition for market shares is related to, or even constitutive of, a competition between two forms of industrial societies, one fossil-based and one based on new clean tech. A concrete manifestation of this is how Porritt imagines national competition for market shares in new technology (92), with for instance a "'green arms race' between China and the USA" over "investment in renewable energy and every kind of green technology (or 'clean tech')" (49). In a more general sense, this competition occurs between possible types of societies. We see this in several of the texts' conceptions of a shift to renewables, as summarised in some of the section titles in this chapter: competition between recent neoliberal fossil capitalism and social-democratic planning for green technologies (Klein); between capitalism as humanity and good finance through Keynesianism for techno-commons (Robinson); between mature technological genius on a regulated market against free-market big oil (Sachs); and between runaway fossil-capitalist greed and moderate capitalism for new tech (Porritt). Thus, competition locates the making of worlds with those forces that are worldwreckers in the relational structure of consumption. The choice of the term of competition to denote this relational structure is based on the occurrence of the term in the texts I have analysed.

Two overarching imaginaries of sustainable worlds

What all this also suggests is two overarching imaginaries. In one imaginary, a sustainable world is made through a multitude of ways of living, such as those of Indigenous people, queer people, and women—or, in sum, by the collective actant called the Multitude. Their worldmaking is a matter of the emergence of something wholly new compared to dominant culture and simultaneously a return of something that has been suppressed by the dominant; it is a matter of a break. In the other imaginary, a sustainable world is made by the Western,

capitalist, male way of living—or by the actant called White Bourgeois Man (including other actants who approximate this figure’s way of being, like the Entrepreneur-Mother or Mother-as-Business Man, for instance). This worldmaking is a matter of the extension of dominant culture but with some new characteristics; it is a matter of continuation. From the perspective of decolonial ecofeminism, this distinction is about emergent decolonial and dominant colonial conceptions of being. The queer Multitude makes a world together, nourishing and caring for each other and building relations; this is an example of how a decolonial alternative to the dominant becomes articulated, as the opposite of the hyperseparated colonial Self which depicts itself as cut off from Others. White Bourgeois Man is instead precisely such a hyperseparated Self, who does not acknowledge the worldmaking of Others that he in effect feeds on. Even though this figure or actant is not imagined in exactly the same manner as in early coloniality as its, or his, being and the lack of being of those he is hyperseparated from are not construed through racial biology, he is essentially the same figure as the one theorised by the decolonial feminists that I cited in the previous chapter (and the same one that is identified by ecofeminists writing about more recent culture): his imagined agency and the Others’ lack of such agency are examples of the coloniality of being in the twenty-first century.

We could call the imaginary that centres the competitive worldmaking powers of White Bourgeois Man *sustainable capitalist development* and the one centring the convivial and confrontational worldmaking powers of the Multitude *ecological decolonisation*, the latter’s perspective recasting White Bourgeois Man’s competition as worldwrecking consumption. In terms of the environmental justice implications of this, sustainable capitalist development construes justice as the social inclusion of more people into a kind of social and political being that is defined by dominant colonial culture, whereas ecological decolonisation construes justice as a matter of the assertion and liberation of the autonomous power for worldmaking that resides in all those turned into hyperseparated Others by dominant colonial culture. The term sustainable capitalist development is apt because it allows us to capture this imaginary’s self-evident first principle of Western-style development—*capitalist development* as the foundation for worldmaking, extended into the future as a continuation of the present—and its addition to this given foundation of a tweak—the premodifier *sustainable* specifying how this extension of the same into the future must be carefully managed. In contrast, the term ecological decolonisation denotes a break, the *de-* added to *colonisation* signalling difference and ending, and the *ecological* attached to decolonisation signalling that environmental sustainability and social justice in the form of decoloniality are inseparable.

That Jannok’s text constructs an imaginary of ecological decolonisation and Sachs’s one of sustainable capitalist development is straightforward. The

alignment of Porritt's text with sustainable capitalist development is clear too, with the reservation that his critique of economic growth does not fit as well within this imaginary, and Tsing's text leans strongly towards ecological decolonisation but with the reservation that her opposition to specifically neoliberal capitalism has some issues from an ecological-decolonial point of view. Robinson and Klein oscillate between the two imaginaries, something that is important to note, because it means that the dominant-cultural imaginary of sustainable capitalist development in fact occurs *within* texts that are professedly oriented towards the disruption of capitalist hegemony.

To further analyse these two imaginaries and the political positionality of the texts, the next chapter looks in greater detail at the relational structures that the actants make up and what forms of being these structures centre. As can be gathered from many of the examples mentioned in this chapter, different conceptions of human being also rely on how the nonhuman is imagined; alongside the conceptions of the human that we have come across here, there are also other entities that the human is constituted by, opposed to, and so on—in particular, we will see, *land*, *technology*, and *money*. In the next chapter, I will further analyse the ontological suppositions of the texts and their imaginaries by considering how human actants are intertwined with nonhuman ones and how the power to make sustainable worlds is imagined in this.

6. Human-Nonhuman Worldmaking and Worldwrecking, from Conviviality, Confrontation, and Consumption to Competition

A queer feminist community of colour acts together as a collective to make a world and to oppose to the forces that would undermine their lives; the protagonist is a multitude of ways of living, or the Multitude. A hyperseparated Self acts by merit of its self-contained techno-genius which outcompetes older versions of itself to make a world; the protagonist is White Bourgeois Man. In this manner, the constitution of a storyworld resides in how its actants as part of worldmaking—and worldwrecking—forces are positioned in relation to each other. Actants can be mutually entwined in conviviality, opposed as exploiter and exploited in consumption, engaged in a struggle between different ways of being in confrontation, and jockeying for positions as versions of the same kind of being in competition. These four are the relational structures that emerge as central to worldmaking and worldwrecking in the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs.

In this chapter, I build on the identification of these structures from the end of the previous chapter, and add into the analysis of these kinds of relations the question of how diverse forms of nonhuman actants intersect with the human ones. This question of the nonhuman is implicated in many of the examples from the texts that I have already discussed, as some of the entities that are referred to are part of nonhuman nature (like other species and whole ecosystems), and some are the inanimate products of social processes (like technological infrastructures or types of technologies, and institutions like individual nation states, the modern state in general, and the capitalist market). I will here unpack in more detail how the texts attribute the capacity to make and wreck worlds to different kinds of humans together with other imagined beings like land, money, and technology. This chapter thus keeps focusing on the aspects of the first two research questions that were engaged with in Chapter 5: it discusses how sustainable worlds are imagined and what the environmental justice implications of this are. To make sense of the conceptions of being in the texts and to discuss these from an environmental justice perspective, I build on theoretical concepts from decolonial ecofeminism—just like in the previous chapter, but adding here the dimensions of this theory that relate to the nonhuman. Furthermore, I draw on a number of sources from research on colonial/imperialist, patriarchal, and

capitalist imaginaries and alternatives to them, thereby adding details to the decolonial ecofeminist framework that I have already introduced. This chapter thus engages the six texts that I analyse in a conversation with other work on the themes that come up in the material—work by the theorist of Indigenous resurgence Glen Coulthard, the feminist Marxist Silvia Federici, the feminist political ecologist Stefania Barca, and the political ecologist and anthropologist Alf Hornborg, among others.

Although several of the texts that I analyse contain more than one of the structures of conviviality, confrontation, consumption, and competition, I will first discuss the four structures separately in order to understand the details of how being is imagined within them. The conception of being, or the ontology, of each individual text and of the imaginaries of environmental justice that they construct is then the topic addressed towards the end of the chapter, where I summarise the conceptions of human and nonhuman being—of worldmaking, and of its opposite, worldwrecking—that I have identified in this and the previous chapter and discuss how the texts and these imaginaries combine relational structures. Throughout the analysis in this chapter, I return to several of the key scenes identified in the previous chapter and I would encourage the reader to re-read the epigraphs in Chapter 5 in connection with the analyses here in order to get more of a feeling for the worlds imagined in the texts.

6.1 Conviviality: Diverse Humans and Land Making Worlds Together

Several of the texts centre on what I, in the previous chapter, termed a community based on a multitude of ways of being and/or the commons, summarised as an actant called the Multitude. When we consider the ways that nonhuman being is imagined in the texts, it appears that these kinds of communities are not only groupings of humans—they are human communities entwined with land.

6.1.1 The Multitude's Human-Land Worldmaking

The intertwining of humans and land as worldmaking actants is most developed in Jannok's text. We see it in the scene I introduced from "Grieving: Oappáide" in the previous chapter: as gestured towards in that chapter, the *she* in the song transcends the human. The song tells the listener that "an old woman's home" and "soul" have been buried by the colonial project, evoking the figure of an old woman who can denote both foremothers and land-as-mother. That *she* partly denotes the land becomes apparent when these lyrics are considered in the light of other lines from *ORDA* where land is referred to as she/her and mother

(*ORDA*; “We”; “I Ryggen”). And that *she* is *both* foremothers *and* land can be gathered from how there is no sharp boundary between the human and the nonhuman in the form of land and animals on *ORDA*. The protagonist that is the Indigenous queer feminist community or the Multitude—the *I* and *we* of “Grieving: Oappáide”—is characterised through connection to aspects of the Arctic landscape with its flora and fauna: the Indigenous Sámi people who are still here are “the crooked birch tree” living “on the edge of the tundra” (*ORDA*); the Indigenous woman is a snow lioness (“Snölejoninna”) and a snow grouse (“Snow Grouse”; *ORDA*) who lives “in the snow far from the city” (“Snow Grouse”) or who is longing always to go northwest when she is in the city (“Tree Line”)—the direction of the mountains and the tundra from the urban areas in northern Sweden/Swedish Sápmi—with the “lakes, rivers, hills, and woods” of Sápmi (“This”) and the “tree line” (*ORDA*) as the starting point for her action; and Indigenous lives are connected to the lives of “bison” and “reindeer” (“We”). The convivial relations that make the world are relations of people and land—a land that “was never wild” but always part of Sámi community (“Čuđit”). Thus, *I*, *we*, and *she* from “Grieving: Oappáide” are entangled and not possible to fully separate, their relations a matter of “care” (“Čuđit”).

A similar convivial relational structure of people and land is present in Tsing’s and Klein’s texts, to an extent also in Robinson’s, and possibly in Porritt’s.

A passage from *New York 2140*—the one with the story told by Robinson’s character Mutt to Jeff about Indigenous and immigrant livelihoods in early New York that I cited in the previous chapter—offers a scene of human-land conviviality that comes close to what we encounter on *ORDA*. It presents a community of Indigenous people and immigrants living well with each other and with the land, based on love for the land that is like love for “your mother” or “your child, or yourself. Because it was you anyway”; the human community *is* land, each and every part of the land “a citizen of the community they all made together” (Robinson 297). This scene offers the most elaborate depiction of what is later, in the title of the last part of the novel, termed “The Comedy of the Commons” (535-613): the making (and, as I will soon return to, protection) of a commons (119) as a solution to social and environmental problems together—a commons made up of “cooperatives, neighborhood associations, communes, squats, . . . solar usufruct, . . . mondragons, unions; . . . horizontalization, deoligarchification” (209; see also 27).

Similarly, *This Changes Everything* invokes human-land conviviality in the story of Blockadia as Indigenous-led land protection. Here Klein writes that non-extractivist cultures view earth as “mother, a fertile giver of life” (Klein 74; see also 177, 316, 342-43, 370, 446) and quotes land protectors who construe their communities as entwined with land and water and who are saying that “water is life” (303; see also 347) and that “the forest is already ‘developed,’ the forest is

life” (388). That land and water are entwined with human protagonists is seen most clearly in the chapter titled “The Right to Regenerate” (419-48), wherein a number of scenes are constructed that link “the reproductive rights of women” to “the reproductive rights of the planet as a whole” (443) or the “rights of Mother Earth” (444)—also linked, as mentioned in the previous chapter, to Klein’s narrator-persona through a personal story told about the author’s fertility issues. This perspective on land and water as life leads to a rejection of a dominant conception of poverty: communities that are labelled undeveloped and poor state that although they “don’t have money,” they “have clean water,” “are healthy,” and “just want to be left alone” (344; see also 342, 464). The point for them is to have “real control over those resources that are most critical to collective survival—the health of the water, air, and soil,” meaning a “deeper form of democracy” (295). As in Jannok’s text, to live well with land and water and with other people is about “care” in Klein’s text (93, 365). Life is land and water, and worldmaking is about convivial human relations with land and water.

This same conception of worldmaking is apparent in *The Mushroom at the End of the World* with its structuring around the matsutake mushroom (9, 19) (and the mushroom’s mycelium [viii] and spores [228] and its collaborators “‘pines’ as a protagonist” [162]) and its depiction—as discussed in the previous chapter—of the matsutake-oriented livelihoods of humans construed as Others. Tsing’s text proposes that life happens in these kinds of “interspecies entanglements” (vii) of which human-matsutake relations are examples; in the “many world-making projects” that surround us, “human and not human” (21), that make Tsing’s first (precapitalist), second (capitalist), and third (pericapitalist) natures alike. Tsing uses the term “commons” in connection to some such projects that have the potential for being the foundation of sustainable and socially just worldmaking, and she defines commons as assemblages of humans and nonhumans (282).

There are passages in *The World We Made* that form the beginning of a convivial relational structure that includes both people and land too, if we read several of Porritt’s scenes and passages together. Porritt at times refers to things like a shift from jobs and consumerism towards community work and sharing (12-13, 70, 147, 209, 302), and uses the maintained “traditional way of life” of nomadic people in Chang Tang in Tibet as a positive example of how people live in the future (234). This paints a picture of social change towards human conviviality. He also at times refers to the primacy of the ecological as worldmaker, as he stresses that humans “can’t ‘manufacture’ soil” (164). Informed by how Porritt elsewhere picks out the term that is often used for institutional arrangements around what I am calling human-land conviviality, “the commons,” as a way of ensuring equitable and sustainable resource management (104), these examples can be understood to speak of human-land worldmaking. But unlike in the examples from the other texts, people and land

are not clearly intertwined in Porritt's storyworld in general—even though he in fact uses the term “convivial” (281) once, a term that in Ivan Illich's ([1973] 2009) definition is about the social and the ecological as inseparable parts of the making of a good life.

The Multitude is Body-Land

To make sense of this difference and understand the details of how conviviality is imagined in the examples from Jannok, Robinson, Klein, and Tsing, we can turn to Coulthard's *Red Skin, White Masks* (2014), discussions in political ecology of socio-ecological dialectics, and the concept of body-land from Chapter 4.

Coulthard writes about Indigenous political action as “a struggle not only *for* land in the material sense” (13)—land “as a material resource” (78)—“but also deeply *informed* by what the land *as a system of reciprocal relations and obligations* can teach us about living our lives in relation to one another and the natural world in nondominating and nonexploitative terms” (13; italics in original). This understanding of land not as a material resource to use, and thus by implication a nonbeing, but as a fellow being for humans to interact with and learn from can be termed a *dialectical* perspective on socio-ecological relations. In political ecology, Paulson, Gezon, and Watts (2003) use this term to highlight the “dialectic mutuality of the material and the social” (208), meaning the ways in which the material world, including ecology, co-creates human society and vice versa. This can be elaborated further through Harvey's (1993) theory of such dialectics: based on work by the dialectical biologists Levins and Lewontin, Harvey proposes that ecological and socio-ecological systems are always made up of “processes, flows, fluxes and relations” rather than discrete objects that exist independently of such phenomena and in total separation from each other (34). In this conception of relations, there are no self-contained individuals mastering worldmaking, but the relations themselves are the smallest units of analysis. Thus, any individual entity only gains its identity *within* the relations that constitute it. What Coulthard depicts is then a human self-reflexive and ethically oriented version of such relationality or dialectics: in the relational co-production of worlds, it is specifically *reciprocity* in ecological relations that is drawn on to inspire social and socio-ecological relations. The conception of conviviality in Porritt's text, in contrast, suggests that human worldmaking needs land but that it is not entangled with it; the text acknowledges land as an indispensable resource but not as a member of the community—a kind of nondialectical socio-environmental thinking that I will discuss further below, in the part of the chapter that analyses storyworld relations of competition.

Elaborating on this relationality based on the examples of human-land conviviality from the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Klein, and Robinson, I would suggest that the worldmakers in the relational structure of conviviality are

humans acting *with* and not just *for* land, and that this produces a self-reflexively dialectical understanding of human and nonhuman ecological being in the texts in question. Thus, the collective protagonist we encounter here is body-land as a relationship, as a making-together by beings of the same kind and of equal importance.¹⁰⁶ The collective worldmaking actant that I am calling the Multitude could also, therefore, be called Body-Land.

The Master's dependence on Body-Land's convivial worldmaking

A point in both Jannok's and Tsing's texts is that this convivial worldmaking underpins everything, even those projects—like capitalism and colonialism—that deny this fact through an imaginary of hyperseparation. Jannok makes this point by inference as she focuses on the Indigenous woman who is “the rainbow you see” (or your “retina’s rainbow” in the Swedish original) and “everything” as the final verse in North Sámi states (“Snölejoninna”); she is what is always there, underpinning everything. Tsing instead focuses on what this ontology means in terms of an understanding of capitalism: as all worldmaking happens in collaborations and not as an effect of choices made in “the decision trees of self-contained individuals” (29), capitalism must always contain “noncapitalist elements” (66) and its “privatization is never complete” (271). Constructing specific scenes that depict this, Tsing narrates how, “even in industrial farms, farmers depend on life processes outside their control, such as photosynthesis and animal digestion” (62); how the industrial factory system too is and was always dependent on this kind of worldmaking (24); how “many capitalist raw materials (consider coal and oil) came into existence long before capitalism” (63); and how “capitalists also cannot produce human life, the prerequisite of *labor*” (63; italics in original). The term Tsing uses for this, which I mentioned in the previous chapter, is the “unacknowledged commons” (271).

Jannok's and Tsing's texts read together here offer what Stefania Barca in *Forces of Reproduction* (2020) calls a “counter-master narrative” (5): an imaginary that contests the hegemonic hyperseparation worldview. The two texts attribute the capacity for worldmaking not to the Master subject of modernity, in Barca's terminology—or the hyperseparated Self in Plumwood's (1993)—embodied in the actant White Bourgeois Man, but to conviviality as based on human-land relations, or Body-Land.

6.1.2 Hybridity in the Convivial Worldmaking of Body-Land

With Jannok and Tsing, it is possible to further substantiate the conception of being in human-land conviviality, or the being of Body-Land as a collective

¹⁰⁶ For a more in-depth engagement with body-land thinking and doing specifically in Sámi land protection, see Ina Knobbloch's (2022) work on and with Sámi feminists.

protagonist. As we saw above, an important feature of conviviality in both Jannok's and Tsing's texts is that such worldmaking is not based on an ideal nature as wild or pristine: in Jannok's wording, the land that was stolen was never wild; in Tsing's, worldmaking in first, second, and third natures alike is about interspecies—human-nonhuman—collaborations. This makes both of their conceptions of nature align with what is often referred to as *second nature*, in a term derived from Marx (see Harvey 1993, 28) that Tsing calls the common usage (viii).¹⁰⁷ This common usage contrasts second nature as human-environment entanglements with first nature as untouched by the human. Jannok's and Tsing's texts both introduce concepts that would capture *how exactly* human-land and human-human relations play out in second nature—and their consequent characterisations of the actant Body-Land here diverge in an interesting way from Klein's.

Body-Land as queer or orda

In Jannok's text, the central concept used to describe and name the convivial world is *orda*, as the coming together of differences—the differences of landscape on the tree line in a concrete sense, and the different worlds and multiple ways of being that also meet there. This meaning of *orda* is elaborated in the text in the album cover: “ORDA is about two completely different landscapes, still coming together somewhere or other”; the worlds of “you and me, both present,” in “diversity” (*ORDA*). It is a place where “the norm” is “shaped as a tree line”; a place of “several mother tongues, cultures, identities”; a place where “borders are to be crossed” and where “all that is in between” can flourish. Jannok's album envisions future worldmaking through *orda* as giving rise to “one world, different souls,” a place where “the contrast rises, showing the beauty”—meaning that differences are allowed to exist and bring out the beauty in life—and where people at the same time might “put guns down” and “meet in peace”—meaning that there is some form of unity too. These characteristics of *orda* are closely related to the concept of queerness in Jannok's thinking. As I showed in the previous chapter, Jannok's human protagonist is a queer community of Indigenous sisters, and the term queer in Jannok's thinking is about the coming

¹⁰⁷ This term and way of thinking is important in a number of research schools that seek to understand the entanglements of nature and society, such as the kind of political ecology that I referred to in the discussion of socio-ecological dialectics above. Paul K. Gellert (2019) offers an overview of this kind of thinking on “socio-nature” (107-08), discussing John Bellamy Foster's (2000) ecological Marxism and ecological rift theory, Jason Moore's (2015) world-ecology, and the notion of ecologically unequal exchange. Other examples can be found in work on social metabolism (González de Molina and Toledo 2014); in Murray Bookchin's (2007) social ecology (on the concept of second nature, see Bookchin 2007, 29); and in ecosemiotics (Maran and Kull 2014; on second nature, see p. 45). Early work in this vein, which is also cited by political ecologists (Moore 2015, 10; Moore 2017, 307; Malm 2016, 301-03), was undertaken by Henri Lefebvre (1991) in his writings on the production of space.

together—in one person or, as in the examples discussed here, in one place—of a multitude of identities or ways of being. This is what “the norm” that is “shaped as a tree line” is about. Both the introduction to the album, with the elaboration on the concept of *orda*, and the song “This Is My Land: Sápmi” relate queerness not just to the Sámi *but to the landscape of Sápmi*, making it a characteristic of the land. The land as part of the protagonist function is queer too; Sápmi is *orda* is queer.

This notion of the queer or *orda* as human-land worldmaker is akin to what Barca (2020) theorises in the concept of the forces of reproduction. As we saw above, the forces of reproduction are made up of all those beings to whom agency is not attributed in dominant colonial culture (body-land, in a word). And Barca characterises these “forces of reproduction [as] a queer political subject” (7). Through the notion of queerness, Barca’s concept of forces of reproduction focuses on “both inter- and intra-species becoming,” meaning “not only material agency in daily subsistence practices (what is typically understood as ‘women’s work’), but also the potential, inherent in such agency, for rejecting heteropatriarchy and the sexual division of labour.” As a definition of convivial worldmakers, this gives us not an established category of woman or any similarly delineated figure of the Other (like nature, for instance) but queerness or *orda* as an alternative conception of human-land (inter-species) and human-human (intra-species) interaction. It is thus the kind of “queer ecology” that Nicole Seymore (2013) has identified in her analysis of fictional texts that imagine dispossessed humans (queer and working-class people and people of colour) and degraded landscapes as interconnected, on the basis of which she elaborates on a queer ecological political agency that works for the healing and protection of these kinds of bodies—or what we could term *body-land as queer* (or Queer Body-Land, as an actant).

Body-Land as contaminated

In Tsing’s text, the central concepts for describing the convivial world are “disturbance” and “contamination” (6, 27, 50, 160), as opposed to “purity” (27).¹⁰⁸ These overlap with Jannok’s concern with the non-wild, but Tsing adds an emphasis in this ontology that is absent from Jannok’s work: she connects her general ontological framework where there is no pure, uncontaminated nature to a claim about how alternative worldmaking cannot escape the contamination of capital specifically (23). Therefore, the text argues that “in a global state of precarity, we don’t have choices other than looking for life in this [capitalist] ruin”

¹⁰⁸ As I mentioned in the previous chapter, Tsing uses the term “queer” in one instance as well. The term is parenthetical in the text and not clearly related to what I here explore as contaminated conviviality, but it is possible to understand the terms *queer* and *contaminated* as similar in Tsing’s text.

(6), two examples of which are how the matsutake mushroom that is the non-human protagonist of the making of life in ruins in the text originates in landscapes disturbed by human-made deforestation in Japan (6, 50), and how people of the Klamath tribes seeking to heal and reclaim their lands are “for the moment . . . picking matsutake mushrooms” to get on (199). *The Mushroom at the End of the World* thus construes a *contaminated conviviality* both as the general essence of human-land worldmaking and as a specific characteristic of ruined environments where alternative worldmaking despite ruination occurs. Although Jannok’s and Tsing’s texts both construe possible sustainable worldmaking as based within second nature (not in Tsing’s sense but as the concept is commonly used), their differences in emphasis mean that there is an interesting tension between their storyworlds. In Jannok’s storyworld, it is imperative to understand Sámi worldmaking with land as something that exceeds colonialism; in Tsing’s storyworld, the emphasis is instead on how all such worldmaking projects are contaminated by what they oppose, just like all worldmaking projects were already about contamination. The categories in Tsing’s storyworld thus become less distinct than those in Jannok’s. This difference is to an extent about form, as the authors make different choices about the use of distinction—features of the two texts that are interesting to consider in relation to the question of connections between ontologies, ways of knowing, and forms of expression. I will elaborate on this in a discussion of uncertainty and open-endedness in the next chapter.

From queer feminist to essentialised female Body-Land

Before moving on to a discussion of the next relational structure, I should also comment on a contrast between, on the one hand, the conceptualisations of conviviality in Jannok’s and Tsing’s texts and, on the other hand, the one in Klein’s. The *queer* Indigenous sisterhood and relations with *non-wild* land in Jannok’s lyrics and the *contamination* as opposed to purity in Tsing’s text are in tension with the conception in Klein’s text of the feminine in the figure of the fertile mother as both woman and Earth. In the chapter on “The Right to Regenerate” (419-48), where Klein connects her own fertility problems to those of the earth, the reproduction of life is precisely the “material agency in daily subsistence practices (what is typically understood as ‘women’s work’)” that Barca (2020, 7) defines as the opposite of her conceptualisation of the forces of reproduction as queer because it maintains the idea of gender roles that is stipulated by the established sexual division of labour. Although Klein also at times, as my analysis of her conception of being above shows, depicts conviviality as made by complex human-land relations, her concept of reproduction here should be contrasted to both the queer conviviality of Jannok and the contaminated conviviality of Tsing. This creates a tension within Klein’s

characterisation of Blockadia between what Dryzek (1997) has defined as social ecofeminism and cultural ecofeminism, the former a gender-constructionist framework where women's position in social structures is the source of their environmentalist political agency and the latter a gender-essentialist framework where women are construed as being one with nature and therefore inherently good for it (156-63, 173-84). The Out of the Woods collective (2020) discuss this tension and relate it to Klein's oscillation between what they call her "minor" and "major" voices, the invocation of a natural femininity in women and earth alike interpreted as part of the less subversive major voice (195-205).

6.2 Confrontation: Convivial World Protection against Dominant Humans

A relational structure of confrontation is important in Jannok's, Klein's, and Robinson's texts, and is gestured towards as important but not explored much in Tsing's. In this structure, different ways of being are engaged in struggle against each other, and the beings that make conviviality are the protagonists of confrontation too: a collective of humans-with-land or body-land as community.

6.2.1 Body-Land's Community Confronting Colonial Capitalism

That being in confrontation is defined in the same way as being in conviviality can be seen in Klein's depiction of the source of confrontation as people, the land, and the water together (177, 316, 342-43, 370, 446); in Jannok's characterisation of the land of Sápmi itself as an actant resisting colonialism through a description of the tree line (*orda*)—so defining of Sápmi's landscape for those Sámi communities that cross *orda* on their move between summer and winter pastures—as the source of "the storm" that resists colonialism (*ORDA*); and in how a force in the defence of the intertidal commons in Robinson's novel is that "life is going to explode the enclosures and bring back the commons" (320). In all three texts, humans lead the struggle for the protection and restoration of a convivial world: the central characters in the intertidal zone in Robinson's text; Blockadia in Klein's; and Indigenous people and their allies in Jannok's. But in all the texts, though it becomes particularly clear in Jannok's where Indigenous people are "in the front line of nature protecting herself for future generations" (*ORDA*), they do so *with* and not merely *for* nature, just as the convivial world itself is made in this manner; this is indeed what Coulthard (2014) is pointing out when he writes about Indigenous struggles as informed by land (13). Thus, the source of confrontation is the convivial world that needs to be protected from the forces of worldwrecking; confrontation is *the result of*

convivial being and the being of this struggle is the same as the being of conviviality. Ontologically, then, confrontation could be said to *reside within conviviality*.

In Jannok's and Tsing's texts, the confrontational aspect of conviviality resides in its mere presence in a world whose dominant forces deny the convivial world's existence and seek to destroy it. This is apparent in Tsing's description of the lives of human and nonhuman Others as a "riotous presence" (vii). The riotous as in confrontational dimension of this is not in focus in *The Mushroom at the End of the World*, however; Tsing's storyworld is primarily about the possibilities of living in ruins—possibilities of conviviality—and not about confrontational politics although, as she writes, the latter "seems useful too" and she is "not against it" (3). Jannok, in contrast, emphasises confrontation as strongly as conviviality. The confrontational dimension of conviviality is clear in her text too—in fact clearer than in Tsing's, as it is depicted as an inherent and indispensable dimension of Indigenous convivial community with land under the circumstances of colonialism. There are many instances in Jannok's lyrics where the mere presence of Sámi people becomes an act of decolonial confrontation. This is what happens in the statement "we are still here," repeated many times in the song with this title ("We")—a line that also gave the name to Jannok's tour in the years following the release of *ORDA*. In a discussion of Sámi movements, Moa Sandström (2017) writes that this line, used by Indigenous people all over the world, is a counter-discourse to the dominant colonial one (97-98), and this certainly applies to how Jannok uses it: a statement of the presence of Indigenous worldmaking (conviviality), it simultaneously acts against the colonial worldmaking that would erase Indigenous peoples and that is from the Indigenous perspective only a force of worldwrecking (confrontation). This confrontational aspect of *ORDA* frames the album as a whole through the aesthetic of the front cover: it depicts Jannok staring squarely into the camera, dressed in a hip-hop influenced style with Sámi attributes like a reindeer coat and *risku* (Sámi silver jewellery)—a confrontational image that states the same thing as the phrase "we are still here." The inseparability of Sámi body-land conviviality and confrontation closes the album too: on the last track on *ORDA*, a yoik without lyrics, we encounter a *noaidi*, a shaman—but the song title translates this as "decolonizer" ("Noadi: Decolonizer" ["Noaidi"]), suggesting that the very act of practising Sámi culture, like the *noadi*'s craft, becomes simultaneously an act of decolonisation. To be a Sámi person is to be confrontational, not by choice but because of your very presence in a colonial world. Based on interviews with Sámi artists and musicians, Marika Nordström (2017) explains that such an experience of political struggle as an integral part of Sámi everyday life is common, because everything from Sámi language education to reindeer herding requires fighting (18). Confrontation is as such not a desired aspect of the making of conviviality, but a given one nonetheless.

And this is nothing new. Confrontation has been a feature of the convivial world for as long as it has needed to defend itself—from when the *ċudiid* first began their colonial plundering (Jannok) in the early days of European expansion (Klein; Tsing), of which I told in the previous chapter. This means, Klein’s text suggests, that confrontation has become a necessary part of conviviality: “we have to do both simultaneously: build and support inspiring alternatives . . . and make sure they have a fighting chance of thriving by trying to change an economic model so treacherous that nowhere is safe” (405). It also means, as we see in Klein’s and Jannok’s texts, that confrontation today is part of a long history of emancipation movements: Indigenous peoples and the worlds they defend all over the planet are connected across past and present (Jannok, “We”) and environmental justice struggles for the protection of a convivial world are engaged in “the unfinished business” of liberation (Klein 458; see also 455-66).

6.2.2 The Need to Transcend Divisions to Make Confrontation Possible

Although the texts cited above describe confrontation as an absolute necessity, an important point in the texts by Jannok, Tsing, and Klein is that it is not therefore a simple matter: to confront dominant colonial power, there is a need to overcome divisions among the potential human protagonists of confrontation, among those who can form the frontline of nature’s protection of herself—divisions that are created by dominant colonial culture, as I will discuss further below when I turn to the relational structure of consumption.

In Jannok’s storyworld, the issue is that the *you* of “Grieving: Oappáide” whose livelihoods are part of settler colonialism often refuse to act for change: this gainer of colonialism is experiencing “the loss of your home sweet home” but is still not grieving because their homes were in fact “already gone”—lost when colonialism first buried the soul of the land under the “kitchen floor” of the colonial house (“Grieving”). “Grieving: Oappáide” suggests that settler-colonial people lack the good livelihoods, the body-land conviviality, that is the source of confrontation. In Tsing’s storyworld, these kinds of divisions mean that there is no “singular solidarity” that can form the foundation for political change (65); “there is no automatic urge to argue together” and “no group’s struggles, taken alone, will overturn capitalism” (134), she writes. This becomes a critique of the orthodox Marxist conception of the industrial proletariat as a “universal class” whose position in relations of production makes it the antithesis of the capitalist class.¹⁰⁹ Although Klein does not theorise this as explicitly in her text, her critique of workers in extractive industries combined with her focus on

¹⁰⁹ A recent consideration of Marx’s theory of “the universal class” can be found in Mike Davis’s (2018, 7-24) work.

land protection movements as the actants for change, both discussed in the previous chapter, suggest something similar to what Jannok and Klein describe.

To cross the borders drawn between people

But the difficulties of confrontation are not described as insurmountable. In Jannok's text, the *you* that acts as settler-colonial gainer of colonialism when they refuse to grieve the loss of their home sweet home is certainly an alienated being who has no way of acting *with* land, a being constituted by lack—but the way “Grieving: Oappáide” depicts a lose-lose situation for Indigenous livelihoods and settler life on the edge of an abyss also holds a promise of commonality. Although the common agenda arises more directly among “indigenous relatives around our mother” (*ORDA*), from the US to Peru to Sápmi (“We”), there is a possibility for overcoming the divisions of *orda*. This theme is underlined in the introduction to the album: *orda* is where “the conflicts begin, if I fight the divisions” (*ORDA*); the tree line where worlds meet can lead to the rise of confrontation against colonial power when *orda* allows space for differences—the queer conviviality that I discussed earlier. This point is echoed by two songs on the album, “I Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti” and “Snow Grouse: Ii Leat Ivdni Mus”: “in order to break down fences / you need to learn how to accept our differences” (“I Ryggen”); people need to “stop jabbering, stop being selfish” to make it possible for “the rainbow to shine” (“Snow Grouse”). Confrontation starts when divisions among neighbours are overcome. The openness of the rhetorical *you* in Jannok's lyrics calls on the listener to choose their position in this. What is more, the line from “Snow Grouse” about overcoming differences is in North Sámi and is spoken by the mother of the *I* of the lyrics to the *I*, so that the lyrics suggest that the *I* and *we* of the protagonist-collective also need to pay heed to this lesson of fighting the divisions. Both *you* and *I*—both the settler and the Indigenous person—must work to build *orda* as a queer community for everyone. Jannok's album itself can be understood as a concrete attempt to do this: Jannok mixes cultural influences from both sides of the tree line, bringing together Western popular culture and Indigenous Sámi culture linguistically (using North Sámi, Swedish, and English), musically (combining pop genres and yoik), and visually (wearing a mix of contemporary Western fashion and Sámi craft on the cover photo), enabling her album to speak to people of different cultural backgrounds.¹¹⁰ The album *ORDA* itself thus becomes an example of *orda* as a queer space where a multitude of ways of being come together.

¹¹⁰ The diversity of this combination cultures becomes even greater when we consider that Western popular music has a heritage from forms of African music that enslaved Black people brought with them to the US.

Tsing's and Klein's texts propose something similar. Instead of a single class and a single solidarity, in Tsing's storyworld there is a need for coordination across difference—something discussed in reference to the political organiser Beverly Brown who has worked with precarious rural workers in the US (254). Tsing writes that work like Brown's shows that it is imperative “to detect the traces of not-yet-articulated common agendas” (254). One possibility for this, according to Tsing's text, is to be found in sites for matsutake picking where diverse precarious workers come together (255). In Klein's storyworld, the possibilities for these kinds of efforts to gain ground across the globe are improving as the unspoken agreement between capitalists and relatively privileged groups, based on “some combination of race, language, and class,” that extractivism would only occur in places constructed as “hinterlands, wastelands, nowheres” has been broken by a capitalism that is ready to turn anyone's backyard into a sacrifice zone (310-11). Here, pipelines crossing whole continents, touching millions of people's backyards and tying struggles together, have become “something of a gift to political organizing” (315). Robinson's novel gives us the same kind of hope for common ground in how confrontational action against regentrification brings an eclectic group of people together, as I showed in the previous chapter's discussion of the plot's protagonists, but he differs from Jannok, Tsing, and Klein in not exploring the obstacles to this. *New York 2140* is thus more optimistic about people just coming together across difference (a feature it shares with Porritt's *The World We Made*)—and, as discussed in the previous chapter as well, Robinson imagines this in a way that is dubiously inclusive as it remains New York-centric, in a sense.

Confrontation through the crossing of the borders between people, or the rise of solidarity across difference without the reduction of difference to sameness, has been discussed at length in political theory. Important contributions that resound with what I have discussed here are made in particular in work on class struggle beyond the kind of unity that orthodox Marxism imagines, such as that of the autonomist Marxists Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson (2013). They theorise political agency as rooted in “border struggles” (23)—struggles around the borders that are drawn between people along lines of class, race, and gender together. They argue that political theory and movements must recognise that “unity is strength . . . but [that] the conditions of this unity have to be fully reimagined against the background of a multiplicity and heterogeneity that must be turned from an element of weakness into an element of strength” (x). In gesturing towards possibilities for such solidarities, the texts by Jannok, Tsing, and Klein all point towards something Raymond Williams often returned to, namely that a powerful source of the capacity to transcend the power of dominant culture is to be found in solidarity among the disenfranchised in actual

political practice, something that both prefigures and helps bring about the rise of a new, emancipated social order (Milner 1994, 47).

6.3 Consumption: Dominant Humans Devouring Human-Land Worlds

Alongside the relational structures of confrontation and conviviality, several storyworlds also contain relations of consumption: the appropriation and eradication of convivial worlds which is what confrontation acts against. In this kind of relational structure, actants of different kinds are opposed as exploiter and exploited. Just as in conviviality and confrontation, Body-Land—the human-land community—is central in consumption. But in consumption, the story told is of how land and people together are being consumed. Relations of consumption are narrated in Jannok’s, Robinson’s, Klein’s, and Tsing’s texts, but are also mentioned briefly in both Sachs’s and Porritt’s too.

6.3.1 Worldwrecking as Cannibalism of Body-Land

People and land are connected in depictions of exploitation from several texts. In Jannok’s storyworld, the land as mother is “stolen cruelly away from her child” and “ruined seas to seas” (“Čuđit”), and “a land torn asunder by mines equals a genocide” (“I Ryggen”); in Robinson’s, the ones suffering from exploitation are “the planet, and the workers who made the stuff [the commodities for consumption]” (4); in Klein’s, “exploited workers and an exploited planet are . . . a package deal” (82); and in Tsing’s, the “unacknowledged commons” (271) that is being ruined is made by “both humans and nonhumans” (5). That the relationship between the Global North and the South is structured in this way is in fact suggested by both Sachs and Porritt too: Sachs describes the dispossession and displacement of Indigenous peoples from their traditional lands as a major cause of poverty (233-36); and Porritt criticises an imagined European attempt to seize Africa’s capacity to generate solar power (19). But neither of these two examples depicts this exploitation as directed against an entwined human-land way of being; the situations described are rather ones of conflict between groups of people over land as a resource. In any case, the depictions of exploitation in Jannok’s and Robinson’s texts are what should lead us to understand this as consumption: the plunderers, Jannok sings, are “stealing my life / *eating* it alive” (“Čuđit”; emphasis added); and Robinson’s character Jeff describes capitalist exploitation by saying, “It’s bad. We’re getting *eaten*” (3; emphasis added), a view seconded by the character Charlotte who blames “vampire capital” (160) for sucking out the life of the world. The term consumption is apt because the exploited humans and land are being *devoured* and not only *appropriated*;

colonialism and capitalism in Jannok's and Robinson's storyworlds are literally about how the convivial world is being eaten up. Such depictions of relations of consumption between humans echo something suggested by Alf Hornborg (2014): "If we follow Marx in understanding the commodities we consume (i.e. metaphorically eat) as embodiments of other people's life energy," then capitalism is "a transformation . . . of cannibalism" (133). In relations of consumption in the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, and Klein, this is a matter of consumption of human bodies and the body of the land together, making this devouring a cannibalism of Body-Land.

The tragedy of the enclosures

Klein's and Robinson's texts, and Tsing's by inference, construe this consumption as enclosure of the commons, as we saw in the previous chapter. Thus, stories of consumption should be contrasted with the prevalent story of "the tragedy of the commons"—the idea that common-pool resources are inevitably degraded because it is in each individual's self-interest to overuse a resource, as argued in a much-cited article by the ecologist Garrett Hardin (1968) who, the Southern Poverty Law Center (n.d.) writes, "used his status as a famous scientist and environmentalist to provide a veneer of intellectual and moral legitimacy for his underlying nativist [white nationalist] agenda" (n.p.). Those telling stories of consumption instead depict what Guha and Martínez Alier (1997) have called "the tragedy of the enclosures": changes in patterns of land titles and use starting with "the European bourgeois revolutions" (60). Paul Robbins (2012) shows that this kind of perspective on the commons is one of the foundational principles of political ecology (59-62)—a perspective that, as Martínez Alier (2014) explains, pins environmental degradation to structures of ownership that take power *away* from the local population rather than the other way around (see also Doherty and Doyle 2006, 707). Robinson's phrase "the comedy of the commons," which is the title of one of the parts of the novel, is suggestive in this context: the enclosures are the tragedy; the commons can instead be a comedy (in the sense of a drama where there is a happy ending).

Consumption as enclosure explains how exactly capitalism, as Tsing writes, contains "noncapitalist elements" (66): the dependence of capitalism on convivial worlds—as discussed in the section on conviviality—is the dependence of gluttonous plunderers on the lives they are literally devouring. Tsing's text suggests that this fact highlights that "privatization is never complete," a characteristic that is described as "its vulnerability" (271): it needs the Others. Her text here gives expression to the kind of understanding of the vulnerability of the hyperseparated Self that Plumwood (2002) has developed. In Plumwood's theorisation of a "centric" system (which I referred to in Chapter 4 as well), an important point is that it offers "a very distorted framework for perception of

the Other”: “the project of mastery it gives rise to involves dangerous forms of denial, perception and belief which can put the centric perceiver *out of touch* with reality about the Other” (118; italics in original); “to the extent that the Other is effectively subdued and their ability to thrive is accordingly affected, they are able to contribute less and less to the welfare of the One” (120). Through the consumption of conviviality, the centric system of capitalism and colonialism destroys its own foundations.

6.3.2 The Core Logic of Colonialism and Capitalism throughout the Centuries

The idea of consumption as a process whereby the centre ultimately undermines itself does not mean that it is only in this final instance of crisis, when consumption backfires for hegemonic power, that problems with consumption arise. This is not the case in Tsing’s storyworld, nor in those of the other three authors who make significant contributions to a critical theory of relations of consumption—although, as we will see in the next part of this chapter, there are other dimensions of the work of Robinson, Klein, and Tsing that create a tension with the narration of consumption. In narrating consumption, in any case, the four texts I am citing here depict this form of relation as a generator of crisis in a long history of capitalism and colonialism; the crisis for the actants of consumption themselves is only the ultimate effect of a logic that is the structural core of what Klein calls extractivism.

Instead of progress, ever ongoing primitive accumulation and expansion of commodity frontiers
 Jannok tells a story of consumption that does not differ across time: from the period of the eradication of the bison in North America to the mining boom in Sápmi today, the villain is the same quest for “gold and iron” that always has meant and always will mean “blood on greedy hands” (“We”); with these examples stretching across centuries covered in the same short verse, there is no distinction between past and present consumption of Indigenous land and lives. In Klein’s storyworld, industrialisation “helped Western nations to deliberately appropriate other people’s lives and lands” (416), and this becomes connected to “new ways to privatize the commons and profit from disaster” (9) to “hand over yet more resources to the 1 percent” (8) as the latter is termed a “neocolonial” system (48-49), suggesting that the same colonial-capitalist logic is repeated. Likewise, Tsing’s text identifies the same kind of exploitative relations from the enslavement of people and the ruination of land on the plantation (39) to contemporary IT supply chains with child labour, mining of conflict minerals, and dumping of e-waste (134) and capitalist “salvage accumulation” (63) in projects that are not as controlled as the plantation (42-43); she writes that she is frightened by how this “salvage” goes on, “as if everyone were taking advantage

of the end of the world to gather up riches before the last bits are destroyed” (274). The conclusion about this in the text, which echoes Klein’s description of industrialisation, is that “*industrial transformation turned out to be a bubble of promise followed by lost livelihoods and damaged landscapes*” (18; italics in original). Robinson tells a story of capitalist salvage too: the issue in the plot is that the intertidal zone is increasingly seen as grounds for “investment opportunities and regentrification,” Charlotte explains (88), a tendency that Franklin calls capitalism’s “creative destruction”—defined as a core characteristic of capitalism throughout the centuries as this is labelled its “middle name” (118; see also 140–41).

These perspectives resound with theories of enclosure or *primitive accumulation* as an always ongoing aspect of capitalism. Rather than as a recent development, neoliberalism (and in particular its structural adjustment programmes in Africa) is theorised as a new wave of primitive accumulation, most notably by Silvia Federici (2019) and the Midnight Notes collective (of which Federici was a member) who launched the term “new enclosures” in the 1990s.¹¹¹ Thus, primitive accumulation “is a phenomenon constitutive of capitalist relations at all times, eternally recurrent” (15), a matter of past and present enclosure of land (21, 27)—and of human bodies together with this, as we saw in the delineation of decolonial ecofeminism in Chapter 4—so that “late capitalism” is not a different form of capitalism but the most recent reiteration, on a world scale, of the logic of accumulation that was instigated with the first enclosures (31). Andreas Malm (2016) agrees when he writes that the term primitive accumulation is a misnomer: in fact, the English translation differs from the original German “*ursprüngliche* Akkumulation’, connoting origin and root” rather than “a crude and immature stage unrelated to the workings of advanced capital” (320). Both Malm and Federici exemplify recent primitive accumulation with the expansion of Chinese coal mining in Inner Mongolia, feeding Chinese industry and its exports to the West, which has displaced and violently oppresses Indigenous pastoralists (Malm 2016, 357; Federici 2019, 55). Primitive accumulation is a term denoting the ongoing devouring of human-land worldmaking or of Body-Land in colonial, patriarchal capitalism.

This characterises capitalism as endlessly searching for new worlds to consume, as constantly expanding what Jason Moore (2015) calls the “*commodity frontiers*—frontiers of appropriation” (53; italics in original). In Klein’s text, growth is explained in this way: it is a matter of the “profit-seeking logic” of capital that leads to constant expansion (89); economic growth is defined not as the generation of more wealth but as the diffusion of a logic that wrecks worlds.

¹¹¹ Federici (2019) writes that the Midnight Notes collective’s writings from 1990 were an early articulation of the theory of globalisation as primitive accumulation (3); two essays from that year are reproduced in Federici’s 2019 book.

Robinson’s “citizen” narrator describes this logic as what drives regentrification: financial capital descends on places that are ripe for exploitation, extracts monetary profits, and then moves on (205-06)—an analysis seconded by Charlotte, who in her critique of vampire capital describes this worldwrecker as eternally “flitting around” (160). Following similar insights, Tsing’s text criticises the idea that expansion will lead to progress and more wealth (132).¹¹²

Among the four texts that elaborate critical theories of consumption, Tsing’s is the one that provides the most in-depth analysis of what this perspective on capitalism means for conceptions of history and the roots of the crises that human societies are facing today with global warming and environmental degradation. According to this text, the precarious situation humans and nonhumans find themselves in is not “an exception to how the world works” but a result of the core logic of capitalism (20). Therefore, Tsing is wary of established “categories and assumptions of improvement” and “growth” and of how “our theories of history are embroiled in these categories” (21), concluding that European colonial capitalism is the foundation for “the dreams we have come to call progress and modernity” (40). The focus on progress and growth, she further suggests, is a problem not just in mainstream thinking but in critical theory too, following the progress thinking of Marx (5, 61) and the focus on “‘progressive’ political causes” (24). Relatedly, Jannok, although she does not explicitly juxtapose this with conceptions of growth and progress, questions whether it should really be called “democracy” when minorities like the Sámi are deprived of their conditions for living by being cut off from the land they belong with (“Snölejoninna”).

Instead of modernity, the rise of the modern colonial world system

Such a perspective on the history of capitalism, from the first to the most recent enclosures or commodity frontiers, describes the period of modern progress as wholly defined by coloniality. As decolonial theory explicates, the period did not simply see the rise of modernity but of “the modern/colonial world system,” where coloniality is the ever-present “dark side” of Western modernity (Mignolo 2000). An evocative image that captures this aspect of modern progress, so the ecofeminist Deborah Bird Rose (2011) suggests, is Walter Benjamin’s Angel of History, who walks backwards into the future and sees how “catastrophe and wreckage are not by-products or collateral damage; the better world toward

¹¹² Jannok does not comment on the constant expansion of exploitation on *ORDA*, but she does on the two albums that came out before it, through the concept of *álpi*—a North Sámi word meaning ocean, tundra, or any vast expanse, as Jannok explains in the album titled *Álpi: Wide as Oceans* (2013a)—that comes to denote both the endlessness of exploitation and the endlessness of people’s souls. I explored this concept in a paper on a panel about degrowth at the Historical Materialism conference in London in 2019 and am working on an article on it which proposes that Jannok’s *álpi* offers a complex and important perspective on limits.

which ideas of progress direct themselves is nowhere to be seen; the work of the moment is disaster piled upon disaster: the ‘pile of debris’ that is still growing skyward” (Rose 2011, 89). For Rose and Mignolo, as for the texts cited here that describe relations of consumption, it is inadequate to depict contemporary ecological crises as recent side effects of what is otherwise a history of progress, because this dominant colonial cultural account hides how consumption of convivial human-land being is the very nature of the system.

6.3.3 Colonial Conceptions and Constructions of Ways of Being for Consumption

For systems based on consumption of humans and land to work well (in the short term, before they have destroyed what they depend on), they need to achieve an important feat: make humans and land controllable. In Jannok’s, Tsing’s, and Klein’s texts, this is in part tied up with ideas about the being of some humans and of land as Others.

Jannok’s lyrics depict how the colonial project produces a “norm that wants erase my everything and create only one landscape, in a world where there are multiple” (*ORDA*)—colonialism wants only the kind of landscape that is produced by industrial projects like mining, and in this needs to eradicate all other ways of living as humans and the landscapes such alternatives produce. To this aim, colonialism invisibilises and silences Indigenous worlds (“Čuđit,” “Snölejoninna”), as the Swedish state does when its attorney in the Girjas case explicitly denies the historical existence of Sámi people on the land (“Court 150602: 1”), opposes the use of the concepts of ethnicity (“Court 150602: 1”) and indigeneity (“Court 150602: 3”), and claims that it is unclear “what is meant by the term Sámi, and how specific such a definition really is” (“Court 150602: 2”). This is an aspect of a coloniality of being that works through *the denial of the existence of alternative ways of being* to the one centred in dominant colonial culture.

There is also, as I have mentioned, a depiction in Jannok’s lyrics of the problem of divisions among groups of local people. These divisions are depicted as being created by colonial power. This is in focus in particular in “I Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti” and “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness.” The former tells of how “you tear loving neighbours apart, / smearing the name of my family and the people of my heart” (“I Ryggen”) and the latter of how colonial power is “dividing things between us, creating borders in this state / founded on deceit and historical hate” (“Snölejoninna”). These lines refer to how Swedish colonialism has created divisions both among Sámi people, by granting only some groups the status of Sámi in Swedish law, and between Sámi and non-Sámi people—of (often mixed) Tornedalian-Finnish, Finnish, and Swedish heritage—in the north of Sweden. Klein’s text refers to similar tendencies in other parts of the world: governments and industries create divides between

Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups with the aim of preventing joint opposition to extractivism (373). We should connect this creation of divisions to something we saw in the previous chapter: the problem of the construction of what Klein calls high-consumerist lifestyles, and in particular extractivism-based varieties of this among people like the workers in the Alberta tar sands who make big money, and what Jannok—as also mentioned earlier in this chapter—depicts in “Grieving: Oappáide” as a settler-colonial mindset among people in a mining town whose houses are built on top of the soul of the land and of Indigenous foremothers. This criticism is directed against those who wish to maintain what has been termed *the imperial mode of living* (Brand and Wissen 2013, 2017, 2018)—the capital-labour deal of the post-war era, which stabilised capitalism by privileging parts of the working population materially, thereby generating a high degree of consensus in mainly Western countries. The depiction in Klein’s text of some workers as gainers of capitalism becomes a critique of this kind of capital-labour deal; it problematises the widespread acceptance in Western culture, as identified by Castoriadis, of how “alienation at work has been compensated by an increase in wages” (Leahy 2018, 65). In Jannok’s lyrics, such gainers of colonialism have become unable even to grieve the loss of their homes. This is an aspect of the coloniality of being that works through *the construction of alienated imperialist consumers thinking of themselves as opposed to alternative ways of being*; the construction of gainers who think their allegiance lies with the antagonist who is wrecking the convivial world.

As discussed above, Jannok depicts how there are limitations to the forms of human-land being that are allowed to exist. This could be construed as a form of homogenisation. Tsing also depicts “homogenization” (197), in a related but not equivalent sense. She theorises a concrete practice of “alienation” (19) whereby “things are torn from their life-worlds to become objects of exchange” (121), because such “simplification” is productive from the point of view of accumulation (28). In short, “the history of the human concentration of wealth [works] through making both humans and nonhumans into resources for investment” (5)—objects of exchange characterised by “interchangeability” (39). It is clear that this analysis builds on and develops the Marxist concept of alienation, even though Tsing does not refer to Marxist thought (except to refute its progress orientation): alienation as theorised in Tsing’s text is about how people become cut off from part of themselves (as occurs through the division of labour according to Marx), but also more broadly about how people become cut off from the human-land community that makes them, an alienation that is connected to enclosure as defined earlier. Rather than only being cut off from their humanity, alienated people are *cut off from their human-being-with-nature or from being as body-land*. The historical roots of this model of alienation, it is suggested in Tsing’s text, are to be found in the plantation where enslaved Africans and

new crops alike were alienated from their relations to other humans and nonhumans (39). Over the centuries, she further writes, this has morphed into new forms and is present, for instance, in the monocultures of commercial agriculture and in industrial factory production (24). This aspect of the coloniality of being works by *turning humans and land into objects for exchange, allowed to exist only for capital* and not as and for themselves; it works through commodification.

Klein's and Jannok's texts comment on another facet of objectification of and alienation from nature, focusing on the characterisation of the dominant human being. The ontological view that posits earth as an inanimate pool of resources is the foundation for extractivism, Klein writes, as it understands nature as an object for humans to use indiscriminately and at their convenience (74)—a conception of the earth as “inanimate machine” (177) paralleled with one of humans, as mentioned in the previous chapter, as masters. Jannok's lyrics describe how this objectification puts dominant human beings, to recall Plumwood's words cited earlier, *out of touch* with the reality of worldmaking: rather than being able to “understand and behold the mother we're walking on,” the “colonial gaze” knows nature only as “a fenced park in the city” (or a “flowerbed” in the Swedish version) (“I Ryggen”). This aspect of the coloniality of being is about *the construction of a master subject cut off from the Others that the master depends on*, or hyperseparation.

In an inversion of the master's ontological view, Klein's text quotes land protectors who self-evidently construe the master's agency as worldwrecking and in opposition to the reproduction of a human-land, body-land community. We see this in how they state matter-of-factly that “you can't eat money” (303), “I Can't Drink Oil” (340), and you cannot “live without water” but you can certainly “live without Chevron,” the fossil fuel corporation (347). We see it in how they want to keep living with the land they are protecting, as they have been “for a long time, longer than any dollar has ever lasted” (397). We see it too in the critiques in Tsing's and Klein's texts of industrialisation as appropriation of land and labour and ruination of worlds, as discussed earlier. And we see it in how Jannok's text decentres colonial power from the storyworld, as the motivations of the antagonists are barely granted any attention—they are “not worthy of listening to this song” and should leave this land if they cannot live well with all its beings (“This”): this signals their irrelevance and the primacy of the decolonial perspective, where Indigenous ways of being are the given starting point, in all Jannok's songs. What this inversion of the master's ontological view means is that the tools of Western industrial capitalism, money and industrial technology, are characterised as what Hornborg (2016) has called “technologies of appropriation”: money and industrial technology are seen not as productive and life-giving worldmaking—as they frequently are in dominant colonial culture, as I will discuss in the next part of this chapter—but as extractive and life-taking

worldwrecking. Hornborg's extensive research on this shows that globalised money and technologies are important tools in ecologically unequal exchange, so that the power that may from a local perspective in the Global North seem to reside in money and technologies themselves in fact hinges on how they organise unequal global transfers of land and labour; their apparent power is about their capacity to consume peripheries to feed the glittering centre, to use Klein's suggestive phrase quoted in the previous chapter. You cannot eat money, fossil fuels, or industrial technologies; they instead eat you, following the definition above of consumption as the literal devouring of convivial worlds. This suggests that another aspect of the coloniality of being is to be found in its *conception of technology and money as beings with the capacity to make worlds*—a conception I will explore in more detail in analysing competition.

In short: an imaginary based on hyperseparation and alienation

These perspectives on different aspects of the coloniality of being in the texts contribute to a critical evaluation of conceptions of agency, as in the capacity for worldmaking, that centre White Bourgeois Man with his Money and Technology as beings that are cut off or hyperseparated from both human and nonhuman Others, and that decentre these Others—the Multitude-as-Body-Land—by construing them as nonbeings *even while exploiting their worldmaking*. The elucidation of the coloniality of being here forms a critique, which is sometimes more and some less explicit (with Tsing elaborating the most on this), of how a colonial, patriarchal, capitalist system and its dominant culture depicts and literally produces Others as nonbeings (as objects, not subjects) that can legitimately and effectively be devoured. This is a critique that can be tied to something Federici (2019) observes about the workings of primitive accumulation: primitive accumulation is a process, she writes citing Marx's *Capital*, of “clearances, wars, imperial drives ‘when great masses of men are suddenly and forcibly torn from their means of subsistence and hurled onto the labor market as free, unprotected and right-less proletarians’” (16). In a recent example of this, she discusses how a system of migrant labour “uproot[s] workers from the terrain on which their organizational power has been built, so that, like the African slaves transplanted to the Americas, they are forced to work and fight in a strange environment where the forms of resistance possible at home are no longer available” (28). Both examples of primitive accumulation contain the element of alienation that I have been discussing here. This logic can also be related to Moore's (2015) theorising of the concrete production of Cheap Natures—“low-cost food, labor-power, energy, and raw materials”—whereby participants in a human-land community are literally turned into objects that can be controlled and thus accumulated (53). Narration of relations of consumption gives us, then, an understanding of hyperseparation as a paradoxical worldview, much like it was

defined in Chapter 4. Such narration depicts a coloniality of being wherein the Self or Master simultaneously denies its need for Others (suggesting that the Others are nonbeings) *and* exploits these Others (suggesting by this actual dependence that the Others do have being, as they are the source of worldmaking).

6.4 Competition: Human-Money-Tech Worldmaking Superseding Itself

Some of the texts centre on an alternative foundation for worldmaking to conviviality: how different versions of the same kind of being jockey for position in competition. This relational structure is central to Sachs's and Porritt's texts and is important in strands of the texts by Klein and Robinson—and a trace of it occurs in Tsing's too. Key human actants in this relational structure are the entrepreneurial human being and, guiding this actant, the good moral leader—both examples of the actant Techno-Genius who is also an aspect of White Bourgeois Man (and who is the most important in Sachs's text); this we saw in the previous chapter. The good work this actant does for the world is about competition, or the capacity for better versions of things, from human ingenuity to technologies to modes of governance, to supersede worse ones. And this trait is not only ascribed to particular humans; it is equally present in the characterisation of nonhuman entities that become at least as important, if not more so, than human ones as worldmakers driving change towards human wellbeing and ecological sustainability.

6.4.1 New Clean Technology, through Public Funding, Outcompeting Old Fossil Technology

The most obvious candidate for a nonhuman actant in stories of competition is technology: we encounter new clean tech outcompeting old fossil tech.

Porritt describes his design fiction in the postscript as imagining an “innovation-driven transition” (276), and in the fictional storytelling as well as in the Connections & Inspirations section we are indeed told that societal transformation has been or will be brought about by the rise to power of new technologies (17, 147-50, 242, 283), leading to a phaseout of oil (38). This is underlined by how Alex McKay's world is full of new high-tech gadgets, of which the story of African farming that I have been discussing is one example (167). Sachs constructs the same kind of storyworld, imagining “a wave of sustainable technologies” (85) as a key driver of change. The explanation for this technological progress in both texts is, in Sachs's words, that history is constituted by “great waves of technological change” (79) where different ages

are founded upon different technological breakthroughs, such as coal-based steam technology, the oil-based internal combustion engine, and information-based ICTs (83)—and, in our present, “a sixth wave of technological change” with “sustainable technologies” (85). In Porritt’s phrasing, this change makes for a great transition “from the Age of Fossil Fuels to the Solar Age” (121).

The same force of technological progress is important in Robinson’s storyworld: he imagines a future based on constant “improvements in tech” (215; see also 278, 286). And there is evidence in Klein’s text too of the importance of this kind of force, though she does not name it in the same explicit way as Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson. The presence of this force in Klein’s text becomes apparent when we consider how important some of the kinds of innovations that Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson imagine to come out of technological progress are in Klein’s storyworld. Sachs’s wave of sustainable technologies is made up of hydropower (202), “wind, solar, nuclear or carbon capture and storage technologies [used with fossil-fuel combustion]” (204), “battery-powered vehicles,” “fuel-cell vehicles,” and “liquid biofuels such as methanol” (423). Porritt praises solar power as what “has really done it” (423; see also 15-21). Robinson imagines technological marvels like “photovoltaic paint” (52). Both Porritt and Robinson also tell stories of how some forms of geoeengineering like carbon capture and storage have been capable of working wonders in preventing run-away climate change (Porritt 93, 121, 256; Robinson 357). Although Klein’s text voices opposition to some of these technologies, like nuclear power and geoeengineering, as I showed in the previous chapter, we also saw in that chapter that she shares this critical depiction of some technologies with Porritt—and, more importantly, the absolute centrality of electricity generation from solar PVs and wind turbines in Klein’s text (16, 55, 64, 97, 102, 128-29, 137, 142, 199-200, 213-15, 253-54, 349, 396-404, 406-07, 451-52) aligns it with the celebration of clean-tech progress.

New technologies cannot achieve this competitive success on their own, however: there is a need for money to be directed to the right kinds of innovation through public institutions—institutions which, as the analysis in the previous chapter showed, are imagined to either complement (in Sachs’s and Porritt’s storyworlds) or construct an alternative to (in Klein’s and Robinson’s) the free market or neoliberalism. There are many references in the analyses in Chapter 5 to the need to finance, fund, or pay for the transition. For instance, when Klein’s text calls for action by the “public sector” (108, 452), this is largely about “public money” (406) or “public dollars” (109) being directed to the kinds of technological projects that are termed renewable. Another example is how this kind of public funding is what has begun to become widespread in Robinson’s imagined future: “the citizen” talks about how mass political action has led to the introduction of economic reforms like progressive taxation, not just in the

US where the novel's action occurs but in many other countries as well, which has spelled the end of the neoliberal global order (602-03). In an earlier stage in history, as discussed in the previous chapter in connection to Sachs's text in particular, it was the logic of unbridled markets where the human profit drive was set free that propelled innovation and economic progress. Both cases display a connection between the flow of money and the capacity of the human protagonist (White Bourgeois Man, as Techno-Genius and Business Man/Entrepreneur) to work with technology to contribute to improvement.

In a sense, both technology and money could be read here as having actant functions: Money enables Technology to do its work, and humans help or collaborate with Technology. To further substantiate such an interpretation and to flesh out the details of how Money and Technology can be actants and drivers of change, we need to understand the ontology or conception of being underpinning competition.

6.4.2 Money and Technology as Life(-Like)—and Urban and Northern

Money as life(-like)

A key tenet of the ontology in competition storyworlds is that to make things is to pay for things. This is stressed recurrently in Klein's text, where it is important to "fund," "finance," "pay," and "spend money" on "green development" (108, 110, 223, 401, 408, 418, 452), and where historical monetary funding for the South in the form of structural adjustment programme loans from the World Bank and IMF is depicted as "much-needed" (62). Similarly, Porritt imagines the mobilisation of financial investment for everything from nature conservation to new technologies as crucial for solving environmental issues (19, 22, 33, 41, 56, 77, 117-18, 167, 240, 294), and Robinson gives finance the same kind of role in his storyworld through a trading scheme devised by the trader Franklin that makes it possible to get the "investment" that is needed "to bring a drowned neighborhood back out of the drink" (134). It is significant as well that one of the key components of the turning point in the novel's plot, when the plot's protagonist manages to save their housing co-op from regentrification, is that some of the characters have found gold treasure at the bottom of New York harbour (307) which the co-operative uses to start a hedge fund that makes them capable of outbidding anyone who would try to buy the Met (345-46); rather than their political organising skills, it is money in the form of bullion that enables them finally to seize control over their homes. Such investment can animate any kind of society, Klein's text suggests: it is possible to generate "steady revenue streams" for independent local communities (398) through "local input and profit sharing" in renewable energy projects (132), and a Navajo community's traditional practices are supported by these kinds of

incomes (398-99). One major reason why the channelling of financial resources matters is that, as Klein puts it, this will “create jobs” in “low-carbon sectors” (21; see also Porritt 225, 240). And this is important in the texts by both Klein and Sachs because formal employment means households get access to monetary income (Klein 10, 62, 68, 92-93, 115, 123-27, 131, 136, 154, 320, 385-86, 391, 398, 400-01; Sachs 58, 140, 154-55, 169, 244).

But this does not explain *why* funding equals worldmaking, nor is it obvious that money occurs in an actant function in the above. Why do Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson imagine there to be a need for money in the first place? In the texts by Klein and Robinson, there is no clear explanation for this. Sachs and Porritt, on the other hand, comment on an aspect of the monetary economy, namely its *growth*, as a force for improvement in itself: as Sachs puts it, “economic growth has *produced* incredible wealth” (27; emphasis added; see also Sachs 23-25; Porritt 184). This means that the interconnected phenomena of an increase in formal employment and an increase in formal monetary investment are the source of life for human societies; growth is not merely a measure of or an effect of something else, but a worldmaking force. In other words, Growth becomes an actant. That economic growth is imagined in this way is particularly clear in Sachs’s text. He likens the “global economic system” to “the human body” (102; see also 7) and explains that, like living biological beings, “modern economic growth has a kind of DNA. It also [like natural evolution] came together from a number of different materials, and something took off” so that “economic life” was born (74). Economic Life imagined as a biological entity has agency: Sachs describes how modern economic growth “burst forward” (86) and began to spread like “ripples in the pond” (87), “diffusing and evolving all over the planet” (102) after it “had come to Europe” where it first saw the light of day (92), and asks how we can “unlock” (72) such “self-sustaining” growth (135) in more places. It is Growth that moves and creates change; it is depicted as a being of the same nature as life itself.

As the underlying artefact of economic growth is money, as suggested by the examples of funding and financing mentioned above, we could also consider the actant in question to be Money. Sachs thus explicates a first principle for the worldview underpinning competition: Growth or Money is life. This is a recent iteration of a worldview that emerged in Europe in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries, when the importance for competing European nation states and aspiring empires of controlling precious metals that functioned as currency led to the formulation of what Alf Hornborg (2016) considers a mercantilist conception of energy: according to this worldview, society is animated by “exchange value, or purchasing power” (20). That the importance of funding, finance, and growth in effect is about the importance of money is not stated explicitly in the texts, except in Sachs’s in one instance where it claims that capital

must be able to accumulate for progress to occur (73)—but the recurrence in the four texts by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson of references to monetary funding together with the lack of discussion of what money is can be seen as testament to the self-evidence of money, since the idea and artefact of money itself, as Hornborg (2016) writes about Klein’s *This Changes Everything*, among others texts, is simply “like water to fish” (174, n 2). This means that the kind of economic worldview that appears in these texts with their focus on investment, incomes, and growth—a worldview that has its foundation in the neoclassical economic school which harks back to the eighteenth century and Adam Smith, whom we encountered in the previous chapter, with his conception of market exchange as the origin of progress—forms a continuation of the mercantilist worldview. The addition of the caveat that the money in question (to an extent) needs to be *public* money is parallel to the addition of Keynes’s ideas to those of Smith: there is a need for some degree of guidance of the flow of currency through society so that it gives life to the right things, just as there is a need for a wiser version of competitive White Bourgeois Man.

Technology progressing on its own accord

That money is of the same nature as life is however not the sole first principle of the worldview in storyworlds based on competition; at times, it appears it is in fact not economic development that acts as the primary worldmaker, but that a different force sets it in motion. Sachs’s work is the most instructive on this as well: he asks, “what causes economic growth?” (3), and answers that “technological advances are the main driver” of it (9). In Sachs’s image of economic ripples on the pond of world society, this makes technological advance “the proverbial stone” that “first hit the water” in England (89). Like economic growth, technological advance is described as an actant with an internal force propelling it forwards: it is “relentless” (80). We could name this actant Technology or Technological Progress. The power of technological progress is depicted in a way that suggests it has an actant function in the texts by Klein, Porritt, and Robinson too, as well as in Sachs’s text.

That technology itself is a driver of change, by merit of the force of technological progress which individual new technologies embody, can be seen in how the competitive power of new technologies is described. As depicted in Klein’s text, a shift away from fossil fuels is possible because new clean technologies and their power are “becoming cheaper, more efficient, and easier to store every year” (16). The characteristic of cheapening is also emphasised by Robinson (378) and Porritt (15, 242-43), the latter pinning it to how solar technologies themselves are “competing furiously with each other” (17). Porritt depicts other new technologies in the same way (121, 147-50, 283), and concludes from this that they can—in wording that invokes the capacity to act—

“kill off” less sustainable ones (121). In these examples, the automatic cheapening of imagined new sustainable technologies is testament to these storyworlds’ reliance on the notion of technological progress as a force capable of propelling change. In these descriptions of the competitive power of new innovations in technology, New Tech becomes an actant. This kind of competitive force inhering in New Tech is explained in the texts by Sachs and Porritt through definitions of natural laws of technological progress. In Porritt’s storyworld, this is “the ‘law of accelerating returns’—Ray Kurzweil’s theory that the rate of technological change increases exponentially” (289; see also 242). In Sachs’s storyworld, a more specific example of such a tendency is how the ICT industry has allegedly proven Moore’s law—the idea that the processing capacity of computers is doubled over intervals of roughly a year and a half (85, 494).

A related kind of example of how technology is imagined to have power and how it thus becomes Technology as an actant appears in the conceptualisations in some texts of blockages preventing new technologies from outcompeting old ones. Sachs here introduces the concept of “tech barriers” (494), and Porritt suggests that individual technological breakthroughs can overcome such obstacles as they often “open the floodgates for everyone else” (93) and lead to “a tidal wave of innovation” (107). If the blockage is removed, Technology moves into action. But tech barriers are not only about innovation problems; they can also be social. Sachs’s text suggests as much when it expresses a complaint about “powerful vested interests like Big Oil that have hindered clarity and progress on implementation” of sustainability solutions (506). Klein and Robinson tell the same kind of story. In Klein’s text, the transition to one hundred percent renewables is a matter of political will and not a problem “from a technical perspective” (101; see also 151), meaning that it would have happened automatically through the competitiveness of New Tech if it was not for the blockage set up by free market fundamentalism and Big Oil (55-56). In Robinson’s novel, the third-person narrator, the “citizen” narrator, and several characters comment on how conservative capitalist forces and lack of political will are the only reasons why new clean technology has not yet saved the day (5, 11 139, 357, 377-82, 378-79); such Clean Tech is “all over the place *waiting* to be declared economical” (378; emphasis added). As the character Jeff succinctly puts it, in a line that I partly quoted in the epigraph to Chapter 5, “the problem is capitalism. We’ve got good tech, we’ve got a nice planet” (5).

Further examples of depictions of Technology as actant can be found in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson, as they all describe technology as life-making or life-like. Sachs does this in the passages cited at the beginning of this section, and when he talks about technological “discovery” (187, 355), not production, so that technologies become cast as entities that already exist out there in the world and need only to be found by humans. Porritt, to take but a

few examples that could be complemented by numerous others from his text, depicts technology as life-making and life-like when he imagines artificial photosynthesis (243)—a technology that literally makes life just like plants—and a Korean city built on a human-made island that has “digital plumbing” so that “from the beginning the city was literally run on information” (127)—literally a human-made world animated by technologies and the data they circulate. In Robinson’s novel, similar tendencies are apparent in how the imagined future society feeds itself and supplies itself with electrical energy, and in this society’s high-tech financial system. Consider the food system of the storyworld: people who live in floating skyvillages can be almost self-sufficient on food (362), as can New Yorkers based on largely technology-intensive food production like in-building hydroponics (12), indoor farms (456, 540-41), rooftop farms (133, 599), and lab-grown meat (380); much food for the urban society of the future is grown on floating islands in “sky ag corridors” (38); and though there are some farms on the land outside cities (40), most rural land is made up of “wildlife habitat” corridors (38, 40) and emptied of humans (380), suggesting that land-based agriculture is of little importance in the imagined future food system as a whole. And consider as well the depiction of advanced computing in finance, wherein Robinson draws on academic theories that extend the concept of agency to the inanimate. In a passage narrated by “the citizen,” the high-tech financial system is characterised as an artificial intelligence with a life of its own, named “an accidental megastructure” or “a hyperobject” (319). The latter is a theoretical concept coined by Timothy Morton (2013) (whose book with this title is blurbed by Robinson, as I mentioned in Chapter 3). Morton’s concept of hyperobjects denotes phenomena that vastly exceed the spatial and temporal scale of the human lifecycle and are thus, according to Morton’s argument, difficult to think and speak of for humans. The example Morton dwells on the most is climate change (though they prefer the term global warming). Elsewhere in *New York 2140*, the same system is referred to as a “global hive mind” (18). Through these three concepts—accidental megastructure, hyperobject, and global hivemind—technologies and technological infrastructures become characterised as actants with life-like qualities. This characterisation is emphasised by how the citizen does not talk *of* this system but *to* it, treating it as sentient by berating the “oversimple algorithms of greed” for what they do in the world (320). A similar way of thinking about technology is apparent too in the character Mutt’s summary of what has made the political action in the plot possible: he considers it to be based on the joint agency of everyone and everything connected to the Met co-op, explaining that “our building is a kind of actor network” which includes all its people and “the building itself” (399). This is a reference to Latour’s actor network theory, Robinson’s interest in which was mentioned in Chapter 3 as well. Throughout the story, we also encounter this building as a

form of character, its AI interacting with other characters and quoted in dialogue (e.g. 91). Advanced technology and the structures it yields are thus depicted as akin to biological beings, akin to species and their ecosystems. In the novel's storyworld, Technology should therefore be understood as an actant with worldmaking capacity.

Although Klein's text diverges from this tendency in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson to explicitly posit Technological Progress and Technology as forces making or being (like) life, her self-evident featuring of clean-tech progress without any substantiation of its conditions makes technological progress as well like water to fish in her work.

Fetishism of Technology and Money

In these four texts, the equation or near-equation of forms of industrial technology and life suggests an ontological centring of a worldmaking force constituted by what the critical cultural geographer Gordon Walker (2021) calls *techno-energies*—the forms of energy that exist “within wires, cables, pipes and tanks” (2). Walker's techno-energies are analytically distinct from what he calls *natural energies* (5), a distinction I will return to in the conclusion to this chapter. For instance, it is the techno-energies of electricity and fuel, not energy in a broader physical sense, that Sachs has in mind when he states that “energy is at the core of every economic activity, whether farming, industry, services, or transport” (112), and it is techno-energies that Klein imagines to be central to the transition when she talks of “a shift to a clean, low-carbon energy system” (9). The very concept of energy becomes defined by industrial technologies; energy *is* techno-energies. Another term for this is proposed by Barca (2020) and is contrasted with what she calls the forces of reproduction (the ecological agency of all those construed as Others, as we have seen): “the forces of production (Western science and industrial technology)” (1).

Porritt in fact uses a concept that can help us understand this tendency to construe energy and human sustenance as techno-energy and Western-style industrial production, though his text does not apply it to the technologies he favours as miracle worldmakers: in criticising those who deny the conflict between sustainable food production for all and biofuels and extensive meat production, Porritt's narrator calls their ideas “cornucopian fantasies” (90). Such a critique of certain conceptions of technologies as cornucopias suggests that it is misguided to think of technology as producing or being life. Alf Hornborg (2003) has also used the image of the cornucopia in his work on ideas of economic growth and technological progress as producing unlimited wealth. He also introduces a related concept that can help us understand the ontological perspective that underpins cornucopian accounts of technology as well as of growth or money: *fetishism*. He attaches the term in particular to technology,

exploring *technofetishism* as the notion that the benefits derived locally from technological infrastructures are the products of the internal workings of machines (Hornborg 2016, 7) and thus not contingent on the wider field of social relations—including globally unequal ecological exchange—that enable their production and maintenance (see e.g. 109, 151-52). But fetishism in Hornborg’s thinking is also a general term denoting the attribution of the life-like quality of “autonomous agency” to inanimate objects: this occurs when “money is . . . believed to generate more of its own kind” and when “machines are believed to work or produce on their own account, regardless of the global price relations which make them possible” (109).

To construe inanimate nonhuman entities that are the products of complex social processes as actants in this manner is a tendency that has been observed in earlier research on Western environmental thought. In an analysis of the *Stern Review* on sustainable development, Anshelm and Hultman (2015) find that it often appears that it is not people but *the economy, the market, or technology* that drives change (21). Dryzek (1997) identifies the same tendency among mainstream economists (or what he calls Prometheans) who around the end of the twenty-first century imagined solutions to environmental problems as the automatic result of more capitalist enterprise. For such economists, Dryzek writes, technology and prices, such as the tendency of cheapening that I have identified, are “agents” (50) (equivalent to what I am calling actants).

In the texts I have been discussing in this part of the chapter, focused on competition, these competitive nonhuman actants are frequently coupled with competitive human ones whose acquaintance we made in the previous chapter: humans cast in the mould of the figure I am calling White Bourgeois Man. It is this protagonist as Techno-Genius that is embodied in or entwined with the force of Technological Progress. Thus, competition centres on the character Tsing describes as “the self-contained individual actor, out to maximize personal interests” (28), casting this being as a positive force driving the progress of human history—a view Dryzek (1997) shows was common as well among Promethean economists (51). But the dimension of competition that focuses on targeted funding through public institutions adds a twist to the characterisation of White Bourgeois Man. We can understand this through Dryzek’s description of the typical sustainable development protagonist as “an increasingly sensitive, caring, and intelligent human being” (131): through the reasonable limitation of competition between profit-maximisers, the competitive relation re-emerges in a new sustainable form with a wiser, more mature version of White Bourgeois Man and an equally wise and mature version of Technology as the winners. This is an example of a tendency Plumwood (2002) identifies in an analysis of capitalist solutions to ecological crises, namely to imagine the protagonists of change as being “bright boys and better toys” (8; see also Gaard 2014).

The urban and the North as the home of Technology and Money

In connection with a fetishist ontological perspective on money and technology as life(-like), the texts also conceive of the urban as the most lively of locales. In Sachs's storyworld, urbanisation is a prerequisite for economic development because cities are where its building blocks can emerge: there we find good politics, education, scientific progress, and increased productivity (52, 90, 356, 359); there we find the types of markets and laws that enabled the emergence of technological advance as embodied in James Watt's genius (76-77). Robinson's storyworld echoes this when Manhattan, with its "huge influx of technological innovation and human capital and sheer money," is described as a site of wonderful human creativity and important innovation (123). That cities are by definition about economic improvement is nowhere as evident as in Sachs's juxtaposition of two images of Shenzhen in China's Pearl River Delta (or Zhujiang Delta, or Zhushanjiao), one from 1980 and the other from 2002, used to illustrate what he describes as China's marvellous economic growth (24).¹¹³ The first image shows Shenzhen as a wooded village with green fields framed by mountains in the distance and a blue sky with some white clouds, and the second shows the same place as a smog-filled concrete and asphalt megalopolis with sky and mountains nowhere to be seen. Depicted by Sachs as illustrative of China's amazing economic growth, this transformation is commended in the text: Shenzhen has improved. That cities through technology are lively is further elaborated in Robinson's (see above) and Porritt's (128, 168, 172) texts, both of which imagine large, densely populated cities—in Robinson's case, a New York hosting "three-hundred-story superscrapers" (35)—to be capable of producing much of their own food. Similar examples of the power of cities to generate life away from land are to be found in the notion of sustainable cities in Sachs's, Klein's, and Porritt's texts. Cities, Sachs asserts, by definition have small ecological footprints (369) and this, both he and Klein insist, applies in particular to dense, planned urban environments (Sachs 368; Klein 24-25)—Klein takes Stockholm, Sweden, as an example of this (179). The idea implied is that dense cities generate resources and do not need to import them to any significant extent. The city Porritt imagines as a pioneer in becoming sustainable through engineering is a telling example of this idea: it is Masdar City, in the desert in the oil state the United Arab Emirates, pictured as a high-tech, human-made place with geometrically designed waterways and green areas, a place of slick design with small splotches of green (130).

Although some of these examples of the urban as the location of sustainable worldmaking are from places outside the Global North, the texts by Klein,

¹¹³ According to the National Population Census of the People's Republic of China, Shenzhen had 351,900 inhabitants in 1982; in 2021, the number had risen to a bit over 17.5 million (see the article "Shenzhen" on *Wikipedia*, <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Shenzhen>).

Porritt, and Sachs generally locate such worldmaking in the North (and in the examples above, it is not so much the South as the North in the South that is in focus anyway).¹¹⁴ For instance, it is public institutions in the North that are called on in these texts, as also discussed in Chapter 5, to transfer technologies and make funds available for change in the South; as Klein puts it, the North must “help to pay for the Global South’s transitioning away from dirty energy and toward low-carbon development” (Klein 181; see also 5, 40, 76, 85, 388, 416, 418), because people of the South say “we need money, we need technology, to be able to do things differently” and build development without fossil fuels (414). Of course, there can be many different qualities to such proposed transfer of money and technology, from radical calls for debt cancellation to the justification of imperialist loans that impoverish the South. But what we find in the details of the imagining of this help is that the agency for the making of a sustainable world becomes located in the North as the home of the actants, the indispensable beings, of Technology and Money. This is apparent in how all the three texts, in the examples mentioned in Chapter 5, imagine a unidirectional transfer from North to South. Furthermore, there is an indiscriminating logic in the depiction of the need for funding, which suggests that Northern money is always a force for worldmaking. An example of this is how Klein’s text in the example cited earlier in this chapter depicts the loans of structural adjustment programmes as “much-needed”—loans depicted by Federici (2019) as a form of “new enclosure,” as discussed in the part of the chapter that focuses on consumption.

In short, in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Klein, there is an asymmetrical conception of the power to act with the urban and the North as the sources of sustainable worldmaking due to their association with Money and Technology—something that becomes even clearer when we consider the parallel depiction of land in rural and Southern locations.

Land, located in the rural and the South, as devoid of life

This conception of land is apparent in definitions of poverty in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Klein. For instance, one strand of Klein’s text defines poverty as lack of access to money and technology (7, 62, 115, 136, 320, 385, 391) (in contrast to another strand of it which depicts poverty as the lack of collective control over land and water, as discussed earlier). The same definition is dominant in Sachs’s text: he writes that the main issue for poor African farmers is that they lack “the income necessary to buy inputs that would enable higher production” (153) and that they live in societies with “no modern transport, no electricity grid” (28). It is also Sachs’s text that offers the most detailed account of what this means for how worldmaking should be imagined. What people lacking technology and

¹¹⁴ In the terminology of world-systems theory, these locations are *semi-peripheries*—located between the cores of the North and the peripheries of the South.

money do have in Sachs's storyworld is land, on the basis of which they live "difficult rural lives, always on the edge of famine, disease, and early death" (73). These poor people are the peasant farmers of all times, from European peasant communities earlier in history (51) to contemporary Africans (28), who always struggle to "eke out a living," in a phrase Sachs repeatedly uses (see also 67, 71). That land is associated with death in Sachs's storyworld is particularly strong in connection to places where non-Western cultures are dominant: writing about "geographical obstacles" to development (120), Sachs imagines, among other things, Africa's lack of coal deposits and the cold and barren land of the Arctic region as causes of poverty (32, 34, 88, 90, 99, 101, 109-10, 112-13, 115, 117, 120, 290). This explains why parts of the world are sadly "still" stuck in poverty to this day (67, 79, 149); why some people have not yet escaped what both Sachs (21, 26, 28, 142) and Porritt (28, 220) depict as a Hobbesian state of nature where life is "poor, nasty, brutish and short" (Porritt 217).

Some land can however be important for the flourishing of human life in Sachs's text. This is the kind of land that can feed industrial technologies with techno-energies: land rich not in topsoil but in deposits in bedrock, like the "coal and iron ore in England" that made the invention of the steam engine possible (76); land harbouring the resource par excellence, fossil fuels, "without [which] the world would be poor, as it was for the millennia until the Industrial Revolution" (186).¹¹⁵ This reveals a geographical determinism in Sachs's thinking, and indeed, the geographer and historian David N. Livingstone (2012) has shown that Sachs, alongside other widely read Western thinkers like Jared Diamond, has recently revived environmental or climatic determinism in the social sciences (593).¹¹⁶ What it can also be considered to exemplify is a very specific way in

¹¹⁵ There is one short sentence in Sachs's text that contradicts this view of technology and land: in discussing agriculture and food, Sachs states something that is reminiscent of the activists' views in Klein's text about how we can only live by the land and water and not eat money or oil, namely that "we must eat" (205). However, this insight about human metabolism does not impact his basic conception of worldmaking, as he elsewhere explains that "agriculture is land dependent, while industry and services are not" (357)—meaning that our need for eating does not come into the reproduction of the urban activities of industry and services that are imagined as occurring away from land and without need for land.

¹¹⁶ Geographical, environmental, or climatic determinism was a common approach to history and global social difference in the social sciences in the twentieth century, with the popular theory of the equatorial paradox stating that a comfortable climate hampers societal development because people can simply live well enough in it without much effort, whereas the somewhat more difficult climate of, incidentally, big parts of the Western world was ideal for development. A key figure in this school of thought was Ellsworth Huntington. For a summary of political-ecological discussions of the shortcomings of geographical determinism, see Robbins (2012, 26-28). There are also instructive critiques of Sachs's geographical determinism specifically: it has, not surprisingly as it is mostly African land that he construes as devoid of life, been critically interrogated by scholars living and working in the Global South (Vlachou, Escudero, and García-Guadilla 2000; O'Connor et al. 1998).

which nature can be acknowledged as important: a way of factoring in society's need for nature *as resource*. Such thinking is one expression of what Jason W. Moore (2015) has conceptualised as “Nature plus Society” thinking, or “Green Arithmetic” (22). This ontology—this conception of nature not as a being that the human and society are entangled with, but as something set apart from the human that the human then comes into contact with—can be further explicated through Harvey's (1993) discussion of the opposite to a dialectical conception of ecological and socio-ecological relations: it is an example of what he calls “Cartesian thinking in the environmental field”—thinking which depicts “‘society’ as a bounded system in interaction with another bounded system called the ‘biosphere’” (33). This perspective understands land or nature as a resource to manage wisely, not as a being of the same nature and importance as the human with whom humans make worlds in complex ways. In narratological terms, land or nature thus becomes an inert *setting* and not an actant.

In any case, when it comes to the locating of the worldmaking power associated not with land but with Technology and Money, storyworlds based on relations of competition place this power in urban areas and in the Global North, whereas land understood as a source of poverty is located in rural areas and the South. This is an expression of what Federici (2019) calls “the creed that only money is productive, while land is sterile and a cause of poverty if ‘only’ used for subsistence”—a creed she attributes in particular to the World Bank and its depiction of Africa (20). And it is also an expression of the tendency identified by Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014) for Africa to be depicted in Western thought “as an irredeemable chaos of disease, violence, and poverty” (17) and “a singularity constituted by absence” (14). In Caminero-Santangelo's analysis, this is an absence “of time, civilization, or humanity,” which at its root, following my analysis here, amounts to an absence of life or of being. We should add that Western thought construes other peripheral places in the same way, like Sápmi: this becomes clear when we consider Jannok's confrontational statements about the Swedish dominant-cultural conception of Sápmi as wild (“Čuđit”) and the Sámi as invisible (“Snow Grouse”) and as inescapably poor (“I Ryggen”). In the absence of money, industrial technology, and enough urbanisation, a socio-ecological world lacks being. This is why the South needs the North to become lively: as a place of simple rural land, it needs technology transfer and investment or aid from the North, as we have seen in this and the previous chapter.

6.4.3 Issues as Unfortunate Recent Side-Effects of General Human Progress

In the analysis of relations of competition so far, I have not explicitly commented on a general story template that arises in competition storyworlds. It is time to turn to this story template. As many readers have probably already deduced, it is

one of singular linear progress: when beings or entities jockey for position, the result is that the winner constantly pushes change in a direction imagined as forwards so that competition becomes an automatically progressive force.¹¹⁷ This story template is important for the problem formulation in competition storyworlds: linear progress is the foundation for in particular Porritt's and Sachs's definitions of the social justice dimension of sustainability, as the world made by Money and Technology together with Techno-Genius/White Bourgeois Man is depicted as wonderful—the only problem is that there is *now* a glitch in this progress (Porritt 5, 206; Sachs 137-38, 208-14, 333, 347, 459). This means, according to Sachs's text, that differentially progressed parts of the world are unrelated to each other. Admittedly, he writes, the poorest countries in the world today were previously prevented from developing by imperial powers (67, 89-90, 102), but in this they were only “set back” by colonialism (102; see also 67) and left behind in an earlier stage of history where they now remain due to “internal rather than international” factors (89).¹¹⁸ Klein tells a similar story and connects it to climate justice. She narrates how poverty reigned in China and India before industrialisation (55), how some “countries got a large head start on industrialization” (40) and used up “most of the atmospheric capacity for safely absorbing CO₂ before developing countries had a chance to industrialize” (409), and how a clean and universal development phase must follow from this, with countries like India and China needing to move on from their dirty “Dickensian” development phase in which they, unlike Western countries, are still stuck (24), and with other countries needing to “pull themselves out of poverty” through industrialisation though preferably a clean version of it (409).

In stories of this kind, environmental issues are cast as *recent side effects* of progress. We see this in Sachs's, Porritt's, Klein's, and Robinson's texts—and interestingly also in Tsing's. Sachs depicts “awareness” of the consequences of industrial capitalism as slow to arise (395, 479), arguing that environmental

¹¹⁷ The topic of how forwards and backwards, past and future, are thus imagined in competition storyworlds and in the dominant social imaginary would be worth exploring further and comparing to the temporal structures of alternative imaginaries. I have been discussing this with other scholars working on capitalism and ecological crises and it seems fruitful ground for future (possibly collaborative) explorations of utopia and hope beyond the common binary choice in current dominant culture between continual linear progress and regressive collapse.

¹¹⁸ It is interesting to note how Sachs's graphs and statistical maps, dispersed throughout the text, confirm this depiction. The maps show the geographical distribution of development and environmental issues, and the graphs show generalised global processes of economic progress and environmental degradation. In the graphs, levels of resource use, wealth, etc. are depicted on the vertical axis and time on the horizontal axis, so that increased levels of consumption become understood as generalised temporal changes. The maps add a depiction of the spatial distribution of these changes, but not by depicting differences between parts of the world as *relations* between spaces so that poverty somewhere becomes connected to wealth somewhere else; differences are instead depicted as matters of not-yet-equal distribution of the imagined single progress.

changes are unintended—“thoughtless, unknowing” (452)—“side effects” of an otherwise wondrous worldmaking project (xiv; see also 10, 188-89). Thus, the environmental crisis does not alter his characterisation of Watt’s steam engine; the engine is instead, after a long discussion of the problems of environmental degradation and climate change, still depicted as “brilliant” (402). In the same manner, his description of the many adverse effects of the Green Revolution in India, like pollution, eutrophication, and freshwater reservoir depletion, does not lead to a questioning of this kind of heavily industrialised farming but to a call for a bit more wisdom in its implementation (167). Porritt’s text likewise praises fossil technologies and talks of their unfortunate unforeseen side effects: the problem with fossil fuel combustion is simply that “humanity” used oil for its cheapness, not knowing that it would cause problems, so “we shouldn’t beat ourselves up too much here” (38). Klein’s text says the same thing: fossil fuels have been of benefit for humans in general but now turn out to have unfortunate side effects (24). Both Sachs (167, 317, 393) and Klein (1) consider the downside of progress to have become known only at the end of the twentieth century with the accumulation of evidence in climate science. Tsing echoes this analysis when she writes that “the economy is *no longer* a source of growth or optimism” (2; emphasis added) and that people have realised “suddenly” that all is not well with the world (3; see also 20, 25, 97-106). In short, fossil technologies have powered amazing human development but there is now an environmental crisis because of their unintended side effects—and there is also a parallel social crisis, discussed mainly in the previous chapter, as development is becoming unstable for reasons to do with environmental unsustainability and/or neoliberalism. Such a perspective on climate and environmental change is common in environmental history (see e.g. Chakrabarty 2009)—and the notion of a recent failure of what I referred to in the previous as the post-war social contract is influential in social science, with Thomas Piketty’s (2014) *Capital in the Twenty-First Century* as a key work.

When it comes to how the nonhuman is imagined, however, the gradual progress story does not only feature the competitive power of New Tech, helped by Money flowing through society in a fairer and more sustainability-oriented ways. Another component of this progress resides in how humans gradually improve their understanding of and way of relating to nature. Porritt and Robinson elaborate on this, imagining Techno-Genius as recalibrating its approach to natural resources by withdrawing from some nature to enable its conservation (Robinson 38, 40, 101, 380, 596; Porritt 152, 227), and by engaging in ecosystem restoration through high-tech means (Robinson 38, 101, 258-59) including cloning of extinct or near-extinct species (Porritt 77; Robinson 359). Their texts thus imagine and condone the conservation of nature understood as separate from the human, often in the form of what has recently come to be

referred to as *rewilding*. In this, their storyworlds rely on a conception of nature and the human that has been formulated in *ecomodernism*: the idea that wilderness protection, as the authors of the *Ecomodernist Manifesto* argue, becomes possible when technological progress has allowed humans to “decouple” from nature (Asafu-Adjaye et al. 2015, 16).¹¹⁹ This is a recent iteration of post-materialist environmentalism, a form of Western-centric environmentalism that I first discussed in Chapter 2 and then identified as important in the 2010s in Chapter 3. As the reader may recall from Chapter 3, Caminero-Santangelo (2014) discusses the history of this idea that humans can only be good for nature after they have become independent from it and then return to appreciate it and assume a new role as its steward (21-23), and shows that this ontological separateness is generally depicted as Western and not African (24).¹²⁰

What the world needs to gradually progress to sustainability, in sum, is the more mature version of White Bourgeois Man that we became acquainted with in Chapter 5 or, more broadly, increasingly mature technological, monetary, urban, and Northern worldmaking; more of the same competition, but just a little bit tempered through the influence of a somewhat more moderate and wiser attitude. That a sustainable world must be made on the basis of Western capitalist progress follows from an imagined opposition between human survival and the forces of nature, an underlying logic that is expressed in Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts, which thus construct the most complete story of progress on the basis of this story template of a single linear history. In their references to a Hobbesian state of nature mentioned earlier, and in scenes from a long history of competition between techno-genius humanity or technological-economic progress and a nature constantly threatening to thwart attempts to eke out a living (e.g. Sachs 21, 51, 343, 355-56, 456; Porritt 266-71), they imagine stages of human improvement from hunter-gathering to farming to industry (or “waves” of technological change), which mean progress away from natural poverty. If this competition between the human and nature has meant the possibility of human

¹¹⁹ Ecomodernism is the label preferred by recent proponents of this kind of thinking on environmental issues, but the term is also used in political-ecological critique. The politics of self-proclaimed ecomodernists like the authors of the *Ecomodernist Manifesto* could be seen as a continuation of the thinking that Dryzek (1997), as mentioned above, terms Prometheanism.

¹²⁰ There are possible exceptions to this ontological perspective on nature and the human in both Porritt’s and Robinson’s texts. Porritt imagines legislation on ecocide (227) and the rights of nature (152) put forth by South and Central American states (227), which seems to suggest that he could have community land protection in mind—but he does not spell this out, which should lead us to conclude that these forms of legislation in his storyworld are only about classical nature conservation. Robinson echoes Tsing’s third nature in imagining the intertidal zone as the site of a new commons: flooded because of sea level rise, the zone is a great example of a place ruined by climate-changing capitalism that people then occupy to make life in capitalist ruins (27, 119, 209)—but the way he sets up pristine environments emptied of humans as the ideal outside of cities means that his text maintains the ideal of human/nature separation nonetheless.

survival and wellbeing, it would be suicide for humans to relinquish this project. Therefore, it makes sense that the only alternative is to tweak this project through a moderate, regulated genius outcompeting outdated, unregulated hubris. Thus, although Sachs at times suggests that there is a need to “change course” (3, 42), in a phrasing that is also echoed by Ban Ki-moon in the foreword (xi), his phrasing in the conclusion is more accurate for capturing this story template: to embark on sustainable development is to “get back on course” (505).

6.5 A Comparative Discussion of the Conceptions of Being

The worldmaker in conviviality and confrontation is a multitude of ways of living as humans with land; a (queer) feminist, Indigenous-led human community entwined with land-as-mother, or what could in short be referred to as an actant called Body-Land. In competition, in contrast, the worldmaker is a male-coded, urban, capitalist, predominantly Western/Northern human genius coupled with industrial technology and money, or the actants of White Bourgeois Man, Technology, and Money. Through the critical narration of relations of consumption, competition becomes understood as colonial, patriarchal capitalism’s self-image and is subverted through a depiction of capitalism as exploitative. What is imagined as the worldmaking force in competition thus becomes the worldwrecking force in consumption. These relational structures and the actants with worldmaking and worldwrecking functions that we find within them are part and parcel of how the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs construct storyworlds of sustainability. Or, to connect back to the phrasings in my first two research questions, by considering these relational structures of actants we can understand how these texts *imagine sustainable worlds* in ways that have *environmental justice implications*, the latter residing in the details of how human and nonhuman being are imagined. A comparative discussion of the ontologies underpinning conviviality, confrontation, consumption, and competition can contribute to a political positioning of the texts and the overarching imaginaries of environmental justice that they construct.

In the following, I will first discuss the conceptions of being in the texts and imaginaries, and then turn to their combinations of relational structures. I divide the conceptions of being and the combinations of relational structures into two categories, drawing on and continuing to elaborate on the terms for two divergent imaginaries of environmental justice that I suggested in the previous chapter: ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development.

6.5.1 Being in Ecological Decolonisation and Sustainable Capitalist Development

Ecological decolonisation

In the imaginary of ecological decolonisation that emerges in the texts by Jannok and Tsing and as one strand in the texts by Robinson and Klein, human being is diverse: “one world, different souls,” in Jannok’s words. It is the Zapatistas’s “‘One No and Many Yeses,’ that is, many roads to the commons, corresponding to our different historic and cultural trajectories and environmental conditions” (Federici 2019, 7)—or one confrontation and many convivialities. The creation of a sustainable world is the creation of a pluriverse, in a term proposed for a post-development framework of thought by Arturo Escobar (2012) and more recently explored in a wide-ranging collection of essays by scholars from around the world (Kothari et al. 2019): a world of many worlds where a plurality of ways of living and being can flourish. And at the centre of ecological decolonisation’s imaginary of the human, we find Indigenous women and women of colour—but the imaginary is also inclusive of other categories of people who would explore diverse and convivial ways of being human. This is what is captured in the name I have proposed for the human actant collective that emerges in particular in Jannok’s, Tsing’s, and Klein’s texts: the Multitude. We encounter specific iterations of these actants in scenes of land and water protection and of the precarious making of life in capitalist ruins.

In terms of how human-nonhuman being is imagined, the nonhuman being that is important in ecological decolonisation is land, understood not as separate from the human but as entwined with it; the protagonist is a collective being of humans-with-land, or the actant I have called Body-Land. The power to make worlds inheres in diverse people and land together, and all kinds of worldmaking—from the most to the least environmentally just—depend on it. Human being-with-land is located far from the city, to use another phrase from Jannok. The way land is included in a community with the human suggests a form of animism: land is alive and has being; it is a being made up of nonhuman subjects that human subjects can live, or exist convivially, together with. Both human and land as ancestors have souls in Jannok’s storyworld, and in Robinson’s scene of early New York, humans and all the elements making up the land are citizens of the community. In contrast, the nonhuman entities of money and technology are insignificant for worldmaking, as is the human actant who touts these tools: White Bourgeois Man. His industrial technology, his fossil fuels, and his money are tools of appropriation. He and his tools are *endiid*—plunderers and colonisers—who can only wreck, not make, worlds.

Central to the worldview of the ecological decolonisation imaginary is that ecological and social crises are by no means new occurrences but instead part of

the long history of genocidal and ecocidal capitalism; that the attempt of this system to create only one landscape and erase all other ways of being, as Jannok puts it, means that it has *always* generated crises. In the words of the Ohkay Owingeh-descendant science fiction author Rebecca Roanhorse, “we’ve already survived an apocalypse” (Alter 2020, n.p.).¹²¹ It is not only White Bourgeois Man’s experience of crisis that matters; colonial patriarchal capitalism’s erasure of peoples and worlds through colonial expansion and enclosure of land and bodies mattered from day one (as did all forms of exploitation, from enslavement to patriarchy and beyond, that preceded this). Thus, the perspective in ecological decolonisation on the history and nature of global capitalism is aligned with world-systems theory and decolonial theory; it describes wealth in privileged parts of the world not as progress and growth but as contingent on exploitation of people and land in peripheries.

Sustainable capitalist development

In the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development that is constructed by in particular Sachs and Porritt but also by strands in the texts by Klein and Robinson (and minor traces of which can be found in Tsing’s text), human being is one: it progresses by means of competition through a universal history in stages of development. Although the imaginary proposes to centre on a universally inclusive form of human being (the actant of the General Human), we have seen that the way this being is imagined in effect bases the one humanity on Western, capitalist, and dominantly male-coded (or patriarchal) ideals, or on the kind of actant that I am calling White Bourgeois Man. Since this being is imagined as worldmaker, sustainable capitalist development’s ontology is one of hyperseparation; it is what Plumwood (2002) calls a centric system where the agency of the master subject, or the One or Self, is construed as the source of worldmaking. This is the case even when sustainable capitalist development would include Others in the one humanity, because these Others when positioned as protagonists are all cast in the mould of White Bourgeois Man—we saw as much in Chapter 5. One example discussed there was how women of colour become protagonists only when they approach motherhood as White Bourgeois Man approaches commercial enterprise and *invest* in their children. Federici (2019) has identified precisely this tendency to depict working people as “*microentrepreneurs ‘investing’ in their reproduction*” and connects it dominant capitalist ideology (64; italics in original). In casting the human in the mould of White Bourgeois Man and telling a universal story of this actant’s competitive progress,

¹²¹ This is a point made by many Indigenous thinkers; see for instance also Waubgeshig Rice’s novel *Moon of the Crusted Snow* (2018), where an elder in the novel’s fictional Anishinaabe community comments on what an odd word “apocalypse” is, seeing as the crisis experienced by characters in the novel’s present is by no means the end of the world—and in fact, the Anishinaabe world has already ended multiple times due to settler colonialism (149-50).

sustainable capitalist development could be understood as Eurocentric and Occidental, following the elaboration of these terms by the decolonial literary critic Walter D. Mignolo (2000). He argues that by making the particular European experience of modernisation into a universal history of progress, the dark side of modernity, coloniality, is hidden from view. A key element in the imaginary of the modern/colonial world system, he suggests, is Occidentalism: the extension of the West or Europe into new frontiers in the Americas (20). This extension of the West is the foundation of sustainable capitalist development's conception of progress as the making of Others across the globe into copies of White Bourgeois Man.

In imagining human-nonhuman being, sustainable capitalist development focuses not on land but on Money and Technology as important sources of life that humans need to work with. White Bourgeois Man and his Technology and Money can reduce the need for land and make land lively, an ontological view that amounts to fetishism of money and technology, as we saw above. Just like the conception of human being posits the agency of the master subject as the source of worldmaking, the conception of nonhuman being posits the master subject's tools as worldmakers. This leads to a conception of being where the tools that enable White Bourgeois Man to harness the power of land and labour are imagined as the actual sources of the power they make available to him. This worldmaking is located in the urban, and in particular the urban North. As was historically the case when the coloniality of being connected the mind/body and coloniser/colonised dualisms—a process referred to in Chapter 4—the coloniality of being in sustainable capitalist development construes being/lack of being in terms of Mind/Body and White Bourgeois Man/Others (land, women, people of colour); this is what happens on the level of ontology when land and human Others are seen as poor, unlively, and devoid of being unless touched by the master subject. The Mind/Body dualism, though never explicitly referenced, is the first principle of this ontology: this dualism carries the ultimate explanatory function as it posits Body as having no real existence and only Mind as fully real.

The worldview of sustainable capitalist development is characterised by a linear story template of generalised human progress, a form of history that relies on what can be called stagism: a story of human struggle against natural poverty through stages of development, with what Sachs calls “the age of sustainable development” as the projected future stage of sustainable worldmaking. David Graeber and David Wengrow (2021, 1-5, 60-61) have shown that this stagist history has become received wisdom in social science, despite a lack of archaeological and anthropological evidence to support it. Thus, the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development contributes to what the social theorists Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson (1994) have analysed as “the master narrative of Industrialization/Modernization”—“one of the most outstanding

examples of how a meta narrative becomes lodged in the theoretical core of social theory” (62). This perspective on global capitalism is aligned with the modernisation hypothesis and its environmentalist version in ecological modernisation and post-materialism (as discussed in Chapter 2), as well as with area studies—a school of social science that is critically discussed in decolonial (Mignolo 2000) and post-Marxist theory (Mezzadra and Neilson 2013, 42). Theories of modernisation and area studies understand wealth and poverty as unrelated, the different “areas” of the world positioned differently on the universal timescale of development.

A comparative summary of being in the two imaginaries

In the summary of conceptions of being in the two imaginaries above, and in the conclusions drawn about their consequent imagining of history and the roots of ecological and social crises, there are a number of opposing views on the human, land, technology, and money. Let us clarify and summarise these contrasts between the imaginaries—contrasts that sometimes cut straight through individual texts:

- *Land* in ecological decolonisation is a life-giver that enables people to live well if they live *with* it; in sustainable capitalist development, land itself is instead poverty without a techno-genius humanity battling against land’s constraints. Thus, in the former imaginary, lack of control over and relationship to land as a fellow worldmaker is the definition of poverty, whereas in the latter land is an inert and replaceable resource and it is instead lack of money and technology that defines poverty. This distinction amounts to, among other things, an opposition between a focus on natural energies and a focus on techno-energies: energy and the foundation for good worldmaking in ecological decolonisation is always rooted in land (together with the activities of diverse human beings), whereas in sustainable capitalist development it is instead associated with technology (particularly industrial technology) and its infrastructures, and with the ability to direct money to their construction.
- *Humans*, or the ways of being human, that are brought to the fore in ecological decolonisation are a diverse community characterised by queerness and/or feminism and led by Indigenous people and people of colour, and in particular by women from these groups; in sustainable capitalist development, humans are condensed into a single way of being, and this oneness of the general human is characterised as Western, capitalist, and male. Furthermore, the human in ecological decolonisation is part of land as a fellow worldmaker and potentially does good things together with it; in sustainable capitalist development, the human is instead set apart from land/nature construed as inert setting, and from this separateness comes to

interact with it in ways that can either safeguard some of it and use the rest wisely as a resource, or destroy it. This means that environmental action for the former is construed as action *with*—community *with*—land, and for the latter as stewardship *of* some land and wise use *of* the rest as a resource.

- *Technological progress* in ecological decolonisation is a false conception of tools of appropriation; in sustainable capitalist development, it is an apolitical, self-propelling (fetishised) force for improvement.

This is not an exhaustive summary of the many details of how being is imagined in the texts and in the two overarching imaginaries that the texts construct, but it captures some of the important divergences that makes it appropriate to divide the imaginaries of environmental justice in the texts into these two categories. This division makes it possible to get an overview of the very different environmental justice implications that the texts and aspects of the texts have; this analytical simplification into a colonial imaginary of sustainable capitalist development and a decolonial imaginary of ecological decolonisation help us see that environmental justice can be imagined in disparate ways and what some important characteristics of such disparities are.

An important conclusion to draw from this summary and from the analysis in this and the previous chapter is that the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development should be understood as a recent manifestation of the coloniality of being in environmental thinking. It offers an updated, politically correct version of racism, as it is not explicitly about race and yet it depicts land and people outside of Western (patriarchal) capitalism as lacking being, much like “primitive races” were imagined during the heyday of racial biology. Conceptions of more and less developed ways of being human are ontologically similar to racial biology, even though the first principle offered by an explicitly racist ontology is relinquished. In environmental justice construed as sustainable capitalist development, coloniality takes the form of occidentalism. But this recent version of the coloniality of being is not uncontested: a multitude of ways of living as humans with land, or an Indigenous-led, feminist, queer community with land, has a strong presence in environmental justice imaginaries from WENA too.

6.5.2 Combinations of Relational Structures in the Storyworlds and Imaginaries

To further position the specific texts in relation to each other and as contributors to these two imaginaries, we could consider how the different relational structures that I have identified are combined in the texts’ storyworlds. Some of the foundational ontological assumptions of the different relations structures overlap, whereas others are in conflict with each other. So how are relational

structures combined to form ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development respectively?

Let us first turn to the relational structures that are important in the texts and aspects of texts that imagine ecological decolonisation. One important combination of relational structures is of conviviality and consumption: it shows how convivial relations can be exposed to consumption. Tsing tell the most developed story of this, Klein and Robinson feature the combination as well, and Jannok refers to it but does not linger on an analysis of consumption. None of these texts solely depicts consumption; they all also consider how conviviality is still here despite consumption—how people and land make other worlds anyway. What is more, several texts combine conviviality, confrontation, and consumption, in depicting how conviviality is defended from consumption. The combination of these three relational structures is present in Jannok's, Klein's, and Robinson's storyworlds. Confrontation is the other side of a generally inclusive convivial world: conviviality needs to exclude some things, some ways of being, to maintain its worldmaking, as we saw that Jannok in particular emphasises. The worldmaking in these texts is not at its core confrontational, but convivial—but confrontation is necessary for conviviality to continue. Tsing briefly comments on the importance of confrontation too, but focuses on conviviality and consumption, which yields an interesting difference between her text and Jannok's. To what extent is it necessary to tell stories of relations of confrontation in a decolonial imaginary of environmental justice? From the point of view of Jannok's lyrics, it would seem that confrontation is an inevitable component of such an imaginary, because there is no way around confrontation when simply still being here as an Indigenous people becomes a confrontational act in relation to colonialism. Hence, the way Tsing grounds positive possibilities in contaminated conviviality—conviviality shaped in part by the impact of consumption—can be dubious: at times, it fails to forward an understanding of how humans can make life in ruins and make other worlds resurge without this worldmaking being constantly reappropriated (as in Robinson's regentrification) when capital keeps looking for worlds to turn into resources for accumulation. Jannok might ask Tsing, is it really such a bad idea to look for ways for convivial worldmaking to escape from capital? But it is not only Jannok (and Klein and Robinson) who can complement Tsing; the critical perspective on consumption from Tsing, Klein, and to an extent also Robinson can complement Jannok's thinking, which focuses less on a critical analysis of consumption than the others do. This lack of focus on the ins and outs of colonial power is an aspect of her decoloniality, her starting point and whole world being Sámi conviviality—but it is nonetheless useful to understand coloniality through a critical theory of relations of consumption as well. If the texts covering conviviality, confrontation, and consumption are read alongside each other, it becomes possible to assemble

an imaginary of ecological decolonisation built on understandings of all three types of relations. I would suggest that this is a fruitful combination for decolonial imaginaries of environmental justice.

The imaginary of sustainable capitalist development is instead wholly based on the relational structure of competition. The definition of progress in this imaginary, as featured the most prominently by Sachs and Porritt but also by Klein, Robinson, and in part Tsing, is entirely tied up with competition. Nonetheless, competition is not the sole relational structure in any of the works that feature it. This creates a tension in many of the texts. In Klein's storyworld, the inclusion of the two scene types discussed in the previous chapter means there is an oscillation between defining the relations where worldmaking happens as conviviality-confrontation and competition. Klein even explicitly places these two relational structures in conversation with each other, allowing confrontation to question competition: she explains that the drive for economic growth "goes much deeper than the trade history of the past few decades" (81), so that neoliberalism is not the real antagonist but the root cause is to be found "in not only capitalism, but also the building blocks of materialism that preceded modern capitalism, a mentality some call 'extractivism'" (25). Nonetheless, ecological decolonisation is, to use the terms proposed by *Out of the Woods* (2020), the "minor" voice in the text, developed fully only in the one scene where we are told about the long history of Western colonial capitalism, whereas her "major" voice again and again casts the relation between Blockadia and capitalism as a relation of competition, with better modes of governance and better technologies outcompeting less adequate ones. Likewise, Robinson's novel has a minor and a major voice, where the minor voice emphasises conviviality and confrontation and the major one competition. Charlotte and Franklin's Keynesian solution is given support by the externally focalising narrators, in particular in the chapter narrated by "the city" and in comments in fragments between the chapters. Jeff's dark view of the world and his yearning for revolutionary change, in contrast, get their proper expression only in one short scene with a story within a story in one of the novel's subplots, where Indigenous livelihoods are described as irrevocably lost— "most of them died" during conquest, Mutt says of Native Americans (296) (and there are no Indigenous people in the novel's present), and he thinks of the story he has told to Jeff not as a source of real hope but as a "lullaby" and a "tale for children" (297)—so that what this subversive perspective longs for seems impossible, unlike Keynesian regulation of capitalism which is described as feasible. The scene does subvert the main perspective on the storyworld—a point I will return to in discussing formal aspects of the novel in the next chapter—but it is also marginal in the novel as a whole. There are other similar examples of conviviality and/or confrontation as even more minor alternative voices within Sachs's and Porritt's

storyworlds—as when Sachs berates dispossession of Indigenous people, or Porritt imagines conviviality around food and water—but they do not impact the general focus on competition. At times, Porritt and also Klein even imagine conviviality as animated by competition, or what could be termed a competitive conviviality; this is the case in their characterisation of clean tech progress as capable of forming, coexisting harmoniously with, or supporting alternative local livelihoods. Tsing’s major voice is, in contrast, concerned with a critique of consumption, but the occasional reference to progress through competition as real—a perspective the introduction in fact places emphasis on (3)—creates some confusion. It seems, in any case, that the capacity to contain alternative conceptions of worldmaking relations within an overarching storyworld based on competition is typical for the texts that construct an imaginary of sustainable capitalist development.

In this chapter, I have investigated the relational structures of conviviality, confrontation, consumption, and competition in the storyworlds and overarching imaginaries of the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs. We have seen that the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development with its Eurocentric conception of being is dominant in Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts and not insignificant in Robinson’s and Klein’s—and that Tsing in a few instances also adheres to it. The only text that could thus be described as fully free from the imprint of the dominant culture of coloniality is Jannok’s. It is interesting that hers is the text where the dominant culture holds the least sway: could this capacity have a connection to her social position as a member of a community that has long lived with the worst consequences of Western competitive progress? In terms of the relational structures that different imaginaries are based on, the imaginary of ecological decolonisation in the texts is built on some combination of conviviality, confrontation, and consumption, whereas competition is the foundation for the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development. Indeed, competition turns out to be a structure that often organises all relations in a given storyworld, whereas the other three structures denote forms of relations that are complementary. In sustainable capitalist development, worldmaking is associated with colonial capitalism and worldwrecking is dissociated from it; capitalist worldwrecking is detracted from the identity of the system, whereas non-capitalist worldmaking is thought to form its identity. In ecological decolonisation, worldmaking resides in human living with land, whereas worldwrecking is everything that consumes this world. In terms of ontology, conviviality, confrontation, and consumption are aligned—it

is a multitude of ways of living as humans with land that makes worlds—and competition is opposed to them—it instead posits Western, capitalist masculinity together with money and technology as worldmakers.

What does this division between an imaginary of ecological decolonisation and one of sustainable capitalist development look like in terms of the coloniality and decoloniality of knowledge? Is there a single way of knowing parallel to the single being that is White Bourgeois Man? And if so, might there also be a Multitude of alternative ways of knowing, just like there is no single decolonial being but a multitude of ways of living and being? In the next chapter, I approach these questions through an investigation of the politics of the forms of expression and ways of knowing that emerge in the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs.

7. Ways of Knowing and Forms of Expression, from Rationalities to Romanticisms to All That Is In Between

Within the imagining of worldmaking, there is a component of knowing: those who make worlds need to orient themselves in this process somehow; they sometimes think about what they do. Worldmakers take in their surroundings, knowing the land, their fellow humans, the technologies, and everything else that they relate to. In the terms of decolonial theory, conceptions of being are tied up with conceptions of knowledge. As different imagined actants of worldmaking, as we have seen, are posited as being in relation to other actants in different ways—actants who are versions of both the human and the nonhuman—then there are probably different ways of imagining knowers and their relations to other entities as well. How are different knowledges, different thought systems and methods or techniques for making knowledge, thought to support and subvert different worldmaking efforts? This chapter investigates this in the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs, considering both the explicit arguments or statements in the texts about what constitutes good and relevant knowledge on the topic of sustainable worldmaking, and their implied assumptions about such knowledge—including how their forms of expression as performances of certain ways of knowing imply such assumptions.

I will approach this through two aspects of the method of ecopolitical narratology: the continual analysis of actants (but focusing here on their roles as beings of knowledge, or *knowers*, in particular), and the analysis of focalisation—of the construction of points of view—in the texts as techniques by which the texts suggest perspectives through which the reader can think about sustainable worldmaking. To reiterate from Chapter 4, I consider how the texts use forms of both *internal focalisation*, mostly present in the six texts in the form of what I will be calling *first-person narrator-personas*, and *external focalisation*, present for instance in the use of impersonal or generalising perspectives.¹²² The first part of

¹²² The narrator-personas should be understood as rhetorically motivated representations of an aspect of the author. That they are rhetorically motivated means that the persona is not meant to be the fullest possible representation of the actual author as a whole person, but a suitable vehicle for the kind of communication the text prioritises. I would propose that this kind of analysis of

the chapter focuses on knowers and knowing as imagined by the texts, and the second part on the forms of expression used in the texts as part of their arguments about and performances of ways of knowing. The third part of the chapter then discusses what the analyses in the first two parts mean for the imagining of emergent-cultural knowledges.

7.1 Knowers and Knowing: The Multitude-Together-With/The One-Separate-From

In analysing the kinds of knowers and ways of knowing that can be found in the texts, I categorise these into two types: detached and relational ones. This analytical distinction serves to bring out contrasts between the texts and aspects of the texts. I will first discuss forms of detached observation and then relational knowledges, considering both the actants—the knowers—we encounter in the texts and how the texts imagine the ways of knowing of these actants.

7.1.1 The Knower of the World as a Detached Observer

Several of the writers feature knowers who engage in detached observation—and their texts perform this way of knowing too. The most detailed account and performance of this is to be found in Sachs’s text and I start by unpacking this, gradually bringing in examples from Porritt and at times from Robinson and Klein as well.

The leader in efforts to solve environmental and social issues in Sachs’s text is a figure he calls the “sustainable development practitioner” (8, 103-04). The characterisation of this practitioner neatly summarises how knowing is imagined in *The Age of Sustainable Development*: the practitioner is, Sachs writes, like a good medical doctor whose expertise is about making a “differential diagnosis” (103-04). Just like the doctor understands the human body as a “complex system” (8), the practitioner too must keep in mind how complex the economic system is (7-

authors’ narrator-personas (and likewise, in novels, of their possible character-personas or alter egos; see Thaler (2022, 180) on Robinson’s use of a character alter ego in *Pacific Edge*) can be a useful alternative to the concept of the implied author. The concepts are similar, as both denote the author as they appear to us in a text, but the notion of persona more clearly suggests that the act of writing a text aimed at a certain readership entails the selection of aspects of your whole person for readers to have access to on the page. In thinking of possible readers, an author will choose to reveal and emphasise aspects of themselves that might speak to that audience: for instance, I have emphasised my activism and personal LGBTQ experiences when writing for some political publications, whereas in texts and talks aimed for audiences that are not used to that kind of political jargon I have instead focused on my analysis as deriving from my PhD research, in effect constructing two different personas (the activist with personal experience; the academic with systematic knowledge) that both reflect aspects of my work as a whole and of who I am outside of my writing too.

8; see also 102-09)—for instance, concerning poverty, to refrain from focusing on only one symptom of lack of development and from prescribing single miracle cures like “economic freedom,” “controlling corruption,” or getting a loan from the IMF (102-03). Instead, sustainable development requires “very careful and science-based attention” (182). The actant who is the protagonist of knowing described here is a detached observer—we could call them the Detached Knower—prescribing treatment for a world that they themselves are set apart from; the known world is thus imagined as inert setting and not as actant (much like land in the sustainable capitalist development imaginary discussed in the previous chapter). There are several depictions of people knowing the world and other people’s needs in this manner. We are presented with a suggestion that “expert advice” from a number of Western academic disciplines needs to be collected so that development practitioners (this example relates to the Millennium Development Goals that preceded the SDGs) can then go to rural Africa to “implement these ideas” (176). We encounter Norman Borlaug as the leading engineer of the Green Revolution (which is described as having solved the past issue of food insecurity in India and as the foundation for a future solution too, as the reader will recall from the previous two chapters), pictured writing with a pencil on a large notepad while standing in a field, his concentrated gaze fixed on something in the middle distance (162). Although depicted in a field, he is clearly not a farmer—not getting his hands dirty by working with the land—but a planner, a scientist, an overseer. Similarly, his Green Revolution collaborators, M.S. Swaminathan and Chidambaram Subramaniam, are both pictured sitting in chairs and wearing clean formal clothing (162). Through these examples of Green Revolution knowledge, detached knowing is defined as being about separation from land. Elsewhere, this is connected to the urban as a source of innovation (357-58), and to the work of “inventors” who are “employed at universities” (271).

This conception of the protagonist of knowing gains strong emphasis in Sachs’s text through how the characterisation of the sustainable development practitioner aligns with Sachs’s own narrator-persona. The persona emerges in a concrete way through several instances of first-person narration (103-07, 145, 176, 182, 215, 224, 302, 500-02, 504), and also by a reference to Sachs’s appointment by the UN to organise the global Sustainable Development Solutions Network (SDSN) (484)—something that suggests that he is a *leading* sustainable development practitioner. Most of the text is narrated without such specification of who the speaker is, though: excepting the few passages using first-person narration, it employs forms of external focalisation, most often with no marker of who the speaker might be, and sometimes in a general “we” mode which includes readers too in the perspective of Sachs’s persona (e.g. 199, 344). But the same kind of knowledge, within which Sachs is an authority, is important

both in this external focalisation and in the first-person narration in the text, so that there is no tension between the narrator-persona—the *I* who would be expected to be an internal focaliser according to narratology—and the externally focalising general narrator. Instead, the reliability of the external focalisation in the text should be understood as *founded on* the authority of Sachs as a sustainable development practitioner; as an expert in a leading academic discipline of detached knowing (as I will soon show it is construed) due to his training as an Ivy League economist.¹²³ Thus, Sachs’s first-person narration *underlines the reliability of the texts’ narration in general* as based on external focalisation; his first-person narration contributes not to making the narration as a whole more subjective, but to proving the text’s capacity for external focalisation because the narrator is Sachs the economist-expert of detached knowing.

Porritt, in constructing his most commonly recurring figures of authority, imagines knowing in the same way as Sachs. Knowing is the business of a brewer pictured wearing lab clothing and monitoring a “hyperefficient” brewing process in sealed metal tanks (194); of volunteers with academic training in “agronomy and engineering, teaching and healthcare” going to poor countries in an “EarthCorps” program (85); of environmental protection programmes coming to local communities to teach them about the importance of nature conservation (248). The protagonist of knowing is the distanced scientist and the outsider—even the knower from the future looking back on the reader’s present, in the form of the fictional narrator’s external perspective on the world which oversees a timeline of sustainable development until 2050. As a reader of Porritt’s text, one is asked to become a knower in the same manner: someone who overviews the totality of a sustainable future world through the text and its images of places from all over the earth. One of the edited photographs in Porritt’s text can be used to illustrate this: a picture I pick out because it depicts the city I live in and come from—and I in fact live in the neighbourhood of Kortedala whose post-war estates are visible in the background. The picture shows us a yard party among architect-drawn solar panel-covered buildings in a central residential area in Gothenburg, Sweden, with the wooded north-eastern parts of the city in the background (38). The image offers an aerial view; we do not get to know the place and the people, what they want and need, or how they would conceive of the problems of environmental degradation and social injustice. This neat overview is simply assumed to capture what the place is like, regardless of what its people might think about the consequences of the kind of vision and practice of urban development that it offers—consequences that can be very different

¹²³ Alongside this function, Sachs’s first-person narration at times also serves to make the text more personal and thus, perhaps, more readable and engaging; this occurs, for instance, when he discusses New York and mentions that it is his hometown (361).

for those who can afford housing in gentrified areas and those who cannot, for instance.

This kind of detached knowing features in Robinson's text too, and in a somewhat different form also in Klein's. In Robinson's novel, it is mainly present in the character Franklin's overview of the world through his trader's screens, where a vast amount of information is represented; screens that, Franklin explains, allow the observer both to "glance at the totality" and to "slow down and take in the data part by part" (18; see also 70). That Franklin's perspective on his screens should be seen as reliable within the novel's storyworld is suggested when the topic of their overview of the world returns near the end, there described by a Franklin who has learned some things and become more grounded (as I will discuss later) as offering "a glimpse into the global mind," to which Charlotte responds by suggesting they are "like history" (589).¹²⁴ Furthermore, this aligns with the efforts of another character, Amelia, to glance at the totality: floating above the planet in her blimp—a perfect image of detached observation—she offers science-based theories both of the conservation of nature as set apart from the human (38-42, 44-45, 101, 259-60) and of human nature (360-61). These characters thus, although they are internal to the novel's storyworld and should only be capable of internal focalisation, have the characteristics of external focalisers and offer a reliable overview of the world *by merit of their engagement with science and with technologies of overseeing*—two aspects of detached knowing that I will soon return to. In Klein's text, one important kind of knower (though, as we shall see, certainly not the only one) is the scientist who overviews long-term, large-scale planetary processes through climate science (415), and who is depicted as the ideal knower because they are less prone to bias than many other people are (46, 59, 152, 415). Klein's text performs a kind of detached way of knowing particularly in passages where it employs "we" narration to describe a supposedly universal situation of human inaction in the face of climate change (e.g. 61, 63, 158, 168). Elsewhere, Klein's "we" narration is more specific, with the *we* at times referring to those living "high consumer lifestyles" who are berated for their climate denialism (2-4, 6, 18), and at other times referring to—and helping the reader imagine—a collective human Social Movement actant who are called on to act politically (e.g. 464-66). In these instances, Klein's *we* has a more specific function than the *we* in Sachs's text; Sachs's "we" narration always occurs without any clear motivation by a

¹²⁴ Although aspects of Franklin's first-person narration and of his focalisation relative to that of other characters are construed by the novel as a whole as limited by his masculinity (in particular before he learns from the two women he falls in love with, as I discussed in Chapter 5), albeit not wholly unreliable, his philosophical musings about a global hivemind represented or constructed by computer networks (589) are never criticised by any alternative narrative authority in the text; instead, they are supported by passages of narration by "the citizen" that I cited in the previous chapter.

specific context—it is simply assumed to be a universally applicable mode of generalisation—whereas Klein’s “we” narration is often a rhetorical strategy with a political motivation. But when “we” narration then recurs throughout Klein’s text without being motivated in any of these manners, the text slips into the kind of “we” narration that is important in Sachs’s text, with the *we* assuming a position from which it can overview a universal human situation. Klein’s text in these instances shares an assumption with Sachs’s: that it is possible to generalise about a universally shared human experience and perspective, and that it is relevant to approach knowing through this.

The detached observer is White Bourgeois Man

There are indications in the examples from Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts above that the detached observer is someone with *Western* academic training and, in the case of Sachs at least, *a man*. Such characterisation of the protagonist of knowing is in fact recurrent in these two texts—and can be found to an extent in Robinson’s too.

Sachs’s text states that the Global South needs universities where people can get training in technological innovation and similar kinds of knowledge so that they can become sustainable development problem solvers (273; see also 296), and that African girls need to “stay in school” (125, 159). Porritt’s text also stresses the extension of formal schooling, imagining all children attending primary school by the year 2035 (224). An important effect of this in Porritt’s storyworld is that it enables people of colour to become sustainable: peasants in South America and the Philippines need more education to be able to resist Catholic teachings on contraception (114), just like local communities need to be taught about the need for conservation, as mentioned above. What all these examples indicate is that knowing is not possible outside of what are construed as places of science, and that this “outside”—where universities need to be established and girls need to stay in school—is located primarily in the Global South. The conception of knowing here is parallel to the conception of being that I identified in the texts by Sachs and Porritt in Chapter 5, and which in Chapter 6 I showed to be central to an imaginary where worldmaking is about competition. To reiterate the conclusion from the readings of Sachs and Porritt in Chapter 5, but to add the analysis of conceptions of knowing, the beings or actants of knowledge are White (meaning Western or Westernised) Men knowing about and for people of colour (the former being protagonists and the latter recipients), or people of colour accommodating the white male way of knowing (thus becoming protagonists).

There is a similar gendering and racialisation of the detached observer in Robinson’s novel, though it is less obvious. The two characters who observe the world from a distance, Franklin and Amelia, are—like the rest of the group of

protagonists—New Yorkers (you will recall from Chapter 5 that the focus on the story of New York is generalised as a universally applicable experience, in a form of US-centrism). Both Franklin and Amelia also have successful professional careers in the formal economy: Amelia is a social media influencer with a big “cloud audience” (38), and Franklin is a stock market trader for the hedge fund “WaterPrice” (17). Furthermore, Amelia has a university degree in evolutionary and ecological science (360) and she uses her platform to forward nature conservation as theorised by the storyworld’s version of such science (38-42, 44-45, 101, 259-60); and Franklin has a job that normally requires a university degree in finance or accounting. Although the gendering of the way of knowing they represent might seem unclear given that Amelia is a female character, Amelia does not stand for an alternative feminist way of knowing, but adheres to the norm of detachment that is clearly coded as masculine in Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts—a norm that is not problematised in the novel.

An embodiment of this way of knowing can be found in Sachs’s narration. At times when Sachs uses the general “we” mode of narration, the *we* actant in question becomes situated in the Global North. This happens often in the chapter on “Health for All” (275-316), where an external perspective on disease in Africa is assumed as the narrator asks “how can *we* best intervene?” (291; emphasis added). Another example is to be found in a discussion of poverty: “*we* are interested in the success of poor countries in raising their living standards (195; emphasis added). As Africa is to be *intervened in* by this *we*, and as poor countries are the *object* that *we* are interested in, the subject position by implication excludes Africans and people in poor countries. And the text itself thus suggests who the reader as a knower of sustainable worldmaking can be: to be included in the *we*, the reader should be a prospective sustainable development practitioner thinking through detached observation, and they are likely to be found in the Global North.

It is instructive to compare the conception of detached knowing to conceptions of flawed or failed attempts at knowing in the texts. These too are the clearest in Sachs’s text. The detached observation of the sustainable development practitioner is cast as modern and scientific through a contrast between the modern medical doctor’s differential diagnosis and how “in the past doctors and spiritual leaders often blamed a person’s disease on one factor (god’s punishment of a sinner) or a few factors (the imbalances of the bodily humors)” (103). Formal education is similarly cast as modern through a contrast between it and the culture of “traditional societies” where girls often do not attend school (212) and women do not participate in the formal economy (219); in fact, older ways of thinking, or “tradition,” are only engaged with in Sachs’s text as sources of gender discrimination in the Global South (105-06, 121, 244). People become proper knowers only in the time and space that is Western modernity, and other

communities with their modes of education, their knowledge institutions, and so on need knowledge to come to them from the outside.

Another important thing to observe in the examples we have encountered so far in this chapter is that the leading knowers constructed in the texts are all successful within dominant Western institutions; their reliable perspective on the world is connected to their excellence in their professional roles within bourgeois culture, such as that of the engineer, the economist, the stock market trader, or the social media influencer. As such, the being of knowledge is not just white and male, but bourgeois too: if not a capitalist, then the capitalist's right hand.

It follows, then, that the construction of dominant white bourgeois masculinity in the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development should be understood as entwined with the imagining of knowing as detached observation: the Detached Knower par excellence is White Bourgeois Man, and a core characteristic of White Bourgeois Man is detachment, or what I have been referring to as hyperseparation. This Detached Knower is the single site and source of real, reliable knowledge; knowing in this imaginary is One.

Technoscience, neoclassical economics, and environmental science as detached observation sciences

There are three categories of knowledge through detached observation in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson, featuring in different combinations: *environmental and climate science*, *neoclassical economics*, and *technoscience*. As a way of introduction to them, let us again start by looking at Sachs's text, as it integrates the three seamlessly.

An important way that the perspective on the world offered by these categories of detached knowledge is expressed is in graphs—and in graphs that look the same for all three: curving upwards in exponential increase. In this manner, we are presented with: 1.) climate science about an acceleration of global warming (39) and environmental science about an acceleration of human impact on ecosystems and of human resource use (e.g. 460 on fishing); 2.) neoclassical economics about GDP growth (e.g. 22, on gross world product from year 1 to 2000), accompanied by statistical data from quantitative social science on improvement in life expectancy (278), population growth (e.g. 20, from the year 10,000 BCE to 2010 CE), and similar trends; and 3.) the notion of technoscientific progress (83, 495). The text itself thus offers a detached observation perspective for the reader to think through—an external perspective, or external focalisation, for the reader to assume in the knowing of their own world as they overview it through these graphs. These are examples of detached knowing because they overview general human and/or ecological tendencies, often on a planetary scale; the meaning of the data depicted for specific beings or worlds is not in focus. And these three forms of detached knowing are

generalised *together*, the conceptualisations of social and ecological change all packaged through the notion of *the great acceleration*, as it is often called. The epistemological implication of this is that the data represented, which derives from research in a number of disciplines in both the social and the natural sciences, is all of the same kind; the diverse types of quantifications of complex social and ecological processes are all equally reliable, even though there is no discussion of how these diverse quantifications have been arrived at.

This conflation of varieties of detached knowing is further evident in the body text in *The Age of Sustainable Development*, as well as in Porritt's text. One example is how technoscientific progress is depicted by Sachs and Porritt as refining environmental knowledge by providing, in Porritt's words, technologies of "surveillance" (152) and "tracker devices" (158); these information technologies improve, among other things, knowledge of land in farming and in nature conservation (Sachs 350-51, 378; Porritt 152, 158, 171). In the case of Sachs, economics is also present in this example: these "smart" technologies are about environmental and economic rationalisation together, as they help farmers save resources and thus "economize, make a better income" (351). Another example is how economics and environmental science are brought together in Sachs's theorisation of the problem of lack of sustainability. It relies primarily on the planetary boundaries framework (184)—a quantification of ecological limits undertaken by the Swedish agronomist and environmental scientist Johan Rockström together with other researchers at Stockholm Resilience Center—but alongside this cites the economist Thomas Malthus's *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (labelled a "seminal work" [138]) and Garrett Hardin's similarly economics-based theory of the tragedy of the commons where the general human as *homo economicus* inevitably overuses shared resources (216, 467). We see the same conflation in how the concept of "ecosystem services," which would capture how ecosystems as separate from the human "provide for human needs," is offered as a key way of understanding ecosystems (449): it seeks to know ecosystems by thinking of them as a market actor having an exchange with the human. In the same manner, Porritt's text features climate and environmental science alongside and at times in conflation with economics. The former sciences are part of a given scientific authority, as they are referenced in passing in descriptions of the problem of climate change (e.g. 240) and environmental issues (e.g. 74-78, 247-54). Both are about a generalised planetary situation, of which these sciences offer a distanced, aerial view. Just like in Sachs's text, economics in Porritt's text offers an overview of the human causes of environmental issues, as well as an understanding of ecology: for instance, economics is the source of evidence that population growth needs to be limited (112), and economic understandings of nature as "natural capital" are described as game-changing (152) in an entry whose title "Nature's Balance Sheet" (151)

further drives home the point that ecology can be known through business management concepts.

What we are beginning to see here is that, in addition to a *conflation* of environmental science and economics, there is also a *privileging* of economics as the knowledge underpinning conceptions of environmental issues. This is the case in Malthus's and Hardin's thinking and in the concept of ecosystem services, where the starting point for an understanding of ecological issues is a dominant-cultural economic conception of human self-interest and markets. Such privileging of economics as *the* foundational knowledge is apparent in particular in Sachs's text. The most plainly visible evidence for this is that a neoclassical economic understanding of economic development and the lack thereof is granted a very detailed and lengthy account that takes up more than half the book and that serves to introduce the topic of sustainability to be investigated in it (Chapters 1-5, covering pp. 1-180). A strong yet implicit argument for economics as a science is to be found in Sachs's suggestion that it is possible to predict development through the formulation of laws, such as the "simple rule of thumb" that "a country at half of the per capita income of the United States . . . will tend to grow roughly 1.4 percentage points per year faster than the United States in per capita GDP" (196-97); the implication is that economics is like physics, a discipline that discovers universal laws.

This economics-knowing underpins the conception not just of environmental issues but of technoscience as a solution to these issues too—technoscience as understood through economics is a central aspect of knowing in the texts by Sachs and Porritt, and also in the ones by Klein and Robinson. I will soon turn to an analysis of this, but will first briefly consider environmental and climate science in the works by Klein and Robinson, where these sciences are not connected to or even contrasted with mainstream economics.

Environmental/ climate science and other natural sciences of detached observation—with or against economics?

Robinson does not engage in any great detail with climate or environmental science in *New York 2140*—unlike in many of his other novels, such as the *Science in the Capital* trilogy. It is a given backdrop, though, as a planetary process of sea level rise is what has made the storyworld's flooded New York; carbon emissions as the key cause of this are gestured towards here and there (e.g. 379-80, 439). The clearest reference to a natural-scientific understanding of the challenge of sustainability is to be found in the inclusion of the evolutionary biologist E.O. Wilson (who also provides a blurb for Sachs's book cover) as an authority. Wilson's idea of emptying half the earth of all humans (a form of *rewilding*, to recall the term mentioned in connection to such schemes in the previous chapter) is depicted as sound by the "citizen" narrator in a passage where the text, through

a description from a bird's-eye view, offers the reader an overview of an important kind of sustainable landscape in the storyworld (380). The view from a distance that the narrator constructs in this passage is akin to that of Amelia from her airship. There is no conflation of economics and environmental science in the novel, but economics is at times depicted as akin to physics, much like in Sachs's text (though the idea is elsewhere questioned in Robinson's novel, as I will discuss below): Franklin ruminates on how "the canals were like a perpetual physics class's wave tank demonstration" and "it was very suggestive as to how liquidity worked in finance as well" (16), thus suggesting that the same kinds of laws govern matter and financial capitalism.

Klein's text talks much more about climate science than Robinson's. Mostly, this climate science is depicted as a monolithic authority positioned in opposition to capitalism with its right-wing denialists and neoliberal blockers of climate action, so that the latter's perspective becomes inimical to or the antithesis of knowledge (31-44, 72, 157, 186, 327, 353, 360, 452). This suggests a science/ideology and objectivity/subjectivity opposition—an opposition that emerges as an important aspect of the conflict between capitalism and the climate that Klein's title emphasises and that her text as a whole is centred on. The text's references to climate science thereby indicate a conception of detachedness as a hallmark of good knowledge, but this is a detachedness defined in relation to specifically capitalist vested interests. In line with the overarching critique in *This Changes Everything* of capitalism and its economists (which we have encountered in earlier chapters), the text does not conflate economics and environmental science but instead understands environmental science as reliable *through its opposition to conventional economic knowledge*.

The dominant conception of technoscience, from neoclassical economics

Although Sachs's and Porritt's texts and the aspects of Klein's and Robinson's that I have discussed here all imagine some form of environmental-scientific detached knowing, they diverge in how they position this in relation to economics. This means that the different texts seem to feature slightly different kinds of detached knowing. Where all four texts overlap, however, is in the way technoscience as solution to environmental issues is depicted—a depiction that bears the mark of neoclassical economic knowledge. Let me explain how this can be seen in the texts.

There are claims to knowledge of technoscientific sustainability solutions in all four texts. In Klein's text, it is stated that "we have *proven* clean, renewable technologies available" (137, fn*; italics in original) and that these are "long understood solutions" (25). This perspective is emphasised by the epigraph to the whole book, a quote from Kim Stanley Robinson which posits technological alterations of the world's climate and ecosystems as solutions to environmental

change that are easier to imagine than “comprehensively changing capitalism” (v), proposing that highly complex technoscientific interventions are self-evidently possible. This indubitability of technological know-how is repeated in several instances in *This Changes Everything* (18, 24-25, 200). Robinson’s novel is based on the same view about the givenness of technological solutions as Klein’s text and the quote in it from Robinson. This is stated most clearly in the introductory scene, where Jeff—a character who stands for the strongest critique of capitalism within the story—asserts that “we’ve got good tech” (5). Sachs writes, in the same vein, that sustainable technologies are “not fanciful science fiction” but available technological solutions (506) that are “within reach” (433) and “can save the day” (437; see also 445)—a point stressed by the foreword by Ban Ki-moon, the former Secretary-General of the United Nations (xi). Porritt makes the same kind of statement in his postscript: “we already have everything we need, technologically, to get the job done—just about,” with the remaining pieces of the technological sustainability puzzle to be found in “the ‘innovation pipeline’” (275).

This “we already have the tech” way of knowing is predominantly about a group of industrial technologies termed renewable, as we saw in the discussion of clean technological progress in Chapter 6. Sachs, for example, states matter-of-factly that “hydroelectric power, solar power, and wind power all release zero CO₂” (202; see also 9, 114), and that nuclear power too is “zero-carbon,” although it comes with the problem of environmental hazards (422). Assertive knowledge about the availability of such solutions is further performed in all four texts through the repeated mentioning of technologies without explanation or argument. Sachs’s text introduces industrial techniques for carbon capture and storage (419, 432), “battery-powered vehicles,” and “fuel-cell vehicles” (423) in this manner. Porritt’s text does the same thing when it displays solar power, and in particular PVs, in real and edited photos where these technologies are placed in what are almost always lush green environments (10-11, 16, 19, 38, 108-09, 128-29, 170-71, 218-19, 260-61), the eco-aesthetic substituting for argument. Both Klein (253) and Porritt (235) introduce the idea of a radical expansion of the technological infrastructure of rail in this manner. And Robinson and Porritt both invoke storyworlds full of new clean tech by featuring such gadgets in a large number of scenes or entries. In *New York 2140*, fossil-free energy and tech for sustainable living are recurrent: we encounter waterproof and carbon-negative high-rise building construction (27-28, 35, 92, 182, 199, 282, 312, 381, 417-18, 556), rewilding by means of floating “skyvillages” (38-39, 223), and forms of non-carbon transportation and shipping (55, 99, 243).¹²⁵ In *The World*

¹²⁵ Other forms of advanced technology, and in particular information and communications technologies, are also ubiquitous in Robinson’s storyworld (e.g. 40, 44, 47, 51, 60, 66, 85, 156, 199, 214, 222, 272, 324, 358-59, 466, 481).

We Made, new clean tech plays a key role in all but four (54-57, 62-66, 111-16, 189-91) of the 49 entries comprising the report from the future, often pictured in edited photographs where they are superimposed on real environments (e.g. 38, 41, 68-69, 108-09, 130, 140-41, 148-49)—something that makes the future world and its technologies look feasible. The absence of discussion of potential problems with a massive expansion of the technologies and infrastructures in question reveals an axiomatic assumption that they are inherently fair and clean—an axiom that is sometimes given explicit expression (Klein 5, 23, 86, 130-32, 226, 392, 394, 398-99, 413-14, 457; Porritt 269).

The closest we come to explanations of the workings of “clean tech” is in sketches in Porritt’s text. One of them describes concentrated solar power and photovoltaics: drawings of these as finished technological artefacts are followed by drawings of the sites of electricity use (homes and businesses), the two connected via arrows combined with the zigzag pattern of lightning—indicating *that* the sun’s energy is transformed to electricity but not explaining *how* (17). Similar sketches lay out how other technologies work (40, 137-38). These are not technoscientific explanations of the construction and maintenance of technological infrastructures, but surface descriptions of their appearance. How professed technological solutions can instead be approached is, interestingly enough, something Klein outlines—although not in relation to the technologies she sees as inherently good. In a chapter where so-called “techno-fixes” are viewed from a critical perspective, Klein considers the supply chain of nuclear power and explains that “vast amounts of fossil fuels must be burned to mine, transport and enrich uranium and to build the nuclear plant” (137). This critical way of knowing techno-fixes is not applied to wind turbines and solar PVs, however; instead of exploring their supply chains, she cites the comedian Bill Maher’s joke “You know what happens when windmills collapse into the sea? A splash” (137).

To understand where this dominant conception of technoscience comes from, we need to consider the kind of thinking, the way of knowing, that stands in for detailed scientific description in these texts. This is where we come back to neoclassical economics. The reader will recall from the previous chapter that the notion of technological progress is entwined with that of economic development in dominant sustainable capitalist development thinking, and that both phenomena are connected to the rise of markets (or capitalism). This gives us a hint that the idea of technological progress is part of a neoclassical economic history of stages of development. Moreover, the connection between technoscience and neoclassical economics becomes particularly clear if we note that the only explanation offered for why clean tech will be able to replace old dirty tech is *an economic evaluation of clean tech’s market price*: Klein (16), Porritt (15, 242-43), and Robinson (378) understand price drops in industrial technologies

like solar power as reflecting a reality of access and improvement. The argument is spelled out by Porritt, who explains that low commodity prices on everything from food to information technology are indications of high productivity and efficiency in production (230). In other words, the competitive power of new forms of technology is known through their economic valuation on commodity markets—the measurement of their inherent force of cheapening, which was discussed in the previous chapter. Hence, the foundational argument and way of knowing that offers an explanation for new clean tech’s feasibility and capacity to make a better world is not derived from technoscience, but from neoclassical economics with its conception of technoscientific knowledge and worldmaking (the actant called Techno-Genius) as a force of progress. That this economic conception of technoscience is central in Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts is logically coherent with how economics as a science is generally depicted by these two authors, whereas its importance for Klein and Robinson creates a tension in their texts since in some respects they oppose mainstream capitalist economics.

7.1.2 Knowers of the World as Being-in-Relation

Several of the texts propose and perform ways of knowing that are very different from the One way of knowing of detached observation in neoclassical economics, environmental science, and technoscience. We encounter these alternative ways of knowing and their knowers mainly in the texts by Jannok, Tsing, and Klein, and to an extent also in the text by Robinson.

An alternative way of knowing is absolutely central in Jannok’s lyrics. In the introduction to *ORDA*, the form of expression that is yoik is defined as part of the way the *I* of the lyrics relates to the land and her people: “I am the power yoik in the frontline of nature defending herself for future generations.” There is no distinction between the cultural expression of yoiking and worldmaking through convivial and confrontational relations; yoik is a form of expression that speaks to knowing as a practice *for and with the community* of people and land, or what I have summarised in the collective actant of Body-Land. The first-person narrator and speaker of the lyrics, who is also represented through the voice on the recordings singing the lyrics and yoiking, is an integral part of this knowing—the speaker knows *precisely because* she is part of the people-land community that is also the known; or, in the terms of narratology, the speaker’s reliability resides in her internal focalisation. What is more, through the combination of musical performance and a direct *you* address to the listener, Jannok’s songs interpellate the listener as someone who is part of things and who needs to immerse themselves in an experience of relating to the stories that are told. This means that the songs propose that we take a relational approach to knowing and become part of the community by responding to the rhetorical challenge of the *you* as an open category—choosing to be a helper to the protagonist or even become part of the

protagonist-collective, and not a gainer of or abettor to the colonial antagonist's worldwrecking. An important purpose of knowledge for this community of convivial worldmaking is that it can be an attempt to give the community the strength to go on, when the *I* sings to her sisters ("Grieving") and manifests through yoiking ("Čuđit"; "Noaidi"; *ORDA*) and the telling of her story ("Who") that another world, another way of living, is still here. This specific relational knowledge is reserved for the community who would see the other world resurge: the song of a better world is only given to those who are willing to be part of change, whereas those who "want to ruin it all . . . are not worthy of listening to this song" ("This"). Crucially, the telling of stories from the alternative world depicts what it *feels like* to be invisibilised and threatened with eradication by the forces of consumption; this is in focus in the songs "Tree Line: Orda" and "Who Are You: Olmmoš," and it stands in sharp contrast to the privileging of a detachedly factual approach.

The keyword for describing how knowing is imagined here is *relationality*. The actant who is the protagonist of knowing has a relation to the known, and knows through attachment or engagement as opposed to detachment; they could be called Relational Knower.

This kind of knower is important in Tsing's text and in parts of Klein's, and occurs in a few instances in Robinson's as well. Klein proposes that an emergent way of knowing is based on "reconnection" (159) and a "deep sense of interdependence with the natural world" (446)—something that comes from "knowing a place deeply, not just as scenery but also as sustenance" (159). What she describes is a way of knowing that is not purely theoretical but instead developed within the ongoing practice of alternative worldmaking, for and with the community of people and land. Tsing uses the word "know" in the same way as Klein above, depicting worldmaking as related to a process of "getting to know the inhabitants of the landscape, human and nonhuman" (159). The expression "getting to know" plays on the double meaning of "know" as both *having knowledge of* and *having a relation to*, and the -ing form of the verb "getting" (or the gerund, in grammatical terms) further suggests that this knowing is processual—ongoing and continually reshaped, just like the worldmaking practices that it is tied up with. Tsing's text is constructed to embody this way of knowing through the use of first-person narration where the researcher's experiences from research situations are narrated: for instance, Tsing's narrator-persona tells the reader that "*I remember the discussion vividly: I was at the edge of my seat*" in the narration of a meeting with Japanese scientists concerned with how to define matsutake as a species (231). And the text explicitly asks the reader to know in a similarly engaged, immersed manner: the narrator tells us that this book is "my attempt to pull you into the maze I found" around the matsutake (14). In a few instances, characters in Robinson's novel suggest the same thing—that participation and

engagement are necessary for real knowledge, and that detachment is lacking—and thus question the detached knowing that is elsewhere stressed. Towards the end of the story, Franklin and Charlotte consider that it might not be enough to be a spectator trying to understand things on a screen (as Franklin does), but that, Franklin says, “it has to be more,” to which Charlotte responds by suggesting that it means not just knowing history but “making history” (589).

Jannok, Tsing, and Klein, and perhaps also Robinson, propose a way of knowing that is reliable *because it is based on attachment to the known*, and not in spite of it. Such a conception of relational knowing is further articulated in some of the texts through a critique of dominant Western science, together with a delineation of multiple alternative knowledges. Let us take a closer look at this critique.

Against the detached knowing in dominant sciences

The critique of hegemonic forms of science is the most articulated in Tsing’s text. Tsing devotes much attention to the dominant cultural practice of knowing through “simplification” (28) and in this develops a critique of “the twin master sciences of the twentieth century, neoclassical economics and population genetics,” arguing that “while practitioners of each have had little to do with each other, the twins set up similar frames. At the heart of each is the self-contained individual actor, out to maximize personal interests,” like “Richard Dawkins’s selfish gene” and “*Homo economicus*, economic man” (28). An important assumption in this way of knowing, according to Tsing’s text, is that “a ‘standard’ individual can stand in for all as a unit of analysis” (28). The picture painted here is of a single hegemonic way of knowing—as an actant, we could call it Master Science or the One Science—which relies on the idea that knowledge gained through the study of an isolated and standardised unit of analysis can be generalised. This is a concise critical summary of the detached knowing that I discussed earlier, and an argument that clearly juxtaposes detached and relational knowing.

In the same vein as this, there is a critique in Klein’s text of the perspectives of Francis Bacon, James Watt, and Adam Smith (170-73), as I recounted in Chapter 5 in analysing the aspect of Klein’s text that understands climate change within a long history of extractivism and Western imperialism. Bacon and Watt’s technoscientific knowledge is about the domination of nature and it is in cahoots with the market-capitalist knowledge of Smith’s classical economics—and with the neoclassical school that descends from it and is taught to elite economists (81). As depicted by Klein, neoclassical economics and dominant forms of natural science then in fact *do* have something to do with each other, even though the academic disciplines—as is Tsing’s observation—may not be connected. The influence of dominant economic ideas on science has even meant that there are

problems with the pillar of climate science advice, the UN's IPCC: Klein's text presents evidence that neoliberal market thinking has influenced the IPCC and its widely trusted reports (79). More broadly, her text also opposes detached knowing in relation to environmental issues, depicting it as a *lack* of knowledge: "disassociation"—a way of thinking whereby you detach yourself from what you do—plays a part in making "decent people" capable of doing work that slaughters environments (344).

A critical perspective on technoscience is also compatible with Jannok's lyrics. One line tells of hydropower as part of colonialism: the colonisers "drown the lávvu" ("We").¹²⁶ Although Jannok does not engage in critique of technoscience at any length, this could in fact be understood in itself as a form of critique because it centres the relational way of knowing and radically decentres technoscience by not considering it worthy of much attention. Jannok's lyrics further suggest, much like Klein's text, that a detached way of knowing is actually a *lack* of knowledge, as already gestured towards in the previous chapter: Jannok depicts the colonialist mentality of people failing to take in the world or "mother" they live on and with—"isn't she pretty," she asks—and who only know nature as "a fenced park in the city" ("I Ryggen").

It is noteworthy that Tsing and Klein also connect such detachedness to dominant forms of environmental science and related practices of conservation. According to Klein's text, there is reason to question the standard environmentalist image of the earth as a fragile blue marble because this image communicates the idea of human separateness (285). The text also opposes a form of conservationism which touts detachedness, as nature conservation predominantly did in the early days of Western environmentalism—something that is illustrated with a quote from William Temple Hornaday, the Bronx Zoo director in the 1910s, who is "urging American educators to 'take up their share of the white man's burden' and help to preserve the wild life of our country" (183). In the present, such conservationism is spearheaded by "corporate-partnered conservationists" (or "Big Green," in a name you may recall from Chapter 5), with their "mantra" that "everything is disconnected" which underpins carbon offsetting schemes that dispossess local people (224). Tsing also depicts such detached conservationism, comparing examples of forest management that she encounters in China and Japan, where the Chinese case is about how to get "laws, incentives" right in order to make peasant-entrepreneurs

¹²⁶ My interpretation of this draws on knowledge of the context Jannok refers to: hydropower is, as discussed in Chapter 2, part of a long history of colonial dispossession in Sápmi, and Jannok's critique here should be understood as part of an ongoing contestation of hydropower by Sámi people, who have come to depict it as *grey* and not green energy because the riverbed laid bare by damming is grey (see Össbo 2021, 24).

act for forest conservation and not, in contrast to the Japanese case, about being in contact with the trees themselves (188).

Crucially, however, this critique does not make out relational knowing to be about anti-science. The texts by Klein and Tsing both stress that it is *a certain way of doing and understanding science* that must be opposed. Klein's text argues with the Western environmental movement writer-activist Rachel Carson against how "so primitive a science" as the technoscience of the chemical industry in the 1950s and onwards has become powerful enough to threaten life on earth (185). It also labels such thinking about technology *religious, magical, and fictional*: the problem is "faith in techno wizardry," which is "our culture's most powerful form of magical thinking" (255), our "secular religion" (289), and a kind of "sci-fi" (258). Economic thinking is described in the same way, which suggests a connection between economics and the magic of techno-fixes: economic growth is "magical thinking" (187, 211) and a "god" (82). In one instance, Klein comments on colonialism in similar language: colonisers "tend to have myths rather than memories" of the history of their nations (445). If the problem is a *primitive* science that is often like *magical* thinking, part of the solution may well be a better and more scientific science. This aligns with a critique in Tsing's text of how, "for many cultural anthropologists, science is best regarded as a straw man against which to explore alternatives, such as indigenous practices"—a view that relies on the idea of "a monolithic science that digests all practices into a single agenda" (159). Rather than a monolithic science, Tsing's text opposes the "parochially imagined rationality" that originates in Western Enlightenment thinking (vii). The point is that the dominant parochial conception of science and rationality—or what I have been calling the One way of knowing—must not lead to a dismissal of science and rationality per se.

This brings us to a discussion of how emergent alternatives, in the plural, to dominant knowledge are imagined.

Indigenous, traditional, and social-movement knowledges with agroecology and new ecological science

Jannok, as gestured towards above, centres Indigenous knowledge in an unassuming manner—a self-evidence that becomes an inversion of the way detached knowing and its preferred sciences are simply taken for granted in the texts and the aspects of the texts that give expression to a form of dominant-cultural conception of knowing. Jannok's lyrics express knowledge from the perspective of the Indigenous woman and community together with the land, as we have seen. This is further evident in her use of first-person narration, together with her expressive vocals on the record which are often in North Sámi and, when they are in Swedish, sung in a Northern Swedish accent; this creates a sense of the speaker's situatedness in and entanglement with the world she speaks

about. Thus, Jannok's texts should be understood as snippets of poetic autobiographical writing (as is the case with songs in many genres of popular music) and their way of knowing as resting entirely on the speaker's personal connectedness to the topics explored. Jannok also talks about Sámi cultural practices as part of the making of knowledge: the *doujar* (crafter) makes "braidings of truth" ("Čuđit") and the *noaidi* (shaman) speaks of decolonisation through yoiking in the album's final lyric-less yoik "Noaidi: Decolonizer."

Klein's text becomes aligned with this perspective on Indigenous knowledge when it proposes that Indigenous people can teach others how to live with land in a non-extractive way (370). Klein's text also stresses the traditional ecological knowledge of farmers who have "long realised" that there are alternatives to extractivist agriculture (134). A recurrent point in the text is that the perspectives or "stories" of land protection movements are important (9-10, 303), suggesting that social movements are sources of knowledge—something that could be construed as important in Robinson's novel too, where all the characters who articulate theories about capitalism and social change (Franklin, Charlotte, Jeff, Amelia) are engaged in building a movement to oppose regentrification. Tsing's text features similar knowers: it follows practices of knowledge production, as well as of worldmaking more generally, that are led mainly by people of colour, something emphasised by the introduction where the existence of people who do not conform to hegemonic Western rationality is presented as a starting point for Tsing's research project (vii). This is connected to Tsing's narrator-persona in the text, as she introduces these alternative knowers with the phrase "*our* riotous presence" (vii; emphasis added). In one instance, Tsing also ponders how other species are in fact knowers too, because all living things live by learning the landscape (50)—learning as in *getting to know* the world they cocreate, as we saw above. It is the Multitude (a multitude of ways of living as humans with land) and the Body-Land as knowers that emerge in all the above examples, and their knowledges arise in Indigenous and traditional cultures and in social movements.

Both Klein and Tsing portray these kinds of knowledges as related to forms of science. Klein's text discusses agroecology as an alternative framework for knowledge of land that amounts to "a combination of modern science and local knowledge" (134); and Tsing's text shows how "science and peasant knowledge" combine in work for forest regeneration in Japan (263). The conclusion in Tsing's text is that it is possible to combine "forms of mindfulness, myths, and tales, livelihood practices, archives, scientific reports, and experiments" without "bowing down to science" as a hegemonic form of knowledge (159). This is becoming easier to do, the argument continues, because sciences that diverge from the hegemonic imaginary of science in the master sciences are being developed. The text highlights "new developments in [the science of] ecology" (5; see also vii, 22), and new ideas in evolutionary theory with "the hologenome

theory of evolution” which states that it is not individual (selfish) genes or individual species that are the units of evolution but rather “the complex of organisms and their symbionts” (142). These new developments gesture towards “a science” where the “unit of analysis is the indeterminate encounter” (37); a science that is “site-specific, that is, attuned to indeterminate encounters and thus nonscalable” (221)—a science of relationality that asks with an open mind what is happening *right here* in convivial worldmaking and does not prioritise generalisability. The prospect of such a science becomes connected to Tsing’s narrator-persona, as she writes that “perhaps an anthropologist, trained in one of the few remaining sciences that values observation and description, might come in handy” (144). The umbrella term she uses for research in such manifold sciences is “Arts of Noticing” (18-25, 132, 255). A point made in the texts by Tsing and Robinson is that the making of knowledge in other ways and for other purposes than hegemonic ones may require alternative institutions: Tsing explains that the kind of research that her book advocates for is opposed by the commodification and privatisation of knowledge production (285), and Robinson imagines community knowledge production as self-organised and accessible for all in the form of, among other things, “free open universities” (209). Alternative sciences thus transcend the institutional structure of dominant modern capitalist culture and point towards the need and potential for the emergence of different kinds of social structures.

Fragments of the kinds of alternative sciences explored above are present in Sachs’s and Porritt’s texts too: in Sachs’s text, earth system science questions the economics-technoscience perspective on the Green Revolution (452), and in Porritt’s “agro-ecology” (164) and “agro-forestry” (165) as the sciences of alternative food production point towards relational knowing. What is more, there is a critique in Porritt’s text of dominant ideas about education and what gets to count as relevant knowledge (78-85, 165, 210-11, 214, 287)—interrogations of knowledge institutions that make up the most subversive strand of his text. These perspectives are in tension with the dominant conception of knowing in both texts and can be read either as calling into question the reliability of their arguments for the One way of knowing that is led by neoclassical economics, or as being safely contained within this dominant imaginary of knowing. What sets these two texts apart from the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, and Klein, in any case, is that the latter four offer much more fleshed-out alternative and possible emergent-cultural ways of knowing, which means a more explicit proposal about a need to choose between the dominant and the emergent—a proposal that is not easy to contain within the dominant imaginary (though it sits uneasily side by side with it in Klein’s and Robinson’s texts). An important part of this proposal is that reliable knowledge must not be equated with modern Western science and that the dominant imaginary’s monolithic

conception of science is misguided. We can understand this as a conflict between *scientism*, which fetishises a narrowly construed single Science (often related to hegemonic Western scientific practice and the neoclassical-economic conception of technoscience), and a *scientific pluralism*, which is open to many knowledge traditions across cultures and does not categorically dismiss ways of knowing that are more akin to the Romantic, to use the term I introduced in Chapter 3.

In what I have discussed so far in this chapter, we can see connections between the different knowledges and the ontologies or conceptions of human and nonhuman being that I analysed in the previous two chapters. In the texts by Jannok and Tsing, in one strand in Klein's text, and sometimes in Robinson's text too, knowing is tied up with and is an aspect of collective human and/or human-land worldmaking. The beings of knowledge or the knowers in these texts are aligned with the broader notion of being and worldmaking in ecological decolonisation: human knowers are Indigenous people, peasants, some farmers, and some scientists, all of whom know by merit of *being part of* what they know, and who are often depicted as knowing *with* the land. Hence, the actant that I have called the Relational Knower is the Multitude and the Body-Land, and their ways of knowing are alternatives to the norm of detached observation. In Sachs's and Porritt's texts and in strands in Klein's and Robinson's, knowing is of the same nature as the hyperseparated Self: detached. The most important characteristic of a knower according to this view is their ability to achieve a position of detached observation. The actant in question should thus be called the Detached Knower. They are characterised as Western, predominantly male, and successful within capitalist society, which means that they are aligned with the being who makes worlds in the sustainable capitalist development imaginary, White Bourgeois Man. The conception of the known world (made up of both human Others and land) makes it into a setting, not a fellow knower. The position of this kind of knower is associated with a hegemonic type of Western science construed as the One way of knowing.

Generally, when we consider conceptions of knowledge of and for a sustainable world, the texts can be divided—as I have just done—in the same way as in Chapters 5 and 6, with Sachs and Porritt constructing an imaginary of sustainable capitalist development, Tsing and Jannok one of ecological decolonisation, and Klein and Robinson constructing both imaginaries and oscillating between the two. However, there are more and larger exceptions to this simplification when it comes to knowledge than when it comes to being, it seems. One example is how environmental/climate science in Klein's and

Robinson's texts relies on detached observation but is less clearly positioned than the other examples of this way of knowing. There is also the fundamentally reformed educational system in Porritt's text and the questioning of the argument for industrial agriculture through earth-system science in Sachs's, both of which can be allowed to undermine the authority of the other detached observation sciences in the texts if the reader focuses on this. It is important to keep in mind that these exceptions are there, even as the analytical simplification allows us to pin-point and discuss an important difference between two distinct kinds of knowers and ways of knowing.

7.2 Forms of Expression: Signification from Measurement to Metaphors

In this second part of the chapter, I will continue to explore both a general distinction between two overarching ways of knowing and interesting details that add complexity to this distinction—complexities I then also return to in the final part of this chapter. In the following, I consider the forms of expression and signification that are proposed in the two imaginaries with their ways of knowing.

7.2.1 The One's Signification: Measurement and Signs that Are the World

In the previous part of the chapter, there were some clues about what scientism, or a monolithic Science as the One knowledge, privileges as the method for knowing: *measurement*, which is how the detached observer is able to oversee the whole. There were also clues about how measurement is rendered in signs, as we looked at graphs depicting a great acceleration; the graph is one of the *quantitative signs* that make up measurement's form of expression. I will now look at this in more detail and consider a peculiarity in the quantitative sign's truth claim in the scientism of the texts.

Measurement, through monetary quantification as signification

That measurement is of utmost importance and that the world can be known through it is something Sachs and Porritt express. In Sachs's text, a key question in defining economic development is, "How do we measure it?" (45). He does not discuss why this should be seen as an important question or whether measurement of the socio-economic world is feasible; it simply needs to be and can be quantified. In this sense, reliability understood as detachment—or external focalisation—relies on measurement as a self-evident form of signification. This is recurrent in Sachs's text: for instance, we are told that foreign aid needs to be "carefully monitored, assessed, and evaluated" (300); that

water management policy needs “measurement” (391); and that the management of resources like fisheries is about the calculation of their quantity (the number of or total weight of fish in a fishery) and the arrival at a figure for the “maximum sustainable yield” for a resource (466). The latter two examples illustrate that the importance and possibility of measurement is equally applicable to the ecological world, which is understood as part of the economic world as a pool of resources (not as actant but as setting, as I have been discussing). That something similar is going on in Porritt’s text can be gathered from the concept of “Nature’s Balance Sheet” (251)—ecology can be measured in the same way as the input and output of a commercial business—and in how he considers possible indexes based on measurement of human wellbeing (83, 207).

While strands of Klein’s and Robinson’s texts vocally oppose quantification, as I will soon show, there are also in these texts rather strong cases for measurement as yielding exceptionally good knowledge. In Klein’s text, this comes in the form of a claim about climate debt being more objective than calls for reparations for slavery and colonialism because “the science of climate change” is based on “evidence etched in coral and ice cores” and makes it possible to “accurately measure how much carbon we can collectively emit into the atmosphere and who has taken up what share of that budget” (415). What this in effect means is that the measurements of climate science can accurately quantify injustice—implicitly, in money—and are therefore a higher order of knowledge than the one entailed in critiques of slavery and colonialism. Robinson’s text also emphasises trust in the measurability of the world in the opening scene in the novel. The scene is a conversation between the characters Mutt and Jeff, where Jeff as one of the critical commentators on aspects of the storyworld, whose voice merges with that of the “citizen” narrator and of the third-person narrator, ponders how to make the “code” of finance accurately represent the full cost of production (3-7)—a potential of code to capture reality that becomes a particularly strong epistemological claim since Jeff connects his musings on finance’s code to how “life is coded, like with DNA” (3).

These perspectives all rely on the notion that it is possible to accurately depict the world through quantification. And they tend to talk of this quantification not primarily—or, in the case of some texts, not at all—in terms of natural-science mathematics but in terms of *monetary accounting*. That money underpins this trust in measurement is clear in other examples from all the four texts that I am discussing here.

Sachs, as an economist trained in a discipline where the focus is on the management of finances in nations and business alike, is not surprisingly the one who is the most enthused by the prospect of accounting for everything in monetary terms. His response to the question about how to measure development is that the best available, though not perfect, measure is GDP

growth (16-17). The text carefully details how to make measurement comparable across different national economies, introducing “GDP at purchasing power parity (PPP)” as “a common standard for comparing the GDP across countries” (15). What this concept means is that “statisticians have decided to use a common set of ‘international prices’ to sum up the production and consumption in each country,” which yields an “adjusted measure . . . [which] assures us that \$1 of GDP in every country, when measured at PPP (or international prices), has an equal purchasing power in terms of actual goods and services” (15). Sachs later explains with the following example:

Suppose that in one country the GDP per capita (converted to U.S. dollars at the market exchange rate) is \$6,000 per person, while in a second country the GDP per capita is \$3,000 per person. It might appear that the first country is twice as rich as the second. Yet if the average price level in the second country is also half of that in the first . . . , the actual living standards of the two countries would be comparable. (49)

He then goes on to explain that this is compared in GDP per capita at PPP calculated on the basis of local “prices for foodstuffs, rent, haircuts, movie tickets, legal fees, and the rest” (49). Although he also states that prices on “goods that are traded internationally” such as cars or TVs, for instance, are “fairly similar” all over the world (49), which suggests that purchasing power at local prices does not tell us everything but might overwrite differences in economic power, his conclusion is that the measure is reliable. In other words, it is possible to quantify all the different nuances of worldmaking across the globe and render them surveyable for a detached economist-observer.

That financial, monetary quantification is capable of accurately representing the world is also suggested in the texts by Robinson, Klein, and Porritt. Robinson’s character Franklin views finance in a way that aligns with Jeff’s view: talking about an index he has created to assess the financial value of the intertidal zone—an “algorithm” (120) based on a combination of the “evaluation” and “rating” of a number of processes and phenomena and “an amalgam of consumer confidence indexes” (121), all represented to Franklin on his computer screens (18, 70)—he states that “my index knew” things that in fact “no one knew” (120). The quantification overview of the algorithmic index is superior to other forms of knowledge. Although this perspective is also complicated by other ideas about monetary quantification, as I will soon consider, the possibility of such quantification is still strongly emphasised in the novel through the voices of Franklin and Jeff.¹²⁷ Unlike Robinson’s novel, Klein’s text does not overtly

¹²⁷ Recall that Jeff is one of the characters who most strongly criticises capitalism, not someone who represents capital and its worldview, which means that his perspective is about the relevance of a radical, unrelenting critique of the status quo. It is telling that a character representing an anti-

discuss money and quantification, but the possibility of monetary measurement underpins one of her most important points: that it would be “costly” to pay for global environmental justice—“hundreds of billions if not trillions of dollars” (5)—and that money needs to be redistributed and channelled into a green transition driven by the public sector (e.g. 39, 70, 108, 112, 119, 452). What this means is that she construes money as capable of representing the worldmaking that underpins a sustainable and socially just society. Like Klein, Porritt imagines schemes for paying for and investing in the transition (50-51, 77, 167, 259), thus implying that the transition can be accurately quantified in money. He also relates this to a brief exploration of a currency reform which would tweak the capacity of money to account for and organise sustainable worldmaking (133-34).¹²⁸

Although none of these four texts actually discusses the idea of money itself and the kind of money that dominates the world today, their thinking clearly relies *not just on general numerical but on monetary signification*. Money becomes a central sign in their scientism.

Quantitative signs that are (one with) the world

Money together with other forms of quantitative signification is further understood in a peculiar way in the texts’ scientism. The other signs are graphs (as also mentioned in the previous part of the chapter), charts, and statistical maps, all of which feature prominently in Sachs’s text in particular, but also, in the case of graphs and charts, in Porritt’s.¹²⁹ They are the signs of neoclassical economics, environmental science, and technoscience through which the reader gets a quick quantification-based overview—a form of external focalisation—of things like the world economy as a whole (Sachs 31) and issues to do with poverty/lack of income/uneven development and health (Sachs 31, 47, 48, 57, 58, 61, 63, 64, 113, 119, 120, 123-24, 126, 127, 131-32, 134, 135, 139, 237, 278, 280, 282-84; Porritt 35, 115); humanity’s economic development over thousands of years (Sachs 19, 22, 91, 111) and over the past few decades (Sachs 140, 163-64, 197-98); technological progress (Sachs 83, 272, 418, 495; Porritt 49, 239, 257); and global environmental issues and carbon emissions (Sachs 39, 187, 191-92, 194-95, 342, 344-46, 370, 401, 403-07 410-13, 444, 455, 457-58, 470-71; Porritt

capitalist outlook thinks about the world and about the making of sustainability through monetary accounting.

¹²⁸ The imagined reform does not change the nature of the monetary sign but simply gives different names to global and national currencies. The system’s new global currency becomes a substitution for the US dollar in the current real-world system.

¹²⁹ In addition to the examples mentioned in this paragraph, there are numerous others in both texts (see Sachs 53-54, 92, 97-98, 116, 146-48, 150-53, 160, 165-66, 169, 173, 238, 240, 242-43, 245-48, 253-56, 259, 261, 264-68, 270, 286, 293-95, 299-300, 308-15, 320, 322-23, 326-27, 329-31, 341, 348, 358, 360-61, 363-65, 368, 389, 416, 420-22, 426, 442, 453, 468, 473, 478; Porritt 43, 46, 58, 99, 179, 205, 207, 223, 229).

118-19, 153-54), including the causes of this such as population growth (Sachs 20, 122, 158, 199, 209, 211-12; Porritt 111) and general human resource use (Sachs 114, 201, 460, 462, 464-66; Porritt 155, 239). These are signs that embody the overseer's way of knowing—and the reader who understands these signs in the way stipulated by the texts also becomes an overseer by knowing through them. What is peculiar about money, graphs, charts, and statistical maps in the texts is that *their relation to the world is one of literalness*. By this I mean that they are presented through a form of naïve realism, meaning that these representations are proposed by the texts in question to literally correspond to and almost be what they represent.¹³⁰ Let me explain why they should be understood to work in this manner in the texts where they are important types of signs.

First, concerning money: that a kind of naïve realism is attached to monetary signification is clear in all the examples I have mentioned in this section so far. There is no discussion of *how* money represents aspects of the world or *how to understand* monetary signification as a way of knowing; instead, money is just assumed to provide a full picture of the known. Thus, for instance, when Sachs compares GDP at PPP or when Klein discusses the cost of transition, it is presupposed that the comparison or discussion is *about actual worldmaking*, not just about currency units employed in attempts to measure worldmaking. The lack of reflection about monetary signification as a form of signification leads to a naïve acceptance of the truth claims made through these signs.

Second, concerning the other quantitative signs—graphs, charts, and statistical maps—that I emphasise and have yet to discuss: how do we see that they are also presented in a naïve realist manner? An illustrative example is Sachs's statistical maps. For instance, he offers a complete overview of the “least developed countries” in Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and East Asia through a map with the areas in question marked in red (48). In connection to the map, he explains in the body text, in one paragraph of half a page, that being landlocked is a major hurdle to economic development. Later in Sachs's text, two other maps of the whole world add other development hurdles in order to better explain, to quote the title of the chapter in question, “why some countries developed while others stayed poor” (101): these hurdles are certain climate zones (116) and a high degree of malaria transmission (119). The presentation of these maps proposes that they make it possible to truly know what this part of the world—an area at least three times the size of Europe—is like. And it does so without outlining how the statistical data on the factors chosen has been

¹³⁰ Naïve realism is a term from epistemological philosophy which denotes the idea that human perceptions correspond exactly to what is perceived. A term that is sometimes used to denote its opposite is radical scepticism: the idea that human perceptions have little or no relation to a world that thus always eludes our attempts to know it. We encountered these terms in Chapter 3, where I discussed how the nature-endorsing ecocritic Nancy Easterlin (2012) suggests a pragmatic approach as an alternative to these two extreme epistemological positions.

arrived at or what the selection process was in considering which factors to measure and represent. The maps *simply know* Sub-Saharan Africa and Central and East Asia, effortlessly capturing the reality of the place. The presentation of the maps through this absence of discussion of what the maps do and do not show reveals a naïve trust in their capacity to capture the fullness of the referent. This is what makes it a form of naïve realism. And the same thing occurs in both Sachs's and Porritt's texts when there is no discussion of the generation of the data depicted in graphs and charts showing the three generalised global processes of economic development, technological progress, and environmental degradation.¹³¹ In terms of signification, the result of this naïve realism is that graphs, charts, and maps become cast not as constructed symbolic signs but as something like embodiments of the world, as if the depictions they offer were not depictions at all but peepholes to look through to an undistorted reality, or smaller-scale exact copies of that reality.¹³² Their naïve realism thereby also hides the details of the ways of knowing that have given rise to the quantifications represented. Rather than used as pedagogical tools that summarise and effectively communicate perspectives on the world, the charts, graphs, and maps

¹³¹ Data on economic development is an example where the shortcomings of the measurements actually become visible in Sachs's text (even though he does not conclude as much). A graph that sums up the *long durée* of development shows gross world product going back to the year 1 (22)—but the only graphs based on actual data are two based on World Bank data on poverty from the years 1981-2008 and 1981-2010 (141). The perspective of the *long durée* graph, with its assertive quantification of all economic activity over thousands of years, recurs when the text talks about modern wealth “compared with the preindustrial era” without citing any data (278; see also 67, 73, 27). In fact, Sachs only twice cites any sources about this at all, and they make the same kind of generalisation without support from historical data: one is Angus Maddison's construction of such *long durée* graphs (18-19) and the other is Keynes's conception of economic development (73). And this is where we come to Sachs's statement about the lack of data: concerning life expectancy as one indicator of development, Sachs points out that *there is no data to use in comparisons across historical periods*: “At the time of the Industrial Revolution, *life expectancy at birth* (LEB) was perhaps 35 years (there are no records to precisely establish a worldwide number, but this is a reasonable estimate)” (277-78; italics in original); a few sentences later, he talks instead of “LEB compared with the *preindustrial era*” (278; emphasis added), extending the estimate indefinitely back in time without commentary. In neither of these two cases does he explain *why* the estimate is reasonable or *how* it was arrived at. His trust in the estimate explains how he can construct a graph based on guesses about a long history of development together with recent quantifications like GDP growth. But for a less trusting reader, the mixing of data and estimates seems an odd statistical method.

¹³² This conception of representations as taking us to a direct experience of represented reality is also apparent in the pictures in Porritt's book—and there applied to thinking about the future. Many pictures in the text, as I have been discussing, feature digital drawings of clean tech gadgets—some wholly fictional and some existing in some form outside Porritt's storyworld—pasted onto photos of real-world environments. These images make the imagined future feel real and feasible, which is probably the intended effect. They are thereby offered as peepholes into that future and thus make up a sort of futuristic naïve realism: that future technological progress can be pictured in ways that look real means it can happen.

in the texts are there as part of a form of expression, an aesthetic, associated with scientific—or, more accurately, *scientistic*—reliability.

In sum, quantitative signs like money, graphs, charts, and maps are presented by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson in a naïve realist manner as literally corresponding to the world, rather than as symbolic signs selectively representing certain parts of or ideas of the world.

7.2.2 Looking for Other Significations: From Critiques of Quantification to Explorations of Metaphors and Double Meanings

Quantitative signification is by no means taken for granted by all the writers I am discussing: when we move into the ecological decolonisation imaginary, monetary code and other mathematical approaches to knowing appear as subjects of critique more than anything else, and the texts argue for and employ other forms of signification—albeit without agreeing about what such other significations should entail.

*The limits of quantitative signification*¹³³

Robinson, Klein, and Tsing all develop critiques of quantitative signification, both of the specific monetary type and of other varieties.

In Robinson's novel, Jeff (oddly in the same conversation where he also strongly supports quantification) states that money is merely "*thought of as value*" (emphasis added) and that this is what gives it power over what is truly of importance, like food, when the truth is that "you can't eat money" (3). This perspective is further developed in a fragment between chapters: in what is made to look like a dictionary entry, we learn that the term "fungibility" denotes the "tendency of everything to be completely interchangeable with money," and the entry seems to suggest that this is absurd as it ends by stating that "health, for instance" (a prerequisite for life) becomes something available only in exchange for money (204). Later in the text, a critical take on this returns as Charlotte considers money as "the universal solvent"—a way of knowing that supposedly

¹³³ I am here discussing critiques that very clearly oppose quantification. In the texts by Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson, there are also critical perspectives on some forms of quantification where the conclusion is nonetheless that quantification can work if it is tweaked somewhat. These defanged critiques do not fit within the ecological decolonisation imaginary's conception of knowing and are thus not discussed here. But an important thing to note is that Robinson's novel is, as on so many other topics, dubious in its critique of finance and money as representations of the world—his work was included in the previous section where I discussed trust in monetary signification, it is included in this section as containing a radical critique of the same, and there is also a middle position in the novel proposing that the quantifications of finance are good *if they are tweaked somewhat*. None of the three perspectives on financial quantification and monetary signification is authoritative in the text and the tension between them is unresolved. This tension is related to a kind of open-endedness in *New York 2140* that I will unpack below.

makes all things comparable—to have only “fake fungibility” (331). These examples form a critique of monetary signification in the sense that they question the capacity of money to stand in for, to accurately represent, everything—and in particular its capacity to represent the fullness of a good life. This perspective is further underlined by the evocative title of part four of the novel, “expensive or priceless” (210): this title indicates that price may not be an accurate way of understanding the world by suggestion that what is often thought of in terms of high quantitative value should perhaps instead be understood as lying *beyond* quantification. And one of Franklin’s musings on finance (in contrast to some of his other musings on the topic), supports this take too: Franklin explains how he created his index, which predicts how property value in the intertidal zone will develop, by *just randomly picking a quantification* among several alternatives offered by his company’s “quants” (people working with statistical and mathematical methods in finance); this, he concludes, is what makes finance “economics and not physics” (122).

An even clearer critique of monetary signification is present in Klein’s text. The text argues that Blockadia should oppose cost-benefit calculations about environmental action:

We will win by asserting that such calculations are morally monstrous, since they imply that there is an acceptable price for allowing entire countries to disappear, for leaving untold millions to die on parched land, for depriving today’s children of their right to live in a world teeming with the wonders and beauties of creation. (464)

This argument draws on Klein’s reports from movement frontlines, where she encounters land protectors who think beyond monetary measurement: she refers to a protest sign reading, “Our Way of Life Cannot Be Bought!” (340) and to activists who explain to her that “no amount of money can extinguish” their love for their home (342), and she concludes that “many of the people waging the fiercest anti-extraction battles are, at least by traditional measures, poor. But they are determined to defend a richness that our economy has not figured out how to count” (344). In the terms of Robinson’s novel, good and sustainable worldmaking is not expensive but priceless. A similar perspective underpins Tsing’s exploration of capitalism as a system based on monetary “translation” of bits of convivial worldmaking into capitalist value to make them into commodities that are intelligible to capitalism and thus available for exchange (8, 62-63, 119, 123-24)—in this, “capitalism is a system of commensuration” of values (133).

All these three texts also, in different ways, point out the limits of other forms of quantitative representation. Klein explains that Western countries measure emissions in a way that transfers the blame for climate change to China, India, and Brazil where products consumed in the West are produced (82), a critique which by implication means that statistical methods are problematised: they are

not by definition reliable but can be used to distort reality. Tsing talks about how ecology is more “complex and unpredictable than even our most powerful computers can model” (41), which leads to the conclusion that there are severe limits to “mathematical modelling” in ecological science (144). *The Mushroom at the End of the World* also more broadly opposes thinking geared towards “grasping the whole in an equation” (34) and “the completeness of classification” (243). Robinson’s “citizen” narrator would appear to comment on the same thing when stating that “life is more than algorithmic” (319). Ecology or life exceeds human attempts at quantification; it is more than what the quantitative sign is able to capture.

In the critique of quantitative signification, then, the texts by Robinson, Klein, and Tsing converge.¹³⁴ But when it comes to what the alternative forms of signification are and what it is that makes a form of signification subversive or part of emergent culture, there is no similar convergence among the texts—by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, and Klein—that contribute to the imagining of environmental justice as ecological decolonisation. I will now explore this by considering the details of how metaphors and double meanings are employed. As we will see, two things in particular stand out as alternatives to quantitative mathematical and monetary signification: Tsing and Jannok base their thinking in the poetic, multifaceted exploration of central *metaphors* (*matsutake* and *orda*); and relatedly, Robinson, Tsing, and Jannok play with overall textual structures and symbolisms that have *double, multiple, or open meanings*. In the following four sections, I compare these aspects of the texts by Tsing, Jannok, and Robinson, and also bring in examples from the texts by Sachs, Klein, and Porritt in relation to them.¹³⁵

Jannok’s orda and Tsing’s matsutake: metaphors with a literal dimension

A form of signification that organises Jannok’s and Tsing’s texts is the metaphor.

Jannok’s introduction to the album explores the meanings of the concept of *orda*, translated as tree line. The tree line is what the lyrics’ central actant and speaker of the lyrics, the Indigenous woman, crosses when she is “nomadically traveling between homes” (*ORDA*). This has a literal meaning as a depiction of the life of the protagonist who is part of the worldmaking of Sámi reindeer

¹³⁴ The reader may wonder why Jannok is missing from this analysis. The reason is simply that Jannok does not develop a critique of quantitative signification, and this might be because she draws on a cultural heritage that has been imperfectly subsumed by quantification or not subsumed by it at all—like the cultures of the frontline activists cited by Klein, perhaps.

¹³⁵ There are also a couple of references by Tsing and Robinson to alternative forms of economic signification, but these are not in focus in either of the texts: Tsing writes briefly of “gift economies” where currency is something other than the kind of money of capitalist commodity exchange (122); and Robinson’s intertidal commons is a place of “barter, alternative currencies, gift economies” (209), though the details of this are not explored in the novel.

livelihoods, where people move with the animals between winter and summer pastures.¹³⁶ But in the song “Tree Line: Orda,” *orda* is also depicted as a somewhat different literal line that is simultaneously a symbolic one: the line crossed in the Indigenous woman’s travelling between a place of traditional Sámi livelihoods with the land in the “north west,” and a place of urban “narrow city streets, narrow lights.” Hence, the stories told on the album about life between the two worlds that meet on the tree line are about three interconnected things: firstly, the concrete physical location of the tree line, where the worldmaking of tundra and woodlands mingle within Sámi culture; secondly, the symbolic borderland between cultures, where the worldmaking of Sápmi and Sweden mingle; and, thirdly, a physical line in the landscape as a borderland between cultures. Importantly, all three dimensions of *orda* are about *a place where two worlds are both divided from each other and become part of each other*—where we encounter both “cities and trees” as two worlds *and* “all that is in between” (*ORDA*). What is more, the connection in the lyrics between Sápmi and the worlds of those whom the Indigenous woman calls her “indigenous relatives around our mother” (*ORDA*; see also “We”) makes *orda* a concept for both specifically Sámi experiences of living in a borderland and more general Indigenous dittos. Through the connections to shared Indigenous experiences of convivial and confrontational worldmaking, *orda* becomes not just a metaphor but a synecdoche (the figure of speech where a part refers metaphorically to the whole): *orda* is an aspect of wider Indigenous conviviality and decolonial confrontation.

Tsing’s text is introduced with a personal story of mushroom picking: in times of difficulty, Tsing writes, “I go for a walk, and if I’m really lucky, I find mushrooms” which serve as a reminder that “there are still pleasures amidst the terrors of indeterminacy” (1; see also 14, 176). To look for mushrooms is a literal practice *and* a metaphor reminding you of possibilities for life in ruins. In fact, Tsing also writes that “commercial mushroom picking *exemplifies* the general condition of precarity” and of the making of life in ruins (109; emphasis added)—it is part of such possibilities. The matsutake and possibilities for life in capitalist ruins are intertwined; it is a literal example and it is used as a metaphor. Like Jannok’s *orda*, the matsutake and matsutake picking become synecdochic—matsutake worldmaking in ruins is part of broader worldmaking in ruins.

¹³⁶ For readers unfamiliar with the context of nomadic Sámi reindeer herding: for a long time, reindeer-owning communities moved with the reindeer between summer and winter pastures. Since the late twentieth century it has become difficult to maintain this mode of living—among other things due to reindeer migration routes being cut off by extractivist projects. Reindeer herding has instead become a “trade” that some Sámi people from reindeer-owning communities work in, but many members of the community join the herders during important parts of the work such as the marking of calves in the summer and the separation of the herd in the winter.

Both Jannok and Tsing thus base their texts on metaphors that *combine material and symbolic meanings*. *Orda* and matsutake are similar in this way. But there are also important differences between them. Exploring these can help us identify different approaches to metaphorical representation and the related practice of using double, multiple, or open meanings.

Different ways of using metaphor and symbolism; different forms of and roles for open-endedness

In trying to make sense of the meaning of the matsutake livelihoods she follows, Tsing's text looks at them from different angles. One point Tsing makes is that what is central to the mushroom picking scene in Oregon is the performance of "freedom," rather than the trading of mushrooms for money (75), and that it is only later that mushroom buyers "translate freedom trophies into trade" (80); the meaning of this is that pickers are not governed by capitalist valuation. A related point is that "because of high prices, matsutake make a substantial contribution to livelihood wherever they are picked, and even encourage cultural revitalizations" (4; see also 261), including revitalisation of Indigenous livelihoods and culture in the case of the Klamath tribe (197-99). Looking at the situation from another angle, however, Tsing contends that these alternatives are constantly translated into capitalist value in order to feed salvage accumulation (274). Thus, the text is ambivalent about the ways of living in and despite ruins that it finds: "On the one hand, I am full of admiration" for people who find ways to survive in ruins, Tsing writes, but "on the other hand, I can't help but worry when the scrap metal [that people sell to make a livelihood] will run out, and whether there will be enough other stuff in the ruins to make continuing survival possible" (131). The text is then both hopeful and sceptical about "pericapitalist" livelihoods, the different angles on the matsutake making the metaphorical and synecdochical meaning open-ended. Tsing explicitly states that this open-endedness is part of how her text subverts the hegemonic way of knowing (which I have termed detached observation science): there cannot be any "definitive untangling" of the subject matter that is worldmaking in ruins and the solution is to be in "the indeterminate experience of encounter" (52; see also 33).

Jannok does something slightly different in exploring doubleness on *ORDA*. The title song, "Tree Line: Orda," focuses on this. It expresses a weary uncertainty: "Double faces, double soul / Double landscape, double home / Life on tree line takes a lot"; "How to live this life, how to choose / What is day and night, what is true," and "where's my home" ("Tree Line"). But this is not the note it ends on: the mood transmutes into a plea for the resolve to somehow choose and "live before you're done, live for the sun." We can gain a better understanding of this combination of doubleness and choice by placing "Tree

Line: Orda” next to “Grieving: Oappáide.” In the latter song, the point of expressing grief is not to revel forever in hopelessness but to share feelings of both grief and yearning with the community, singing to the sisters (*oappáide* means “to the sisters”) in the “hope that we’ll always belong” and that the sisters will “keep strong.” Likewise, the point of expressing uncertainty in “Tree Line: Orda” is not to stay lost but to find a way to live nonetheless. Moreover, the move from doubleness to choice is important in the confrontational dimension of the album *ORDA*: there is a clarity in the songs and the aspects of songs that are the most confrontational, like “We Are Still Here: Mii Leat Das Áin,” “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness,” and “I Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti.” Their form of expression is explained in the introduction as one aspect of *orda*: it is *orda* as “definition,” “conflicts,” “sharp lines,” “distinct words leaving no room for interpretation”—“this is the clarity of the tree line” (*ORDA*). We find an example of this shift to confrontation from a more uncertain grieving mood in “Čuđit: Colonizer,” where the speaker explains that although she “could fill an ocean with all my tears,” she will “show no fear” to the plunderers. This distinctness, where convivial worldmaking is sharpened to a confrontational point, is a necessary thing in the borderland of colonial and decolonial cultures. *Orda* thus holds a doubleness and complexity but is not left open in an ambiguous manner—its meanings, including those that are about doubleness and uncertainty, are often explicated.

Let us summarise the differences between *orda* and *matsutake*. There is a clarity to *orda* as synecdoche and as metaphor infused with literalness: Sápmi’s *orda* is a smaller part of wider relational structures of conviviality and of its confrontation with consumption. *Matsutake*’s synecdochic and metaphoric meanings are instead ambiguous: *matsutake* as one example of contaminated (pericapitalist) conviviality perhaps tells a story of hope in and despite ruins and perhaps tells one of the hopeless ongoing spread of ruins through consumption.¹³⁷ To further understand the differences highlighted by this analysis between ways of using metaphors, it is instructive to bring in examples from Klein, Sachs, and Robinson too.

When it comes to ways of making symbolic meanings distinct, we find some interesting convergences and divergences among Jannok, Tsing, Klein, and Sachs. Jannok’s distinctness in metaphorical signification is actually more akin to how metaphors and similes are used in Klein’s text than in Tsing’s. Klein uses metaphors like “mother earth” (419-48) and “monster earth” (278-79), and similes such as one where the planetary situation is likened to that of the

¹³⁷ Tsing’s way of using metaphor could thus be described as *rhizomatic*—openly associative, with meanings popping up here and there without clear connection to each other but supposedly bound together nonetheless by the root fibres that are the rhizome—and suspected to be inspired by Deleuze and Guattari’s (1988) writings on rhizome and rhizomatic thinking.

overexploited island of Nauru (which also becomes a synecdoche as the causes of extractivism on Nauru are the same as the causes of planetary climate injustice) (161-69; for other examples, see 2, 419-48). When Klein uses these narrative techniques, the narrator *explains* them to the reader, for instance by stating that she realised she could not keep apart her learning about ecological crisis and her experiences from her own fertility crisis (423); she does not leave them open for the reader to interpret in different ways.¹³⁸ But Jannok's *orda* is at the same time more akin to Tsing's poetic exploration of a materially grounded metaphor than to the role metaphors have in Sachs's text. Sachs uses metaphor when he talks of the world as a pond hit by a rock that starts off ripples of development (87), or of how Japan "developed a wonderful metaphor" of a flying geese formation for how some countries lead economic development and others can follow in their slipstream (96); he uses simile when he talks of the world economy being like a body to diagnose and the sustainable development practitioner being like a doctor (7-8, 102-09). Although a flying geese formation is pictured in the book (97), this does not mean that the lives of geese are included in the story. The text uses geese to talk of something completely different (and in the same manner, there is no actual pond in the text). The beings used metaphorically by Sachs are unrelated to what the figures of speech are proposed to explain. Their function in the text is therefore, in one sense, detachedly instrumental and not relational (or, put in other terms, it is an arbitrary relation as opposed to a materially grounded one). In another sense, though, Sachs's metaphors rest on the assumption that animate beings like animals (geese, humans) and ecosystems (ponds) can be equated with processes occurring in social structures that are theorised by mainstream economics (like GDP growth in global capitalism), so that the metaphors by implication come to suggest a relation of equivalence between biological life and what Sachs's text terms "economic life." In this sense, the metaphors serve (though probably inadvertently) to naturalise a social process occurring in a specific kind of political system—capitalism. In contrast, Jannok, Tsing, and Klein all use metaphors and similes in a more profoundly relational manner, which is what makes them synecdochical: there is in their texts a *concrete material connection* between the literal and the symbolic meaning.

When it comes to the question of what functions open-ended symbolic meanings can have, it is relevant to consider the argument in Tsing's text that such signification is subversive in comparison with how such signification operates in Robinson's novel. As I have discussed in earlier chapters, Robinson's text, as well as Klein's, straddles the ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development imaginaries. The details of how the two imaginaries are

¹³⁸ In this, the use of both metaphor and simile in Klein's text makes the text more readable, accessible, and engaging by offering concrete and personal examples that paint a more vivid picture of the storyworld than abstract argument does.

given their place in Robinson's novel are interesting when we are talking about the politics of not-so-distinct symbolic meanings. On the level of the main plot, the novel proposes that the Keynesianism supported by several of its important characters has been successful in making the world more just and sustainable, and that it could be considered revolutionary—as I demonstrated in Chapters 5 and 6. But on an intricately constructed symbolic level, this meaning is subverted. Towards the end of the story, an old man from the novel's treasure-hunt subplot called Hexter says that everything has in fact *not* changed, because of "hegemony" (546). Although the novel's clearest narrative authorities, the third-person narrator and the "citizen" narrator, support Keynesianism as real change, a reader versed in literary history and theory might read Hexter's subversion of this authority as reliable because Hexter is as one of the most precarious characters in the story reminiscent of a Shakespearean truth-speaking fool. And Hexter's focalisation is given weight by a surreal symbolic scene near the end of the story, in which the top-one-percent financial capitalist Hector Ramirez floats away in a skyvillage, untouched by the supposed political changes of the storyworld (583). The names Hexter and Hector are remarkably similar, which seems to suggest that the two characters are consciously juxtaposed—this adds further emphasis to Hexter's critique. When the novel ends, a reader who has unpacked the symbolic meaning will not be sure of what to make of it all; the novel will leave them with a lingering uncertainty. But since the radical meaning requires more than a surface reading and since its clues are tucked away in a subplot, the Keynesian compromise stressed by the main plot will remain in focus for readers who either are less trained in literary interpretation or simply prefer the politics of the novel's surface meaning. While connected to the novel's most radical political position, Robinson's use of symbolic signification is a way not to emphasise this dimension but to make it *less* visible. In the light of how the construction of open-ended or ambiguous structures by means of symbolism (including metaphors) can be a way to *de-emphasise* subversive meanings, we might question the celebratory approach to such signification in Tsing's text.

Different ideas about forms of artistic expression

Finally, there is a related contrast in signification between some of the texts in arguments about and employment of forms of artistic expression.

Tsing's text makes a connection between the theme of open-endedness and the structure of the text, as her narrator-persona explains: "my experiment in form and my argument follow each other" (viii). Therefore, she further writes, the book is made up of "a riot of short chapters . . . like the flushes of mushrooms that come up after a rain," which makes it "an open-ended assemblage, not a logical machine" (viii). In this, the structure of the text imitates or draws on the way mushrooms grow, with the mushroom mycelium spreading out in large

networks of little threads that find tree roots to connect to and occasionally sprouting mushrooms above ground—a structure that might to someone observing mushrooms from above appear to be the outcome of the random actions of isolated individuals, but that is in fact an expression of interconnections in unseen assemblages. This structure is visible in the table of contents (v-vi), which reads like a poem and does not give you a clear overview of the whole text. For instance, the titles of short passages that are interspersed between chapters here form possible cut-up sentences, as there are three dots (...) before and after the titles of these texts: “Freedom ...” “... in translation” or “... in gaps and patches”; or perhaps the titles beginning with the dots connect to the chapter titles, making the sentences “After progress: salvage accumulation” “... in translation” and “Disturbed beginnings: unintentional design” “... in gaps and patches.” This choice of overall textual structure is motivated by a contention that the study and representation in writing of contaminated convivial worldmaking needs the multiple voices of musical “polyphony” where several melodies intertwine (viii, 24) and “a mosaic of . . . rhythms” (4)—like “singing a madrigal in which each singer’s melody courses in and out of the others” (34). The text contrasts this form to the “driving beat” of progress (21), implying that art with a driving beat, or with other kinds of repetition and symmetry, is part of the dominant way of knowing. In sum, Tsing’s form of storytelling is presented as being designed to mimic the structure of the assemblages that it studies, and the narrator proposes that it is therefore necessary to draw on forms of art that are convoluted rather than simple—a neat summary of the text’s general argument about open-ended signification as subversive.

Here as well, Jannok’s album has a contrasting approach to Tsing’s creative nonfiction. Important forms of artistic expression used on Jannok’s album are: repetitive melodies, both drawing on pop song form (with components like verse, chorus, and bridge) and on Sámi *yoik* with its short melodic cycles—including what is termed “power yoik” (*ORDA*) in the introduction to the album, which occurs in particular on “This Is My Land: Sápmi,” “We Are Still Here: Mii Leat Das Áin,” “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness,” and “I Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti”; steady drum beats, like the snare drum playing a march rhythm that opens “This Is My Land: Sápmi,” or the insistent electronic-sounding drums fusing with an overall rhythmical instrumentation on songs like “Snow Grouse: Ii Leat Ivdni Mus” and “We Are Still Here: Mii Least Das Áin”; and a similarly steady rhythm in vocals on tracks with a rap-inspired vocal style, like “Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness” and “I Ryggen på min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti.” When it comes to the lyrics, there is, as we have seen, also a steadiness, distinctness, and repetition, best exemplified by the recurrent phrase “we are still here” with its communication of a resolve to remain and to be seen. To repeat the phrase from Jannok’s introduction that I cited above: “this is the clarity of

the tree line” (*ORDA*)—a clarity that takes the reader or listener firmly by the hand and directs their interpretation.

The way Jannok’s album uses artistic expression in connection with this anti-colonial polemic is akin to how Klein’s text combines evocative metaphors and similes with an argumentative style prioritising clarity, as I outlined above. In using such signification, neither Jannok’s nor Klein’s text makes the kind of claim that Tsing’s makes about this style as tied up with a more associative and open-ended way of knowing compared to the dominant one. In relation to this point, we could note as well that both Jannok and Klein present examples of when popular-cultural artistic expression has a role in political contexts. Jannok embodies an example: in an announcement of a festival concert in the village of Gáresavvon/Karesuando in Swedish Sápmi, as part of *ORDA*’s “We Are Still Here” tour, Jannok connected her performance to an earlier one in the 1990s by the protest music profile and Cree songwriter Buffy Sainte-Marie on the same Gáresavvon hill (Jannok 2018). Klein mentions an example: she picks out as important how the Canadian-American songwriter and musician Neil Young has allied himself with Indigenous groups in opposition to the Alberta tar sands and toured Canada under the banner “Honour the Treaties” (383-84). Both of these are recent contributions to the protest and land protection tradition in music and art that was shown, in Chapters 2 and 3, to transcend the binary distinction between rationalist and Romantic movements and ways of knowing.¹³⁹

In connection to the contrast between the simple aspects of Jannok’s form of expression and Tsing’s prioritisation of complex form, it is also interesting to consider Porritt’s text with its use of science fiction-inspired narrative techniques. The design fiction *The World We Made* is an example of a text from an artistic or creative genre that prioritises clarity and simplicity. But its version of clarity and simplicity does not have much in common with Jannok’s. If Jannok moves between clear and open-ended forms of signification, Porritt’s text is wholly based on a kind of clear, simple prose that is best described as didactic. Of course,

¹³⁹ Speaking of Romanticism in the arts, it is also interesting that both Klein and Sachs refer to actual artistic expression from the Romantic period which reacted to industrialisation, and that the works they refer to are examples of diametrically opposed uses of a form of Romantic aesthetic. Klein’s text refers to “William Blake’s ‘dark Satanic Mills’ [that] blackened England’s skies” (157), drawing on the common interpretation of the line from Blake’s poem “Jerusalem” as referring to industrial factories. The rest of the poem depicts a green, living landscape, with which the blackness of the mills is juxtaposed. This way of understanding and depicting industrialisation stands in sharp contrast to a painting reproduced in Sachs’s book: Karl Eduard Biermann’s *Borsig-Maschinenbauanstalt zu Berlin* (77). Biermann depicts industrial factories in the same aesthetic as he uses in his landscape paintings: we see a lush industrial landscape enveloped in warm (perhaps transcendental) light, the black smoke rising from the chimneys mingling harmlessly with fluffy white clouds without dimming the sun. The factory is thus not juxtaposed with a healthy landscape but depicted as part of it. This means that very different imaginaries and political positions can converge aesthetically; their difference lies in the question of *what* is being depicted in this aesthetic.

as my discussion above suggests, something like a didactic dimension can be identified in Jannok's form of expression as well (in the text's exploration of confrontation in particular), but this dimension of the text *is complemented by explorations of complexities* of different kinds. What is more, Jannok's clarity is a form with a different content from Porritt's, and in this it comes closer to a didactic dimension of Klein's text than to Porritt's didacticism. Klein's text, as I discussed above when analysing the use of metaphors in different texts, is generally polemical and argumentative and rarely suggestively open-ended, and this could be considered a didactic rhetoric; this makes Klein's text similar to Porritt's. But in Klein's text, this form of expression is most often about anti-capitalist and anti-colonial *confrontational clarity*, whereas it is in Porritt's text connected instead to the communication of the Detached Knower's scientific knowledge about competitive white bourgeois male worldmaking.

A further thing to note in considering Jannok's contribution to this movement in music and art, though, is that the use of repetitive artistic form on her album is not only connected to polemical clarity and performance of confrontation, but to uncertainty, grief, and the need for emotional comfort too. Examples are the *yoik* that returns as a chorus on "Grieving: Oappáide," the final lyric-less *yoik* "Noadi: Decolonizer" where the same short melody with some variations constitutes the whole track, and the sharing of certain feelings with the convivial community that I mentioned earlier. It thus seems that the repetitive forms of expression of pop songs and *yoik* can be used to talk of and support both confrontation and conviviality; that such forms can engage with many different themes, in both distinct and open ways. The *yoik*'s and the pop song's repetitive, cyclical structure can be about a polemical insistence on confrontational clarity and about an open journey with melodies and lyrics that allow you to live out feelings of loss, grief, uncertainty, hope, and more.

In short, creative, artistic expression can work with clarity as well as with doubleness or open-endedness, and its uses are not wholly determined by, although sometimes in complex ways related to, the details of its formal characteristics.

A summary of the different uses of metaphors, open and distinct signification, and artistic expression in the texts

What the above discussion of metaphors, open-endedness and distinctness, and artistic expression has shown is that subversive emergent culture is not based on just *any* metaphors and *any* forms of open signification as alternatives to the One quantitative signification, because it is possible to use these forms in different ways and as part of different politics. Jannok, Tsing, and Klein employ different kinds of metaphors from Sachs, and Jannok and Klein a different kind of distinctness in metaphorical meaning from him. Jannok employs a different kind

of double meaning to Tsing and Robinson—and, unlike them, combines it with distinctness too. The questions we need to ask to understand this are not simply about *whether* metaphors or open signification are used, but about *what* metaphors are used and *in what ways*? *About what* does open signification express uncertainty and *what purpose does this serve* in a text (or other form of communication)? Is metaphorical or open signification the only form used, or is it *combined with other forms of signification* (like distinctness), and if so *how and to what effect*? Such questions suggest that, just like there is not just one alternative to the One knowing of scientism, there is not one but a multitude of forms of signification to explore in the making of emergent decolonial culture—from the simple to the complex, from the distinct to the open, from the argumentative and polemical to the poetic and evocative. Concerning forms of expression and signification, one might say that the devil is in the detail, and god as well (to draw on the idiom that predates the one about the devil).

7.3 Emergent Ways of Knowing and Forms of Expression: A Discussion from the Perspective of Ecological Decolonisation

To close this chapter, I will discuss the ways of knowing and forms of expression and signification we have encountered by relating aspects of them to similar perspectives from the literatures on ecological politics, (eco-)political philosophy, and the politics of cultural expression. This will allow us to identify some strands of dominant and emergent imaginaries that the texts build on or reiterate. The discussion approaches the topic through a focus on potentially emergent culture—within the perspective of ecological decolonisation as the decolonial end of the spectrum of WENA environmental justice imaginaries—and considers the dominant in relation to this. I focus on how sciences and arts, rationalities and Romanticisms, and *logos and mythos* intersect in emergent and dominant ways of knowing. These last two terms, logos and mythos, originate from a mid-twentieth-century conception of Ancient Greek philosophy as gradually developing from the latter to the former: from ways of knowing the world based on heroic tales of gods and other supernatural powers to ones based on reasoned thought about the world's natural constitution.¹⁴⁰ These two terms are ones I have not yet employed, and I introduce them here to capture something that occurs in the interpretations earlier in this chapter: the juxtaposition of rationality and magic or myth.

¹⁴⁰ For an introduction to the discussion in philosophy of this conception of Ancient Greek philosophy, which was first proposed by the German philosopher Wilhelm Nestle, see Fowler (2011).

7.3.1 Relational Rationality with a Basis in Experience

The major contributions to a conception of knowledge that can be positioned within an imaginary of ecological decolonisation come from Jannok, Tsing, and Klein, and some contributions also come from Robinson. These four texts all outline what could be termed a *relational rationality*, which is about systematic conscientious inquiry but where this is based not on detachment but on engagement with and a relation to the known, much like Boaventura de Sousa Santos (2018) suggests that what he calls “the epistemologies of the South” are about “knowing-with rather than knowing-about” (147).¹⁴¹ Such relational knowing is understood in ecological decolonisation not as irrational or as an obstacle to knowledge production but as a hallmark of good knowledge, something that echoes Cornelius Castoriadis’s (1987) political philosophy. Castoriadis explicates experience of something as a logical condition for knowledge of it, so that “this is not some ‘fault’ in our vision, it *is* vision” (40; italics in original); it is not possible to know something that you are not part of, because that something will be so alien to you as to be unintelligible or even impossible to see. This kind of epistemological theory and its expression in the relational rationality of the texts aligns with what Donna Haraway (1988) has termed “situated knowledge.” Relational rationality does what Haraway argues for with this concept: it situates itself in relation to the known and as part of the known, instead of performing what Haraway calls the “god trick” (589), or what I have called detachment—a detachment that Haraway argues is always feigned, never achieved, and thus only hides the position from which the Detached Knower views the world. This resonates with the approach that underpins political ecology as defined by Paul Robbins (2012) (in a quotation the reader

¹⁴¹ Relational rationality is not an established term in any research field, but it has been used by some social scientists in studies of human interactions. I propose this concept of relational rationality based on the findings from the analysis in this chapter and not based on any previous usage. Thus, the concept as I use it is not related to what has been studied by a few other researchers who have used “relational” as a modifier to rationality. Two examples are a study of business negotiation (Hofstede et al. 2019) and a study of how children respond to questions in interviews (Aronsson and Hundeide 2002). Both refer to a kind of contextual assessment of what is rational in specific relationships: Hofstede and colleagues (2019) are concerned with how certain “actions are rational from the perspective of the social world in which the actor lives, with interpersonal relationships weighing heavily” (850), and Aronsson and Hundeide (2002) discuss how, “within a relational rationality, meaning making is built on *alignments* and loyalties . . . rather than on facts alone” (176; emphasis added). In this usage, that something is *relationally* rational means that it is rational from the point of view of a person in specific situation. This could be construed as a contextual type of rationality. In contrast, what I propose by specifying that it is a *relational* form of rationality that we encounter in emergent ways of knowing in the texts is that rationality, regardless of any specific contextual conditions, becomes defined as based on the knower’s entanglement with the known. It is not a limited contextual matter of defining the conditions for how people make choices about how to act, but of a general epistemological argument about the conditions for knowledge.

may recall from Chapter 1): because all knowledge of ecological issues is political, it is more appropriate to assume “a normative approach rather than one that claims the objectivity of disinterest” (13).

This approach finds expression in the way first-person narration is used in the texts by Jannok, Tsing, and Klein. The Relational Knower’s use of “I” narration is about situatedness, about the reliability of the narration as residing in the narrator’s experience of and relation to the known. This stands in contrast to the first-person narration in Sachs’s text, which, as I have demonstrated, partakes of the text’s argument for and performance of detached observation; the first-person narrator-persona is construed as capable of external focalisation—as a Detached Knower—through its characterisation as an economist capable of overseeing and diagnosing a world set apart from the knower. This detachedness is a depoliticised perspective of the kind criticised by Robinson, or, to speak with Haraway, it performs the “god trick” and masks its situatedness. There is a related contrast between forms of narration in the texts by Jannok and Tsing, on the one hand, and Sachs and Porritt, on the other, when it comes to the use of “we.” The former two use a specific situated “we” narration, where the *we* refers to the community of Relational Knowers (made up of, among others, Indigenous women, queer people, and people of colour), whereas the latter two use a general human “we” mode that would seem to speak for everyone in a universalising manner while, at the same time, it also becomes associated with Western (capitalist) masculinity. Finally, the explicitly political, situated approach also finds expression in how Jannok’s and Tsing’s texts interpellate the reader as someone who needs to feel for and relate to the themes discussed, and not approach them—as the reader is encouraged to do by Sachs—as a distanced observer. Thus, the texts by Jannok and Tsing perform relational ways of knowing in their forms of expression and encourage the reader to partake of such ways of knowing too.

Relational rationality is elaborated in specific ways when it comes to knowledge for political environmental justice struggle. One dimension of this is about what I have been referring to as confrontation. Relational rationality develops a critical analysis of dominant knowing with its One knower and One signification, and this can be seen as an example of what Santos (2018) calls “confrontational knowledges” (297) or, in work done together with Maria Paula Meneses (Santos and Meneses 2020), “knowledges born in the struggle”—knowledges produced because of the necessity of confronting the forces of consumption in the protection of a convivial world. This critical perspective is developed in particular in the analysis of dominant knowledge and its role in supporting capitalist accumulation in Tsing’s text, but it is gestured towards as well when Robinson and Klein refer to movements as knowers. Another dimension of knowledge for environmental justice struggles is about how to

know the entity that is to be protected in a relational manner. The earth is known not as a pale blue dot viewed from a distance (as we see the planet in a common environmentalist image that Klein's text problematises). Instead, the earth that movements are protecting is a being that the movements and their human actants are part of, as body-land; this knowing is a matter, to recall a phrase used by Tsing, of *getting to know* the land as a fellow being and companion and not of merely *having knowledge of it* as a thing set apart from the human. We could connect this aspect of relational rationality to Deborah Bird Rose's (2011) environmental ethics. Rose builds on the philosopher Emmanuel Levinas's idea that the face-to-face meeting with the human Other is the basis for ethics, if you allow the meeting to show you that the Other is both human like you and a different person (12-13, 15, 29-41), and proposes that this is applicable to ethics across species difference too. Her ethics builds particularly on the encounter between the human and the dingo (the wild Australian dog) who look into each other's eyes, whereupon the human experiences both difference and sameness in that look (69; on encounters with dingoes, see also 5, 62-64, 138-39).

At the same time, relational rationality is not a matter of complete immersion in such experience, because complete immersion would take away the rational dimension—meaning the erasure of the kinds of explanations, arguments, and analyses of what makes convivial, confrontational, and consumptive relations that are important in the texts by Jannok and Klein and that also occur in Tsing's text when it focuses on critical analysis of capitalism. To understand this quality of relational rationality, we can turn again to Castoriadis (1987) and his concept of "elucidation." With this concept, Castoriadis seeks to understand what we might term reliability or objectivity or simply truth as a matter not of absolute knowledge through detachment but of critical self-reflexivity: elucidation is about producing knowledge which "knows itself as [situated in and part of society and history]," as this "can enable it to be lucid about itself" (3). Thus, "elucidation is the labour by means of which individuals attempt to think about what they do and to know what they think." A term often used for this type of philosophy and political theory is *critical theory*. Relational rationality can then be thought of as a form of *critical rationality*. The critical perspectives offered by the texts that imagine ecological decolonisation often have something of this quality.

The material further suggests a potential for some Western sciences—such as ecological science and climate science—to be part of this type of rationality. But there is an important caveat, which takes shape when we consider Klein's commendation of climate science as more objective than other knowledges in struggles for social justice, and which Santos (2018) can help us understand: "modern science can be a useful tool in the struggles against oppression" if it is dethroned from its position as Truth (in the singular with a capital T) and instead integrated into what he calls "the ecologies of knowledges" (45). This is the

position Western sciences have in the strands of the texts, including Klein's, that elaborate ways of knowing within an ecological decolonisation imaginary.

Searching for relational forms of expression

Concerning signification in connection to knowing in the ecological decolonisation imaginary, there is agreement among the texts that construct such an imaginary about the need to transcend the hegemony of instrumental rationality's regime of quantification. A call for such an approach is at the centre of Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre's (2001) theorisation of Romanticism as a form of thought that, since the Romantic Movement and onwards, has gone "against the tide of modernity": opposing the dominance of exchange value and quantitative monetary relations (20) and constructing a "critique of the quantification of life in (bourgeois) industrial society" (96). This is a way of knowing focused on how there is something more than what instrumental rationality can know and the quantitative sign can denote; that life is incommensurate to economic calculations. When it comes to what the alternatives to the hegemonic form of expression and signification can be, though, the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, and Klein point in different directions. It is clear that they all transcend a conventional distinction between what I have been calling the Romantic and the rational, since they all combine artistic, creative forms of expression with elements of critical theory and, except in the case of Tsing, clear confrontational political communication, but beyond this they reveal different preferences: Tsing's style and argument for a form of expression lean towards the convoluted and intricate, whereas Jannok's and Klein's texts at least in part lean towards clarity and simplicity. These two perspectives are part of movements and theories in art, and a way to get a better understanding of them is to contextualise them.

Tsing's preference for polyphony and dismissal of steady beats leads one to think of highbrow art and the distinction between such culture and popular or mass culture. A similar view was articulated by Theodor Adorno ([1945] 1996) in the Frankfurt School debates over socialist art that I mentioned in Chapter 2. Adorno argued for a complex modernist aesthetics, thought to challenge the reader or listener through its form, and against popular jazz music, described as predictable, standardised, and repetitive with a straightforward emotional appeal. Tsing could also be understood to draw on a tradition of experimental academic writing that builds in part on Frankfurt School theoreticians, even though she does not explicitly argue with it. In the 1980s, as Marcus and Fischer (1999) explain, many anthropologists began to critically interrogate the Eurocentric assumptions that had long been the foundation for their discipline, and they were interested in experimenting stylistically and developing new kinds of anthropological texts as part of the project of challenging anthropology's

problematic heritage (xix-xx, xxxii, 137). Marcus and Fischer relate how the Frankfurt School and, later, expressionism, postmodernism, and poststructuralism influenced anthropologists who sought to transform their discipline (17-44). One thing emphasised by (aspects of) all these academic and artistic tendencies is creative innovation of forms of expression. Tsing's exploration of socially and ecologically inclusive posthumanist anthropological writing can be seen as recalling in particular the poststructuralist notion that a text should embody its argument in its style or that its style *is* its argument.¹⁴² Her choice of the mushroom with its mycelium as the guiding metaphor can also be related to poststructuralism, due to the similarities between this metaphor and the concept of *rhizome* developed by Gille Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1988) (something I mentioned in a footnote above as well). This stylistic-philosophical heritage from poststructuralism is something Tsing shares with other contemporary academics working in fields and theories that are related to or similar to posthumanist anthropology, from Tsing's PhD tutor Donna Haraway's (2016) posthumanist and feminist science and technology studies, to the new materialism of theorists like Karen Barad (2007), Jane Bennett (2010), and Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann (2012) to Timothy Morton's (2010, 2013, 2017) new materialism-like ontological philosophy. Both Morton (2007) and Oppermann (2011) were in fact poststructuralists before becoming part of these more recent theoretical developments. This branch of theory makes strong claims about the connections between form of expression, ontological outlook, and political positionality, as we saw in Chapter 3.

Jannok's and Klein's choices to work with or emphasise popular music and protest/protection music as part of emergent culture suggests something different from Tsing's style and argument about style. Jannok's and Klein's texts exemplify—rather than argue in the abstract, as Tsing's does—that popular-cultural forms with directness and a predictable, repetitive structure (though, as we see in Jannok's songs, containing some kinds of complexities and doubleness as well) are part of subversive movements. Jannok shows this by being part of a music movement; Klein shows it by giving an example from such a movement. This brings our attention to the context and history of politicised popular music; what Klein's and Jannok's examples show is that there is a continuity from the protest music era of the 60s and 70s (that I mentioned in Chapter 2) to the protest and land protection music of today. Klein brings up Neil Young, who was an important figure in that movement and who has continued to be a

¹⁴² This is Jacques Derrida's famous performative argument in "Structure, Sign, and Play in the Discourse of the Human Sciences" (1970): he performs the way *différance* is, according to his argument, the source of all meaning in language and argues that this kind of play with the theorised limits of language is the best way to stretch the possibilities of what can be thought, as it is not possible to think outside language.

politicised and confrontational songwriter and touring artist all the way up to his most recent releases.¹⁴³ The same continuity is apparent in how Jannok continues the work of earlier Sámi and other Indigenous songwriters and musicians. This is visible in her form of expression, which carries on the work of her role-model Sámi musicians and artists Nils-Aslak Valkeapää (Áillohaš) and Mari Boine (see Chapter 2) in combining Indigenous Sámi and Western cultural influences and reflecting aspects of Sámi border living, including the need for a confrontational politics of anti-colonial land protection. It is also visible in her connection to Buffy Sainte-Marie, who was just like Neil Young an influential voice in North American and international protest music culture with popular songs like “Now that the Buffalo’s Gone” ([1964] 2006a) and “Universal Soldier” ([1964] 2006b), the latter becoming one of the biggest protest music hits in a cover version by the Scottish singer-songwriter Donovan ([1965] 2006).¹⁴⁴ Jannok’s and Klein’s examples thus illustrate something Santos (2018) has found in research on knowledges born in the struggle: that many forms of expression constitute such knowledges, including stories and songs (59). While such knowledges certainly question the dominant imaginary with its political ideas, its conception of being, and its norms about what counts as valid knowledge, the examples from Jannok and Klein show that the question of form of expression might not in such knowledges be given the same kind of emphasis as in some experimental art and academic theory.

As we have been seeing, an important way that what could be termed relational rational-Romantic forms of expression find representation in the texts is in the use of metaphors. But it is a question of *what kinds* of metaphors and *how exactly* they are used. One aspect of this is how there is a concrete relation between the metaphorical and literal dimensions of Jannok’s, Tsing’s, and Klein’s metaphors. This is similar to something Andreas Malm (2017) explores in an analysis of fiction about climate change: *material allegory* (129). Malm interprets a story where refugees hiding in a tanker die from overheating as a material allegory for the unequal impact of climate change on different groups of people. What he identifies is a concrete relation between the levels of meaning in his interpretation of the text—the allegory is not arbitrary but relational. Jannok’s, Tsing’s, and Klein’s texts all construct material metaphors in this manner, and this can be

¹⁴³ There are more examples of how Neil Young does this from after the publication of Klein’s book. Two that stand out are the albums *The Monsanto Years* (2015), about the environmental and social devastation caused by the GMO giant Monsanto, and *World Record* (2022), about climate change.

¹⁴⁴ It is interesting to note that Sainte-Marie still has ties to Sámi activism and art, recently contributing a blurb for one of the first Anglophone books about Sámi political movements and their (artist-)activists (Kuhn 2020). This should be seen as one indication of international Indigenous movement connections and of how artistic expression is part of forging such connections.

contrasted to Sachs's arbitrary use of beings as metaphors. However, there are also two different types of material metaphors in the texts: the meaning of Tsing's matsutake is diffuse and open and Tsing's text jumps back and forth between levels of meaning in combining the literal and the metaphorical dimensions of matsutake, whereas Jannok's *orda* (like Klein's similes and metaphors too) is chiselled out conscientiously, with levels of meaning systematically explored.

7.3.2 In Opposition to Dominant Culture's Scientism and its Limited Rationality

As gestured towards in the above, emergent ways of knowing are articulated in part through a critique of the dominant way of knowing in the sustainable capitalist development imaginary, wherein we encounter the Detached Knower and the One quantitative signification. This critique is important in the articulation of what we could call a theory of rationalities. Let us look at it more closely.

Something important that the critical perspective reveals is that it is specifically the position of the actant I have been calling White Bourgeois Man that is masked and taken to be universal through the god trick of detached knowing (which is what is happening in Sachs's and Porritt's texts), so that the ideal of detachment becomes connected to Eurocentrism—in line with how the coloniality of knowledge has long been articulated, as we saw in Chapters 1 and 4. The ideal of knowing through detachment can thus be related to the concept from Val Plumwood's (1993) ecofeminism that I have been using to delineate how being is imagined in dominant colonial culture: *hyperseparation*. But the critique of this does not become anti-scientific in any simplified sense, as is apparent in all the texts that construct an imaginary of ecological decolonisation, and as Tsing articulates with particular lucidity. To use Tsing's terminology, the critique opposes *a parochially imagined rationality*, not an abstract monolithic science strawman. Similar forms of critique have been articulated for a long time in critical theory, often calling what they oppose *instrumental rationality*—a prominent example is Horkheimer and Adorno's *Dialectic of Enlightenment* ([1947] 1997). In environmental philosophy, a variety of this critique that resonates with the texts I have analysed can be found in Plumwood's thinking. Plumwood (2002) interrogates common assumptions about environmental ethics in Western environmental thought and opposes the often-proposed choice between instrumentalist thinking and the detached appreciation of nature “in itself,” the latter frequently becoming anti-rational. Demonstrating why this is a false choice, Plumwood argues for a third alternative: a relational ethics connected to a better, more rational rationality that she calls “ecological rationality.” In delineating this form of rationality, she argues for a dialogical, not a monological and

hyperseparated, mode of knowing which is “more, not less rational” than hegemonic reason (14) because it is “a fully self-critical form of reason” (8)—“a better, more democratic and communicative form of scientific rationality” (44-45). The idea that other rationalities, beyond White Bourgeois Man’s dominant one, are possible is implied in the texts’ positioning of Indigenous and traditional knowledges as entwined with modern science in agroecology, some forest knowledge, and so on: these knowledges are of the same kind, not radically distinct.¹⁴⁵

The critique is then not directed at rationality per se, but at how *certain sciences are employed in the production of environmental injustices*. This is the case, for example, when Klein and Tsing criticise the detached nature conservation perspective where the earth is viewed from a distance—a perspective that Sachs, Porritt, and Robinson (and, when emphasising climate science’s planetary objectivity, Klein too) express and embody. This type of critique where ideas about conservation are analysed as racist is common in political ecology: Byron Caminero-Santangelo (2014) explains that the field problematises how mainstream conservationism assumes that African land can and must be saved by detached outsiders implementing “effective Western conservation practices based on politically neutral knowledge”—something that justifies dispossession (24). The often hidden political agenda of detached knowing is also targeted when the role of economics is considered in Klein’s and Tsing’s texts. There is a similarity between this and the critique that was levelled at structural adjustment programmes in Africa by feminist Marxist thinkers like The Midnight Notes Collective and Silvia Federici (also one of the collective’s members): these critiques showed that economic arguments by institutions like the World Bank for “rationalization” of agriculture and land use served to dispossess local African communities of their land (Federici 2019, 35-36).

A closely related critical perspective is present in Tsing’s, Klein’s, and Robinson’s consideration of economic commensurability and monetary measurement. They have this perspective in common with ecological economics, a discipline that has emerged partly as a response to the hegemony of commensurability in mainstream neoclassical economics, and which asserts the fundamental *incommensurability* of different values and the impossibility of achieving perfect monetary accounting (see e.g. Guha and Martínez Alier 1997, 23). It is also reminiscent of work in economic anthropology, where the idea of commensuration is connected to the form of signification known as general-purpose money or standardised currency, “a portable, arbitrarily valued medium of exchange” that can be used in exchange for almost anything (O’Neil 2012,

¹⁴⁵ This possibility of the entanglement of Indigenous knowledge and academic scientific knowledge echoes the botanist Robin Wall Kimmerer’s argument and explorations in *Braiding Sweetgrass: Indigenous Wisdom, Scientific Knowledge, and the Teachings of Plants* (2013).

n.p.). David Graeber's (2014) comprehensive study of historical forms of currency and debt and their connections to ways of organising social relations demonstrates that the rise of this kind of currency means that money for the first time comes to be understood to exactly correspond to what it represents (130, 144, 145-46). This sets such money apart from what he calls "social currencies," which are never thought to perfectly represent what they refer to (158). What this shows is that commensurability as the measuring of everything according to the same standard is intimately connected to an epistemological literalism in relation to symbolic signification: general-purpose money structuring what Graeber calls relations of exchange posits a sign-signified relation where sign = signified, in contrast to how social currencies understand the relation as sign < signified.¹⁴⁶ And the texts I have analysed interestingly also display this kind of literalism in their conception of graphs, charts, and statistical maps—both money and other quantitative, statistical signs are approached through naïve realism. We can find a phrase that captures this epistemological peculiarity if we turn to Jean Baudrillard ([1983] 2005): the scientific sign is *the map that is the territory*—a map that corresponds exactly to what it represents. In Baudrillard's essay (and in the story by Borges that it draws on), there can be no such map because it would end up being the same scale as the territory and thus useless as a map. But in the kind of knowledge system that I am referring to as scientism, such signs can exist.

Lastly, there is one more important target of the critique of dominant rationality: the notion of (techno-)scientific progress. It is a critique developed by Klein and Tsing and directed at a type of knowledge present in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson. Klein's and Tsing's critiques are not very detailed, but they gesture towards a connection or alliance between dominant Western technoscience and economics. The relation is seen more clearly in the celebration of technological progress in the texts that construct a sustainable capitalist development imaginary: they base their knowing of progress not on detailed technoscientific explanation but within the worldview of neoclassical economics. This is a tendency that has been observed and analysed in research on varieties of environmental politics. Jonas Anshelm and Martin Hultman's (2015) study shows that mainstream, capitalist thinking on sustainability is characterised by "a heavy reliance on technology while detailed descriptions are, paradoxically, notably absent" (9). That thinkers who stress technological solutions to environmental issues substitute explication of technoscientific detail with economic thinking is apparent in Dryzek's (1997) discussion of Promethean

¹⁴⁶ Graeber's (2014) discussion particularly revolves around the fact that exchange economies make it possible, for the first time, to exchange a human life for something else. He shows that the "move from $A = A$ (one life equals another) to $A = B$ (one life = one hundred cloths" was only possible "because the equation was established at the point of a spear" (144)—a spear used to tear people from their social relations and sell them as slaves (128-29)

economists who argued that markets will solve environmental issues through technological progress if left to self-regulate. A foundational assumption in their thinking, Dryzek explains, is that *price is a measure of scarcity*, meaning that sinking prices on a resource indicate that supply exceeds demand and that there is therefore enough of that resource to satisfy the need for it (47). Dryzek also shows that Prometheans—much like Sachs—claim to measure improvement over time in “indicators of human wellbeing such as life expectancy, food supply per capita, amount of arable land, air and water quality, amount of parkland, forest cover, and fish catch” (48). This brings us back to scientism’s naïve realism about quantitative monetary and statistical signification. The knowers who use such methods and forms of signification are, as David Graeber proposes (2014), “rational calculating machines” (78)—a characterisation of the human as *homo economicus* that does not suggest a rigorous and critical scientific approach but a limited one which excludes the contributions that could be made by a noncomputational human intelligence.

What all this suggests is that the limited or parochial rationality that is dominated by economic thinking about progress and economic calculations should perhaps not even be termed rational. Again, Plumwood (2002) provides an illuminating analysis. She calls this dominant form of rationality “rationalist rationality” (18) or “arrogant and insensitive forms of” reason (5), and argues that it “is irrational, despite its hyper-rational trappings” (16), because “it is maladapted to the environment it depends on” (18).

In opposition to the mythos of the dominant form of rationality

This brings us to another form of interrogation of the sustainable capitalist development imaginary’s conception of knowing: one that focuses not on its version of rationality or logos but on its mythos. Such an interrogation gets its clearest expression in Klein’s comments about dominant-cultural and myths about the past and magical thinking about economic growth and techno-fixes. This echoes earlier critiques. Löwy and Sayre (2001) discuss one from the Romantic period: John Ruskin’s identification of “mammonism” as “the true religion of the English” and this religion as the root of egotistical, calculating *homo economicus* as the dominant way of being human (138). More recently, Graeber (2014) has explored the dominant-cultural conception of money as based on a myth about the past, and more specifically on the origins of money: he discusses the “myth of barter” from classical and neoclassical economics as “the founding myth of our contemporary civilization” (395), a myth that naturalises capitalist markets or more broadly what he calls exchange

economies.¹⁴⁷ An additional recent critique of dominant environmental thinking's mythos is Hornborg's (2016) theory of "global magic," which brings together an analysis of the belief in money with one of the belief in technology. The concept of global magic summarises his analysis of technofetishism and money fetishism. His argument, as I have related, is that industrial technologies are understood in current dominant culture as bounded objects and not as contingent on the wider field of relations that they are part of. The conclusion Hornborg draws from this is that the power that globalised technologies derive from land and labour through the way economic relations are structured in the world system comes to be seen as inhering in technology itself, and that the economic growth and profits that these technologies are entwined with come to be seen as local phenomena with no relation to impoverishment elsewhere. Such fetishism should thus be construed not just as part of a dominant ontological outlook but as part of a dominant epistemology too, and one characterised by a magical belief in technology's autonomous agency and money's capacity to grow. Such knowing is what is performed in the texts and the parts of texts by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson that centre neoclassical economics and its conception of technoscience (which means that Klein features *both* a critique of magical thinking about money and technology *and* a performance of this very type of thinking).

In short, the critique of the mythos of dominant culture suggests that the root of instrumental rationality is not rational at all, but rather myth-like.

7.3.3 Rationalities and Romanticisms Together

So what does this mean for an understanding of the often proposed contrast between rational and Romantic knowing and expression? We have seen that neither science nor art, rationality nor Romanticism, logos nor mythos is by definition part of either dominant colonial or emergent decolonial culture. Focusing on the emergent ways of knowing and forms of expression of ecological decolonisation, it is evident that they are always about making good, reliable, adequate knowledge for convivial worldmaking and the kind of political

¹⁴⁷ The myth of barter, according to Graeber (2014, 22-28, 34-36), is the story told by Adam Smith, among others, of how markets for exchange of commodities supposedly predated the kind of money they are based on, so that people had to resort to inconvenient barter trade—until money was invented and solved all their problems. The issue with this story, Graeber explains, is that it is not supported by empirical research: there was no land of barter, because what predated market economies based on standardised currency were not pseudo-market economies just waiting for the invention of money, but different kinds of gift economies based on social currencies—currencies that do not work through the exact equivalence of exchange but through the construction of complex social relations of mutual interdependence. Thus, the myth of barter posits the type of economic behaviour that became dominant with the advent of standardised currency not as based on such currency but as part of an innate social logic which makes the invention and adoption of standardised currency a natural step in social development.

change that is imagined through confrontation—both when logos-sciences-rationalisms and mythos-arts-Romanticisms are centred. And turning to dominant ways of knowing and forms of expression in sustainable capitalist development, we can assert that they entail forms of both logos-sciences-rationalisms and mythos-arts-Romanticisms too. There is thus no either/or choice between these as two radically opposed ways of knowing. This is not a new insight: for instance, Löwy and Sayre (2001) show that there is both more than one Enlightenment and more than one Romanticism, that the Enlightenment-Romanticism “relation has always been variable and complex,” and that some forms of Romanticism in the nineteenth-century Romantic Movement are best understood as radicalisations of Enlightenment social critique (55-56).

What my analysis shows is that the choice instead stands between, on the one hand, forms of *relational* rationality and Romanticism, and, on the other hand, *detached instrumental* rationality and Romanticism. The devils and gods in the details reside in the relational/detached contrast, not in the rationality/Romanticism one. Or to put it another way, the alternative to the One way of knowing of scientism is *manifold*, comprised of forms of science and forms of art together. Perhaps we can understand the way of knowing that is entailed in Jannok’s concept of *orda* as one example of how to do this. As knowledge, *orda* is about and comes from the borderland between cultures; it is what Gloria Anzaldúa ([1987] 2012) has termed border thinking, a kind of thinking that does not derive from outside of dominant culture but that emerges on its borders by drawing on influences from both sides of the border and from the experience of how the cultures of the border both co-constitute each other and are in conflict. Jannok’s border thinking does not depict a choice between the cultures and worlds on the two sides of the tree line but instead suggests a choice between different imaginaries of what the borderland can be—a world of conviviality across cultures or a world where one culture consumes the other. In the border thinking of *orda*, from which the hegemony of the One detached knowing of scientism is expelled, relational rationalities and relational Romanticisms of different cultural origins can develop together into the ways of knowing that contribute to an imaginary of ecological decolonisation.

We have seen in this chapter that there are dominant colonial and emergent decolonial conceptions of knowing that align with the conceptions of being I identified in the two previous chapters. My division of the WENA imaginaries of environmental justice that emerge in the texts into the two overarching imaginaries of sustainable capitalist development and ecological decolonisation

is thus relevant also when we consider the coloniality/decoloniality of knowledge, and the texts are positioned in the same way relative to each other when it comes to how they imagine both sustainable worlds (as discussed in Chapters 5-6) and knowledge of and for the making of such worlds. In the next and final chapter of this thesis, I will delve into the implications of the findings from the present chapter and the previous two chapters for the political-academic theories and debates in political ecology and the environmental humanities that were introduced in Part I—and consider as well how writer-activists working in connection with social movements might draw inspiration from this work. What are the most important academic-political takeaways from this study?

PART III

8. From Developmentalism to Decoloniality: Takeaways on Present and Future Environmental Justice Imaginaries

From a mountainside, a group of activists are watching a corporate chief communications officer walk off. They are unsettled and uncertain, yet resolved. The distance between them and the CCO increases, and in the end the man gets in one of a number of big black cars parked along the dirt road. In a futile effort, he tries to scrape off some of the mud staining his black leather shoes. Then the car takes off, and the CCO watches the activists from his tinted black window. He feels he probably won the argument, and regardless it was a good photo op. The chunky gravel pops and crackles under the tires as the cars slowly progress towards the motorway and the coastal town with the airport from where the people in the cars will go back south. They have bars and drinks and families to return to. But the others are staying on the mountainside for the time being; most of them live nearby, and many are from the local Indigenous community. Watching the black caravan snaking down the road, they wonder if their story will be told in a fair way when it has been chopped up and shortened into a two-minute clip for the media; they wonder if they can win the argument—and if winning the argument will stop the mine. In the meantime, regardless, they will keep doing what they do: live with the lands around the mountain. They will have their discussions about how to care for the land and the water and their disagreements about how to share them, and their conflicts over how to use and think and feel about tools that come from industries elsewhere. Some of them will leave the cause because it is too radical, others because it is too meek. Some might even move down south. These are difficult choices. But somehow, some people will still remain with the land. What happens next is yet to be decided: whose world will be made on that mountain?

This scene could take place in so many locations across Western Europe and North America, and likewise in other parts of the world. The confrontation it depicts between two worldmaking projects is happening wherever forms of extractivism said to be part of the creation of a sustainable and socially inclusive society come into conflict with people protecting other ways of living with a place. It shows us how important it is when discussing environmental justice to consider what worlds get to be made, what worlds might be wrecked in the process, and who gets to decide this.

I have in this thesis approached this topic by analysing how Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs imagine sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them, and what the environmental justice implications are of this—as I put it in my first two research questions. These questions have got their response in the three chapters of Part II, through an ecopolitical narratological analysis of the texts’ conceptions of worldmaking and worldwrecking actants and their related conceptions of knowers and knowledge and embodiment of these conceptions in their forms of expression. This is a form of political narratology in Mieke Bal’s (2004) sense, as it does not focus solely on the surface political positioning or messaging of texts but unpacks how the ways in which being and knowledge are imagined carries political meaning. The results can be briefly summarised through a reiteration of the distinction between two overarching imaginaries of environmental justice, one anti-capitalist and one pro-capitalist, one emergent or resurgent and one dominant: *ecological decolonisation* and *sustainable capitalist development*. The distinction between these two imaginaries is an analytical one—a simplification for the sake of clarity—whereas real-world examples of people and their expression of ideas are rarely such ideal types. Thus, the distinction cuts through the texts I have analysed, with most of them containing a tension between imaginaries—something that is particularly pronounced in Klein’s and Robinson’s texts. The simplification into ideal types is present in the scene that I opened Chapter 1 with too, and to an extent also in the above scene (although some complications are added) which follows after the one from the introduction. Although the confrontation between forms of worldmaking will not always be so clear-cut, this does not discredit the analytical simplification; on the contrary, the very point of the simplification is to help identify an important line of conflict that does not easily manifest itself unless we employ such analytical categories.

Beyond this brief summary of the results from the study, I will not in the following reiterate all of the details of my findings in the analytical chapters; the richness of the results is best engaged with in the kind of discussion that I undertake in the chapters themselves. The three chapters in Part II (5-7) drew explicit conclusions about the first two research questions: How are sustainable worlds and knowledge of and for them imagined in the texts by Sofia Jannok, Anna Tsing, Kim Stanley Robinson, Naomi Klein, Jonathon Porritt, and Jeffrey Sachs? What are the environmental justice implications of these texts’ imagined worlds and knowledges? In this chapter, I will bring out some of the important takeaways that the textual analyses offer concerning the specific aspects of imaginaries of environmental justice that were introduced in Chapter 3. These were to do with, on the one hand, political concepts in and around environmental justice and, on the other hand, the role of ontologies and epistemologies in environmental (justice) politics. All three of my research questions are actualised

in the following discussion, as they have been throughout this thesis. In this chapter, though, I the most explicitly engage with the third one which I have yet to begin to summarise answers to (any tentative conclusions about the third question were left hanging in the air in Part II): How can the results from the analysis inform theories on politics, ontology, and epistemology in political ecology and the environmental humanities?

This discussion of the third research question takes up the first and largest part of this chapter. After this follows a more speculative type of concluding discussion in the second part of the chapter. There I turn to some movements and imaginaries that have been emerging in the years since the 2010s and consider them through the insights from my research. And finally, I build on ecopolitical narratological method and on my earlier analyses and discussions to point towards some paths that future environmental justice writer-activism might explore in the imagining of ecological-decolonial worldmaking and knowing.

I would emphasise that the discussion of this, as well as the discussions in connection to the first two research questions in Part II, should be understood to be considering how the textual analyses that I have undertaken can be of *relevance and interest* for academics and writer-activists with an orientation towards environmental justice. The results of this kind of qualitative, text-based study are not necessarily generalisable, because such a study primarily forwards an understanding of the texts in question and their imaginaries; my study neither gives an exhaustive account of the imaginaries of environmental justice that were present in WENA in the 2010s, nor offers insights about how texts and imaginaries like the ones analysed here were (and are still) approached in social movements.¹⁴⁸ Thus, the conclusions I draw in this chapter are to do with what political ecology and the environmental humanities (with theories like cultural materialism, decolonial feminism, and ecofeminism), as well as environmental justice writer-activists, can learn from these specific examples.

8.1 Environmental Justice Imaginaries in WENA in the 2010s: A Concluding Discussion

I divide the following discussion of the third research question into two parts, one on political concepts and one on ontology and epistemology, and in this reiterate the structure of Chapters 2 and 3. As the reader will notice, there is a lot of overlap between the two parts of the discussion, but for clarity it is nonetheless helpful to keep them separate.

¹⁴⁸ As shown in Chapter 1, however, many of the writers have connections to social movements, which makes it likely that these texts have some influence among activists—though the degree and details of any such influence have not been explored.

8.1.1 On Political Concepts Within and Around Environmental Justice

In the material I have analysed, we can see the kind of tension between ways of understanding environmental justice that was identified in the previous research surveyed in Chapter 3: imaginaries of environmental justice from WENA in the 2010s range between anti-capitalist decolonisation and reformed capitalism. This should be taken to mean two things. First, that what is proposed in the previous research holds up to careful empirical scrutiny through the analysis of imaginaries. And second, that the combination of the findings from my study with the previous research strongly suggests that this tension has been an important characteristic of WENA environmental justice imaginaries in recent years. What I discuss in the following can therefore be of relevance not just for an understanding of the six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs, but also to an extent for an understanding of WENA environmental justice imaginaries more broadly.

I have so far been referring to the tension as one between *ecological decolonisation* and *sustainable capitalist development*. I will now elaborate on this by characterising the two ends of the spectrum of imaginaries as *decolonial* or *not-in-anyone's-backyard-ist* (NLABYist) and *developmentalist*. The political concepts within environmental and climate justice movements and imaginaries that have been in focus in the study—forms of anti-capitalism, social democracy and Keynesianism, sustainable development and similar reformisms—will be related to this tension, and their political positionality will be considered.

Environmental justice between NLABYist decoloniality and developmentalism

The imaginary that I have been calling ecological decolonisation is based on the notion of a break with the status quo in dominant culture, as opposed to a gradual improvement within the dominant form of worldmaking. This is apparent in the term decolonisation, as mentioned in Chapter 5: the *de-* prefix signals precisely this break, this move away from and in no way continuation of the dominant. This uncompromising nature of ecological decolonisation is perhaps best summed up in Klein's insistence that Blockadia struggles for there to be *no sacrifice zones, neither here nor elsewhere*, and not just for a redistribution of the devastation of extractivism, as we saw in Chapter 5. Klein's suggestion is that this outlook is what defines an anti-extractivist movement of movements. And recent research on decolonial forms of environmental justice has proposed the same thing, in fact: a group of environmental justice scholars have argued that environmental justice is emerging as a movement of movements and that in this it is moving from NIMBYism—a "Not in My Backyard" politics—to NIABYism—"Not in Anyone's Backyard" (Akbulut et al. 2019, 2). Leah Temper (2019) connects this tendency to Indigenous land protection movements specifically: such movements, including the Wet'suwet'en First Nation's opposi-

tion to pipeline construction that Temper focuses on, tend to challenge not just individual projects of resource extraction but capitalist society itself, going beyond a NIMBY approach so that specific Indigenous resistances are also seen as solidarity actions with all other communities that are affected by a mode of extraction (101).¹⁴⁹ Temper and others (see also Akbulut et al. 2019) understand the obstacles that mainstream conceptions of justice pose for such movements as a matter of “the coloniality of justice”—an interpretation of justice not as change away from a socio-ecologically harmful system but as a relative redistribution of its harm. In short, *NLABYist*, *decolonial* movements define environmental justice as the struggle for good ways of living based on the idea that no land or water should be sacrificed—and by implication that all decisions about how to live with land and water need to be made by the people who would feel the adverse effects of unsustainable practices.

In contrast, what I have been calling sustainable capitalist development is based on the extension into the future of the same kind of capitalist development that has been dominant over the past few hundred years, just with some minor tweaks like a more socially just distribution of capitalist consumption and a more moderate form of environmental devastation. Its notion of justice is precisely the colonial one that Temper has identified. This imaginary of maintained capitalist development with some tweaks can be understood as an environmentalist expression of a broader imaginary that has been termed *developmentalism*. As explained by Leandro Vergara-Camus and Cristóbal Kay (2017) in a discussion of Latin American left-wing government policy and practice, a core characteristic of developmentalism is “the idea . . . that it is necessary to have growth before redistribution” (430), meaning that a good life for all can only be achieved *after Western-style capitalist development has first occurred*. The implication is that all other worldmaking projects by definition yield too little to go around; that poverty is the order of the day in any time and place outside of what is imagined as the most recent modern, industrial, capitalist stage in the evolution of society away from prehistorical poverty—a stagist imaginary that we saw expressed the most clearly in Sachs’s text. According to Fikret Adaman and Bengi Akbulut (2021), who discuss the Turkish autocrat Erdoğan’s combination of authoritarianism, populism, and developmentalism, the function of developmentalism’s promise and to some extent realisation of a certain form and imaginary of prosperity is to stabilise power relations by generating a consensus in society for capital-state power and its agenda. The stabilising function of developmentalism in social and environmental terms together has further been theorised by Kathleen McAfee

¹⁴⁹ This could be understood as a longer historical tendency too: Brett Clark (2002) shows how the Indigenous environmental movement in the US is not solely about saving individual sites from environmental harm but that it also forms a more synthetic “direct challenge to the operation of the capitalist society as a whole” (422).

(1999) in a prescient analysis of what has recently been labelled “payment for ecosystem services.” She proposes the concept of “green developmentalism” and suggests that it “reflects efforts by relatively far-sighted capitalist actors to overcome barriers to accumulation” that arise due to the degradation of the environment and of workers’ health (134). Thus, the function of developmentalism is not actually to build better lives for all people, and that of its green variety is not to make such projects good for both people and land together; it serves rather to make possible the ongoing exploitation of labour and land and thus make accumulation sustainable over a longer period of time. Or, in McAfee’s words: “By providing a rationalization for the pursuit of green goals without reversal of the long-term net transfer of financial and material resources from the global ‘South’ to the ‘North’ and from rural to urban areas nearly everywhere, green developmentalism reinforces environmental injustice on a world scale” (McAfee 1999, 135).¹⁵⁰

From a decolonial perspective, one could construe the distinction between decolonial NIABYist and developmentalist imaginaries as a distinction between *cosmetic* and *radical (or rooted)* appeals to social justice and environmental sustainability.¹⁵¹ To return to the scene with the land and water protector and the mining corporation CCO that opened Chapter 1, we could understand the CCO’s talk about fossil-free tech and fair mining as a cosmetic appeal to justice and sustainability that rationalises a form of worldmaking that needs sacrifice zones and that depicts justice as the somewhat more equal distribution of pollution (though probably not in the first instance its redistribution to the backyards of corporate heads and other members of societal elites). The land and water protector, however, does not see this form of worldmaking as a necessary foundation for a good life but thinks of it as undermining, or wrecking, an alternative worldmaking project of people and land together where no sacrifice zones are needed. These are the two extreme positions that can arise in the contestation of what environmental justice means—although actual thinkers, like the writers of the six I have been engaging with in this thesis, frequently give

¹⁵⁰ Similarly, Vergara-Camus and Kay’s (2017) conclusion about the developmentalism of left-wing governments in Latin America is that its effect has been, contrary to what is often the stated agenda, an enforcement of the power of agribusiness and its bourgeoisie, alongside an increased differentiation among peasants leading to difficulties for broad-based coalitions. This should be understood as an observation of the same logic at play as that discussed by theorisations of the imperial mode of living: it yields a consensus between some workers and capital and thus stabilises capitalist society.

¹⁵¹ Within a dominant-cultural colonial perspective, what I am calling cosmetic need not be understood as such or done with the kind of greenwashing intention that my choice of term implies, but may also be the expression of a profound belief that large-scale extractive projects combined with minor incremental societal changes form the path to an environmentally sustainable and socially just world. But the point of my distinction here is that the *outcome* of this kind of politics is the same regardless of the intention.

voice to versions of both and are difficult to position so clearly. Real-world examples are, in other words, often messier than the scene with the CCO and land and water protector, but the line of conflict between the two ends of a spectrum of environmental justice imaginaries is nonetheless indubitable.

It is through my combination of cultural materialism, decolonial ecofeminism, and econarratology that I have been able to identify and analyse the tension between the two ends of this spectrum. First, on a foundational level, the analytical distinction between dominant colonial and emergent decolonial culture, made by cultural materialism together with decolonial theory, helps to direct our attention to important differences between the texts and their imaginaries—even while we should keep in mind that these are differences that cut through individual texts and that the analytical distinction points to a spectrum rather than to two polar opposite camps.¹⁵² Second, the details of these political differences were possible to tease out by means of my ecopolitical narratological analysis of actants and actant relations as part of worldmaking and worldwrecking forces, which was informed by theoretical concepts from decolonial ecofeminism on the imagining of human and nonhuman being.

The relation between the decoloniality/developmentalism and North/South distinctions in environmental justice

The tension that I have identified between two imaginaries of environmental justice has in some research been connected to a distinction between Northern and Southern environmental justice. Temper (2019) notes that decolonial environmental justice has been little explored in the Global North, whereas scholars based in Latin America have done more work in this vein (96). This is apparent, she suggests, in the mismatch between the common Northern environmental justice framework, where justice means a NIMBYist relative improvement of some people's environmental health, and the more far-reaching aims of the kind of Indigenous land protection movement that she discusses. And if we look at other research that analyses imperialist dimensions of social movements, it seems that this problem with Northern conceptions of the intersections of sustainability and justice is widespread.

Scholars focusing on the imperial mode of living (the capital-labour deal which has created a relatively materially privileged white working class in mainly the Global North) indicate that many social movements such as labour unions in the North, even those concerned with “a just transition,” remain committed to the maintenance of the material privilege of the part of the global working class that

¹⁵² As will be discussed below, the concepts from cultural materialism that this distinction is based on are also complicated by the results of the study, signalling a need for the cultural materialist terminology to be altered somewhat. In this alteration, the general distinction between the dominant and some form of counterhegemony is still maintained, however.

they organise (Brand and Wissen 2017, 158; Eversberg 2019, 234). In other words, such social movements remain within the dominant imaginary of environmental justice as a matter of sustainable capitalist development. Theorists of the imperial mode of living therefore propose that some social movements can in fact contribute to the continuation of environmental harm and social injustice, as the worldmaking agenda of such movements is underpinned by “production and consumption patterns that fundamentally rely on unlimited access to resources, space, labour power and sinks, which implies a globally unequal appropriation of nature” (Brand and Wissen 2013, 698-99). This theorisation of the imperial mode of living’s social and environmental effects draws on the concepts of ecologically unequal exchange and environmental load displacement, which denote processes whereby natural resources and the products of labour are concentrated in the privileged North while environmentally harmful industry, cheapened and often dangerous labour, and waste are displaced to the South (Hornborg 2013, 2016; Warlenius 2016, 2017; Scott, Gellert, and Dahms 2019a; Dorninger et al. 2021).¹⁵³ While one might expect an explicitly colonialist politics to have such consequences, the fact is then that even social movements with a stated devotion to environmental sustainability and social justice can in practice end up supporting a form of NIMBYism, where the worst effects of capitalist production and consumption are displaced to the South—a NIMBYism which at the end of the day serves to preserve the unsustainable and unjust worldmaking of the status quo.

At the same time as this North/South division is prominent, the material from WENA that I have analysed (and the scene set somewhere in WENA with the CCO and the land and water protector that is based on my research) displays the same tension that is associated with the North/South distinction; clearly, this tension also exists *within* a part of the Global North. This is in fact what Temper’s (2019) study shows: the land protection movement she discusses contests the common Northern conception of environmental justice as relative redistribution of harm. There is also research that shows that environmental injustices are shifted onto local and Indigenous communities in similar ways in *both* Western Europe (the example is Sápmi) *and* the Global South (the examples are Mauritius and Peru) (Rambaree, Báld, and Backlund Rambaree 2022). A telling example is

¹⁵³ The roots of this kind of research are to be found in Marxist dependency theory, which analysed capitalism as an imperial project where development in centres actively created underdevelopment in peripheries. The Guyanese academic and activist Walter Rodney famously developed this hypothesis in *How Europe Underdeveloped Africa* ([1972] 2018). World-systems theory and ecologically unequal exchange researchers like Emmanuel Wallerstein, Samir Amin, Stephen G. Bunker, and Arrighi Emmanuel (see Scott, Gellert, and Dahms 2019b, 1) have further elaborated the analytical framework from dependency theory. Wallerstein’s distinction between cores, peripheries, and semi-peripheries with differentiated roles in the whole of the world system (e.g. Wallerstein 1974, 1980, 1989, 2011) is influential in current world-systems theory.

how in Sweden in 2012, 12 out of 16 active mines were located in Sápmi, and these 12 stood for 98.5% of the mineral value produced in Sweden; the proportions are similar when it comes to proposed new mines—something that is leading to increasing protests from Sámi groups against mining (Lawrence and Åhrén 2016, 181). What this tells us is that we need to understand environmental load displacement and ecologically unequal exchange both as matters of Northern imperialist capitalism on a world-system scale, and as matters of internal colonialism within nations or regions in the North and the South alike.¹⁵⁴ This requires from decolonial theory that it does not, as some thinkers tend to do (e.g. Mignolo 2000, xxvi-xxvii, 22, 33), treat Northern regions like Europe as homogeneous locations of dominant colonial culture, because this overwrites the existence of emergent culture in the North and may thereby contribute to its ongoing marginalisation.¹⁵⁵ Discussions of decolonial NIABYist and developmentalist imaginaries of environmental justice need to pay attention, therefore, to how there is—in a phrase attributed to Ramón Grosfoguel that I mentioned in Chapter 1—*a North in the South and a South in the North*.

So what does this mean for definitions of the political concepts in and around environmental justice that I introduced in Chapter 3, and for the question raised there about the positioning of these concepts relative to each other? As the reader may recall, these concepts were *anti-capitalism* and *decoloniality*, *social democracy*, and reformisms like *sustainable development*—the latter two being potential expressions of coloniality but also potentially part of or allied to anti-capitalist, decolonial movements.

¹⁵⁴ It would be instructive to study forms of internal colonialism in the North and South in comparison. To take but a few examples that I have personally come into contact with: when I co-organised a workshop with Rap Battles for Social Justice in Montreal in the mid-2010s and described the colonial relationship between the south and north of Sweden, a Sudanese-Canadian activist said it was strikingly similar to the north/south conflict in Sudan (which had then already led to the independence of South Sudan). I have also had discussions with Italians about the north/south division in Italy and with Eastern and Southern Europeans about the east/west and south/north divisions in Europe. To better understand twenty-first century imperialism and environmental injustice, work should be done to connect these kinds of internal colonialism to world-system scale North/South imperialism.

¹⁵⁵ Likewise, one should not imagine a simplistic, essentialised antithesis to the West as infallible; instead, it is better to focus on the power across the globe of what Quijano calls Eurocentrism—“the cognitive perspective not of Europeans only, but of the Eurocentered world, of those educated under the hegemony of world capitalism” (Lugones 2007, 191).

On the concept of anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice

My analysis of the texts, in particular through details from the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Klein, and Robinson, offers suggestions for what it can mean to imagine environmental justice as anti-capitalist and decolonial (or as ecological decolonisation). I mentioned above that NIABYism is proposed as an important characteristic of such an imaginary. I will now add two details to this characterisation.

An important finding in my analysis is to do with the combination of relational structures in the ecological decolonisation imaginary. Environmental justice understood in this manner *combines relations of conviviality* within the community of humans and land as the foundation of worldmaking, *relations of confrontation* whereby this community opposes the forces that would wreck its world, *and a critical perspective on relations of consumption* that entail capitalist, colonial, patriarchal power's devouring of the convivial world. As we saw in the discussions in Part II, the four texts that construct this kind of imaginary do not all elaborate to the same extent on all three relational structures, however—and, as we saw as well, there are some differences between their narrations of the relational structure of confrontation. Tsing's text does not emphasise confrontation whereas Jannok's, Klein's, and Robinson's texts do. And Jannok's text, on the one hand, and Tsing's, Klein's, and Robinson's texts, on the other, characterise the worldwrecking antagonist of consumption in different and complementary ways. Jannok's characterisation emphasises the antagonist's colonial traits and offers the most in-depth account of this dimension of the actant I have been calling White Bourgeois Man; Robinson's characterisation instead primarily focuses on the antagonist's capitalist traits; and Tsing's and Klein's texts more clearly than the other two connect colonial/imperialist power to capitalism. What this means is that an imaginary of ecological decolonisation is not constructed in exactly the same way in all these four texts, and that this imaginary as I have summarised it rather emerges from *a reading of these four texts together*.

To return to the combination of relational structures within this imaginary, this combination means that environmental justice movements are defined not only through their confrontational act of land protection but also through *what it is they protect*, namely ways of living as humans with land that revolve around what I have been calling conviviality and that could also be termed mutual aid (following the ideal forms of social and ecological relations in the thinking of someone like the anarchist Pyotr Kropotkin) or care (to relate to the feminist tradition). At the same time, no matter how fundamental conviviality is, it cannot be the sole characteristic of anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice, as the prospects for convivial life hinge on the active protection of conviviality through confrontation. The importance of confrontation can be understood as a reaction to a tendency Robinson depicts, as cited in Chapters 5 and 6, through

the concept of regentrification: capitalist accumulation constantly descends on new places where people and other species are trying to make life in what Tsing terms capitalist ruins; the making and remaking of conviviality are never safe from appropriation. This is something that is illuminated by some feminist Marxist and anarchist theory on the commons and commoning. For instance, Silvia Federici (2019) celebrates the power of the commons to make alternatives, but she also writes as follows:

I argue for the need to distinguish communal/communitarian social formations that work within a noncapitalist horizon from forms of commoning that are compatible with the logic of capitalist accumulation and may function as the safety valve with which a capitalist system in crisis tries to diffuse the tensions its policies inevitably generate. (6)

This suggests that Porritt's version of conviviality is problematic: it is contained within an imaginary of competitive capitalism where it acts as a complement in happy coexistence with such relations and not as an alternative to them. To imagine conviviality in this manner is logical within an imaginary of sustainable capitalist development that does not depict capitalism as a worldwrecking force but as a fundamental worldmaking one. The critical perspective offered by an analysis of what I have been calling relations of consumption (the hyperseparated Self's exploitation of the worldmaking of Others), however, reveals this happy coexistence as an illusion. Thus, we see too why it is important for anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice to develop a critical understanding of the forces that threaten convivial relations. What this critical understanding enables is the imagining of environmental justice as unachievable within the frames of capitalist institutions—within the small world of the elected politician, as Jannok depicts it—so that environmental justice becomes the kind of social movement that Steve Martinot (2006) describes as making more than “a demand to sit at someone else's table, to be grudgingly accommodated as a former nonparticipant, and included under the former rules” (164). It means not a rearrangement of people's roles within a given system, but a shift away from an excluding and exploiting system and a construction of other kinds of roles and institutions.

Another important contribution from the material I have analysed to the elaboration of what anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice means is to be found in a phrase that Jannok repeats on her album: “we are still here.” The phrase captures something that is apparent in the ecological decolonisation imaginary as it emerges in Jannok's, Tsing's, and Klein's texts, namely that conviviality as the foundation for worldmaking in possible environmentally just futures has its roots in alternative, counterhegemonic strands of the past. This view is what underpins the notion of Indigenous resurgence, which I have referred to in several of the previous chapters: a new politics is not a matter of the emergence of something wholly unprecedented, but of the resurgence of

suppressed parts of the past and present that were always and will always be here. As Nick Estes (2019) puts it in the title to his book on the Standing Rock water protectors, “our history is the future.” This makes resurgence a matter of what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) calls “indigenous modernity” (96)—it breaks with the dominant conception of history as a linear move away from Indigenous pre-history to a modern Eurocentred present, and instead sees the present as characterised by a conflict between several possible modernities where the Eurocentric alternative is merely what Barca (2020) calls “a specific type of modernity” (1). To connect this to another term that I have been using (and will return to later in this chapter when discussing knowledges), it is a form of Romanticism, if we follow Michael Löwy and Robert Sayre’s (2001) definition of the term and movement: Romanticism is an anti-capitalist worldview (14) that “looks to premodern societies for concrete examples and tangible proofs of a qualitatively different mode of life, one distinct from (and in certain respects superior to) capitalist industrial civilization” (255). In contrast to how Robinson’s early New York utopia of Indigenous peoples, immigrants, and land, as discussed in Chapter 6, is depicted as an unreal lullaby and tale for children—as something old that the text expresses *a liking for* but also sees as politically irrelevant in the present—the ongoing making of so-called “pre-modern” cultures is a political force to count on in the present.

While the resurgence of Indigenous cultures should thus be understood as an important component of environmental justice worldmaking, this does not mean that all Indigenous politics automatically becomes a politics of decolonial NIABYist environmental justice. As Glen Coulthard (2014) points out, there is a division within Indigenous politics between the radical imaginary of resurgence and a less transformative imaginary which accepts a dominant settler state-led politics of *reconciliation* (see e.g. 105-06)—the latter meaning the kind of maintenance of an established political table to meet around that Martinot opposes and that Jannok depicts as lacking space for Sámi concerns.¹⁵⁶ To relate this to my distinction between two kinds of imaginaries of environmental justice, decolonial NIABYism is compatible with Indigenous resurgence, whereas reconciliation between Indigenous people and settler-colonial states operates within a developmentalist imaginary. In emphasising the power of Indigenous resurgence and of the resurgence of other non-Western cultures within environmental justice, it is therefore important to define resurgence as *one form of*

¹⁵⁶ Coulthard (2014) also criticises the concept of *recognition* in connection to this (1-3). One of the examples that Coulthard discusses of a turn from more radical claims to an acceptance of recognition within the settler-colonial state is of the Dene First Nation. Previously radical Dene activists had in the 1990s and 2000s come to accept the mainstream model of economic development and to support extractivist projects on their lands—so long as the Dene are, in the words of one such previous radical, “masters of our own house” and thus able, for instance, “to make sure this pipeline is done the right way” (76-77).

Indigenous or more broadly “Romantic” non-Western politics, and not as the essence of such cultures in themselves. Applied to Jannok’s lyrics, this suggests an understanding of her textual “Sápmi”—a Sápmi that is depicted as *orda* or queer and as radically opposed to the logic of plundering that underpins dominant colonial culture—as a way to argue for and to dream about the realisation of a resurgent, utopian potentiality that is harboured in the Sápmi of the real world. Jannok’s “Sápmi” is a rhetorical category and narrative device that emphasises the possibility for Sámi culture, and other Indigenous cultures, to resurge and to form real alternatives to the dominant.

In any case, the characterisation of anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice as often a matter of resurgence has repercussions for the cultural-theoretical framework that this thesis is based within: that of Raymond Williams’s cultural materialism, with its distinction between dominant and emergent culture. As I explained in Chapter 1, I focus on the terms *dominant* and *emergent* from Williams’s framework because they relate to the conflict between established hegemony and counterhegemony as the potential making of a new kind of social order. But Williams also proposes a third term, as I explained in Chapter 1 as well: *residual culture*. The separation of the residual and the emergent suggested by Williams is what my study problematises: it suggests that what Williams labels emergent culture is perhaps often better described as *resurgent*, meaning the returning of cultures of the past in new forms. In relation to this, one problem that arises with Williams’s terminology is that the choice of the term residual is somewhat misleading, as it seems to suggest that remnants of cultures that were more widely influential in the past are mere residues in the present and not active components in it. Although this is not what Williams argues (as mentioned in Chapter 1, he has a separate label for inactive cultural remnants from the past, namely the *archaic*), a problem remains in his separation of the residual from the emergent, because this separation does preclude the kind of culture that says “we are still here” and uses this as the foundation for future worldmaking. Resurgent culture *combines* the residual and the emergent from Williams’s terminology—a possibility he does not discuss in his theory. His fiction, however, such as the novels *Border Country* ([1960] 2006) and *The Volunteers* ([1978] 2011), does explore something like this, suggesting that the history of Welsh culture and its rural livelihoods are important socially and politically in the late twentieth century and not just in the past. Drawing on my study and on Williams’s fiction, the cultural-materialist terminology could be updated to include the terms *dominant*, *emergent*, *resurgent*, and *residual*, with clarifications of the complex relations among them along the lines of what I have discussed here.

To conclude this discussion of anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice, the texts or the aspects of the texts that revolve around these political concepts

could be termed *writer-activist* texts. This suggests that particularly Jannok and Tsing, and to an extent also Klein and Robinson, could be labelled environmental justice writer-activists.

On the concepts of social democracy and sustainable development within or in connection to environmental justice

In Chapter 3, we saw that there is no clear agreement in the previous research about the position of social democracy and of sustainable development and similar reformisms. And this lack of clarity is also manifested within the texts I have discussed that in different ways express support for either concept; social democracy and sustainable development overlap and are depicted in disparate ways in those texts. We saw in Chapter 5 that Robinson calls Keynesianism—an economic approach associated with social democracy—anti-capitalist, that Klein connects it to non-environmentalist centre-left politicians, and that Sachs considers it reformist and commends it. We also saw that Klein, Sachs, and Porritt all lift out Scandinavian/Nordic social democracy as a role model in making society fairer and more sustainable, even though they associate this with different degrees of change to or change away from the capitalist system. And the concept of sustainable development as used by Sachs in particular but also by Porritt is aligned with this social-democratic vision: it is a matter of moderate critique of runaway capitalist greed (or neoliberalism) in the twenty-first century as a historical moment when it has just become clear, so the imaginary suggests, that such a version of capitalism is unsustainable. Interestingly, although Robinson makes fun of the sustainable development concept by using it to denote the continuation of capitalist appropriation, thus positioning his social democracy as more properly reformist than this, the details of his imagined reforms are not dissimilar to those of Sachs's and Porritt's sustainable development.

So what are we to make of the rather messy picture of reforms for reining in capitalist greed that is offered by these four thinkers who rhetorically position themselves differently vis-à-vis capitalism? An important starting point for positioning both social democracy and sustainable development within or in relation to environmental justice is that references to these kinds of reforms of capitalism in the texts that elicit support for them are consistently, as I have shown in my analyses, aligned with the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development and its developmentalism. When Klein and Robinson (and to a small extent Porritt) search more widely for inspiration and look beyond Europe and European-style regulated capitalism with its parliamentary politics and instead turn to social movements as forces in their own right, to South American left-wing politics, and to Indigenous thinkers and communities, they often

develop an alternative imaginary of environmental justice which contradicts and undermines the sustainable capitalist development one.

That social democracy and sustainable development as imagined in these texts fit within an imaginary that is inimical to decolonial environmental justice gets further emphasis when we consider the critique by one of the other writers levelled against an example used by Klein, Sachs, and Porritt: Jannok's critique of a Nordic state. The picture Jannok creates is one of an extractivist, racist, colonial Sweden, not of a leader in sustainability and justice. This chimes in with research that questions the received image of Sweden as progressive in environmental and social terms. Anderson, Broderick, and Stoddard (2020) show that Sweden's Climate Act—celebrated as a major victory by a Green Party in coalition government with the Social Democrats between 2014 and 2021—does not suffice to meet Sweden's commitments in the Paris Agreement and fails with regard to global justice. And Lawrence and Åhrén (2016), based on studies of resource extraction in Swedish Sápmi, demonstrate that Sweden is colonialist at home though rhetorically anti-colonial abroad (172-73). If we zoom out to include the whole EU, which is also mentioned by several writers as a sustainability leader, there is similar cause for questioning the received image: the sustainability victories of this proposed transition leader have largely meant an externalisation of environmental impact to other parts of the world (Brand and Wissen 2013, 696-97).

In sum, the image of successful reform within capitalism through (a green version of) social democracy and through sustainable development is based on examples that when scrutinised reveal that Western European regulated capitalism is characterised by double standards. What is more, there is another example of a role model brought out by Klein, Sachs, and Porritt that makes this image of regulated capitalism even more problematic: China. Seen in the light both of Klein's critique elsewhere in her text of Chinese extractivism and of Jannok's and Tsing's accounts of when state power is part of colonial, capitalist extraction, the commendation of China becomes a justification of an authoritarian state-capitalist system that is highly effective in its extractivist creation of sacrifice zones. This shows us that thinking on state planning and sustainable development risks turning into support for authoritarianism and a way of greenwashing extractivism, in an imaginary of sustainable *state-capitalist* development. Thus, it is an imaginary that can partake of a tendency that Brand (2016) suspects will be prominent in the near future, namely that new "green" forms of capitalism and imperialism will emerge, fuelled by competition for resources.

The reformed version of capitalism that we encounter in the concepts of social democracy and sustainable development in the material I have analysed are therefore examples of how dominant culture can produce a new iteration of

itself—and they remind us of the importance of telling apart such new iterations of the dominant from truly emergent and resurgent culture. What moderate changes to capitalism entail, rather than a relative improvement for all people and all other species, is a *displacement and invisibilisation of social and environmental harm*—meaning a stabilisation of the status quo through the enforcement of an imperial mode of living for relatively privileged workers in a global perspective. This is a manifestation of what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) calls “a ‘change so that everything remains the same’” (102): a rhetorical concern with justice for Indigenous communities, the Global South, and so on that becomes “an ornamental and symbolic multiculturalism” (98), which means a “conditional inclusion” and “false inclusion” of these communities in an oppressive system that has no room for cultural plurality and a multitude of ways of living (97). The clearest example from the six texts of this false inclusion and ornamental multiculturalism is Robinson’s diverse representation of people that nonetheless becomes a form of Western-centrism and urban-centrism, since the characters as New Yorkers are depicted as representing the situation of people anywhere on the planet—a perspective that gains emphasis when the more radically utopian version of early New York as a community of Indigenous people, diverse immigrants, and land is described as unreal and impossible.

While other texts (as well as political programmes, social movements, etcetera) that use or relate to the concepts of (green) social democracy and sustainable development might not necessarily display the tendencies identified here, my analysis of how some texts that are connected to these concepts imagine sustainable (state-)capitalist development does mean that there is reason to critically scrutinise other uses of the same concepts as well. And my textual analyses can provide some inspiration on what to look for in this: for instance, are the imagined protagonist of social democracy and sustainable development of Indigenous people, people of colour, women, peasants, and underprivileged workers, or are they rather techno-genius white, bourgeois men (with social movements demoted to helpers, and diverse non-Western ways of living depicted as lacking worldmaking capacities or even as being worldwrecking antagonists)? One concrete manifestation of sustainable development thinking in particular that should be subject to such scrutiny is the UN’s the Sustainable Development Goals, because of the direct connection between the SDGs and Jeffrey Sachs’s textbook. Although there is an opening for a radical interpretation of sustainable development and the closely related term sustainability, as my review of previous research on sustainable development in Chapter 3 showed, social movement-oriented writers (as well as movements themselves) would do well to be explicit about their divergences from moderate, pro-capitalist versions of these concepts.

Here, one could learn from another critical analysis of the kind of inclusive capitalist imaginary that versions of social democracy and sustainable development could be said to exemplify. The tension within sustainable capitalist development thinking, with its simultaneous celebration of diversity and maintenance of injustice, brings to mind an old leftist critique of *liberalism*. In their analysis of different forms of climate politics, Mann and Wainwright (2018) summarise this critique and connect it to mainstream climate politics in the West. As they write, “Left critics . . . have exposed liberals’ erasure of domination by highlighting the ways in which liberalism is, and always has been, as much about the production of unfreedom for some as it has been about freedom for the privileged ‘community of the free’” (83). What I have discussed as a cosmetic appeal to environmental justice in sustainable capitalist development thinking is an example of this: it paints a picture of liberal-capitalist representative democracies like the Nordic countries and the EU as fair and sustainable while obscuring the unfreedom and unsustainability produced by these institutions in some people’s backyards, so that the environmental injustices that are produced by the system are invisibilised and can thus be justified. The result is a tension between an ideal image and an actual reality conveniently obscured by this image: what Federici (2004) summarises as “the promise of freedom vs. the reality of widespread coercion, and the promise of prosperity vs. the reality of widespread penury” (17). What we thus see is that developmentalism’s promise of freedom and prosperity serves to mask the reality of coercion and penury, and—following Adaman and Akbulut’s (2021) analysis cited above—to generate a consensus for it.

To conclude this discussion—drawing on the conclusion about the writer-activist qualities of the texts discussed in connection to anti-capitalist, decolonial environmental justice—we could consider the texts and the aspects of the texts that are connected to social democracy and sustainable development to be *writer-lobbyist*, rather than writer-activist, because they focus not on movements but on getting established political institutions in Western(ised) countries to act. Hence, Sachs and Porritt, and aspects of Klein and Robinson, could be labelled writer-lobbyists with an interest in environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

Part of what makes the difference between ecological decolonisation and sustainable capitalist development are different conceptions of being and knowledge, as I have been showing throughout my analyses of the texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs. In the discussion in this chapter so far, this has not been spelled out, although it is there in a latent sense. I will now bring this out more clearly by considering the ontological and

epistemological theories in environmentalist thought that are engaged with in the material.

8.1.2 On Human and Nonhuman Being, and Rational and Romantic Knowledges

As in the case of political concepts in and around environmental justice that I have so far discussed in this chapter, the kinds of complexities in terms of ontology and epistemology that were identified in the background and previous research chapters (Chapters 2 and 3) are apparent in the material I have analysed. The six texts by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs do not offer any simple answers about how to understand the politics of ontology and epistemology, but they do help us gain a better understanding of the devil in the details in such questions as I have been discussing throughout Part II.

To introduce this discussion, I will briefly recap what we learned in Chapters 2 and 3, where we encountered an academic-political debate on the politics of ontology and epistemology (the latter including the question of forms of expression). The environmental justice-oriented positions in these debates were difficult to pinpoint, as there has been and was still in the 2010s widespread disagreement about the merits and flaws of different ontologies and epistemologies from environmentalist perspectives. Some, such as many of those who are labelled nature endorsers and nature sceptics by Kate Soper (1995), consider ontology—and particularly understandings of nonhuman nature—to be *the* defining feature of different forms of environmental politics. Others, including Soper herself, suggest that there is no such inherent politics of ontology or politics of nature. There are both those who consider recent theoretical developments in posthumanism, new materialism, the ontological turn, and similar areas to be inherently problematic (Malm 2018; Hornborg 2016, 2017a, 2017b; Persson and colleagues 2018), and those who consider these developments to be inherently emancipatory (Barad 2007; Bennett 2010; Oppermann 2011)—whereas others instead emphasise the importance of an openness to alternative and non-Western ontologies and/or knowledges in academic and political contexts, if this is done in a way that is compatible with a critical political ecology (Burman 2017; White, Rudy, and Gareau 2016; Pellizzoni 2016, 2019). Furthermore, some argue that there is an essential relation between a certain politics, a certain ontology, and a certain way of knowing as embodied in a form of expression (Dryzek 1997; Hornborg 2017b; Tsing 2015; Moore 2015). But at the same time, thinkers who position themselves as politically radical or subversive ascribe to and argue for different ontologies and forms of expression, from the scientific and the argumentative to the artistic, creative, or poetically metaphorical. This is connected to the oft-made distinction between Romanticism and rationality, a distinction that is at the same time difficult to

make in relation to actual examples of knowledges and forms of expression used in political contexts, as many of these do not neatly map onto the proposed distinction; I showed as much in my discussion of artistic-activist work and theories on the politics of aesthetics from the Frankfurt School (Chapter 2) to recent Indigenous land protection “artivism” (Chapters 2 and 3).

Let us now see what devil-in-the-details interventions into academic-political debates can be offered based on the material analysed in this thesis—on the topics of the imagining of the human, of nonhuman nature, and of human-land relations; the imagining of technology and money; and the imagining of rationality and Romanticism.

Imaginariness of the human, of nonhuman nature, and of human-land relations

The way human/nature and human/land identities and relations emerge in the material I have analysed can helpfully be understood through the ecofeminist Val Plumwood’s thinking. In her *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature* (1993), she conscientiously investigates and creatively intervenes in debates in environmental philosophy from the last decades before the turn of the millennium. Plumwood identifies two dominant tendencies in environmental (and likewise feminist) philosophy: rights-oriented environmentalism and “intrinsic value”-oriented deep ecology, both of which profess to offer alternatives to instrumentalism. Plumwood refers to the first of these approaches as *moral extensionism*—by which “non-humans are included [as moral subjects] just to the extent that they resemble humans . . . , just as women are allowed in the institutional structure of the public sphere just to the extent that they can be seen as possessing masculine characteristics or analogues of them” (172). The second approach is termed *identification*—in which the way to counteract human dominance of and alienation from those they depend upon, or hyperseparation, is via identification with the Other through “indistinguishability, expansion of self, and transcendence of self” (176). The second approach takes instrumentalist domination of nature to be a general human conceit, allies itself with nature instead, and thus attempts to escape from the logic of hyperseparation via and to equivalence and sameness. It is an example of the kind of thinking that David Graeber (2014) calls a “diametrical inversion” or “mirror image”—an inverted reflection that remains within the logic established by the dominant way of thinking as it fails to think beyond the options suggested by it (241). Plumwood (1993) contends that both philosophies lack “an adequate historical analysis” of the social forces that got us into this ecological mess and that both rely on a conception of “self” that is founded on a dualistic hyperseparation of the human and the nonhuman (166).

Thinking on the developmentalist end of the spectrum in the material I have analysed tends towards extensionism—but in particular of the dominant way of being human in relation to nondominant ways of being human. We see this in

the tendency to cast all humans in the mould of the figure that I have been calling White Bourgeois Man, as apparent in particular in Sachs's and Porritt's texts but also to an extent in Klein's and Robinson's. In this imaginary, justice becomes a matter of equal access to assimilation to a predefined way of being that is characterised by things like techno-genius and entrepreneurial economic rationality as defined by dominant Western culture. When it comes to nonhuman nature, the approach in sustainable capitalist development can take the form of rights-oriented extensionism, as when Porritt's competition-centred imaginary, which does not question the institutional foundations of Western-capitalist society, includes the notion of the rights of nature (as discussed in a note in Chapter 6). But the approach to nonhuman nature most often takes the form instead of a moderate, mature instrumentalism: nature needs to be managed carefully by a morally ingenious human steward who understands when there are limitations to exploitation.¹⁵⁷ This means that the combination of ecological and social sustainability in sustainable development and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (which are, the reader will recall, intimately connected to Sachs's text) are not holistically socio-ecological but remain within the hegemonic ontology, where nature is an inert resource—in contrast to what is sometimes suggested by researchers in the environmental humanities and social sciences about the SDGs. Interestingly, the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development can at the same time also harbour new ontological philosophies that are reminiscent of Plumwood's identification in their opposition to all distinctions between the human and the nonhuman, as when Robinson's novel explores actor network theory and the concept of hyperobjects in ways that fetishise (as in depict as life-like) the algorithmic system of high-tech finance.¹⁵⁸

In sum, environmental justice as conceived of in the sustainable capitalist development imaginary is a matter of *more equal distribution among people of the right to use nature* for developmentalist aims, whereas the matter of justice *for nonhuman nature* is generally not considered.

This moral extensionism in relation to nondominant ways of being human (associated in particular with people of colour and women) is the ontology of what I in the previous part of this chapter discussed as conditioned and false inclusion, following Rivera Cusicanqui (2012). It is an example of what Plumwood (2002) has called “the incorporative self,” a kind of being that “uses unity in a hegemonic fashion to absorb the other or recreate them as a version

¹⁵⁷ One could perhaps understand this as a form of extensionism too: the extension to all people and all of nature of the instrumentalist logic of hyperseparation, whereby what Plumwood terms “self” becomes characterised by alienation from what animates it, or from life itself.

¹⁵⁸ In relation to this, it is interesting to note that Luigi Pellizzoni (2016) shows how these kinds of ontological philosophies risk ending up supporting the kind of ornamental multiculturalism that Rivera Cusicanqui (2012) criticises; the term Pellizzoni uses for this is neoliberal multiculturalism (4).

of the self' (203). It amounts, in effect, to the erasure of the Other, the erasure of alternative ways of being human such as those that are summarised in what I have been calling the Multitude, so that only the One way of being human remains in the dominant imaginary. According to Stefania Barca's (2020) analysis of what she calls the "master narrative" of modernity, this has long been a prominent feature of mainstream economics and has recently become influential in accounts of global environmental change. In contrast to an earlier kind of colonial imaginary, where Indigenous peoples were depicted as "uncivilized and inferior, akin to wild animals" and Black Africans as "incomplete versions of the human," there is now instead a general *We* subject—treated by Barca through capitalisation as a proper name and individual protagonist—in stories of environmental degradation (20). This *We*, she suggests, "represents the ultimate version of racism, that in which the uncivilized Other has been devoured for its own benefit—assimilated into capitalist/industrial modernity." This general *we* mode is apparent, as we saw in Chapter 7, in Sachs's text in particular, but also occurs in Klein's text—although it only becomes fully Western-centric in Sachs's. But the kind of general human actant that Sachs's *we* is tied to—a generalised humanity that is in fact not-so-general but Western, bourgeois, and male as worldmaker, and made up of people of colour and women as worldwrecker—is important in Porritt's and to an extent Robinson's texts as well, as discussed in Chapter 5. What Barca finds, and what can be seen as well in the material I have analysed, is that a historical racial-biological conception of ontological difference (which was coupled with coloniality of power as direct political domination) has been replaced by a racism of sameness where the ontological category of being relies on a notion of Western, capitalist, patriarchal cultural supremacy and where this being is extended so as to devour all other ways of being human (a racism-of-sameness that is coupled with coloniality of power as economic imperialism [see e.g. Patnaik and Patnaik 2017; Suwandi 2019]).

To summarise, the sustainable capitalist development imaginary relies ontologically on a human moral extensionism, whereby the One incorporates and thus devours all other ways of being, together with a moderate instrumentalism in relation to nonhuman nature.

What about the ontological outlook(s) on the decolonial end of the spectrum in the material I have analysed? There is some variation in the material, but generally it does the same thing as Plumwood does with her critical analysis of instrumentalism, extensionism, and identification: rejects the terms of the debate. The ecological decolonisation imaginary problematises the instrumentalist conception of Others as objects, often criticising this ontological outlook head-on, as in Tsing's, Klein's, and Jannok's objections to alienation and objectification, discussed in Chapter 6. But, to use terms from another text by Plumwood, *Environmental Culture* (2002), the imaginary also proposes that the idea

that humans *either* subscribe to anthropocentric (prudent, self-interested, instrumentalist) values *or* to ecocentric values (ethical ones, valuing nature “in itself”) is misguided. We see this in how Jannok, Tsing, and Klein, and sometimes also Robinson, explore relational, human-land or body-land ways of being; this amounts to an ontology where humans and other species are not dualistically separated, not hyperseparated, from each other, and can have shared interests despite the differences between them. In the terms of *Feminism and the Mastery of Nature*, identification with the Other through indistinguishability and expansion or transcendence of Self is not the only or the best ecologically-minded alternative to instrumentalism. Instead, it is not necessarily anthropocentric to care about human interests because some ways of being human are not opposed to the needs of other species or of land. As the Sámi reindeer herder and activist Jannie Staffansson (2018) puts it, “there are many people . . . who do not realize that humans are beneficial to ecosystems and to the Earth because many of us have been treating it [sic.] so poorly” (n.p.). In other words, the problem is that hyperseparated, exploitative ways of being human become *the* definition of the human, so that the possibility of human-land conviviality becomes overwritten. The real alternative is to understand the problem of environmental degradation not as inherent in a general human/nature relationship but as connected to a certain way of being human, and to understand *other ways of being human with land* as the way out of the fix. This means that the questioning of the idea that environmental harm is necessary, which is what underpins NIABYism, has a foundation in a relational ontological outlook.

However, the variation in the material I have analysed also means that there are examples of something like a relational ontology that are more difficult to position politically. This occurs particularly in Tsing’s text. In one way, Tsing’s posthumanism, with its focus on precarious labour and cultural revival within multispecies worldmaking, becomes a form of what White, Rudy, and Gareau (2016) call eco-Marxist critical hybridist theory (140): thinking on naturecultures that maintains a critical edge vis-à-vis power structures. But in another way, its tendency towards open-endedness (motivated by the text’s imitation of the structure of the mushroom’s mycelium) becomes vague in a similar manner to reformist environmentalist thinking, as discussed in Chapter 3. As with reformists who imagine far-reaching change, the political programme of this kind of posthumanism can be difficult to pin down—and this can create a risk of co-optation. What is more, in its vaguest form this kind of thinking can tend towards an inversion of anthropocentric, instrumentalist thinking into a naturecultural, ecocentric-like indistinguishability of identification. As Hornborg (2017a) argues concerning theories that categorically oppose analytical distinctions between nature and society, this makes it impossible to critically analyse power relations; or, in Rekret’s (2016) words, from his critique of new materialism, this kind of

thinking “licences the eschewal of analysis of social relations” (227). Although Tsing leans towards the maintenance of critical-theoretical edge, it is not entirely clear that she succeeds.

Imaginaries of technology and money

Ontology in environmental justice politics is, however, not only a matter of how the human, nonhuman nature, and human-land relations are construed; it is also about conceptions of other forms of nonhumans, namely the cultural artefacts and phenomena of technology and money. We saw this in the textual analyses, as some of the texts when producing an imaginary of sustainable capitalist development give certain technologies and money actant functions, something I discussed in Chapter 6 as fetishism—the attribution to inanimate objects of traits that inhere in living beings. Indeed, it is primarily in the sustainable capitalist development imaginary that technology and money are discussed; they are decentred rather than critically explored in ecological decolonisation, a point I will soon return to. But let us first look at these forms of the nonhuman in sustainable capitalist development.

Concerning technology, the most common expression of fetishism is the turning of “renewables” into a reified category of inherently clean industrial tech (and not—as in the actual scientific definition of renewability—a matter of use within the cycles of renewal that the earth supports). This tendency is prominent in Sachs’s, Porritt’s, Klein’s, and Robinson’s texts: they all, as I showed in Chapter 6, depict “new clean tech” not just as an inanimate object used by human actants but as an actant too, a helper that makes sustainable worldmaking possible (or even a protagonist in the form of techno-genius). This fetishised, reified category of new clean tech is a continuation of the same conception of technology as in the story of earlier capitalist development, as we saw as well—just like sustainable capitalist development as a whole is about the continuation, with some moderating tweaks, of the same kind of worldmaking as before the problem of global environmental change crystallised. This notion of *the continuity of technological progress* is a feature of the imaginary that is best captured by Sachs’s metaphor of development ripples in the pond of world society, ripples set in motion by the innovation of the steam engine. The ripples are imagined to continue even to this day for the benefit of all humankind and clean tech progress is seen as the latest stage—a renewed proverbial stone superseding the steam engine—in this rippling effect. And the relationship between the inventors of technology as the throwers of the proverbial stone and the actual technology as the thing or being causing the rippling is obscure: is the human thrower or the stone itself the actant causing ripples of progress? This confusion is perhaps clearest in Robinson’s incorporation of actor network theory and Timothy Morton’s ontological philosophy with the concept of hyperobjects, both of

which contribute to his depiction of Industrial Technology as a being. It is interesting that Robinson's use of these theories that are often framed as critiques of Western-scientific ontology is instead fully compatible with the techno-fetishism of what I have identified as a dominant scientific ontological outlook. This is a kind of thinking that risks naturalising techno-fetishism, since it masks, as Andreas Malm and Alf Hornborg (2014) suggest, how "perceptions of 'technology', no less than perceptions of 'Nature', are cultural constructions conditioned by global power structures" (65).

In the same imaginary, money too is depicted both as an inanimate object used by human actants and as itself an actant, and the latter becomes a form of fetishism. The clearest example of the fetishist conception of money is to be found in Sachs's text, wherein money is depicted as an animating force in society, but it occurs also in Porritt's, Klein's, and Robinson's, as we saw in Chapter 6. Money fetishism, as I have also discussed, is connected to technofetishism. For instance, in Sachs's text it is not clear whether it is markets based on money (imagined as urging on the self-interest of *homo economicus*) or technologies (imagined as having an internal progress force) that act as the prime mover in capitalist development. Or, in Klein's text, there is a strong connection between the local implementation of clean tech progress and the animation of local communities through monetary revenue flows.

In the ecological decolonisation imaginary, instead, money and technology are, as I mentioned above, generally just decentred and thus not discussed at length; Jannok, Tsing, and in some respects Robinson and Klein focus on imagining the beings of human-land worldmaking, and in contrast to this tend to criticise specifically the *human* worldwreckers—in the form of Western, bourgeois, male antagonists and their abettors and gainers—that devour convivial worlds. The critical commentary on a fetishist ontology that does exist takes the form of a dismissal of the conception of money and fossil fuels as life, as discussed in Chapter 6, through statements like Klein's quotes from movement activists who juxtapose food and water as (metabolically) necessary for humans with inedible money and oil. It is interesting to note that the way rural and Indigenous activists self-evidently dismiss the widespread, hegemonic views of techno-fetishism and money fetishism based on their relational ecological worldview problematises one of the positions in the academic-political debate over the merits of different ontologies: the one that dismisses non-Western ontologies as politically counterproductive, such as Alf Hornborg's (2016) assertion that a "modern" ontology (by which he means a scientific one) is a better alternative than an animistic or magical one because the latter is something "that most of us have irrevocably lost" (111). Rather than to "most of us," this would particularly apply to a parochial group of academically educated people in highly secularised parts of the world.

Imaginaries of rationality and Romanticism

Moving on to the question of epistemology, or the texts' ways of knowing and forms of expression, the main thing to note is that the material I have analysed does not support a binary distinction between rationality and Romanticism, in conflict with some of the arguments that have been made in the research over the past few decades that I discussed in Chapters 2 and 3. Instead, there are *different forms of (appeals to) science and rationality* in the six texts I have been discussing, and likewise *different uses of creative, metaphorical ways of knowing*.

In the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development, we encounter a hegemonic form of science or rationality that I have been calling scientism. It is centred on technoscience, neoclassical economics as science, detached knowing through measurement, and the supposed literal exactness of quantitative signification. Its expert is the detached figure that Sachs calls the sustainable development practitioner. When it comes to technoscientism, we saw in Chapter 7 that it offers no detailed explanation of the workings and production of the technologies that are centred, something that occurs in the texts by Sachs, Porritt, Klein, and Robinson—these texts all simply give the reader surface descriptions of “new clean technologies.” Hence, knowledge of technology takes the form of self-evident references to its being; a techno-fetishist ontology becomes the argument in technoscientific epistemology. In Alf Hornborg's (2016) wording, technologies are seen as “bounded, material objects” and not as “the products of wider and intangible fields of relations” (7); no detailed knowledge of the conditions of and inputs into production is therefore needed. Hornborg further shows that this view underpins the academic disciplines of neoclassical economics and engineering, which together contribute to the linked ideas of economic growth/development and technological progress (43, 114)—something Sachs's text in particular is an expression of. This brings us to the question of neoclassical economics as science, and the strong belief in detached quantification as a way of knowing. Neoclassical economics and technoscience are connected in the imaginary of sustainable capitalist development, since a kind of measurement that is often referred to when texts overview an imagined history of development is economic quantification of complex social change. This could be an expression of something David Graeber (2014) has identified in dominant economic thinking, namely the idea of “the economy” (in the singular) and of this singular economy's objectively quantifiable total value that can be accurately measured in money so that, “in the end, the accounts balance” (115).¹⁵⁹

¹⁵⁹ In economic anthropology (e.g. Graeber 2014) and new economic criticism in literary studies (e.g. Shell 2013), connections are made between types of economic signs and wider cultural ideas (like the idea that everything can be measured and that this is the best kind of knowledge that I am discussing here) so that dominant monetary forms of thinking are understood as also expressed in

But there are also examples where it is neither economics nor technoscience but environmental/climate science that is presented as offering a reliable quantitative overview. This use of quantification can overlap with the money-based kind, as it does in Sachs's and Porritt's conflation of economics and environmental science in overviews of the challenges faced by a generalised humanity.¹⁶⁰ Moreover, climate science can be part of the conception of quantification as the most reliable form of knowledge, as it is in Klein's privileging of the "objective" truth of climate science and quantification of unequal emissions of greenhouse gases above the "subjective" truth of the injustice of slavery and colonialism, which I discussed in Chapter 7. Positioned in this manner, climate science partakes of a kind of detached Western knowledge which often—albeit probably inadvertently in these kinds of examples—serves to discredit Indigenous and other non-Western knowledges; it becomes part of the coloniality of knowledge, whereby certain "scientific and philosophical discourses . . . depict themselves as being neutral, impartial and detached from geo-historical conditions" (Álvarez and Coolsaet 2020, 53) and as such as more reliable and relevant than, for instance, Indigenous knowledges.

The thinking at the decolonial end of the spectrum of environmental justice in the six texts does not wholly dismiss rationality, as we saw in Chapter 7 as well: there is an engagement in the texts by Tsing and Klein with how forms of ecological science and traditional and Indigenous knowledges intersect. One implication of this is that Western sciences are not necessarily part of the coloniality of knowledge. The problem is specifically *detached scientific* knowledge and its *hegemony* which discredits all other ways of knowing; the idea of Western science as the One knowledge, and not as one-of-many. As part of an alternative to this, Jannok, Tsing, and Klein delineate what I termed a relational rationality: a rationality based on experience of and a relation to the known. In Chapter 7, I related this to Plumwood's (2002) concept of ecological rationality—the rationality of a human being who knows their enabling conditions, unlike the hyperseparated Self who denies and overlooks them. This notion of rationality can help us see one of the problems with the economic rationality that is important in sustainable capitalist development. This economic rationality, with its detached quantitative overview of social and ecological change, finds a correlation between economic growth, increased standard of living for some people, and increased environmental degradation, and then assumes that growth

myth, art, and general cultural practices. An example is how Graeber relates the rise of monotheism in religion to the rise of the universal equivalent in economics. Although there may be some merit to such arguments, I cannot deduce on the basis of the material I have analysed whether the widespread scientific trust in detached measurement is an expression of the hegemony of monetary quantification—but it is certainly an interesting parallel, at least.

¹⁶⁰ Environmental and climate science quantifications need not be conflated with monetary quantification, however, but can also be part of a multitude of knowledges, as I will discuss below.

is a *key cause* of wealth, whereas ecological issues are mere *side effects* of growth. This is the argument offered for why growth can and must be decoupled from environmental degradation—an arbitrary choice, as one could just as well opt for decoupling good living standards from economic growth (and the Western-style development that economic growth is connected to). One correlation is recast as causation and the other correlation as a non-essential relation that can and must be decoupled. It is hard to describe this as scientific evidence or rational argument.

The ecological decolonisation imaginary also, however, entails forms of Romanticism: experimental, creative ways of knowing that intersect with rational argument in this imaginary, yielding a kind of knowing that the political ecologist Karsten Schulz (2017) calls “critical enchantment.” An example of this is how Jannok works with traditional Sámi myth and folklore as ways of understanding the situation in the colonial present when, among other things, she recasts and reinterprets the *čudit* and the *noaidi* as coloniser and decoloniser. This approach to folklore is not unusual in recent Indigenous writings—another example is how the Algonquian folklore figure of the *wendigo* (a cannibal) appears in contemporary Anglophone fiction as a symbol for white colonial expansion and a way of understanding it in depth (e.g. Erdrich 2012; Rice 2018). Such use of myth and folklore in contemporary art and fiction that voices social critique shows two things. First, that the forms of expression of such knowledge, or its genres, can be artistic and creative and draw on the mythical at the same time as they build clear, critical arguments, as is the case with Jannok’s combination of poetic complexity and argumentative distinctness which I analysed in Chapter 7. Second, that what Shultz calls critical enchantment is a form of resurgence: it is a way to bring back traditional culture not as a residue to remember from a lost past but as an active part of modern Indigenous (or other forms of non-Western) life. The knowledge that resurges is not old but both old and new at the same time, something returning to be continually remade in the present.

Another characteristic of both the Romantic and the rational aspects of the ecological decolonisation imaginary is that they lean towards the qualitative in their consideration of the rich details of particular experiences, so that the expert becomes someone with a relation to the known. We see this, for instance, in Jannok’s lyrics, where the starting point is the experience of the Indigenous Sámi woman, who is Jannok’s persona, and of her body-land community, as captured in the material metaphor of *orda* which denotes the Multitude’s queer worldmaking. But this does not mean that all use of qualitative metaphorical as opposed to quantitative numerical signification is automatically part of emergent or resurgent culture. As we saw through the comparison of Jannok’s, Tsing’s, and Sachs’s use of metaphors and through the related discussion of open-endedness and distinctness where my interpretation of Robinson’s text

problematizes Tsing's categorical celebration of open-endedness, there are dominant-cultural uses of metaphors and of experimental, symbolic signification. This brings to mind Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui's (2012) objection to certain kinds of decolonial theory that become a defanged, depoliticised jargon (102), an academic and political rhetoric of decoloniality that ignores how "there can be no discourse of decolonization, no theory of decolonization, without a decolonizing practice" (100). Sometimes metaphors and other kinds of creative expression can become the kind of vague, depoliticised performance that Eve Tuck and Wayne Yang (2012) oppose in their much-cited critique of academics who make decolonisation into a metaphor and not a matter of the concrete return of land to Indigenous peoples. Following this and Jannok's use of clarity, one should be wary of how a preference like Tsing's for associative, rhizomatic thinking could lean more towards the performative metaphorical than towards support for actual decolonisation.

Furthermore, seen in the light of Jannok's complexity combined with clarity, writing like Tsing's can seem unnecessarily convoluted—a problem because it risks becoming impenetrable or too time-consuming to read for non-academics, for precarious academics with little or no space to do research, and for those for whom English is a second, third, or fourth language. Of course, if convoluted form of expression was necessary for thinking and communicating something politically radical, it would be motivated. But there is little support in my material for such an essential connection between what we could term Romantic form (creative, artistic, experimental) and emergent/resurgent cultural content. To understand and explain in a more nuanced way how form of expression is political, we can turn to the concepts of *cultural form* and *socio-cultural formation* from Raymond Williams's thinking. For Williams, Milner (1994) writes, "form . . . is not so much a matter of classification as of social relationship" (60); Williams was interested in "the social conventionality of form" (50).¹⁶¹ Discussing the larger processes through which cultural forms take shape, Williams uses the concept of social formation or socio-cultural formation (Filmer 2003). Paul Filmer (2003) explains that Williams was interested in how artistic work was shaped through "institutional socio-cultural formations which structure experience through formal processes of socialization and cultural reproduction" (207). A cultural form is not a discrete entity with internal characteristics, but a product of an ongoing social process in dominant, residual, emergent, and resurgent socio-cultural formations. And the conventions of a cultural form include both stylistic tendencies and more general conceptions of things like who

¹⁶¹ Milner simply uses the concept of form here, as Williams often does too—but in *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (1974), Williams instead talks of this as cultural form, and this longer term is preferable, I would argue, as it is less easy to confuse with the more common concept of form as denoting only stylistic elements (as opposed to content).

and what are actants, what perspectives it is relevant to give voice to, and so on. For example, for the cultural form of the academic paper in a natural science like medicine, there are conventions in form of expression (a centring of the passive voice and of the representation in charts and graphs of quantitative research results) and in the related construction of authority and truth claims (with the knowing subject separated from the known object, as marked by the passive voice, among other things).¹⁶²

Therefore, that a certain cultural form is subversive should not be attributed to its internal characteristics but to its connection to emergent/resurgent socio-cultural formations. The most subversive texts in my study—the ones that are the most firmly based in an imaginary of ecological decolonisation—are two of the most creative, artistic ones: Jannok’s pop music and Tsing’s creative non-fiction. But this does not mean that the pop song style and the artistically experimental academic style are inherently more subversive than the conventional styles of a textbook or of investigative journalism—in opposition to Tsing’s claims about her own experimental form of expression. Rather, this should be attributed to how Jannok’s and Tsing’s texts are part of potential emergent/resurgent socio-cultural formations that allow for the expression of ideas that are controversial in other formations. Jannok’s Indigenous Sámi pop music album is part of the formations of Sámi community building, social movements, and arts, conjoined with those of broader international Indigenous and environmental justice movements and of the Nordic pop music scene. Tsing’s creative nonfiction, to an extent, part of a critical-theoretical academic tradition and context that has at least at times been entwined with political movement organising (but which is also constantly threatened with being defanged and assimilated into a capitalist form of academia, as Tsing’s point about the need for resistance to the commodification of research that I cited in Chapter 7 highlights—something the decolonial critique of a superficial rhetoric of decoloniality discussed above also suggests is all too common. In contrast, writers like Sachs and Porritt work in cultural forms that partake of and are much more constrained by dominant socio-cultural formations like those of neoclassical economics and technoscience. Their forms are primarily geared towards the transmission of knowledge from these scientific fields to prospective corporate and state managers of capitalist society.¹⁶³

¹⁶² Although Williams himself writes mainly about published texts in elaborating his concept of cultural form, the concept is suitable to discuss other cultural phenomena too, like artefacts and practices—an applicability that is evident in the influence of Williams’s cultural materialism on the school of Cultural Studies, with its analytical turn away from specific works of art and literature to the cultural forms or signifying practices that emerge in subcultures (e.g. Hebdige 1979).

¹⁶³ An implication of this is that the concepts of cultural form and socio-cultural formation can allow for political positioning of writers and texts and get around the often tedious discussion of

Following this as well as the wider discussion of rationality and Romanticism, the conclusion must be that the central question to ask is not whether it is rationality *or* Romanticism as ways of knowing and forms of expression that characterises alternatives to dominant culture, but *what kind of rationality* as well as *what kind of Romanticism* are politically subversive. The choice stands between a number of cultural forms and socio-cultural formations from the dominant to the emergent and resurgent, not between the reified categories of dominant culture.

Some general conclusions on the politics of ontology and epistemology

In political ecology and the environmental humanities, there is, as we have seen, ample discussion of the merits and flaws of different ontological outlooks and epistemological approaches. To summarise and conclude the discussion in this part of the chapter, let me consider what takeaways my study can offer on the topic for academic-political theory with an environmental justice orientation.

I would approach this from the perspective of the theorisation of the coloniality of being and knowledge. An important part of the coloniality of being in the twenty-first century is the centring of the imagined self-contained (hyperseparated) agency of the figure of White Bourgeois Man together with fetishised Money and Industrial Technology as the beings that make worlds. And the dominant detached way of knowing that provides arguments as to why these beings should be trusted and why their perspectives count is part of the coloniality of knowledge. Decolonial alternatives to this can centre something like the Multitude—a plurality of ways of being human—acting and knowing together with other species and with land. Based on this, we could make a distinction between two ways that ontology and epistemology matter in politics:

1. There is the question of *who and what is ascribed agency or being* in ontological outlooks, from certain humans to nonhuman nature to fetishised artefacts created by humans.
2. There is also the question of *whose ontology, worldview, and knowledge* are construed as true, legitimate, and relevant.

“the intentional fallacy” in literary criticism. Following Roland Barthes’s (1977) essay on the death of the author, much literary criticism for a long time tended to revert to a postmodernist conception of the meaning of any text as essentially open-ended since the authority of the author has been relinquished. But with Williams, we can instead focus on “the dynamic interrelationship between social formation, individual development and cultural creation,” so that “the author as writer, though not as authoritative source of origin, remains if not central then at least not yet radically decentred” (Milner 1994, 61). Whereas there is much more to an author as a person than can be glimpsed from a limited set of texts, it is possible on the basis of textual analysis to gain an understanding of the political positionality of texts, authors as a public personas, and the cultural forms and formations that texts and authors partake of.

The first is generally what the notion of the coloniality of being seeks to interrogate, whereas the second is the kind of question explored through the notion of the coloniality of knowledge as well as the notion of *the coloniality of reality*. The latter is a concept that I have not previously referred to, although it was present by implication in the discussion of different approaches to the politics of ontologies in Chapter 3, where I mentioned Anders Burman's (2017) elaboration of a political-ecological (as opposed to depoliticised or apolitical) approach to the ontological turn in anthropology.¹⁶⁴ Burman uses the concept of the coloniality of reality to capture how there are power relations between different conceptions of what exists or what is real, with a privileging of a Western-scientific understanding of reality. If the coloniality of being is about who is considered to be a true human being, and the coloniality of knowledge is about who is considered to be a legitimate producer of knowledge, the coloniality of reality is about whose reality is allowed to be real.

While the coloniality of reality is about ontology, it operates within the same mode of oppression as the coloniality of knowledge: through institutions for knowledge production and the wider institutional construction of expertise and authority in a Western-centric world. The coloniality of being, in contrast, is about ontology in another sense: it operates through the psychological internalisation of a colonial conception of the human or of being. This is of course an analytical simplification—conceptions of what constitutes legitimate knowledge will feed into processes of psychological internalisation, and psychological internalisation will feed into the construction of a hierarchy of knowledges and knowledge institutions. It is therefore important to consider how the two questions I distinguished between above also overlap. For instance, when *the attribution of agency or being* (1) takes the form of an ontology that centres a figure like White Bourgeois Man and his tools, it is also common that it is this being's Western-scientific and scientific *ontology, worldview, and knowledge* (2) that are construed as legitimate. But the distinction is important nonetheless, because it allows us to better understand what is going on in the debate over the politics of ontology and epistemology—something I have been able to analyse in imaginaries of environmental justice through an ecopolitical narratology which identifies how different kinds of actants, like White Bourgeois Man and the Multitude or Body-Land, are ascribed the capacities to make sustainable worlds and to produce knowledge of and for such worldmaking.

What the distinction allows us to see is that there is a tendency for the questions of *who and what is ascribed agency or being* (1) and *whose ontology, worldview,*

¹⁶⁴ To recount from Chapter 3, Burman's (2017) focus is not on the inherent merits, in the abstract, of ontological plurality in academic research, but on how a specific situation in the Bolivian Andes demonstrates that non-Western ontologies can very well be compatible with a critical political analysis of the colonial-capitalist world system.

and knowledge are construed as legitimate (2) to be conflated in a confusing way. This is what happens when experimental academic theories that ascribe agency to both ecological and non-living entities like technologies (an example of 1) are construed as inherently subversive vis-à-vis dominant Western-scientific ontology (an example of 2). And a similar conflation can be identified among proponents of Western-scientific ontology and epistemology who see only their own conception of reality and approach to knowledge production (2) as compatible with a politically useful identification of political agency and strategies for change (1). A better way of thinking about the conflation of the two ways that ontology and epistemology matter is as follows: how agency is ascribed is frequently tied up with how the capacity for constructing valid ontologies and valid ways of knowing is ascribed as well. This means that the politics of ontology and epistemology is primarily about *who* is construed as being and knower, not more abstractedly about the inherent merits of a certain ontological and epistemological theory.

A conclusion to draw from this is that both decolonial theory's focus on the coloniality of being and knowledge, and the kinds of literary analysis that are developed in econarratology and postcolonial political-ecological literary criticism, can help deepen the academic discussion in fields like political ecology and the environmental humanities of the politics of ontology and epistemology. The concepts of the coloniality of being, knowledge, and reality can help by asking the clarifying questions that I have identified, while literary criticism can provide a concrete method for analysing how imaginaries construct actants as beings and knowers and how they embody their conceptions of knowledge in their forms of expression. This can help us see that the much-discussed ontological question of how the nonhuman (both in ecological terms and more broadly) should be imagined matters *together with the question of how human being is imagined*, because the two are inseparable. With this in mind, an important distinction can be made between an imaginary that attributes agency to dominant humans and their nonhuman tools, and one that attributes it to a multitude of ways of being human together with the wider multitude of beings that make up the land.

Having discussed what to make of the results from my analysis of the texts from the 2010s in WENA by Jannok, Tsing, Robinson, Klein, Porritt, and Sachs, I will close this thesis by looking forwards into the 2020s and beyond, considering what my research suggests for emerging social movements in WENA with an environmental justice orientation and their prospective writer-activists.

8.2 Looking Forwards: Tendencies in the 2020s, and an Exploration of Emergent/Resurgent Cultural Forms

There are and have long been environmental justice movements and imaginaries in WENA. And some of these have developed NIABYist, decolonial forms of environmental justice where the aim is for nobody's backyard to be sacrificed. Looking forwards in time from the 2010s, what are the prospects for such a politics to emerge in prominent new movements and imaginaries in WENA? And what shapes might writer-activist work take within decolonial environmental justice? In asking these questions, I hope to offer some important takeaways from my study for social movement activists and political thinkers. To answer the questions, I look first at some emerging movements and political concepts in the years since the period I have focused on in my study, and then begin a project of sketching emergent or resurgent cultural forms that can help us imagine decolonial environmental justice.

8.2.1 Decolonial Environmental Justice in 2020s Movements and Concepts?

In considering what support there might be for a politics of NIABYist environmental justice in new social movements in WENA, I will in the following consider two prominent movement networks and two political concepts. The networks are #FridaysForFuture (#FFF) with its school strikes and the direct-action group Extinction Rebellion (XR), both of which boomed around 2018-2019. The political concepts that were emerging in and around movements in the same period are the Green New Deal and degrowth. More visions, initiatives, groups, networks, and organisations have also been developed from these as offshoots and collaborations, and others are being organised too in what seems to be—as I indicated in Chapter 1—a new wave of environmental social movement mobilisation in parts of the Global North (and across the globe).

Two movement networks: #FridaysForFuture (#FFF) and Extinction Rebellion (XR)

Some research on #FFF emphasises its political radicalism, labelling it a political resistance movement (Holmberg and Alvinus 2020) and demonstrating that groups opposing environmental injustices have collaborated with local #FFF groups (della Porta et al. 2019, 499, 502). But there is also, however, a tendency for #FFF to depoliticise climate change through the “scientisation” of climate action, as a common argument is that political leaders should simply “listen to the science” (Evensen 2019, 428):

Thunberg hinted at the need for ethical reasoning in her speech at COP24 when she stated “we need to focus on equity”, when she asserted “it is the sufferings of the

many which pay for the luxuries of the few”, and when she reproved political leaders for stealing children’s future. This rhetoric, however, is underdeveloped in the #FridaysForFuture movement and features far less frequently than the admonition to listen to science. (Evensen 2019, 429)¹⁶⁵

Furthermore, Walker (2020) has shown that the focus on “high-profile” school strike actions that are undertaken predominantly by a minority of youth in the Global North silences the environmental and social issues that are perceived as important by other groups of young people globally. This aligns with what I showed earlier in this chapter concerning scientism in environmental politics: it risks delegitimising Indigenous and other non-Western perspectives on ecological issues. As such, it could be interpreted as an expression of coloniality, and particularly of the coloniality of knowledge. Therefore, whether #FFF in its different iterations will be aligned with decolonial environmental justice struggles is unclear.

A similar picture emerges in the research on XR. Slaven and Haydon (2020) discuss this: on the one hand, the organisation expresses concerns about global social justice, but on the other hand, XR’s concept of politics and its actual engagement with social justice leaves a lot to be desired. Citing one of many political commentaries on the rapid growth of the XR movement, they write that “XR depoliticises the climate through its calls for crisis action, bringing forth a ‘privileging of moral action over political analysis’ which hazards strengthening troubling power dynamics” (59). However, Slaven and Haydon also find that XR’s framing of their proposed climate action strategy as “beyond politics” in fact contains a call for deliberative democracy in its proposed creation of a citizen’s assembly (60). This, the authors conclude, points towards more radical social and political change than what is emphasised by XR’s rhetoric. Finally, Slaven and Haydon show that there are indications that XR have taken critiques about the movement’s lack of anti-racist and decolonial perspectives seriously and are beginning to incorporate such concerns (61). Perhaps there is an opening in this movement network for explorations of decolonial environmental justice? Recent developments in Sweden, where an offshoot of XR called Skogsupproret (“the Forest Rebellion”) has gathered environmentalists and Sámi activists for land protection from logging and decolonisation of Sápmi, perhaps suggest this. These developments are interesting to follow to see what conceptions of justice they put forth and whether they point towards NIABYism both regionally and globally.

¹⁶⁵ An empirical study shows that this tendency for “scientisation” varies between local #FFF movements, with particularly high support for “listening to the science” among school-striking youth in New York, Mexico City, and Bucharest—and very weak support in Oslo (de Moor et al. 2020, 27). There are no studies from rural areas or smaller cities and towns, but these results show that #FFF as an urban middle-class youth movement has this tendency towards scientisation in many different parts of the world.

Two political concepts: the Green New Deal (GND) and degrowth

For a few years, between 2018 and 2021 or so, the concept of the GND was on the lips of many if not most left-wing environmentalists in the West. It denotes a policy package for social and environmental reform. Proponents like Naomi Klein (2019) depict the GND as radically anti-capitalist through reform as method, which chimes in with earlier research that has suggested that the GND works as a potential complement to ecosocialist movements (Aşici and Bünül 2012). But others imagine the GND as a much more moderate pro-growth tweaking of the capitalist system (Pollin 2019). Thus, as the concept gained in popularity, it is not surprising that critiques became prominent too. Jamie Tyberg (2019) builds a strong case against the US GND that Klein, among others, supports, depicting it as growth-centred and colonialist. She mentions the Red Deal of the Indigenous organisation the Red Nation as an alternative to and decolonising critique of the GND (8). It would appear, then, that the same kind of leaning towards developmentalism that I identified in sustainable development and (green) social democracy is repeated in the GND, despite the sometimes more radically anti-capitalist rhetoric of GND proponents.

Tyberg's GND critique looks to degrowth as part of a decolonisation of the GND (4). This concept, denoting an equitable reduction of the material size of the global economy as part of anti-capitalist social change, was gaining much attention as well in Anglophone environmentalist thought in the early 2020s. A term meant to subvert the idea of economic growth as necessary and good, degrowth calls for radical rethinking of the foundations for human wellbeing beyond Western-centred developmentalism. Degrowth is gradually moving from being what Gooch, Burman, and Olsson (2019) call a framework for radical political thought and activism (19-20), or what Eversberg and Schmeltzer (2018) call a "lively political and academic *debate*," to being, in the words of the latter, a "highly dynamic and diverse *social process* extending well beyond the scope of the immediate community of a few hundred activist academics who regularly attend degrowth conferences" (266; italics in original). Research has suggested that degrowth and environmental justice are aligned in their critique of capitalist accumulation (Akbulut et al. 2019), that degrowth is a Northern movement for environmental justice (Martínez Alier et al. 2016, 746), and that it can be related to "Sumac Kawsay of the Andes' Quechua people" and the thinking of other similar communities and movements globally (Tyberg 2019, 5).¹⁶⁶ But it has also been suggested that degrowth does not necessarily align with decolonisation (Tyberg 2019) and that it needs to overcome certain "barriers in communication" in order to support and collaborate with Southern environmental justice

¹⁶⁶ On the similarities between degrowth and other such imaginaries, see also Akbulut and colleagues (2019, 5) and Martínez Alier (2012, 66).

movements (Rodríguez-Labajos et al. 2019, 178). As Tyberg (2019) puts it in her title, there is a need for a move from degrowth to decolonisation. Degrowth thus seems to be more open to decolonial environmental justice than most GND thinking, but more work on decolonising it and on creating coalitions with movements is needed.

For these as well as for other imaginaries and movements that are sprouting and growing in WENA and beyond, there are some takeaways that I would particularly highlight from my study—and from the wider research tradition in political ecology that it is part of. To this aim, I will in the following, final section make some suggestions for the creation of writer-activist texts on decolonial environmental justice. How might one imagine the cultural forms of such writing?

8.2.2 Imagining Cultural Forms for Environmental Justice

In imagining these cultural forms, it is useful to draw on ecopolitical narratology, just like it is in the analysis of already existing texts. Working with this method and building on the results from my study, I will creatively explore some possible future environmental justice imaginaries that might offer some food for thought for writer-activists connected to social movements that work for this. I describe their worldmaking actants or beings, and the entities that are not construed as actants. I imagine their ways of knowing and how these can be embodied in forms of expression. Or, to paraphrase and merge my two first research questions: I explore some components of possible environmentally just worlds, and knowledge of and for such worlds. The following is not an exhaustive or definitive account of how environmental justice imaginaries should be constructed, but a collection of suggestions for writer-activists to pick from and find inspiration in.

Human and nonhuman ecological worldmaking actants

The central human actants are collectives of peasants, workers, Indigenous peoples, women, and so on, and their social movements as the shaping forces of our world—as convivial and confrontational worldmaking forces. And these collective human actants are entwined with other ecological actants, summarised in the concept of land in my analyses. Together, these human and nonhuman ecological actants are Stefania Barca's (2020) "forces of reproduction" as the real source of life that exceeds capitalism and that capitalism depends on and consumes. One name for them is Body-Land. In writing about these actants, one could perhaps build on modernist experiments with perspectivism—where the

psychological life of many different characters is depicted—and try to tell stories from multiple perspectives where some are those of animals, plants, or even whole communities of ecological beings, and some are those of humans in different social positions. How could relational worldmaking of humans with land, its wrecking by antagonists, and its protection thus be depicted? This could be a way of exploring both dominant conceptions of the human in WENA and prospects for its subversion. One could focus on the threat to the imperial mode of living with, as Ulrich Brand (2016) writes, “the crisis of Fordism in the early 1970s” and the advent of neoliberal globalisation or “post-Fordism” (115): what happens to people when relatively privileged parts of the global working class get less and less compensation for accepting alienation and health risks? Might the ensuing precarisation in WENA open up for new possibilities for change? What ways could there be to counteract and offer alternatives to fascist responses that protect the short-term interests of predominantly white and male imperial-mode-of-living consumers? One component would be, as Brand and Neidermoser (2019) suggest, a project of “formulating a ‘solidaristic mode of living’ and a framework of ‘a good living for all’” (178). A story of this could be written as a “comedy of the commons,” to borrow Kim Stanley Robinson’s concept; it could explore, with André Gorz, “the elimination of work in the socially and historically specific form it has in capitalism,” of “work-as-employment” or “work-as-commodity” (Barca 2019, 231), and *commoning* as an alternative to this (see e.g. Bargaballo, Beuret, and Harvie 2019). This should not be so hard to imagine, because such nonalienated worldmaking is still here. We see it in the North Sámi language where the verb *bargat* means “to work” but also more generally “to do”: instead of separating work from all other aspects of life, I imagine a world of *bargat*, of working and doing as part of a whole practice of living, where people nourish healthy relations with each other and with the land.¹⁶⁷

Diverse technologies as tools

In cultural forms for environmental justice, technologies are not fetishised and depicted as semi-beings but are generally understood as inanimate tools—but it could be interesting as well to invert the fetishist tendency in dominant culture and depict industrial technology as an antagonist actant in fiction (perhaps playing with monster tropes), although as a form of critical analysis in nonfiction this might become confusing. In any case, cultural forms where there is a detailed critical interrogation of technology and ideas about it are important for environmental justice.

¹⁶⁷ *Bargat* is in many dialect areas more common than the verb *dabekat* for “to do,” as suggested by a teacher and confirmed by a student and native speaker in a class in North Sámi that I participated in.

It is particularly important to interrogate conceptions of what are often called “renewables”: industrial technologies that produce electricity from wind, water, and solar radiation. Conceptions of these as inherently clean and democratic, like in Klein’s text, are common across the political scale in contemporary culture. For instance, a left-wing critic of fossil capitalism like Andreas Malm (2016) bases his vision of societal transition on precisely such a depiction of these technologies (367-88), and this view is shared by corporations, like the Norwegian power company Statkraft who describe a transition to renewables as paving the way for “a more peaceful and democratic world” (Statkraft n.d.).¹⁶⁸ But such conceptions are becoming increasingly difficult to uphold, as the production of these technologies and the extraction of raw materials for them increase and impact more and more places. Dominant conceptions of renewables rely on the idea of climate change as a single issue, which allows one to overlook something Plumwood (2002) pointed out already two decades ago: “If we used a fraction of the resources we currently use to build hyper-efficient solar-powered trawlers or bulldozers that continue to strip what is left in the oceans and forests, the biosphere could still be seriously damaged” (7). They also fail to consider that the raw materials needed include fossil fuel inputs into the production of technologies and the construction of infrastructures (Capellán-Pérez, de Castro, and Miguel González 2019). And they invisibilise the long history of resistance to so-called renewables, such as the opposition to hydroelectric damming that I mentioned in Chapter 2.

Through a critical interrogation of conceptions of “renewables,” it becomes possible to imagine alternative futures where these kinds of technologies and what Gordon Walker (2021) calls techno-energies are much less central, and to instead centre land- and labour-based natural energies, in Walker’s terminology. This brings us back to my above suggestions about the importance of thinking about a collective of human-land beings as actants. A concept that can come into such an imagining of energy is *care*, as suggested by Angelica Wågström and Kavya Michael (2023), who highlight the importance for the “energy transition” of recognising both the need for access to energy for those who undertake care work, and how care work often demands very little industrial-technologically generated energy. Through their latter observation, Wågström and Michael gesture towards the possibility of imagining the transition as a move away from energy-intensive, unequal consumption, and instead towards practices of care as what underpins the reproduction of society. One important thing to explore in an imaginary of energy centred on care is the kinds of technologies and forms of (re)production that could be part of this. Rather than talking about the

¹⁶⁸ Malm has more recently participated in movements that also oppose large-scale non-fossil technologies and infrastructures, but he has not yet, to my knowledge, discussed in his writings what this means for his earlier theory of transition.

commonly imagined West-to-the-Rest transfer of technology, one could explore possible global collaborations on convivial technologies—collaborations in which non-Western societies can teach Western societies important things about practices for living with the land and what sustainable technologies and forms of social organisation could be part of this. There are numerous stories from WENA that could inspire such an imaginative effort; for instance, as Greta Gaard (2014) points out, artists of colour and of minority sexualities in the US have told such stories about climate change, though these are often overlooked in a dominant culture that prioritises stories of technoscientific heroism.

Money as a tool—with limited use

As in the case of technology, money (and markets and growth) is not depicted in a fetishist way. If it features in an emergent/resurgent imaginary, this kind of fetishism is critically analysed. Money is not the source of life but a way for people to secure access to the power embodied in land and labour, or in body-land. It is not odd that counterhegemonic political movements want to get control of money because of the power money has over life in the global capitalist system, but it is necessary not to let this be the horizon of political change. David Graeber's (2014) critique of money can help us understand why. He introduces his critique by pointing to "money's capacity to turn morality into a matter of impersonal arithmetic—and by doing so, to justify things that would otherwise seem outrageous or obscene" (14). One of his most powerful examples of how this operates is from early European colonialism. He shows how despite arguments about morality—such as concerning the souls of Indians—the way power was divided between financiers and explorers meant that moral considerations did not tend to take precedence: "at the key moments of decision, none of this mattered. Those taking decisions [conquistadors] did not feel they were in control anyway; those who were in control [financiers] did not particularly care to know the details" (319). A further resource to draw on here is Alf Hornborg's (e.g. 2016) work on money. I will not reiterate it in detail here because this would take up too much space—his analysis of the peculiar idea and artefact of money requires some elaboration—but what he demonstrates, in brief, is that the kind of signification that general-purpose money entails makes everything exchangeable for everything else, and that this kind of money also enables and favours unlimited accumulation. His conclusion is that it is the logic of money which drives the acceleration of environmental destruction and the exploitation of human labour; capitalism for Hornborg is an expression of the logic of money. The conclusion to draw from Graeber's and Hornborg's analyses is that rather than accept as the given foundation for social organisation a very peculiar type of money that suspends moral judgement and tends to accelerate destruction, one could draw on the many other ways societies have devised to

represent the complicated meanings and choices that are involved in living with other people and with land.

Rational-Romantic knowledges and forms of expression

When it comes to how cultural forms for environmental justice might think about and perform ways of knowing, the kinds of complexities that I outlined earlier in this chapter in the section on rationality and Romanticism provide food for thought.

Science can be explored in ways that do not reinforce scientific hegemony—the sciences of emergent/resurgent culture are of many kinds from many cultures. Within this, some kinds of Western science can be included. One argument for this is that the appeal to Western science is an approach that is likely to speak to secular Westerners; for instance, it is possible to build on the way that the IPCC Special Reports implicitly call for increasingly radical change, as mentioned in Chapter 1. On a more general level, there is another argument for the exploration of forms of Western science: Western science is not necessarily an expression of Western-centric culture, but can be understood as part of a long cross-cultural tradition of scientific inquiry, and it would therefore be odd for counterhegemonic movements to cede the form of rationality that is associated with Western science to dominant colonial culture. One example of a way of knowing that it is unnecessary and problematic to dismiss in such a manner is quantification. In opposition to what is often argued about this form of knowledge, Graeber and Wengrow (2021) show that there are examples of “mathematical and calendrical knowledge” (433) and “administrative tools” related to measurement (423) in cultures that were not governed by bureaucratic elites; these ways of knowing were instead used to organise forms of egalitarian, democratic societies. Measurement, therefore, can be but is not necessarily tied up with centralised bureaucratic control. In other words, the diverse sciences of emergent/resurgent cultural forms do not exclude measurement. Nor do such sciences exclude statistical methods, the presentation of results in graphs, and so on, because the problem with these methods and forms of expression in material I have analysed is specifically related to their role in a hegemonic parochial rationality, to use Tsing’s concept, in which they are used as part of an aesthetic of detached knowing. If these methods and signs are not understood through naïve realism but approached with an awareness of their capacity for misrepresentation, they can be part of the multitude of ways of knowing for environmental justice.

At the same time, it is important not to conceive of these kinds of non-scientific sciences as the sole reliable ways of knowing but as allied to some forms of what I have been calling Romanticism: artistic and creative expression, folktales and myths, and so on. This has repercussions for the imagining of “the

expert”—a figure who is common in discussions of climate and environmental change. Unlike in dominant culture, it is not only when someone’s expertise relies on scientific training—and certainly not only when this training comes from established institutions of science in Western and Westernised culture—that they can count as an expert. Instead, experts can both think through scientific training from different cultures and think through animistic, mythical, or magical ontologies; they can both write textbooks and sing songs; and they can both contemplate matters from a critical distance and be immersed in what they have knowledge of. When Romantic forms of knowledge are explored, Plumwood (2002) points out something that one should keep in mind:

spirituality . . . has many of the same ambiguities and potentials to foster better or worse relationships with nature as other kinds or [sic.] theories and practices. The problems of reason/nature and mind/body dualism arise for spirituality in much the same way as for areas like ethics. A critical engagement with the political and ethical character of specific forms of spirituality is essential. (218)

And when it comes to creative, artistic expression, emergent/resurgent cultural forms explore both the simple—perhaps even the didactic—and the complex. Its writers may bear in mind that such forms of expression can do many different things: they can be modes of protest, ways of spreading information, emotional outlets, ways of feeling real, venues for imagining how things might be different, and more. Crucially, regardless of whether a cultural form is associated with art or with science, with Romanticism or rationality, one should listen and read with the same expectation of finding knowledge and the same readiness to be critical. Poetry, spoken word, songs, paintings, or performance art are not automatically more subjective and less reliable than textbooks, argumentative prose, or scientific papers. The key is instead, for writers as well as readers and listeners, to pay careful attention to detail in the cultural form as a whole, meaning its form of expression and its content together.

Beyond stereotypical divisions between scientific and artistic or mythical forms, which cultural forms can be construed as vehicles for environmental justice knowledge? What are some concrete cultural forms that could mix the kinds of influences that I have mentioned here? One could imagine socialist/communist/anarchist, feminist, Afro-futurist, and Indigenous-resurgence design fiction, where the futures imagined and backcasted from are not about stereotypical white, bourgeois, male, techno-genius agency but about conviviality and commoning and its institutions, practices, and beliefs. One could imagine economics textbooks by movement activists from around the world on ways of taking power over economic decisions, with discussions of different political-economic theories from critiques of dominant neoclassical economics and its Keynesian variety to possible alternatives like ecological economics and Modern Monetary Theory which question the dogma of mainstream economics,

combined with anthropological perspectives on money and different forms of currencies and economies. One could imagine experimental academic writing that is complex but not unnecessarily so; that does not make it more difficult than it has to be to understand its points. One could imagine collections of folk and popular music from land protection movements across the world. And these are just some of the cultural forms for environmental justice writer-activists to explore.

In the final instance, everything that I have been discussing in this thesis begs a commonly asked question about the prospects for change to happen in time to save something worth living for: is there any hope? It is difficult to respond to this with anything other than open questions such as those posed by Sofia Jannok in “Tree Line: Orda” and “Who Are You: Olmmoš”: “How to live this life, how to choose / what is day and night, what is true” (“Tree Line”)? Or “Will you fight if there’s no glory / If there’s no win, nothing to gain, your belief, will it remain” (“Who”)? At the same time, the realisation that human communities and the land together are the only possible foundation for worldmaking, and that capitalist domination is ultimately dependent on this kind of community, is powerful. The source of all that is good, meaningful, and beautiful in this world is not competition and the profit drive, but collective human creativity and the land and water that it interacts with—that which competitive rulers exploit. There is no worldmaking without conviviality. And where people are cut off from this conviviality through alienation, as many are in the Global North from where I am writing, there are still possibilities for another kind of world to be imagined and made through commoning—even for traces of it to be found in everything from bursts of mutual aid among neighbours during crises to how growing green things reclaim spaces from the concrete and the asphalt. This does not on its own answer the question of how people can go about building emergent and resurgent worlds during catastrophic ecological breakdown and simultaneously confront the dominant worldmaking that is eating us alive. But it does offer a starting point for this: as history has shown again and again, things happen when people act collectively in organised ways based on the realisation that the powers that be are vulnerable to their opposition. Even if we cannot know the outcome, to think about the power of conviviality feels good and nourishing; it feels free. Perhaps in this historical moment we must allow for desperation and hopelessness to sit alongside love and hope, like Jannok does on *ORDA*. Because she does not only give expression to uncertainty about whether convivial worldmaking will survive; she also provides comfort, strength, and a reminder that love for people and land *is still here* despite everything. So the song

“Reaggánan Ráhkisvoutha: Yearning,” a poem by Paulus Utsi that describes a life bent by the wind, ends with a soft yet unyielding “Dát lea mu eallin man mon ráhkistan”—“This is my life which I love.” Maybe the best convivial futures we could have imagined without global capitalist devastation are already foreclosed, but the story is not over: there are still lives to love, still worlds to make and fights to fight in making them.

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Appendix

The English translations of the lyrics to Sofia Jannok's songs "Í Ryggen Pá Min Kolt: Backstabbing my Gákti" and "Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness" are reproduced here with the permission of the copyright owner.

I Ryggen På Min Kolt: Backstabbing My Gákti

by Sofia Jannok

It angers me when I'm consistently stereotyped, and casually patronized
Being exoticized just fills me with stress,
yet to you I'm nothing but a reindeer herder in a fancy dress
But the heritage I carry, it just cannot be sold,
for it is the echo of my ancestors, ten thousand years old

An irrelevance with a washed-out face,
an impoverished soul to your colonial gaze
You ask me to dress traditionally when I sing
Well, I guess being politically correct is only for some things

Raised fist, a knife in your hand,
claiming that I'm occupying half of your land,
and assuming that acknowledging our rights
will only result in bloodshed and fights
But I don't ask for you to approve of me
Our lands have been unceded territories from the beginning, you see

Giving is the required response to taking,
a requirement to pass on to future generation
Sure, we were the first ones, but we are still here,
and I don't intend to leave yet, my dear

I'm fed up with being a cutesy symbol put on a shelf
when you're busy selling metals and promoting yourself
A culture cannot exist without blood,
and a land torn asunder by mines equals a genocide

Try to understand and behold the mother we're walking on, isn't she pretty?
But I guess you're so out of touch with reality—what a pity—
that nature to you spells a fenced park in the city

APPENDIX

No, I guess you're not keeping your lingo up to date,
because calling someone "Lapp" is racist, a clear sign of your hate
Indeed, you're so fucking outdated
that sharing this land with immigrants and me is incompatible with your hatred

You tear loving neighbours apart,
smearing the name of my family and the people of my heart;
Your racism is backstabbing my *gákti*

Pretending to be an authority
you're destroying all that is precious to me,
if you'd only realize that in order to break down fences
you need to learn how to accept our differences

Snölejoninna: Snow Lioness

by *Sofia Jannok*

I do exist, I'm a feminist,
an eco warrior and a pacifist
A fullblood member of the snowmobile mob,
sure, I admit it, I'm an egoistic snob
A devoted Buddhist, yet to Jesus I pray
I've always been here, I'll always stay

Don't treat me like a longwinded legal debate,
dividing things between us, creating borders in this state
founded on deceit and historical hate

An outspoken anti-racist, my ass
You don't even recognize the people from whom you've stolen all your cash
Son, he, she and ze;
Once you stole this land from me

A native empress
The rainbow you see
A snow lioness;
Well, all that is me

All of it, yes it can all be found here,
yet I am something more, as *mon lean queer**
Residing here for thousands of years

Dearest politician, I realize it is late,
let's have a discussion, or do you have too much on your plate?
Caring for the environment, won't you be on our side,
did you know that my people is committing suicide?
You think of us as too small to exist,
our issues as too obscure to end up on your list
If you try to get rid of us, we will resist
We've been here since time immemorial, and we choose to persist

Is this what they call democracy,
the majority abusing us, what a travesty
I've been looking for mental and physical freedom for so long,
and, let's get one thing straight, I sure do belong

A native empress
The rainbow you see
A snow lioness;
All that is me

Eamiálmot, álo gávdnon, mon lean ledjonváibmu garra fámuin
*Mon lean gáit, bonju maid, arvedávgi ravddas ravdi***

*I am queer

** An indigenous people, we will never disappear

With the strength of a lion's heart

I am everything, both here and queer;

a rainbow stretching from one edge to the one over there