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# SLOW VIOLENCE AND ENVIRONMNETAL INJUSTICE IN RACHEL KUSHNER'S CREATION LAKE

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## ABSTRACT
*Ecological crisis is one of the pressing concerns of contemporary age and fiction is the one medium through which ecological concerns can be addressed. This study explores how the depiction of slow violence in Creation Lake, by Rachel Khushner, intensifies environmental injustice. The analysis uses Rob Nixon's theoretical framework to examine how ecological harm is implemented gradually and bureaucratically, frequently under the guise of legal development. This research analyzes the ways in which the novel's narrative strategies, and character perspectives expose systemic dispossession, particularly through state-regulated water systems and policy rhetoric, using Catherine Belsey's method of close textual analysis. It focuses around three fundamental themes, the invisibility and temporal displacement of harm, the complicity of state-corporate systems, and the ability of fiction to make slow violence narratively visible. The findings demonstrate that Creation Lake uses institutional language, deferred causality, and a fractured narrative structure to critique ecological exploitation rather than spectacle. The study affirms the role of fiction in exposing environmental injustice and promoting ecological consciousness where official discourse fails, which aligns with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) 6 and 15. It reckons that literature is essential for using narrative and moral witnessing to fight against the normalization of ecological harm.*

**Keywords:** Ecocriticism, Ecological Degradation, Slow Violence, Environmental Injustice, Resource Exploitation, Sustainable Development Goals.

## Introduction
Environmental deterioration and sociopolitical inequality have emerged as a pressing area of research in the contemporary age, characterized by ecological crisis. As a literary form, fiction offers a special interpretive lens to reveal the hidden forms of environmental injustice. One of the most pernicious manifestations of this kind of injustice is what Rob Nixon (2011), called "slow violence". It is a form of harm that disproportionately affects marginalized communities and develops gradually and often imperceptibly (ibid), and operates across long periods and diverse geographies, in contrast to the dramatic and immediate imagery typically associated with violence. Hence, its effects are hard to track and often ignored in public discourse (ibid). Fiction that deal with topics like resource management, land exploitation, and the unequal distribution of environmental degradation are good at depicting this phenomenon. Rachel Kushner's Creation Lake portrays ecological damage through the silent, bureaucratic processes of state-planning and infrastructure design rather than through spectacle or abrupt collapse. This is particularly evident in the depiction of a government-sponsored "mega-basin" project that diverts local water supplies to benefit corporate agriculture at the expense of farmers and the environment (Kushner, 2024; The Guardian, 2024). Furthermore, Thom Davies (2022), investigates slow violence in toxic geographies, contending that while harms are very present

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in structural and bureaucratic forms of environmental harm, they are frequently made "out of sight" in the public imagination (ibid).

Creation Lake (2024), by Rachel Kushner is a prime example of this literary potential. Set in rural southwestern France's Guyenne Valley, the novel depicts a systemic ecological assault masquerading as progress and development. It illustrates the ways state-sponsored "mega-basin" projects, ostensibly designed to boost regional economic growth, lead to long-term ecological degradation and societal uprooting (Financial Times, 2024; NPR, 2024; Washington Post, 2024). Industrial agriculture and global capital accumulation gain from these developments while local and impoverished communities lose access to vital resources like land and water (Financial Times,2024; Washington Post, 2024). Through intricate characters and settings, the narrative depicts institutional complicity in these processes, showing a world where natural systems are being commodified and the earth's "life support" functions are progressively being compromised (The Guardian, 2024; NPR, 2024).

Engaging with related critical perspectives, such as environmental injustice, ecocriticism, and the global sustainability agenda outlined in the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), is necessary to gain a more thorough understanding of the ecological challenges examines in Creation Lake. Environmental Injustice, according to Juliana Maantay (2002) is the "disproportionate exposure of certain people or communities to pollution and environmental hazards, particularly those who are economically and politically marginalized (Maantay, 2002). Maantay (2002) emphasizes that these populations often face "a greater burden of environmental hazards and less access to environmental benefits," due to inequities in land use planning, policy enforcement and institutional power. Parallel to this ecocriticism, defined as "a worldwide emergent moment which came into existence as a reaction to men's anthropocentric attitude of dominating nature" (Mishra, 2016) has emerged as a key literary methodology that interrogates the representation of nature, ecology and environmental ethics in literature. According to Glotfelty (1996), "eco criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". It foregrounds the cultural narratives that shape our perception of the national world and the socio political structures that govern ecological exploitation. Furthermore, the Sustainable Developmental Goals, particularly SDG 6 (clean water and sanitation) and SDG 15 (life on land), offer a global policy framework that underscores the urgency of equitable water access and terrestrial ecosystem preservation. These frameworks offer a crucial context for comprehending the larger consequences of environmental harm that are portrayed in Creation Lake, even though they are not vital to the theoretical analysis in this study. Additionally, they place the study in an interdisciplinary discussion that connects issues of sustainability, justice, and environmental governance to literary production.

This research explores how the novel's thematic engagement with environmental injustice reflects the process of slow violence. The objectives are to examine the ways through which exploitation of natural resources, especially land and water, acts as a system of structural violence against groups that are politically and ecologically vulnerable and how this form of violence intensifies environmental injustice. Nixon's theory of slow violence is applied in this study, and its findings are contextualized in light of two important Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) i.e. SDG 6 (Clean water and Sanitation) and SDG 15 (Life on land) (United Nations 2023).

**Statement of the Problem**

Environmental injustice intensifies the dynamic of slow violence when it is embedded in state-corporate complex system and it renders harm both invisible and normalized, therefore this study examines the ways Rachel Kushner's Creation Lake narratively exposes these legalized, delayed injustices to highlight the entanglement of power, environment, and dispossession.

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**Research Question**

How does environmental injustice intensify slow violence in Rachel Kushner's Creation Lake?

**Rationale and Significance of the Study**

The research is driven by the researcher's interest in climate activism and the belief that literature can help raise awareness about environmental problems, especially the unnoticed ones. Rachel Kushner's Creation Lake reveals these issues by not only representing but also advocating sustainability and justice in the face of often overlooked ecological harms. Furthermore, by aligning the study with SDGs, the research contributes to contemporary eco-critical debates on environmental justice and contemporary fiction.

**Literature Review**

Lahtinen and Loytty (2024) evaluate the rise of empirical ecocriticism, arguing that while empirical tools may capture short term emotional responses they fail to account for the deeper temporal and symbolic layers of text that deal with gradual ecological collapse. They contend that assessing a reader's empathy for non-human species or climate narratives cannot replace careful interpretation, particularly in works that depict gradual, imperceptible harm.

Similarly, Moriarty (2025), explores how illustrated children's books about Wangari Maathai portray environmental injustice in subtle and age-appropriate ways. Drawing on Nixon's concept of slow violence, Moriarty introduces the term "precarious progress" to describe the fragility of economic ecological gains achieved after long term harm. These symbolic texts engage young readers by presenting the environment not merely as setting but as subject, using visual and narrative strategies to cultivate a sense of pace and ecological awareness.

Additionally, Bhatti, Saeed, and Gilani (2023), argue that Khan's Trespassing reveals the ways in which literature creates awareness about the entanglement of ecological crises with human activity, power relation, and environmental degradation. Their study demonstrates that ecocriticism not only identifies natural motifs in fiction but also underscores how storytelling illuminates the repercussions of exploitation on both land and communities (Bhatti et al., 2023). This realization is similar to the current study's focus on Creation Lake, which emphasized environmental injustice as a systemic and gradual from of violence.

Moreover, Masroor, Ajmal, and Khan (2024) also examine how literature addresses both environmental and social injustice. In their study, they found that South Asian fiction often engages with themes of pollution, industrial development, displacement, and climate related disruption. Their study introduces the concept of "narrative advocacy" where literature not only reflects social realities but also inspires action by representing the everyday consequences of ecological harm. The findings present slow violence as both environmental and political, linking it to systemic inequality and marginalization.

Furthermore, the concept of "slow disasters" in Latin American literary contexts is examined by Fuentealba et al. (2024). They analyze empirical cases from Peru, child, and Argentine where long term environmental degradation becomes part of daily life. In these examples, ecological harm is normalized over time, and communities are forced to adopt rather than resist. Their research also offers a regional critique of the Anglophone dominance in environmental humanities and supports the importance of localized theory and analysis. The authors argue that this "slow" temporality of disaster reveals how injustice becomes institutionalized and invisible, especially when no dramatic event triggers media or political attention.

Recently, Riano-Landazabal (2025), explores how conservation efforts in Colombia can produce slow violence by reshaping land use and mobility. His study focuses on rural communities affected by state-backed conservation projects that limit movement, access to land, and traditional practices. The author shows that these policies disproportionately affect women, whose everyday mobility is constrained in the name of environmental protection. The result is not immediate displacement but a gradual re organization of space and community

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life, which echoes Nixon's idea of slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight". He warns that conservation under neoliberal models, can function as a tool of control that reproduces inequality rather than justice. Eco-critical studies highlight the ways climate fiction reimagines environmental crisis, urging readers to confront the slow violence of ecological collapse through narrative representation (Nixon, 2011). Recent scholarship on El Akkad's American War reveals how dystopian literature can raise environmental awareness by depicting the social and ecological consequences of climate change (Iqbal, Khan, & Abdullah, 2024). Such perspectives affirm literature's capacity to merge aesthetics with activism, fostering critical awareness of climate change.

Although these studies offer valuable insights into the global and literary dimension of slow violence especially in postcolonial and Global South contexts, they largely focus on scenarios marked by activism, visible conflict, or rapid environmental change. What remains understudied is how state infrastructure in rural spaces such as water systems and land consolidation projects which enacts environmental injustice through legal mechanisms. Unlike narratives centered on climate catastrophe, Creation Lake reveals slow violence as part of ordinary governance and development, focusing on mega-basin infrastructure, resource allocation and policy debates. It demonstrates how ecological harm can be structured into systems that appear neutral or even beneficial.

This research directly addresses that gap by analyzing how the novel presents resource control and environmental exploitation through the theoretical underpinnings of Rob Nixon. The study extends Nixon's framework into new narrative and regional contexts by examining how a contemporary novel situated in rural France critiques environmental policy not only through spectacle, but through the everyday mechanism of administrative harm.

**Theoretical Framework**

This study analyzes Creation Lake through Rob Nixon's (2011), prism of slow violence, which is introduced in his book Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of Poor. Nixon's theory provides an effective framework for understanding forms of environmental harm that are gradual, unspectacular and institutionally normalized. Drawing upon three key tenets: invisibility and temporal displacement; state corporate complicity; and the narrative function of fiction, this section argues that Creation Lake as a literary case study represents strong violence in portrait fiction.

**Invisibility and Temporal Displacement**

The terms "invisibility" and "temporal displacement" describe environmental damage that develops gradually over time, frequently without visible symptoms which makes it challenging to identify, track down, or address its impact in literary, political or public discourse. Nixon (2011), defines slow violence as "a violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all". Unlike conventional forms of violence, which rely on immediacy and spectacle, slow violence often escapes both visual representation and political urgency. Its effects accumulate silently, often across generations, and are therefore excluded from dominant discourses of crisis or catastrophe. This temporal displacement renders victims and ecosystems socially invisible within media, legal and institutional frameworks.

"A different kind of violence, a violence that is neither spectacular nor instantaneous, but rather incremental and accretive, its calamitous repercussions playing out across a range of temporal scales," Rob Nixon (2011), exhorts readers to acknowledge. A significant change in the environmental harm is conceptualized is introduced by this articulation. Instead of being characterized by spectacular visibility or instantaneous destruction, slow violence develops gradually and frequently lacks a distinct genesis. It becomes ingrained in political, legal, and infrastructure institutions that mask its long-term effects. Since such violence defies

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conventional story forms and public identification, its delayed impact produces what he calls a "representational challenge". Understanding delayed violence thus revolves around the concepts of invisibility and temporal displacement: harm unfolds quietly, dispersed over time and geography, and frequently eludes accountability and discussion. This idea is central to the study, as its guides how the novel is examined for the quiet but ongoing harm shown through its story, language, and major themes.

**State-Corporate Complicity**

Rob Nixon (2011), emphasizes hat slow violence is often enabled through the strategic collaboration of state institutions and corporate interests. Rather than appearing as direct or explosive events, environmental harm is administered through policy, legal frameworks, and infrastructural systems that obscure responsibility. He explains that this violence frequently escapes accountability because it unfolds over long durations, which do not align with the short-term cycles of electoral politics or corporate returns. As a result, environmental issues are repeatedly deprioritized, with leaders adopting a stance of "not now, not yet"/ "last in, first out" especially when such actions fail to produce immediate political or financial gain. He further explains this mindset through the concept of "resource enclave" where wealth extraction occurs within tightly controlled zones that are physically and imaginatively cut off from the surrounding poverty. In such contexts, both foreign and local elites treat natural resources as "exterritorial," existing for profit rather than for people or the nation itself. This reflects imaginative dissociation, a rent-seeking logic that values markets over communities and normalizes the gap between extraction and ecological or social care. As a result, slow violence is embedded not just in infrastructure but in the very mindset of development, making it harder to confront or even recognize (Nixon, 2011, p. 85, 86). Moreover, Nixon draws attention to the neglect of poor and marginalized communities, who are often most affected yet least studied, consulted, or protected. These communities are either ignored or subjected to exploitative practices under the guise of development and experimentation (Nixon, 2011, p. 28). This tenet shapes the present study's focus on how fiction reveals the complicity of state and corporate systems in normalizing environmental injustice through slow, legalized, and often invisible forms of harm.

**Fiction representing Slow Violence**

The representational challenge of slow violence is another core concern for Nixon. He contends that this form of harm "requires imaginative storytelling to make visible what is unseen and to dramatize what is incremental" (Nixon, 2011, p. 28). Fiction, then, becomes a vital literary strategy for rendering slow violence legible. By exploring how ecological degradation affects memory, identity, and everyday life, literature can resist the reassure of long-term harm and humanize delayed destruction.

According to Nixon (2011), literary forms that defy the demands of spectacle, immediacy, and sensory conformation are necessary to depict slow violence. Imaginative writing becomes essential for making delayed, invisible harm accessible to perception, emotions, and actions, in a world shaped by what Nixon, calls "layered predicament of apprehension". He challenges the cultural privileging of sight and the assumption of violence must be seen to be real, asking instead how we can ethically engage with threats that unfolds slowly, too distantly, too minutely to be noticed in a single moment. In this context, fiction not only becomes a tool of expression but also of resistance which is able to give form to environmental harms that science may overlook or politics may deny. "The narrative imaginings of writer-activists", according to Nixon (2011), "may thus offer us a different kind of witnessing: of sights unseen" and renders the imperceptible apprehensible. Moreover, he elucidates, "In a world permeated by insidious, yet unseen or imperceptible violence, imaginative writing can help make the unapparent appear, making it accessible and tangible by humanizing drawn-out threats inaccessible to the

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immediate senses" (ibid).Hence, this tenet enlightens the present study's focus on literature's role in exposing environmental injustice, especially through texts that humanize long-term damage and challenge dominant framework of visibility , authority , and evidence.

Rob Nixon's theory of slow violence offers a precise lens through which to interpret the ecological, political, and narrative structure of Creation Lake. The novel's focus on temporal invisibility, state complicity, and affective storytelling reflects the defining features of Nixon's theoretical framework. By foregrounding these dimensions. Kushner's work not only critiques the mechanisms of environmental exploitation but also challenges the dominant modes through which ecological harm is socially and politically obscured.

The sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), also known as the Global Goals, were established by United Nations in 2015 as a universal plan to promote peace, prosperity and environmental protection by 2030 (United Nations Development Programme). This study focus on Goals 6 and 15, which relate to clean water, sanitation, and life on land. These goals help frame the novel's concerns with environmental justice and sustainable governance. Creation Lake explores issues such as ecological damage, social displacement, and systemic neglect, showing how fiction can reveal forms of slow violence that are often overlooked. By connecting these themes to the SDGs, the novel urges both readers and policy makers to recognize the deep-rooted inequalities that contribute to environmental crisis. This study therefore examines Nixon's theory of slow violence alongside the selected SDGs, using the following research methodology to explore their representation in the text.

**Research Methodology**

This qualitative study adopts an interpretive textual analysis to examine the representation of environmental injustice and slow violence in Rachel Kushner's Creation Lake. The approach is descriptive, analytical, and interpretive, suited to explore how meaning is constructed through narrative language, form, and ideology rather than through empirical data. This method is especially appropriate for the scene of literary studies, where the focus lies not in proving a hypothesis, but in analyzing how literary texts participate in social, ethical, and political discourse. Belsey (2002), draws from the post-Barthesian idea of the "death of the author," which frees the text from authorial control and opens it to multiple readings. As she writes, "the death of author… means liberation of the texts from the authority of a presence behind it which gives it meaning…plural, contradictory, capable of change". This framework is particularly useful in analyzing Creation Lake, where environmental injustice is communicated not through explicit declarations but through narrative gaps, administrative language, and delayed consequences. Additionally, this method allows the study to engage with Sustainable Development Goals 6 and 15, which concern clean water, sanitation, and life on land (United Nations Development Programme). Moreover, the selection of the novel is purposive, as it offers a nuanced literary depiction of environmental degradation, state complicity and rural dislocation.

**Analysis and Discussion**

Creation Lake (CL) functions as a narrative embodiment of Rob Nixon's theory of Slow Violence by illustrating how environmental injustice is rendered invisible, accepted by the law, and eventually intensifies ecological vulnerability through its fragmented narratives, weird landscapes, and various characters. Using Nixon's framework from Slow Violence and Environmentalism of the Poor, this study examines three central themes which are the invisibility and temporal displacement of environmental harm, the complicity of state-corporates power in the justification of ecological degradation, and the ability of fiction to make invisible violence visible. Each of the themes underscores Kushner's use of fiction as a powerful investigative tool; it becomes a counter-discursive archive that records environmental harm masked by institutional rhetoric. The discussion further aligns the findings with

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sustainable developmental goal 6 (clean water and sanitation), and 15 (life on earth), emphasizing the novel's relevance to contemporary environmental and social justice discourse.

**Invisible Violence and Deferred Consequences**

The novel's deeper look at environmental injustice and the politics of development is clearly shown in the title Creation Lake, which is full of symbolic meaning and sarcasm. At first, the word "creation" makes us think of beauty, beginnings, or something good and holy. But close reading of the novel shows that this idea is used in an ironic way. The lake, possibly made by humans, is the result of corporations and the government. What should be seen as environmental harm is presented as progress or recreation (Kushner, 2024, p. 32). The text says, "The nicest feature was a lake just beyond town, perhaps man-made, but pleasant. A few old men were dispersed along the lakeshores, still as statues, their fishing poles over the water" (ibid). The word "lake" also suggests peace and being enclosed, which reflects how slow violence works, it happens quietly over time not through sudden events. This matches Nixon's idea that slow violence is not dramatic or quick, but slow and hard to notice (Nixon, p. 14), hence, the title is important in the novel's message. It challenges the clean and positive language used to describe development and shows how quite violence can be hidden inside modern ideas of "progress" aligning with Nixon's perspective.

Rob Nixon (2011), describes slow violence as harm that builds over time, is hard to see, and often cannot be reversed (ibid). Kushner shows this clearly in how ecosystems are slowly damaged by water management systems, especially through building mega-basins. Bruno Lacambo explains that these reservoirs, lined with plastic, pull water from underground aquifers. This water is then exposed to toxins and dries up faster in the sun (CL, p.10). These changes may seem small at first but lead to big problems like poor soil, damaged environments, and less water. Rural people are hurt the most, as they depend on these national systems. Words like "siphoning" and "capturing" show how nature is turned into something to be used by industry (CL, p. 10). Taking water out of its natural place becomes a kind of structural violence as it happens slowly, is hidden, but has serious effects (Nixon, 2011, p. 22). In the novel, water is not shown as just a product but as a living part of the earth, harmed by so-called development. This kind of harm also connects to the loss of species. Bruno respects the Neanderthals, an extinct group which he sees as living in balance with nature. This adds to Nixon's (2011), point that slow violence also wipes out different types different ways of living that cared for the environment. In this way the novel shows that slow violence does not just damage land and water rather it also species and their memory (p. 14). Since the damage happens slowly, government and business leaders are rarely blamed because there is no big, sudden event to point to. This is part of environmental injustice where poor and rural people suffer most, while richer groups benefit. Because these communities have fewer resources to defend themselves, the harm continues, mostly ignored by politics and the media.

As the narrator travels along the road by Le Moulin, the landscape reflects the deep neglect of rural life. The description of "sun-singed squashes," "scraggly lettuces," and "rocky soil" shows how the land is difficult to farm and unsustainable for local people. Kushner also observes that "Their land did not border a creek or river tributary and would be difficult to irrigate" (CL, p. 32). This detail underscore that community is constrained by environmental limits that prevent sustainable farming. By drawing attention to such overlooked conditions, Kushner illustrates how ecological harm is normalized and eventually forces rural communities into vulnerability and decline. This scene highlights the absence of irrigation infrastructure, long-standing abandonment of rural regions, where ecological constraints combine with social neglect to make survival nearly impossible which reflects a form of invisibility and temporal displacement. It does not seem urgent until it leads to depopulation and poverty because the gradual depletion of soil and water resources gradually undermines livelihoods and causes

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long-term vulnerability. With its focus on water scarcity and systemic neglect of rural sustainability, which exacerbates social inequality, this portrayal also aligns with SDG 6 and SDG 15, which emphasize the degradation of soil and ecosystem that threaten rural sustainability. As Nixon (2011) explains, such gradual exhaustion of land and resources illustrates slow violence, where ecological harm builds over time and changes the circumstances of rural survival. This framework makes the depiction of the subtle but persistent harm, that threatens the ecosystems and communities in the novel, more understandable.

The pump failure cause by zebra mussels shows how environmental problems build slowly and often go unnoticed until they cause sudden damage. Although the state labels such incidents as sabotage or arson, Kushner uses her character's voice to highlight that the underlying causes are more profound ecological imbalance and neglect problems. Pascal Balmy's claim that "trade, industrial farming, highways, tourists, commercial air travel, trucking, and shipping" (CL, p. 51) are the true offenders, makes it abundantly evident that it is strong systems, not lone individuals, that cause long-term damage. His story about the state introducing lynx, then wolves, and later facing more problems, shows how short-term solutions leads to long-term destruction. This reflects Nixon's (2011), idea of slow violence, where harm develops quietly over time and only becomes visible when it is too late. This also links to SDG 6 (Clean Water and Sanitation), since failed water systems threaten fair access to water, and SDG 15(Life on Land), as poor management harms ecosystems and reduces biodiversity.

**State-Corporate Complicity in the perpetuation of Environmental Injustice**

Creation Lake (CL) reveals how the intertwined forces of state authority and corporate profit perpetuate environmental injustice resulting in the normalization and invisibility of ecological harms. Through the voices of rural French farmers especially Jean Violaine and the debates around mega basins, the novel offers a layered critique of environmental injustice (CL, p. 180). The mega-basins, which are used for industrial agriculture, represent the intrusion of capitalist agribusiness on traditional rural farming. Here, slow violence manifests through the systemic erosion of local farmers' independence, income, and identity, pressuring them to conform or surrender their land. Jean's comments on rising suicides and economic despair reflect how slow violence results in the quit disappearance of the rural poor (ibid).

A pivotal scene of protest illustrates the institutional nature of this harm, "Le Moulin was converted to a hubbub of excitement…in protest of the government's plan of steal their water and give it to corporate farmers, their plan to ruin thus valley" (CL, p. 215). This is not framed as illegal action but as administrative policy. Nixon observes that slow violence often works through the official channels of progress and policy, where governments are complicit in destruction through partnerships with capital. The phrase "plan to ruin this valley" uncovers how bureaucratic language disguises harmful intent as rational governance.

The narrator's description of Priest Valley a place with "no one lives", "a valley of pure green," and "no development" (CL, p. 42), critiques how modern society equates development with destruction. Green space, usually a sign of health, reframed as emptiness or failure. This echoes Nixon's view that slow violence works under the assumption that ecological harm is necessary for progress what he calls "planetary management" (Nixon, 2011, p. 16).

Rural France itself is portrayed as a landscape of attrition, not crisis. With "collapsed barns", "bald hills", and grim little dwellings," Kushner paints a picture of slow collapse (CL, p. 32). Nixon's idea of "glacial violence" is illustrated by metaphors like autoimmune disease, "like the scalp of someone with an autoimmune condition" (ibid). These subtle but powerful images show how slow violence becomes systemic and self-sustaining, buried in the everyday routine of development and governance (Nixon, 2011, p. 25).

The way that the "real Europe" is describes as "a borderless network of supply and transport" and as "highways and nuclear power plants" demonstrates the ways covert infrastructure

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systems both support daily life and harm society and the environment. The irresponsible behavior by truck drivers is portrayed by these imageries that they "ignore weight regulation on their loads" and "safety inspections on their brakes". Overall, Kushner's depiction of real Europe including "windowless distribution warehouses," demonstrates the ways businesses and the government engage in destructive practices that exploit both workers and the land (CL, p. 27). This reflects Nixon's ides of slow violence, where the damage to people and environment happens gradually, spread out over time and space, and frequently masked by terms like efficiency and progress. Hence, the deep interconnectedness of institutional power and environmental harm becomes clear by the portrayal of Europe as an invisible transport network driven by profit and official neglect.

The large-scale cultivation of seed corn on Guyenne reflects how state-corporate complicity directs natural resources toward industrial agriculture while marginalizing local communities. Kushner describes the monocrop economy as "corn, corn, and more corn", a phrase that underscore the sterility and uniformity of land reduced to a single cash crop (CL, p. 32). To sustain this system, the state planned massive water reservoirs or "mega- basins" that would dedicate regional water to industrial growers, encapsulated in slogans such as "no water without management" and "no future without water" (CL, p. 33). These rhetorical strategies illustrate what Belsey (2002) calls the textual construction of power, where language masks the exploitation under the guise of collective progress.

The conversion of diverse landscapes into monocrop fields, described as "vast fields of green, sterile as a Nebraskan Monsanto horizon," signals depletion of biodiversity and soil vitality (CL, p. 33) and also exemplify what Nixon (2011), terms slow violence which is the gradual, often invisible process of ecological harm. Resistance against this dispossession often turns violent, as Kushner notes cases, where peaceful demonstrations escalated into riots, resulting in serious injuries and repression (CL, p. 34). It emphasizes Nixon's (2011), assertion that marginalized groups are disproportionately exposed to ecological and political systemic violence as a result of environmental struggles. As the mega-basins support corporate agriculture under the pretense of development and management, the description also demonstrates how the state and corporate power are intertwined in determining environmental policy. Therefore, it is evident how such complicity results in direct forms of environmental injustice and dispossession of local communities when protests are violently suppressed. Such projects, which prioritize industrial agriculture over local community deprive them of their fundamental rights to land and water, are undermining SGD 6 (Access to clean water and Sanitation).

Much of the population had fled this region for its lack of jobs, its stagnancy, and its disconnection from modern life. There was no future here, and so young people had moved to cities…to seek jobs in factories or in the service sector, to get an education, try to find a pathway into middle-class life. There were still a few small dairy operations, but most of the locals who remained here had given up on farming, acquired satellite TV, and drank all day. With the butcher and baker in their villages long gone, the people in this valley had to drive to Bouliere to shop at Leader Price." (CL, p. 32-33)

The passage shows due to loss of jobs, and "disconnection from modern life" young people tend to leave their villages, while those who stayed behind quit /abandoned farming and became dependent on outside markets like "Leader Price" The disappearance of local shops such as "the butcher and bake" highlights how community systems were replaced by corporate supply chains. This slow decline of basic necessities reflects Nixon's idea of slow violence which occurs gradually through economic neglect and structural change rather than sudden disaster. The portrayal of a community left with little more than "satellite TV" and drinking depicts the ways corporate and state priorities create long-term social and ecological vulnerability (ibid).

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In short, the above passage highlights the temporal displacement of ecological harm, where the long erosion of rural economies and landscapes forces younger generation to migrate. The absence of opportunity reflects not only environmental decline but also state neglect, which illustrates Nixon's (2011), concept of slow violence operates quietly until entire communities are uprooted.

By unmasking such hidden infrastructures, the novel not only critiques the systemic complicity of state and corporate power but also demonstrates fiction's unique ability to make invisible violence perceptible.

**The Role of Fiction in Making Hidden Violence Visible**

Kushner uses fiction to visualize harm that is invisible in media or policy language. In one reflection, Bruno Lacombe notes how the mega-basins affect water. "These plastic-lined reservoirs siphon groundwater…exposing it to leads toxins and accelerating its evaporation" (CL, p. 10). There is no crisis, no explosion, only quite despair. Nixon writes that "imaginative writing can make the unapparent appear" (CL, p. 28), and Kushner achieves this by guiding readers into the moral and ecological implication of development without spectacle.

The novel also critiques the language of development itself. Sadie Smith and Minister Platon show how bureaucratic speech becomes a tool of violence. When the state's "rural coherence" (CL, p. 33) policy justifies mega basin construction, the phrase hides pollution, waste, and displacement beneath the appearance of modernization (CL, p. 45). Nixon (2011), explains that governments normalize exploitation through economic and legal vocabularies. Euphemism like "coherence" serve to erase harm rather than resolve it.

After a sabotage event, Platon claims that mega basins are vital to economic future of rural France (CL, p. 46). His language equals global capitalist justifications for extractive projects. Nixon (2011), notes that environmental harm is often legitimized as economic necessity through state corporate analysis. In addition, displacement and degradation are also framed as progress as evident from these examples.

Furthermore, Sadie Smith's character reveals how fiction can expose these mechanisms. Her work is intentionally vague: "I had been watching him now for months, without any explicit instruction…" (CL, p. 56). Her role mirrors the slowness and bureaucratic anonymity of slow violence. Nixon (2011), emphasizes that harm is often enact it through impersonal institutions with no clear author. Sadie's observation, mundane but loaded, show how harm operates beneath the surface.

Sadie fully understands the system' hidden workings when she says, "By hiring consultants and spies. By keeping track of those who threatened their interests" (CL, p. 173). Her tone is calm and formal, but the message shows how those in power quietly control and silence people who disagree with them. This connects with the thirds tenet, how fiction can reveal hidden forms of violence. As Nixon (2011) explains, this kind of harm is a "representation challenge," and stories like Creation Lake help make these quiet, hidden actions easier to see and understand.

Moreover, Kushner's depiction of depopulation, abandoned farms, and the erosion of local services underscores the environmental injustice faced by rural communities. The gradual depletion of resources, the restructuring of land for large-scale industrial use, and the loss of sustainable livelihoods exemplify that ecological harm disproportionately affects marginalized populations and leaves them vulnerable and largely invisible in public discourse, Fiction plays a significant role in making these unseen aspects perceptible to readers, transforming the abstract environmental harm into a tangible narrative. By presenting the lived experiences and realities of these communities, the novel allows readers to witness the cumulative consequences of slow violence, in line with Nixon's (2011) assertion. Through imaginative storytelling, the

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novel exposes how environmental degradation, economical marginalization, and social neglect intersect, highlighting the ethical imperative to recognize and address harms that are otherwise overlooked and normalized.

**Conclusion and Recommendations**

The aforementioned analysis makes it clear that Creation Lake exposes the mechanism and effects of slow violence through the inconspicuousness of environmental damage, state-corporate collusion, and the moral function of fiction in bringing invisible realities to light. The novel highlights important connection between environment and social injustice and shows the ways ecological degradation, social marginalization, and cultural erasure occur gradually, disproportionately impacting vulnerable communities.

The findings of the research support the main contention, which is that environmental harm becomes more than just materially damaging when it is implemented through legal frameworks, infrastructure, and developmental rhetoric. It also becomes more difficult to recognize, address or resist in such case. This situation is skillfully revealed in Creation Lake, which depicts environmental injustice through a gradual process of systemic attrition brought on by the combined forces of policy, bureaucracy, and normalized neglect rather than a sudden disaster. The novel offers a compelling critique on how environmental degradation is both accepted and concealed in democracies, based on Nixon's theory of Slow Violence.

The novel, through the portrayal of water infrastructure, policy-driven ecological harm, and rural dispossession, provides an answer to the research question. Instead of being merely background scenes, the mega-basins, depleted aquifers, and uprooted farmers serve as narrative focal points that illustrate how capitalist growth and bureaucratic governance document violence as modernization. Kushner's depiction of violence through repetition, stagnancy, and administrative power, rather than drama, is reminiscent of Nixon's emphasis on invisibility and temporal displacement (Nixon, 2011, p. 14, 169). Similarly, the story revolves around the theme of state-corporate collusion. Policies like the previously mentioned "rural coherence "and the justification of mega-basin construction as "essential to France's economic future" (CL, p. 46) show the ways governance can act as a catalyst for devastation. Nixon's claim that the government normalizes exploitation through strategic vocabularies is reflected in these instances. While their loss is reframed in the public as a national development and advancement, the rural world, whose labor and land are taken, suffers invisibly. This study also critically illustrates the power of fiction in the representation of this invisible sufferings endured by marginalized communities. Kushner makes those otherwise invisible layers of harm visible through atmospheric realism, character introspection, and non-linear storytelling. Nixon's task of "making the unapparent appear" and "kind of witnessing: of sights unseen" is exemplified by Sadie Smith's internal monologue, Bruno Lacombe's ecological mourning, and then the strange stillness in rural France (Nixon, 2011, p. 28). By making the reader sit with its weight and tempo, the novel's fragmented, slow, and recurrent formal structure does more than just portray slow violence.

The research's ramifications are also relevant to prevailing global challenges. Creation Lake highlights the ways dispossession occur under the pretense of sustainability, even in areas like rural Europe that are frequently left out of conversations about environmental justice. This disproves the notion that postcolonial areas, war-ton regions, or the Global South are the only places, where slow violence occurs. This is how the novel reframes ecological vulnerability as a global distributed condition that flourishes whatever ecological preservation is subordinated to administrative logic. Furthermore, the novel challenges the practically of Sustainability Development Goals like SDG 15(Life on Land) and SDG 6 (Access to clean water) when these principles are compromised by technocratic tactics that disguise harm as advancement. In this

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way, fiction turns onto a vehicle for resistance, a creative space where harm can be re-examined from and ethical standpoint and re- narrated.

In a nutshell, Creation Lake expands on Nixon's theory of slow violence rather than merely reflecting it. The study demonstrates that violence and dramatic situations are not always necessary for harm to harm. It frequently occurs as a result of laws, regulation, and silent choices. By presenting the narrative in this manner, Kushner encourages readers to recognize and consider the covert mechanisms that harm the environment. Literature extends its status as a mere art from in this way. It extends into a means of documenting, critiquing, and denouncing injustice.

This study suggests encouraging prospects for further research on climatic resistance, slow violence, and environmental injustice. Future researchers can:

- Examine the ways environmental harm increases social inequality using intersectional frameworks that address class, gender, and race.
- Compare the novel with other literary works that explore similar themes to uncover both universal patterns and local specificities
- Use character-centered approaches and trauma theory- informed readings to explore how people internalize ecological violence and develop emotional resilience.
- Engage with other Sustainable Development Goals other than 6 and 15, to strengthen the link between literary critique and sustainability discourses.
- Analyze narrative forms, especially temporality and emotional registers, to comprehend how literary technique influences public awareness and ethical response to ecological harm.

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