

The Fluid Landscapes of the Othered Environment: the politics of exploitation in *Breakfast of Champions* and *1984*

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Abstract

One of the basic notions of 'Ecocriticism' is that environmental devastation occurs due to the 'unrestrained capitalism' - a very dire picture of which can be found in Kurt Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1973). It would not be an overstatement that this novel is itself an Eco-critical text. Vonnegut shows us how in an imaginary future a society entirely consumed in automobile culture devastates its land, how dislocation becomes a reality for people in that land and above all how industrial and corporate hypocrisy works up in forming the 'Self' of the exploiters. This showcase of 'capitalist exploitation' leading to the destruction of the environment aligns with the ecocritical theory of 'hegemonic oppression'. However, in George Orwell's *1984* (1949) the devastation seems to happen not due to the 'capitalist exploitation' rather due to the conscious exploitation by a dominant group in a strictly stratified and hierarchical society. Direr, indeed, is the way this group sees the region where the 'great wars' are fought among the three surviving mega-states - Oceania, Eurasia and East Asia. Large plains and forests of Asia, South Asia, Africa, and Latin America constitute these frontiers. The boundaries there are ever-changing. These regions are used for exploitation of resources - both environmental as well as human. Both the text, therefore, appears relevant in understanding the environmental exploitation in the regions which we along with many other human beings call home. These lands suffer from ecological devastation due to the western model of development and profiteering of the big corporations and multinational companies. Governments in these regions are acting as accomplices to these agencies. Therefore, this paper endeavours to expound how Vonnegut's and Orwell's novel reveal the veritable faces of environmental exploitation and devastation by two seemingly opposite forces and, under such exploitation how the victim landscapes are forced to put up with turning into the 'Other' by the 'Self' of the big corporations and governments and thus, in conception, turning into 'fluid' to these forces.

In the discussion or debate on the issues of environment, landscape essentially becomes a part. Here I intend to mean the natural landscape. The landscape, as a matter of fact, is regarded as something objective. It is explored for resources, sustainability and development – as various big corporations and governments claim, and it is also exploited – as the environment activists claim. It is conserved, again, by the environment-conscious groups. Whereas the debate on 'explore versus conserve' disperses throughout eco-critical discourses, the landscapes which are really exploited in the name of exploration mostly remain at blind spots. These landscapes become fluid – in the sense that their physical boundaries shape-shift according to the will of their owners.¹ In most cases, the inhabitants – the people who really live in those lands – are not the owners. The owners are the people with legal right and authorities over these lands. Therefore, the boundaries of these lands may and, in most cases, do change like the boundaries of puddles of liquids or take the shape of their containers. More so, the freedom of the inhabitants turns fluid just like the terrain's fluidity as it is compelled to yield to the shear force from the owners. Interestingly though, the landscapes I would like to discuss are physical territories with affixed political identities like government, sovereignty, people, constitution (may or may not be) etc. and any other entities a territory would need to call itself a state. Nonetheless, these territories appear as mere terrains to the sight of those who are thinking of exploring As a sensitive stream like all other creative art, literature

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cannot but address this issue. However, its tools are metaphors and allusions. Hence, the very start of eco-criticism started with a story 'A Fable for Tomorrow', in Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) which was about how the inhabitants of a certain town devastated their nature and eventually paid for it and all that (Garrard, 1). However, in this article I would like to present two novels – Vonnegut's *Breakfast of Champions* (1969) and Orwell's *1984* (1949) to demonstrate and discuss that the exploitation and devastation of nature go much deeper than the issue of some town's people making some silly or maybe sin-like mistakes for which they ultimately had to be punished. Here reading these two novels alongside we find a scheme, a mindset of 'we' and 'they', 'Self' and 'Other', a perfectly calculated formula to set forth pre-emptive mechanisms of exploitation and the absence of any regret for that. *Breakfast of Champions* exposes the modes and the indifference of the 'Self's' exploitation of the landscapes and *1984* identifies the territorial positioning of the 'Other' landscapes and how the definitive exploitation there culminates into turning them into 'fluid'. Moreover, both the books clearly identify who these exploiters are. The exploiters, as Vonnegut shows, are not quite unknown to us; and we somehow maybe reluctantly, accept their right to exploit. However, Orwell's *1984* holds some real surprise. Here the section of the society that formulates this well calculated, ongoing, never-ending, and never receding exploitation consists of people whom we may call some of our very own. Therefore, I write this paper keeping 'Eco-criticism' at the forefront and use it to show how the 'Self' has formed and eventually has identified certain landscapes as the 'Others' and turned them into 'fluid terrains' – devoid of shape as well as freedom – for the exploitation of both the natural resources and the people who are part of that landscape and who are, therefore, trying to hold onto whatever is left there, with the help of two breath-taking novels – *Breakfast of Champions* by Kurt Vonnegut (1922-2007) and *1984* by George Orwell (1903-1950).

When we look at the stakeholders – the inhabitants, the explorer/possessors/owners, and/or the conservationists of the territories, we cannot help noticing that politics plays a crucial role here. Therefore, the point of departure for my discussion in this paper would be the statement – "Ecocriticism is, then, an avowedly political mode of analysis" (Garrard 3). Keeping politics in sight let me discuss a few of the notions which helped me to formulate the structure of my study of the fluid landscapes identified and illustrated in this paper. Lawrence Buell has identified the 'toxic discourse' of environmental devastation as a 'cultural genre' and he has set out its four criteria: 1) 'mythography of betrayed Edens', 2) 'totalizing images of a world without refuge from toxic penetration', 3) 'the threat of hegemonic oppression', and 4) 'gothicization'. Of these 'the threat of hegemonic oppression' comes from "powerful corporation or governments" which is "contrasted with threatened communities" (Ecocriticism 12). Understanding the terms- 'the threat of hegemonic oppression', 'powerful corporation or governments' and the 'threatened communities' is immensely important in this paper. Italian Marxist theoretician and politician Antonio Gramsci propounded 'hegemony' as the "consentient privileges enjoyed by the dominant group because of its position and function in the world of production" (Hegemony 673). The 'dominant group' in Gramsci's statement aligns with the 'powerful corporation and governments' in Buell's third criteria. The 'privileges' are the privileges of exploitation (in the name of exploration) in the landscapes presented in *Breakfast of Champions* and *1984*, and also around the world. This exploitation is consentient. The objectified and exploited nature in those landscapes as well as the inhabitant there have given consent, actively or passively, in the form of an allowance to be exploited. There might be minimal or no resistance whatsoever from the

part of the exploited. Therefore, the landscapes along with their inhabitants represent the ‘threatened communities’ which eventually turn ‘fluid’ in the novels.

To understand how the landscapes turn ‘fluid’ because of the ‘hegemonic oppression’ of the ‘powerful corporations and governments’, the identification of the formation of the ‘Self’ and the ‘Other’ in the narrative becomes crucial too. Hegel (1770-1831) was among the firsts to introduce the idea of the ‘Other’ as a constituent in self-consciousness where the ‘Self’ acts to exert mastery over the ‘other’ (Duquette). George Herbert Mead (1863—1931) duly affirms this idea of ‘self’ in the statement, “The generalized other (internalized in the “me”) is a major instrument of social control...” (Cronk). With the advent of Post-colonial reaction and ideas the definition of imperialism becomes equally important to understand the concept of the ‘other’. In addition, the issue of ‘imperialism’ is surmountable to understand the concept of the ‘othered landscapes’ discussed in this paper. *The Dictionary of Human Geography* defines imperialism as “The creation and maintenance of an unequal economic, cultural and territorial relationship, usually between states and often in the form of an empire, based on domination and subordination” (Gallagher, Dahlman and Gilmartin). The maintenance of this unequal relationship has been described as depending on the subordination of an “other” group, or people. Mountz presents the philosophies of postcolonial scholars who demonstrate “that the colonizing powers narrated an ‘other’ whom they set out to save, dominate, control, civilize and/or extract resources through colonization” (Key Concepts in Political Geography). According to post-colonial theorist Edward Said, “to build a conceptual framework around a notion of us-versus-them is in effect to pretend that the principal consideration is epistemological and natural – our civilization is known and accepted, theirs is different and strange – whereas in fact the framework separating us from them is belligerent, constructed, and situational” (Reflexions on Exile and Other Essays 577). These frameworks continue to shape our sub-national, national, and international relations with each other in a way that is deemed by the majority of the Geographical community to be counterproductive. In this sense, the Orient is “one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other” (Said, Orientalism 1). Orientalism (is)... a Western Style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient... because of Orientalism the Orient was not (and is not) a free subject of thought or action (3). Orient, though is an idea, also represents a territory. The geographical positioning of this territory coincides with the description of another territory in *1984*, the territory that constitutes the frontiers amongst the three super-states mentioned in the novel and the lands which have been used for exploitation of both natural and human/labour resources. This is the geographical territory where the environment has been ‘othered’ by the ‘dominant group’ and, in the process, the landscapes have been turned ‘fluid’.

Before venturing into finding the coincidence between the landscapes of the ‘othered environment’ and the physical territory depicted in *1984*, let us first visit Vonnegut’s *Breakfast of Champions* to see how the ‘Selves’ of the exploiters are formed and operate in the hegemony, and how the ‘Others’ – both nature itself and the inhabitants in it, are responding. The novel is a deceptive science fiction. It tells us, “This is a tale of a meeting of two lonesome, skinny, fairly old white men (Dwayne Hoover – a Pontiac dealer, multi-millionaire and Kilgore Trout – a science fiction writer who puts the bad idea in Hoover’s already tangled brain resulting Hoover to cause a havoc outside the very country club of which he is part owner) on a planet which was dying fast” (Vonnegut 16) – as if the setting is in a far off future. Contrarily, this is a tale of a planet of our own time, and more particularly the territories narrated and featured in the novel constitutes various parts of the USA. Though the name of the country is hardly ever explicitly

mentioned, the names of the various states and regions are stated as they are. Also, there are vivid descriptions of the devastation of nature and natural resources in those lands, the cause of that devastation, and the aftermaths. In a country where “Color was everything” (19) likewise mattered the big companies, corporations. The country itself is a collection of these ‘selves’ forming a larger ‘Self’ conforming with Herbert Mead’s idea of ‘I’ and ‘me” (Cronk) which as Vonnegut puts:

When Dwayne Hoover and Kilgore Trout met each other, their country was by far the richest and most powerful country on the planet. It had most of the food and minerals and machinery, and it disciplined other countries by threatening to shoot big rockets at them or to drop things on them from airplanes. (20)

And the ‘Self’ of Dwayne and Kilgore’s country propounds:

Most other countries didn’t have doodley-squat. Many of them weren’t even inhabitable anymore. They had too many people and not enough space. They had sold everything that was any good, and there wasn’t anything to eat anymore.... (20)

This is, in fact, true for many African, Asian, and Latin American countries which were previously identified as the ‘Third World’. However, after the ‘Rio Earth Summit’ held in 1992 and ‘WTO Doha round’ held in 2001 they have been called the LDCs (the Least Developed Countries, the concept of LDCs was however adopted by UN in 1971) since. The name may have changed but neither the attitude nor the positioning.

In addition to the deception of the setting, anybody who had read the preface of this novel would find that this novel is not really written by Vonnegut but by somebody named PHILBOYD STUDGE from his experience and remembrance of the ‘Veteran Day’ (15). So, the narrator/writer is also a character here – which is not Vonnegut himself. But again, this novel is definitely written by Vonnegut, so the deception goes on ad infinitum.

On one fine day, Kilgore was blessed or cursed with an opportunity to be recognized for his talent as a writer for the first time when he had been sent an invitation to the ‘Midland City Festival of the Arts’ along with a \$1000 check. This invitation had been the result of the persuasion of the only known fan of Trout’s fiction – Eliot Rosewater. Therefore, having felt persuaded himself, Trout starts his journey to ‘Midland City’ in ‘nowhere’ in the country where both Trout, Hoover, Rosewater were citizens and many others (as in the novel) also inhabited (35-37). At various stoppages; and on, by, and around the roads, highways en route to ‘Midland City’ Trout witnesses various forms of devastations of nature, and its aftermaths. The description also includes the reflections of both Trout and the inhabitants of these lands on the exploitations and their positioning in it. Let us get back to the text of the *Breakfast of Champions* once again. The driver of the truck in which Trout was hitchhiking made a point:

The planet was being destroyed by manufacturing processes, and what was being manufactured was lousy, by and large.

And also,

... he knew that his truck was turning the atmosphere into poison gas, and that the planet was being turned into pavement so his truck could go anywhere. “So I’m committing suicide,” he said.

... ..

“My brother is even worse,” the driver went on. “He works in a factory that makes chemicals for killing plants and trees in Viet Nam.”

... ..

“In the long run, he’s committing suicide,” said the driver. “Seems like the only kind of job an American can get these days is committing suicide in some way.” (72-74)

Both Trout and the driver recognized their shares in the devastation of the nature they were talking about though they were not the actually responsible agents and/or beneficiaries of the exploitation. The driver’s remark of identifying his brother as a passive agent in the hegemony and also identifying his action as ‘suicidal’ is particularly important here. These show that they are not totally unaware of the exploitation/devastation and the state everybody who has any part in it will end up. Trout, however, assumes a more disinterested attitude than the driver.

But his head no longer sheltered ideas of how things could be and should be on the planet, as opposed to how they really were. There was only one way for the Earth to be, he thought: the way it was. (87)

His disinterestedness extends to the situation when –

The Governor of New York, Nelson Rockefeller, shook Trout’s hand in a Cohoes grocery story one time. Trout had no idea who he was.

As a science-fiction writer, he should have been flabbergasted to come so close to such a man. Rockefeller wasn’t merely Governor. Because of the peculiar laws in that part of the planet, Rockefeller was allowed to own vast areas of Earth’s surface, and the petroleum and other valuable minerals underneath the surface, as well. He owned or controlled more of the planet than many nations. This had been his destiny since infancy. He had been born into that cockamamie proprietorship.

“How’s it going, fella?” Governor Rockefeller asked him.

“About the same,” said Kilgore Trout. (89)

The passage above, nonetheless, reveals that Trout may be disinterested here but the narrator/writer created by Vonnegut surely identifies and exposes Governor Rockefeller as one of the influential members of the exploiter’s echelon. How another member – uncannily the only fan follower and the reason for Trout’s journey – Eliot Rosewater acts as an exploiter and devastator of the landscapes has been put in the pages afterwards.

The truck carrying Kilgore Trout was in West Virginia now. The surface of the State had been demolished by men and machinery and explosives in order to make it yield up its coal. The coal was mostly gone now. It had been turned into heat. The surface of West Virginia, with its coal and trees and topsoil gone, was rearranging what was left of itself in conformity with the laws of gravity. It was collapsing into all the holes which had been dug into it. Its mountains, which had once found it easy to stand by themselves, were sliding into valleys now.

The demolition of West Virginia had taken place with the approval of the executive, legislative, and judicial branches of the State Government, which drew their power from the people. (99)

The novel presents evidence to the statement it made earlier regarding the faulty manufacturing processes and the products it manufactures the country. “Trout marveled at how recently white men had arrived in West Virginia, and how quickly they had demolished it—for heat” (100).

Trout meets another of the passive agents of the ‘hegemony’ – an old miner when he and the driver of the truck stop at a place to eat.

Trout asked him what it had felt like to work for an industry whose business was to destroy the countryside, and the old man said he was usually too tired to care. (103)

This old miner also reveals some remarkably interesting and important fact of the 'hegemony':

"Don't matter if you care," the old miner said, "if you don't own what you care about." He pointed out that the mineral rights to the entire county in which they sat were owned by the Rosewater Coal and Iron Company, which had acquired these rights soon after the end of the Civil War. "The law says," he went on, "when a man owns something under the ground and he wants to get at it, you got to let him tear up anything between the surface and what he owns."

Trout did not make the connection between the Rosewater Coal and Iron Company and Eliot Rosewater, his only fan. He still thought Eliot Rosewater was a teenager.

The truth was that Rosewater's ancestors had been among the principal destroyers of the surface and the people of West Virginia.

"It don't seem right, though," the old miner said to Trout, "that a man can own what's underneath another man's farm or woods or house. And any time the man wants to get what's underneath all that, he's got a right to wreck what's on top to get at it. The rights of the people on top of the ground don't amount to nothing compared to the rights of the man who owns what's underneath."

He remembered out loud when he and other miners used to try to force the Rosewater Coal and Iron Company to treat them like human beings. They would fight small wars with the company's private police and the State Police and the National Guard.

"I never saw a Rosewater," he said, "but Rosewater always won. I walked on Rosewater. I dug holes for Rosewater in Rosewater. I lived in Rosewater houses. I ate Rosewater food. I'd fight Rosewater, whatever Rosewater is, and Rosewater would beat me and leave me for dead. You ask people around here and they'll tell you: this whole world is Rosewater as far as they're concerned." (103-104)

There is also another really good example of how the 'hegemony' utilizes the tools of communications – here media and knowledge – here the science of statistics to extract consent from the exploited is found in one of Trout's stories *How You Doin'*:

And the peanut butter-eaters on earth were preparing to conquer the shazzbutter-eaters on the planet in the book by Kilgore Trout. By this time, the Earthlings hadn't just demolished West Virginia and Southeast Asia. They had demolished everything. So they were ready to go pioneering again. They studied the shazzbutter-eaters by means of electronic snooping, and determined that they were too numerous and proud and resourceful ever to allow themselves to be pioneered. So the Earthlings infiltrated the ad agency which had the shazzbutter account, and they bugged the statistics in the ads. They made the average for everything so high that everybody on the planet felt inferior to the majority in every respect. And then the Earthling armored space ships came in and discovered the planet. Only token resistance was offered here and there, because the natives felt so below average. And then the pioneering began. (136)

Thus, the exploiters always win as they have the legal, media and above all the muscle power at their disposal. Nature and its inhabitants cannot do anything but to succumb to that power. The government which draws its power from the people is also aiding the exploiters. The Media is controlled by the agencies of the exploiters. The government and private force together form the accumulated 'Self' of the exploiters which extracts the consent (voluntary or involuntary) of the exploited 'Other' i.e., nature and its inhabitants. If consent cannot be extracted through diplomacy this 'Self' would wage war over the noncompliant. (As) Donald Rumsfeld said that his mission in the War against Terror was

to persuade the world that Americans must be allowed to continue their way of life (Roy 43). The American way of life leaves the earth's bowels empty of its coal, oil, gas, and the sheen of the earth perched, draughty and devastated thus obsolete. Nature definitely retaliates in the form of natural disasters but that again strikes only those who are the children of nature. The coercers stay out of reach. The 'hegemony' wins and it stays. The 'Other' turns non-decisive, assumes the form that the 'Self' desires. The landscapes thus, turned into an entity that must yield to sheer force of the desire of the 'dominant group', become analogous to liquefied substance. They take whatever shape the 'big corporations and governments' want them to have and thus turn 'fluid' devoid of any shape of its own.

The other character – Dwayne Hoover is also a member of the exploitive agencies. In Dwayne's brain bad chemicals are at work while he came out of the clubhouse he owned after breakfast that morning. The parking lot in front of him turns into a trampoline (81). This can very well be understood as a practical example of how the 'Self' perceives the 'other' as an object with uncertain and manipulatable form; and perceives it with equal uncertainty and distrust. Dwayne has inherited a ranch which his stepfather received as a court verdict from the man who had bought it from a free-slave family during the 'Great Depression'. The farm – contemptuously termed by Dwayne's stepfather as "... a God damn Nigger farm (98)" eventually housed the sacred miracle cave which consists of several attractions for the tourists. Midland city – where Dwayne, the Pontiac dealer, lives is situated by the 'Sugar Creek' which is now contained within a concrete trough built by the engineers (89). However, this creek becomes a concern for Dwayne's twin stepbrothers – Lyle and Kyle as it flows beneath and through the 'Sacred Miracle Cave' which is the sole income source for the brothers and now the creek is polluted.

The underground stream which passed through the bowels of Sacred Miracle Cave was polluted by some sort of industrial waste which formed bubbles as tough as ping pong balls. These bubbles were shouldering one another up a passage which led to a big boulder which had been painted white to resemble *Moby Dick, the Great White Whale*. The bubbles would soon engulf *Moby Dick* and invade the *Cathedral of Whispers*, which was the main attraction at the cave. Thousands of people had been married in the *Cathedral of Whispers*—including Dwayne and Lyle and Kyle. Harry LeSabre, too. (96)

The twins went on with the crazy plans of blasting those bubbles away by opening fire on them with 'Browning Shotguns'. In Lyle's word: "They let loose a stink you wouldn't believe... it smelled like athlete's foot" (96). However, they had to surrender the stinking nuisance and resolved to force stop the creek from flowing inside the cave rather than finding the real cause behind the pollution. His remark – "Just forget about *Moby Dick* and *Jesse James* and the slaves and all that, and save the *Cathedral*" (97) – can, however, be read as an example of how easily the exploiter's 'self' see the other inhabitants of nature as dispensable and strive to save that which is of any commercial use when it is faced with the wrath of nature. When nature and commerce are the options to choose from, even at the moment of existence, commerce ultimately wins.

The real cause of the creek's pollution is revealed in the later sections of the novel when Trout arrives at 'Midland City' and takes a short cut through the 'Sugar Creek' to the country clubhouse – which is on the other bank – where he is supposed to check-in.

Trout lowered his artistic feet into the concrete trough containing Sugar Creek. They were coated at once with a clear plastic substance from the surface of the creek. When, in some surprise, Trout lifted one coated foot from the water, the plastic substance dried in air instantly, sheathed his foot in a thin, skin-tight bootie resembling mother-of-pearl. He repeated the process with his other foot.

The substance was coming from the Barrytron plant. The company was manufacturing a new anti-personnel bomb for the Air Force. The bomb scattered plastic pellets instead of steel pellets, because the plastic pellets were cheaper. They were also impossible to locate in the bodies of wounded enemies by means of x-ray machines.

Barrytron had no idea it was dumping this waste into Sugar Creek. They had hired the Maritimo Brothers Construction Company, which was gangster-controlled, to build a system which would get rid of the waste. They knew the company was gangster-controlled. Everybody knew that. But the Maritimo Brothers were usually the best builders in town. They had built Dwayne Hoover's house, for instance, which was a solid house.

But every so often they would do something amazingly criminal. The Barrytron disposal system was a case in point. It was expensive, and it appeared to be complicated and busy. Though, it was old junk hooked up every which way, concealing a straight run of stolen sewer pipe running directly from Barrytron to Sugar Creek.

- i. exploitative of the environment (such as genetically engineered seeds, the use of fertilizers, mining, patents), and
- ii. unequal in terms of human access to and enjoyment of the resources

Barrytron would be sick when it learned what a polluter it had become. Throughout its history, it had attempted to be a perfect model of corporate good citizenship, no matter what it cost. (174-175)

Hence, when it comes to the matter of expense or money Nature is compromised. The same analogies can be found in the poorer countries in Asia and Africa where the big multinational companies are always prowling around for a sweetheart deal the corrupt and authoritarian governments there to exploit the natural resources for establishing industries which these countries are of little use (Roy, 41). And, when they set these industries that heavily commission on the land where these are set up and other natural resources like water and air around the establishment are asked to go through arrangements that will minimise its negative impact on nature, they usually go for estimating the expenditure for it. If the arrangement is deemed to involve an amount of money that these corporations are not willing to spend then they go for a roundabout and fake makeover. Eventually, nature, the land, the water resources, the air, the flora and fauna, the people are expensed against the monetary cost-effectiveness of taking the necessary steps to save them. Here the corporate 'Self' regards the 'other' as formless and expendable thus 'fluid'. Promod K Nayar (2010), too, validates such effects and motives of the westernized hegemonic exploitation:

The IMF –World Bank (or First world) policies affect the Third World in ways that are Further waste dumping and mining practices often have a racial dimension to them: wastes move from First World towards the Third World. (248)

Let us now visit *1984*. I need to mention here, however, that this novel is somewhat regarded as a showcase of the 'Soviet-Socialist Communism' with all its viciousness and authoritarianism. So far, we can say that all the exploitation of the landscapes has been due to the capitalist, consumerist, corporative economic system in Trout's and Dwayne's land. The government is corrupt because the capital is owned and controlled by the capitalists like Rockefeller, Rosewater, Barrytron or by Maritimo Brothers – company run by gangsters. In *1984* nothing is run by such. Here the state runs everything. State designates and regulates everything – from public to private, from politics to production, from office to factories. The state is run by the 'party'. In other sense the 'party' is the 'state', the 'state' is the 'party'. But we should not be deceived. The 'state' is not the

physical manifestation of the abstract ‘party’ or vis-à-vis, rather both are physical and substantially present. The time is also stuck in an eternal ‘present’. We find the existence of three super states – Oceania, Eurasia, and Eastasia, always at war with one and at peace with the other. The ally and enemy may change but never the war. However, what is interesting is the description of the frontiers, their positioning, and the purpose these frontiers are maintained.

In chapter 17 of *1984* Winston (the central character) gets hold of the book written by Goldstein titled *The Theory and Practices of Oligarchical Collectivism*. The title of the 3rd chapter of this book is ‘War is Peace’. It is here, while explaining the theoretical as well as practical indispensability of the War fought by the three super-states, Goldstein gives us the idea of the frontiers where the war has been taking place. Between the frontiers of the super-states, and not permanently in the possession of any of them, there lies a rough quadrilateral with its corners at Tangier, Brazzaville, Darwin, and Hong Kong, containing within it about a fifth of the population of the earth. It is for the possession of these thickly populated regions, and of the northern icecap, that the three powers are constantly struggling. In practice no one power ever controls the whole of the disputed area. Portions of it are constantly changing hands, and it is the chance of seizing this or that fragment by a sudden stroke of treachery that dictates the endless changes of alignment. (Orwell 187)

I hope, if the curious reader looks at the map of the world, he would be able to identify that about at the centre of this quadrilateral is situated my – the writer’s – country – Bangladesh. I would not deny that this had been and still is one of the motivations as well as concerns behind writing this paper. Nonetheless, I assure, it is not only me – the writer or us – the readers that this paper is about. This is about the ‘otherized us’ that the ‘hegemony’ has turned us and our landscapes into and the ‘fluidity’ that has been coincided upon us. Also, this us consists of all the landscapes and people that fall within this quadrilateral or any other abstract geometric or non-geometric shapes that the ‘hegemony’ has drawn on the world map. Surely the ‘hegemony’ in *1984* is of a different character – which I would like to discuss briefly afterwards, but that does not necessarily change the purpose and the character of the exploitation.

All of the disputed territories contain valuable minerals, and some of them yield important vegetable products such as rubber which in colder climates it is necessary to synthesize by comparatively expensive methods. But above all they contain a bottomless reserve of cheap labour. Whichever power controls equatorial Africa, or the countries of the Middle East, or Southern India, or the Indonesian Archipelago, disposes also of the bodies of scores or hundreds of millions of ill-paid and hard-working coolies. The inhabitants of these areas, reduced more or less openly to the status of slaves, pass continually from conqueror to conqueror, and are expended like so much coal or oil in the race to turn out more armaments, to capture more territory, to control more labour power, to turn out more armaments, to capture more territory, and so on indefinitely. It should be noted that the fighting never really moves beyond the edges of the disputed areas. The frontiers of Eurasia flow back and forth between the basin of the Congo and the northern shore of the Mediterranean; the islands of the Indian Ocean and the Pacific are constantly being captured and recaptured by Oceania or by Eastasia; in Mongolia the dividing line between Eurasia and Eastasia is never stable; round the Pole all three powers lay claim to enormous territories which in fact are largely uninhabited and unexplored: but the balance of power always remains roughly even, and the territory which forms the heartland of each super-state always remains inviolate. Moreover, the labour of the exploited peoples round the Equator is not really necessary to the world’s economy. They add nothing to the wealth of the world, since whatever they produce is used for purposes of war, and the object of waging a war is always to be in a better position in which to wage another war. By their labour the slave populations allow the tempo of continuous

warfare to be speeded up. But if they did not exist, the structure of world society, and the process by which it maintains itself, would not be essentially different. (186-188)

As I had mentioned before, I would like to draw my reader's attention to the constituents of the power echelon of this unique 'hegemony'.

The new aristocracy was made up for the most part of bureaucrats, scientists, technicians, trade-union organizers, publicity experts, sociologists, teachers, journalists, and professional politicians. These people, whose origins lay in the salaried middle class and the upper grades of the working class, had been shaped and brought together by the barren world of monopoly industry and centralized government. (205)

Also, they are more powerful and more vicious than their predecessors as they have the knowledge of history and they know how to utilize it (203).

As compared with their opposite numbers in past ages, they were less avaricious, less tempted by luxury, hungrier for pure power, and, above all, more conscious of what they were doing and more intent on crushing opposition. This last difference was cardinal. (205)

So, we see that the goal of the 'hegemony' is 'pure power'. The goal for exploitation is thus not merely profiteering, rather the ultimate subjugation of the landscape that has been exploited.

The concept of fluidity takes visible shape in Orwell's *1984*. As has been quoted, the possession of the landscapes changes now and then so does the boundaries. At one time part of the landscape belongs to Oceania at other time to Eurasia or Eastasia. However, the change of the possession makes little sense since all the three superpowers war at this landscape, on this land and for this landscape for the same purpose – exploitation. The landscape – though ideologically bound within a geometric shape, is in a constant movement within itself – a chief characteristic of the fluid substances. The landscape cannot liberate itself from the quadrilateral, but its boundaries flow back and forth within this container. In addition, the landscape also takes the shape of this abstract container – another proprietary characteristic of the 'fluids. Thus 'fluidity' has been coincided upon this landscape from outside as well as it assumes 'fluidity' within itself. The prophecy of 'hegemony' is thus fulfilled – the consent for the substantiating quality has been extracted from the landscape along with its resources and the exploiters assume the right to exploit them.

As Arundhati Roy suggests that 'hegemony' is always in search of such landscapes where it can impose such 'fluidity' (Roy, 41). In addition, in most cases, these landscapes are found in the territories described in *1984*. However, the 'hegemony' might find there an already consentient authority ready and eager to consummate with it, but what about the people. Roy gives us a different picture. Here the instances are drawn from our neighbouring country – India. Following the western model of development of heavily commissioning on the natural resources, India started building dams on its major rivers. This projects ultimately displaced a large populace consisting mostly of the 'Dalits' (the lower class) and the 'Adivasis' (indigenous people) around India. The dislocated inhabitants tried to put up a resistance but ultimately curbed down by the joint force of government, Supreme Court, and multinational corporate mafias. Part of the intelligentsia complied with this brute force, but the part consisting intellectuals like Arundhati Roy and others cried out loud against such atrocity. Roy gives a vivid account of one out many of such non-violent resistances in "ahimsa" in her seminal anthology – *An ordinary person's guide to Empire* (2005).

The NBA (Narmada Bachao Andolon – Save Narmada Movement) believes that Big Dams are obsolete. It believes there are more democratic, more local, more environmentally viable and environmentally sustainable ways of generating electricity and managing water systems. It is demanding *more* modernity, not less. It is demanding *more* democracy not less. (Roy 6)

Resistances of similar characteristics went about in Bangladesh when the Asian Energy, backed by the then government, tried to develop a plan for extracting coals through ‘open-pit mining technique’ at Phulbari, Dinajpur in 2008. This type of mining would dislocate a huge populace from the region and devastate the natural resources like agrarian lands and water resources both within and at the adjacent area (Mohammad) (Press Release: Asian Development Bank Pulls Out of Controversial Phulbari Coal Project in Bangladesh). Intelligentsia like Anu Muhammad, Faruk Wasif as well as organizations like ‘National Committee to Protect Oil-Gas-Mineral Resources-Power and Ports’ fought alongside the people. However, research carried out by Maha Mirza and Tanzimuddin Khan shows that the ‘hegemony’ is still in action to set up establishments like ‘Special Economic Zones’ or ‘Rampal Power Projects’ which will heavily toll over the natural resources of the region which we might not be able to recover in many years to come. To cap it all, the ‘Rampal Power Project’ will devastate the ‘Sundarbans’ the only mangrove forest we have, and which acts as a natural shield against natural devastation in the south-west part of the country as well. (Mirza) (Khan) Indeed, when we Arundhati Roy’s *An Ordinary Person’s Guide to Empire* (2005) we realize how the power hankering of the ‘dominant group’ in 1984 is connected to the environmental exploitation of the ‘big corporations and governments’ in *Breakfast of Champions* and how this power hankering is the ultimate factor in turning the landscapes in discussion into ‘fluid’ entity. Both *Breakfast of Champions* and *1984* presents us with the account of ‘hegemonic’ ‘Selves’. They may be different in their political ideology and outlook, seemingly; yet they are similar in their ways of exploiting their prays – the landscape along with every living and inanimate object on and inside it. This exploitation, as I have mentioned before, is not for begetting profit merely. In *1984* Orwell shows that money has little to do with it as the profit these landscapes generates is totally consumed by the war itself – which has been waged to keep these landscapes in possession. So, the ultimate purpose, as Nayar, Arundhati as well as both Vonnegut and Orwell validate, is pure power. This yearning for power and more power wages more and more exploitation and more and more wars for this sake. The landscapes like – South Asia, Latin America, Africa, Fur East or the uninhabited North and South Poles – on which these wars are waged are deemed something to be possessed only not to be preserved and sustained. They are exploited in the name of exploration, whereas the past inhabitants in these landscapes have been exploring them sustainably for a livelihood since they have been there. The inhabitants along with their knowledge have been ignored as primitive, archaic and inadmissible, whereas they and their knowledge could have been the most effective tools for sustainable exploration of the resources and preservation of the integrity of these landscapes. This dismissal by the ‘dominant group’ and its pursuit of absolute power turns the environment, and everything in it, of these landscapes as the purely objectified ‘Other’. This ‘Other’ made yield to the force of the ‘Self’ of their owners eventually turn into an entity which cannot retain its identity or its shape for that matter. These landscapes, therefore, being ‘othered’ by the ‘Self’, yield being ‘fluids’.

Arundhati, however, present us a cause for hope reconciling the cause for the past failure of the regime presented in *1984* and the coming failure of the capitalist exploitation presented in *Breakfast of Champions*:

Fortunately power has a shelf life. (Roy 43)

Soviet-style communism failed, not because it was intrinsically evil, but because it was flawed. It allowed too few people to usurp too much power. Twenty-first century market capitalism, American-style, will fail for the same reasons. Both are edifices constructed by human intelligence, undone by human nature. (44)

In this fight between flawed human nature and nature along with human, we are presented with options to choose. Which side shall we take? Dwayne, Rosewater, Barrytron, Maritimo are the agencies with bad chemicals; Trout, the truck driver, the old miners are failed and frustrated mercenaries in *Breakfast of Champions*; Big brother is up with his war machine, ‘doublethink’ and ‘Ingsoc’ in *1984*. On the other hand, we have NBA and Phulbari – narratives of which are struggling to liberate themselves from the state of ‘other’ and ‘fluidity’ mechanically imposed upon them, to come out of the pens of Arundhati Roy, Pramod K Nayar, Tanzimuddin Khan and Anu Muhammad. It will matter very little in the long run because, like Arundhati on a quiet day, I too can hear the breathing of a small god readying herself in heaven. A new world is not only possible, she is already on her way (44).

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Notes

1. In physics liquids or gases are called fluids because they yield to shear force as their intermolecular bond is weaker than solids. They do not have any shape of their own and they assume the shape of their containers. They also have the quality to flow free in any direction in the absence of a container. In case of liquids such as water the intermolecular force might act to hold the molecules together when they are in small volume at any place – hence puddles might form. In gasses the intermolecular force is the weakest. Therefore, gasses are freer to flow about (Britannica) (Faber). (or maybe, exploiting) them. These landscapes are otherized. In addition, when we are talking about the idea of the 'Other' the idea of 'Self' ensues eventually. Here those who are exploiting/exploring these territories composes that 'Self' and they turn these physical territories into the fluid 'Other' terrains.