Terry Tempest Williams's "*Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place":* An Ecocritical Approach

رواية تيري تيمبست ويليامز "الملاذ : تاريخ غير طبيعي للعائلة والمكان" من منظور النقد البيئي

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Authorization

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my lovely mother, father, brothers: Lara, Laith, and Mohammad, Mr. Mohammad Attary, Dr. Abdul- Qader Khattab who encouraged me to write about this subject, my close friends and to all persons who helped and encouraged me till I finished this work.

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Abstract

This thesis recounts mainly Terry Tempest Williams's role as an activist, novelist, and naturalist as reflected in her novel *Refuge*. It shows Williams as a voice speaking against pollution that threatens lives and ecosystems, denouncing the destruction of wild life, working to preserve the wilderness, and protect the environment.

Williams is connected to a complex web of human life, animal life and the physical landscape. Williams's mother is one of seven female family members who died of cancer apparently related to downwind radiation exposure from nuclear testing by the United States Government in the Nevada Desert. Her *Refuge* portrays a personal tragedy, along with Williams's scientific background as an environmental activist educator. It explains

Williams's passionate pleas for protection against those human forces that pollute the earth and destroy its life forms.

Although Williams has used several forms of media to express her ideas and support for the environment, her primary vehicle remains the writing of literary works, such as *Refuge*. In addition, Williams speaks in the public forums, lobbies for environmental protection legislation, participates in civil protest, and works whenever necessary to shape and secure the earth's future. This critical analysis clarifies the significance of Williams's work and analyzes its implications on society and the protection and the safe guarding of the environment.

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الملخص

توضح هذه الرسالة بشكل أساسي دور الكاتبة تيري تيمبست ويليامز كناشطة وروائية وكاتبة في موضوع البيئة كما ينعكس في روايتها " الملاذ ". تركز هذه الرسالة أيضا على ويليامز كصوت يتحدث ضد التلوث الذي يهدد الحياة البيئية ، ويشجب تدمير الحياة البرية ، ويعمل من اجل المحافظة على الحياة البرية وحماية الطبيعة.

ترتبط ويليامز بعلاقات وثيقة مع الحياة البشرية ، والحياة البرية والمناظر الطبيعية . والدة ويليامز هي واحدة من سبعة أفراد من إناث أسرتها توفيت بمرض السرطان الذي يبدو انه مرتبط بالرياح المتعرضة للإشعاعات النووية الناجمة عن التجارب التي أجرتها حكومة الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في صحراء نيفادا. تصور رواية " الملاذ " مأساة شخصية علاوة على تقديمها لتيري تيمبست ويليامز عالمة وناشطة ومثقفة في مجال البيئة كما أنها توضح مناشدتها القوية لحماية البيئة

من القوى البشرية التي تلوث الأرض وتدمر أشكال الحياة المختلفة. ومع أن ويليامز استخدمت وسائل إعلامية متنوعة للتعبير عن دعمها للبيئة، إلا أن أهم هذه الوسائل هي تأليف الأعمال الأدبية مثل "الملاذ" . وعادة ما تتحدث ويليامز في الندوات العامة والتجمعات المنادية لحماية البيئة وتشارك في الاحتجاجات المدنية وتعمل كلما دعت الضرورة من اجل حماية مستقبل الأرض. وتوضح هذه الدراسة أهمية هذه الرواية وتحلل آثارها على المجتمع ودورها في حماية البيئة.

Chapter One

Introduction:

Background:

As a critical approach, ecocriticism began in the 1990s, although its roots go back to the late 1970s. The term “ecocriticism” was coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism.” (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996). Briefly, ecocriticism refers to “the study of literary texts involving the physical environment” (Glotfelty & Fromm 1996: xviii). Ecocriticism, as Azima (2008) discusses, focuses on the relationship between literature and the environment, and its critics “celebrate the rooted connections to place” (p. 5). In *The Environmental Imagination* (1996), Buell defines ecocriticism as “a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis" (p.430). Cook (1994) affirms that ecocriticism is connected to political and social agendas. Furthermore, Love (1996) in his seminal essay “Revaluing Nature: Toward an Ecological Criticism” believes that ecocriticism can reanimate the study of literature and help address some of questions focusing on global and local ecology.

The term ecocriticism refers to literary criticism which concentrates on the relationship between literature and natural world and gives scholars and critics of literature, language and communication a chance to contribute in the tasks of protecting natural world, and reducing health problems (Philippon 2008). Sugiyama

(2004) argues in his on-line article "*Reviews: Practical Ecocriticism by Glen Love*" that ecocriticism is the study of the connection between literature and non-human world. He also states that this environmental movement appeared in the 1960s and this approach differs from critical theories which are related to humanism by focusing on man's connectedness to the natural world. Although ecocriticism is apparently conducted by biology, cognition, evolution, or behavioral ecology, it should be based on grounded arguments in ecological, natural, scientific manner to recognize human connection with nature.

Fromm (2000) in his on-line article believes that classic writers were unintentionally using ecocriticism for centuries before its appearance as an academic discipline in the early 1990s. He also announces that Virgil in his *Georgics* (a poem consisting of two thousand lines of poetry on the subject of agriculture), John Clare, Thoreau and Rachel Carson who are considered sensitive people had actually noticed that they were from the mud of their earth. Fromm concludes that ecocriticism's early years create writers talking about nature, appreciating critics of classic nature writers, and academics focusing on the growing problems of air pollution and environmental degradation.

Howarth (1996) argues that as an interdisciplinary science, ecology describes the relations between nature, culture and language theory analyses how words represent human and non-human life. Newell (2006) asserts that ecology approaches describe the natural world as interlinked web of life. Furthermore, Howarth (1996)

concludes that ecology was highlighted "by studying the properties of species and their distribution across space. In tracing those relations, ecology often uses metaphors. For example, water is the sculptor of the landscape, life is patchy and ecosystems build linking chains or webs" (p.75). Moore (1996) suggests that metaphor promotes an ecocentric view which denies that there are any divisions between human and non-human nature and denies the claim that humans are the only ones of organic creatures that own the value of living.

Ecocriticism has now become a well established critical approach. Fromm (2000) in his on-line article discloses that after many years, a meeting in the U.S.A of the Western Literature Association in 1991 issued a new discipline, a new professional organization, *The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment,* known as *ASLE*. Cohen (2004) argues that *ASLE* now has groups in many countries such as: Germany, Japan and the United Kingdom whose aims are to share facts, ideas, and texts concerning the study of literature and the natural world to reduce degradation of the natural world. In addition, a new journal, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment,* known a*s ISLE*, comes as a support for *ASLE*. All these reflect the rapid growth of ecological literary criticism and environmental studies in the United States and around the world in recent years, which in turn reflects the explicit increase in the production of environmental literature over the past several decades and the increased visibility of such writing by critics. Furthermore, *ISLE* seeks to encourage such scholarship, writing, and

teaching, while facilitating the development of a theoretical foundation for these activities as well as seeking to reconnect the gaps between scholars, artists, students, and the public in order to create scientific literary methods deal with environmental issues.

Ecocriticism is closely connected to nature writings and works that concentrate on nature and the environment as their main theme. Moore (1996) argues that nature writings bring the lives of non-human beings into language and become a primal part in literary texts. Lewis (1997) concludes that nature writers certainly have been affected – emotionally, psychologically, developmentally, and aesthetically – by their natural environment as they sense their world through writing. Furthermore, nature writers– among these writers is Terry Tempest Williams- emphasize the influence of landscape shapes and the emotional connection the writer feels with her natural environment. In turn, these perceptions and memories affect the writer's imagination, resulting in a creative aesthetic vision that indebted to the landscape. Barnhill (2002) in his on-line article "Terry Tempest Williams and the Literature of Engagement" clarifies that many creative writers who engaged in literary ecology concluded that one can create an image of nature writing if he has a relation with the natural world and that image is important for many reasons: the image helps to approach texts, what we look for and what we emphasize. It also influences what texts to choose in courses and anthologies and it affects how man responds to nature writings and how society thinks of this type of

writing. Considering Williams as a nature writer, Lapkoff (2007) discusses nature writers' intention which can be summarized as follows. First, to instruct their readers by synthesizing imagery appeared in language, which is enough to stimulate their imagination, and second, to engage their readers in their memories and thereby spark their imagination to live the writers' experiences. Nature writers choose to discuss natural phenomena that will appeal to the reader's senses. Although the reader can't literally see, hear, smell, taste or feel what the nature writer describes, but through the use of explicit, remarkable language, the nature writer hopes to enable readers to imagine doing so. In addition, the writers choose words in their literary texts which they hope will resonate with their readers on an emotional level. Lapkoff adds that nature writers experience their subject matter as pedestrians: their view of the world is the result of observations made while walking through the landscape as they live their realistic dreams through melting with nature. He states that observation has been stimulated while keep moving on foot because writers can get their perspective from the natural world when there is motion. The narrators move slowly in their environment in order to stir the readers' emotions toward wildlife instead of describing it from a fixed viewpoint which detains their imagination to establish their literary texts. The world communicates itself to them by means of all their senses, touch, smell, hearing and taste and by these aspects of communications the narrators can fuse literally and emotionally in arresting mixture. Some critics such as Dresdner (2003) considers some writers who focus on

ecological writing not only nature writers but also "ecobiographers" such as Terry Tempest Williams who uses nonfiction autobiographical narratives to explore the relationship between human and nature.

Terry Tempest Williams's work, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place* (1991) belongs to nature writing or environmental literature. The writer is considered by many critics one of the major figures in nature writing and in American environmental literature. She is well known for exploring social and environmental issues in their literary work. Her other works include: *An Unspoken Hunger: Stories from the Field (1994), Desert Quartet* (1995) , *The Open Space of Democracy* (2004) and *Finding Beauty in a Broken World* (2008) as well as several other works that deal with health/cancer issues and the Mormon culture. Her environmental activist themes, Bush (2000) reveals, are influenced by a series of nature writers from nineteenth and twentieth centuries, such as: Emerson (1803-1882), Thoreau (1817-1862), Aldo Leopold (1888-1948), Edward Abbey (1927-1989), and Rachel Carson (1907-1962).

After living for many years in Salt Lake City, Williams was forced to move to another place. She actually moved to a small village in the southern Utah desert, seeking a kind of life that may help her live in direct relationship with the land. She is recognized as a passionate advocate for the preservation of the American western wilderness. She worked as naturalist – in – residence at the Utah Museum and was the winner of Natural Lannan Literary Award and a fellowship in creative

nonfiction. In *Refuge,* Williams states that she belongs to a Mormon family with roots in Utah since 1847 and that she was born in Salt Lake City, Utah, within the sight of the Great Salt Lake, which has greatly influenced her writing. *Refuge* is also rich with various meanings because of the explicit details it provides of nature, the individual excursions which either filter through or inspire the texts, and the interlinks which flow between the human and the non-human world.

Statement of the Study

This study shows how the author recognizes the importance of writings whose aim is to protect nature and the environment. Williams is trying to make connections between her mother's death and nuclear fallout. At one point in her narrative, she writes, "something is wrong and I cant figure it out.. the earth isn't well neither are we. I saw the health of the planet as our own" (262-63). The writer insists that land and the environment deserve protection from the continued "rape" of the West, and believes that these lands have their own sovereignty that deserves to be honored and defended by the law. Traditionally, patriarchal attitudes of superiority have justified the exploitation of nature and wilderness areas. However, Williams challenges this assumption by speaking out against the domination and destruction of the wilderness and nature, creating stories and myths that encourage a personal relationship with wildland and a community that includes the earth.

The study shows how Williams is using her novel continually to express the importance of appreciating the natural world. She shows how people are disconnected from the natural world and treat it as an object rather than as a subject, that mankind is superior to nature. Williams asserts that humans are part of a larger community and treats the environment and its inhabitants as equals who should recognize each other's sovereignty and live in harmony with one another. The study shows the writer's insistence that human beings live in a society that denies the existence of nature as a living body that can be diseased and hurt as the human body. It also discusses how man misunderstands and abuses nature and creates boundaries that wreak destruction not only on people, plants, and animals, but also on the body of the earth itself. The writer encourages a fresh connectivity between "language and landscape" which would stop the degradation of nature.

In *Refuge*, each of the 37 chapters is titled with a different bird species. This kind of titling helps illustrate the central point of each and every chapter. Moreover, it interweaves her mother's diagnosis and eventual death from ovarian cancer with the rising of the Great Salt Lake and the subsequent flooding of the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge as a way of making close connection between the natural world and the human world. As she faces the destruction of her mother's body and the simultaneous devastation of the refuge, she reflects, "I couldn't separate the Bird Refuge from my family, devastation respects no boundaries. The landscape of my childhood and the landscape of my family, the two things I had always regarded as

bedrock, were now subject to change Quicksand" (p.40). In the face of changes and devastation taking place on the landscape and in her mother's body, Williams is drawn to reconsider many of the things that she has been taught to depend upon and believe in her whole life. In her life, up to the simultaneous flooding of the refuge and her mother's cancer, she is able to depend on the constancy of the landscape and her family. If the family is unstable, the landscape heals her. If the landscape changes or if her retreat into the wilderness is disrupted, the women in her family provide stability and a connection to home and place. Williams considers the essence of her mother's body as being the essence of the landscape; the earth and her mother blend into one. She recalls, "I laid my head on her lap and closed my eyes. I couldn't tell if it was my mother's fingers combing through my hair or the wind" (p.156). And later she finds great comfort in the fact that for her the landscape and the body have continued to merge into one another to the extent that she realizes that as long as she can access the wilderness, she will be able to access her mother, and accept the idea that mother Earth and her own mother are integral. She muses, "I am reminded that what I adore, admire and draw from mother is inherent in the earth, my mother's spirit can be recalled simply by placing hands on the black humus of mountains or the lean sands of desert. Her love, her warmth, and her breath, even her arms around me – are the waves, the sunlight, and water" (p.214). Her mother's body appears to be wetland and nourishing earth, she writes, "Her

womb is the first land we inhabit. It is here we learn to respond, to move, to listen, to be nourished and grow" (p.50).

Objectives of the Study:

The main aim of the study is to examine the nature of the relation between the natural world and human life, and to explore how man is connected to the non-human world as being a vital part of it. The study highlights the strong relationship between human beings and the landscape as it is conveyed in William's *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, which in each chapter, excluding the final one, is titled with the name of a local bird and in slightly smaller and italicized print underneath is the Great Salt Lake's level.

The other aim is to express a kind of an ongoing relationship between humans and the bird kingdom. In her work, all three – the birds, the lake, and Williams – connect throughout the text. From the beginning of *Refuge*, the cycle nature of life is visible both in her discussion of the natural world and her family.

The study also displays the writer's use of such figures of speech as metaphors and similes that show how the natural world as healing and takes on a motherly persona. The author creates ample scenes of a comforting nature such as when the "wind massaged" (p.19) her face or when "a full moon watched over me like a mother" (p.189), as well as, "the depth and stillness of Great Salt Lake comes over the wetlands like a mother's calming hand" (p.151). The images also culminate

when Diane asks Williams to help her die; laying her head on Diane's lap, William couldn't tell "if it was my mother's fingers combing through my hair or the wind" (p.156).

In addition, the study displays other techniques describing how the writer borrows images from natural life to describe the human world. For example, the image of the gulls flying "untangle [her] grief" (p.75) as a mother untangles her child's hair. When Williams is with her mother, she is drawn into the wilderness to such extent that mother and earth blend into one, to the point that she realizes that as she can access the wilderness, she will be able to access her mother. She muses, "I am reminded that what I adore, admire and draw from mother is inherent in the earth, my mother's spirit can be recalled simply by placing my hands on the black humus of mountains or the lean sands of desert. Her love, her warmth, and her breath, even her arms around me – are the waves, the sunlight, and water" (p.214). Williams encourages her readers to see birds as sacred, when she uses words apparently drawn from religion: "chorus of wings" (p.264), "magic of birds", (p.18), "miracle of migration" (p.264), "pilgrimage of gulls" (p.76), "birds that mediate between heaven and earth" (p.18). In addition, she recalls her land, particularly, the desert as "holy":

> If the desert is holy, it is because it is a forgotten place that allows us to remember the sacred. Perhaps that is why pilgrimage to the desert is a pilgrimage to the self. There is no place to hide, and so we are found. In the severity of salt desert, I am brought down to my knees by its beauty. My imagination is fired. My heart opens and my skin burns in the passion of these moments. (p.148)

Another objective of the study is to examine the connection between the protagonist and the landscape through describing how the Great Salt Lake rose to record levels and eventually flooded the wetlands that had served a refuge for migratory birds in Northern Utah. It also explores how the backdrop of Williams's family's struggle with cancer came as a result of living downwind from a nuclear test site. It also concentrates on the main themes of this work especially its treatment of nature and the connection between natural and human life.

This thesis also aims at explaining the irony implied in the novel's subtitle. The word "unnatural" has several definitions. Firstly, it refers to the irregular behavior of nature itself and to the artificial constructs that humankind has tried to impose on the wilderness and on the community. Secondly, "unnatural" suggests the abnormally cruel behavior of the federal government and the patriarchy of the Mormon church toward the quiet and peaceful residents. Thirdly, it indicates the unjustifiable nuclear testings, particularly in an inhabited area. After reading the novel, the readers would learn that all the presumed places of safety aren't safe after all or even stable including family, nature, and government protection. In the end, the title comes to take on a bitter and sarcastic tone, as though to say that the refuge isn't safe; it is poisoned and undermined. This revelation at the end sheds light on the foregoing events. There are different forms of pollution, deception, human and animal deaths and disasters.

Finally, the study aims to show the narrator's personal experience with human interference in controlling nature and how the protagonist uses the Great Salt Lake's wide range of birds as a means of connecting her to the meaning of family and to emphasize the ways in which humans handle and endanger the environment in different destructive forms. Here, the writer opposes the destruction of the environment, for this will have catastrophic effects on wild life as well as on human health. The writer is tied to the land she inhabits and evokes a love born of the long life of many generations of humans who lived on the land. She also shows how the wilderness reminds us of what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from. As a way of connecting herself to the familial and the natural, the writer devotes specific chapters to birds in order to conjure up specific memories from her past.

Significance of the Study:

This study has chosen one of Terry Tempest Williams's most important books, *Refuge: An Unnatural History of Family and Place*, as its focus. The writer herself is the recipient of Lannan Literary Award and a John Simon Guggenheim Fellowship in creative nonfiction. This thesis is a modest contribution to ecocriticism and its importance in literary studies. Williams's *Refuge* is treated in this study from the perspective of ecocriticism and this approach helps us view some aspects which would have been neglected when using traditional critical approaches.

In addition, the study sheds the light on an important subject which is the relationship between the landscape and man and concentrates on such vital issues as the environment and the natural world and the integral relationship between them. The pages of *Refuge* resound with the death of the writer's mother and grandmother and other women from cancer. The novel shows that the death of these figures was the result of the American government's conducting nuclear weapons tests in the neighboring Nevada desert.

The study also makes a possible connection between her mother's cancer and the metaphorical cancer of Great Salt Lake. Williams says: "It kills us with the name first" (p.43). She adds that "it surfaces and demands our attention, we can surgically remove it, we can shrink it with radiation, we can poison it with drugs, whatever we choose, though, we view the tumor as foreign, something outside ourselves, it is however, our own creation, a creation we fear" (p.44). This accurate description of cancer serves as a parallel to the conditions of Great Salt Lake. In addition, she shows birds as spiritual teachers that teach us many things and move us to a deeper appreciation of spiritual matters. As a child, Terry was enchanted by "the magic of birds, how they bridge cultures and continents with their wings, how they mediate between heaven and earth" (p.18). The birds are no longer objects of observation when they skirr but teachers that connect heaven and earth, which means connection between fact and emotion, self and community, between what is and what might be. The birds are now symbols of deliverance from earthy attachment.

In *Refuge*, the Great Salt Lake is a world in itself constantly being threatened by escalating lake levels and the intervening of men who want to control the natural process. The writer also uses the Lake's wide range of birds to connect her to the meaning of the familial and to emphasize the ways in which human nature handles the fights and the losses in life and uses its process of rising and falling lake levels to parallel the tumult that went along with the process of her mother's dying. Her *Refuge* was tied both to the place and to the people. As she was losing them both, she called it an "Unnatural history of family and place". In what way was it unnatural? This is one of the basic themes that the study will try to explore.

The writer attempts to come to terms with the loss of her mother and that of the birds in the refuge by juxtaposing natural history and personal tragedy, and reveals how birds can heal her to face her tragic drama. She says, "the losses I encountered at the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge as Great Salt Lake was rising helped me to face the losses within my family" (p.2-3). The author captures the essence of change in the environment, change in people as a result of their environment, and the need for humans to change their relationship with the earth. In addition, Williams believes that human beings need to identify themselves as one among the species of the planet and not the one to dominate all other life forms. She also shows that our lack of intimacy with the land has initiated a lack of intimacy with each other. These themes will be further explained in the discussion that will be carried out in this study

Definition of Key Terms:

Ecocentrism: the word comes from the Greek (oikos), meaning "house" and (kentron), meaning "centre". It is a belief that holds that "the world is an intrinsically dynamic, interconnected web of relations with no absolute dividing lines between the living and the nonliving, the animate and the inanimate. (1)

Ecocriticism: As defined earlier.

Ecology: The word ecology comes from the Greek word (oikos), meaning "home" or "a place to live". It discusses the relationship of an animal to both its organic and inorganic environment, particularly those plants and animals with which it comes in contact.

Environment, environmentalism, ecology movement: "The verb environ ("to surround") is of medieval provenance. Environment as noun was derived from the French (virer), meaning "to turn" and was introduced during the first third of the 19th C., initially to denote cultural milieu but then often with primary reference to physical surroundings specifically. Environment can denote the surroundings of an individual person, a species, a society, or of life forms generally. Environment and environmentalism are widely used, as in ecological sciences, to apply to natural environment(s) specifically."(2). Ecology movement etymologically means "a study of the household"

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(1): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (137)
(2): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (140)

Environment writing, environmental literature: Terms sometimes used as virtual synonyms for nature writing, but always with the intent of suggesting a more encompassing range of reference, if not also a wider range of genres. Environmental writing usually (though not always) denotes nonfictional prose. (1)

Georgic: It is a Greek word which means "agriculture", focusing on the life of shepherds. (2)

Landscape: A polysemic term whose chief modern usage in English derives from early modern Dutch *landscape* painting. Landscape typically refers to rural rather than urban contexts, and typically implies a certain amplitude of vista and degree of arrangement, whether the referent is an artifact or an actual locale. In all cases, landscape implies the totality of what a gaze can comprehend from its vantage point.(3)

Nature writing: is generally defined as "nonfiction prose writing about the natural environment. Nature writing often draws heavily on scientific information and facts about the natural world. At the same time, it is frequently written in the first person and incorporates personal observations of and philosophical reflections upon nature.(4)

Wild, wildness, wilderness: Terms share the sense of "undomesticated". Wilderness literally refers to special area, whereas wildness is a term of quality rather than location. (5)

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(1): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (142)
(2): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (144)
(3): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (142-43)
(4): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (144)
(5): see Buell, Lawrence (2005). The future of Environmental criticism (148-49)

Limitations of the Study

This study has covered only one work by Terry Tempest Williams. Perhaps a discussion of her other works would have shed greater light on the main subjects referred to in the study. As a new approach, ecological criticism hasn't been widely used in critical studies. Consequently, there are not many sources available on this work by Williams.

Chapter Two

Review of Related Literature

Few critical studies have been written on Williams's *Refuge*. One of these studies is Jennifer Farrell's on-line article "Making Love to the Earth: the Eco-Feminism of Terry Tempest Williams" (1996) which argues that Williams is a woman "whose scientific background merges with personal experience in order to reanimate the world and to bring the concept of animism back. By bringing the natural spirit back and connecting with it, Williams hopes to inspire others to do the same". The writer adds that Williams's "personal quest is to awaken in every individual the desire to reconnect with the earth".

Refuge is an unconventional history about birds, family and land. From beginning to end, *Refuge* conveys Williams's relation with birds, the lake and the landscape. Glotfelty (1996) demonstrates how Williams is keen on describing her natural world by focusing on birds and the Great Salt Lake. Smith (1993) draws attention to the list of rare and regular bird species of the Great Salt Lake. Both Smith and Glotfelty show how the text itself follows the nature writing type in which there is immediate observation and detailed description of birds and their habitat, scientific explanations of ecology, and the presentation of measurable quantitative details like rainfall and lake level.

Frost (1997) explains how *Refuge* presents the idea of the wilderness and its importance for every individual, demonstrating that human world has relational connection to the physical world. She argues that Williams's "descriptions of death, pain and ugliness aren't random events" (p.6) in the writer's text but they are integral in arresting artifacts to examine the main texture of the novel. For her, Williams has gathered her experience from nature and becomes part of a greater life view that is concerned with a deep reflection on nature. Frost shows how Williams, like other nature writers, turns to the natural world to learn valuable lessons about human life and its close connection with the non-human.

In her on-line article titled "Science and Ecocriticism", Heise (1997) points out that "ecocriticism or 'green criticism' is one of the most recent interdisciplinary fields that emerged in literary and cultural studies". For her, ecocriticism plays an intense role to show the connection between the natural environment and "the imagination of a cultural community at a specific historic moment." Moreover, she argues that ecocriticism elucidates how nature is used literally or metaphorically in certain literary works of which *Refuge* is a good example.

Cox (1997) argues that many critics consider the non-human world is not presented to talk only about farming methods but also to bring out that "human history is implicated in natural history" (p.104). She also adds that human and non-human interests are important and legitimate.

Turner (2000) shows that Williams interweaves together her concerns about the loss of bird habitats and her anger about the nuclear testing program as well as her grief after the loss of her mother. According to Turner, nature writing becomes Williams's main weapon against those who cause harm to the environment. She points out how the author "spent her young adulthood attempting to understand her desert homeland and humankind's role in it" (p.114) and shows that Williams's work seeks to communicate with what she reads about the landscape and lives the wealth of unseen or sensed details that may be ignored by observers who might "dismiss the desert as being barren or desolate" (p.114). She also explains that though the rocks may seem rough and cold, they become resting places where man can find peace and comfort. Williams's *Refuge,* is not only about reminding readers of their landscape but is also to protest against the government's nuclear testing. Williams's art "demands the cooperation of the audience both during the aesthetic experience and after" (p.115).

Williams is a "voice speaking against pollution that threatens lives and disrupts ecosystems," as Barlow (2000: iii) asserts. She adds that Williams denounces all forms of destruction and works to protect the wilderness as well as takes actions against political and governmental agendas that endanger the natural world. In her opinion, Williams as a nature writer and ecological activist is not only connected to human lives but also to the landscape genealogically as well as physically. She illustrates Williams's dramatic personal experience "along with her

scientific background as an environmental educator and director of Utah's Museum of Natural History" (p.iv) clarifies her environmental activities to preserve her land from the degradation and destruction its life forms. In addition, the critic shows how Williams has used T.V and radio programs as well as public speeches to express her support for the environment and to announce her refusal toward ungracious treatment to wildlife. Barlow shows Terry's concerns in *Refuge* for life, "both human and non human" (p.2). She decries "destruction of the natural environment" and feels "personal grief over the deaths of individual animals and birds, particularly unnatural deaths" (p.3).

Another study on *Refuge* is Lawrence Buell's *Writing for Endangered World* (2001:46). Buell argues that Williams's *Refuge* is a contemporary work of nature that contains a double plot about a Utah wildlife sanctuary threatened by a rise in the Great Salt Lake and about the tragedy of women inflicted with cancer caused by aboveground nuclear tests in the Nevada desert.

Hostetter (2001) discloses that Williams writes about the growth of the soul is "the growth of the interior self" (p.5), if one senses the charm of the world around him and she stresses that "the disruptions of culture" (p.5) is the disruption of self. Hostetter also observes that the author shows how natural disasters in *Refuge* are the work of man. He goes on to explain how this realization prompts Williams to become part of a concerted campaign to fight nuclear testing. Hostetter shows how Williams portrays herself to be the hero in three different ways. Firstly, she becomes

the hero of her "family who helps them face their tragedy" (p.109). Secondly, she defends nature, and tries her best to protect the Bear River Migratory Bird Refuge from corrupted people. Thirdly, she becomes political and social activist when she confronts the U.S government's nuclear testing policies.

Nizalowski (2001) argues in his on-line article "Terry Tempest Williams: The Emerson of the West", that Williams's power of writing process comes from what she senses in her natural world. He argues that Williams's *Refuge,* "with its highly textured descriptions of the Utah landscape and its passionate depiction of life and death in a contemporary American family" has earned Williams a great deal of respect among her audience as well as among literary critics

In his on-line article, Barnhill (2002) argues that *Refuge* is considered one of the masterpieces that gives a good depiction of how nature writing can be an explicit conjunctive of nature and human beings on the earth. He believes that Williams's "nature writing itself emerges out of its writer's community and is aimed toward it." He explains how Williams has explored her relationship with nature along with her relation to her community and has shown how the two are obviously inseparable. Williams experiences nature through her relation with her community (family) and she experiences her community (family) through her connectedness with the natural world. In other words, the natural and the human worlds are intermixed.

Zuelke (2003) views *Refuge*'s as "weapons of language" (p.111) and as an expression of Williams's outrage against an unnatural situation that has poisoned the

bodies of her family and her land. Williams sees herself as an essential member of her community connected to society "by her relationships, by the community's presence in her imagination" (p.99) and by her membership as activist in her community.

Glotfelty (2004) asserts that *Refuge*, heralded a new way of writing about nature. As a scientist by profession, Williams was trained to be objective. In addition to her focus on the family relationships as well as on relatives, birds and the lake, she gives exact figures and statistics to underscore the truth and the factuality of her subjects and ideas.

Williams casts herself, as Taylor (2004) reports in her on-line article, as one who has been "engaged in multiple simultaneous marriages - landscape, community, cultura1 heritage, and the truth and value of her own experience." Williams refers to herself as an "edge-walker" wants to find the syndetic path which connects the strength, comfort, and her religious heritage with her own form as an artist that is overwhelmed by an earthy sensuality. Utah is where Williams chooses to make her home and where she has made an obvious commitment to stay engaged in the community of her religious and cultural ancestry vowing to stand her ground in the place that she loves. Williams's arts reflects her belief in the value of Earth literacy and the sacred commitment, "to stay home, to learn the names of things, to realize who we live among - plants, animals, rocks, rivers and human beings." She thinks

that the human beings' lack of intimacy with the land is a result of man's lack of intimacy with others.

In his on-line article, Cohen (2004) notes that ecocriticism asks a wide range of questions and he argues that all ecological criticism shares one statute in which the human culture and the physical world are integral and affect each other. For him, ecocriticism is "the interconnectedness between nature and culture, specially the cultural artifacts of language and literature." He also argues that ecocriticism focuses on the aesthetic artistic expressions of human experience in his world both naturally and culturally with mixture of passions like: "The joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hopes for harmonious existence and the fears of loss and disaster"

Taylor (2005) in her on-line article argues that Williams has been called a citizen writer who speaks and speaks out eloquently on behalf of an ethical stance toward life, a naturalist and fierce advocate for freedom of speech. She is an outspoken anti-war activist who "possesses an intense passion for the sacred landscape of her Utah home and for the larger American West- a landscape she experiences as inspired by wilderness and grace." She explains how Williams has consistently shown to people how environmental issues are social issues that ultimately become matters of justice. She further argues that *Refuge* is a classic American nature writing, a legacy to humankinds to bring out the term of landscape, a book where the author juxtaposes her familial and natural tragedies and portrays cancer as an intruder who passes through the earth's body and the human body.

In an interview with Beebee (2005), Williams affirms the importance of nature and acknowledges that man doesn't have adequate language to convey what the wilderness means. She also asserts that the land we live on "deserves protection from the continued rape of the West" (p.9) and "to be honored and defended by the law". Beebee describes Williams as a passionate and engaging writer who uses richly "textured language throughout her narratives" and her literary text provides an arresting style of language that shows that the language and the landscape are integral. Williams uses imageries reflecting the power and determination in her stories "to encourage humanity to realize how humans are destroying their environment instead of working and living with their community" (p.10). In his interview, Scott London (2006) asserts that the connection between language and the landscape is a constant theme of American literary works. He adds that nature has been a source of inspiration for America's finest writers and that Williams is one of them.

Payne (2006) concludes in her article "We are dirt: We are Earth" that ecocriticism paralyses the human and nature dualism in which the natural world has always been regarded as less superior and separate from the human world. Although many theories stress the subjectivity of the human, ecocriticism turns attention to the relational nature of individuality, the link that stimulates a dispersing of oppositions between human and natural worlds as well as instigating an ecologically inspired responsibility.

Austin (2006) illustrates Williams's apparent fused passion of landscape, desert, natural world as mosaic of ideas, truths, stories and desires that she weaves together to create a power of narrative. Moreover, these inanimate concepts are the starting point for Williams's literary works.

Hill (2006) suggests that the natural world can shape the self of every individual; thereby he/she must preserve his/her world, remember it, and give it significance. For her, landscape won't revitalize until it is verbalized; landscapes that surround man don't become recognized until humans "turn them into narrative" (p.7). Place according to Williams is "connected to personal relationships, memories and stories" (p.13). She asserts that man's identity can be threatened if landscape is dismissed. Hill sees Williams's surroundings as "fused with her physical self" when she sees woman's body "in the curvatures of mountains near home and mother's touch is similar to the wind that stirs her hair". In other words, she revitalizes herself if she melts with her natural world that seemingly to be similar to human touch and from.

Newell (2006) shows that Williams continuously employs repetition, images, metaphors and parallelism as part of her techniques to create a sense of ongoing rhythm. These mechanisms support Williams's ideas towards the meaning of nature and its essence in man's life

Obviously, there is some critical literature on Williams's work. Nevertheless, there is large scope for more work. The main contribution that this study hopes to

make is the discussion of this piece of nature writing in the light of the principles of ecocriticism (the interconnectedness between man and nature, environment and literature by using images, metaphors and other techniques). Although the above studies on Williams's Refuge deal in one way or another with the novel, none of them has discussed it from a strictly Ecocritical viewpoint. Hence, the justification for writing this piece of research is to fill in this gap and to prepare for more research in ecocritical criticism.

Chapter Three

Perils to Nature

"As a people and as a family we have a sense of history, and our history is tied to land" (p.14). With these words, written near the beginning pages of *Refuge*, Williams emphasizes the close connection she sees between her life, the life of her family, and the landscape. Growing up in Salt Lake City, nestled between the Wasatch Mountain Range and the Great Salt Lake, she has relied upon the landscape which has been as constant for her as the family history and religious beliefs that are passed to her upon her birth. From an early age, she recognizes an interconnectedness between the landscape, her home, her family's religion and her own life. John Tempest, Williams's father, reveals the concept of love for land and his family's connection to the natural world,

> The land, the water, the air, all have minds of their own. I understand it because I work with the elements everyday. Our livelihood depends on it [the lake]. If it rains, we quit. If it is a hundred degrees outside, our men suffer. And when the ground freezes, we can't lay pipe. If we don't make adjustments with the environment, our company goes broke. (p.139)

Williams's passion for the wilderness extends to her personal history. As a child, making trips and excursions to the Great Salt Lake has been a regular occurrence. She says that her family's "attachment to the land was our attachment to each other" (p.15). For her, the landscape is the second home and, like her mother,

she finds the hard soil more comforting than the hospital tile. The desert instructs her in a way that the human world can't: "Once out on the lake, I am free. Native. Wind and waves are like African drums driving the rhythm home. I am spun, supported, and possessed by the spirit who dwells here. Great Salt Lake is the spiritual magnet that will not let me go. Dogma doesn't hold me, wildness does" (p.240). For her too, the Bird Refuge is a sanctuary "a consecrated place, a place of protection for my grandmother and me" (p.15). Those feelings only intensified as Williams aged and began to depend on the constancy, solitude and peace that she is sure to find when she immerses herself in the power of the landscape and in the company of birds and plants. She sees promise in the blooming Joshua trees which connect her to the earth, family and health as well as to her Mormon ancestors:

> The Joshua trees standing their ground had been named by the ancestors, who believed they looked like prophets pointing west to the Promised Land. These were the same trees that bloomed each spring, flowers appearing like white flames in the Mojave, and I recalled a full moon in May, when mother and I had walked among them, flushing out morning doves and owls. (p.290)

Place is closely connected to people, memories and stories. One can see how the destruction of place has the potential to threaten individual identity and existence. For the local women, who have historically been equated with the landscape and the wilderness, the destruction of the land or separation from it is experienced as the destruction of the self. The engagement with the landscape is something that the women in Williams's family rely upon in the face of personal

challenges. When Diane discovers a mass in her lower abdomen, the author is not surprised that her mother retreats to the Grand Canyon in search of solitude and healing in preparation for telling the family and before seeking the medical care she needs. Upon Diane's return, she calls Terry and explains "The Grand Canyon is a perfect place to heal, I have found a tumor, a fairly large mass in my lower abdomen, I discovered it about a month ago" (p.23). Explaining her quest for solitude and peace, she adds: "I needed time to live with it to think about it and more than anything else, I wanted to float down the Colorado river …. I knew the days in the Canyon would give me peace" (p.23). Diane's search for solitude, healing and peace in nature is a pattern that is repeated again and again and which for the narrator, her mother, and her grandmother becomes a pattern that binds them to each other: "Our attachment to the land, was our attachment to each other" (p.15). In fact, the women are drawn into the wilderness to find peace and seek healing.

Williams's work is reminiscent of Thoreau's and Emerson's earlier works on nature. Williams's novel echoes Henry David Thoreau's aesthetic mode which combines close natural observation, historical and personal experience, and symbolic meanings. Williams's *Refuge* recalls Thoreau's condemnation of man's interference with nature and the dehumanizing effects that this has on nature. Like Thoreau, Williams endeavors continually to express the importance of appreciating the natural world and experiencing its spiritual impact on human beings. Both offer pictorial descriptions of the non-human world: birds, ponds, and animals in order to

show how nature is a source of pleasure and peace. *Refuge* and *Walden* aren't just masterpieces of autobiography but social critiques of modern Western Civilization that is concerned with materialistic and political attitudes without comprehending that community and society are responsible for the protection of the natural world.

Like Emerson, Williams is also relishes the importance of solitude in nature so as to be able to contemplate the natural world and to find peace and quiet in nature. Emerson (1836) argues: "To go into solitude, a man needs to retire as much from his chamber as from society. I am not solitary whilst I read and write" (p.5). In fact, Emerson believed that nature finally provides man with adequate company any appropriate comfort. Even more, nature enables man to transcend this material world and to reach high levels of spiritual experience.

The writer has woven the story of the rising of the Great Salt Lake into the story of her mother's death from cancer in 1987. The title of this work implies the writer's need to find refuge in a place where she can find peace with the flora and the fauna and a place where she can reflect on the destruction of her family and the natural surroundings. The writer shows how many of natural places have disappeared under the pressure of development and the government's policies to conduct nuclear tests. The writer shows how atomic testing was given priority and public interests were neglected or ignored. She argues, "Much has been written about this, American nuclear tragedy, public health was secondary to national security" (p.284). She adds that the government claims that it is safe to conduct such

tests: “The American public was told by its government, in spite of burns, blisters, and nausea, it has been found that the tests may be conducted with adequate assurance of safety under conditions prevailing at the bombing reservations” (p.284).

The book discusses the feelings of kinship to the land as shown by the main characters. It also investigates the extent to which humankind has lost its connection to both earth and other fellow human beings who have forgotten their kinship with the land so their kinship with each other has become weak and insignificant. In other words, the writer shows how those who neglect or reject the earth ultimately neglect and reject the human. For example, the men in *Refuge* who attempt to dike the lake are not different from those who carry out nuclear tests where human communities live and work. Both are indifferent to human life and to their community’s interests.

Williams shows the violence committed against the humans, particularly against the feminine: “Men define their intimacy through their bodies. It is physical. They define intimacy with the land in the same way. Subjugation of women and nature maybe a loss of intimacy within themselves” (p.10). The author believes that human beings shouldn’t identify themselves as one among the species of the planet and that they can dominate all other life forms. Williams explains her personal relationship with the land, a relationship that depends upon an individual’s ability to merge with the natural world, not to destroy it because man is just another species on earth, and can’t be separated from the natural world. Mankind and nature are one

and the same. In *Refuge*, Williams reminds us that the history of North America is one of massive destruction of the land, of the water, of the soil, of the wildlife: "when the Atomic Energy Commission described the country north of the Nevada Test Site as virtually uninhabited desert terrain, my family and the birds at Great Salt Lake were some of the virtual uninhabitants" (p.287).

Williams describes changes in bird life at the sanctuaries covering the shores of the Great Salt Lake as water levels rose during the unusually wet early 1980s and threatened the nesting grounds of dozens of bird species. As a result, many shorebirds were destroyed and birds were displaced, and entire areas were damaged resulting "loss of habitat and declining rate of bird production" (p.113). Williams reveals that in the American West, the numbers of some birds don't look good: "In recent years, the long-billed curlew, the largest North American shorebird, has been declining in number in the Great Basin, as it loses much of its breeding habitat to the plow and other land developments. In the Midwest, it has been extirpated as a breeding species altogether. The Eskimo curlew is close to extinction" (p.145). She adds that, "snowy plovers have shown a 50 percent decline in abundance on the California, Oregon, and Washington coasts since the 1960s, due to the loss of coastal habitats" (p.257) and that "California has lost 95 percent of its wetlands over the past one hundred years" (p.111). One can sense a note of desperation in Williams's warning: "Marches all across the country are disappearing without fanfare, leaving the earth devoid of birdsong" (p.112).

Refuge traces the journey of several women through disease, death and destruction. It also portrays the sense of being one of (the Clan of One-Breasted Women): "I belong to a Clan of one-Breasted Women. My mother, my grandmothers, and six aunts have all had mastectomies. Seven are dead. The two who survive have just completed rounds of chemotherapy and radiation" (p.281). *Refuge* is also a journey through the physical landscape which was affected by man's interference. We are told that the U.S government tested thousands of nuclear devices from the 1940s to the 1960s. In an interview with Ives (1995) Williams deplores the weak connection between human and land. She also recognizes that people in her state across the American West are in conflict over the wise of use the land and the diminishing of the natural world: "The birds have abandoned the lake. Borders are fluid, not fixed. There is no point even driving out to the Refuge" (p.239). *Refuge* portrays that the environmental crisis which has occurred is a result of man's disconnection from the natural world and as a consequence to the increasing technology and the failure to recognize the interconnectedness of all things. It attempts to draw the readers into a cooperative rather than a competitive relation with other members in natural life and to redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of the meaning of the threatened natural world. The narrator draws two contrasting pictures of the coherence between man and nature by quoting an African woman saying:

> I was raised under an African sky. Darkness was never something I was afraid of. The clarity, definition, and profusion of

> stars become maps as to how one navigates at night. I always knew where I was simply by looking up. My sons do not have these guides. They have no relationship to darkness; nothing in their imagination tells them there are pathways in the night they can move through. (p.137)

The contrast here is between an old view that shows close attachment to nature and a current view that lacks this sense of attachment. The book is also a rage against anyone who disrespects nature. In the novel, the narrator's loss is twofold: the loss of a good number of her family members and the loss of the birds. Both events have resulted in a loss of hope, at least for the time being: "Since Mother's death. I have been liberated from my optimism" (p.239). *Refuge* juxtaposes a natural history and a personal tragedy through memories which end with painful events: Williams's mother's illness and the degradation of the marshlands. Both are treated as major catastrophes resulting from the brutal intervention of humans. The mother's story is as painful as the inundation of the Bird Refuge. In short, there is a human disaster as well as a natural disaster going simultaneously.

Refuge argues for an understanding of the world that has been greatly harmed by the environmental wounds which humans have inflicted upon it. It shows how human beings are often careless in their use of nature. It also underlines the role of nature as a healing power when man learns how to use it. Barnhill (2002) indicates that Williams interacts with nature in this way. He points out that there is a recognized relationship between nature and humans in which nature is seen as an object rather than a subject. Thus, there is true involvement of humans in nature. He

argues that Williams condemns the exploitive use of nature in which there is no deep sense of the relationship between humans and the earth and nature is treated as passive object devoid of intrinsic value. For her part, Williams believes that there should be no separation between herself and her environment. This concept is underscored by Glotfelty (2004) who points to the integral relationship between the self and the place in which the self identifies with the place and become one. Lewis (1997) states that Williams conveys the relationship between nature and self. He shows how the writer is tied to the land she inhabits and how she evokes the feeling of the new generations to love land, and how she teaches that humans are part of the land they live on. In fact, *Refuge* shows us what it means to be human, what we are connected to rather than what we are separate from. Williams's African friend describes the attachment between man and nature in these words: "I am Kikuyu, my people believe if you are close to Earth, you are close to people" (p.137). The relationship with the land is here equated with the relationships among people. A sense of community or communal life when people emphasize the self and material gain rather than community and harmonious coexistence: "Because we have forgotten our kinship with the land, our kinship with each other has become pale" (p.137). Throughout this book readers experience the vision of a woman who is connected to nature and who reports the problems and mistakes of the State of Utah and its people and records the birdflight and the nesting patterns, showing us that each deserves careful attention. *Refuge* reflects the writer's commitment to creating

an undamaged world and a safe environment: “I keep dreaming the Refuge back to what I have known: rich, green bulrushes that border the wetlands, herons hidden cattails, concentric circles of ducks on ponds” (p.140).

Her solicitude appears in each chapter about the birds. She records a list of the birds she has seen and finds a great joy doing it and considers this a source of solitude and an essential part in her life: “At the end of each day, I write down the names of all birds seen and read them loud” (p.88). Such passages define her rootedness to the natural world where she can find solace and peace: “I go to the lake for a compass reading, to orient myself once again in the midst of change” (p.75). Her respect for non-human creatures defines her determination to reject dealing with them as objects rather than as subjects and to treat them as she treats her fellow human beings. This is obvious in her affectionate and endearing treatment of a swan: “The small dark eyes had sunk behind the yellow lores. It was a whistling swan. I looked for two black stones, found them, and placed them over the eyes like coins” (p.121). Here she quotes ceremonies from the Greek myths about the funeral rituals used for great leaders and places two coins over the dead swan’s eyes as a metaphor of glorifying it. Hostetter (2001) believes that Williams’s washing of the swan’s body prefigures the writer’s preparation for washing her mother’s body for burial. The author uses words to translate her emotional appeal using ink and paper but she inquires, “But how do we correspond with the land when paper and ink wont do? How do we empathize with the Earth when so much is ravaging her?” (p.85).

Williams wonders whether human beings are still connected to the earth especially after they have ravaged nature and after they have done her a great harm. The current attitude towards birds annoys her: “The flocks of flamingoes that Loius Agassiz Fuertes [an artist who concentrates on painting birds] lovingly painted in the American tropics are no longer accessible to us. We have lost the imagination to place them in a dignified world. And when they do grace the landscapes around us, they are considered accidental” (p.89). She makes a comparison between the ways flamingoes were seen in the past and the way they are seen in the present and she feels sorry for this change. She shares conversations with her mother and grandmother and receives myths and stories about her family and friends in the process of dealing with the destruction this book describes. As a child, Terry was enchanted by “the magic of birds, how they bridge cultures and continents with their wings, how they mediate between heaven and earth” (p.18). The birds are now teachers that connect heavenly and earthy worlds, which means connection between reality and imagination, self and community, past and present, between what is and what might be. Terry Williams identifies with nature and analyzes her connectedness to nature. She argues that the unmindful destruction of lands and natural life and also civilization’s intrusion upon the wild life have negatively impacted nature, damaged the environment, which in turn has resulted in the destruction of human life. She portrays the great damage that man has inflicted on both the environment and human life itself and how technology can be an

oppression and a destruction of nature and human life. She also calls for the conservation of lands, lakes and birds and argues for an ecologically safe world.

Parallel to her account of such devastation, Terry describes the changes in the birds' life at the sanctuaries covering the shores of the Great Salt Lake as water levels rose during early 1980s and threatened the nesting grounds of dozens of species: "In the summer of 1983, I worried about the burrowing owls, wondering if the rising waters of Great Salt Lake had flooded their home" (p.10). She believes that people's interference with water flow (building dams and diverting rivers) caused the flooding at the refuge, just like the government's nuclear testing that caused her mother's illness. She uses the Great Salt Lake's wide range of birds to emphasize the destructive ways in which humans handle the natural world. She sees the lake as a symbol of resistance and stamina; it teaches her lessons in endurance and fortitude: "I want to see the lake as Woman, as myself, in her refusal to be tamed. The State of Utah may try to dike her, divert her waters, build roads across her shores, but ultimately, it won't matter, she will survive us" (p.92). Williams personifies the lake as a woman as a way of showing her veneration of wildlife. She also identifies with the land and connects it to the human body and pictures the land to be a female. For Williams the sand dunes at Fish Springs, are animate and feminine: "And they are female. Sensuous curves – the small of a woman's back. Breasts. Buttocks. Hips and pelvis. They are the natural shapes of Earth. Let me lie naked and disappear" (p.109). Again Williams views herself and the landscape

being fused into oneness: “I am desert, I am mountains. I am Great Salt Lake. There are other languages being spoken by wind, water, and wings. There are other lives to consider: avocets, stilts, and stones” (p.29). This passage fuses desert, mountains and lake with the speaker’s persona. Moreover, there is an implication that desert, lake and mountains speak to her. She expresses her affections for lakes, birds and non-human creatures in the same way she does with her family. Sawyer (2001) draws attention to what Williams lays on, such as, relational images of desert land and its flora and fauna in bizarre ways to the readers. There is a parallel between the land and man; if the land is in good shape, man will be healthy and safe.

Williams pictures man’s interference with natural life on many occasions throughout her book. Chapter One, for example, shows her contempt for those who destroy nature’s creatures. Here she condemns the action of the three men who have leveled the clay covering nesting mound of some burrowing owls at the Bear River Bird Refuge. Her emotional response is so intense that in describing her reaction, she says: “I knew rage, it was fire in my stomach with no place to go” (p.12). Moreover, she condemns the channeling of three mountain streams, Red Butte, Emigration, and Parley’s, into a holding pond at liberty Park near the centre of town. As a result of this channeling the water will be funneled into the Jordan River, which will eventually pour into Great Salt Lake. We are told that these three Wasatch Front rivers converge underground in an eighty inch pipe, but when the pipe gets to full, it blows all the manhole covers sky high, causing massive flooding

on the streets" (p.39). The result of this action, as she tells her readers, is that "the Bird Refuge is under water" (p.62). This means that birds life will be seriously affected because "the population of colony-nesting birds on the islands fluctuates with the lake level and human disturbance" (p.71).

Williams describes the status of the land and its population after the flooding: "Most of the islands have either been abandoned by colony nesters or their population has been greatly reduced" (p.72). As she clarifies, there will be no "nesting space due to rising waters, increased human visitation to the islands, and most important, lack of food due to the submerged marshes". In addition, this will result in a sharp decline in the birds' population besides "making the birds more vulnerable to predators and human interference. Food supply is also threatened as the marshes shrink". Williams refers to Dr. Behle's predictions about the danger that will happen to Great Salt Lake: "If present trends continue, there is danger that the islands of Great Salt Lake will be entirely abandoned by colonial birds". The diminishing of birds life disrupts the tranquility at *Refuge* and creates a kind of God-forsaken place: "The Refuge is subdued, unusually quiet. The spring frenzy of courtship and nesting is absent" (p.96). The feeding site for the birds is diminishing and "Bear River Bay remains their only feeding site on Great Salt Lake" (p.99). Accordingly, having one feeding site leads to having the same breeding and feeding schedule and this "would not be advantageous if every colony was on the same breeding and feeding schedule. The competition for food wouldn't only diminish the

resource but also result in pelican mortality" (p.106). Williams indicates that all studies expose the connection between the birds numbers and the rising of the lake levels: "The recent population and habitat studies performed by the Utah Division of Wildlife Resources shows that colony nesting species around Great Salt Lake have been affected by the rise in Lake level" (p.110). The result is the death of birds killed by the rising salt water. The loss of such birds becomes significant as it forms a serious damage to nature and to wild life in Utah area. Actually, the author uses statistics to show the sharp decline in the bird life in that area. For example, we are told that Franklin gulls in the late 1970s were thousand breeding pairs, compared to the fifty-one nests counted in 1985. In November 1984, two hundred fifty-nine whistling swans were counted at the refuge. One year later: three. All this shows the rapid diminishing of such birds. Williams reveals how she is upset by this sharp decline and eventual diminishing of birds' population which means that humans are in trouble. Williams stresses this feeling in most of the chapters: "The avocets and stilts, along with other ground nesters around Great Salt Lake, have been completely displaced. The nesting sites have been usurped by water" and "when wetlands are destroyed, many species go with them" (p.111). The result is: "leaving the earth devoid of birdsong" (p.112).

Williams stresses her sentiments about the malignant use of the natural world, so that the reader becomes more aware of the perils threatening natural life. The reader is also made to see the negative attitudes towards nature with the hope of

becoming more able to recognize the challenges and threats that may befall the environment. The author remarkably intertwines nature and human life through appeal to reason, passion and figures. Besides her sympathetic attitude to nature and her reasonable treatment of the dangers threatening it, she resorts to statistics when she gives at the start of each chapter the water level of Great Salt Lake. This kind of factual presentation is as much convincing as the sympathetic presentation is appealing and moving.

The narrator shows a strikingly sympathetic attitude when she talks about a barn swallow stuck to a barbed wire fence. Instead of following her instinct to help it, she lets it die, so that nature takes its course: "Suffering shows us that what we are attached to – perhaps the umbilical cord between mother and me has never been cut. Dying doesn't cause suffering, resistance to dying does" (p.53). Here she uses the dead barn swallow to show how human beings often perpetuate suffering. She also uses starlings to explain human nature. For her, this bird species is as aggressive as humans in their behaviour:

> When I am out the dump with starlings, I don't want to like them. They are common. They are aggressive, and they behave poorly, crowding out other birds. When a harrier happens to cross over from the marsh, they swarm him, he disappears. They want their marsh to themselves. Perhaps we project on to starlings that which we deplore in ourselves: our numbers, our aggression, our greed, and our cruelty. Like starlings, we are taking over the world. (p.56)

On another level, Williams pictures the relationship between a mother and landscape, a mother and a lake, women and the moon. She describes the womb as the first landscape the man inhabited and "it is here we learn to respond, to move, to listen, to be nourished" (p.50). The mother's body is compared to a nourishing earth in which the fertile landscape is parallel to the maternal environment. She portrays the lake calling the dead swan as a mother calling her deceased son: "And I imagined the shimmering Great Salt Lake calling the swans down like a mother, the suddenness of the storm, the anguish of its separation" (p.122).

She also draws parallels between women and the moon: "As women, we hold the moon in our bellies. It is too much to ask to operate on full moon energy three hundred and sixty-five days a year" (p.136). Throughout this book, the moon is used as a metaphor that signifies the hidden power and patience that women have within themselves. Williams also presents the moon as a feminine figure that watches over her in the darkest times: "One night, a full moon watched over me like a mother" (p.189); "a full moon hung in a starlit sky. It was Mother's face illumined" (p.232). Williams's words move far beyond ordinary perception to record details noticeable only by those who have looked deeply.

The writer reveals the harmful effects of nuclear testing on both man and nature and how erroneously Great Salt Lake was chosen for these tests: "A blank spot on the map translates into empty space, space devoid of people, a wasteland perfect for nerve gas, weteye bombs, and toxic waste. The army believes that the

Great Salt Lake Desert is an ideal place to experiment with biological warfare by calling this place "blank spot" which is "on the map translates into empty space, space devoid of people, a wasteland perfect for nerve gas, weteye bombs, and toxic waste" (p.148). *Refuge* contains a condemnation of this insulting view of western deserts by including page after page of personal encounters with the landscapes described as sensuous and spiritual, places of profound peace and great beauty. She is furious when an official from the Atomic Energy Commission once commented that the desert between St. George, Utah, and Las Vegas, Nevada: "is a good place to throw used razor blades" (p.242). Wareham (2008) states that nuclear weapons are manmade that represent man's degradation of the natural world. The purpose of these weapons is mostly destruction, which affects most life's forms. She adds that the destructive power of nuclear weapons have potential part to destroy all civilization and the entire ecosystem of the planet. She also asserts that many nuclear tests have been conducted in the atmosphere, underwater, in space, and underground. These tests create generations have been ingested, inhaled external radiation. In her view many aspects of nuclear weapons testing have been characterized by a disregard, sometimes willful, of public health and the environment.

The same writer tells us that in the US, in 1997, the National Cancer Institute revealed that these tests at the Nevada site contaminated the nation's milk supply with iodine-131, the result is, many symptoms of thyroid cancers. Nuclear weapons

make flash of light, then a great fireball, which produces high heat. The fireball rises and cools, forming mushroom cloud. A powerful explosion wave causes the damage of buildings and flying debris. Studies show that plants and animals which have been exposed to radiation have genetic mutations, and everyone knows that mutations can lead to the development of cancers. These results and devastating effects of nuclear testing help reinforce Williams's concern about the dangerous effects of nuclear tests and radiation on human and natural life.

Having examined the perils to nature, we now turn to a discussion of the effects of the abuses of nature on human life.

Chapter Four

Threats to Human Life

In the last fifty years, the earth has been abused and irradiated and polluted so heavily that human life has become seriously dangerous. In addition, the relationship between humans and the land has been harmed and all human beings have become implicated in and victimized by the threat of global nuclear radiation. *Refuge* makes a close connection both between this abuse of nature and the disastrous effects on human and natural life. In the epilogue to *Refuge*, entitled "The Clan of One-Breasted Women", Williams tells the darkest story of all in her book. After watching nine women in her family suffer mastectomies (many women are now dead- six aunts, mother, and grandmothers- making her the matriarch of her family when she was only 34), she discovered some information about the atmospheric testing that she believes has had direct dire effects on her female relatives. Williams captures the essence of environmental change: change in human life as a result of the abuse of the environment, and the need for humans to rectify their relationship with the earth. She believes that human beings need to see themselves as one of the planet's many species, rather than as the beings meant to dominate all other life forms. Williams's mother's cancer is portrayed as a process parallel to the damage done to Great Salt Lake. In fact, the writer links her mother illness with cancer to the environmental tragedy of Great Salt Lake. Even more, she draws parallels between her mother's

illness and the disturbance in nature when the mother becomes weak and nature keeps raging through snow: “It continues to snow. Mother continues to weaken” (p.213). Williams ponders on the way cancer begins slowly and invisibly: “One cell divides into two, the two into four, the four into sixteen, and on until, together, their presence is recognized” (p.44). Like cancer, ideas begin quietly and invisibly, and like cancer, they grow from “abnormal thoughts”, and “divide”, develop until they “make themselves conscious” and “demand total attention” (p.44).

Williams stands against the malpractices of her society and beings to work with a strong will and imagination to put an end to these practices. She tries her best to take case up the case to the highest decision makers until that day “on May 10, 1984, Judge Bruce S. Jenkins handed down his opinion. Ten of the plaintiffs were awarded damages. It was the first time a federal court had determined that nuclear tests had been the cause of cancer” (p.285). *Refuge* reflects every moment the author has been living with her family since the day when she knew about her mother’s illness: “Twelve years before, I knew something was wrong when I walked into our house after school and mother was gone. In 1971, it had been breast cancer” (p.23). She presents the frequent visits to hospital and the suffering that cancer has inflicted on the mother and the family at large. Even nature senses the brutality of the days the mother will pass through: “Mother and I got into the car. It started to rain. In a peculiar sort of way, the weather gave us permission to cry” (p.28). Following the positive diagnosis of her mother’s illness with cancer, everybody in the family

begins to feel the threats of imminent death and limited hours. For Williams Cancer has infinite power and it kills human beings with its name first. As a result, cancer becomes synonymous with death. Accordingly, a person who has cancer recognizes that something monstrous captures the body, dies by the ongoing increments and lives in "nausea and pain" (p.213), then cancer becomes "a disease of shame, one that encourages secrets and lies, to protect as well as to conceal" (p.43). In addition, the patient, the doctors, and the family "find themselves engaged in war" and use military words "the fight, the battle, enemy infiltration and defense strategies". Williams sees cancer as our creation, the creation we fear because it afflicts the human's body till annihilation. She presents cancer as an increasing process where one cell divides into two, two cells divide into four, four cells divide into sixteen that abnormal cells defeat the normal ones. The cancer as the writer conveys changes the victim's outlook like what happens to Diane when she sees herself ill with cancer: "I don't believe this is my body, I could never have imagined myself this thin" (p.198).

As indicated earlier, Williams asserts that "dying doesn't cause suffering, resistance to dying does" (p.53), and living in constant fear of it is the enemy. Of course, dying causes suffering, but she believes that if man tries to fight death, he will only suffer; he has to accept it and let it happen. Like the birds, humans suffer from death: "I recall a barn swallow who had somehow wrapped his tiny leg around the top rung of a barbed-wire fence… When I saw the bird, my first instinct was to

stop and help. But then, I thought, no, there is nothing I can do, the swallow is going to die" (p.53-54). Williams juxtaposes the condition of the swallow with her mother's condition: both are about to die and she can't do anything to save them. But she couldn't leave her bird alone: "I couldn't leave the bird" (p.53), thus showing her sympathy with it. "The swallow had exhausted itself……. With each breath, it threw back its head, until the breaths grew fainter and fainter. The tiny chest became still. Its eyes were half closed. The barn swallow was dead" (p.53).

Williams establishes a close link between nature and her mother's illness and suffering. She tells her grandmother that the "earth is not well and neither are we. I saw the health of the planet as our own" (p.263). William sees the health of the planet as being vital to her own health: "It is all related. I feel certain". Nature and woman are connected through the womb. When her mother has been out of the town, Williams considers communication without letters, reminding herself in essence of the communication she has had with her mother in the womb:

> The heartbeats I felt in the womb -two heartbeats, at once, my mother's and my own - are heartbeats of the land. All of life drums and beats, at once, sustaining a rhythm audible only to the spirit. I can drum my heartbeats back into the Earth, beating, hearts beating, my hands on the Earth – like a ruffed grouse on a log, beating, hearts beating – like a bittern in the marsh, beating, heart beating. My hands on the Earth beating, hearts beating. (p.85)

When Williams and her mother are unable to speak or write to each other, they can use the earth to communicate. This is what helps her remain strong and constant throughout her mother's battle with cancer.

Turner (2000) gives a brief account of the victims of nuclear testing. She says that in 1980 the Pentagon estimated that about 250,000 American soldiers, airmen, sailors, marines were exposed to radiation. She also gives a notable example of a soldier widow called Nancy Cooper. Nancy's husband was present at several of the atmospheric bomb tests and started showing leukemia symptoms four years before he retired early from the army. In *Refuge* Williams tells us that many of these families who were affected by the nuclear tests conducted in the Nevada desert were Mormon who lived by a strict religious code for diet and health and they ate and drank only products that were naturally grown or raised, and were forbidden to ingest caffeine found in coffee, tea and soda, nicotine in tobacco products, or alcohol. Prior to the nuclear tests, they were some of the healthier people in the world. After 1951, when scores of children began to suffer from leukemia, doctors in S.T George and Salt Lake City were stunned by the symptoms they saw. Leukemia and other forms of cancer had rarely been diagnosed in this area of the country before the bombs. These mothers fed contaminated meals to their children because officials from the Atomic Energy Commission told the public that they couldn't be harmed by the fallout that was ingested. Reports told housewives to wash all vegetables and fruits carefully in order to remove the ash, but no one ever informed them that the produce was in fact irradiated, as was the meat from cattle and sheep, milk, water sources, and the soil itself. Many mothers irradiated their babies through breast milk and a good number of children died of thyroid cancer.

Thousands of pregnant women miscarried, women who had cancer "become bald" (p.286) and the survivors' children had an abnormally high rate of infertility and miscarriage. Williams tells her readers that according to many statistics, "breast cancer is genetic" but what they don't say "is living in Utah maybe the greatest hazard of all" (p.281).

Turner (2000) gives another example of a widow whose husband died from the irradiation he suffered from at the testing site called Sarah Haynes. After his death, Mr. Haynes's files and actual existence were deleted by the Atomic Energy Commission. Such cases are discussed by Williams who makes reference to suits against U.S Government. For example, she reports "twelve hundred plaintiffs seeking compensation from the United States government for cancers caused by nuclear testing in Nevada" (p.284). One of those is Irene Allen who has sued the U.S government after losing two husbands and "had been widowed twice", both of whom died of cancer, the first "died of leukemia", the second "died of pancreatic cancer". We are told that a local judge, Bruce S. Jenkins, awarded damages to Allen and nine other plaintiffs. The Tenth Circuit Court of appeals, however, overturned Jenkins's decision, and the US Supreme Court refused to review the case. Williams comments bitterly on this incident: "To our court system it doesn't matter whether the United States government was irresponsible, whether it lied to its citizens, or even that citizens died from the fallout of nuclear testing. What matters is that our government is immune" (p.285). Williams points out how the legal doctrine of

sovereign immunity has been used to shield the U.S Government from having to pay compensation to survivors of cancer caused by nuclear weapons testing in Nevada: "United States was protected from suit by the legal doctrine of sovereign immunity" (p.285). For some southwestern mothers, maternal expectations were damaged by the unenlighted political activities of the federal government and the military. They had no choice, they lost their children and potentially the children of future generations and no amount of money could heal the wounds of loss and regret.

Barlow (2000) agrees with Williams's words how the government and its leaders believe that "the king can do no wrong" (p.285) and that is apparent in the case of nuclear weapons testing and its maiming and deadly effects on U.S citizens during the decades after World War II. He states:

> On December 18, 1950, President Truman granted permission to the Atomic Energy Commission to develop the Las Vegas-Tonopah Bombing and Gunnery Range on government-owned land north of Las Vegas, Nevada. According to the minutes of an Atomic Energy Commission meeting on December 12, 1950 the Nevada site was finally selected because of three basic reasons: low population density, favorable meteorological conditions, which included a prevailing easterly wind blowing away from the populous west coast, and hundreds of miles of flat, government-controlled land. This Nevada site has become the primary location for America's nuclear weapons testing. (p.50)

Seven major tests have been conducted at the Nevada Test Site from January 1951 to October 1958: "atomic testing in Nevada took place from January" (p.283).

Barlow comments:

> Years later, Dr Harold Knapp, a medical researcher with the fall-Out Studies Branch of the Division of Biology and Medicine, AEC, 1960 to 1963 concluded that during the years of heavy testing 1951-55, the dose to an infant's thyroid from radioactive iodine in milk has been 60 to 240 times the direct dose to the thyroid from external gamma radiation from fallout particles on the ground. (p.52-53)

In *Refuge,* Williams quotes Atomic Energy Commissioner, Thomas Murray, as having said, "Gentlemen, we must not let anything interfere with this series of tests, nothing" (p.284). He points out the nuclear testing continued and seven major nuclear test series were conducted between 1951 and 1958. The flashes which become "a family nightmare" (p.286) burned into the darkness, and radioactive cloud patterns moved away. Due to changing wind directions, poor weather forecasting, the carelessness of directors, almost thirty percent of the radioactive debris from the atomic bombs have moved over largely Mormon towns that settled to the east of the Nevada Test Site.

From the mid-50s onward, southern Nevada and the Southwest in general have seen an increase in cancer, radiation sickness, birth defects and inexplicable physical anomalies causing death in large proportions, and the result is: "living in Utah maybe the greatest hazard" (p.281). Anne (2000) says that Dr. John Gofmen who became an outspoken authority on radiation and disease claimed in 1993 that there was a cancer plague resulting from the Nevada tests. Dr. John thought it was hard to see one out of six people dies of cancer, which means a serious plague. In

case after case, individuals (active witnesses to the mushroom clouds) have reported a striking range of symptoms and ailments resulting from increased levels of radiation in the atmosphere, water supply, and food sources and consequently the children are “drinking contaminated milk from contaminated cows” (p.283). Barlow (2000) remarks that by 1961 people of Southern Utah and Nevada have noticed deaths from cancers. Dr. Wareham (2008) clarifies that nuclear weapons are manmade which represent man’s intention to confront the natural world and the effects of these weapons are destructive. He recounts that many nuclear tests have been conducted in the atmosphere, underwater, in space and underground, the result is unhealthy generations who have been ingested, inhaled toxic radiation. In 1991, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War and the Institute for Energy and Environmental Research published “Radioactive Heaven and Earth: the health and environmental effects of nuclear weapons testing in, on and above the earth”. This study shows that the radiation exposure from carbon – 14 would cause millions of human cancer deaths. The report concludes that nuclear weapons testing generate willfully unhealthy public and disregarded environment. According to the report, nuclear weapons testing produce flash light, then an enormous fireball which generates high heat, the fireball rises and cools, forming mushroom cloud, and powerful explosions cause flying debris.

Williams has dreamt for months about bright lights in the desert nightscape, her father reveals to her that on a trip home from California in the early morning

hours of a day in September 1957, she and her family had pulled to the side of the road to watch the explosion of one of the mushroom clouds. Though her father expresses a kind of wonder at the scene and remarks that seeing the tests has been a very common experience at the time, she is engaged by the destruction she hears. The subject of nuclear testing becomes a major theme in her work.

Chapter Five

Conclusions

In *Refuge*, Williams draws upon her knowledge as well as her practical experience and morals in order to present her connection to the earth and to her mother. As we have seen, her mother becomes one of the various women who are maimed by the government's nuclear testing. All have lost their breasts (their symbolic tie to maternity and womanhood) by cancer caused by irradiation. The author draws parallels between the suffering of humans and the suffering of nature. Like the women, the earth, too, is suffering. The author describes the wounded landscape as a second mother: "each time there was another nuclear test, ravens watched the desert heave. Stretch marks appeared. The land was losing its muscle" (p.288); "the red hot pains beneath the desert promised death only, as each bomb became a stillborn. A contract had been made and broken between human beings and the land" (p.288). The women affected by this grievous abuse of nature and the environment act collectivity in a serious attempt to save nature and to protect and safeguard the environment and consequently save their lives and the lives of the future generations.

During Williams's mother's illness, the author recounts her participating in the Great Peace March with her grandmother and Diane. All of the marchers came together to sing the following lines: "we are a gentle, loving people and we are

walking, walking for our lives" (p.134). Their passivity had for years marked them as victims afraid to speak out and fight back. But the march has become a starting point for the women to express their concerns, and to voice their opposition and to protest to the authorities. The march shows solidarity among these women in their fight against oppression and the dangers to the well being of the earth as well as the humans. In *Refuge,* Williams isn't striking or organizing marches just for the sake of her family but also for the sake of humanity at large. What is done in Utah is just the beginning of what can be done in other parts of the world afflicted with a similar abuse of nature and the environment. According to her, these marches would end the concept of the Mormon "angel of home" and kill the fear of being silent, as opposing the authorities is considered a sin in the Mormon church. Williams's work, therefore, marks a departure from the prevailing traditions and heralds a new way of resisting harmful nuclear testing.

Again, the central question of *Refuge* that is: How can one find a refuge in the midst of this milieu that doesn't show any respect for both the environment and the inhabitants?. Williams attempts to find answers to this question by first arming herself with knowledge, learning from nature and birds how to survive, bridging the gap the man creates between the natural and the human worlds, and illustrating what is and what might be.

As we have seen, the writer learns from the stillness of the landscape to be calm and patient. From nature, she learns how to move on and how to be courageous

and persistent in the face of dangers or obstacles, or even death. In the gulls, she sees symbols of soaring and deliverance. Whenever she feels distressed or unhappy, she recollects the flight of the birds over the Salt Lake and immediately, she is consoled and relieved of her grief or distress. Even when she sees the living birds devouring the flesh of decaying animals, insects or birds, her morale is strengthened and as a result she becomes less afraid of death and by accepting it, life becomes a kind of refuge which is a source of comfort. All these lessons lead her to view human beings as an integral part of the cycle of nature where life and death become an integrated process that keeps life going. They also teach her how to deal with her own personal problems. The rising of the Great Salt Lake enables her to face the losses within her family. Instead of succumbing to the dangers and misfortunes that occur by her dispassionated fellow human beings, she determines to stay to do her best to overcome all threats that endanger human and natural life.

Refuge is a story of the Tempest family and the relationship between man and nature, its pleasures and difficulties and solace in nature in moments of loss or grief. Nature becomes here a source of solace and consolation and a place where one can find protection and care,

In the days and hours that Williams spends caring for her mother, she is able to watch the stages of her mother's illness and the changes that happen to her body. Meanwhile, Diane communicates her growing wisdom and perspective on life and death to her daughter. Her mother's suffering leads her to open up to life and

become strengthened and reinforced by the inspiring power of nature. From the moment Diane's illness is introduced into the text, the healing impact of nature on humans is clearly established. Rather than going to her doctor after discovering an abnormality in her lower abdomen, Diane turns to the Grand Canyon to heal her wounds and alleviate her anguish and to guide her in her fight with disease. The whole experience becomes a matter of renewal and a growing awareness. It is a lesson from which she and others can learn a great deal. In their isolated moments in nature both mother and daughter find strength and inspiration as well as a sense of healing and moral support. In nature, she forgets about death and instead becomes more absorbed with life. As the cancer develops and the text moves on, Diane continues to turn to nature to find herself in a way that she can't do in ordinary life. For her, a visit to nature becomes more rewarding than a visit to the hospital. The first inspires life while the second leads towards death.

Having learned through this bitter and hard experience in nature and the landscape, Williams begins to learn to accept death as a fact of life. At the end of the experience she has gone through with her mother and nature, Williams emerges as a better informed person who simultaneously loves life and accepts death. Such a realization becomes a kind of refuge and a source of solace and comfort. From now on, death begins to take a new dimension. Death is right and is "earthy, like birth, like sex" (p.219). Her grieving over her mother and the refuge ultimately leads her to a point that she can no longer blindly follow the tradition that prevents her from

asking the questions that keep her disconnected from landscape, wholeness, and healing. After suffering the devastating losses of the women in her family, she realizes that in order to achieve peace, healing, and personal refuge, she must be willing to break from tradition. Now, she can speak her mind and express herself in a frank and an honest manner without being restricted or constrained by traditional beliefs or commonly accepted ideologies. She has gained an inquisitive mind that will be concerned with seeking neutral, independent and objective knowledge. She is disconnected from people but she will be closely connected to nature which ultimately will lead her love life and care about both the natural and the human world.

In the preface of *Refuge*, Williams considers her motivations for telling her story, "Perhaps I am telling this story," she writes, "in an attempt to heal myself, to confront what I don't know, to create a path for myself with the idea that "memory is the only way home, I have been in retreat, this story is my return." (p.4). For her, storytelling becomes as an essential aspect in the process of accepting and embracing the changes in the landscape, in her family, in the female body, and in her own psyche. Storytelling and memories become the tie that binds her to the landscape and to her mother and all that she loses. Ultimately, storytelling serves as the thread that reconnects her to her family and to her community even though she has to abandon some of the things that anchored her to them in the past. Furthermore, in her creation of story and her realization of the importance of

memory, she recognizes that she is still bound to the women that shape her life and the refuge that provides such a vital sense of security to her though they are no longer physically accessible to her. Her writing as a whole is a therapy for her and a means to find a harmony with nature.

Actually, writing becomes perhaps the main weapon she can use against those in power. In this work Williams wants to use language as a means of speaking out to the world against the various kinds of hazards that threaten both the natural and the human world. Writing and storytelling become her means of healing and the hope to continue living her life in the wake of her mother's death.

Williams' commitment to defend nature continues in her speeches as a spokesperson on behalf of nature. In her speeches, she gathers the principles she has concluded in her narratives: to protect the environment and to remain faithful to her mission toward her land and her society. In her speeches as well as in her writings Williams believes in the importance of community, home, family, heritage, and commitment and the issues of land use and the preservation of wild remain central points to her activism. In fact, she has witnessed before a U.S Senate subcommittee hearing on the Utah Public Land Management Act to protect Utah's wild lands and has harangued her speeches before Congress on behalf of America's Redrock Wilderness Act (Taylor, 2005).

The importance of ecology and the balance between plants, animals, people and their environment has been underlined in the recent World Conference on

Climate Change in Copenhagen in 2009. World leaders and its decision makers have stressed most of the themes that have always been reiterated by nature writers including Williams. They have drawn attention to the fact that man and nature are integral and that the natural world must be protected. They have also announced their support for any possible solutions that can cease the degradation the natural world, eliminating corruption and proclaimed that nature is an essential part in man's life and as the ecosystems achieve balance, man must find a balance with the earth. The negotiators have marked that scientific evidence clearly shows that greenhouse gas emissions contribute significantly to global warming. The prospects are grim: rising temperatures will cause major crop declines in entire regions and significant changes in the availability of water resources. At the same time, as some areas experience major water shortages, rising sea levels will be threatening some of the world's largest cities and may even cause loss of territory and give rise to border disputes. Rain forests, wild life and many animal and bird species would face extinction. Storms, droughts, forest fires and floods will cause irreversible environmental degradation and desertification, affecting the food supplies of millions of people and causing massive migrations. Consequently, they have tried hard to work out an agreement that would to deal with drought, floods and other impacts of climate change and to develop clean energy. All these projects and efforts reinforce what nature writers and environmental activists have been calling for throughout history.

Finally, Williams shows herself as a woman that has moral principles, who lives for the sake of the human and the natural world. She speaks strongly and with deep convictions nowadays when there are strenuous effects made to save the earth. For Williams birds have been the mediators between earth and heaven and the birds are essential in her life. Williams asserts that the most effective policy in handling environmental problems is that of patience and perseverance. As individuals who have the right to live healthy, we must change our treatment for others, thereby; our treatment to land will change consequently. Earth, natural world, birds have the right to be respected and preserved, and that will be by encouraging our community and every individual to do so, and by using media and public speeches which will reach our voice to politics, and revitalizing the soul of our writers to view their points through writing, speeches, and interviews. At last, Terry Tempest Williams as an inclusive nature writer and an ecological activist, the researchers in the future would continue to investigate her other works with a view to explain the new development in her struggle to protect and safeguard the environment in attempt to save both natural and human life.

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