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An Ecofeminist Perspective of the Alternate-History Novel *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*

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Abstract: Orson Scott Card's *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* is an interesting work of fiction that belongs to the genre of Alternate History, which is a subgenre of speculative fiction. The novel poses the question of: "what would have happened to the world if the Indigenous American tribes had been stronger and had made coalitions with each other, instead of being conquered and defeated by European forces?" This paper reads the selected novel from the Ecofeminist point of view, exploring various issues that are relevant to the theory of Ecofeminism. The analysis conducted in this paper tackles the roles women perform when trying to save their world; the connections between women and nature, and how patriarchal cultures treat both of them; the role technology plays in the times of natural disasters and how it can make the world a better place for women; whether or not technology is a tool in the hands of the White savior; and the empowerment of the Indigenous Americans or lack thereof.

Keywords: alternate history; ecofeminism; *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*



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1. Introduction: Alternate History and *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*

Through the ages, humans have longed for the ability to travel in time. Some wanted to see the future and the secrets it holds, while others had a dire need to travel to the past. Those who belonged to the latter party mostly wanted to not only see the past, but change it as well. Some of them had the idea that their suffering at present can be eliminated if some past actions were undone, and past mistakes uncommitted.

Because this is a universal desire, many fiction writers have used the "time-travel" theme in their works. More specifically, some writers focus on time travel, which involves changing the past as a means of amending the present. This kind of fiction is known as "Alternate History", which includes the time-travel aspect. According to Duncan (2003), "an alternate history is not a history at all, but a work of fiction in which history as we know it is changed for dramatic and often ironic effect" (p. 209). Alternate History, which is also known as Alternative History, or AH, is a subgenre of science fiction and historical fiction. It is the genre in which one or more historical events occur and are resolved differently than in real life. Thus, this genre changes one or more things about past events, leading to a different future for a person, a community, or the entire world. This is related to what is called the butterfly effect, which refers to the condition where small changes in a given system can lead to large-scale variations in the future of this system. However, Alternate History is not limited to time travel. Some works of fiction have portrayed alternate versions of history that were not the result of time travel; rather, the result of different routes taken and different decisions made in the past by people of the past, with no interference from their future selves or descendants.

Alternate-History novels can be also classified according to how they end. Leonard (2003) suggests that writers of science fiction, from which Alternate-History sprang, may

sometimes employ imaginative tools to create fictional worlds where some social issues of the real world have been solved. Writers might also create a future where some real-world issues are exaggerated into “a grim dystopia” (p. 253). The chosen novel in this paper belongs to the first type.

This paper chooses Orson Scott Card’s novel *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* to be critically analyzed. Leonard claims that most science fiction writers simply ignore racial problems in their works. Orson Scott Card, however, uses the problem of racism as a major point of discussion in his novel, as Leonard states that the characters of the novel “come from many different ethnic backgrounds, and its plot is about an attempt to change history and Christopher Columbus’s interactions with the native peoples that he encounters in the Caribbean and Americas” (p. 259).

The choice of this novel to be the topic of discussion in this paper is due to a number of reasons. First, the novel belongs to a subgenre of science fiction known as Alternate History. Science fiction allows authors more freedom of thought so that they can tackle issues of the real world with little to no restrictions. Alternate History, in particular, is chosen because it deals with either undoing the mistakes of the past using technology, or imagining a future based on some hypothetical changes made to past real-life events. Such themes are relevant to the ecological and feminist concerns of how modern man-made technology and other White-savior tools might be one major cause of the ecological threats to nature. These themes also shed light on another major Ecofeminist concern, which is the place of women and minorities in their societies, by depicting hypothetically different statuses for women and minorities in the past to show how providing the minorities with better lives would have changed the world in the present. Such themes in the chosen novel include the roles of women in combating the ecological crisis and protecting their world. Thus, such Alternate-History works of fiction would help the reader see that more tolerance and the acceptance of the minorities’ rights can make the world a better place for more and more people. Nonetheless, not all Alternate-History fiction deals with Ecofeminist themes. Though a lot of Alternate-History novels deal with nature and climate change, they do not necessarily tackle women-related issues. An example of such works is Philip K. Dick’s *The Man in the High Castle* (Dick 1962), which mainly focuses on the various impacts of the imagined Axis victory in World War II on the natural world, including the Nazi’s draining of the Mediterranean Sea’s water; their development and use of the hydrogen bomb; and their invention of rockets to be sent to outer space on exploration missions. Another reason why Card’s novel is chosen is that it is written by a male author. Literary research should not neglect works of fiction written by male authors and which deal with Ecofeminist concerns. It is important to identify how male authors tackle such issues and what solutions they suggest to solve them. So, the paper focuses on what roles the female characters in the novel play in saving their world and how they are perceived by other characters in the novel.

This paper uses the critical, analytical method to read the Alternate-History novel *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* (Card 1996) from an Ecofeminist perspective. The objective of analyzing this work of fiction is to answer the following questions: how does the Alternate-History genre serve the causes of Ecofeminist literary theory? How does the selected novel serve as an example of the ways Alternate-History deals with Ecofeminist issues? How are women and nature connected to each other in this novel? Is nature symbolic of women and are women symbolic of nature? How are women and nature regarded by the characters? How do men and women relate to nature? If women and nature are exploited by some characters or forces, how does the author view this exploitation? What methods are used by the characters to help women and/or nature? What roles does technology play in saving nature? Is technology a tool in the hands of the White man to wash his past crimes against the Indigenous Americans? Are the Indigenous Americans empowered in this novel?

2. Ecocriticism and Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism is a branch of feminism that is concerned with both women and the environment, and the mutual aspects that bind them both together. Feminism, from which Ecofeminism sprang, is a social and political movement that is known for demanding and protecting the human rights of women and of different minorities. One of the applications of this movement is a literary critical theory that is known as Feminist criticism. It critiques literature using the Feminist ideology and guiding principles. By examining the economic, social, political, and psychological dynamics that are present in the literature, this school of thought aims to analyze the various ways in which male dominance and women's roles are portrayed in the literature.

In Ann Dobie's *Theory into Practice: An Introduction to Literary Criticism* (Dobie 2015), she uses Lawrence Buell's definition of Ecocriticism being "the study of literature and environment from an interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to analyze the environment and brainstorm possible solutions for the correction of the contemporary environmental situation" (p. 239). Ecocriticism analyzes the representation of nature in fiction and non-fiction writing, as well as in movies, television series, and others where nature plays a role. The study of nature representation in the literature is not limited to examining animal representations. As Bertens (2007) suggests, Ecocriticism "examines representations of landscapes and of nature in its original state: the landscape of pastoral, for instance, and the wilderness" (pp. 200–1).

There are connections between Feminist criticism and Ecocriticism, which mainly emerged during the second wave of Feminism. Ecofeminism developed out of liberal Feminist concerns of ending every kind of domination. It relates the oppression of minorities, a feminist concern, to that of nature, an ecological concern. The main feminist ideas of gender equality, revaluing non-patriarchal or nonlinear structures, and a worldview that respects biological processes, holistic connections, and the value of intuition and cooperation are all used by Ecofeminism. Ecofeminism brings a commitment to the environment as well as knowledge of the connections between women and nature. The concept of Ecofeminism was introduced by Françoise d'Eaubonne in her book *Le Féminisme ou la Mort* (Feminism or Death) first published in 1974.

Ecofeminism also stresses that the domination of patriarchal culture has led to the destruction of nature. According to Candraningrum (2013), the main idea on which Ecofeminism is based is the belief that both nature and women are objectified as a result of patriarchy. Ecofeminism deals with the various ways in which women and nature are oppressed. Ecofeminists investigate how gender categories affect people so that they can show how society standards unjustly dominate nature and women. Ecofeminism, similar to Feminism, developed a literary theory that is based on activism. The literary criticism of Ecofeminism is used as a means to help both women and the environment.

Fundamentally, Ecofeminism views the culture/nature dualism of Western culture as gendered. In other words, men and the concept of masculinity are linked to culture, while women and the concept of femininity are linked to nature. Since culture is respected, and nature is not, such links lead to hierarchy. According to Gaard (2010), exposing these associations found in "literature and culture as well as political thought, media, education, and other aspects of society" is a main aspect of the Ecofeminist literary thought (p. 48).

3. Orson Scott Card's Alternate-History Novel *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* from an Ecofeminist Perspective

Orson Scott Card is an American writer known best for his science fiction works. He won a Hugo Award and a Nebula Award for his novel *Ender's Game* and its sequel *Speaker for the Dead*. Card has shown an interest in alternate realities in both fiction and non-fiction writing. Card's *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus* is an Alternate-History novel that starts with a near-future world facing economic and nature-related troubles, and that is expected to experience famines and wars, as a result. These problems are caused by imperialism and the unfair treatment of nature and its resources. The main

characters are scientists working at a research facility called Pastwatch. The technology that this facility provides allows them to monitor the past and to watch any point in the history of time on screens. According to [Alcocer \(2011\)](#), “the aim of the novel is, on the one hand, to understand the history of the American hemisphere in light of the events surrounding its conquest following the arrival of Columbus. . . On the other hand, however, Pastwatch enters the realm of science (or speculative) fiction in its dramatic attempt to imagine a scenario in which humans from the future are able to travel back in time and alter the historical record” (p. 35).

First, it is important to have an overview of the real-world history of Columbus and his journeys this novel refers to with some changes. Columbus was mainly self-taught and had a strong background in geography, astronomy, and history. He developed a strategy to look for a western sea route to the East Indies. Following the Granada War, the Catholic Monarchs Queen Isabella I and King Ferdinand II decided to support a journey to the West in response to Columbus’s relentless campaigning in numerous realms. Columbus sailed from Castile with three ships, until he arrived on American soil, putting an end to the pre-Columbian era of human life there. He traveled back to Castile carrying captives. Columbus was later ousted from his position as colonial ruler after being accused by his contemporaries of using severe cruelty.

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In the present time of the novel that is set in the near-future for the readers, the scientists of the Pastwatch facility realize that Christopher Columbus received a vision ordering him to sail west, where he would find a land whose inhabitants were disbelievers, whom he should teach about Christianity. The scientists realize that this vision is an intervention into the past that is performed by other scientists from a different future timeline, in which Columbus has already sailed east to fulfill his desire of attacking the Muslim-reigned Constantinople. He failed miserably at the conquest, and Europe was weakened as a result. The miserable status of Europe encouraged the Tlaxcalan Empire in Central America to invade Europe. Consequently, Europe suffered the inhumane sacrificial practices of Central America, including killing people as human sacrifices. When those scientists from the parallel timeline redirect Columbus to sail west rather than east, they save their world; however, they sacrifice Central American people to Columbus’s cruel conquest.

To both save their natural world and amend the mistakes of Columbus in Central America, Pastwatch researchers decide to travel back in time to where it all started: Christopher Columbus’s arrival at the American Continents. They think that if they can help the Indigenous tribes be stronger and to cooperate with each other, then these Indigenous Americans would not be killed or enslaved, and the New World would not be established on blood and death. To make things even better, the time-travelers would be there to meet Christopher Columbus when he arrives at the Americas, to make him see the Indigenous Americans as human beings rather than slaves. The novel ends with colonialism and slavery being overcome by what [Leonard \(2003\)](#) describes as “an independent and powerful new world empire which is equally matched with the Europeans”. Leonard goes on suggesting that “racism is revealed as an ideology which can be altered by the introduction of a different world-view” (p. 261).

According to [Merrick \(2003\)](#), the argument that some science fiction works are not to be blamed for excluding women characters was made on the basis that the subject matters of such works, science and technology, are traditionally male-related interests. Orson Scott Card, however, challenges this whole notion in his novel by giving a female character the role of the mastermind of the Intervention process. The novel also represents female characters as either smart, high-achieving, independent women, or victims of male domination. The first type includes Tgiri, a scientist, who attempts to “sabotage the European conquest of America” ([Card 1996](#), p. 16). Another character who belongs to the same category is Tagiri’s daughter, Diko, who follows in the footsteps of her mother.

Eventually, Diko becomes one of the three-time travelers who travel back in time to change history and, consequently, save the world. The third character is also named Diko, and it is after her that Tagiri's daughter is named. The older Diko, as she will be referred to in the rest of this paper, is a woman who lived centuries before the present time of the novel, and who used to have a prestigious status among men and women in her tribe. The fourth is Chipa, an Indigenous American girl who serves as Diko's messenger to Christopher Columbus. She helps him change his attitude towards the Indigenous Americans.

On the other hand, other female characters are victimized by male characters. Some of them are raped, while others are abused and/or neglected. The tough conditions that these women experience parallels the treatment that nature receives by the hands of colonizers and the male-dominated culture. The first of these female characters is Amami who is raped by men belonging to a different tribe from hers. She is blamed for the accident, while the criminals receive no punishment. The second one is Parrot Feather, a young girl who is also raped by sailors of Columbus's crew. The third is Felipa, Christopher Columbus's wife, whom he marries for her connections, then neglects her when those connections prove to be futile.

4. Women and Nature

In the novel, Christopher Columbus marries a woman named Felipa for her father's influence and status. Because Columbus is a foreign merchant in Lisbon, he needs support that can be given to him through her family connections. Columbus is not the devoted husband she needs. He is constantly occupied with his goals of land conquest, fulfilling what he believes to be God's orders. Just as virgin lands are only seen as a source of financial gains that provide men with their sense of achievement, so do human virgins, such as Felipa, who is degraded, in the eyes of her own husband, into a mere tool of fulfilling his religious goals. His constant neglect of her needs serves as a symbol of Man's indifference to the suffering of the natural world, which is usually only thought of in terms of how useful it can be for humans.

As Felipa cannot provide Columbus with the help he needs, Columbus is denied the King's support; therefore, no ships or crews are granted to him. Thus, he starts to see Felipa as useless. He grows even crueler to her and their five-year-old son. As a result, Felipa becomes sick and her health deteriorates over time until she dies. This silent abuse that Felipa is subjected to is similar to the abuse of nature committed later by his crews as they conquer American lands, killing, enslaving, and raping the peaceful Indigenous Americans. Columbus and his crew cannot even see the Indigenous Americans as more than beasts:

Diko had learned, as most did in Pastwatch, that for most of human history, the virtue of empathy was confined to one's kinship group or tribe. People who were not members of the tribe were not people. Instead they were animals—either dangerous predators, useful prey, or beasts of burden. It was only now and then that a few great prophets declared people of other tribes, even of other languages or races, to be human. Guest- and host-rights gradually evolved. Even in modern times, when such attractive notions as the fundamental equality and fraternity of humankind were preached in every corner of the world, the idea that the stranger is not a person still remained. (Card 1996, p. 320)

Men treat nature as their commodity; something they have the right to use for their own favor. This inferior view of nature is even worse when the land is inhabited by people who do not belong to elite races or cultural groups. A European sailor accompanying Columbus on his quest claims America as Spanish land, showing no respect to the rights of the Indigenous Americans: "This land is now the property of Their Majesties King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, our sovereigns and the servants of Christ" (Card 1996, p. 277).

Felipa almost never stands up to her husband's neglect and mistreatment. Her silent endurance leads to her death and orphans her child. This long silence with terrible consequences brings to mind the silent, seemingly unaffected status of nature before it unleashes

its wrath in the form of natural disasters, such as earthquakes, hurricanes, and volcanoes, which cost humans their lives and their resources.

As suggested in the novel, the natural landscape can be a motivation or a turn-off for such slavers and abusers. Villages are easier to raid and its inhabitants are easy kills and hostages. On the other hand, mountains are avoided, especially when the number of raiding slavers is small. This is because mountains are flooded with darker places, where hidden traps are ubiquitous and where dangerous animals can be lurking. Thus, when nature is powerful, Man is forced to respect it and its inhabitants. The author uses this example to stress the idea that powerful, seemingly scary aspects of nature can be protective of those who resort to it, by being, simultaneously, destructive to those who are ruthless and materialistic.

Felipa's relationship to Columbus seems to be more of a mother–son relationship than a marriage. Felipa is devoted, helpful, and loving, while Columbus meets all her graces with indifference, taking all her efforts for granted, similar to an ungrateful child. His view of Felipa is similar to Man's view of the planet he inhabits as "Mother" Earth, which is expected to provide and care, while he share little or nothing in return. The motherly burden placed on women in male-dominated cultures is paralleled with the motherly roles expected from Earth.

Diko also receives contempt and under-appreciation from the Europeans. Columbus even attempts to beat Diko out of anger. His reaction, according to Card, is not because he is normally violent, it is, rather, because he and the other European sailors think that they are superior to other races, and more specifically, to women from other races. Columbus cannot not believe that Diko would be a messenger from God because of her gender and race: "Sees-in-the-Dark. What kind of name was that? And how did it happen that an Indian woman had received a prophecy telling of Colon and Christ? Such a vision must have come from God—but to a woman? And not a Christian woman, either" (Card 1996, p. 330). Some of the conquerors are more honest about the European idea of people of color: "Pinzon laughed insolently. "All brown people are servants by nature", he said" (Card 1996, p. 346).

In the times of war and land conquest, women are humiliated or threatened in order to defy enemies. Women are either raped, killed, or taken as hostages. They constitute a point of weakness for the parties they belong to by just being present, and they are taken advantage of as a means of revenge by the opposing parties (Rehn and Sirleaf 2002, pp. 10–11). Virgin lands and women are viewed and treated similarly by patriarchy-dominated cultures. In Card's novel, the Spaniards who think of native lands as their commodities, and thought of the Indigenous Americans as slaves, also see women as objects of pleasure. They rape and almost kill a very young girl named Parrot Feather during their invasion and abuse of the American lands.

Women are threatened because they are one of the most vulnerable entities during an invasion. Conquerors do not rape women of conquered lands only for pleasure; showing power and domination over the invaded inhabitants is another major motive. Just as ruining the landscape and destroying aspects of peaceful nature are forms of power display used by invaders, so is the sexual abuse of women. This is because women's honor is, traditionally speaking, protected by their men, and since the conquerors want to break the spirits of men whom they attack, the women are targeted. Women, in this case, are not thought of as humans, but rather as weapons or tools for the conquerors to establish their authority. Nature is not very different from women, as nature is usually viewed, in war or peace, as a tool for the welfare of Man.

Amami's story is another example of the conquerors' violence against women. She is a woman who belongs to an ancient tribe. She is raped by men from another village when she goes to fetch some water. The reception of this accident by Amami's tribe, including her own husband, is very shameful. He beats her, accusing her of being a prostitute. Blaming and punishing the victim is the strategy her husband employs to overcome his sense of weakness. His reaction shows the mistreatment women are subjected to throughout the

different ages. Furthermore, it shows that political ties between the weak tribe of the victim and the stronger tribe of the predators are far more important than the individual's safety and wellbeing. Because her tribe is weaker than that of the predators, the abuse she is subjected to goes unpunished. In other words, a vulnerable land becomes a host for vulnerable people.

On the other hand, there is the older Diko whose husband is very supportive of her, as he enjoys a prestigious position among their tribe. However, Diko is not a happy woman, after all. She has lost her eight-year-old son, Acho, who is said to have been devoured by a hippopotamus. The truth is that Acho has been captured by a slaver. Slavers used to "raid a village, kill all the men, and take the small children and the pretty women off for sale, leaving only the old women behind" (Card 1996, p. 25). Humans, especially women and children, are bought and sold similar to merchandise. Greed and materialistic ambitions ruin those people's lives.

According to the novel, Indigenous Americans are innocent and hospitable, and are not corrupted by greed, unlike the European conquerors. They give gold to their European visitors as a welcome gift, unaware that they are conquerors. There is a clear difference between the attitudes of the generous Indigenous Americans who think only of making friends with the Europeans, and the attitudes of the Europeans whose main concern is to accumulate fortunes and lands. They even intend to use these Indigenous Americans as their slaves who would "mine gold and other precious metals" (Card 1996, p. 296). Both the Indigenous Americans and their lands are to be abused by the European conquerors. In Mies (1993a), Maria Mies cites H. Bodley's account of how the White Man abuses humans and nature in the colonies in her article "White Man's Dilemma: His Search for What He Has Destroyed". She claims that colonizers regard tribal people as less evolved than them, and that the surrender of those creatures to progress is dictated by "the universal law of history". Tribal people in the 1830s in America were also seen as "sub-humans" (p. 148).

Diko, a smart and innovative scientist, develops and takes part in the employment of the Intervention project, which aims to save the world by changing the past. According to Plumwood (2003), some feminists do not accept Ecofeminism due to the notion that women are responsible for the environmental corruption burden as part of their responsibilities towards the private sphere or the household. This traditional view is problematic for three main reasons. First, it continues to see women as committed to taking care of the household. Second, it claims that the faults in our way to deal with environmental problems should be amended by the private sector. Third, it requires women to carry the burdens of the world. However, Diko does not develop this technology because she feels it is her duty to save the world as a woman; she rather does it as a scientist who has enough confidence to know that she can help the world with her resourcefulness and dedication.

Some of the members of the tribe, where Diko settles when she travels to the past, question the authority she has gained as a prophet-like figure. Others, however, show her the respect she deserves, calling her "Sees in the Dark". This appreciation they give to a strange woman defies the stereotypical image of the Indigenous Americans being savages or barbarians. According to Alcocer, "encouraging the islanders to recognize the value and equality of women is crucial to Diko's plan to mount a strong resistance to the Spaniards who would eventually make landfall and attempt to dominate their societies" (p. 39). Diko praises those Indigenous Americans as follows:

The men of Ankuash are not animals. Sees-in-the-Dark came here because the men of Ankuash have already tamed themselves. When women took refuge in my tent, or Putukam's, the men of this village could have torn apart the walls and beaten their wives, or killed them—or Putukam, or even me, because I may be clever and strong but I am not immortal and I can be killed. (Card 1996, p. 316)

As a member of the intervention team, Diko does not seem to lust for leadership over her colleagues. She makes sure that Hunahpu, one of the three time-travelers, learns the missing information he needs, but only privately. This might be due to the fact that she is very self-confident, so she does not need to show off or belittle her colleagues to appear

to be better than them. Diko describes herself as “far more qualified than anyone else”, stressing that she is a perfect candidate for this dangerous mission (Card 1996, p. 202).

Diko is an example of a powerful woman who does not over-exercise her power. Christopher Columbus and his crew of men, on the other hand, are ready to use humans for their own privilege. The novel sheds light on how men and women make use of their power. Diko uses her assets to save the world, while Columbus and his crew use theirs to achieve personal glory to accumulate fortune, abusing lands and human beings in the process. This difference of attitude towards power between a male and female leaders is an example of female empowerment in the novel. It also sheds light on how a female leader is responsible towards nature and the minorities, as compared to the male leader, suggesting that women’s sense of commitment during natural disasters can save the environment. However, even when Diko saves the world, it is not achieved cost-free. Nonetheless, Diko’s difficult choice is only made to erase the mistakes and crimes against nature and humanity, committed by the patriarchal culture that views nature not as an entity to co-exist with, but as a source of fortune and glory.

Diko and Hunahpu develop an intense relationship, becoming romantically attached to one another. However, they may not be able to have a future together because both of them would be traveling to different points in the past. Diko is more goal-oriented than Hunahpu, whom she describes as a “romantic fool” (Card 1996, p. 204). This female scientist breaks the stereotypical image of women as more concerned with love, marriage, and the domestic life than men when she presents herself as the most practical and logical of the couple. She says to Hunahpu: “Work with me, and when the time comes to go into the past, go with me. Let our marriage be the work we do together, and let our children be the future that we build” (Card 1996, p. 204).

According to Merchant (2006), when both women and nature are deprived of their agency and made passive, they can be controlled by “science, technology, and capitalist production” (p. 514). In Card’s novel, however, Diko is a technology developer and user. She employs technology to save both humans and the natural world, and she rejects the traditional roles of womanhood, such as bearing and upbringing children, until she saves the world. So, technology, which might control women and abuse nature under patriarchal domination, actually enables this woman to achieve her goal and save the world. In other words, if technology is used for proper, meaningful purposes, it can be a tool to help women lead better lives and fulfill their potential, as well as save nature and make the world a better place.

Tagiri, Diko’s mother, shows a connection with nature as she only thinks about her daughter Diko leaving her. Tagiri is not afraid to die; it is her motherly emotions that torment her. She is an example of how women can be very attached to their offspring. Compared to her and her emotional suffering is Columbus, who has no problem leaving his five-year-old child Diego behind to achieve individual glory on the basis of religious conviction. Women, then, are more domestic at least on the emotional side. Despite her pain, Tagiri does not stop her daughter from going on her mission of saving the world. Thus, she sets herself free from this limiting stereotype which, if she gives in to it, might cost humanity a great opportunity for survival. Just as the ordinary course of events and the laws of the universe are ready to be changed for the better, so does Tagiri, who overcomes her natural instincts for the greater good.

5. Alternate History and Technology as Saviors

The future of the world in the novel is at stake. Manjam, a scientist, describes the devastating future to the Pastwatch scientists, warning them against the inevitable outcomes of their present ecological problem, and encouraging them to take the step and start the Intervention journey to alter history. The Pastwatch facility and the technology it employs to monitor the past both serve as a symbol of science, technology, and all the tools that can help change lives for the better and save natural resources. They are also symbolic of

people who have enough knowledge and who have the choice to only “watch” injustice towards women and nature, or to step in to save them:

Tagiri looked at her husband, her children, and more than once she thought: what if some stranger from a faraway place came and stole my son from me and made a slave of him, and I never saw him again? What if a conquering army from a place unheard of came and murdered my husband and raped my daughter? And what if, in some other place, happy people watched us as it happened, and did nothing to help us, for fear it might endanger their own happiness? What would I think of them? What kind of people would they be? (Card 1996, p. 151)

The Interveners aim at strengthening the Indigenous Americans so that they do not give in to the European soldiers accompanying Columbus. They destroy the Spanish ships, so that Columbus is not able to go back to Spain to ask for more help. At the same time, they aim at eliminating the danger of the Central Americans towards humanity. So, they come up with a peaceful man-made religion to teach the Indigenous Americans to abandon the violent practices of human sacrifice.

Some of the scientists, such as Tagiri, have a problem with the idea of Intervention, of going back in time to change the past, ending, in the process, some lives that would not be born once the change is performed. Once a point in the past is changed, many of the people who had already been born and died since that point in the past may not be even born. So, one way or another, this change might end lives, too. Diko explains to her that: “individual people always sacrifice for the sake of the community. When it matters enough, people sometimes even die, willingly, for the good of the community that they feel themselves to be a part of” (Card 1996, p. 222). Diko believes that what is more important than individual lives is the life of the community as a whole.

Regarding Diko’s sense of responsibility towards the world, it is important to look at Mies’s discussion of the argument made by some feminists that women should not bear the responsibility of amending the mistakes made by men. Mies understands their point of view, yet she stresses that it is not a very helpful outlook. In Mies’s article, “Who Made Nature Our Enemy?” (Mies 1993b), she goes through the Chernobyl nuclear disaster and how Chernobyl women’s lives changed after the tragedy, showing how these women had to amend the mistakes of men and their use of technology. She further puts technology under the spotlight, stressing that “what happened in Chernobyl cannot soon be undone” (p. 93). Some of the implications and results of technology are irreversible. Even when the results can be undone, it is a long, costly process.

Card, however, uses an imagined, unlikely, version of technology to warn people against other man-made disasters, such as the invasion of peaceful lands and its terrible consequences on both humans and the natural world. Card’s use of a kind of technology that does not exist is important in confirming the difficulty, almost impossibility, of changing the past or undoing the mistakes made by Man. The technology employed in the novel wipes out the lives of those who live in the present time of the novel, as it changes the past, making it uncertain if they will ever exist. Thus, even if such a technology exists one day, it would be very ethically controversial as it would eliminate lives in exchange for amending some past mistakes to save other lives. Mies attacks politicians and scientists for this reason. She claims that “they have no ethics” and that they lack “imagination and emotion” (p. 94). This intervention, though it wipes out the lives of the present-time people in the process of changing the past, is chosen, however, by some of these people who will lose their lives in the process. Thus, Leonard (2003) claims that this intervention is an example of “sacrifice and concern for others rather than personal gain” (p. 261). Nonetheless, this choice to perform the Intervention is not made by the millions and millions of people who lose their lives in the process of changing the past. The novel, then, poses the question of who should make serious, life-changing decisions with regard to world problems. Should scientists be given the authority to meddle with nature as long as their experiments and inventions create something useful for humans, even if this creation harms humans in some other ways? What and who determines the right of two paths, if both paths lead to grave losses?

The Alternate-History genre does not tell people to wait for some smart scientists to invent a device that will help them change the past to suit their goals. It, rather, invites them to change their present behaviors and attitudes towards their own world, so that less damage is done and more lives and natural resources are preserved.

The Intervention, which technology has made possible, leads to a number of reforms for the Indigenous Americans. They begin to value themselves more: they are no longer ready to put up with the ill treatment of the Spaniards who not only enslave the Indigenous Americans, but beat and punish them. Gradually, some of the Spaniards themselves start to see the Indigenous Americans as equal human beings. Columbus begins to think differently of the Indigenous Americans after his meeting with Diko, who discusses with him the real Christian teachings from her point of view. He finally thinks of the Indigenous Americans as: “quiet, gentle, [and] unwilling to provoke a quarrel” (Card 1996, p. 356). The Spaniards even change their way of viewing female Indigenous Americans, giving them their due respect: “Chipa got up at once and headed for the door. Diko noticed with pleasure that Pedro held the flap open for her. The boy was already thinking of her, not just as a human, but as a lady. It was a breakthrough, even if no one was aware of it yet” (Card 1996, p. 334).

Even Columbus himself rejects the idea that Chipa is a servant and that people of color are servants by nature to the White people. Chipa is sent by Diko as a messenger to Columbus. The choice of Chipa, a young girl, to perform this task is crucial. Throughout history, men always played the role of messengers. It was very unlikely that a woman, let alone a young girl, would take on such a role. With the Intervention technology, it is possible for an Indigenous American girl to perform a diplomatic role. This innovation is one more example of the desirable outcomes, or reforms, which result from the Intervention operation. Jumping into history does not only stop Columbus, it provides many people with different opportunities to use their potentials. A smart, young Indigenous American girl such as Chipa would not have been appreciated if it was not for the use of technology that made the Intervention operation a reality.

This Intervention saves both individual lives and the world. Chipa, the young messenger sent by Diko to Columbus, has her life dramatically changed after the Intervention. In the original version of the past, Chipa receives a terrible fate in her twenties: her children are killed in front of her, before she is raped to death. Technology, then, provides her with a more promising, less dangerous future. Her life is made better as she is taught languages and given her own diplomatic power. Undoing the mistakes of technology, then, requires the smart employment of technology itself, and the realization of a different present and future through time travel in this novel proves this. However, technology is not free of costs: it can solve some problems while causing others; and it save lives while annihilating others. Technology itself is not the savior of Man, and its implications can considerably harm both humans and the environment. Furthermore, some would claim that the use of time-travel technology is a kind of White-savior interference that aims to remove the crimes of the past performed by the White people themselves, using White technology. Nonetheless, this kind of technology described in the novel is developed and employed by a group of scientists, none of whom is White. In fact, all of the scientists in the novel belong to either Africa, South America or Asia. Another accusation towards this solution is that it does not truly empower the Indigenous Americans because this sense of empowerment, which the Indigenous Americans experience, is achieved by means of the Intervention of people who do not belong to the same Indigenous American tribes. According to Łaszkiewicz (2021), the growth of the Indigenous Americans “is indebted to the help of the time-traveling protagonists and Columbus’s leadership” (p. 309). In this respect, Gaard (2010) refers to how western Ecofeminists deal with other cultures from an ivory-tower point of view. She suggests that critiques of “cultural traditions and cultural narratives harming women and/or nature must be initiated and led by the women within the culture itself” (p. 51). However, among those people who perform the Intervention in the novel is Hunahpu, who is a descendant of one of those Indigenous American tribes. Moreover, as mentioned before, the other members, Diko and Kemal, belong to African

and Asian cultures and ethnicities that are, or once were, similarly suppressed by the White Man. This similarity, still, does not guarantee that the Intervention members know and understand the people and situation of these particular tribes as much as the members of the tribes do. Even though Card puts some noticeable effort in avoiding the ivory-tower attitude of some Ecofeminist attempts, his technological solution still partially falls into this category.

6. Conclusions

Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus is an Alternate-History novel written by Orson Scott Card. This novel poses many Ecofeminist questions. Themes, characters, and symbols are employed in the analysis of this novel. The analysis can answer the questions posed by this paper. First, women were found to play crucial roles as they attempted to save their world. Diko, Tagiri, and Chipa made daring choices and sacrifices to ensure that they served a great cause, which made their world a better place. Women and nature were treated similarly in patriarchal cultures, as they were seen as mere tools or steps to be taken to help men achieve their goals. Powerful men in patriarchal cultures were prone to abuse both women and the natural world for their own benefits, enslaving the Indigenous Americans, and raping both the lands and women. This was particularly noticed in Felipa's misery as Columbus's wife, virgin women in conquered lands, and the virgin lands explored by Columbus and his crew. Technology as a controversial idea in Ecofeminism was tackled. Though it chose technology as a solution to Man-made mistakes, the novel did not overlook the dire consequences of the employment of technology. Moreover, the White-savior accusation to this kind of solution was discussed, and it was rebutted as those who participated in the technological solution were non-White people. However, the technological solution partially follows the ivory-tower attitude of some Ecofeminist endeavors. The chosen Alternate-History novel, *Pastwatch: The Redemption of Christopher Columbus*, is a stark reminder of how much better the world would be if the natural world is not abused. It provides a glimpse into how life can improve for everyone, if Man gives up on his desires for domination and conquest.

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