**ABSTRACT SAMPLE SUBMITTED TO ALA 2018**

**Abstract: The Unrecognized Legacy of Environmental Racism in Post-Colonial Tunisia: Mustafa Tlili’s *La Montagne du Lion* (2008) and Lazhar Sahraoui’s *Arajeef* (2011) By Lamia Benyoussef, Birmingham-Southern College**

Borrowing Bethe Berila’s[[1]](#footnote-1) concept of the toxic body living in the heteronormative landscape of the nation and the insight of Diane-Michelle Prindevelle on the interrelations between race, gender and environmental justice,[[2]](#footnote-2) this paper examines the issue of environmental justice in two male novels set in two marginalized regions of post-colonial Tunisia, the South and the North West. While in *Arajeef* (*Lies*), Sahraoui presents the building of Sidi Barrak Dam (1999) which caused the massive deterritorialization and forced migration of the indigenous peasant population of Nefza (North West Tunisia) to the slums of Béja and Tunis as the direct consequence of an inherited environmental racism that goes back to Ottoman colonization, in *La Montagne du Lion*, Tlili, while not downplaying the long history of Tunisian racism against its black population, traces the environmental racism in the South of Tunisia to the French imperial gaze which allows the dark and/ or black Tunisian of the South to exist only as the object of the imperial gaze not as an agent of agricultural and industrial development. Inheriting the legacy of the French imperial gaze, Bourguiba’s government promoted only tourism and toxic industries in the remote areas of South Tunisia. To survive, the mountaineers and dwellers of the Sahara Desert have been forced to commodify the privacy of their homes as a human zoo for both the Western tourist and the bourgeois suburban domestic tourist. These two novels will be tied to the environmentalist and regional movements which appeared in the post-revolution at the axis of gender, sexuality, race/ethnicity, and class.

1. Beth Berila, “Toxic Bodies? ACT UP’s Disruption of the Heteronormative Landscape of the Nation,” *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, ed. Rachel Stein (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2004), 127-136. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Diane-Michelle Prindevelle, “The Role of Gender, Race/Ethnicity, and Class in Activists’ Perceptions of Environmental Justice,” in *New Perspectives on Environmental Justice: Gender, Sexuality, and Activism*, ed. Rachel Stein, 93-108. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)