



Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Narratives

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Abstract:

This article explores the evolving field of ecocriticism and its intersection with postcolonial narratives, emphasizing the significance of integrating diverse theoretical perspectives to enhance our understanding of the relationship between literature, culture, and the environment. It highlights the necessity of incorporating scientific knowledge into literary analysis to address contemporary environmental challenges and critiques the historical focus of ecocriticism on aesthetics, advocating for a more nuanced examination of narrative forms. The discussion includes the implications of spatial theories in postcolonial ecocriticism, addressing the complexities of globalization and environmental degradation while recognizing the importance of indigenous knowledge and practices. Furthermore, the article introduces concepts such as “econarratology” and “material ecocriticism,” which underscore the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues. By examining the contributions of scholars such as Graham Huggan and Rob Nixon, this article calls for an interdisciplinary approach that fosters a critical understanding of the politics of space and the environment, ultimately contributing to ongoing discussions about environmental justice and the legacy of colonialism.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Postcolonial Narratives, Environmental Justice, Spatial Theories, Econarratology, Material Ecocriticism, Social Justice.



Introduction:

Environmental literary criticism has emerged as a dynamic field of study that investigates the intricate connections between literature, culture, and the environment. It offers a lens through which one can explore and understand the environmental challenges we face, as well as envision alternative ways of engaging with the natural world. This article delves into the three fundamental aspects of ecocriticism: its meaning and origins, diverse approaches and methodologies, and the postcolonial context of ecocriticism.

To start with, an exploration of the meaning and origins of ecocriticism, tracing its roots back to the early environmental movements and examining its evolution as an interdisciplinary field, is necessary. By examining the foundational principles and key theoretical concepts, the reader can acquire a thorough comprehension of the core principles of ecocriticism and its importance within the broader domain of literary and cultural studies (Walter de Gruyter).

Moving forward, talking about the evolution of ecocriticism in literary criticism helps in the creation of a clear idea about the development of this field. From traditional textual analysis to ecofeminism, deep ecology, and beyond, researchers have developed an array of tools and lenses to examine environmental themes in literary and cultural texts. By shedding light on the diverse perspectives and critical insights that ecocriticism offers, the encouragement of a multifaceted exploration of environmental concerns will rise within the understanding of literary texts.

Finally, examining the intersectionality between ecocriticism and postcolonial theories contributes to a profound comprehension of postcolonial ecocriticism. By intertwining the study of environmental issues with the legacies of colonialism and the dynamics of power, postcolonial ecocriticism unearths the complex entanglements between human societies, the environment, and the processes of domination and exploitation. Through this lens, researchers can gain a deeper understanding of how literature and culture can reflect and challenge the unequal distribution of environmental resources and the ecological consequences of colonialism (Gisela Heffes).

By delving into these three interconnected aspects, this article provides a comprehensive overview of ecocriticism, highlighting its significance as a transformative field of study. It underscores the importance of understanding the meaning, origins, approaches, and postcolonial perspectives within ecocriticism, opening up new avenues for research and dialogue that can contribute to human collective efforts in creating sustainable and just futures.

Differentiating ecocriticism from other critical perspectives is one way to define it better. In general, literary theory aims to explore the relationships among authors, literary works, and the broader context of the world. Typically, in literary theory, the world is synonymous with society. However, ecocriticism expands the



concept of the world to encompass the entire biosphere (Meeta Baid). Because everything is interconnected, it must be inferred that writing does not exist in some artistic vacuum separate from the physical world but instead is a component of a vast global structure in which energy, material, and thoughts are all intertwined.

To a large extent, environmental activity is motivated by the alarming realization that humans have entered an era of ecological limitations, a period in which human actions are destroying the planet's basic fundamentals. With this knowledge comes a true desire to make a difference in environmental restoration in our time and in our role as literature instructors. Humanities researchers have a vital role in shaping our world.

We are currently in a worldwide catastrophe because of how our ethical systems work, not because of how ecosystems work. Ethical structures must be reformed in order to survive the crisis, and this demands an awareness of human influence on nature as clearly as possible. Historians, literary experts, or philosophers cannot do the reformation, but they can help us comprehend the world around us. Our emphasis on issues related to value, meaning, tradition, perspective, and language challenges contributes substantially to environmental discourse.

Ecological critique is a worthwhile endeavor since it focuses our attention on issues that we should be concerned about. Its primary goal is to raise awareness. As a group, ecocritics work to raise awareness of environmental crises, human nature's relationship to the natural world, and how culture transmits ecological ideas through language and literature (Graham Huggan et al. 28-29).

Ecological criticism, encompassing diverse inquiries and varying levels of complexity, asserts that human culture is interconnected with the physical environment, exerting influence on it and being influenced in return. Ecocriticism specifically examines the connections between the environment and culture, with a particular emphasis on language and literature as cultural artifacts (Paul Outka). It is a theoretical discourse that acts as an intermediary between humans and nonhumans as both a critical position and a theoretical discourse.

1. Green Cultural Studies: Concept and Origins

Green studies, as an interdisciplinary field of study, explores the complex interplay among literature, culture, and the environment. Its origins can be traced back to the environmental movement of the late 20th century, ecocriticism has emerged as a significant and dynamic branch of literary and cultural theory. Several questions rise here such as the one about the meaning and origins of ecocriticism, its evolution, and key theoretical underpinnings. To start with, an introductory exploration of the meaning and origins of ecocriticism is important. By understanding the conceptual foundations and historical development of this



field, we can better appreciate its significance and potential contributions to our understanding of literature, culture, and nature.

Environmental literary criticism entails examining the relationship between literature and the natural world. Environmental literary criticism adopts a nature-centered approach to literary analysis, Cheryll Glotfelty adds:

ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (XVIII)

In other words, “ecocriticism is a critical mode that looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying particular attention to attitudes towards ‘nature’ and the rhetoric employed when speaking about it” (Prמוד K. Nayar 330).

Sociocultural products (artworks, literature, scientific ideas, etc.) that are somehow linked to the interpersonal experience of the natural surroundings are examined in ecocriticism. When it comes to environmental issues, ecocriticism is also a reaction to demands, difficulties, or problems. It is a solution to our current ecological disaster, which necessitates a humanistic perspective of our interactions with the natural world. Disassociation from the physical world is a major factor in environmental catastrophes. This is not just due to increased technology but also to a lack of awareness of the interconnection of all things. A reaction to the academy’s out-of-control specialization is thus found in ecocriticism, which aims to reconnect researchers with one another and academia to the world’s genuine issues.

Ecocriticism, thus, is multidisciplinary by definition. Reconnecting the disciplines that have been shattered by over-specialization is the only way to grasp the interconnectedness of all things, including the mind and the environment (Glotfelty et al. 9). The holistic ideal is a part of the interdisciplinary concept. As a result, ecocriticism must maintain its “a big tent” quality, including a variety of viewpoints.

Encouragement and recognition are critical, and it is important to remember that all ecocritical activities are part of a larger picture. A wide range of ecocritical techniques can be used, including those based on various theoretical and methodological frameworks. Aside from being a practical reaction to urgent issues, ecocriticism is also fundamentally intellectual, if not moral. The interdependence of all things is celebrated in a holistic and comprehensive view of the cosmos. While all things are valued for their connection and their integrity, so too is the integrity of all things, including creatures of the soil, critical practices, spiritual beliefs, and even ethnic origins. All will recognize the ideologies and notions of diverse communities as ecocriticism invites all viewpoints within its



tent in order to comprehend the human relationship to the cosmos (Donelle Nicole Dreese 56). Within the field of ecocriticism, there is a tendency for social, or even spiritual activism for those who make it such. Ecocriticism may be criticized for being too broad in scope, yet it is precisely this holistic perspective that sets it apart from previous critical methods that have contributed to the kinds of rifts that ecocriticism aims to repair.

The human connection with the planet is where ecocriticism returns to its roots when it is put into practice, despite the fact that it may influence nearly every field. In advocating for a worldview aimed at healing the ecological damage inflicted by humans, ecocriticism can actively engage in political endeavors. It is a multidisciplinary study and from an ecological perspective, where almost all fields get together to assess the ecosystem and come up with feasible alternatives for the current environmental condition to solve.

Ecocriticism is the study of how people and nature are intertwined in writings. Environmental, societal factors and sentiments regarding ecology are examined and discussed here. In ecocriticism, one of the key objectives is to analyze how people in society interact with nature and environmental challenges. In recent decades, biodiversity loss and technological advancements have brought this critique to the forefront of public discourse (Swarnalatha Rangarajan 19). Because of this innovative approach, literature and theoretical studies can get new insights into literary materials. Various labels have been employed to characterize ecocriticism, such as green cultural studies and environmental literary criticism. Contemporary philosophy has largely maintained a utilitarian stance towards nature, perceiving it as existing for human benefit. After the 18th century, several viewpoints called for a reevaluation of the connection between humans and the environment, prompting a shift in ecological perspectives. Deep Ecology, as a concept coined by the Norwegian Arne Naess, underscores the interconnectedness of all living beings and natural elements, moving away from an anthropocentric standpoint.

Traditionally, the criteria and topics for critical analysis in literary and cultural studies have centered on issues of class, race, gender, and geography. However, the environmental crises of this century have introduced a new threat, awakening a consciousness in the late 20th century. Present-day environmental challenges such as nuclear war, degradation, depletion of natural resources, population growth, the expansion of capitalist practices, the utilization of space as a dumping ground before exploration, pollution, and loss of biodiversity are among the most urgent issues confronting humanity today. Literary and cultural theories have begun to address this problem in intellectual discourse, and numerous environmental initiatives have emerged globally, some gaining traction in the political arenas of various countries.

The comparison between environmentalism in affluent and highly developed nations and the more basic, subsistence-focused environmentalism in developing



or Third World countries is a contentious topic in extensive debates (Nasrullah Mambrol). Over the centuries, ecocriticism has evolved into the standard reference for examining ecological thought. Mankind and mother earth show the impact of human civilization on the land and nature. The Annals School of historians, particularly Braudel and Lefebvre, were also concerned with environmental issues and terrain utilization. Environmental historians have also made significant contributions (Nasrullah Mambrol).

There have been numerous variations of environmentalism over the years. Deep ecology and ecofeminism have both grown in prominence in recent decades. “Androcentric” (Man/male-centric) and “anthropocentric” (Human-centric) were two of the new theories that challenged the idea of development and modernity (Nasrullah Mambrol). Environmentalists focused their attention on technology, medical science, cosmetics, and the fashion industry, all of which use animals in their research. Under the banner of the environmentalist organization “Earth First,” the deep ecology movement underscored a perspective centered on the Earth. Without careful consideration, nature's beauty (and safety) is at risk of disappearing, and this new awareness has given rise to ecocriticism (Nasrullah Mambrol).

There have been protests all around the world over local injustices or environmental risks that have been organized outside of the conventional political structure. There is an Indigenous Ecological Association that works to strengthen indigenous communities and regions, seek ecological sustainability, and keep our cultures Sacred Fire burning brightly as a symbol of our people’s strength. NGOs and other non-governmental organizations have helped to create a new type of international diplomacy, one that is not constrained by national borders (Nasrullah Mambrol).

In light of this, it is understandable why opponents of the U.S. wilderness heritage have come to seem like champions of outdoor recreational activities. A purely contemplative privileged approach to the natural world may appear to be linked to purist views of the environment as wilderness areas - and besides, wilderness is not where anybody really lives. Even the term purity carries with it a tainted connotation in our society. It immediately became extremely evident that the genuine purist idea of the environment — that it is simply the natural world — cannot function in today’s society. Neither the Costa Rican peasants nor the residents of Baltimore’s inner city have found it to be effective (Rachel Carson 13).

The unfairness of putting a garbage factory near those who cannot afford to fight it is clear. Racism might also be a factor. Some individuals have long been associated with dirt or the unclean, and this has been a recurring aspect of societal discrimination. An ecojustice worker must examine the boundaries between environmental concerns and public healthcare and education inequality in order to operate in this profession.



21st century ecocriticism has been substantially shaped by its response to accusations of its underlying cultural politics. Furthermore, there are ongoing efforts to broaden the definition of ecocritical readings. In addition to the study of nature writing, can ecocriticism be applied to novels? As a follow-up, environmental justice is now a prominent focus. It is our belief that environmental justice is the right of every individual to partake equitably in the health benefits associated with the ecosystem. Wardi argues that the areas where we live, work, enjoy, and pray are referred to as the environment (Anissa Janine Wardi, *Water*. 76). It is important to note that environmental justice refers largely to a social change; multifarious and invested in the exigency of regional outreach efforts. There is a flourishing of ideas about nature's diversity and complexity in literary and cultural criticism as a result. When it comes to environmental challenges, ecojustice and ecocriticism focus on how human identity is affected by environmental environments, whether rural or urban.

Because of the increasing prevalence of left-progressive political views in the humanities, ecocritical arguments tend to link themselves with those that address issues of environmental justice and cultural diversity in their arguments. Critics are increasingly taking a social ecology perspective, which holds that human violence towards nature ultimately results from oppressive hierarchical structures inside the society (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen 176). As with conventional cultural criticism, several twenty-first-century critics employ a similar method to map out the different aspects of a particular issue or cause from an overtly progressive standpoint. In ecocriticism, concepts of nature are investigated through tracing how various notions of individuality are entwined with varied definitions of the environment or distinguishing the different cultural backgrounds, presuppositions, and limitations of different notions of environment. Many popular methods of literary analysis approach fiction and nonfiction alike as arenas for contending social interpretations and identification claims.

Ecocriticism, sometimes known as "green" criticism, is a relatively new multidisciplinary discipline in the world of literature. It demonstrates the idea that ecology is a cultural consciousness at a certain historical period, looking at how the idea of "nature" is constituted, what qualities are attributed to it or denied to it, and how the human-nature interaction is envisioned. Nature's role in literary and aesthetics and tropes is examined in greater detail; as are the underlying beliefs about nature that drive genres that do not explicitly address this issue. Green cultural studies can utilize this research to investigate how historically shaped notions of nature and the natural, especially in literary and creative works, have impacted contemporary perceptions of the ecosystem (Andrea Kate Campbell).

On the other hand, environmentalists see their work as a direct intervention in the present discussions over environmental degradation and preservation in society, politics, and the economy. As science stands out as the primary



“construction” of nature in Western societies, this form of inquiry seems well-suited for fostering interdisciplinary connections. Since the 1960s, environmental philosophy has undergone significant development, with science playing a crucial role - research, from ozone depletion to species extinction and soil erosion, has substantiated environmental claims regarding the deterioration of the environment. Even among environmentalists, though, there is some disagreement on science’s role. Environmentalists frequently use science to back up their positions. Yet, at least a portion of the environmental movement views science as an enemy; blaming it for the current state of the environment as a result of industrialization and urbanization. It is not uncommon for ecological groups to oppose contemporary science’s extremely specialized, materialistic, and aggressive methodology.

The lack of a substantial connection between literary and scientific approaches to the environment has led to uncertainty within the green movement itself. However, skepticism about science’s role in contributing to environmental degradation is only partially responsible for this gap. The exploration of nature and human connections to nature in art and literature has a lengthy history, even though the critique from an environmental perspective is a relatively recent focus. Green studies have a tradition of viewing nature as an aesthetic rather than a scientific object, expressing concerns that scientific study may undermine the appreciation of nature’s beauty. Consequently, literature and art may be perceived more as defenses against science and technology (a perspective dating back to at least the Romantic era) rather than as arenas where diverse forms of knowledge and discourse might intersect. If science is not disregarded, it often serves to reinforce the author’s preexisting belief that nature is beautiful and complicated, without any genuine conceptual bridge between scientific explanation and artistic assessment (Greg Garrard 126).

The shift in language from “nature” to “environment” introduces a new challenge for establishing eco-bridges between literature and science. The term “environment” encompasses both natural and human-made habitats, making it a more abstract and less precise concept than “nature.” The terms “natural” and “cultural” are no longer interchangeable, highlighting a lack of clarity regarding the boundary between nature and culture, particularly in the humanities (T. Sweet). Westerners’ interactions with nature within their own societies reveal that many of the landscapes they encounter are far from wild or untouched by human influence. Despite this, these landscapes may still appear to observers as unaltered, nonhuman, and inherently natural.

Deconstruction, New Historicism, and Cultural Studies have instilled skepticism in literary critics regarding the establishment of clear boundaries between terms like “nature” and “culture.” These terms, which may seem mutually exclusive, are intricately intertwined in various ways, whether through semantic, historical, or political entanglements. Within the context of Cultural



Studies, an alternative perspective on environmental crises views the discourse on scarcity and limits in nature, emerging in the 1970s, as rooted in interpersonal dynamics of injustice rather than objective scientific “fact.” This perspective is exemplified by Andrew Ross’s recent work, the Chicago Gangster Theory of Life. According to Ross, if scientific methodology is considered relative, then environmental degradation is undeniably real. However, he underscores that the ultimate cause of environmental degradation lies in economic, social, and cultural disparities, which must be addressed before any implementation of “sustainable development” (Carolyn Finney 1).

Political discussions that emphasize scarcity are built upon dominant interests that necessitate thorough scrutiny before embracing the concept of “natural limits.” In simpler terms, while this approach may have merit, it redirects attention away from establishing connections between scientific and literary approaches to the environment. Instead, it encourages an examination of the environment where science is viewed merely as a tool serving political interests that demand the primary attention of cultural critics.

From its inception, literary criticism of the environment encounters a range of approaches to the subject: the “discursive construction” stresses how the distinction between nature and culture is rooted in specific social traditions; the “aesthetic construction” places value on nature for its beauty or richness; and the “political construction” underscores the power dynamics between people and their environments. An ecocritical analysis must position itself within the context of these various discourses and critically assess their relevance to ecological objectives. It is crucial to inquire about how the value of nature can and should be evaluated based on human needs.

Concerning our connection with the environment, “Social ecology” promotes prioritizing human needs, whereas “deep ecology” underscores the intrinsic value of nature, irrespective of its role in human society. Michael Bennett explored this contrast in the context of Urban Culture in the American Book Review. To establish distinct goals and methodologies, ecocritical projects must position themselves in relation to these fundamental distinctions in environmental ideology, as articulated by Tayana L. Hardin (56).

Due to a shift in our perspective on soil, numerous species have either disappeared entirely or experienced a significant reduction in their diversity. Remarkably, for each species that goes extinct, about 30 other interdependent species are pushed into the ‘at-risk’ category (Murray Bookchin). In response to these findings, initiatives have been launched to safeguard endangered species and establish protected biological and ecological areas. However, such efforts fall short, necessitating a broader societal approach to address the issue. The distinctiveness of humans becomes apparent in their relationship with habitats. Environmental alterations can directly jeopardize the survival of plants and animals, especially as human mobility reaches unprecedented levels. In search of



stability and completeness, metaphorical roots lacking, humans are constantly on the move.

Physical mobility has its advantages, such as the opportunity to learn about new cultures and people. The lines between civilizations are blurred when they come together. In this way, man has become a citizen of the globe. Even though it is not often used, the phrase “world ecosystem” is theoretically viable because ecosystem borders are inherently arbitrary. Humanity’s sole hope of avoiding extinction is to participate in all aspects of the world. Ultimately, the term “global environmental culture” denotes an expansion of one’s outlook, culminating in environmental awareness where the consideration for spaces worldwide becomes crucial. The objective is to promote this awareness, and literature and literary criticism play a pivotal role in achieving this aim. Consequently, ecocriticism has become an essential component of contemporary global culture (Murray Bookchin).

The act of creation requires the artist’s awareness. The creator’s unconscious prompts a deliberate effort to craft art, with a structure that aids the recipient in developing their own unconscious or spatial subconscious mind in the context of ecocriticism. Ethno-criticism contributes an additional layer to literature, revealing aspects that may be overlooked by the average reader—that humans and their local environments are integral to the broader human race and should be protected and preserved. Embracing Deep Ecology and fostering a reimagining of consciousness and unconsciousness necessitates a reevaluation or transformation of one’s perspectives on nature and all living beings. When the physical and social realms are merged, the result is an ecocultural environment, as articulated by Murray Bookchin (10).

In contemporary discussions on human impact on the environment, it is inevitable to incorporate ecological terms such as pollution. The detrimental consequences of hazardous waste and the release of toxic materials, which manifest in impaired performance, reduced growth, diminished reproductive capacity, and eventual death of individual organisms, have altered the biosphere. The physical environment now includes references to the impacts of overconsumption and depletion of natural resources, sparking lively debates in fields like literature and linguistics. W.H. Auden’s famous assertion that “poetry makes nothing happen” seems inaccurate in a time when both human life and the natural world face the threat of extinction. These statements hold relevance for environmental protection beyond national or administrative boundaries, even when extracted from their original context. Pollution, after all, does not require a visa to enter a country (Meeta Baid).

Post-structural and interdisciplinary methodologies in literature, literary criticism, and language studies suggest that a particular field can be utilized, even if previously considered inappropriate by another discipline, to accomplish its objectives (Robert T. Tally 174). One of the reasons structuralisms’ techniques



have become too restricted for creative analysts is because they have already fulfilled their potential. Humanity's growing dread of extinction, on the other hand, has pushed the boundaries of scholarly objectivity. Toxic discourse, literary dangers, and language pollution are all examples of unexpected pairings of terminology traditionally designated for environmental protection.

Defining "language pollution" as the thoughtless adoption of new lexical elements from other languages, especially English, according to Dragan Veselinovi, this phenomenon is labeled as such. It is essential to recognize that this process has both positive and negative dimensions. On the positive side, it facilitates the introduction of new words and concepts that reflect emerging realities in the language (76). In such cases, incorporating foreign terms and adapting them phonetically proves to be a simpler approach. Conversely, the same process could be considered pollution when it disregards equivalents in the host language in favor of foreign terms. This consideration leads to a discussion about the evolution of ecocriticism within the realm of literary criticism.

2. The Evolution of Ecocriticism in Literary Criticism

The evolution of ecocriticism within the realm of literary criticism reflects a growing awareness of environmental issues and the urgent need to address them. Hence, comes the need for the exploration of the transformative journey of ecocriticism by highlighting its progression from a niche field to a significant and influential branch of literary analysis. By tracing the development of ecocriticism over time, we can gain insight into the changing perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and critical approaches that have shaped its evolution.

Ecocriticism originates in a bio-social context of unrestrained capitalism, excessive exploitation of nature, worrying definitions and shapes of 'development' and environmental hazard. While it does not seek to alter the course of any of these very real factors, its task is to see how theoretically informed readings of cultural texts can contribute not only to consciousness raising but also look into the politics of development and the construction of 'nature'. (Nayar 329)

Environmentalists have suggested that postmodernism rewrites the world as a text, destroying everything. It was feared by ecocritics, who believe that postmodernism, poststructuralism, and other theories hold that nature is a created reality, that it would declare the death of nature while simultaneously celebrating civilization.

Early ecocritics were particularly troubled by the assertion of postmodern literature that it frequently severs the connection between humanity and the planet. They observed a growing gap between humans and the natural world, as postmodern literary critics prioritized symbolic nature over the tangible natural sphere. This detachment, ecocritics argued, would contribute to worsening environmental degradation. Critics of postmodern literature, including Scott



Russell Sanders, accused it of fixating solely on urban settings. This lack of awareness about the land and scenery is noticeable in contemporary popular fiction. Ecocriticism contends that literary critics endorsing such works fail to encourage ethical behavior among their readers and the academic community they engage with. However, it accurately mirrors our environment. Fiction confined to the human world is inherently false and consequently pathological. Despite our urbanization and disconnection from nature, ecocritics asserted that, fundamentally, we are all still animals. They contended that neglecting the environment would result in increased deterioration and a weakened human connection to nature, a major concern for them (Garrard 87).

Glen A. Love and Lawrence Buell, two prominent proponents of naturalism in ecocriticism, spearheaded the movement. According to Buell's influential work, *The Environmental Imagination*, literary critics should re-engage with reality in the context of nature writing. Buell questions the necessity for literature to transport readers away from physical reality without ever returning to it. He expresses concern that the environment, instead of being a subject of factual exploration or a worthy entity in itself, has been relegated to metaphorical status. This shift, he argues, could inadvertently lead literature professors to adopt anti-environmental stances through their engagement with such literary studies. Buell suggests a more constructive approach would involve focusing on environmental nonfiction and appreciating the genuine efforts made to authentically portray nature (Andrea Kate Campbell). Classical realism, according to Glen A. Love, is a technique aimed at bringing the environment to the forefront of literary discourse, decentering the human character, and re-establishing a connection between readers and their natural surroundings, despite Buell's nuanced interpretation of realism (Love 114).

According to *The Ecocriticism Reader*, other ecocritics were on the same page. In their critiques of the theory, Love, Sanders, and others pointed out that the theory's emphasis on cutting ties runs counter to ecological principles that hold that everything is interconnected. Love said that eco-consciousness is more important than self-consciousness, and Western American literature is the best place to start. Although they have certain parallels, Sue Ellen Campbell's love of theories and her passion for the natural world appears diametrically opposed. Although both theory and ecology discard the traditional humanist viewpoint regarding our importance in the broader context of life, their proposed alternatives differ significantly. Theoretical thinking perceives everything as an interlinked system of signifying structures of various kinds. In contrast, ecology advocates for a shift in focus, emphasizing the importance of not only how things are meaningful to us but also how they relate to the rest of the world—the nonhuman components alongside us (Garrard 35). In order to distinguish themselves from more traditional literary critics, ecocritics argued that their discipline was more of an "attitude" than a theory. Since the natural world is undeniably real, attractive,



and valuable, ecocriticism sought to revitalize the nature writing genre by highlighting works that aimed to accurately describe nature and attested to its worth.

Nonfiction and individual tales were popular genres of choice for early ecocriticism. One-way literary criticism might do more to resist environmental degradation was to strive for “one foot in literature and the other on land,” (Barbara Christian 89). The origins of ecocriticism are inspiring in many ways. Together, these traits lead to an energetic and creative new approach to literature, emphasizing environmental concerns, reconnecting readers with nature, and diminishing the relevance of exclusively academic discourse. An academic publication, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment*, was established in just a few years by a group of researchers who immediately jumped on the bandwagon.

An overview of the discipline of ecocriticism may now be found in *The Ecocriticism Reader*. Postmodernism and postmodern literature should not be dismissed out of hand, but certain postmodern notions that deny the importance of nature should be scrutinized. In other words, dismissing nature is equally dismissing any conceivable human consequences. Because of this, I feel the purpose of connecting readers with the world around them to be valuable and necessary. To begin, it immediately confronts the claim that theories are too detached from the realities of ordinary life.

An approach to ecocriticism that focuses on the impact of nature on readers’ perspectives and relationships with their own surroundings can be a useful tool for both readers and academics. This sort of discussion can help students who have sat in a literary class and pondered how studying a work of literature relates to “real life.” On the other hand, ecocriticism opens the door to a wide range of researchers by focusing on the physical environment. A wide range of disciplines is welcome to participate in the debate of nature perceptions, connections with the environment, and the production of nature. Scholars have criticized early ecocriticism for its rejection of theory and questioned the field’s depth and endurance.

Romanticism and pastoralism have provided literary critics with a wide number of options to choose from when it comes to talking of humans and nature. For the first time, ecocriticism makes use of theories from the natural sciences to explain how life on this planet has evolved over time, our place in the universe, and the forces that keep ecosystems in balance and harmony. Dana Phillips has alleged that notions of harmony and holistic wholeness have propelled ecocritics and environmental activists alike. That is precisely what Phillips claims: “Ecocriticism has lamentably under-informed by science studies, philosophy of science, environmental history... and ecology,” which is a topic that professional duty should demand us to grasp. Ecologists and literary critics have used ecological themes in their writing and what it takes to get up to speed on today’s



most cutting-edge fields of science like ecology and evolution, then how ecocritical pedagogy might be used to study current literature's scientific and environmental themes (Serenella Iovino *et al.* 125).

Ever since the Age Of enlightenment of the 17th century confirms Greg Garrard, when Newton and Descartes drifted away from Aristotelian belief systems to start making independent analysis, exploration, and mathematical skills trying to define methods and techniques, we generally believe that interactions between literary works and scientific knowledge are becoming more and more constricted. According to Stephen Jay Gould, oversimplified historical models and misleading dichotomies are at the heart of this traditional narrative of the Scientific Revolution. Although many professional scientists and literary scholars feel that there is an unbridgeable gap between science and humanities, he contends that this belief is incorrect.

Aristotelian learning from the Middle Ages and Renaissance influenced many seventeenth-century scientists' experimental and mechanical advances. When it comes to literature, poets and essayists alike have been fascinated by the scientific discoveries of their respective time periods, as have the novelist, dramatist, and essayist. Each person is a fisherman in a common cultural ocean. For Garrard, Shakespeare, Samuel Johnson, Jane Austen, John Milton, and Montaigne were among the literary giants, as were works by Swift, Defoe, and Carlyle etc.

Sciences and literature lived side by side amicably only until the late 19th century, when biological and physical disciplines began to specialize and become more systematic in their approach. Humanistic beliefs were not entirely disassociated from the work of contemporary science. As an example, go no farther than Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*, which is equal parts Montaignian essay and natural history field trip, but which is infused throughout with classical knowledge and reference.

On the other hand, poets and writers have consistently shown a keen interest in scientific advancements. Dr. Beer's research has highlighted the significant impact of Darwin's ideas about the natural world and evolution on literature in the nineteenth century. In the early twentieth century, modernist authors such as Yeats, Pound, Woolf, Joyce, and Lawrence were enthralled by the scientific breakthroughs led by Maxwell, Einstein, Bohr, and Heisenberg (Barbara Ann Schapiro 121). This intermittent engagement with the dynamics of technology and science by literary critics may be attributed, in part, to the retreat of academic disciplines like literature, philosophy, and the arts into specialized and defensive enclaves over the past century, as technology and science have assumed increasing dominance. Literary and scientific scholars have become increasingly isolated from each other, which has led to a constant debate about whether or not they have incredible abilities for artistic writing and speculation, while researchers assert that the only specific knowledge is acquired from factual experimenting and measurement with math as the sole measure.



Ecocritical approaches must confront the tension between science's assertion of providing value-neutral descriptions of nature and cultural analysis' inclination to perceive research as influenced by specific conceptual, institutional, and commercial interests that inherently impart a set of more or less explicit values (Timothy Clark 96). Many cultural studies of science fail to recognize the difference between the environment in which scientific research is conducted and the findings it produces, which is a glaring oversight.

The scholarly characterization of nature should be one of the fundamental building blocks of critical theory. It is constructively approached and likened to literary outlooks of the ecosystem because of its conceptual power and broad cultural impact in the West and, growingly, many places around the globe. When confronted with a literary work, the critic may discern where it deviates from the scientific method in order to achieve certain aesthetic and ideological aims. This allows for an evaluation of how scientific understanding is absorbed and altered (rather than "constructed") in culture (Christian 67). Consequently, the text undergoes a shift from being a site of opposition to science and its claims of authenticity to a construction in which science is merely employed to validate the inherent beauty of nature. This transformation turns the text into a space where diverse perspectives on nature and various representations of science are explored.

In light of the fact that some environmentalists have implemented ecologist terminology to the world of literature in immensely figurative contexts, such a strategy appears all the more apposite: Ideas like ecological balance and ecological ecology were conveyed to texts envisioned as systems with an inherent coherence that, when activated by the reader, reveals the dynamic harmony and collaboration of diverse elements and the overall developmental, negative trajectory of the text. It becomes problematic when nonliterary terms such as "pollution" are translated in a similar manner, as it tends to revive the outdated metaphor of the literary text as a biological organism and reintroduce literary depictions of nature as inherently imaginative, serene, and pleasant. Interestingly, "pollution" is seldom translated in this manner. To avoid such figurative transmissions, it is necessary to propose a conflict between science and artistic depictions of nature that are both more explicit and possibly more adversarial. In the midst of a growing body of literary works addressing environmental issues, literary criticism is only beginning to explore the implications of "green thought" for its own methodologies.

Environmental critiques dangers are becoming irrelevant if it fails to acknowledge the contributions and challenges that scientific description of nature presents for artistic expressions. By giving thoughtful consideration to environmental policies in literature, science has the potential not only to make a substantial contribution to the interdisciplinary dialogue involving literary studies, environmental studies, and other fields.



This initial definition of ecocriticism's ambit is broad enough to offer an area of research rather than a set of instruments for functioning in that field. It is strategic. It is not uncommon for both internal and external critics to decry this depth by seizing on certain sentences. Even while Glotfelty's description, as widely used as it is, could reflect how ecocriticism has been so diverse, there are many more places on the board for individuals willing to participate in contemporary debates.

Similarly, the subject of ecocriticism's examination has shown to be dynamic rather than static. Using a wave metaphor, Buell introduced a series of connected but separate axes in his 2005 statement on ecocriticism's genealogy. A first wave of various texts with an emphasis on urban settings and diversity and inclusion studies precedes a second wave that emphasizes postcolonial critique and a persistent focus on theoretical questions. The third wave follows the second wave. As new areas of study emerged, ecocriticism's bibliographies expanded to include a wider range of perspectives (both inside and throughout the proposed model) and environmental considerations.

Consequently, the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), the primary professional organization for scholars in ecocriticism, boasts one of the most extensive international memberships among all literary fields of study. In their introduction to *Postcolonial Ecologies*, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley argue that ecocriticism is prone to naturalizing predominant environmental discourses, particularly those that do not deeply engage with issues of difference, power, and privilege. Emerging themes such as the Anthropocene (which posits that humanity now resides in a new geological epoch defined by human carbon-burning activities), the tangible reality, and animal studies are broadening ecocritical concerns to encompass broader societal contexts and, at times, research articles. The current state of ecocriticism might be better described as a banyan tree rather than an ocean wave, with branches connecting to form multiple yet interconnected trunks (Sarah Jaquette Ray 84).

An exploration of the shift in ecocriticism towards narrative theory reveals a new avenue that has the potential to make its distinctive contribution to the field. The limited attention given to narrative in ecocritical studies has not been solely due to a lack of interest, with many scholars within ASLE's vibrant community of creative authors garnering significant notice. In the book *What is Natural Worth? Narrative Expressions of Environmental Values* by Terre Satterfield and Scott Slovic, the inclusion of interviews with authors adds depth (Monica Seger). Seger explains that, in their examination of deliberative discourse, Satterfield and Slovic emphasize the power of storytelling to navigate the inherent oppositions within such conversations. The twelve authors interviewed, including Simon Ortiz, Alison Hawthorne Deming, and Robert Michael Pyle, challenge assumptions made by interviewers. However, William Kittridge argues that stories can prompt readers to make more nuanced judgments, while Ofelia Zepeda



questions whether an overarching concept like “story” can truly convey any meaningful essence.

The criticism of narrative forms, on the other hand, has taken longer to arrive. This may be in part due to Lawrence Buell’s early work on the subject, which was foundational. He proposes aesthetics for an “ecocentric” Ethic in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995). He suggests: “But if we abandon the concept of human segregation, what kind of literature is left? It has to be a literature that abandons or at the very least examines what would appear to be the most basic emphases of writing: character, identity, narrative awareness.” (92). This inclination leads to a preference for literary forms such as the nature essay, with a particular emphasis on the works of Henry David Thoreau, which permit digression and elaboration. Although Buell revisits and revises these assumptions in his subsequent significant ecocritical work, stating that “Argument can state, but narrative can actually dramatize,” the analysis of narrative structures has often been kept separate from ethical discussions and has assumed a subordinate position in relation to them (Jhan Hochman, *Green*. 143).

On the other hand, Ursula Heise’s *Sense of Place and Sense of Planet* devotes much emphasis to storytelling’s ability to dramatize and other narrative functions. Despite gaining recognition for its argument advocating a shift in focus from the local to the global, this research has received comparatively less attention for underscoring the “challenges” posed by the necessary adjustment in “narrative patterns” accompanying the shift in scale. The researcher contends that the destruction caused by geophysical forces and patterns presents a more significant threat to narrative genres such as the nature ramble than any other. She suggests that attention should be directed toward allegory and collage. Heise explores the worldviews conveyed through various forms and media. In this afterword, where Heise urges ecocritical scholars to delve into the “question of the aesthetic,” she issues a similar call to the authors of *Postcolonial Green: Environmental Politics and World Narrative*. Ethno-criticism, she argues, is required since it “have often tended to assess creative works most centrally in terms of whether they portray the realities of social oppression and environmental devastation accurately, and what ideological perspectives they imply,” However, she also argues that “if factual accuracy, interesting political analysis, or wide public appeal is what we look for, there are better and more straightforward places to find them than novels and poems” (213). The “aesthetic transformation of the real” is, therefore, her major focus, which has “a particular potential for reshaping the individual and collective ecosocial imaginary.”

Similar to Heise, Nancy Easterlin is intrigued by the impacts that different forms and media exert on individuals. A great deal of ecocriticism attempts to identify the genre or form that can “palliate the soul” and “culminate in an environmentally friendly perspective” by combining evolutionary history and cognitive science. She does an admirable job of explaining how this is a faulty



approach. As an “agentive force,” she says that “integrating the actions and purposes of human groups within their prescribed domain, the narrative brings into relation and coordinates sequence, causality, physical place, knowledge of interaction with human others, and self-concept” (139). In this context, ecocritics face heightened importance in exploring narratives, encompassing not only specific narrative genres but also acknowledging the intricacies of nature, culture, and their interconnected systems.

According to Heise and Easterlin’s works, the study of story forms will complicate or sophisticate current ecocritical arguments that favor genres like humor, the nature essay, the georgic novel, and the realist novel, and so on as ideal for promoting environmental consciousness. For those interested in exploring the links and disconnections between different story genres, such an ecocritical approach to form might be useful for coming up with new tales. Ecocritical concern to poetry in the etymology meaning of poesis, “to make from,” may be reinvigorated when narrative form limns additional linkages between experienced settings and narrative comprehension. There has recently been a shift in the field of ecopoetics toward paying attention to the multiple ways in which personal memories and experiences intersect with forces of nature of perception and how different forms and experiments with language can be used to express them, as described by Sarah Nolan in her book *Ecopoetics: A Reader*.

The approach of ecocriticism in this study aligns with ecopoetics in attempting to move beyond the “ecocritical discomfort with language and aesthetics” emphasized by Scott Knickerbocker in his formulation of ecopoetics. Consequently, ecocriticism that specifically addresses narrative forms can be regarded as an ecopoetics of storytelling. Certain scholars are explicit about the correlation they perceive between story theory and ecocriticism. According to Markku Lehtimäki, in his seminal 2013 article “*Natural Environments in Narrative Contexts: Cross-Pollinating Ecocriticism and Narrative Theory*” the techniques of narrative theory can be employed to investigate how cultural practices are interconnected with the natural ecologies they are associated with.

Similarly, Erin James argues for narratological notions and language in *The Story world Accord: Ecocriticism and Postcolonial Narratives* (2015). Erin combines “ecocriticism’s interest in the relationship between literature and the physical environment with narratology’s focus on the literary structures and devices by which writers compose narratives” (xv), to form “econarratology,” which she calls “ecological narratology.” In her research, she underscores the significance of the reading process, viewing it as especially effective in examining the imaginary realms that readers conceive and immerse themselves in while engaging with narratives. She also highlights the connections between these imaginative worlds and the actual world, emphasizing their potential to cultivate awareness and understanding (Erin xv).



In *Affective Ecologies: Empathy, Emotion, and Environmental Narrative*, Alexa Weik Von Mossner is also interested in exploring the mental and physiological responses of individuals when they engage with narratives. She uses affect analysis and perceptual discourse analysis to examine how readers' emotional connection with ecological themes might inspire them to care for human and animal beings who are vulnerable to environmental injustice in her examinations of American texts (literary and cinematic).

Using this book as a starting point, literary theorists may build on ecocritical and narrative theory in their future research. It demonstrates that ecocritics may use narrative theory to describe environmental sentiments in novel ways, even though its terminology can be a bit cumbersome. This project might be pushed even further by new research. Ecocritics, for example, may use Gerald Prince and Robyn Warhol's feminist approach to narrative. Prince defined the unnarrated parts as "those passages in a narrative that explicitly do not tell what is supposed to have happened, foregrounding the narrator's refusal to narrate," (James Phelan et al. 220) while Warhol used the term "unnarrated" to refer to those passages. In order to better understand why this person refused to answer the question, she proposes four more phrases that may be used. Using these terms, ecocriticism may ask why modern narratives do not focus on hazardous waste. Should not books just tell the story of toxicity instead of narrating it (subnarratable)? Is it impossible to convey with words (supranarratable)? To what extent does the literary canon avoid discussing the subject because of taboo (antinarratable)? Do current generic conventions (paranarratable) just not fit it? While ecocriticism has asserted that these categories speak to literary and cultural standards, the narrative theory uses terminology that may be used to aid communication outside of ecocritical endeavors.

New scholarship, such as the emerging field of new materialism, has the potential to influence and steer ecocriticism and narrative theory in various directions. One noteworthy area within ecocriticism's recent focus is new materialism, as exemplified by Serenella Iovino and Serpil Oppermann's material ecocriticism. This branch extends the existing interest in materiality by treating material as a form of literary text, moving beyond a mere representation of material in the text. Iovino and Oppermann suggest that material ecocriticism views natural-cultural interactions as material tales, tracing trajectories and referring to "storied matter" in their discussions (Iovino et al. 6-7). Their analytical approach reveals the interacting factors that contribute to the material's existence. However, the use of the terms "narrative" and "tale" in these contexts introduces a level of ambiguity that may compromise the strength of literary and cultural experts that these terms seek to evoke. What makes this a tale as opposed to just a list of events? Who or who are the narrators in these stories? Ecocritical assessments of narrative forms may ask a number of concerns about the "narrative



agency of matter” in order to further sophisticate these and related efforts that have gained widespread attention.

Ecocriticism and narrative theory can improve the link between critical study and creative activity that has long been of interest to literary and environmental experts. As a method of expressing critical arguments through narrative, story scholarship has been promoted by several ecocritics as a way to keep in mind the critic’s place and time in location and time. Ecocriticism without a story is like “stepping off the face of a mountain—it is the disoriented language of free fall”; narrative scholarship, for Scott Slovic, fosters “awareness, literally, of where we are in the world and why we are writing” (34–35); Slovic’s emphasis on narrative is clear. According to this hypothesis, ecocritics would be able to make better-informed narrative decisions if they were conversant with narrative theory.

The narrative scholarship is also evident in Iovino’s study of the re-inhabitation of Italy’s Po Valley. It is a “narrative rehabilitation” that focuses on tales that highlight “values and responsibilities” as well as “envisio[n]... suitable strategies for change in the form of possible narrative endings,” (Iovino 106). Indigenous peoples, who have relied on narratives for millennia, are unlikely to be surprised by the idea of using narratives as a means of interacting with the world around them. According to Daniel Wildcat, indigenous knowledge typically consists of “collaborations... emergent from the nature-culture nexus,” implying that tales and the settings in which they are transmitted are inextricably linked (173). Indigenous literature should not be used as a vehicle for Western-based narrative theory because Western-based narrative theory has been established in a Western context that is often at odds with indigenous objectives. However, a discussion between these many frameworks may still reveal useful areas of convergence that aid storytellers in communicating with one another. Environmental and storytelling theory may be used to highlight the diverse ways in which storytellers approach their craft.

Ecocritical notions and traditions also have the potential to expand narratological work in contemporary and intriguing ways. “Spatial turn” has been a prominent movement in narrative studies over the past fifteen years, where narratologists switch gears and look at narrative spatialization as a distinct category. In David Herman’s influential essay from 2001, “Spatial Reference in Narrative Domains,” and the recent collaborative work by Elana Gomel, Marie-Laure Ryan, Kenneth Foote, and Maoz Azaryahu titled *Narrating Space/Spatializing Narrative: Where Narrative Theory and Geography Meet*, valuable insights can be derived from ecocritical examinations that delve into the distinctions between place and space present in these works. A narrative ethics thread may be added to ecocriticism studies by focusing on specific locations and non-places and how varied ethical ties to settings are established. Several ecocritics have investigated how authors renowned for their focus on place and space acquire their profound understanding, exploring aspects like movement



modes such as walking and the act of storytelling itself. This inquiry prompts considerations about the transmission of space across diegetic levels. This understanding affects narrative spatialization and setting debates.

David Herman argues that narratological examinations of representations of nonhuman entities in narratives can gain insights from ecocritical considerations regarding the world beyond human and posthuman ecosystems. Herman adds that traditionally, narrative theorists have maintained the notion that while not every narrator is human, all narrators must possess human characteristics (49). However, a recent surge in scholarly work, propelled by an increasing interest in how narratives can evoke empathy and concern for nonhuman characters, challenges the anthropocentric assumptions underlying fundamental narratological inquiries such as “Who speaks?” and “Who sees?” Works like *The Storied Lives of Nonhuman Narrators* by Lars Bernaerts, Marco Caracciolo, Luc Herman, and Bart Vervaeck, as well as *Narratology Beyond the Human* by David Herman, question whether narratives can accurately represent the perspectives of nonhuman entities without human intervention.

3. Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Exploring Concepts of Space and the “Other”

In recent years, the intersection of postcolonial theory and environmental studies has given rise to a new field of research known as postcolonial ecocriticism. So, what is the relationship between these two disciplines? and what the ways in which environmental concerns have become an integral part of postcolonial literary and cultural analysis? By examining the increasing traffic between ecocritical and postcolonial literary studies, the profound implications of this “green turn” within the postcolonial framework can be explicit.

Postcolonial ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary field of study that combines postcolonial and ecocritical approaches to analyze the relationships between literature, culture, and the environment in the context of colonial and postcolonial societies (Outka). It examines how colonialism and its legacies have shaped the natural world and how literature and other cultural forms have represented and responded to these changes. Postcolonial ecocriticism is more concerned with highlighting the ways in which colonialism has problematized indigenous ways of life, including their relationships with the land and the environment. It also aims to explore how literature and other cultural forms have been used to resist colonialism and imperialism and their ecological impacts, and how these works have contributed to the development of environmental justice movements.

Postcolonial ecocriticism emerged as a distinct field of study in the late 1990s and early 2000s as a unique area of study. Scholars recognized the interconnections between colonialism, environmental degradation, and cultural representation. This field combines postcolonial studies and ecocriticism, employing their theoretical frameworks and methodologies. Environmental justice is one of the important focus of postcolonial ecocriticism, it involves



ensuring fair distribution of environmental benefits and burdens and recognizing the rights of marginalized communities to a healthy environment (Melanie Murcott). Advocates argue that environmental injustices often stem from colonial legacies, including the dispossession of indigenous lands and the exploitation of natural resources for colonial powers' advantage. They emphasize the significance of acknowledging and respecting Indigenous knowledge and practices related to the environment, as well as promoting inclusive and equitable approaches to environmental management and conservation.

In a seminal article published in 2004, Graham Huggan astutely observed that the inclusion on environmental dimensions in postcolonial discourse signaled a crucial acknowledgment. It revealed the necessity of addressing the monumental scale of environmental devastation inherent in modern imperialism and colonialism. In essence, this perspective posits that all issues related to colonization and imperialism are inherently intertwined with environmental issues.

By delving into postcolonial ecocriticism, one can demonstrate the multifaceted nature of this interdisciplinary approach. This article underscores the transformative potential of postcolonial ecocriticism. Ultimately, I hope to contribute to the ongoing dialogue surrounding the imperial legacy of slavery, postcolonial ecocriticism, and the urgent need for inclusive environmentalism.

Huggan discussed the reciprocal need for both ecocritical and postcolonial studies, highlighting the potential benefits each discipline could derive from the other. He elucidated that ecocriticism could play a crucial role in emphasizing the material environment as a central focus within the critical framework of postcolonial studies. Conversely, postcolonial studies could challenge and counteract the tendency of certain green movements to align with Western liberal universalism and exclusive nature conservation predominantly influenced by the white middle-class elite (Graham Huggan 704). Huggan defined five areas of expansion within the emerging field of "postcolonial green":

environmental activism enhanced by properly analyzed ideologies of development; textual practices foregrounding the politics of traditional environmental discourses; a correction of universalist ecological claims; initiation of debate on the rhetorical function and material effects of the discourses of anti-imperialist resistance and intercultural reconciliation; and finally, reinvigoration of utopic thinking in order to assist the global struggle for socio-economic and ecological justice. (720)

A year following Huggan's article, Rob Nixon continued the exploration of the interactions between postcolonialism and ecocriticism. However, Nixon's analysis placed a stronger emphasis on the divisions and gaps that exist between them. Nixon says:



whereas postcolonialists had traditionally focused on hybridity and cross-culturations, eco-critics have been drawn to ideas of purity; postcolonialists concern themselves with displacements, whereas eco-critics give priority to a sense of emplacement; postcolonialists favor cosmopolitanism, but eco-critics favor a nationalist interpretative framework; finally, postcolonialists are devoted to rescuing marginalized pasts, while eco-critics imagine timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature. (235)

As mentioned previously, the convergence of these two academic disciplines aligns with the changing political and historical discussions surrounding the environment. In the early years of the twenty-first century, it has become inevitable to contextualize the concept of the environment within the historical paths of imperialism, colonialism, and the diverse forms of resistance against them.

The foundational works of Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak, which established the framework for postcolonial studies during the 1970s and 1980s, appear to neglect the conceptual importance of the environment in anti-colonial movements across Arab countries, Africa, Asia, and Latin American nations (Pablo Mukherjee Upamanyu). Yet It is possible that Franz Fanon established the groundwork for the important realm of postcolonial-ecocriticism. He argued that: “for a colonized people the most essential value, because the most concrete, is first and foremost the land: the land which will bring them bread and, above all, dignity” (cited in DeLoughrey & Handley 3). Derived from Fanon’s writings, the term “land” serves as the primary defining feature of former colonies. Beyond being an emblem of identity, it also serves as a means of sustenance for both the colonizers and the colonized, both during and after the era of physical colonialism. This alignment elucidates the reason postcolonial critics such as Franz Fanon in 1961, Gayatri Spivak in 1988, Edward Said in 1993, and Homi Bhabha in 1994, along with ecocritical critics like Lawrence Buell in 2001, Glen Love in 2003, and Timothy Morton in 2007, can collaboratively establish a more comprehensive framework for comprehending colonized individuals and their interactions with the natural environment.

Initially, ecocriticism emerged as an intellectual movement primarily concerned with the preservation of nature, specifically focusing on the concept of “the wilderness.” On the other hand, postcolonialism places its main emphasis on another area “analytics of place, power, knowledge and representation” (Elizabeth DeLoughrey 321). Consequently, postcolonialism and ecocriticism share a common ground in their mutual interest in the concept of representing place. Postcolonialism focuses on the historical aspects of place, whereas ecocriticism centers on the aesthetics connected to it.

Prior to the spatial turn, time held the central focus in critical approaches, with space being less emphasized. Henry Lefebvre confirms: “In the wake of this fetishization of space in the service of the state, philosophy and practical activity



were bound to seek a restoration of time” (21), and Marx, Bergson, Husserl, Merleau-Ponty and the Deleuze of l’Anti-Oedipe are part of that tradition (22). In an interview featured in Simon During’s *Cultural Studies Reader*, Michel Foucault recalls how time was once perceived as the exclusive subject deserving of scholarly examination:

I recall having been invited, in 1966, by a group of architects to do a study of space (...) at the end of the study someone spoke up – a Sartrean psychologist – who firebombed me, saying that space is reactionary and capitalist, but history and becoming are revolutionary. This absurd discourse was not at all unusual at the time. Today everyone would be convulsed with laughter at such a pronouncement, but not then. (Foucault quoted in During 140)

Emerging spatial theories challenged the prevailing emphasis on time and history, advocating for cultural and social critique. Postcolonial theory, specifically, underscored the potential for anti-colonial expressions within the exploration of space. Scholars in postcolonial studies asserted that space became the primary, and sometimes the sole, medium through which colonized communities could articulate their histories, which had been suppressed and erased (Benitez Rojo, Brathwaite, Glissant, Harris). This shift towards prioritizing space involved rejecting Eurocentric concepts that exalted illustrious genealogies as the foundation of a superior identity, and discrediting Eurocentric historical narratives that glorified the dominant white imperial self (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire*. 34). However, not all perspectives on space were considered critical. The postcolonial emphasis on lived, practiced space emerged as a response to the colonial notion that these spaces were devoid of inhabitants and culture, making them available for appropriation and reshaping. The understanding that space is never merely an objective entity, but rather imbued with meaning and power, is where the transformative capacity of spatial theory lies.

To fully comprehend the significant critical implications, it is a priority to examine the distinctions between real, imagined, and lived space. Tim Cresswell provides an insightful overview, focusing particularly on the critical dimension of spatial theorization. Let’s delve into his analysis of the differentiation between real and imagined space, observed in the 1970s when humanist geographers contested scientific approaches that perceived space as a mere abstract and vacant entity (real space). Instead, they began conceptualizing the idea of “place” to theorize the emotional and meaningful connections individuals have with specific locations (Cresswell 18-24). Cresswell illustrates that approximately a decade later, critical geographers, influenced by cultural studies, started challenging the essentialist and exclusive nature of many place-related concepts. They acknowledged that the significance of a place is not uniform for all its inhabitants; individuals from various social classes, ethnicities, and age groups experience it differently, often conflicting with the dominant portrayal of that place. For instance, a nationalist or ethnocentric depiction of a nation as the inherent



homeland of a specific racial or ethnic group only. Places were now perceived as socially constructed entities, shaped by acts of exclusion that underlie their formation (Cresswell 26). The crucial aspect of this constructivist perspective is the recognition that what has been created can also be transformed. An essentialist, exclusive, and naturalized construction of place can be demystified and reimagined as an inclusive place (Cresswell 26-30).

The subsequent phase in the discourse on the role of spatial theories in understanding the politics of space, and promoting an emancipatory process of demystification, involves reinterpreting the notion of lived space. My goal is to firmly situate it within the context of contemporary efforts to establish a genuinely critical approach to place and space. Building on Cresswell's contributions, I acknowledge the significant value of the concept of lived space as articulated by urban theorist Henry Lefebvre and political geographer Edward Soja (who uses the term "thirdspace" to convey a similar concept). These theorists aim to transcend the restrictive dualities inherent in anti-positivist spatial theories, which merely juxtaposed real and imagined, objective and subjective spaces, as explained by Tim Cresswell:

"Thirdspace is practiced and lived rather than simply being material (conceived) or mental (perceived) ... Thinking of place as performed and practiced can help us think of place in radically open and non-essentialized ways where place is constantly struggled over and reimagined in practical ways" (38-39).

Hence, the concept of lived space, centering on the daily struggles over ownership and significance, facilitates a more profound form of anti-essentialism compared to the earlier notion of imagined space. Consequently, it holds the potential to challenge any essentialist, homogenizing, and exclusionary interpretations of the cultural significance of places.

Postcolonial ecocriticism delves into a more profound analysis, elevating the examination to a greater depth. Although the term "lived space" may not frequently arise in discussions within ecocriticism, it can be contended that the foundational ecocritical comprehension of lived space establishes the groundwork for a novel set of socially engaged inquiries. The significant momentum gained by ecocriticism can be attributed to its potential to provide an academically rigorous and socially meaningful approach, with some asserting its capacity to contribute to the endeavors addressing global environmental degradation. Erin James (2012) posits that the convergence of ecocriticism's environmental focus with the cultural, linguistic, and representational concerns of postcolonialism opens avenues to "push the parameters of each discourse in new and exciting ways" (60). This collision of frameworks introduces a philosophical instability within the domain of postcolonial-ecocriticism, as succinctly outlined by Rob Nixon who adds:



First, postcolonialists tended to foreground hybridity and cross-culturation. Ecocritics, on the other hand, historically were drawn more to discourses of purity: virgin wilderness and the preservation of ‘uncorrupted’ last great places. Second, postcolonial writing and criticism was largely concerned with displacement, while environmental literary studies tended to give priority to the literature of place. Third, and relatedly, postcolonial studies tended to favour the cosmopolitan and the transnational. Postcolonialists were typically critical of nationalism, whereas the canons of environmental literature and criticism developed within a national (and often nationalistic) American framework. Fourth, postcolonialism devoted considerable attention to excavating or reimagining the marginalized past: history from below and border histories, often along transnational axes of migrant memory. By contrast, within much environmental literature and criticism, something different happened to history. It was often repressed or subordinated to the pursuit of the timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature (235).

The extensive passage above reveals a significant challenge within postcolonial-ecocriticism. It pertains to the reconciliation between the historical approach of reconfiguring the portrayal of former colonies, as constructed by the colonizers, and the pursuit of conservation and sustainable resource utilization in both former colonies and the lands of the colonized. This challenge is further compounded by the complexities of a neoliberal world where globalization holds immense influence. Another significant consideration is that postcolonialism is predominantly characterized as “interdisciplinary, transnational, and comparative” (Cilano & Deloughrey 80). This characterization arises from its exploration of the interactions among multiple sovereign cultures involved in the exploitation and extraction of native resources. In contrast, ecocriticism, having originated academically in the United States and the United Kingdom, tends to maintain a national focus. This dichotomy prompts the question: How can the theoretical framework proposed by postcolonial-ecocriticism effectively bridge the gap between “transnational” and “national” aspects, extending beyond the concept of place? Addressing this query poses one of the challenges within the discourse of postcolonial ecocriticism.

The long-standing object/subject divide that has been a recurring theme in philosophical discussions within postcolonialism is mitigated through the convergence of this field with ecocriticism. This merger challenges the traditional nature/human dichotomy, which has been articulated by Aldo Leopold:

... humans must abandon the long-held view that land is a commodity and come to see themselves not as conquerors of nature but citizens within it. We must come to regard the land, by which he means, “soils, waters, plants, and animals,” as part of a larger community. The non-human members of this community have a “right to continued existence, and at least in spots, their continued existence in a natural state (cited in Zammito et al. 106)



In postcolonial discourse, the concept of the “Other,” typically depicted as the oppressed natives (colonized), is expanded to encompass the non-human elements of the natural world, such as forests, soil, animals, rocks, valleys, and more. These natural elements are seen as the very sites from which resources are extracted. This viewpoint finds resonance in Gayatri Spivak’s influential critical essay titled “Can the Subaltern Speak?” In this essay, G. C. Spivak argues:

A group of countries, generally first-world, are in the position of investing capital; another group, generally third-world provides the field for the investment, both through the comprador indigenous capitalists and through their ill-protected and shifting labour force. In the interest of maintaining the circulation and growth of industrial capital (and of the concomitant task of administration within the nineteenth-century territorial imperialism), transportation law and standardized education systems were developed – even as local industries were destroyed, land distribution was rearranged, and raw material was transferred to the colonizing country (287).

Hence, Spivak acknowledges the separation between humans and nature, an implicit aspect evident in her framework. She positions neo-colonialists and indigenous people on one side of the binary, juxtaposed with the oppressed class and nature on the other. Despite not being explicitly classified as an eco-critic within the postcolonial context, Spivak’s contention regarding the West’s collaboration with local capitalists in the Third World implies that postcolonial discourse is inherently linked to the flora and fauna of these nations. Although Spivak has not expressly articulated this connection, her arguments resonate with the periphery of postcolonial ecocritical conversations, warranting further attention and exploration.

Overall, capitalism and colonisation “affects both the subjugated other in the form of humans populating a territory and the nonhuman other in the form of the geography, flora, and fauna also found in that territory” (A. Trulijo 38). Postcolonial eco-critics focus on this concept of alterity, underscoring the importance of distinguishing between the motivations behind specific human actions that negatively affect the fauna and flora and the predominant actions that exclusively impact humans. This distinction stems from the acknowledgment that both the oppressed humans and the declining non-human environment are encompassed within the realm of the “other,” experiencing the consequences of colonial endeavors.

Additionally, specific historical conditions and the concurrent expansion of interdisciplinary frontiers, along with the rising importance of ecological and environmental studies, compelled postcolonialism to rediscover the conceptual relevance that anti-colonial intellectuals of the 1960s and 1970s had assigned to the environment. Bill Ashcroft, alongside Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths, renowned for compiling numerous influential theoretical postcolonial writings, stood as one of the early advocates emphasizing this renewed focus on the



environment (Mukherjee). The involvement of second wave postcolonial scholars like Ashcroft, Huggan, and Nixon signifies a clear acknowledgement within postcolonial studies of the deliberate involvement in eco-/environmental discussions.

The distinctive feature of 'postcolonial environmentalism' has always been its emphasis on environmental injustices, particularly the plight of marginalized communities and the oppressed people. This form of environmentalism, often referred to as the 'environmentalism of the poor,' highlights how people suffer from inadequate living conditions due to internal or external colonization, exploitation, and the loss of natural resources, forcing them into social margins and urban slums. This focus on human environmental injustice stands in contrast to purely biocentric perspectives, like those of deep ecologists, who prioritize the equal ethical value of all living beings.

According to George Handley, such biocentric perspectives have often failed to effectively address the challenges faced by impoverished communities and the interconnected nature of social and environmental problems. The argument is that social and environmental issues frequently intertwine, exacerbating each other. This observation echoes the historical reality of slavery, which constituted both social and environmental evils. Destitute descendants of slaves were forced to rely on limited natural resources that slave owners permitted them, which consequently led them to gradually lose their connection to their original sense of place. "The consequences of natural events are often distributed according to the tragedies of human oppression and poverty" (Handley 184).

Within the domain referred to as 'postcolonial green' or 'eco postcolonialism,' it becomes essential to revive and strengthen the conceptual importance of historical materialism, a foundation for many 'social ecological' and second-wave postcolonial viewpoints. This philosophical perspective, originating from the radical faction of the European Enlightenment, holds significant implications (Mukherjee). By carefully exploring the materialist aspects of ecological thought, not only can ecocriticism gain greater analytical strength, but it can also contribute more meaningfully to postcolonial studies by offering corrective insights.

Similarly, by actively involving and adopting the materialist stances, especially evident in what was termed as second wave postcolonial studies, the discipline can rejuvenate itself and position ecocriticism within the wider frameworks of both historical and contemporary colonialism and imperialism. Importantly, a materialist viewpoint within the 'postcolonial green' framework enables us to comprehensively navigate the intricate connection between the formal and stylistic elements of literary and cultural expressions and their historical environmental contexts (Mukherjee).



Conclusion:

In conclusion, the exploration of ecocriticism and its intersection with postcolonial narratives reveals a rich tapestry of relationships between literature, culture, and the environment. As the field continues to evolve, it becomes increasingly clear that an interdisciplinary approach is essential for addressing the complex environmental challenges of our time. By integrating scientific knowledge with literary analysis, scholars can deepen their understanding of how narratives shape perceptions of nature and culture, particularly in the context of colonial histories and indigenous practices. Concepts such as “econarratology” and “material ecocriticism” underscore the importance of recognizing the interconnectedness of social and environmental issues, while emerging spatial theories challenge traditional notions of place and power dynamics.

The critical insights of scholars such as Graham Huggan and Rob Nixon, highlight the necessity of acknowledging both human and non-human “others” in our discourse. This inclusive perspective not only enriches our understanding of environmental justice but also emphasizes the enduring legacy of colonialism on ecological resources. Ultimately, the integration of ecocriticism and postcolonial studies fosters a more nuanced and critical engagement with the politics of space and the environment, paving the way for a more equitable and sustainable future. As we move forward, it is imperative that we continue to bridge these disciplines, fostering a dialogue that prioritizes both cultural diversity and ecological integrity in our quest for social and environmental justice.



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