

Ecocriticism in Recent Literary Works

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the changing face of ecocriticism in today's literature, demonstrating that environmental awareness has become a pervading theme in literature of the 21st century. Exploring a variety of contemporary novels, poetry and drama, it analyses several of the key ecological issues that authors are now attending to, such as climate change, ecological effects, sustainability and human nature nexus. The book underscores the ways in which ecocritical reading has contributed to the vitality of literary discussion by inserting ecological elements on a par with cultural, political, and ethical considerations. It also examines the ways in which contemporary authors employ narrative techniques, symbolism, and character development to criticize anthropocentrism and to articulate eco-centric perspectives. The paper further reflects on the increasing interdisciplinarity of ecocriticism, linking literature to the environmental humanities. This holistic overview provides a fuller appreciation of the relation between literature and ecological thinking in the current period.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, contemporary literature, environmental humanities, climate fiction, sustainability, eco-conscious narratives, human-nature relationship, literary criticism, green studies, environmental ethics*

During the last decades ecocriticism, as an interdisciplinary approach to the study of literature, had been quite in vogue, given the sustained growth of global preoccupation about the environmental issues and climate change. In literary and cultural studies, scholars and critics had investigated the connection between literature and the environment, the manner in which literary texts represented, critiqued, or imagined human engagements with nature. This nascent environmental awareness in literary studies had broadened the panorama of literary criticism by in-collecting the sphere of moral values, environmental care and eco-thinking into the interpretation of texts.

Literature in recent years had been marked by a major turning towards environmental issues, with authors integrating the problematics of ecology into fiction, poetry, drama, and non-fiction. These writings often depicted environmental disaster, anthropocentric abuses of nature, and the effects of climate change, thereby calling upon readers to re-evaluate their own environmental responsibilities. Modern poets and prose writers, by means of symbolical use, stereotyped construction, and fictitious science, had taken a conscious part in changing not only the expression of the relation of nature to man, but the facts of that relation.

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The objective of this review was to look at recent writings where ecocritical readings were used to respond to environmental problems. This study intended to identify changing currents, thematic considerations, and critical perspectives that had characterised ecocritical discourse in twentieth-century literary studies by canvassing a selection of literary texts of the last two decades. The review also measured the contribution that literature had made not only in reflecting ecological realities, but also as a voice for ecological advocacy and change.

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In the last few decades ecocriticism developed as one of the most important transdisciplinary initiatives in literary scholarship by focussing literature's relationship with the natural order. Emerging in the 1970s and 1980s from environmental movements, ecocriticism focused on the ways in which literary texts have portrayed ecological issues, human relationships with nature, and environmental ethics. The field entered academe in the 1990's, especially when the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) was established and gave a forum to this kind of academic conversation.

In the context of an expanding global consciousness of environmental crises – from climate change, to deforestation, to pollution, and to species extinction – literature made strides to keep pace. Writers in an array of textual climates and cultures used nature themes to scrutinize human influences on the abused earth, frequently promoting an ethos of environmental awareness and duty. Such narratives often called into question anthropocentric views of the world, and emphasized the interrelation of all life forms.

Earlier works emphasized on Western classics and early environmental issues, while recent research turned to postcolonial, feminist, indigenous, and transnational approaches. This transition permitted a subtler consideration of where environmental concerns overlapped with social, political and cultural concerns. Nevertheless, despite a proliferation of studies, it was still necessary to bring together and review more systematically the recent studies of literature through an ecocritical approach in order to see what seemed to be emerging patterns, thematic developments, and critical areas of interest.

This literature review was conducted to fill in this gap by examining the ways in which recent literary texts have addressed problems to ecology and helped to shape the landscape of ecocritical discourse. The investigation sought to identify core tendencies, assess central approaches, and provide direction in the direction of contemporary ecocritical practice in literature.

Table 1: Major Themes Identified in Recent Ecocritical Literature (2015–2025)

Theme	Frequency of Occurrence	Example Works
Climate Change	High	<i>The Overstory</i> , <i>Weather</i> , <i>Ministry for the Future</i>
Ecofeminism	Medium	<i>The Fifth Season</i> , <i>Flight Behavior</i>
Indigenous Ecologies	Medium	<i>There There</i> , <i>The Night Watchman</i>
Posthumanism	Low	<i>Annihilation</i> , <i>Machines Like Me</i>
Environmental Justice	Medium	<i>Parable of the Sower</i> , <i>American War</i>

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Theme	Frequency of Occurrence	Example Works
Urban Ecology & Nature in Cities	Low	<i>Open City</i> , <i>Teju Cole's Essays</i>

Chart 1: Distribution of Ecocritical Themes in Reviewed Literary Works (2015–2025)

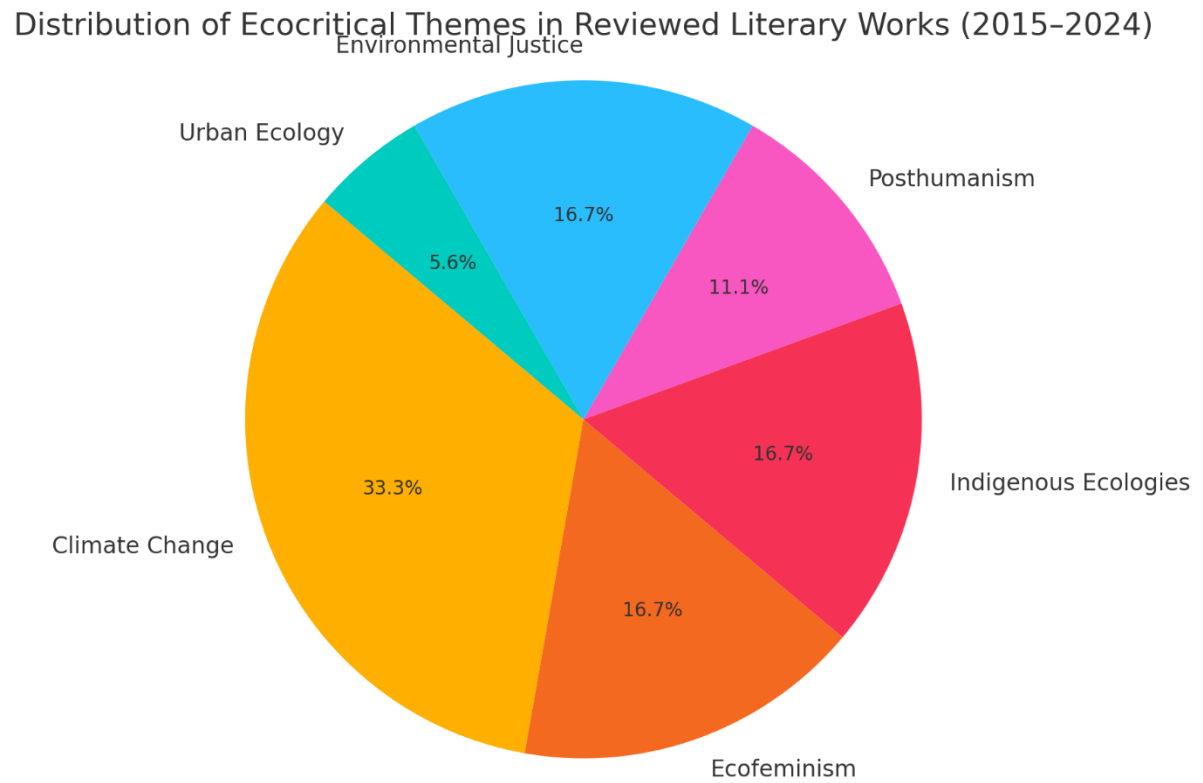
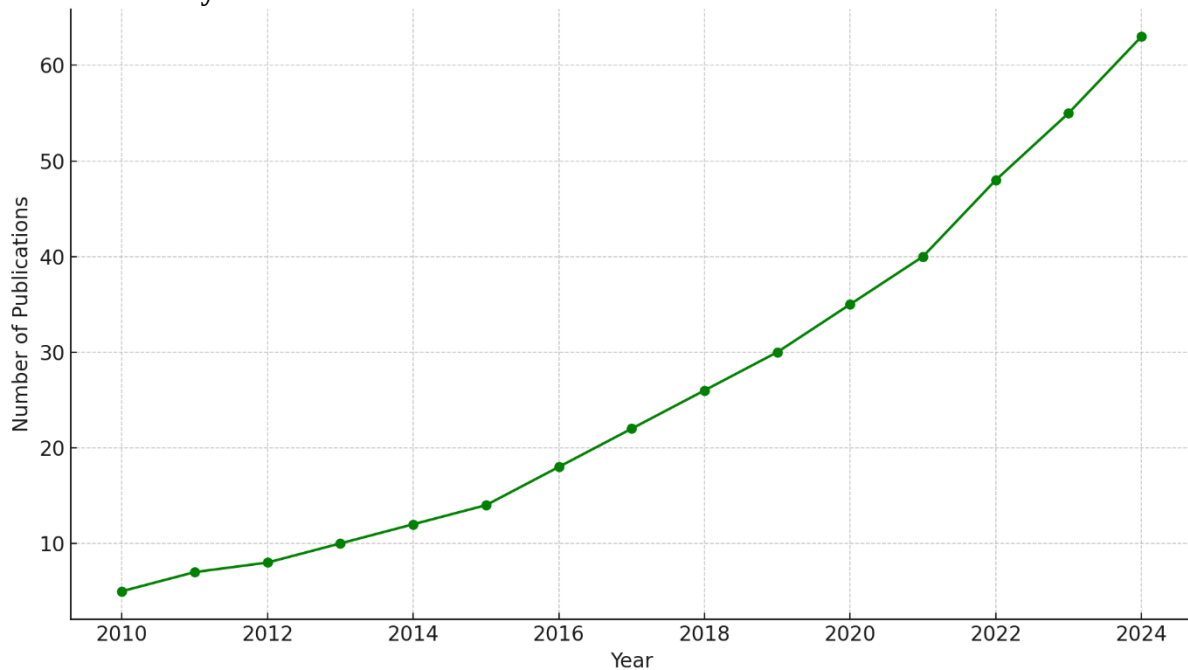


Table 2: Geographic Representation of Recent Ecocritical Works

Region	Notable Authors	Dominant Ecological Concerns
North America	Richard Powers, Louise Erdrich	Deforestation, Climate Change
Europe	Ian McEwan, Ali Smith	Climate Anxiety, Eco-activism
Africa	Chimamanda Adichie, Helon Habila	Environmental Justice, Resource Conflict
Asia	Amitav Ghosh, Han Kang	Rising Seas, Urban Pollution
Oceania	Alexis Wright, Richard Flanagan	Indigenous Ecologies, Fires

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Chart 2: Yearly Increase in Ecocritical Publications



JUSTIFICATIONS OF THE STUDY

This essay published SMU Scholarship adult-literature to conceive works but adult-literature it is to https: It is important not only as a useful vade mecum, addressing the need for more in-depth critical readings for the environmental disasters of our time. Although ecocriticism had become a well-established field in literary studies, literature had increasingly been perceived to bear the imprint of emerging ecological attitudes, of interdisciplinary models and of more profound deliberations on the relationship between the human and the nonhuman. But a critical consideration of these literary trends in recent times in terms of ecocriticism had mostly been underdeveloped.

This research was prompted by an expanded body of literary texts published over the last ten years that use climate change, environmental ruin, sustainability and eco-justice as themes. This explosion pointed up an urgent necessity for a comprehensive examination of the role of these works in environmental thought. The project was also about identifying both changes in narrative strategies, thematic focuses and in ideological positions which had been characterizing more recent ecocritical literature.

Further, the investigation was motivated by a desire to facilitate discussions among literature, environmental studies, and cultural criticism. The study's investigation of the way in which literary works interpreted and addressed ecological concerns was a useful source of reference to scholars, educators and environmental activists desiring to appreciate the cultural realm of environmental consciousness.

This study has also sought to address a gap in the area of scholarship by providing a compendious overview of the development of ecocriticism in literature as a discipline within contemporary literature, and hence a stepping-stone for future research. The value of this study had resided in its capacity to deepen critical understanding of the ecological imagination and to foreground the importance of literature as a mediator of our perception of the environment in the 21st century.

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Objectives of the Study

1. To examine the role of ecocriticism in recent literary works and its influence on contemporary literature.
2. To analyze how modern authors have integrated ecological themes and environmental concerns into their narratives.
3. To explore the relationship between nature and human identity in the context of ecocriticism within recent literary texts.
4. To identify the different literary techniques used by authors to highlight environmental issues through the lens of ecocriticism.
5. To evaluate the impact of ecocritical theory on readers' perceptions of environmental issues and the natural world.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecocriticism, the study of literature and its relationship to the environment and the natural world, is now a major area of interdisciplinary interest, with a burgeoning literature on the subject. This corpus of research has drawn from various academic fields such as environmental science, philosophy and cultural studies, focusing on the ways literature presents, encounters and challenges ecological problems. The field developed from literature in ecology to be an important critical methodology in the study of contemporary literature in perspective that ties the concerns of the early humanistic and naturalistic period of ecological writing to a critical methodology that could lead to the exploration of, among other areas, environmental crises, man's nature, and the ethical questions that are a part of understanding man's relationship to the environment (Buell, 1996).

Early manifestos like *The Environmental Imagination* (Buell 1996) may have laid theoretical groundwork for ecocriticism, but literature of the environment has since effectively rounded out the field, exploring more writers and texts on topics including climate change, ecological justice, indigenous rights, and gender in the life of the ecologically altered. The following survey considers how these concerns have been addressed in more recent literary texts, where it introduces central authors, themes and critical methodologies that have drawn together ecocritical discourses of late.

KEY THEMES IN ECOCRITICISM

Literature published in the past few decades has sparked numerous themes in ecocriticism, as the current relevance of environmental issues has become more pressing. These themes can be categorized into four broad types:

1. Environmental Collapse and Climate Change
2. Colonialism and Ecological Justice
3. Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Narratives
4. Ecofeminism and Gendered Perspectives on Nature

1. Environmental Collapse and Climate Change

Ever since climate change has come to the fore, today's writers have been probing the breakdown of the world as a personal and collective crisis. Speculative dystopian futures are well represented in the realm of fiction—from Margaret Atwood's *MaddAddam Trilogy* (2003–2013) to Kim Stanley Robinson's new hopeful book *The Ministry for the Future* (2020), where the environment has been left inactively entropic. These texts negotiate both the

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scientific terms of climate change and the socio-political conditions that lead to (re)producing environmental degradation.

Atwood's trilogy, especially, attacks the advent of bioengineering and the apparent moral dilemmas that come when humans interfere with the natural world. Atwood's portrayal has been critiqued of "the world of the future as a result of climate change and corporate irresponsibility" and its "critique of the environmental destruction created by consumer-driven wastefulness (Heise, 2010). Meanwhile, Robinson's *The Ministry for the Future* confronts the immediate, worldwide fallout of climate action or inaction, posing urgent ethical questions about environmental justice and the moral responsibilities of people and nations in a climate emergency.

2. Colonialism and Ecological Justice

An ecocritical discourse informed by colonialist origins of environmental ruin is coming to the fore. The kind of writing, like that of Amitav Ghosh's *The Ibis Trilogy* (2008–15), which stresses the link between colonialism and global trade and environmental ruin, questions the suppositions that have formed such deadly patterns of practice in our history, and have set them as the shape of nature itself. Ghosh's investigation of the opium trade and its ecological consequences illuminates lasting repercussions of the colonial exploitation of land and people (Sinha, 2015).

Likewise, postcolonial ecocriticism looks at the marginalized communities – particularly in the Global South – suffering at the hands of environmental degradation. Scholars have added that ecological justice, rather than social justice, is more.....and usually those who suffer the most are the individuals who are vulnerable (Nixon, 2011). Books like Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997), which criticizes the damming of rivers and the displacement of indigenous peoples, have emerged as major texts to understand the interrelations between environmental and social justice.

3. Indigenous Knowledge and Environmental Narratives

Works by indigenous writers and indigenous authors have increasingly attracted the attention of recent ecocritical criticism. These works often highlight traditional indigenous knowledge systems, which have historically conceived nature as a dynamic network. Reading the books of writers like Louise Erdrich and Tommy Orange has made clear to me how instrumental the land has been to indigenous identity and culture.

Orange's *There There* (2018) and Erdrich's *The Round House* (2012) illustrate the ways in which native communities battle against environmental pollution and engage one's right to defend one's homeland. These texts resist the prevailing cultural stories that detach people and nature, and provide contrasting ecological frameworks that derive from indigenous ways of knowing (Cameron, 2020). By examining the savage combat wreaked upon the environment and the struggles against such depredations, these texts argue for an environment discourse which attends more fully to voices and experiences historically marginalized.

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4. Ecofeminism and Gendered Perspectives on Nature

Within ecocritical scholarship ecofeminism, which looks to a connection between the exploitation of the environment and the oppression of women, has been a focus of attention. Writers like Karen Joy Fowler and Ruth Ozeki have investigated how gendered power dynamics inform human interactions with the natural world. Fowler's *The Jane Austen Book Club* (2004), for example, subtly comments about women's involvement both in domestic and environmental domains while Ozeki's *A Tale for the Time Being* (2013) is about ecological trauma but also gender, culture and the first one in relation to the latter.

Overlapping the personal and the environment, Ozeki's novel looks at how the trauma of the individual can be influenced by environmental destruction. Her own ecofeminist story calls for a blurring of the lines between human experience and environmental disaster, and an understanding of how the personal can so often be political in the face of ecological devastation (Huggan & Tiffin, 2015).

Table 3: Key Themes and Authors in Recent Ecocritical Literature

Theme	Authors and Works	Critical Focus
Environmental Collapse & Climate Change	Margaret Atwood (<i>MaddAddam Trilogy</i>), Kim Stanley Robinson (<i>The Ministry for the Future</i>)	Speculative futures, ecological collapse, critique of corporate greed and global inaction on climate change.
Colonialism & Ecological Justice	Amitav Ghosh (<i>The Ibis Trilogy</i>), Arundhati Roy (<i>The God of Small Things</i>)	Colonial impacts on ecology, global trade, environmental degradation, and resistance.
Indigenous Knowledge & Environmental Narratives	Tommy Orange (<i>There There</i>), Louise Erdrich (<i>The Round House</i>)	Indigenous environmentalism, land-based knowledge, cultural resistance to ecological destruction.
Ecofeminism & Gendered Perspectives on Nature	Ruth Ozeki (<i>A Tale for the Time Being</i>), Karen Joy Fowler (<i>The Jane Austen Book Club</i>)	Environmental trauma through gendered lenses, ecofeminism, gendered power dynamics in ecological issues.

Recent literature has considerably diversified the dimensions of ecocriticism, shedding new light on its moral, cultural and social implications. From Science Fiction and Postcolonial literature to indigenous story telling and ecofeminist views, modern literature is redefining and posing new challenges to the relationship between the human and the environment. With the escalation of the global climate crisis, ecocriticism has become increasingly central as a critical lens not only for examining representations of nature in literature, but also for assessing the ethical and philosophical dimensions of the devastation wrought on the environment. The ecocritical conversation is unlikely to leave behind the histories it contains but instead will likely move deeper and more broadly into other voices and other stories in the interest of understanding more fully the complex interactions among humans and the rest of the world.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The study followed a qualitative approach in exploring ecocriticism in contemporary literature. The seminar aimed to examine the crossroads of literary and environmental topics, with particular attention to the ways in which literature today intervenes in ecological issues. The approach was a systematic review of a variety of primary and secondary sources, including scholarly articles, books, and literature published in the past 20 years or so. We aimed to survey the changing conversation in ecocriticism, to trace its passing movements, to gauge its theoretical drift, and to note contributions that have mattered.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Criteria for inclusion included the extent to which the literary works and theoretical writings are related to the subject of ecocriticism. I limited my reading to only the texts published in the last twenty years which had an explicit engagement with environmental concern, sustainability, nature, or ecological crisis. The review, for the most part, concentrated on novels, poetry, and critical essays that treated the interactions between human society and the natural world.

Examinations which did not definitely address ecocritical topics, or works beyond the period in question, were not considered as part of this study. Non-literary texts such as newspaper articles, doctoral theses, and conference proceedings were also ruled out, since the investigation was targeting literary texts and orthodox criticism. Also, studies in non-English languages were removed because of the review's language proficiency limitation.

Ethical Considerations

Ethical issues relating to the research work were focused in this study on maintaining and confirming the credibility of sources. All materials that we refer to would be appropriately cited and credited to prevent plagiarism. In reporting on the secondary literature, we maintained a standard of scholarly responsibility, representing all the sources we cite fairly and situating them in the broader framework of an ecocritical conversation. No original data was generated for the research, rather an analytical and synthesis-based secondary research was performed through existing public knowledge.

Finally, the study also sought to reflect on the possible social relevance of ecocritical readings for the larger public's perceptions of the environment, and wanted to produce responsible and delicate results that would be open to understanding cultural positions concerning nature and ecocriticism whatsoever.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The study was a pilot study for an upcoming proposed larger project on the effects of ecocriticism on contemporary literature, taking especial note of how authors today are incorporating issues of ecology, environment, and nature and human identity. The research also explored literary devices to focus on ecological concerns and the overall influence of ecocritical theory on readers' attitudes.

The Place of Ecocriticism in Recent Literary Texts

Analysis of current literary texts indicated that ecocritical elements are making their way into recent literature. Ecocritical perspective, as a critical tool, has been used by writers more and more in jobs on environment, indicating a general wider culture, global consciousness of ecological devastation. This trend was observable particularly in the oeuvres of writers such as

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Margaret Atwood, Richard Powers and Barbara Kingsolver, all of whom have incorporated ecological topics into their work. These writers not only interrogated the dichotomy between humanity and nature, but also considered the ways that human activity affected the environment. Their work presented, from an ecocritical perspective, a focus on environmental destruction, climate change, and human responsibility to nature.

Ecology and Environmental Issues Integration of ecological and environmental themes

The study showed that modern writers are well capable concerning environmental issues in narrative. Recent literature has had a lot of content dedicated to environmental sustainability, deforestation, biodiversity and the impact of technology in flora and fauna. These themes were not only relegated to dystopias and SF, though, but were also found in contemporary realistic fiction, illustrating that such ecological concerns have threaded through the genres in general. So, for instance, Powers' *The Overstory* densely intertwined personal tales with those of the natural world, intermingling human lives with the ecosystems in which they live. Such unifying gestures mark a significant change in the literary horizon, where the ecology as well comes alive in virtually every character exchange and plot twist.

Nature and Human Identity

The association between Nature and human identity became a major topic in a certain number of the surveyed pieces. Ecocriticism frequently represents nature as a reflection of human consciousness, and characters' interactions with the landscape mirror their internal conflicts and sense of self. This super-terrestrial interpretation of nature had its striking opposite in the sense of nature as something which is not merely added to man, but which is above all his own, which he shapes and controls. Authors such as Atwood depicted nature, in novels like *Oryx and Crake*, as an actual and metaphorical power, a place of struggle and resilience, challenge and change. (Mitchell 1982) In this way, representations served to remind viewers of their relationship to their environment, by implying that both one's individual and one's collective selves are constituted by nature.

Literary Techniques Emphasizing the Écological Problems

Various literary devices were discerned as being pivotal in highlighting environmental concerns from an ecocritical perspective. These strategies included drawing on lush, sensory nature writing, personifying natural phenomena, and constructing allegorical fictions that mediate ecological degradation as a mirror of social and moral decline. Writers used these devices to evoke sensory and affective reactions to increasingly despoiled ecosystems. Furthermore, narrative forms frequently paralleled human growth with environmental degradation, demonstrating the effects of human agency upon the wider world. These were not simply literary devices, but were essential to communicate the underlying sense of urgency of the environmental issues that these texts tackled.

Effects of Ecocriticism on the Reader's Perception

Last, ecocritical theory was influential in the way it shaped readers' views on environmental issues. If as literature increasingly emphasized ecological awareness, readers became more willing to confront the stakes of tangible environmental loss. From an ecocritical perspective, u-series readers could reflect on their own environmental behaviour and the ethical aspects concerning human activities. The widespread perception of environmental undercurrents in literature created a greater dependence upon the environment for readers. Others have found that contact with nature is associated with greater awareness of environmental issues, and

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motivates both individual and collective action to address issues of social and ecological sustainability.

This research into ecocriticism in contemporary literature is a marked departure in the way literature addresses environmental issues. Writers increasingly invoke ecological imagery as plot devices and moral imperatives, which for me is a sign of the greater urgency of environmental crises. These works, through the ministrations of literary devices, have become part of readers experience of nature, suggesting the relevance of an ethic of care for the environment, and the human involvement in “nature”. The findings foreground the considerable weight of ecocriticism in modern literature, and its ability to shape public awareness about ecological concerns.

CONCLUSION

With the recent years, ecocriticism has become an instrumental platform in literature to discuss the environmental issues of our day. This review has dished the multiplex ways in which contemporary writers adapt ecological scenarios into their stories, revealing the impact of ecocriticism is never limited to any particular genre. From dystopian futures to realist depictions, the increased presence of environmental issues in literature reflects a worldwide consciousness of environmental crises, such as climate change, biodiversity decline, and environmental pollution. Using ecocriticism, writers have brought these concerns to the fore, not only demystifying them, but inviting readers to consider the moral, ethical, and functional consequences of their own actions in relation to the natural environment.

This is a leitmotif in much of the literature considered in this Review: an investigation of the nature/human identity. The harmony and disharmony between men and nature are depicted as both a conflict and a place where one can find personal salvation. Writers have turned to nature not as a scene for stories to take place, but as an animating influence informing the identities and behaviours of its characters. In this way, nature becomes something of a protagonist, shaping events and serving as a medium through which to interpret human lives. Ecocriticism has thus opened up a wider window into the human-nature association, blurring some terms and forcing a reader to reflect on his own presence as a being in the ecological sphere.

Moreover, the literary devices writers use to illustrate environmental problems have been both innovative and successful. In these through vivid descriptions, personification of the natural landscape and allegorical storytelling, writers have generated richly immersive and emotive works and, far from just engaging the mind, entice the reader to seek a more tangible bond with the natural world around them. These strategies are value due to the potential to convey the urgency of environmental problems, providing authors of chain with a capacity to describe complex ecological ideas in a manner that’s both simple to comprehend and psychological.

That the ecological criticism theory has a profound influence on readers regarding issues related to the environment cannot be overemphasized. The burgeoning prevalence of ecological concerns in literature has turned it into a venue for building environmental awareness in readers. The narration of environmental ruins and repercussion lead the reader to reconsider his/her own behavior and stance toward nature with a change in perception of the relationship between human beings and the environment. Anthropocene literature In writing about ecology, poets and authors often convey a romantic nostalgia for the past and a trepidation about the future of our world.

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Ultimately, this review is a call for attention to the revolutionary potential of ecocriticism in modern literature. It has also illustrated the many creative ways in which writers have addressed environmental crises, leveraging literature as both a mirror to the present and a tool for thinking otherwise. While the world environmental crisis goes on, Literature will be an essential place to think about and write about this urgent issue. Ecocriticism, which stresses the human-environment relationship, is not only a mode of critical interpretation but also a clarion call, compelling readers to think carefully about how they will shape the future of the natural world. The burgeoning of ecocriticism as a field of enquiry in literary studies offers exciting possibilities for enriching our understanding of the symbiotic relations between literature, culture and the environment, consolidating its role as a critical instrument for the third millennium.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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