

Eco-Fictions: Emergent Discourses on Nature and Environment in Postcolonial Literatures

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CALL FOR PAPERS

Instead of looking at the past by viewing the remains of ancient settlements or by inspecting inscriptions left in caves by primitive humans, future generations will gather information about current times by the imprint that neoliberal capitalism is leaving on everything. Plastic bottles, cigarette butts, electronic components and even medical waste will provide them with a portrait of what we have become. Being acutely aware of this, authors are already documenting the state of emergency that society has reached and which is symbolised by the ever-growing ecological consciousness that climate change and other irreversible phenomena have created in our daily lives. Having this assertion as our point of departure, we call for papers that explore how authors illustrate this conundrum in their works. We press for the need to reconsider the way in which nature has been represented in literature, as well as the symbolic connection that exists between nature and humankind since we have identified a series of insurgent discourses in literatures written in English that indicate a point of inflection.

Indeed, it was by the end of the second half of the 20th century that an emergent discipline of study also known as ‘ecocriticism’ opened new avenues of research within academia. Glotfelty and Fromm (1996) defined the term as a discipline that examines the relationship between the physical environment and both literary and cultural studies. This academic discipline denounces the anthropocentric and instrumental bias that views nature as a mere object for human exploitation. Puleo et al. (2015) remind us that the real challenge for the 21st century is to work towards dismantling existing hierarchies of power-relations. The academia and artists have accepted this challenge, which relies on our capacity to undertake the necessary transformative relations to correct environmental maldevelopment and put forward policies based on subsistence and sustainability. Nature has also become the ‘other’, using Said’s well-known trope, and is sometimes regarded as a product for human consumption. Gender, class, race, history are among the keywords at the centre of this debate since the logic of domination, paramount to understanding the motivation for the apparition of ecocritical studies, lies behind them.

The ‘otherisation’ of nature as a social construct has already been highlighted by Huggan and Tiffin (2015), who point out the need to approach ecocriticism from a transdisciplinary perspective. They argue that, considering the actual crisis within the humanities, ecocritical studies need to be practiced from a convergent perspective with other well-established avenues of research such as that of gender or postcolonial studies. We agree with this assertion and it is for this reason that we call for papers that explore these possibilities through a special issue entitled “Eco-Fictions: Emergent Discourses on Nature and Environment in Postcolonial Literatures”. The term “eco-fictions” does not mean to limit potential contributions to those dealing with fiction, but rather it refers to writings about nature, the environment, and ecology in general. Furthermore, we use the term ‘emergent’ as a titular concept not just in a temporal sense, but largely in an epistemological one as these new discourses, often from previously submerged or suppressed groups, destabilise deep-rooted cultural assumptions and cause important social transformations. Thus, this special issue aims at bridging the gap between artistic creation and political intervention by analysing the dialogic relationship with nature

that blooms from postcolonial literatures and which is illustrative of a reflective ecocritical attitude towards the environmental consequences of human behaviour.

Contributors may wish to analyse this multifaceted relationship between nature and postcolonial literatures and/or between ecocriticism as a field of study and specific postcolonial settings from, among others, one of the following approaches:

1. Ecofeminism, gender studies and ecocriticism, postcolonial and transnational feminisms, gender-defined econarratives, glocal feminism.

Traditionally, patriarchy has had vested interests in aligning women with nature. Feminism, in turn, has either denounced this equivalence woman-nature or appropriated it to contest this oppressive ideology. Taking this into consideration, we call for papers that analyse the feminisation of nature or the naturalisation of women in literature, as well as texts that challenge this dichotomy in contemporary literary production, by answering some of the following questions:

- How has this simile been censured in literature?
- Which are the strategies that authors follow when reinterpreting the anthropocentric dualism of woman-nature in contemporary narratives?
- Is it possible to establish a new paradigm regarding the poetics of domination in order to challenge patriarchal discourses around nature?
- How are these forms of oppression being challenged from a cultural perspective?
- Can ecofeminism be identified as an alternative avenue of research with which to approach contemporary literary production?
- Which are the consequences of this approach?
- Will ecofeminism avoid the reproduction of default discourses in literature?

2. Ecomarxism, social epistemology and ecology, colonialism and postcolonialism, neoliberalism and globalisation, eco-social justice.

If Marxism denounced the synergies of exploitation of humans by other humans for economical purposes, ecomarxism claims that a similar process is taking place when humans exploit nature for the same purpose. It is for this reason that we call for papers that analyse the representation of the intrinsic value of nature in literature:

- Is contemporary literary production urging for an eco-social sense of justice? How is this done?
- How do authors illustrate in their works the dialectical relationship between social and political discourses when regarding nature?
- Can we identify an ecological consciousness in those texts that deal with imperialistic historical processes?
- Which are the literary strategies followed by authors to consider the historical structures of material and capitalist ideology in their works?

3. Ecotopias, technological development and ecology, regenerative politics, pan-humanism and post-humanism, cyborg studies.

Ecotopias implement innovative discursive constructions that might challenge mainstream ideologies and postulate alternative forms of intervention. Thus, ecotopias, posthumanism and

the cyborg-subject present a series of possibilities both for literary creation and for academic research:

- How do authors regard the future of humanity in their works?
- How is the human-subject represented in this utopic or dystopic future?
- How do contemporary emerging narratives move beyond mainstream literature to further engage with alternative forms of expression? Why are writers and artists interested in these new forms of expression? How are they reproduced and which are the outcomes of these new narratives?

Please submit abstract proposals for the “Eco-Fictions: Emergent Discourses on Nature and Environment in Postcolonial Literatures” special issue consisting of a title and 500-word summary by November 1st, 2016. Be sure to include the following information: author’s name, institutional affiliation, email address, and short CV.

Authors will be notified by December 1st, 2016. Our selected abstracts will be compiled as the special issue’s table of contents in order to be submitted for final approval to an international, top-tier journal on the area of Postcolonial Studies which has already shown interest in publishing it.

Full articles would be expected by November 1st, 2017.

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