
**EXPLORING ECOCRITICAL TRAJECTORY FROM
RACHEL CARSON TO AMITAV GHOSH**

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ABSTRACT:

This paper follows the footprints of ecocriticism from Rachel Carson’s ‘Silent Spring’ (1962) to Amitav Ghosh’s ‘The Great Derangement’ (2016). Carson sounds the alarm about pesticide buildup in the ecosystem and takes on the split between nature and culture, laying the groundwork for Western environmentalism (Buell, 1995). On the other hand, Ghosh addresses the issues with postcolonial perspectives in his climate fictions and non-fictions. He brings nonhuman voices to the front and casts light on the climate struggles faced by the Global South (Ghosh, 2016; Huggan & Tiffin, 2010). This paper identifies three major shifts: first, from the dangers of chemicals to the larger issue of climate change; second, from a Western perspective to an ethics of the Global South; and third, from stories that focus on humans to a more ecocentric perspective. The overall message is that literature is constantly changing the way we think about and respond to environmental issues.

KEYWORDS:

Amitav Ghosh, Anthropocene, Anthropocentrism, Climate Fiction,
Ecocriticism, Pollution.

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Introduction:

Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' (1962) was a pioneering work that marked the beginning of the ecocritical period in English literature. Carson persuaded readers to consider pesticides not only as chemicals but also as poisons that are intricately woven into the entire ecosystem. After a period of approximately fifty years, Amitav Ghosh addresses a new form of concern, which is climate change, not only as a scientific term but also as a reality that affects people in the postcolonial world. When Carson and Ghosh are juxtaposed, it becomes apparent that ecocriticism has expanded its horizon from early nature writing to current climate fiction. This paper will elucidate that ecocriticism shifts from pollution to planetary change. It shifts from the focus on Western legislation and solutions to the focus on justice for the planet. It shifts from the focus on human beings to the expansion towards stories of many species. These are not merely steps forward, but they redefine the entire concept of what kind of work environmental writing can do and what ecocriticism needs to address.

Ecocritical Trajectory:

Ecocritical trajectory in English literature has different milestones of extensive intellectual responses to ecological crises ranging from the pressing need of tackling chemical toxification concerns in Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' (1962) to the insightful 'Anthropocene' explorations of Amitav Ghosh. Ecocriticism has integrated ecological warnings with the development of theoretical thoroughness and practical advocacy. Rachel Carson's 'Silent Spring' (1962) launched the movement by scientifically analysing the effects of bioaccumulative rise of DDT and the consequent bird population crashes, while attacking corporate deceit and government lethargy. Carson's 'Silent Spring' directly catalysed the ban on DDT in USA, the founding of the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency). Joseph Meeker's 'The Comedy of Survival' (1972) further developed 'literary ecology' by favouring adaptive, comic models of survival over tragic, anthropocentric models of defeat, as Raymond Williams' 'The Country and the City' (1973) analysed pastoral

representations as ideological discourses that stretched over centuries. William Rueckert's influential 1978 essay, 'Literature and Ecology' formally introduced the term 'ecocriticism' in literary studies.

Cheryll Glotfelty broke institutional ground with the first Literature and Environment professorship in 1990, and this sparked the creation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992 with the journal ISLE. Jonathan Bate's 'Romantic Ecology' (1991) launched 'British Ecocriticism' with reference to Wordsworth's immersive environmental literary tradition. Lawrence Buell's 'The Environmental Imagination' (1995) specified place-based ecological ethics and the agency and influence of the non-human world in the environmental texts. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm's 'The Ecocriticism Reader' (1996) formally anthologised and defined the field as literature's interaction with the nonhuman world.

Three ecocritical waves strengthened the depth and breadth of the concept. The first wave (1970s–1990s) was devoted to man-caused pollution, nature writing and wilderness literature. The second wave (1990s to 2000s) interwove the racial, class-based and global injustices with the toxic landscapes created by industrial activities. The third wave (2000s onward) is characterised by the vastness of the Anthropocene, petrocultures, carbon economy, materialism and climate crises. Amitav Ghosh represents the synthesis of this process: 'The Hungry Tide' (2004) traces the Sundarbans' tidal uncertainties, fish economies, and postcolonial transformations of habitat destruction, while 'The Great Derangement' (2016) criticises the traditional narrative fiction for its silence in addressing the issue of climate change.

Paradigm Shifts in Ecocritical Thinking:

1. From Toxicology to Climate Systems:

Carson focuses on particular toxic substances like pesticides and sees the problem as one that can be fixed by governmental

regulations and policies (Carson, 1962). Ghosh, on the other hand, confronts climate change that is intricately embedded in the world's energy patterns and development (Ghosh, 2016). Thus, there has been a shift of focus from a series of problems to a need for the complete overhaul of the Earth's systems. 'Climate fiction' or 'cli-fi' places the issue of climate change front and centre in the narrative. Early cli-fi tends to focus on climate disaster as an apocalypse to come, rather than acknowledging that for many people, climate crisis is already present, embedded in their daily lives (Johns-Putra, 2019).

Cli-fi is rooted in the reality of communities already living with climate emergencies, as in the Sundarbans being battered by cyclones one after the other, or in island nations seeing the rise of the ocean, or in lands being subjected to drought after drought, as in Ghosh's cli-fi. Cli-fi is now being nudged towards postcolonial ecocriticism and environmental justice (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010).

2. From Western Environmentalism to Global South Climate Ethics:

'Silent Spring' emerged from a US context and launched the Western environmental movement, which was largely concerned with regulation, preservation of wild lands, and risk management (Buell, 1995). Ghosh's writing is situated in South Asia, and he highlights river-delta communities—those who have done the least to contribute to climate change but who are paying the greatest costs (Ghosh, 2004). Ghosh's work is at the centre of Global South ecocriticism, where you cannot disentangle environmental issues from colonialism, development, and deep-seated inequities (Huggan & Tiffin, 2010; Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996).

3. From Anthropocentric to Ecocentric Storytelling:

Carson's literature focuses on human health and familiar species (Carson, 1962). Ghosh goes beyond human boundaries. His writing moves away from the human, with real attention to tides,

storms, and other nonhuman forces (Ghosh, 2004). This multi-species storytelling approach is right in line with the environmental humanities and posthumanism, where nonhuman life is seriously considered—not just as background, but as real subjects in their own right (Haraway, 2016).

Conclusion:

Exploring the ecocritical trajectory from Rachel Carson to Amitav Ghosh reveals the evolution of ecocriticism from toxicology to climate justice; from Western norms to postcolonial defiance; from humanist narratives to species-wide imagination. ‘Silent Spring’ remains a landmark text in the field of ecocriticism. It shows how everything is connected in nature and demonstrates the power of literature to inform and enforce policy. Ghosh takes the literary efforts to another level by unmasking the climate crisis as a continuation of imperialism and by questioning the representational capacity of the fictional literary form itself.

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