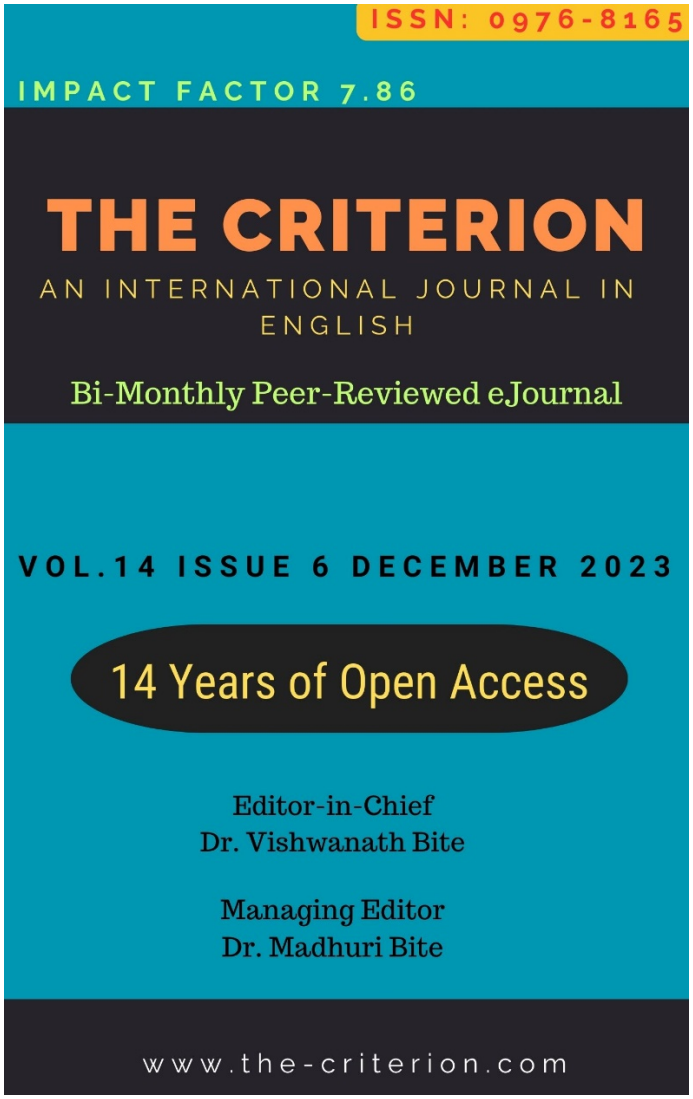

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Book Review: *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*

Title of the Book: *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*

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Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin cover the ambiguous conflation of Postcolonial theory and Ecocriticism. It discusses environmental and animal criticism with respect to postcolonial 'identity'. The concept of Identity being the epicentre of Postcolonial theory deals with human as well as non-human identity of colonized countries. The ecological turn with respect to the concept of Identity gives rise to postcolonial ecocriticism.

The book is divided into two parts, which are Postcolonialism and the Environment, and second is about Zoocriticism and the Postcolonial. The ideology of colonization is intertwined with the notion of anthropocentrism and eurocentrism. The euro-centric assumption of indigenous cultures as primitive and less rational is underlined with the idea of the anthropocene. The work highlights the assumption of natural privatization of human along with the humanly interests above those of other species on earth; which are being generated and repeated on the racist ideology of imperialism on a planetary scale. Zoocriticism is not just concerned with animal delineation but also with rights of animals.

Under the first part, the initial idea that is introduced in the text is 'Development'. Postcolonial Ecocriticism works to provide alternative viable options against Western ideologies of development. De Rivero in *The Myth of Development: The Non-Viable Economies of the Twenty-First Century* (2001) articulates that the mid of development, that is

arguably associated with Enlightenment ideology of progression and the Darwin theory of survival of the fittest, is a distorted and erroneous presentation by wealthier Northern counterparts to align the less 'advanced' Southern countries within the scheme of capitalist growth model which itself thrives on equality and devastating environment exploitation. Amartya Sen's point of view is also discussed, about how development, primarily, should be about human development, expanding human freedom and choices and defenestration of substantial sources of unfreedom like social unrest, political repression, poverty etc. The postcolonial ecocriticism premise highlights that, social justice cannot be achieved without ecological justice.

Detention Diary of Nigerian writer activist Ken Saro-Wiwa, *A Month and a Day& Letters* (1995), is cited, showing the scenario of ecological harm done by oil companies in terms of 'ecological war'. The exploitation of Niger Delta on premises of oil and gas extraction, dates back to the early twentieth century; also studied by Andrew Rowell, James Marriott and Lorne Stockman in their work *The Next Gulf: London, Washington and Oil Conflict in Nigeria* (2005), giving affirmation to the term 'growth without development'. Another work of Ken Saro-Wiwa, *Genocide in Nigeria* (1992) is also mentioned to discuss the Ogani struggle.

Essays by Arundhati Roy in her works, *The Greater Common Good* (1999), and *The End of the Imagination* (1998) intervenes the ecocritical horizon as a postcolonial writer. These works criticize the Narmada Valley Development and nuclear weapons, contributing to an ecological warfare against humans, non-humans and eventually earth. The nuclear space is further expounded by mention of text of Australian feminist activist Zonlde Ishtar's collection of Oceanic Nuclear Testimony, *Daughters of Pacific* (1994), giving voices to the indigenous women; she traveled through pacific islands during 1986-87 and has written about nuclear industry, tourism, the dumping of waste and pollution of the oceans. Continuing with the ecocritical references, Hawaiian based author Robert Barclay's *Melal* (2002), is also included, giving a fictionalized account of post nuclear pacific, showcasing the horrors of radiation, nuclear testing and U.S. military presence in the pacific. Ian Wedde's *Symmes Hole* (1986) and Witi Ihimaera's *The Whale Rider* (1987) are also covered to provide a better understanding of reframing of national culture in nuclear space. *Symmes Hole (1986)* presents a potent mixture of fantasies reminiscent of Melville's style in the South, exploiting the unrefined violence and chaotic decadence found in accounts of nineteenth-century whaling. *The Whale Rider* (1987) transitions from a cultural viewpoint centred around the Maori renaissance to an unabashedly consumer-driven attitude, where the global commercialization

of Maori culture has been modified, not necessarily by Maori community themselves, to align with evolving national objectives. The concepts of tourism, native people, eco-catastrophe, global warming and the human crisis are further explored. Tourism is important for these poor pacific island countries, as economic diversification is a major concern in these weak economies. At the same time sustainable forms of touristic development are equally important, which is also looked into. The term 'ecotourism' is emphasized, referring to a form of tourism that revolves around a conservation-focused philosophy with the goals of raising public consciousness about the environment, enhancing economic advantages for local populations, promoting cultural understanding, and reducing the adverse effects of travel on the ecosystem. Patricia Grace's *Potiki* (1986) and Jamaica Kincaid's *A Small Place* (1988) are taken to provide a clear reflection of developmentalist ideologies. Other works that are mentioned, which engage with the issue of global warming in experimental ways are, novel *Carpentria (2006)* by Alexis Wright; Kamau Brathwaite's narrative poems, *X/Self* (1987), *Mother Poem* (1977), *Sun Poem* (1982); Crudella Forbes' futuristic fictional chronicle called *Ghosts* (2012). Further, the text moves toward the idea of 'Entitlement', about postcolonial white settler anxiety. It introduces the notion of pastoral as pseudo-arcadia. Huggan and Tiffin put the myth of pastoral fulfilment, and ironies associated with it. Pastoral is an anthropocentric belief rather than an ecocentric notion in the postcolonial arena. Pastoral literature of Australia, New Zealand focuses on how the settlers of colonizing power led to the displacement of indigenous people. Olive Schreiner's satirical late nineteenth century novel *The Story of an African Farm* (1883), brings up the problematic relationship of a white ownership and black labor. J.M. Coetzee's works *Life & Times of MichaeL K* (1993) and *Disgrace* (1999) are mentioned, bringing the crisis of pastoral beliefs that initially seem unable to persist, and are possibly undeserving of surviving, a method of analysis that breaks down a pastoral narrative, which has consistently served as a foundational belief system for promoting and prolonging self-justifying myths of white supremacy. V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1988) revolves around Naipaul's life on his Wilshire estate, which bears resemblance to an idyllic English countryside. However, Naipaul's perception of these pastoral setting gains its full meaning when contrasted with his grandparents' history on a Trinidadian sugar plantation originating from India. This gives Naipaul a dual awareness of his environment; beneath the surface of English serenity and prosperity, he carries the recollection of a distressing and nightmarish aspect tied to the transatlantic plantation that played a role in shaping the very tranquility he observes. 'Entitlement' might be emotionally experienced or legally attested but, more or less, is always going to be questioned. Much of

postcolonial writing deals with these questions and investigates through possible understanding of belonging and ecological relationships between human, non-human species and the environment surrounding them.

Second part of the book introduce us to the categorisation and treatment of other subjugated humans as 'animals' by dominated groups, which is a common phenomenon in postcolonial history. Human slavery and human genocide were, and still are building grounds of human oppression of the suppressed as animals. The historical paradigm of human oppression is unabridged by instances of animal categorization and animal metaphors, which eventually led to the backing of exploitation, slaughter, objectification, and enslavement. Huggan and Tiffin explore the 'Ivory and elephants' angle of postcolonialism. Mark Twain's satire *King Leopold's Soliloquy* (1905) and Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1901) are taken to portray the colonial rapacious course and brutal assailing of colonies like Congo. The text further highlights the misguided European intentions which would bring salvation and civilization to Africa but authentically harbors the exploitative and murderous intentions; similarly to the absence of slaughter of elephants in *The Heart of Darkness* though ivory being the centre of the narrative. Other texts are also mentioned like *The White Bone* (1998) by Canadian writer Barbara Gowdy and George Orwell's *Animal Farm* (1945), that protest against human treatment of animals or loosely cover this aspect. Now, another extension of second part of the book is 'Christianity, cannibalism and carnivory'. Another text that is mentioned is *Not Wanted on the Voyage* (1985) by Canadian novelist Timothy Findley retelling the Christian story of Noah's Ark, through anthropocentric perspective. It is a story of destruction, devastating extinction of non-human species which has been told as a story of salvation for ages. Continuing with the cannibalism and carnivory, it discusses the obsession of Europeans with cannibalism. It was Westerners, who assumed 'others' whom they met on foreign land as cannibals, which may or may not be true. Further, addition of 'Agency, sex, emotion' introduces, Yann Martel's *Life of Pie* (2001), as an example to further point out anthropocene attitudes of humans towards non-human species, by downgrading them to the periphery of human activity. The question of non-human agency is further discussed, by citing *The Hungry Tide* (2004) of Amitav Ghosh. Works like Robyn Williams' *2007: A True Story* (2001), Peter Goldsworthy's *Wish* (1995), Zakes Mda's *The Whale Caller* (2005) and Marian Engel's *Bear* (1996) deal with emotions, relations and concept of beastality with respect to animals.

Although rights continue to serve as a crucial safeguard, the majority of post-colonial authors have opted to tackle the issues of these injustices not primarily within legal or

rational frameworks but rather through imaginative writing. This creative approach allows them to effectively explore the interconnected injustices of racism and speciesism, consistently paying heed to the emotional experiences of animals and our connections with them. In these narratives, our inherent empathy towards animals is neither callously rejected nor systematically suppressed.

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