



Ecophobic Rhetorics in Ma Jian's *The Dark Road* and Sefi Atta's "News From Home"

Oluwakemi Abiola Kalejaiye ¹, Niyi Adebajo ¹

1. Department of English, Faculty of Arts, Olabisi Onabanjo University, Ago-Iwoye, Ogun State, Nigeria

Corresponding authors:

abiola.kalejaiye@oouagoiwoye.edu.ng

dradeniyadebanjo2018@gmail.com

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Abstract

The contestation of world economies and the trappings of geopolitics coupled with First Worldism in the current postmodern agenda offer a viable operation site for the various scientific and industrial inventions worldwide. Whether from Tokyo, Beijing, Washington D.C, Johannesburg, or Lagos man's so-called giant strides in architectural designs and technology keep reminding us of how much harm has been done to nature. Adopting a critical textual analysis within the context of Ecocritical theory, this paper seeks to explore *The Dark Road* (2012) by Ma Jian, and Sefi Atta's short story "News From Home" (2010), as a direct response to the challenges of the environmental degradation in the face of burgeoning economic order and globalization. The study contextualizes the challenging experiences of China and Nigeria on issues of environmental degradation as both countries struggled with man-made disasters. Beyond this, this paper highlights the devaluation of the environment in global cities and the apocalyptic warnings such human action portends. Findings reveal that humanity has eroded the quality of nature by engaging in activities that plunder natural landscapes. The study further revealed the contradictions and odds against the operation of industrialization; besides the fact that it makes the environment toxic for living, it also hampers our capitalist tradition which is retrogressive to conservation. In all, the novelists' ecocentric stance is not only discursive of vulnerability of 21st century social environment, but also indicative of the ecoglobal perspective of contemporary Nigerian and Chinese novelists.

Keywords: globalization, environmental degradation, Nigeria, China

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Introduction

Literature has continued to grapple with the problems of global cities and developing economies. Several issues ranging from the conundrum thrown up by industrialization, the alteration of the natural world and the erosion of stable counterbalance which should sustain the functional systems in the ecosystem, have all interested contemporary novelists. Thus, while the Nigerian novelists approach environmental pollution from mining, oil spills and gas flaring in the Niger-Delta with contempt their Chinese counterparts present an apocalyptic projection of a technologically advanced China burdened with the crises of industrialization and environmental degradation. Apparently, the reality of environmental despoliation has led to the emergence of writers who attempt at addressing this continental challenge.

Describing the twenty-first century as the 'Asian century' Guha (2014) observes that the economic growth which the continent has successfully achieved in the second half of the twentieth century has created a huge void between man and nature and the propensity for further devaluation of his natural environment. For ecocritics, the emergence of a predominantly industrial economy and the twin forces of capitalism and globalization only auspicate 'a spoliation of the natural world' (Abrams & Harpharm, 2012, p.98). Evidently, the depiction of ecological awareness in global fiction has birthed, to a large extent, a reengagement with the grimness of the general human situation with the increasing evidence of environmental deterioration and the effects of explosive capitalist growth.

Additionally, the sense that a degraded physical environment equates to a grave human existence has created an enigmatic evolution of ecocriticism in modern fiction. Charles Dickens' *Great Expectations* and Thomas Hardy's *Tess of d'Urbervilles* and *The Mayor of Casterbridge* are perhaps a few of the major literary attempts to capture the adverse effect of modernization in London during the Industrial Revolution. The pioneer efforts of Dickens and Hardy also inspired an alternative focus on the adverse effects of globalization on the human race. It is this fact that gives credibility to the understanding that literature has been concomitant with ecocriticism; there is a constant flux between literary awareness and ecological transformation.

Furthermore, it is interesting to note that the work of Chinese and Nigerian writers in this era share similar similarities with the Victorian novelists. The similarity between the Victorian and Asian narrative is the post-modernist tendency and rebuttal engagement of economic liberalism in endangering human lives. Just like the master narratives of Europe, the trajectory of the Asian writers is that there is a global competition among the World powers and the economic and social aspiration to outwit one another in innovations and inventions. Hence, the thrust for modernization has constantly put the planet and the world population in a state of jeopardy. One feature of globalization, whether industrialization or mechanization, is despoliation of the natural environment. To this end, the various apocalyptic warnings amidst natural crises reveal that human beings have become more vulnerable in the environment which should shield them from the precarious forces of nature.

Theorizing Ecocriticism

Our understanding of global problems such as environmental change and ecological transformation informs the conceptual background of ecocriticism which aims at providing a link between man and nature to bring about a balanced co-existence. Ecocriticism explores the connection between biological and physical environment bringing into awareness the devastation wrought on nature by human activities; industrial and chemical pollution of the biosphere, the depletion of forests and natural resources, the unrelenting efforts of the man at bringing into extinction rare plant and animal species and the alarming rate at which the human population is growing which seem to have exceeded the capacity of the earth at sustaining it. It is in the wake of these environmental crises that ecocriticism became an integral part of literary scholarship.

Ecocriticism seems propelled within a conceptual background of man's natural environments which has not only become increasingly degraded but has assumed a dangerous position in the face of man's unfriendly nature towards it. Unfortunately, the effects of human action are becoming more intense, producing in turn predictable eco-destructive rhetoric. Abrams and Harpharm (2012, p.98) posit that ecocriticism offers a critique of "binaries such as man/ nature as mutually exclusive opposition". The contestation and hostility between the two entities are further revealed in man's desire to dominate every force of nature albeit not in a way intended to conserve the environment. Ecocriticism invites us

to view all living things and their earthly environment no less than the human species, possess(ing) importance, value, and even moral and political rights (Abrams & Harpham, 2012, p.98). This constitutional movement questions the rationale for clearing the forests for landscaped gardens in global cities and the ambivalent position created by groundbreaking technological development in the ecological space.

Besides, the tradition of thematizing landscape, space, and the creation of awareness for conscious protection of the ecosystem is premised on the sensibilities of Chinese writers whose narratives have embraced global ecologist and environmental themes. Their writings reverberate issues that are pertinent to China's ecological civilization and environmental sustainability. Thus, the application of ecocritical theory is instructive for the understanding of the effect of globalization on man. The development of global cities implies that we must take foreign policy seriously for effective environmental management, making the ascendancy of protectionism necessary. This present mode of man's vulnerability is often explained in Levy's argument that as a result of man's inordinate ambition and quest to conquer nature, "(he) has control of the non-human world because he is unable to predict with any accuracy the effects of his actions upon it" (p.210). It is in the light of this that Estok explains that "the effects of our actions are becoming more intense and less predictable, producing in turn, though, a very predictable storm of ecophobic rhetorics" (2009, p.208). Invariably, adjudicating an ethical consideration for the natural environment in the face of the various apocalyptic warnings arising from environmental destruction only seem appropriate to ensure a balance between man and nature in global cities of the world.

Ecophobic Rhetorics: China's Example

The change in global climate has necessitated a shift in paradigm especially the perception of the invincibility of nature to the role which humanity plays in creating the toxic social environment in the 21st century. Goron (2018, p.4) explains that "the global horizon of sustainability remains bleak: the depletion of resources and the loss of biodiversity has accelerated let alone the change required to prevent catastrophic climate change". Inadvertently, global warming and environmental crises have constantly presented nature as a hostile opponent who is responding angrily to incursions and actions, an opponent, to be

feared and controlled. So, by arousing nature's barren condition in the face of man's so-called unprecedented civilization, the globalized nature of environmental threats necessitates collaborative action.

Therefore, narratives of ecological concerns present the dilemma of capitalist China and the writer's deliberate attempt at interrogating domestic imperialism by exposing the living condition of the peasants. Thus, while China may not suffer overt colonialization like some of her other Asian counterparts, China's environmental history and literary engagement reveal ecophobia concerns in a conventional form such which has not been and may not be explored by Chinese writers as a result of the country's political dimension (Yang, 2012). However, the polemical concerns of contemporary Chinese novels in the twenty-first century have necessitated the transmutation from social realist concerns to address issues of globalization, hi-tech, urbanization, economy, and poverty and the impact of these issues on the low-income earners in China.

Citing a 2010 study conducted by the WHO and a group of universities, Huang (2014) observes that outdoor air pollution contributed to 1.3 million premature deaths accounting for almost 40 percent of the global death. Similarly, a 2011 research conducted by Nanjing Agricultural University explains that 10 percent of rice sold in China contained excessive amounts of cadmium. This research further estimated that as much as 70 percent of China's farmland is contaminated with toxic chemicals. The paradox in human development is that the spoliation of nature seems to be the defining trope of globalization going by the various architectural designs which stretch natural space and industrial pollutions which have caused various health challenges to humans. In a way, global ecological crises such as tsunamis, earthquakes, flooding, wildfires, and typhoons have raised environmental consciousness and at the same time raised concern on the role which man plays in wreaking havoc on the ecosphere. Subsequently, the task of ecocriticism is not only aimed at formulating a conceptual framework for the study of the interconnections between literature and the environment, the sheer precarity of human and animal life in an increasingly globalized world has necessitated the need to address depleting ecosystem in the face of cosmopolitanism and globalization.

In the delineation of Asian industrialization, therefore, the thrust for globalization is also very crucial. The Chinese writings in contemporary times, pointed out that present degradation of the natural environment resulted in the

thick toxic smog which engulfed Beijing in January 2013. Going by the statistics of the WHO that air pollution accounts for 40% of global deaths, one cannot help but question if humanity is a bespeaking factor in the operation of globalization. Can a country claim to be great when her citizens do not have clean air to breathe, safe water to drink, or uncontaminated soil on which to live and farm? These questions highlight the imperative to re-examine China's development model and its seeming technological advancement in the context of a depleting ecosystem and the hazardous living conditions of peasants, who constitute a larger percentage of the Chinese population.

Xiaoyun (2014) notes that the three decades after reform and the three following the opening up of Mainland China to economic activities transformed the country from being a traditional agricultural country to a modern industrialized state. He writes:

From 1953 to 1978, China prioritized heavy industry through a centrally planned economy intending to accomplish a great leap forward and catch up with the developed world. The second stage, the period of 1979 to 1999, witnessed a more balanced development to promote light industries. The third stage starts in 2000 when China saw the reappearance of heavy industrialization. (p.2)

The above appears to be the conception of globalization on the Chinese agenda. But in the actual sense, the enormity of contradiction and controversies with which man's advancement in technology is strewn informs a necessary intrusion in the contented space.

Hence, since the outrage on China's ecocritical activities, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) adopted Ecological Civilization (EC) as a constituent part of their green rhetoric and at the same time provides an alternative development theory capable of revolutionizing the ecocidal global economic order and brings about a global ecological transition (Goron, 2018, p.7). This measure becomes expedient as a means of sustaining nature and at the same time helps to avert further destruction of the ecosystem as a result of rapid industrialization. However, the subject of debate has been the effectiveness of the program in reforming China's industrial model to align with the international concept of a low-carbon economy and adjudicate an ethical consideration of China's ecological environment. The reality of globalization, despite the enthusiasm for establishing E.C., is that over time, the values and power practices

of successive leaderships in CCP have cast doubt on the real intention of establishing the E.C. This explains why Goron (2018, p.7) argues that ecological civilization should articulate professionalism instead of the CCP political propaganda. In a way, the deployment of civilization suggests a political and cultural paradigm. This in a way has reinforced China's doctrinal grip in the wave of economic globalization as well as designating a model for environmentalism.

It is on this note that Thorns (2002) posits "the invention of globalization in this postmodern age is defined essentially by the flexibility in the world economy which turns world economy into a dependent one and further results in further transformation of the cities" (p.71). The transmutation of the natural environment to global cities and this present mode of environmental policy are often explained by revealing the connection between capitalism and industrialization. Jian recognizes these developments and concludes in his novel that the harmony between man and nature becomes threatened as a result of the exploitation and spoliation of the land.

Ma Jian's *The Dark Road*: An Ecocritical Perspective

The tide of Asian globalization and the tempo-spatial destruction of nature appear to be the greatest challenge of ecocritics whose primary concern has been the despoliation of global cities. *The Dark Road* is profoundly an environmental novel which explores the effects of industrialization on the local populace. The novelist's skepticism regarding representations of nature is tempered by an intense concern with environmental degradation in China during the late twentieth century in the last decades of the twentieth century. China's ecological concern becomes more worrisome when one considers the fact that the pollution from the environment deforms foetus before they were born while the women's gestation period becomes more prolonged going by the despoliation in the ecosystem. For example, Jian offers a vivid representation of the deplorable environment Chinese peasants fleeing from family planning officials are living in the face of the country's industrialization policy. Konzi observes:

Since the sluice gates were raised last week, foamy floodwaters have engulfed the creek, risen to the pond and lapping at the base of the willows a few meters to the hut..the flooded creek was teeming with dead fish, he brought the net so that he could scoop them out and sell them in the village.

He'd heard that once the poisoned fish are gutted, salted, and dried, the chemical taste is barely noticeable. (p.173)

Jian's engagement of this socio-economic and environmental crisis is, therefore, what one encounters in this narrative. The text also condemns the abuse of non-human nature by modernity, suggesting that the process that the hope for humanity in the globalization agenda lies not in outwitting other nations but in developing a stewardship relationship responsible for maintaining the natural world while providing an ecological vision of nature as possessing as counter-hegemonic power.

The Dark Road reminds us of how industrialization has been tied to the global agenda of China. Jian raises concern about environmental decline to oppose what appears to be an economic competition of world cities and the destructive operation of globalization which turned the lakeside town into mountains of European waste. In *The Dark Road*, degradation cannot be separated the economic boom which followed China's industrialization policy. The transmutation of the mode of economic sustenance from agricultural-based to industrialization and the ascendancy of the advancement of wealth and position of First World city is well stated:

Until recently, Heaven was a sleepy, impoverished lakeside.. But ten years ago, after the first British ship docked at the nearby Pearl River Port of Foshan and unloaded of electronic waste, Heaven's economy took off. An entrepreneurial family hauled some of the waste back to their homes and hiring migrant labourers to help out. Today, the front doors of every house are surrounded not by bales of wheat but bundles of cables, circuit boards, and transformers. In just one decade, Heaven has transformed from a quiet backwater into a prosperous, waste- choked town. (*The Dark Road*, p. 237)

Like most industrialized countries in the world, globalization has created an economic restructuring which is evident in the changes to labour market. This has in turn affected employment, migration, household formation, and housing. Besides, it needs to be clarified that this is just an aspect of the many challenges of industrialization. Similarly, the despoliation of rural spaces in building sophisticated architectural infrastructure is evidence of 21st century "technologicistic paradigms" Cripps (2010, p.226). This line of thought foregrounds the next question which is, how have technological innovations produced anthropocentric nations? In an attempt to answer, Jian challenges

technocrats who are engaged in transmuting the mode of production from agricultural-based to industrial based, and in which the ascendancy of the global city from its present state to the position of First world city.

The implication of a situation like this is the spoliation of both land and labour from the rural to the urban cities for the enhancement and advancement of the wealth and position of China to the burgeoning industrial city. Jian seems to suggest that the reality of environmental degradation and the implicit economic undertones emphasizes ecophobic rhetoric within the Asian psyche that the trending globalization is an albatross to the achievement of humanity in the face of modernity. According to Horkheimer and Adorno (2002), the relation to nature under capitalism is characterized by “domination of nature by human beings, the domination of nature within human beings, and, in both of these forms of domination, the domination of some human beings by others” (p.11). This domination over nature is conceived in the technologies which replete stunning master-pieces and architectural designs further point to human domination and transformations in nature which has alienated us from the natural ground of our being Gregory (2010, p.298). Ultimately, Jian’s ecocritical concern and demand for the conservation of the ecosystem is perceived as his skepticism towards all representations of capitalism in China and the country’s ecophobia vision in line with the global economic and political relationships which largely defines the country’s hegemonic stance.

The complex situation is often represented with the description of Heaven’s township, an e-waste dumpsite that produces 70% of the world’s toxic e-waste. The complicity of the West becomes more visible with the United Kingdom “taking delivery of 45,000 tonnes of Chinese manufactured Christmas toys, then the ship is returned to southern China a few weeks up later loaded with UK electronic waste” (*The Dark Road*, p.293). Meili, the protagonist of the novel, did not only give birth to an abnormal foetus as a result of her frequent contact with the toxic waste, but she also suffered the consequence of working on the waste as well. Yet, Meili, herself, tries to undermine the adverse effect of the contamination of their natural environment on the skin, respiratory, neurological digestive diseases, and the toxic waste laden in the soil, air, and water. Feeding on contaminated food has become a new normal. Kongzi, Meili’s husband cooked a fish he’d caught in the polluted river, and he can still taste its foul odour in his mouth (*The Dark Road*, p.149).

By emphasizing Meili's affinity with the slums, Jian in a way tries to impose the need to develop deliberate conservation of the land. Thus, in a sense, he emphasizes the need for nations to restrain themselves from eco destructive habits in the guise of global trends. More importantly, Meili's development in *The Dark Road* is marked by an awareness of her interdependence with the biosphere as she combines with the non-human nature to achieve progress past the destructive impact of the state on her. In other words, development in the novel is related to the acquisition of a more eco-conscious sensibility even as the protagonist reverts to her natural environment to create balanced and the desired healing. In all, the invention of globalization in this postmodern age is defined essentially by flexibility in the world economy which turns nations into independent entities and results in further transformation of the cities (Thorns, 2002, p.71).

Meili suffers spiritual and social degenerations whose scars the story serves to bear witness to. Consequently, the tragedy which results from the degradation of the protagonist's environment can be viewed as a collective tragedy as the narrator reveals the character's adaptation and survival while appropriating the blame and responsibilities of man's neglect of his social environment. Thus, in the face of the raging global pandemic, Jian's ethical perspective is aimed at mitigating China's industrialization policies which are capable of despoiling man's natural environment. As Meili, the protagonist, suffers from physical, spatial, and spiritual rupture and eventual death, the novelist attempts at conscientizing countries on the need to find the solution to the problem of air pollution. He advocates the need to adopt eco-friendly policies.

Essentially, Ma Jian points out the nature of the disaster in the slums, underlining the passive stance of the government on the predicament of Chinese citizens fleeing from the family planning policy. Finally, this present mode of Eco consciousness is often explained as a means of providing a sustainable global environment during and post-Covid to combat imminent threats to man's life and the natural environment.

Although Ma Jian's *The Dark Road* examines environmental degradation in the wake of China's economic boom, his attention is etched on addressing a broader continental audience on the need to preserve the ecosystem. In this instance while the setting in *The Dark Road* alludes to China's physical and political landscapes in the Communist and post-Communist era, what is

significant in the novel is the novelist's interrogation of the government activities in a bid to attain the country's millennial goals. To this end Jian eschews China's harmful ecological practices as the country rolls a triumphant entry to her economic miracle. On this note, Jian seems to suggest that the desired healing from the raging pandemic in the world can only be accomplished when individuals give nature the respect it deserves (*The Dark Road*, p.375). In other words, Jian seems to propose that industrialization without recourse for the natural environment only reveals man's inhumanity and injustice against nature.

Sefi Atta's "News From Home": A Narrative of Environmental Burden

Since the discovery of oil in Oloibiri, a small community in the eastern Niger Delta region of Nigeria, the despoliation of the natural environment of the creeks and coastal areas where crude oil is drilled in Nigeria has been a great concern to ecocritics. Thus, starting from the agitations of Kenule Saro Wiwa, Niyi Osundare, and Tanure Ojaide, the tradition of Ecocritical writing has continued to resonate in Nigeria's literary circles. Despite the fact that the Niger Delta provides the vast majority of Nigeria's wealth, a generality of the populace remains in abject poverty. Comprising of states such as Abia, Akwa-Ibom, Bayelsa, Cross River, Delta, Edo, Imo Ondo and Rivers State, the indigenous population of the Niger Delta region have suffered tremendous neglect because of the degradation of the ecosystem by multinational companies.

Atta's "News from Home" is one out of the many stories in the novelist's collection which delves into environmental pollution arising from the effect of frequent oil spills and the practice of gas flaring by multinational companies. Atta explores the challenges of Nigerian coastal towns where oils are drilled affecting the natural environment around the family. Apart from the fact that what the people breathe in is polluted air, the water is polluted. As a narrative of ecological concern, Atta is quick to point our attention to the focal point of this study, according to her, "...the oil companies spill oil on the land, leak oil into the rivers and wouldn't clean up their mess". The economic exploitation and environmental degradation of the expatriate company do not seem to leave the prying eyes of the author. Eve, the protagonist, notes that the gas flaring which goes on daily in the community leaves the people susceptible to all forms of terminal diseases. She observes further that "there were patients with strange growths, chronic

respiratory illnesses, terminal diarrhea, weeping sores, inexplicable bleeding, miscarriages, stillbirths, babies dying in utero, women dying in labour” (“News From Home”, p. 177).

Similarly, there is evidence that the entire population suffered diverse health issues that would invariably lead to a high mortality rate. The community described in Atta’s writing is a place where human activities have despoiled the natural environment such that nature has become hostile to the inhabitants and what they feel is death. Madam Queen retorts “we are dying of our air, we are dying of our water, we are dying from oil” (p.191). Atta had written what seems to be a criticism of foreign earning for Nigeria. The narrative echoes the pains the oil boom has brought to Niger-Deltans. Consequently, environmental criticism in “News from Home” becomes a sharp, provocative, and penetrating engagement with the crises of oil exploration in the oil-rich region as oil has become a curse on the land.

As a result of the ecological condition of the land, feeding on food grown from other parts of the country has become the new normal. The flora and fauna have become anemic. The deplorable state of the natural environment in the creek area with the government issuing expatriates the license is brought to reality. Lamenting the state of events, Queen, one of the indigenes, cries “they drill our father’s farms and they don’t give we, their children jobs...There are no fishes in our rivers, no bush rats left in our forests. We don’t use natural gas in our homes and yet we have gas flares in our backyards” (“News From Home”, p.190). Again, it is an open secret the land is constantly raped given the sleazy roles of the government, expatriates, and traditional elders in the community. It is under such conditions that Atta, like the rest of other eco-conscious novelists jolts our senses to the ethical values of one of the reasons for the invincibility of the environment in the face of a global pandemic.

Conclusion

This study has been concerned with the exploitation of the natural environment in China and Nigeria. The focus has been on the narratives of a Chinese author and a Nigerian author: Ma Jian’s *The Dark Road* and Sefi Atta’s “News from Home”. It is the trust of this investigation that, like other continental literature, Chinese and Nigerian novels in the 21st century explore ecological trauma. Environmental despoliation is reclaimed in narratological idioms that

merge globalization and economic strides. Whether the elected sites for these spoliations are in Asia or Africa, the numerous environmental concerns present a sordid revelation of government policy on the environment in China and Nigeria. The increasing need to awaken our ecological consciousness has created an ontological shift in the need to reverence nature but more importantly adopt measures to sustain it. The implication of this is the influx of constructive post-modernists who question the rationality behind man's anthropocentric nature in the quest for globalization.

The portrayal of biocentric issues revealed the literary motifs of the novelists. The novelists express concern for public health and the engendered landscape by transcending ethnic and national boundary to explore varying human experiences from ecoglobal perspective. Through the deployment of imagery, symbolism and metaphor, the novelists' anchorage of environmental issues reveals their chagrin to environmental degradation.

In Ma Jian's *The Dark Road*, there is a passive resignation as the citizens live with draconian government policies, while in "News from Home", the people revolt against the injustice of producing the majority of the nation's national resources without directly benefitting anything from the government. In both texts, there is a loss of meaningful living as the people grapple with the challenges of ruining the natural environment.

In addition, both texts affirm the dominant trope of ecocriticism that man should have a social responsibility of taking care of the natural environment. In *The Dark Road*, Meili and her husband suffer from physical, spatial, temporal, cultural and most importantly spiritual rupture. To attain healing and rejuvenation, Meili and Kongzi went back to the natural environment in the face of the overwhelming challenge of family planning officials. For instance, the visit to the nuwa cave helps Meili to reclaim her fertility while supplication to the fertility goddess of the cave facilitates the safe delivery of Newborn who had stayed in her womb for 3 years, while in Atta's "News From Home", educated citizens from the creeks migrated abroad or travelled to developed cities to find a means of livelihood.

Similarly, both texts uphold the notion that man is capable of inflicting injury to nature and vice-versa. However, the difference is that there is a passive resignation in *The Dark Road* as most of the vagrants resign to living with the

contamination of the natural environment while embracing adaptation and survival skills. The migrant peasants living around the slums work in the garbage dump while the burgeoning Chinese city profits from the filth. In “News From Home”, the nature of natural disaster is the pandemic and gas plant accident which resulted in the death of most of the villagers.

Findings in the study reveal that literature is against ecophobia policies in developed and developing nations. Consequently, apportioning blame and responsibilities where they belong can help illuminate the domain of social responsibility and political action. Ultimately, rather than forging an unholy alliance with imperial powers in the tyrannical management of nature and the natural resources, globalization should reflect an organic and relational perspective between man and the ecosystem. Finally, the novelists seem to suggest that it is only the advocacy for deep green and ecological rejuvenation through communal efforts during the Covid and post-Covid era that individuals can have ecological value to avert the multiple environmental crises in our contemporary world. Through this avenue also, we can have a more congenial 21st social environment for humanity as a whole.

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