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ARTICULATING ECO-ETHICAL REPRESENTATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICAN FICTION

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Abstract
The endeavour in this paper is to explore the indigenous ecological sensitivity and ethical responsibility with an objective to outline an aboriginal articulation of an eco-ethic. The paper examines the role of nature in the lives of natives while evaluating their indigenous eco-customs and traditions that have helped in sustaining their eco-centric approach to life. It also explores the culture-nature dialectic that surfaces the long-lasting conflict between tradition and modernity. For this study, three South African texts: J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2001) and Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* (2005) have been studied from an ecocritical perspective.

Keywords: South African Fiction; Ecocriticism; Eco-ethic

Since its conception, ecocriticism has been characterized by the desire to preserve the radical impulse which propelled the early environmentalist movement in the 1970s. Over the past three decades, however, ecocriticism has acquired all the leanings of literary and cultural studies. Though in a larger framework it has failed to develop a cultural theory distinctly its own, it has fairly compensated for this lack by a set of ethico-political commitments that lend a sufficient amount of programmatic coherence to the whole enterprise. In the field of environmental ethics, two major approaches are being followed. The first argues for the preservation and management of the environment to satisfy human wants and survival needs. A second more radical environmental ethic is to consider the interests of the environment and the non-humans, when taking actions that may affect them, independently of the consequences to humans. The ethic that has developed as a result of this viewpoint is articulated in Aldo Leopold's 'land ethic' maxim: "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise" (217). In this perspective, the whole is important morally and not just the parts that make it.

The present study endeavours to strengthen the idea that the environmental concerns of the world fuelled by the capitalistic ideologies of materialism and accumulation, induced nationally but affecting the transnational thought, cannot bear a single meaning or strategy to combat the effects of development on nature. However, this does not mean that we choose to ignore the warning of ecocide, and must work on an informed understanding of ecocriticism that is alert to the fact that local environments exist within "global capital and planetary material and energy flows, each with its temporality, and that these local environments have different constituencies, historically constituted" (Vital 90). For this study,

three South African texts: J. M. Coetzee's *Life and Times of Michael K* (1983), Zakes Mda's *The Heart of Redness* (2001), and Nadine Gordimer's *Get a Life* (2005) have been studied from an ecocritical perspective.

The South African novelists register the breakage in the relationship between the natives and the land through the fictional characterizations of this upheaval in their novels. While J. M Coetzee in *Life and Times of Michael K* makes an attempt to defeat the possibility of western ideologist hegemony; Zakes Mda in *The Heart of Redness* posits the pheneomological occurrences of indigenous thoughts in contention to the western models of development and progress, and Nadine Gordimer in *Get a Life* addresses the issue of ecological health positing a warning that if our priorities towards ecosystem are not re-assessed the world may head towards murkier grounds of existence.

The eco-ethical thrust of the novel *Life and Times of Michael K* is clear from the start. Michel K, the protagonist, is a gardener who works for the "Parks and Garden division of the Municipal services of the City of Cape Town as a gardener, Grade 3 (b)" (4). He is among the deprived and the less privileged people of South Africa, constantly being rebuked and reprimanded for their poverty. To avoid the perils of the ongoing Civil War in South Africa, he finds refuge in the expanse of nature. He, along with his sick mother Anna K, moves to a farm in Prince Albert, fleeing from a South Africa torn by Civil War where "the careless violence, the packed buses, the food queues, arrogant shopkeepers, thieves and beggars, siren in the night, the curfew, the cold and wet" spoil people's lives. They return to the countryside where "if she was going to die, she would at least die under the blue skies" (8). She does die on the way and K proceeds to the farm with her ashes. He is detained for a time in a labour camp and then arrives at the farm, located near the town of Prince Albert. He buries his mother's ashes on the farm, taking the earth as his symbolic mother and begins his life as a vegetable gardener. This existence is disrupted by the arrival of a grandson of the farm's owner, who attempts to make K his servant. K hides in the mountains barely surviving by eating roots and insects. Near starvation, he walks to Prince Albert and is arrested and taken to Jakkalsdrif, a resettlement camp. K escapes and returns to the farm in Prince Albert to cultivate a new crop of pumpkins and melons. This time his task of cultivation is disrupted by the arrival of a small revolutionary force from the mountains, though K remains undetected. He lives in a burrow in the earth, planting and tending his garden at night. Again near starvation, K is discovered and arrested by soldiers who mistakenly assume that he has been supplying food to the rebel guerrillas. K is interned in the Kenilworth camp and is taken care of by a military officer who becomes obsessed with K and attempts to impose charity upon him. K passively resists until he escapes from the camp. Later, Michael K encounters some pimps and whores who also treat him as an object of charity. Alone at the end, K envisions a scene in which he helps a derelict old man obtain water from a water puddle with the help of a spoon by saying "one can live" (184).

A predominant motif in the novel is the protagonist's strong association with nature. Coetzee uses the metaphor of place (land) to lend multiple connotations to the character of Michael K. The journey that K undertakes is a journey not only into the heart of South Africa but also a journey into the heart of his self. His need to connect with the wilderness of Prince Albert is a way of overcoming his feelings of alienation and otherness imposed on him by the civilized world. In *Life and Times of Michael K,* the notion of 'belonging' is interwoven with questions regarding the ethics governing the adequate distribution and conservation of natural resources. Coetzee articulates a localised understanding of self-in-nature which is equally aware of the complex entanglement between social injustice and the aggressive containment of natural environment by the political set-ups.

Coetzee's gardener protagonist gradually becomes aware of the various restrictions he imposed on himself and his environment, and ultimately rebels against these physical and imaginary boundaries through a radically ascetic and a non-linear approach to cultivation. Michael K

is initially uncritical of his complicity in a tradition of cultivation in which his own oppression is ultimately rooted. He performs his daily tasks as a municipal gardener with the purposelessness of an automaton: "Sometimes on Saturdays he failed to hear the boom of the noon gun and went on working by himself all through the afternoon" (4). Michael K experiences confinement and discrimination allowing him to interrogate his relationship with land. When K veers from the road in order to rest on an adjacent farm, he is warned off the land by an old man. Looking across the outstretched farmland, K considers that he could understand that people should have retreated here and fenced themselves in with miles and miles of silence. He also has the revelation that they should have wanted to bequeath the privilege of so much silence to their children and grandchildren in perpetuity (though by what right he was not sure). However, he wonders whether there were no "forgotten corners and angles and corridors between the fences, land that belonged to no one yet"(47).

However, as soon as Michael K escapes the narrow corridors of power, he gets to concentrate on the life forms that others choose to ignore. He significantly affirms that animals and plants are oblivious of war. He realizes that grass does not stop growing and that leaves do not stop falling in parks because of the ongoing war (67). By linking war with nature, or by contrasting ecology and human indifference, Coetzee presents the dichotomy of human-nature relations. War is transient, but nature is an enduring, generative force that continues to sustain and support mankind beyond any realms of dominance. Coetzee uses the images of sheep "packed so tight that some stood on their hind legs" (36) to evoke a potential critique of dominant structures. He draws an ethical pattern that moves against the anthropocentric treatment of nature. South African environmental ethics is based on the principle of intrinsic value of nature. As opposed to the western ethical perspectives that assign an intrinsic value to human beings alone, South African ethics believe in the concept of Oikos, where land, man and spirit are woven into a strong filial relationship. According to Selvamony this phenomenon is termed integrative Oikos which integrates the sacred, nature, and the humans in a complex kinship even as a family with kith and kin (314).

Once K arrives in Prince Albert, he occupies a deserted farm which he believes to be his mother's childhood home. Here K establishes a vegetable garden, planting melons and pumpkins from leftover seeds found in the abandoned shed. Although motivated by a desire to settle on the ancestral farm, to "live where [his] mother and grandmother lived", K practises a form of cultivation that is deliberately at odds with the approach of the farm's previous occupants, the Visagie family (99). His refusal to construct a new kingdom out of the deserted wreckage also suggests the rejection of a model of cultivation which is dependent on right over land. Coetzee juxtaposes Visagie and Michael K, thereby, presenting two different eco-ethical ideologies. To Visagie, farm is just a place of adventure, while, Michael K draws pleasure from the act of cultivation, his vegetable garden is maintained primarily for sustenance and has little aesthetic value. In fact, K could not imagine himself spending his life driving stakes into the ground, erecting fences, dividing up the land. He thought of himself not as something heavy that left tracks behind it, but if anything "as a speck of ant-feet, the rasp of butterfly teeth, the tumbling of dust"(97). He shuns the farmhouse in favour of a hovel in the ground close to his vegetable patch and is careful to use only bio-degradable materials for his daily tasks. Michael K's distancing of himself from the legacy of the Visagie family can be read as a critique of the anthropocentric treatment of nature.

Michael K's need for nourishment gradually fades as he becomes increasingly immersed in cultivating his pumpkin garden:

> As he tended the seeds and watched and waited for the earth to bear food, his own need for food grew slighter and slighter. Hunger was a sensation he did not feel and barely remembered. If he ate, eating what he could find, it was because he had not yet shaken off the belief that bodies that do not

> eat die. What food he ate meant nothing to him. It had no taste, or tasted like dust. (101)

Thus, K is not only living harmoniously on and from the land, but also becomes one with his natural environment. He is seemingly endowed with a kind of intrinsic arcane knowledge which allows him to avoid poisonous plants, an ability which is tentatively attributed to a mystical soul tied with the animal world: "He also ate roots. He had no fear of being poisoned, for he seemed to know the difference between a benign bitterness and a malign one, as though he had once been an animal and the knowledge of good and bad plants had not died in his soul" (102). Many other ecologists have also vouched for this feeling of merger with nature. Edward Abbey in his text *Desert Solitaire* describes the experience of 'an extended stay alone' in Havasu Canyon during which he gradually lost a sense of the identity of his human body and began to see a leaf when looking at his hand (250-251). Aldo Leopold portrays a merger of his body with the surrounding marsh landscape in one of his sketches *A Sand County Almanac*, as does Gary Snyder in his poem "Second Shaming Song" (*No Nature* 56).

Life & Times of Michael K also hints at the possibility of an approach to the natural world which exists apart from everyday wars, a return to nature as children of the earth. However, a non-invasive return to nature must not only acknowledge the power of Gaia to turn on her abusive children, but also be aware of the brutal political history which has hampered such an uncomplicated engagement with the environment. Despite K's final assurance that one can live from only 'a teaspoon of water', this promise is undermined by the fact that such a way of life is ultimately presented as unattainable, if the weight of history is lifted. Coetzee most explicitly attempts to separate K from any political agenda and focus on the graver intention of restoration of nature, in a much cited scene in which a group of rebel soldiers pass through K's farm. K briefly considers joining their group, but finally decides not to make his presence known on the basis that some men must avoid war in order to continue the idea of gardening, "Yet in the same instant that he reached down to check that his shoelaces were tied, K knew that he would not crawl out and stand up and cross from darkness into firelight to announce himself. He even knew the reason why: "because enough men had gone off to war saying the time for gardening was when the war was over; whereas there must be men to stay behind and keep gardening alive, or at least the idea of gardening; because once that cord was broken, the earth would grow hard and forget her children. That was why" (109). Coetzee's determination to restore the bond between K and the land speaks volumes about the need for engagement with nature to overcome the rootlessness that affects the disenfranchised majority of South Africa.

While Coetzee projects an eco-ethic based on a spiritual communion with nature, Zakes Mda in *The Heart of Redness* posits valid questions on the western homogenization of ethnic cultures as alternative modes of development. It foregrounds the failure of capitalistic developmental models due to lack of knowledge and comprehension of native culture and ecological thought. The novel attempts to dissolve the borders of past and present, 'Believers' and 'Unbelievers', tradition and progress, colonial and neo-colonial, nature and culture within the framework of the narrative. It positions the old South Africa against the new South Africa, and while drawing similarities and differences, it questions the formation of the new on the grave of the old.

Mda's male protagonist, Camagu, ordained with the doctoral degree in Communications and Economics from the United States returns to South Africa harbouring dreams of contributing purposefully to the building of the new nation but is soon disenchanted by the rampant nepotism and lop-sided political and economic policies. He decides to return to the USA, but is enchanted by the mysterious call of NomoRussia, a call from the past governed by the mysticism and spiritualism of his native tradition. He decides to follow her and ends up in a place called Qolorho-by-sea, a lagoon in confrontational dialogue with the wheels of development. Here, he undertakes a journey into the heart of his existence, his redness, his traditions and his lineage unmarked by the burden of original

sin. For Mda, Qolorho-by-sea becomes the land to politically embed colonial and postcolonial linkages, ecologically draw connections between the dangers inherent in the plans of global eco-tourism projects and epistemologically to ascribe validity to indigenous Xhosa cosmologies, which are grounded on spiritual connections between humans and ancestral spirits, the land and the inhabitant, the sea and the valley and the native flora and fauna. Talking about the spiritual connection between biotic communities, Greg Garrad, a noted ecocritic asserts, "The metaphysical argument for biocentricism is meant to sustain moral claims about the intrinsic value of the natural world which will in turn affect our attitudes and behaviour towards nature" (202).

The Nongqawuse valley as a site for the narrative fulfils the spiritual aspirations of the Xhosa tribe and continues to draw powerful sense of reverence for the modern-day 'Believers' while serving as a potent platform to test the ecological and spiritual connotations of the past on western dictated dictum of the contemporary South Africa. The people of Qolorha share a symbiotic relationship with nature. For them, the birds, trees and the lagoon are a means to communicate with their ancestors. Zim, 'the Believer', finds solace in a fig tree in front of his house, as he believes that the fig tree is frequently visited by the spirit of his ancestors. Even Camagu, the male protagonist who had long left the land, shows his disdain for the "screeching saxophones" (27). He is brought back by the mystic voices of NomoRussia who is invoking her ancestors through the oral tradition of split-tone music. Throughout the novel, there are explicit references of natives embodying ecological consciousness in their daily lives. Whether it were the conservation laws charted by King Sarhili, or the decisions of not allowing any indigenous trees to be cut, the task of preservation of nature is taken quite seriously by the natives of Qolorha. The only trees that are allowed to be cut are the mimosa because they grow organically and are in much abundance. While strolling in the Nongqawuse's valley, Camagu finds Qukezwa cutting down beautiful plants with purple flowers. When he objects, she replies, "Nice plants, eh? Nice for you, maybe. But not nice for indigenous plants. This is the inkberry. It comes from across the Kei River. It kills other plants"(90). Moreover, these foreign trees need a lot of water, drawing in excess from the indigenous crops. Here she contests the idea of the 'Unbelievers' that openly exhort: "It is foolish to talk of conserving indigenous trees. After all, we can always plant civilized trees. Trees that come from across the seas" (146). The 'Believers' of Qolorho envision an ethical understanding of biodiversity that aims at preserving "the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community" (189).

These acts challenge the unjustness of the ecologically impaired vision of the developmental models and echo the eco-holistic ethical framework propounded by Aldo Leopold in *A Sand County Almanac* (1949). He asserted that even scientist know very little about the functioning of land, a reality that limits the prospects of land health. J. Baird Callicott and Robert Frodeman assert, "Because of these limits, Leopold concluded, it makes sense for people to rely on sentiments and intuitions as well as known facts and reason. It makes sense for them to act humbly and draw lessons from the behaviors of species that have thrived far longer than has *Homo sapiens*" (23).

In the novel, the initiation of the man-nature communication is done at the behest of the cattle-killing episode (1850s) etched in the history of South Africa. During the colonial times, when the Xhosa people were being subjugated in the garb of colonialisation, the prophesy of a young girl Nongquawuse that a mass sacrifice of the cattle and destruction of crop would save them from British invasion, resulted in the spread of famine and an inevitable surrender of local people to the forces of colonization. The episode while affecting the ecology also divided the people into two groups- 'Believers' and 'Unbelievers'. The 'Believers' who are headed by Zim and his robust daughter Qukzewa, are against the development project that aims to bring a gaming city project into their land. They believe that the gaming project will serve the lesser economic interest and will harm the ecology of the place severely. On the behest of the creation of new jobs, it will eventually subdue the indigenous population and affect its connect

with the land. The 'Unbelievers', championed by Bhonco and his western-educated daughter Xoliswa Ximiya, stand for progress and development. They believe that the new gaming project will empower the youth with new jobs, and the tools of modernization will bring them at par with the civilized majority of the cities.

From an ecological point of view, the debate between the 'Believers' and the 'Unbelievers' cautions against a totalitarian acceptance of any ideology and suggests a mediated route as propagated by the educated elite (Camagu) and the white trader (Dalton), a workable solution that satisfies most of the community members. Being well-versed with the western models of development and equally informed about the needs of the indigenous land, Camagu is able to rightly propose a developmental model that is not only progressive but also ecologically sustainable. His project of eco-tourism gets a good boost with the government agreeing to declare the place as a national heritage site and rejects to allow any prospects of building the casino and the tourist resort. He organizes a cooperative of local women who harvest and sell their sea produce and make and sell their traditional Xhosa clothing and jewellery. However, he refuses to lure tourists on the fascination of an exotic community as suggested by his partner John Dalton, a native with a British capitalistic mindset. Camgu is in favour of using Xhosa tradition to sell the ecological attraction of the place provides the integrity and biodiversity of the place is maintained. He asserts, "…the culture of Xhosa as they live it today, not yesterday. The amaXhosa people-he claims- are not a museum piece. Like all cultures their culture is dynamic" (248). Through the final act of Camagu and the rejection of Dalton's capitalistic idea, Mda tries to achieve an amalgamation of culture and nature, the postcolonial and the ecocritical. When the protagonist, at the end of the novel, offers Dalton to work together for a progressive future he says, "This rivalry of ours is bad. Our feud has lasted for too many years" (277). Mda hints at such new landscapes of partnership where the educated mindset recognizes his roots and traditions, and while developing a close communion with nature works for the progress of South Africa.

In *Get a Life*, Nadine Gordimer furthers the developmental debate by projecting the subjectivity of a professional environmentalist who is caught between his ecological beliefs and the realities of transnational commerce. The text posits questions about the complacency that has crept both into the lives of South African middle class and in their attitude towards their responsibility surrounding the conservation of ecology. The novel hits at the core of contemporary South African ecological conundrum regarding how to "address global environmental concern without losing economic advantage for their home countries or opportunity for economic growth (Jowit 2007). Nadine Gordimer firmly believes that "[r]esponsibility is what awaits outside the Eden of creativity" (*The Essential Gesture* 285).

The protagonist, Paul Bannerman is an ecologist empowered by the western education and by his practical experiences "in the forests, deserts and savannahs of West Africa and South America" (6). While describing himself, Paul asserts. "What am I, I'm a conservationist, I'm one of the new missionaries here not to save souls but to save the earth" (94). He holds a formidable post with a mandate for conservation and environmental control in Africa. His wife Benni/ Bernice is a copywriter who works with an international advertising firm whose only mandate is profit at all cost. The husband and wife operate on two different levels of ethical system. Paul is interested in money and job security but is unable to leave behind the dictates of his ethics and takes the process of ecological conservation with much seriousness. He does understand the realities of the ground and works from a place that is not emotional but practically viable. While Paul loves to work in wilderness, finding solace with ecology, Benni enjoys the corporate experience offered by the urban jungle. Gordimer by presenting a contrast in the characterization of the lead couple highlights the pluralistic viewpoints that exist with regard to man's relationship with ecology and land ethics.

While writing about environmentalism, Gordimer takes a decisive shit in the novel *Get A Life* where the characters are shown participating in the conservation of ecology not out of a sentimental relation to environment but as a social consequence of their existence. They exhibit opposing energies for the development of the pebble-bed nuclear reactor, the dams in Okavango Delta, and the Pondoland national toll road and mining scheme propagated by the Australian firm. However, these opposing energies have nothing to do with validating their love for nature but are a cause that allows them to be socially accountable. The novel thus evaluates the dubious environmental defenses presented by the middle class elite of South Africa. Paul's idea of conservation though is scientifically empowered and valuable but is limited by his comfortable, secure lifestyle that does not allow him to experience nature from a personal space. He takes pleasure in discovering and recognizing new species, and enjoys his short stay in 'wilderness' that allows him to escape the mundane chores of life, but when the presence of nature becomes unsettling he quickly replaces the memory with metaphysical thoughts about relationships and existence.

Thus, ecology is a predominant thread in his life, yet it is engaged with as an activity that gives mere satisfaction and no urgency. The novel places ecology on the continuum of social-economic order where earth is exploited for its instrumental value and no effective direction can be followed in its conservation. It also puts to question the role of the government in supporting the on-going tourism projects perceived on the ideology of Heritage Sites proposed by the UN that though put South Africa on a transnational map but turn a blind eye towards industrial activity that threatens an ecological spot on the coast of Pondoland. The novel presents South Africa's natural environment as a resource that has both national and international appeal, thus hinting at the economic model of environment where nature is being defended by those who subordinate it for their own capitalistic designs. This defines the subjective appropriation of ecology reflected in the profile of the protagonist Paul. While he works through a scientific comprehension of ecology his understanding of the ecosystems of South Africa comes from a social arena that is far-removed from the mysticism of the soil. Paul's engagement with ecology surfaces through his meditations and conversations which help him turn ecology into a vocabulary valuable enough in the courtroom where he stands fighting for the rights of ecology and of the people being affected by its destruction. Besides, the argumentative leverage, ecology also allows Paul to admire the transformative power of the ecology, not merely reducing it to an aesthetic pleasure. He is curious to understand the grandeur and delicacy, "cosmic and infinitesimal complexity of an ecosystem complete as this" (90) and analyze it not from a momentary attractiveness but from a perspective of the self-sustaining capacity of ecology. This allows Paul to not reduce ecology as a mere landscape but a land that is living, breathing and surviving on its own. Paul, who first surfaced as a middle-class elite indulging in activism as part of his social responsibility, through the course of the narrative emerges as a character that while positing "insights into the complexity of ecology's historic connection with political-economic structures" (Vital 97) indicates a direct relation of ecology, a science thriving on the deployment of technology based on scientific investigation, with economics and political power structures. While Paul represents that brand of ecology which is no longer a privilege of the colonial past or a contention of land rights movement, it has now come under the domain of economy. Ecology is now the epicenter of the tourism projects advocated by the Ministry of Environment to provide relief from poverty to the people of South Africa. Thapelo, a colleague of Paul and an environmental activist asserts, "Pondoland ….. the centre of endemism… The government wants to put a national toll highway through it, … they are going to let an Aussie company in to mine the dunes, destroy the coastline too" (84). While ecology is now being projected for the benefit of all species, especially the humans, for Paul it is a tool to tackle broader social concerns and assist the poor escape the harmful effects of this development. The novel

represents the dual agenda of the nations where on the one hand they talk of development and on the other they chose to disrupt the lives of numerous inhabitants living in harmony with the ecology of the country. It also reflects the dichotomy of postcolonial cultures that want foreign capital and investment in their country so that they may at some point in time forsake the title of 'developing country' but are apprehensive of the threat of exploitation of natural resources that inherently sustain the ecosystem of their country.

Through the course of the narrative, Gordimer highlights the self-generative quality of ecology. While referring to the recuperation of Paul from thyroid cancer, and to the Okavango, where the "balance between positive and negative is achieved", Gordimer asserts, "The innovation of matter is greater than any collective of minds, faiths" (91). She accepts the supremacy of nature over all mankind and insists that the regenerative quality of ecology cannot be fully explained within the boundaries of science. The reference to the inland delta in Botswana, Okavango, "landlocked in the middle of the breadth of South West, South and South East Africa" (90) and "so vast it can be seen by astronauts from outer space"(91); directs the reader to the vastness and complexity of the ecosystem. The human brain cannot begin to understand the traces of the ecosystem as "what we've only got a computerspeak label for, ecosystem?" (91).

Another poignant issue that the novel highlights is the construction of the nuclear pebble-bed reactor in the region. The project that is powered by the world's collective fear…'nuclear capability" (99) will supplement the needs of powerful developed nations like USA who arm-twist the nuclear policies of the world for their advantage. Though the "government's Electrical Supply Commission, got a license from the National Nuclear Regulator … the Environmental Affair Minister was challenged in court by Earthlife Africa and other groups, even the Cape Chamber of Commerce-businessmen who've usually got other things on their calculators than extinction by nuclear leaks …" (114). While giving a slight reference to these gross dichotomies in the functioning of world powers, Paul returns to the question of dams and their effect on the ecosystem calling it a " site of planned destruction important to world ecology" (101).

While issuing an eco-warning, Paul claims, "…ever civilization does to destroy nature, nature will find its solution in a measure of time we don't have …" (168). Speaking about the grave issue of thrusting a highway through " the centre of endemism, the great botanical marvel, n'swebu", Paul questions the dualism that marks the progress of development, "… you gouge ten million tons of heavy minerals and eight million tons of limonite from the sea-sculpted landscape of sand dunes, isn't that the morality of survival. Isn't that to industralise? And isn't industrialization, exploitation of our rich resources, for the development of the poor.

The forms of eco-ethics presented by these authors transverse the borders of all regions and give a clarion call to the humanity to comprehend the gravity of the situation and evaluate the role of indigenous eco- ethic in providing the solution to the problem. Together, the novels appeal to the urban and rural cultural interfaces calling for a collective effort towards addressing the problem of environmental degradation.

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