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Article

Modern Environmentalism, Nineteenth Century Ecocritical Consciousness and the Condition-of-England Novels

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Abstract: The environmental crisis of the twentieth century has a long precedence. Ideological debates around the two parallel discourses- anthropocentrism and ecocentrism- have their roots in the early Modern period. The advent of the Anthropocene Era began way back in the late eighteenth century and the phenomenon of Climate Change was accelerated in the mid nineteenth century during the peak of the Industrial Revolution. As a result, nineteenth century saw the rise of an environmental consciousness which were reflected in the Victorian Condition-of-England novels. The aim of this article is to chart the growth of modern environmental and ecocritical thoughts through the eighteenth century and try to locate the reflection of such discourses in the nineteenth century public awareness and also in the Victorian 'Condition-of-England' novels.

Keywords: Modern Environmentalism; Nineteenth Century; Ecocriticism; Anthropocentrism; Condition-of-England novels

Introduction

The 'Anthropocene Age' is broadly defined by climate scientists as the time period "since around 1750" when human have become geological agents "capable of moving the earth from the stable Holocene epoch of the last 10,000 years into a new geological era" (Elliott, Cullis and Damodaran 3). So, the last two hundred and fifty years have been significant in terms of Man's relationship with his environment when he came to be at the helm of everything through the rapid advancement in technology and its applications on society that changed the fabric not only of human life, but also that of the environment. John Ruskin in his work *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884) give a portentous warning to the Victorians regarding the blackened sky

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of the Industrial Revolution, while Rachel Carson in the opening chapter of her book *Silent Spring* (1962) rings the warning alarm against the consequences of overuse of DDT and pesticide on the fragile ecology of the earth. Therefore, the Victorians and citizens of the twentieth century belong to the same chapter of environmental history, and modern environmental crisis has deep-roots that can be traced back to the nineteenth century.

Modern Environmental Movement: Issues and Concerns

Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) "ignited the green fire of environmentalism and the Western world was ready to hear her eloquent message" (102) observes David Peterson Del Mar. President Kennedy mentioned the book approvingly, and in 1963 the Presidential Scientific Advisory Committee validated her charges (103) against the chemical industry which was rampantly using organic pesticides such as DDT to control pests and insects (Garrard 2). Hence, the modern environmental movement started its journey in the footsteps of Carson, and very soon broadened its scope and expanse. The Environmental Protection Agency was established in 1970 in order to enforce environmental laws to dispose-off toxic wastes in such a way that the ecology is not affected, while the Endangered Species Act came into being in 1973. The first 'Earth Day' was celebrated on April 22, 1970, and the amount of literature on environmental problems multiplied over the years. The Sierra Club, founded in 1892 by John Muir with the aim of protecting the depleting wilderness, increased its members up from 20,000 in 1959 to 1,13,000 (Del Mar 103) and together with the Wilderness Society, succeeded in stopping the building of dams on the Colorado River and the Grand Canyon.

During the 1980s more issues added up to the existing corpus of environmental awareness. Grassroots activism could be seen regarding issues of human health affected by toxic chemicals in water, soil and air leading to rising cancer and reproductive problems. Pollution became a major factor with the increase of toxic gases and ashes in the atmosphere resulting in acid rains. To protect people victimized by toxics, the National Toxics Campaign advocated the Bill of Citizens' Rights and "the fear of a poisoned world" was increasingly "pressed, debated, debunked, and reiterated" (Buell *Writing for an Endangered World* 30). It had clear links with another significant issue- the Environmental Justice campaign which brought to the limelight "the maldistribution of environmental benefits and hazards between white and nonwhite, rich and poor" (Buell "Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends" 96). The dumping of toxic wastes of the First-World nations into the Third-world countries became a significant concern of environmental racism, and in October 1991 the First National People of Color Environmental Leadership Summit was held in Washington, D. C., where the 'Principles of Environmental Justice' were adopted which included, apart from racial issues, international and globalization agendas such as global poverty and environmental pollution.

Disgruntled by the slow progress of environmental preservation and inspired by Edward Abbey's *Ecodefence: A Field Guide to Monkeywrenching* (1975), 'Earth First'-a loose association of earth warriors dedicated to the protection of Mother Earth- selected

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'ecotage' (ecological sabotage) as their mode of demonstration which included guerrilla theatre; blockades of roads used for transporting tree-logs; padlocking themselves to bulldozers; getting locked-up to the cranes of export ships etc. (Merchant 182, 184). The 'Greenpeace' organization (founded in 1971) also used such direct action and confrontation strategies to bring to the public forum urgent issues such as nuclear-free sea, saving whales and seals, implementing organic agriculture, promoting renewable forms of energy etc. (185, 186) Another extremely vital agenda of Greenpeace was saving Antarctica (and the earth) by reducing global warming and climate change. The issue of Climate Change got exclusive attention round the world culminating in 1992 United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) and later Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC).

The tenacity of the modern environmental movement towards radicalism led to the formation of 'green' political parties that challenged the reticence of traditional parliamentary governments in enforcing earth-friendly measures and their covert liaison with the multinational companies to earn profit by exploiting natural resources. Green politics soon became a multi-faceted platform embracing different political ideologies such as the 'Left Green,' who advocated eco-socialism through an "ecologically-oriented cooperative commonwealth based on decentralized, democratic, public-ownership of property and guaranteed housing, healthcare, and employment" (179). All these paved the path for a common global framework for Sustainable Development when the United Nations endorsed the Brundtland Commission Report entitled Our Common Future in 1987 which called for a "new form of economic development that would sustain the resource base" (226). This heterogenous texture of modern environmental movement while, on one hand, drew its strength from the pragmatic efforts of varied professions such as climate scientists, geologists, anthropologists, sociologists, environmental historians, geographers, philosophers, ecocritics, writers, journalists, social activists and many more; on the other hand, it grew-up based on the protracted ideological debates of hundreds of years because "the history of green ideas about the relationship between society and nature also reveals that these ideas are, and always have been, part of deeper ideological debates." (Pepper 2)

Modern Environmentalism: Ideologies and Debates

The scala naturae or the Great Chain of Being which is thought to have originated with the Greeks and transmitted to the medieval writers, was the accepted cosmological blueprint for all elements in the universe, animate and inanimate, spiritual and material, where Man was placed below God and each link of the Chain was vital for the whole chain's existence. With the advent of Renaissance Humanism, Man became the foci, the centre of the universe-a belief that was extended and supported by the 'Scientific Revolution' from the time of Copernicus to the end of the seventeenth century when Isaac Newton's *Mathematical Principles of Natural Philosophy* (1687) was published. Science lent reasoning capacity and intellect to humankind to prove the superiority of Man over Nature and other creatures of the earth. This ideological position is termed as 'Anthropocentrism' within modern environmental discourse

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which is defined by Pepper as "(a) seeing human values as the source of all value, and (b) wanting to manipulate, exploit and destroy nature to satisfy human material desires." (Pepper 19)

Descartes in his *Discourse on Method* (1637) further explored this standpoint by dissociating the mind and the body, the concrete and the abstract, through his famous statement "I think therefore I am" (quoted in Pepper 141). Man exists only when he thinks, that is, when he applies his reasoning and intellectual faculties wherein his material existence becomes non-existent. This 'Cartesian dualism' created a huge schism between Man and Nature because "Not only are we not a part of an environment, we are not even part of our body" (Evernden 98). Pepper observes that this society-nature separation was further accelerated by Bacon in his emerging principles of new science in New Atlantis (143) where he assigned the scientist a superior social role which was later on taken-up by the Enlightenment thinkers of the eighteenth century who perceived the world as a Great Machine to be explored using reason and logic (147). Progress (whether intellectual or material) became the keyword to define social growth which, in turn, "accompanied the rise of modern capitalism, with its political philosophy of laissez-faire liberalism" (15) in the shape of Industrial Revolution.

Simultaneous to these anthropocentric discourses, ecocentric discourses were also taking shape within the fertile ground of eighteenth century thought. 'Ecocentrism' views mankind as part of "a global ecosystem, subject to ecological laws" and "constrain human action, particularly through imposing limits to economic and population growth." (38) Thomas Malthus in his *Essay on the Principle of Population* (1798) set the limits to growth by projecting the 'arithmetic' growth of earth's resources side by side the 'geometric' increase in human population- "...the human species would increase as the numbers 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64,128, 256, and subsistence as 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. In two centuries the population would be to the means of subsistence as 256 to 9; in three centuries as 4096 to 13, and in two thousand years the difference would be incalculable" (25-26). Garrard identifies Malthus' thesis as "the most influential forerunner to the modern environmental apocalypse" which "set out to contradict the utopian predictions of endless material and moral progress." (93) Twentieth century environmental texts such as Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962) and Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb* (1972), a neo-Malthusian classic, inherited their apocalyptic tone from Malthus to warn that social policy needs to be guided by ecological necessity. Thus, the Malthusian doctrine highlighted "two environmental issues" affected by over-population: "scarcity of resources" and "increase in pollution and other forms of environmental degradation." (Elliott Cullis 58).

Malthus' predictions provided the basis for Charles Darwin's theories of 'Natural Selection' and evolution in his *Origin of Species* (1859) and *The Descent of Man* (1871). While working on his evolutionary theory, Darwin relied on the methods and models of modern science such as massive empirical data collection and on-site observation of numerous species during his voyage on the Beagle to the Paraguayan island. However, the implications of his theory ran counter to the science-borne

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Cartesian view of Man-Nature separation. In Chapter 3 of the *Origin of Species* titled "Struggle for existence", Darwin placed Man within the complex 'web of life' making him inseparable from Nature and just one of many species on earth. (Pepper 180) His idea was very close to the pre-modern Great Chain of Being and with this he "laid the foundations of the modern ecocentric regard for diversity". (184) Also, Darwin's proposition regarding the common ancestry between Homo sapiens and Apes, disturbed both the Judeo-Christian notion of Man's superiority from other earthly creatures and the Renaissance ideal of human superiority.

Victorian ecocritic John Parham observes that "Darwin's own significance lies in the fact that he laid the foundations for scientific ecology" (Green Man Hopkins 17), and paved the way for German Zoologist Ernest Haeckel's first coinage of the word 'ecology' in 1866 in his *General Morphology*- "by ecology we mean the body of knowledge concerning the economy of nature- the investigation of the total relations of the animal both to its inorganic and to its organic environment...in a word, ecology is the study of all those complex interrelations referred to by Darwin as the conditions of the struggle for existence" (quoted in Bate 36). Haeckel derived the word from Greek 'oikos' meaning 'household' which is also the common root word for 'economy'-a point which is stressed by modern environmentalists. Thus, a harmonious nexus between nature and capital, between preservation and progress, was eagerly sought-after within the nineteenth century ecological discourses which resulted in "two divergent, sometimes antipathetic philosophies, 'deep' and 'social' ecology" (Parham Green Man Hopkins 23). Both the ideologies are significant in terms of the nineteenth century socio-cultural and literary context.

Deep ecology originated from Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess' observation that nature has 'intrinsic value' apart from mere 'use value' as perceived by the utilitarian mind of modern capitalism. Naess set out eight key points of deep ecology arguing that "These values are independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes" (68). Therefore, deep ecology condemns the reckless materialism promoted by the Industrial Revolution which has commodified nature, thereby creating a huge chasm between Man and Nature. It promotes the "identification of humans and the ecosphere" (Garrard 21) akin to the Pantheistic outlook of the British Romantics. Social ecology, on the other hand, sees mankind as a social organism and therefore, proposes his reconciliation with nature through sustainable social practices such as 'ecotechnology' or 'people's technology.' This 'Techno centrism' of social ecology is sometimes looked skeptically by deep ecology patriots as a covert method of exploiting the earth on the lines of anthropocentric values, but nevertheless, in its "emphasis on the continuity of nature and society, social ecology has adopted a largely pragmatic position" (Parham Green Man Hopkins 25). This pragmatism is noticeable in the socio-centric Victorian Condition-of-England novels where the search for a more sustainable life is a common theme amidst the festering wounds of Industrial Revolution.

Ecocriticism and Environmental Awareness in the Nineteenth Century

The term 'ecocriticism' was first used by William Rueckert in 1978 in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (105). Its etymology has

been traced back by William Howarth to Greek words oikos meaning 'house' and kritis meaning 'to judge' (69). Hence, the ambivalence inherent within the word 'eco' which meant 'home' to the Ancients and at the same time means 'nature' to us, makes ecocriticism a broad analytical tool to interpret both nature and culture simultaneously, and brings within its paradigm the whole of the human world. It emerged as a significant critical discipline in the 1990s owing to the foundation of Association for the Study of Literature and the Environment (ASLE) in the United States in 1992, and the subsequent publication of its academic journal Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment (ISLE) in 1993. Glotfelty proposes perhaps the most comprehensive definition of ecocriticism in *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996), the first anthology of its kind- "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment...Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature... as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non-human" (vxiii-xix). Ecocriticism is akin to Environmentalism in the sense that both are keen to save the Planet Earth; both are interdisciplinary in nature; both have activist as well as academic faces; and so ecocriticism is often used interchangeably with similar terms such as 'Environmental Criticism' and 'Environmental Humanities.' Buell identifies two "interpenetrating epicentres" of ecocriticism namely- "British Romanticism" and the subsequent "U.S nature writing" ("Ecocriticism: Some Emerging Trends" 89). Thus, ecocritical discourses serve as a connecting link between us and the nineteenth century. In fact, Buell observes that "Environmental criticism arises within and against the history of human modification of planetary space, which started in remote antiquity but has greatly accelerated since the industrial revolution, when 'environment' first came into use as an English noun" (*The Future of Environmental Criticism* 62).

Environmental awareness within the socio-cultural matrix of the nineteenth century has been traced back to the British Romantic tradition originating in Wordsworth. Jonathan Bate finds "a strong contemporary force" within Wordsworth's 'Romantic ecology' linking it to "the most pressing political issues of the coming decade: the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer, the destruction of the tropical rainforest, acid rain, the pollution of the sea..." (9). Wordsworth's opening lines in "Sonnet on the Projected Kendal and Windermere Railway" published in the October 16, 1844 *London Morning Post*- "Is then no nook of English ground secure/ From rash assault?" (708) testify his strong protest against the massive extension of the railways in mid-nineteenth century which violated the serenity of places such as the Lake District. By 1844 England was in the grip of 'railway frenzy' where the rapid expansion of the rail became a mission. 66 new lines were proposed in parliamentary Bills in 1844, followed by 220 more in 1845 and 562 in 1846. At the start of 1830, there were just over 100 miles of railway open in Britain, by 1844 (the year of Wordsworth's protest) the railway network had reached about 2,000 miles of finished track, with three quarters of it built since 1839 (Hess 117). The railways at that time was also associated with the economic interests of manufactures and urban employers of the industrial towns of the North such as Manchester, Liverpool etc. who promoted the

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Lake District "as a mass vacation destination for their own profit, with an uneducated and vulgar mass public" (124). Therefore, Bate observes, Wordsworth foresaw the troubles of "mass tourism that threatens the Lake District today" (50). Bate brings Wordsworth's central ecological text commonly known as *A Guide to the Lakes* (1842) "from the periphery to the centre" (42) and shows how the poet gives a "holistic" picture of the Lake District "exploring the relationship between land and inhabitant" (45) in the *Guide*. Wordsworth, thus, proposes 'Ecotourism' as alternative to mass tourism to "educate them [tourists] to care for the delicate ecosystem." (47)

Another instance of eco-protest was the Manchester vs Thirlmere debate in the mid-1870s which, according to Harriet Ritvo, "demonstrates, almost all the components of a modern environmental position" (458) in the nineteenth century. The growing water scarcity for domestic as well as industrial use of densely populated Manchester prompted the Manchester Municipal Corporation to propose a dam on Thirlmere, one of the lakes in the Lake District, and convert it into a reservoir. It provoked protest amongst the local property owners who gathered at a hotel at Grasmere in September of 1877, where they founded the Thirlmere Defence Association (461). The Thirlmere debate also paved the way for the formation of two crucial institutions for the preservation of the English landscape, the Lake District Defence Society and the National Trust, both of which emerged in response to a new series of developmental proposals in the Lake District in the 1880s and 1890s (Hess 145). Hence, Wordsworth's attempts during the 1840s to form Environmental Pressure Groups actually bore fruit in the Victorian era. It was the Victorians who established the first nature conservation, building preservation, and anti-pollution pressure groups during the 1880s such as The Selbourne Society for the Protection of Birds, Plants and Pleasant Places; The Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings; The Commons, Open Spaces and Footpaths Preservation Society; and The Coal Smoke Abatement Society. These trends show a gradual transition from "Romantic ecology" to "Victorian ecology" (Parham, "Was there a Victorian Ecology?" 156) informed by a Victorian "attempt to adapt their Romantic inheritance to pragmatic ends" (Parham, Green Man Hopkins 62).

Victorian Ecological Crisis and the Condition-of-England Novels

Calling the Victorians the inhabitants of a "Mechanical Age" (*Signs of the Time* 55), Carlyle warns the philistine horde against the reckless show of technological prowess on nature. Tennyson calls these people "a savage race" (148) while Arnold saw them as "ignorant armies clash[ing] by night" (118). Charles Turner expressed regret at the loss of landscape beauty, pollution of the air, the lakes, and the rivers. Hence, the apotheosis of anthropocentrism has been reached during Queen Victoria's reign.

One of the driving forces was 'Steam power' which became the supreme agent of change and the backbone of the expanding capitalist economy. It drove the cotton mills, railways, mining operations, and urban development. As a result, the "fossil economy" was born in Britain (Malm 19). In Manchester, the number of mill-chimneys stood at 1 in the1780s and 500 by the early 1840s, prodding Charles Napier, commander of the government troops, to coin the phrase 'chimney of the world' for the Cottonopolis. (239) The textile factories accounted for 52 percent of all horsepower

generated from steam in British industry, cotton mills alone taking 31 percent (243). In 1850, Britain emitted nearly twice as much carbon dioxide as the US, France, Germany and Belgium combined and so, argues Malm, "If global warming has a historical homeland, there can indeed be no doubt about its identity" (246). All this prompted Ruskin to ask explicit social and environmental questions on air pollution, smog and acid rain.

Ruskin's *The Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century* (1884) "exemplifies Victorian anxieties about 'risk'." (Parham, Green Man Hopkins 87) Ruskin observes that the storm cloud, which he re-names as "modern plague cloud" (18), was a phenomenon of the British skies for "forty following years (1831 to 1871)" (1). He characterizes the clouds as "pitch dark" with "deep, high filthiness;" "smoke-cloud; dense manufacturing mist" (24); and "Manchester devil's darkness" which causes "foul drizzle, slow and steady" (25). Ruskin's description coincides with that of nineteenth century environmental chemist Robert Angus Smith who was entrusted to carry out chemical investigations on Manchester's atmosphere and who arrived in the city in 1843 (during the time period mentioned by Ruskin) and came "face to face with the appalling environmental conditions that existed there", of "darkened skies from black smoke" (Reed 63). Smith became increasingly concerned about "the quantity of sulphuric acid and its damaging effect on the natural and human environments" (78). So, Smith's empirical observation coincided with Ruskin's premonition which makes Storm Cloud a seminal Victorian ecocritical text. Ruskin attacks the Victorian environmental damage with a mindset akin to modern environmental movement giving premonitions on acid rain and "greenhouse effect" which were "the material expression of moral decline brought by industry and the market place" (Pepper 203). Therefore, more significant are the phrases "smoke-cloud" "manufacturing mist" and "Manchester devil's darkness" which indicate that Ruskin indicts not merely physical pollution, but also the moral-ideological pollution namely, Political Economy along with the *laissez faire* attitude of modern capitalism, which has raised a Pandemonium in the name of Manchester. Ruskin's interest in social criticism while observing clouds shows a transition from deep to social ecology which helped William Morris to structure his socio-environmental philosophy premised on sustainability.

"Morris can be reclaimed as a father not only of the British Labour Party, but also of the green movement," states Bate (55). A member of the Social Democratic Federation (SDF) which was at the forefront of early 'green politics,' Morris became the primary influence on contemporary social ecology. His Utopian Socialist novel *News from Nowhere* (1890) creates an ideal picture of a utopian sustainable society. No where's hero falls asleep by the Thames in London and wakes up in the twenty-first century, "when capitalism, ugly urban environments, commercialism, wage-slavery and pollution are gone" (Pepper 215). As is evident, Morris' novel iterates almost all the major themes of modern environmentalism. His ideas regarding social change, while on one hand, are akin to Romanticism in his eulogisation of a utopian, pollution-free space; on the other hand, they are conditioned by the Marxist dialectics of equitable and democratic distribution of resources and capital. Thus, Morris' environmental ideology towards "a socialist ecological restructuring of human society" binds him in a

common thread with the 'Condition-of-England' novelists such as "Gaskell, Dickens" etc. (Parham *Green Man Hopkins* 94)

The phrase 'Condition of England' is attributed to Thomas Carlyle who used it in the title of his opening chapter of *Chartism* (1840). Carlyle once again used the phrase in the opening lines of *Past and Present* (1843)- "The condition of England . . . is justly regarded as one of the most ominous, and withal one of the strangest, ever seen in this world. England is full of wealth, of multifarious produce, supply for human want in every kind; yet England is dying of inanition" (226). As is evident from Carlyle's statement, these novels emanated from the economic context of the nineteenth century British industrial society addressing issues such as the 'Hungry Forties,' class conflict, workers' wages, exploitation of the proletariat by the capitalists etc. The Chartist Movement was founded in 1838 when William Lovett drafted the 'People's Charter', and strived to address these issues. The Chartists petitioned the same to the Parliament between 1839 and 1848- a movement which is famously known as the 'Chartist Uprising'. The Social-crisis novel, which reflects these incidents "became a method of teaching the middle and upper classes about the 'real' condition of England." (Simmons 336)

However, apart from class conflict, the Condition of England fiction reflects another very significant aspect of the Victorial social milieu, which is, to use Buell's phrase, "public health environmentalism"- "Whereas first-stage ecocritics privileged figures like British romantic poet[s]...more consequential for second-stage ecocritics were the likes of Charles Dickens (who was deeply involved in Victorian-era public health environmentalism)" (Buell "Ecocriticism: Emerging Trends" 95).

The infectious fever that broke out in the cotton mills in Radcliffe in 1784 and subsequently in Manchester and Liverpool during the 1790s, became an important subject in the early Social Crisis Novels such as Godwin's *Fleetwood: or the New Man of Feeling* (1805) and Robert Blincoe's *Memoir* (1828) on the fate of the factory children. The 'Factory Question' addressed in these early Social Problem Novels included, apart from economic issues, the issue of unhygienic conditions of working in the factories, disease, air quality, heat death, and the escalation of risk especially for women and children. The detailed life of the factory operatives appeared throughout the 1830s in John Walker's *The Factory Lad* (1832); Frances Trollope's *The Life and Adventures of Michael Armstrong, the Factory Boy* (1839); and Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna's *Helen Fleetwood* (1839-40). All these novels acted as forerunners to the canonical Condition of England novels of 1840s that came-of-age with Benjamin Disraeli's trilogy *Coningsby* (1844), *Sybil* (1845), and *Tancred* (1847). Disraeli sub-titles Sybil as 'The Two Nations' which he calls "THE RICH AND THE POOR" (69)- "...between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy; who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets..." (68). The chasm depicted here between the lower and the upper classes bespeaks not only of economic injustice but also of environmental injustice that hinges on "the maldistribution of environmental benefits and hazards" between "rich and poor" (Buell "Ecocriticism: Emerging Trends" 96). There were plethora of examples available to the

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social problem novelists within the Victorian sanitary geography to explore these issues in the Condition of England novels.

Between 1841 and 1901 the population of England more than doubled and most of it lived in urban centers. Towns of over 1,00,000 inhabitants increased from 6 in 1841 to 30 in 1901 (Banks 277). It affected the quality of urban life as more people lived in the same space and this, Banks believes, was "the background cause to much of the misery, squalor, and vice which were found in the Victorian cities" (278). There is plenty of Victorian documentary literature on sanitation and civic life that deals with "the risk of 'toxic' conditions posed to the human population" (Parham Green Man Hopkins 96) such as James Phillips Kay-Shuttleworth's pamphlet *The Moral and Physical Conditions of the Working Classes employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester* (1832), Edwin Chadwick's *Report on the Sanitary Condition of the Labouring Classes of Britain* (1842), Friedrich Engels's *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* (1845 German, 1887 English), Henry Mayhew's *London Labour and the London Poor* (3 vols. 1851), Florence Nightingale's *Notes on Hospitals* (1859), and Charles Booth's *Life and Labour of the People of London* (9 vols. 1892-97). These non-fictional documents closely studied the living conditions of the poor and formed the ground for solid documentary evidence on which the Condition of England writers based their novels.

Barbara Leckie in her study of the Social Problem fiction analyses the housing for the poor in the novels where, according to her, "the intimate space of the home becomes a social problem with public and political implications" (4). Disraeli's description of the labourer's cottage in *Sybil* materializes these implications being "utterly unfit for its original purpose of giving protection from the weather, [because it] looked more like the top of a dunghill than a cottage." Disraeli continues to depict "open drains," "dissolving filth," "typhus," "malaria," "consumption" (54-55) in subsequent pages in connection with home that clearly reflects the housing distress of the Victorian poor. Disraeli is surely indebted to Chadwick's *Sanitary Report* which focused on "two most feared…epidemic diseases, cholera and typhus" (Freedgood 42). Like Disraeli, Kingsley in *Alton Locke* (1850) gives a grim picture of living conditions in the formidable East End of London as the eponymous hero is taken to Downe's house where he could see "reflections of the rushlight in the sewer below. The stench was frightful- air heavy with pestilence." (317) Leckie notes that Kingsley's description resembles Mayhew's in "The Cholera Districts of Bermondsey" (12). She quotes Mayhew's photographic description of filth to show its proximity to Kingsley's prose. Dickens, in *Hard Times* (1854), also sets the tone of the novel by painting the obnoxious, smoky and claustrophobic atmosphere of Coketown- a prototype of the Victorian industrial cities- "It was a town of red brick, or of brick that would have been red if the smoke and ashes had allowed it…It was a town of machinery and tall chimneys, out of which interminable serpents of smoke trailed themselves for ever and ever…" (25). Dickens' 'smoke' is the anticipation of Ruskin's 'Storm Clouds' which indeed shows that climate change was predominantly a Victorian problem.

Conclusion

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The social milieu in the Condition-of-England novels, as discussed so far, betrays a lamentable situation in the Victorian social ecology which is the fallout of Political Economy and bourgeoisie capitalism. Do these novels provide a remedy to this 'Condition-of-England'? Do these novels hold up a mirror to the citizens of the twentieth century? These nineteenth century narratives betray an understanding of a new social order which might have proved revealing to the twentieth century citizens because social and environmental concerns involve relationships not only among people who live in similar societies at the same time; but also among people who live in different societies at the same time; between people of the present and those of the future. Hence, the nineteenth century ecocritical consciousness is an important link in the larger environmental debate of the twentieth century.

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