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The Influence of Karl Marx's Ecological Insights in the Works of Selected Literary Writers

Abstract

A significant issue facing humanity now is the ecological disaster as a result of the transformation of natural processes into splintered, unchanging mechanisms designed for individual accumulation. Therefore, we can say that the issue of nature is an issue to the capital. The significant developments in ecosocialist theory cast light upon the ongoing prominence of Marx's metabolic as well as materialist approach to understanding the colloquial swap concerning nature and humans which additionally includes the ecological rifts and their creation inside ecosystems. This paper explores the influence of Marx's views on ecological crisis due to capitalism in the literary works of British, American, and Indian poets. The findings of the study indicate Marx's influence on these writers. Besides, this influence of Marx on the literary circle also reflects Marx's ideas as universal and relevant to all fields of all ages.

**Keywords:** Ecological Disaster, Karl Marx, English, American, Indian, Poets, Writers

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Cite Us



### Title

## The Influence of Karl Marx's Ecological Insights in the Works of Selected Literary Writers

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### Abstract

*A significant issue facing humanity now is the ecological disaster as a result of the transformation of natural processes into splintered, unchanging mechanisms designed for individual accumulation. Therefore, we can say that the issue of nature is an issue to the capital. The significant developments in ecosocialist theory cast light upon the ongoing prominence of Marx's metabolic as well as materialist approach to understanding the colloquial swap concerning nature and humans which additionally include the ecological rifts and their creation inside ecosystems. This paper explores the influence of Marx's views on ecological crisis due to capitalism in the literary works of British, American, and Indian poets. The findings of the study indicate Marx's influence on these writers. Besides, this influence of Marx on the literary circle also reflects Marx's ideas as universal and relevant to all fields of all ages.*

### Keywords:

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### Introduction

In his critique of capital, Marx has talked about the private riches and their expansion which makes him a theorist who comprehends environmental abuse. Additionally, his focus on the "Lauderdale Paradox" which is mainly the "use value and exchange value" (which facilitates access to secluded wealth while sacrificing public wealth), explains the reasons behind ecological disorders (Hornborg, 2025). The ecological ideas of Marx are important in the 21<sup>st</sup> century since these ideas

demand the formation of a viable social order for future generations. Besides, since his ideas are in glaring contrast to the market mechanism which is planned for speaking about the environmental crisis (prioritizing profit over ecological protection) therefore the exploration of Marx's ecological concerns may help fight the challenge of global warming and climate change which are turning earth into a "demon-haunted world" with each passing day (Henning, 2025).





It is argued that the 20th century saw the emergence of ecological thought. As a result, discussing Karl Marx's ecological theories in the context of his mid-19th-century presentation seems odd (Bernstein, 2025). Marx is considered as the pioneer of ecological thoughts particularly in recent years however some believe that Marx's acumens in the contemporary world relate merely to his own time. Some critics of socioecological thinking assert that the ecological concerns of Karl Marx are not appropriate within the contemporary world (the 21<sup>st</sup> century) since his insights are of meager historical value (Haines, 2025). De Kadt and Mauro, 2001 contend that both Marx and Darwin belonged to the beginning of an era of "thinking about nature" and much was required in technology and science. Besides, Marx had neither seen the development of the chemical sciences (CFCs, DDT, and PCBs" nor had he written during the era of nuclear power (2001, p.50-54). Therefore, his undeviating influences on the contemporary problems in nature and ecology are meager.

The present study, however, is profoundly different. This study deals with Marx's metabolic strategy and its influence on literary writers and poets. These writers reflect his contrary perceptions of use value and market value, his materialist philosophy, his ideas about wealth accumulation, his emphasis on viable growth of humans, and his overall evaluation of capital which lays out a valuable methodological basis to assess present-day ecological crisis together with visualized collective and ecological revolution. It is obvious that highlighting the significance of Marx's ecological dialectic does not imply that he directly addressed all of the intricate ecological issues that we currently face (Antmann, 2025). Additionally, this endeavor rejects the illogical claim that the fundamental Marxian tenet is the only best way to safeguard the earth and wildlife from private enterprise (Kovel, 2002). However, this paper argues that the ecological thoughts of Marx provide us with a critical approach to talking about the main problem with the modern theory of ecology: its incapacity of creating a dynamic environmental idealism that connects the societal issue to the environmental crisis (in the vein of Lukács's claim that the canon of Marxist socialism primarily refers to method).

It is important to keep in mind that failure to draw on historical knowledge was a major factor in why the early attempts to create an ecosocialist

stance throughout this era failed. Ecosocialist theory's early stages took a smorgasbord strategy, with a variety of eclectically collected and integrated a variety of theories. Green theory was frequently grafted upon Marxism, and vice versa. Ecosocialism was weak because it accepted diverse unplanned interpretations and cautiously resisted criticizing the mystic, utopian, and dogmatic tendencies, present in green theory, But in this case, nature/environment became reinstated as a crucial factor inside Marxism. It also skipped through traditional Marxism's ecological philosophies and methods. Contrarily, self-described eco-Marxists typically attempted to merge environmental and economic issues by asserting that the latter was the root of the former. Not the societal divide in the conditions of living that extended to nature itself, but rather that was the primary question raised by the ecological catastrophe (James O'Connor in Foster, 2001).

The ecosocialist philosophy in its second stage aimed at returning to Marx, to comprehend his ecological concerns, his environmental materialism and to ascertain the greater implications of his political economy critique, which mainly focused on how the material conditions were altered due to the capitalist system (Huong, Van Hanh, & Hoan, 2025). This interaction illustrated how Epicurus, an ancient Greek philosopher, had a profound influence on Marx in shaping his vision of nature and history as being dialectically intertwined (Foster, 2000). It also connected Marx's view of sustainable human development to how he handled the use-versus-exchange value split in his value analysis. His ecology of materialism not only serves as a theoretical framework but also a vital position that may assist in evaluating the core inconsistencies in a specific production method. In doing so, human society demonstrates its ecological and historical interdependence with nature (Foster, 2009; Clark & York, 2005).

In a piece titled "The Return of Lauderdale's Paradox," ecological economist Herman Daly argued that the ecological paradox has grown significantly worse over time. He claims that as the world becomes more crowded because of population and expansion in economic growth, formerly cheap goods grow limited and cost more than zero. Consequently, we observe a gain in private wealth and curiously exult while being unaware of the decline in public wealth. Evaluating wealth in terms of exchange value comes at a cost,

according to Lauderdale's paradox (Daly, 1977). Hence by focusing on Marx's metabolic analysis, how it relates to the "Lauderdale Paradox", and in what way his ecological concerns interacted with "the elementary triangle of ecology," for the sustainability of future generations, this project will provide an overview of some of Marx's fundamental ideas regarding the dialectics of both society and nature. Additionally, this paper considers some implications for debates about the ecological problems in the twenty-first century.

What relevance can the environmentalism of Karl Marx hold for the current threatening global ecological crisis as reflected in literature? The Earth's ecosystems are all currently in a state of deterioration and a quarter of the world's animals may become extinct soon (Foster, Clark & York, 2009; Kolbert, 2009; Kintisch, 2009). The world is down a path of rapid climate change, as carbon emissions are rising at a rate ten times that of the previous decade this century (Menon, 2025; Mendivil, & Sarbo, 2024). This paper debates whether Marx's ecology, which was developed in the nineteenth century, has any current applications and whether the literary writers reflect that influence in their writings.

### **Studies on Karl Marx**

Different scholars have used Karl Marx's theoretical underpinnings to support various arguments such as class conflict, class struggle, class consciousness, commodity and labor, and the use of surplus value as given by Marx in his famous work "Das Capital" (2024). Moreover, studies on Karl Marx have a broad spectrum and are certainly not limited to any one perspective. Though a social and economic theory, Karl Marx's thoughtful insights have influenced different writers and scholars from various fields.

The nineteenth-century romantic poets PB Shelley, William Wordsworth, and John Keats have ideological similarities with Karl Marx. For instance, in many of his prose and poems, PB Shelley has put forward his thoughts on the unjust system of parliament that prevailed in England during his time. In his prose works (Shelley, 1915) he demanded a complete reform of the parliament and the judicial system to provide equal rights and opportunities to the common masses of England. John Keats in his poem "Isabella or the Pot of Basil" (Leeper, 2018) asserts the hegemony of society over

an innocent girl Isabella who is considered a commodity by her brothers. Besides, William Wordsworth as a poet of nature always advocated the true strength of nature by attacking the elite class for developing factories and industries. Thus, Marx's philosophy has always been adopted by various writers to raise their voices against any type of injustice in society. Famous prose writer of the Victorian era John Ruskin also attacked capitalism due to which the rich were becoming richer, while the poor, were poorer. Other than British literature, even American literature emerged with the thought of justice for the rights of the Americans advocating the Marxian philosophy of justice.

The philosophy of Karl Marx has influenced modern writers too. Nevertheless, in the fields of novels, drama poetry prose, and literary criticism, modern writers have reflected Marxism and particularly his concept of historical materialism in their writings. For instance, George Orwell's "Animal Farm" (2021) is a reflection of how humans exploit the poorer class on the basis of resources. Besides, Galsworthy is another writer whose plays are a depiction of class struggle. GB Shaw in one of his plays explains the conditions of prostitutes in a historically materialistic world. Similarly, George Gissing (2014) and George Moore (2014) asserted how humans have declined due to class differences which have become incurable diseases. In the field of literary criticism, the influence of Marx was no less. Though not directly a comprehensive theory on literature, the very idealism of Marx to provide equal rights to all the people in society encouraged literacies to speak for the rights of the people and stand against injustice.

### **Influence of Marx's Ecological Insights in the Works of Selected Literary Writers**

Karl Marx's ecological concerns have greatly influenced English writers whether they belong to America, India, or Britain. One of the writers highly influenced by Karl Marx's views on capitalism was Sir John Betjeman. His poems clearly reflect how modern man has deteriorated the environment with industrialization. In his poetic genius "Inexpensive Progress" he asserts that cutting off trees to make nylons and destroying willow for one's own comfort is a complete cruelty to nature. Besides, the poet further continues that modern man has deprived himself of green hedges as well as greenery for its own technological progress

which actually is no progress for the poet. Since such progress is at the cost of the environment and therefore it cannot be beneficial to human health. The poet in this poem wants to explain the sensitivity of environmental degradation to the insensitive modern man.

Another poet W.H Davies (1908) is also influenced by Marx since he is quite considerate about protecting nature and writes about the disasters caused by capitalism and industrialization. The poet asserts that due to the materialistic approach in life, we are putting ourselves into neurosis and unnecessary competition. This is agreed by T. S Eliot in his poem "The Waste Land" (1964). In this poem, the poet supports Marx's ideas of an anti-capitalistic society where people can breathe fresh air. Thus a human mind can only be preserved with its contact with nature. Another English writer and poet who showed his deep thoughts about protecting nature is Mathew Arnold. His poem "Dover Beach" beautifully explains the sophistication and grace of nature.

The influence of Marx is also reflected in the prose writings of John Ruskin (1903) and Thomas Carlyle (1898) since they both belong to the Victorian era (the era when industrialization was at its peak). Therefore, both writers have written about the drastic effects of industrialization which ruined nature to provide so-called material progress to the people of that time. Moreover, the concern for the Marxian environment is also reflected in the writings of American writers. For instance, Robert Frost's regional love for nature is clearly depicted in his poem "Birches" in which the poet has wonderfully explained the way birches show their reaction to storms. Besides, his another poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening" the poet provides a vivid description of the woods and links it to his worldly promises. The Indian writers or poets are no less in expressing their deep sorrow for nature's destruction. For example, Gieve Patal in his famous poem "On Killing a tree" compares the growth of a tree to a human while in the ending stanza he explains the brutal process of its cutting for various material purposes.

Karl Marx's ideology of a clean environment is also reflected in Margaret Atwood's "The Year of flood". In this novel, the novelist has beautifully portrayed the anger of nature against unjust practices towards the environment. Other than fiction, some movies that have been based on Marx's idealism for a clean environment include "The Day After Tomorrow", "seas piracy" and "Under the dome"

## **Conclusion**

Karl Marx is a huge name in the world for his unending contributions to a balanced structure of society. He is the pioneer of Socialism however his writings influenced various literary writers in different eras. Starting from the Victorian era till the modern times and the prevailing 21<sup>st</sup> century, his works have been used as influences to highlight and explore oppression, hegemony, and inequality based on the division of labor and means of production. Socialists all over the world consider Marx as their pioneer in advocating true human value. Economists in the 21<sup>st</sup> century use Marx's ideology of surplus value to bring positive changes in the economic structure of the countries. In the field of literature, various writers since the nineteenth century including poets, novelists, dramatists, prose writers, and literary critics have been influenced by the writings of Karl Marx and have portrayed the deplorable condition of humans due to the exploitation by the elite class which has created a rebellion in the proletariat class. Other than the socialists, economists, and literary perspectives, Marx's concern for the environment also had a major influence on various English, American, British, and Indian writers. His views on capitalism, historical materialism, environment degradation, and exploitation of nature due to human lust for technological advancement and building of industries in the cities by cutting trees are clearly reflected in the works of the poets and writers of his time to date. Thus, we can say that Marxism increased sensitivity among writers for the protection of the environment which makes Marxism a universal phenomenon for all ages and times.

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