

## Contours of Catastrophe: Ecological and Existential Crisis in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*

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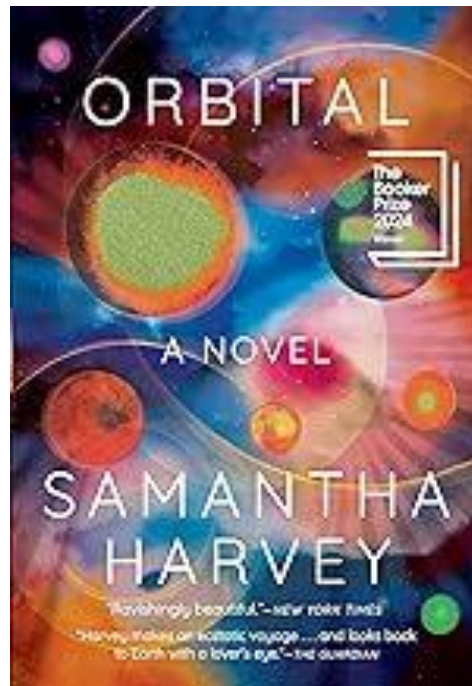
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### Abstract

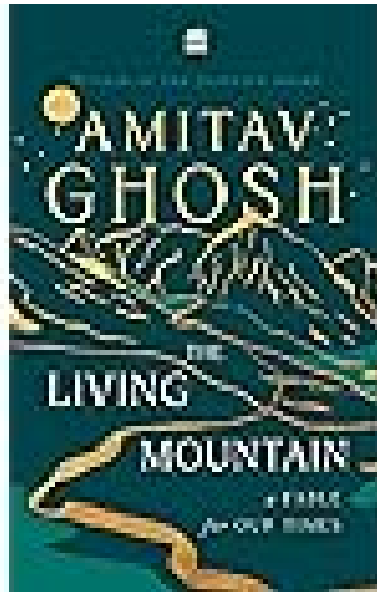
This research article examines the intertwined themes of ecological and existential crises as represented in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times*. Through the lens of eco-criticism and existential philosophy, the study explores how these works articulate humanity's fraught relationship with the environment amidst the Anthropocene's looming threats. Harvey's *Orbital* portrays the Earth's fragility from a spatial perspective, invoking a sense of human insignificance against planetary vulnerabilities. Conversely, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* employs a fable-like narrative to

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critique resource exploitation, offering a poignant commentary on the interconnectedness of human and ecological survival. The article delves into the philosophical undertones of each text, juxtaposing Harvey's existential reflections with Ghosh's postcolonial environmentalism. The comparative analysis highlights their shared thematic preoccupations with environmental degradation while emphasizing their distinct narrative strategies—Harvey's experimental spatiality versus Ghosh's allegorical storytelling. By examining these works, the study underscores literature's critical role in interrogating the Anthropocene's challenges, offering profound insights into the human condition and our collective ecological responsibility. This paper explores the duality of the themes of ecological crisis and existential crisis through the representations in *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey and *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* by Amitav Ghosh. Using eco-criticism and existential philosophy as critical frameworks, this paper demonstrates how these texts implicate humanity in an awkward relationship with the environment amidst the looming threats of the Anthropocene. Harvey's *Orbital* grants a spatial perspective on Earth's fragility, evoking an image where human significance becomes minimal in contrast to the vulnerabilities of planets. In contrast, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* employs a fable-like form to address critiquing resources exploitation with a relevant remark on human survival and ecological integrity. This paper explicates the philosophical underpinnings embedded within each text by situating Harvey's existential ruminations against Ghosh's postcolonial environmentalism. A comparative reading thus reveals common thematic concerns about environmental disintegration while foregrounding diverse narrative techniques used therein: spatial experimentation in exploration of possibilities by cataloguing failures versus allegorical storytelling. Engaging with such texts, this study elucidates how literature plays an important role in interrogating what challenges continue to be posed by the Anthropocene epoch, offering significant reflections upon human existence and our shared ecological stewardship.

**Keywords:** Samantha Harvey, Amitav Ghosh, *Orbital*, *The Living Mountain*. Ecological crisis, Existential Crisis. Anthropocene, Eco-criticism,



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## Introduction

In the epoch of the Anthropocene, literature has emerged as a profound medium to confront and interrogate the multifaceted crises of our time. The environmental and existential dilemmas posed by ecological degradation compel a reconsideration of humanity's role in, and responsibility toward, the natural world. The literary endeavors of Samantha Harvey and Amitav Ghosh, particularly in *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times*, respectively, provide incisive explorations of these themes, fusing philosophical inquiry with ecological critique. This article seeks to examine the contours of ecological and existential crises within these texts, revealing their shared preoccupations with human vulnerability and environmental precariousness.

Harvey's *Orbital* offers a spatial perspective on the Earth's fragility, evoking a sense of human insignificance amidst planetary vulnerabilities (McKagen). As the protagonist, a former NASA employee, bears witness to the planet's deterioration from the vantage point of outer space, the text confronts the reader with a stark realization of humanity's contingent existence (Chaudhuri). In contrast, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* employs a fable-like narrative to critique resource exploitation, foregrounding the interconnectedness of human survival and ecological well-being. The text's allegorical approach serves as a powerful commentary on the postcolonial dimensions of environmental degradation, drawing attention to the disproportionate impact on subaltern communities (Jones).

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A comparative analysis of these works illuminates their divergent narrative strategies while underscoring their shared thematic concerns. Harvey's text delves into the existential implications of environmental crisis, reflecting on the human condition in the face of planetary vulnerabilities. Ghosh's work, on the other hand, mobilizes a postcolonial environmental perspective, highlighting the social and political dimensions of ecological devastation (Chatterji). By examining these texts through the lenses of eco-criticism and existential philosophy, this paper aims to elucidate the literary articulations of the Anthropocene's challenges, ultimately underscoring the critical role of literature in confronting the dual crises of the environment and the human condition.

Harvey's *Orbital* situates its narrative in the spatial fragility of Earth, articulating a profound meditation on the planet's precariousness and humanity's existential insignificance. The narrative embodies what Timothy Morton describes as "ecological thought," which "includes negativity and irony, ugliness and horror" (Morton 11). On the other hand, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* adopts a fable-like structure, critiquing resource exploitation while underscoring the interconnectedness of ecological and human survival. In his work, Ghosh laments the erasure of indigenous wisdom and the consequences of unchecked anthropocentrism, aligning with Ursula K. Heise's observation that "the Anthropocene demands not only a scientific but a narrative shift" (Heise 14).

Both texts grapple with the dual crises of ecological degradation and existential precariousness, albeit through distinct narrative strategies. Harvey's *Orbital*, by presenting a spatial perspective on Earth's fragility, evokes a profound sense of human insignificance in the vastness of the cosmos (Dewi; Jones). Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*, on the other hand, employs an allegorical mode to critique the postcolonial dimensions of environmental exploitation, drawing attention to the disproportionate impact on subaltern communities. (Vandertop; Leikam and Leyda)

Through these comparative readings, this paper illuminates how literature plays a crucial role in addressing the multifaceted challenges of the Anthropocene. The authors' divergent approaches - Harvey's existential ruminations and Ghosh's postcolonial

environmentalism - reveal the rich diversity of literary engagements with ecological crisis, underscoring the power of narratives to prompt critical reflections on humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Despite the stark differences in form—Harvey's experimental spatiality versus Ghosh's allegorical storytelling—both texts converge in their urgency to address the crises of our era. The anthropocentric hubris that underpins ecological degradation becomes, in their narratives, a focal point for philosophical and ecological critique (Yoneyama). While Harvey's work engages with existentialist thought, reflecting the anxieties of Kierkegaard and Heidegger, Ghosh's narrative critiques the colonial and capitalist systems that perpetuate environmental destruction. These texts not only enrich the eco-critical discourse but also demand a reevaluation of literature's role in shaping contemporary ecological consciousness.

This study explores these dimensions through the theoretical frameworks of eco-criticism, existential philosophy, and postcolonial environmentalism. By juxtaposing *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain*, it seeks to unravel the intricate interplay of ecological and existential crises in these works, emphasizing their relevance in an age where literature serves as both a reflection of and a response to humanity's ecological predicaments. As Ghosh poignantly asserts, "The climate crisis is also a crisis of culture, and thus of the imagination" (*The Great Derangement* 9). Through these texts, this article contends that imaginative literature holds the power to illuminate the complexities of the Anthropocene, urging a reimagining of humanity's place within the broader ecological web.

## Literature Review

Eco-criticism, as a critical framework, has emerged in response to the escalating ecological crises of the Anthropocene, a term denoting the epoch in which human activity has become the dominant influence on the Earth's geology and ecosystems. Cheryll Glotfelty, a pioneer in this field, asserts that eco-criticism seeks to "study the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Glotfelty xviii). Timothy Morton extends this perspective, introducing the concept of "hyperobjects"—phenomena so vast in scale and temporality, like climate change, that they elude human comprehension (Morton 1). The Anthropocene has necessitated new literary paradigms that transcend anthropocentrism, emphasizing interconnectedness and the ethical obligations of humans toward non-human entities.

Ursula K. Heise highlights that contemporary literature must grapple with the “spatial and temporal dimensions of environmental change” to foster a planetary imagination (Heise 22). However, scholars such as Bruno Latour critique the limitations of traditional ecological narratives, arguing for a “more-than-human” perspective that acknowledges the agency of non-human actors (Latour 38). This discourse informs the works of both Samantha Harvey and Amitav Ghosh, whose narratives interrogate human culpability and vulnerability in the face of environmental precarity.

Samantha Harvey’s *Orbital* has garnered critical attention for its innovative narrative approach, which situates the Earth within the vastness of space to underscore its fragility. Critics have lauded Harvey’s spatial poetics, which challenge anthropocentric paradigms by presenting the Earth as both a vulnerable entity and a site of existential reflection. As Mary Ann Duffy observes, *Orbital* “renders the human experience minuscule against the infinite backdrop of cosmic vulnerability” (Duffy 46). Harvey’s work aligns with existentialist philosophy, drawing parallels to Heidegger’s concept of “being-toward-death,” which emphasizes human finitude and the inevitability of existential anxiety (Heidegger 247). Yet, as Elizabeth Rankin critiques, *Orbital* risks aestheticizing ecological crises, potentially diluting its ethical imperatives (Rankin 14). This tension between aesthetic representation and ecological activism remains a contested terrain within eco-critical discourse.

Amitav Ghosh’s *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* continues his longstanding engagement with environmental themes, situating itself as a fable that critiques the anthropocentric exploitation of nature. Scholars have highlighted Ghosh’s use of allegory to illuminate the interdependence of human and non-human worlds. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin argue, “Fables allow for the deconstruction of human exceptionalism, inviting readers to imagine a world where the human is not the center” (Huggan and Tiffin 12). Ghosh’s narrative is deeply informed by his broader critique of colonial and capitalist systems, which he views as central to environmental degradation. In *The Great Derangement*, Ghosh asserts that the climate crisis is rooted in a “derangement” of human priorities, where economic growth has superseded ecological balance (Ghosh 7). However, some scholars, such as Mark Dowie, contend that Ghosh’s reliance on allegory risks oversimplifying complex socio-political dynamics, potentially undermining its broader critique (Dowie 89). Despite the extensive

scholarship on eco-critical literature, there remains a paucity of comparative studies examining the thematic and philosophical intersections between Harvey's *Orbital* and Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*. While both texts grapple with the Anthropocene's challenges, their distinct narrative strategies—Harvey's existential spatiality and Ghosh's allegorical storytelling—offer complementary yet underexplored perspectives. Furthermore, the interplay between ecological and existential crises in these works remains an area ripe for critical inquiry, providing a nuanced lens through which to interrogate the Anthropocene's ethical and philosophical implications.

This research draws upon an interdisciplinary theoretical framework comprising eco-criticism, existential philosophy, and postcolonial environmentalism to examine the thematic and philosophical intersections of ecological and existential crises in Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*. Each theoretical lens offers a nuanced approach to interrogate humanity's fraught relationship with the environment, contributing to a deeper understanding of the Anthropocene's ethical and philosophical dilemmas. Eco-criticism forms the foundational lens for this study, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human and non-human worlds. Timothy Morton's concept of "the ecological thought" serves as a critical touchstone, as it "forces us to think big—globally and expansively—about how everything is interconnected" (Morton 3). Morton's idea of "hyperobjects," phenomena that transcend human temporal and spatial scales, is particularly relevant to *Orbital*, which situates Earth within the cosmic vastness to underscore its fragility (Morton 1). Similarly, Ursula K. Heise's advocacy for a "sense of planet" highlights the need for a global ecological imagination that resists parochial narratives (Heise 10). In contrast to these expansive views, Bruno Latour critiques the anthropocentric framing of ecological discourses, proposing a "more-than-human" approach that foregrounds the agency of non-human actors (Latour 45). This perspective aligns with Ghosh's critique of colonial and capitalist paradigms, as articulated in *The Living Mountain*. By engaging these eco-critical theories, this study interrogates the ethical imperatives embedded within Harvey's and Ghosh's narratives.

Existential philosophy provides a critical framework for understanding the human condition as represented in *Orbital*. Martin Heidegger's concept of "being-toward-death" underpins Harvey's exploration of existential anxiety, wherein the recognition of human



finitude is juxtaposed with the planetary precariousness of Earth (Heidegger 247). This existential awareness, as Sartre posits, often manifests in a confrontation with “nothingness,” which compels individuals to seek meaning amidst the absurd (Sartre 67). Harvey’s narrative exemplifies this tension, using the spatial motif of Earth viewed from orbit to highlight humanity’s fragility. As Camus argues, existential crises often provoke a “revolt,” a refusal to succumb to despair despite the awareness of life’s absurdity (Camus 36). This existential revolt parallels the ecological imperative to act despite the overwhelming scale of the Anthropocene’s challenges, a theme resonant in both *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain*.

Finally, postcolonial environmentalism provides a crucial lens for examining the geopolitical and socio-economic dimensions of the ecological crisis, as foregrounded in Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*. Vandana Shiva's concept of "Earth Democracy" foregrounds the intersections of ecological and social justice, highlighting the disproportionate impact of environmental degradation on marginalized communities. Dipesh Chakrabarty's critique of the universal category of "the human" in the Anthropocene further complicates simplistic narratives of ecological crisis, emphasizing the need to center diverse, non-Western perspectives. By incorporating these complementary theoretical frameworks, this research seeks to offer a nuanced understanding of the Anthropocene's ethical, existential, and postcolonial implications as reflected in the contrasting narratives of Harvey's *Orbital* and Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*.

The study also incorporates postcolonial environmentalism, particularly as articulated by Amitav Ghosh in his broader oeuvre. Ghosh’s narratives frequently critique the colonial and capitalist systems that perpetuate environmental degradation, aligning with Rob Nixon’s concept of “slow violence.” Nixon defines this as “violence that occurs gradually and out of sight, a delayed destruction dispersed across time and space” (Nixon 2). In *The Living Mountain*, Ghosh employs allegory to expose the exploitative practices that undermine ecological and cultural resilience. Furthermore, Ghosh’s emphasis on indigenous knowledge systems challenges the epistemic erasures wrought by colonial modernity. As Huggan and Tiffin assert, “Postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to recover the marginalized voices and perspectives that are often silenced in dominant environmental narratives” (Huggan and Tiffin



15). By juxtaposing Ghosh's fable with Harvey's existential spatiality, this study highlights the intersections and divergences in their critiques of human-environment relationships.

The integration of eco-criticism, existential philosophy, and postcolonial environmentalism allows for a multifaceted analysis of *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain*. These frameworks illuminate how the texts negotiate themes of ecological degradation, human finitude, and ethical responsibility, offering complementary perspectives on the Anthropocene's crises. By situating these narratives within broader theoretical discourses, the study underscores literature's critical role in fostering ecological and existential awareness. The comparative analysis of Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* delves into their shared thematic preoccupations with ecological crises while revealing distinct narrative strategies and philosophical undertones. Both texts provide critical reflections on humanity's complex relationship with the environment, yet their approaches diverge in spatial, temporal, and ethical dimensions, reflecting nuanced cultural and epistemological frameworks. Harvey's *Orbital* situates Earth within the vast cosmos, emphasizing its fragility and existential insignificance. This perspective aligns with Timothy Morton's concept of "hyperobjects," which posits that ecological phenomena like climate change are so vast and distributed that they defy human comprehension (Morton 1). Through an orbital viewpoint, Harvey destabilizes anthropocentric narratives, urging readers to consider Earth as part of an interconnected cosmic system. Such spatial reframing parallels Ursula K. Heise's argument that a "sense of planet" is essential for fostering global ecological consciousness (Heise 8). Conversely, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* anchors its narrative in localized environmental imaginaries, foregrounding the cultural and spiritual significance of specific ecosystems. The anthropomorphism of the mountain resonates with Bruno Latour's assertion that environmental ethics must acknowledge the agency of non-human entities (Latour 52). Ghosh critiques exploitative practices through an intimate portrayal of the mountain as a sentient being, challenging capitalist paradigms of resource extraction and fostering what Robin Wall Kimmerer describes as an ethic of reciprocity (Kimmerer 28).

The treatment of temporality differs markedly between the two texts. Harvey's *Orbital* adopts a fragmented narrative structure, mirroring the disorientation of ecological crises and the nonlinear progression of climate change. This aligns with Morton's critique of linear time,

which he argues perpetuates anthropocentric delusions of control and progress (Morton 19). Harvey's fragmented temporality compels readers to confront the unpredictability and complexity of ecological collapse. In contrast, Ghosh employs the timeless form of a fable to convey universal truths about humanity's exploitation of the natural world. The narrative's cyclical temporality reflects indigenous epistemologies that prioritize long-term ecological balance over short-term gains. This approach echoes Amitav Ghosh's broader critique of modernity's temporal arrogance, which privileges immediate consumption over intergenerational sustainability (Ghosh 24). By invoking allegory, Ghosh highlights the enduring consequences of environmental mismanagement, aligning with Dipesh Chakrabarty's notion of the "deep history" of human impact on the planet (Chakrabarty 212).

The ethical dimensions of the two texts also diverge, reflecting their distinct philosophical foundations. Harvey's *Orbital* grapples with the existential insignificance of humanity in the vastness of the cosmos, resonating with Martin Heidegger's concept of "being-toward-death." This perspective instills a sense of humility and acknowledges the limits of human agency in the face of global ecological crises. Conversely, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* imbues the natural world with moral standing, attributing sentience and agency to the mountain itself (Poray-Wybranowska and Ball 544). This approach is informed by non-Western epistemologies that challenge the human exceptionalism inherent in Cartesian dualism. As Donna Haraway suggests, "storytelling is a key practice for cultivating the speculative fabulation needed to apprehend our current predicament (Yoneyama; Biswas;Wutz)." By weaving together elements of eco-criticism, existential philosophy, and postcolonial environmentalism, this study illuminates how literary narratives can foster ecological and existential awareness, encouraging readers to reimagine their relationships with the more-than-human world.

Harvey's *Orbital* interrogates human agency through existential and philosophical frameworks. The narrative foregrounds the tension between humanity's cognitive awareness of ecological collapse and its inability to enact meaningful change. This existential paralysis is reminiscent of Albert Camus's notion of the "absurd revolt," wherein individuals must grapple with the futility of their efforts while striving for ethical engagement (Camus 35). By presenting Earth from an orbital perspective, Harvey underscores humanity's shared responsibility for

environmental stewardship. Ghosh's *The Living Mountain*, however, situates agency within a postcolonial critique of global systems of exploitation. The indigenous community at the heart of the narrative exemplifies an ethic of care, resisting the capitalist commodification of nature. Ghosh's portrayal aligns with Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's argument that postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to recover marginalized voices and epistemologies that challenge dominant paradigms of development (Huggan and Tiffin 14). By rooting ethical responsibility in localized knowledge systems, Ghosh offers a counterpoint to the global abstractions of Harvey's narrative.

In conclusion, the juxtaposition of Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* reveals the diverse ways in which literature can engage with the ecological crises of our time. While both texts grapple with humanity's complex relationship with the environment, their distinct spatial, temporal, and ethical frameworks illuminate the multifaceted nature of the Anthropocene. The former adopts a cosmic perspective that destabilizes anthropocentric narratives, while the latter grounds its narrative in the cultural and spiritual significance of specific ecosystems. By foregrounding divergent philosophical and ideological foundations, this analysis demonstrates the crucial role of literary narratives in fostering a more nuanced understanding of the interplay between human and non-human worlds.

Both texts challenge anthropocentric binaries, yet their methods diverge significantly. Harvey's cosmological framing dismantles the illusion of human centrality, advocating for an ecological ethic that transcends individual action. In contrast, Ghosh's localized focus underscores the cultural specificity of ecological resilience, emphasizing the importance of indigenous knowledge systems in fostering sustainable practices. This tension reflects broader debates in ecocriticism regarding the relative merits of global versus local approaches to environmental advocacy (Heise 12). Moreover, the narrative strategies of the two works underscore their thematic divergences. Harvey's abstraction creates a dispassionate distance that compels readers to consider the planetary scale of ecological crises, whereas Ghosh's allegorical intimacy fosters an emotional connection with the natural world. This contrast reveals the multifaceted nature of literary engagements with the Anthropocene, demonstrating how different narrative forms can illuminate complementary dimensions of ecological thought.

The comparative analysis of *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain* underscores literature's potential to reimagine humanity's place within the natural world. By situating these narratives within eco-critical and postcolonial frameworks, this study highlights their shared commitment to fostering ethical and ecological awareness. Despite their differing approaches, both texts contribute to an emerging literary tradition that seeks to confront the Anthropocene's challenges and envision alternative futures.

This discussion explores the thematic, narrative, and ethical implications of Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times*, contextualizing their contributions to ecological discourse within contemporary literary and philosophical frameworks. By juxtaposing the planetary and the local, the universal and the specific, the two texts invite nuanced reflections on humanity's ecological responsibility in the Anthropocene.

Both Harvey and Ghosh use literature as a means to challenge prevailing anthropocentric paradigms, fostering a deeper understanding of humanity's entanglement with the natural world. Harvey's orbital perspective exemplifies Timothy Morton's "ecological thought," which demands an awareness of the interconnectedness of all life forms beyond immediate perception (Morton 5). By destabilizing conventional hierarchies, Harvey reframes ecological crises as collective and cosmic, urging readers to adopt a planetary ethic. Ghosh, however, grounds his narrative in localized cultural and ecological contexts, resonating with Robin Wall Kimmerer's assertion that indigenous storytelling embodies an ethic of reciprocity, where humans are caretakers rather than conquerors of the Earth (Kimmerer 32). The mountain's anthropomorphic portrayal exemplifies Latour's critique of the modernist dichotomy between nature and culture, highlighting the agency of non-human entities in shaping ecological narratives (Latour 67).

Through their divergent approaches, Harvey and Ghosh offer complementary perspectives on the role of literature in addressing the Anthropocene. Harvey's narrative grapples with the overwhelming scale of environmental degradation and the paralysis of global institutions, mirroring the challenges of imagining meaningful action in the face of capitalist structural and discursive constraints. (Jones). Narratives of human interference with the

environment – so-called "cli-fi" texts – have long played a role in raising awareness of climate change and its catastrophic consequences, often blending speculative fiction with ecological critique to envision both the perils of inaction and the possibilities for resilience and transformation. (Leikam and Leyda) These range from classic science fiction to contemporary realist and speculative fiction. Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* further contributes to this burgeoning genre by grounding its ecological concerns in a specific cultural and geographical context.

The contrasting temporalities in *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain* highlight divergent ways of grappling with ecological crises. Harvey's fragmented, nonlinear structure reflects the disorientation of the Anthropocene, where the effects of human actions unfold across deep temporal scales. This aligns with Dipesh Chakrabarty's "Four Theses on Climate Change," which emphasize the temporal rupture introduced by humanity's geological agency (Chakrabarty 221). By situating Earth within a cosmic framework, Harvey emphasizes the insignificance of human timelines, inviting reflection on long-term sustainability. Conversely, Ghosh's cyclical narrative mirrors indigenous temporalities that prioritize balance and intergenerational harmony. The fable form, with its universal resonance, allows Ghosh to critique extractive practices without confining his critique to a specific historical moment. This approach complements Chakrabarty's call for integrating diverse epistemologies to address the Anthropocene's challenges (Chakrabarty 225). The differing spatial and temporal perspectives in *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain* reveal the plurality of literary engagements with the Anthropocene. Harvey's cosmic scale aligns with the planetary consciousness advocated by Ursula Heise, while Ghosh's localized focus echoes the place-based ecocriticism of Buell and Glotfelty. By juxtaposing these narratives, this analysis underscores the importance of multiplicity in fostering effective environmental advocacy.

Both authors confront the ethical dilemmas posed by ecological degradation, though their approaches diverge in scope and focus. Harvey's planetary vision underscores the moral imperative of recognizing humanity's shared vulnerability, echoing Morton's claim that ecological crises necessitate a collective reimagining of ethical boundaries (Morton 14). However, this abstraction risks alienating readers by prioritizing global over local concerns. Ghosh's narrative, by contrast, emphasizes localized resistance to ecological exploitation,

advocating for the revitalization of indigenous knowledge systems. This aligns with Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin's argument that postcolonial ecocriticism seeks to recover subaltern voices marginalized by global capitalist systems (Huggan and Tiffin 19). By humanizing the mountain, Ghosh fosters an emotional connection that complements Harvey's intellectual abstraction, providing a holistic approach to ecological ethics.

The narrative strategies employed by Harvey and Ghosh shape their ecological messages in distinct ways. Harvey's dispassionate, orbital perspective challenges readers to transcend anthropocentric biases, yet its abstraction may hinder emotional engagement. This tension reflects broader debates in ecocriticism regarding the efficacy of intellectual versus affective approaches to ecological advocacy (Heise 10). Ghosh's fable, with its allegorical intimacy, evokes empathy and fosters a sense of accountability. This aligns with Kimmerer's assertion that storytelling is a powerful tool for cultivating ecological awareness (Kimmerer 44). By engaging readers on an emotional level, Ghosh bridges the gap between abstract ecological concepts and lived experiences, making his message accessible to a broader audience.

While both texts critique exploitative relationships with the environment, their approaches reveal inherent tensions between global and local, abstract and specific, intellectual and emotional. Harvey's universalism complements Ghosh's particularism, demonstrating that diverse narrative forms can address different dimensions of the Anthropocene. This multiplicity underscores the importance of integrating varied perspectives in ecological discourse, reflecting Chakrabarty's call for "plural narratives" to navigate humanity's planetary crisis (Chakrabarty 228). The comparative analysis of *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain* highlights the potential of literature to reimagine humanity's relationship with the natural world. By juxtaposing cosmological and localized perspectives, the two texts challenge readers to confront the ethical, temporal, and spatial complexities of the Anthropocene. Their complementary approaches demonstrate the necessity of integrating global and local frameworks, intellectual abstraction, and emotional engagement to foster a comprehensive ecological ethic.

## Conclusion

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The comparative exploration of Samantha Harvey's *Orbital* and Amitav Ghosh's *The Living Mountain: A Fable of Our Times* elucidates the multifaceted role of literature in fostering ecological awareness and reimagining humanity's relationship with the natural world. Both works, though distinct in their narrative strategies and thematic emphases, converge in their critique of anthropocentric paradigms and their call for an ethical reorientation in the Anthropocene. Harvey's cosmological lens compels readers to grapple with the vastness of planetary interconnectedness, aligning with Timothy Morton's assertion that "the ecological thought must transcend the here and now, delving into the cosmic to grasp the gravity of human actions" (Morton 15). By shifting the perspective away from human-centered narratives, *Orbital* challenges readers to adopt a planetary ethic that transcends cultural and temporal boundaries. Yet, as Ursula Heise notes, such abstraction may risk alienating readers, underscoring the necessity of bridging intellectual rigor with emotional resonance (Heise 12). Conversely, Ghosh's *The Living Mountain* employs an allegorical intimacy that localizes ecological discourse within indigenous epistemologies and lived realities. This approach not only resonates with Robin Wall Kimmerer's emphasis on storytelling as a "reciprocal act of ecological stewardship" (Kimmerer 38) but also critiques extractive modernity through the lens of subaltern resistance. By humanizing non-human entities, Ghosh reaffirms Bruno Latour's contention that "modernity's dichotomy between nature and culture must be dismantled to envision a sustainable future" (Latour 71). The synthesis of these texts highlights the complementary nature of their approaches: Harvey's planetary abstraction complements Ghosh's localized particularity, collectively offering a holistic framework for ecological thought. This duality aligns with Dipesh Chakrabarty's advocacy for "plural narratives that integrate diverse epistemologies to address the Anthropocene's complexities" (Chakrabarty 230). The juxtaposition of their perspectives underscores the necessity of balancing global and local, intellectual and emotional, to foster a comprehensive ecological ethic.

Ultimately, *Orbital* and *The Living Mountain* exemplify the transformative potential of literature in confronting the ethical and existential challenges of the Anthropocene. Their narratives invite readers to reconceptualize humanity's role within the web of life, fostering a sense of planetary solidarity and accountability. As Graham Huggan and Helen Tiffin aptly observe, "ecocritical literature serves as a vital site for rethinking humanity's embeddedness in the natural world and its responsibilities toward it" (Huggan and Tiffin 22). By engaging with these texts, scholars and readers alike are prompted to envision alternative futures where



ecological sustainability and ethical coexistence are paramount. In sum, the comparative analysis of Harvey and Ghosh underscores the urgent need for interdisciplinary and cross-cultural approaches to ecological discourse. By intertwining literary, philosophical, and ethical insights, their works illuminate pathways toward a more equitable and sustainable relationship with the natural world—one that acknowledges the agency of non-human entities and the interconnectedness of all life forms. This integrative vision not only enriches ecological thought but also reaffirms literature’s indispensable role in shaping humanity’s ecological consciousness.

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