



**John Steinbeck's The Winter of Our Discontent: A
Postmodern Study**

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This study uses a postmodern ecocritical framework to analyse John Steinbeck's eco-centric worldview in the Postmodern age in his last book, *The Winter of Our Discontent* (1961). This ecocritical study examines the novel's themes and shows how they relate to postmodern issues like identity crises, disintegration, alienation, and ethics by focusing on man's relationship with nature. Nature declares itself to be man's "place," friend, consolation, and shelter from the rapidly changing American society of the 1950s and 1960s when capitalism and consumerism ruled culture. In the novel, Steinbeck emphasises interdependence to challenge the duality of man's superiority over nature. In this case, nature is central to a postmodern literary narrative about a man searching for a lost, fragmented identity and an escape from moral degradation. This study shows how postmodern themes of alienation, identity crisis, and moral decay influence the protagonist's search for oneness with nature, linking postmodernism and ecocriticism.

Keywords:- Steinbeck, *Winter of Our Discontent*, Ecology, Postmodernism, and Criticism

Introduction

Howards End (1910, p. 206) said to stop splintering and always start to connect. It is the message this study shows throughout the analysis of the selected text. John Ernst Steinbeck Jr. was born in Salinas, CA, on February 27, 1902. He was an American writer and the 1962 Nobel Prize in Literature winner novel" for his realistic and imaginative writings, combining as they do sympathetic humour and keen social perception." He has been called "a giant of American letters.", *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939), *East of Eden* (1952) and the novella, *Of Mice and Men* (1937). He was the author of twenty-seven books, including sixteen novels, six non-fiction books and five collections of short stories.

Steinbeck's final novel, *It is a tale of degeneration, corruption and spiritual crisis.*, *The Winter of Our Discontent* (*Winter*), published in 1961, has postmodern traits such as fragmentation, alienation, loss of subjectivity, and identity crisis. Two considerations influenced this winter season choice. First, the book has yet to receive critical recognition commensurate with its literary merit or Nobel Prize-winning author. Interestingly, current critics have generally ignored the work, with a few unfavourable reviews and articles. Insightful: John Steinbeck, Don Noble's massive Steinbeck biography, overlooked the book until 2011. Most critics and scholars of *Winter*, including Randall D. Miller (2005), Joseph Allegretti (2005), Barbara A. Heavilin (2004), Lesleigh Patton (2002), Joseph R. McElrath, Jesse S. Crisler, and Susan Shillinglaw (1996), Richard C. Bedford (1972), and Jarmila Dvorak (1962), have focused on the novel's moral message rather than its other themes. Reviewers need to pay more attention to the novel's postmodern features. *Winter* shows Steinbeck's environmental zeal, confirming his reputation. Steinbeck was a lifelong environmentalist and "deep ecology" proponent. Jeffrey Schultz and Luchen Li (2005), Petr Kopeck (2006), and Mark Andrew White (2008) have criticised his environmental concerns (2006). Critics label Steinbeck an "ecological prophet" (Simmonds 323), while *Winter's* ecological theories are almost entirely ignored. In Susan F. Beegel, Susan Shillinglaw, and Wesley N. Tiffney, Jr.'s 1997 book *Steinbeck and the Environment: Interdisciplinary Approaches*, just a few chapters describe *Winter's* whaling business.

Methodology

This paper highlights postmodernism and ecology that critics have ignored to illuminate Steinbeck's eco-centric vision in a postmodern anthropocentric world. Technology, which fuelled capitalism and consumerism, also harmed the environment. Steinbeck's eco-centric worldview highlights the exploitation of the physical environment and the social collapse and alienation of postmodern man, providing hope in a dismal world. This paper employs ecocriticism to claim Steinbeck's *Winter* shows a civilisation where nature heals the postmodern identity crisis, moral relativism, and anomie. The study analyses Steinbeck's protagonist's battle to keep his identity in a society without subjectivity or morality. These cultures feel disconnected, alienated, and upheaval. After failing to adjust to his postmodern, unsteady social surroundings, Steinbeck's protagonist seeks affiliation and identity in nature. The study's second segment eco-critically analyses Steinbeck's work to show how nature helps postmodern man. The novel's environment influences the protagonist's search for belonging, originality, self-discovery, and nature. Postmodern Personal Identity: Fragmented Ethan Hawley Scandal After World War II, postmodernism brought uncertainty and upheaval to almost every aspect of Western culture. According to James M. Glass, postmodernism "celebrates variety, change, transition, and flux" (256).

Discussion

Postmodernism changed the western culture. Turning points are unstable and cause many changes. Postmodern critics have long studied identity and its complexities. Subjectivity and identity collapse in such a moment. This change has hurt the postmodern identity due to economic and technological developments. These changes promoted capitalism and materialism, which changed people's thoughts, speech, and relationships. "The instability of identity in Western nations has its deepest roots in the shift and increased volatility of cultural patterns related to massive economic and technological upheaval on a global scale," Robert G. Dunn observed (108).

Capitalist consumerism shaped the 1950s and 1960s American society. After World War II, materialism took over American society. Shopping malls and supermarkets throughout the US reflect the 1950s and 1960s commercial boom (Shumaker and Wajda 128-33; Featherstone 64-109). Thus, a consumerist civilisation dominated the globe after WWII. This transformation lowers the individual to a consumer, placing enormous material demands on them and threatening their sense of self. Steinbeck's *Winter* depicts consumer society and the individual's failure to match its standards. *Winter* follows Ethan Allen Hawley, a former Long Island nobleman who struggles to adjust to contemporary life in the early 1960s New England hamlet of New Baytown. He followed his family's rigid traditions. Ethan lived comfortably as the heir of a wealthy family that owned half of New Baytown. Ethan's father lost much money in dangerous WWII investments. It destroyed Ethan's family's income and status. Ethan had to work as a supermarket clerk at his family's post-war company. Ethan's stability has been destroyed, and he lives in a time of "fragmentation, disintegration, sadness, meaninglessness, an ambiguity or even absence of moral constraints and social unrest" (Rosenau 15). Postmodernist tenets hinder his identity development, threatening his subjectivity and self-image. *Winter* signifies post-war change. New Baytown, a whaling town, has succumbed to capitalism. Ethan sees the Bay Hotel "now being destroyed to make place for the new Woolworth's" on his way to work early in the novel (*Winter* 9). Ethan calls the bulldozer and wrecking ball crane "waiting predators in the early dawn" (*Winter* 9). Steinbeck's first description of capitalist society is dismal.

Capitalism is portrayed as a vicious intruder that threatens community calm and safety. This artwork predicts calamity, like the apocalyptic sentence, "If the old does not adapt, then it will be destroyed" (Patton 180). Ethan compares the rapid post-war social shift to a "great ship" being "turned and bunted and pushed around and hauled about by innumerable small pulls." After being diverted by the tide and tugs, the ship must go ahead. The planning hub—the bridge—must ask, "All right, I know now where I want to go." Where are the dangerous rocks? What is the forecast? 1993–94 (*Winter*) The ship may symbolise postmodernism's global viewpoint change. The postmodern guy, who has a solid hold on his ideas, lacks confidence in today's unpredictable and chaotic world. Many postmodern crises impair human subjectivity and stability. The book blames identity crises on money and consumerism. Mary, Ethan, and their two teens, Allen and Ellen, are unhappy with their family's poverty.

Modern civilisation prioritises consumption. Ethan cannot afford such material comforts for his family in this post-war era. These new rules endanger his identity and stability, and he cannot adapt. In the book's introduction, Ethan tells Mr Baker, the novel's banker, that he feels like a failure and is decaying because of his family's financial problems "My wife needs clothes. My kids need shoes and fun. What if they cannot study? What about rent/mortgage/utilities/food/dental/tonsillectomy/what if I'm sick and can't sweep this goddamn sidewalk? Layoffs make me hate my job more. *Winter* 14. Ethan, a postmodern person, is dissatisfied and insecure since everything is monetised here. Postmodern New Baytown believes that money drives social transformation. In *Winter*, Ethan, his wife, and his daughter chat about money, and the father values money above everything else. Mary tells Ethan she will read cards and "[e]verything you touch will turn to gold" (18). Margie Young-Hunt, Mary's middle-aged fortune teller, predicts that Ethan will become the town's most powerful person by making money: "Her deck kept revealing dollar signs and more cash. You will be rich " (31). He worries about Ethan's wife seeing him as a failure if he does not become wealthy. Mary is a product of social status, success, and stability. Her thoughts concentrate on money: "I want to respect if I live here. I do not want the kids to feel terrible about not dressing well. I want to be positive " (34). Mary blames her husband's failure on his inability to adjust to capitalism. "You might escape if you gave up your outdated, arrogant ideas. You're mocked. Beautiful men without money are bums " (34). Ellen, his resembling daughter, wants to know when he will be rich. "Please do not keep me waiting. I want out of poverty." (57). The protagonist's relationships with other

characters must revolve around money. The narrative emphasises money and business, and "money gets money" is repeated three times (Winter 55, 271).

This counsel from Mr Baker and Joey Morphy, the neighbourhood playboy and bank teller, taught Ethan business principles. Mr Baker tells Ethan that "your only admission is money" and that business ethics, reputation, and expertise will not help him (144). In a capitalist world, man is useless without money. Ethan learns that "money has no heart" from his boss, Italian immigrant Alfio Marullo (56). Thus, business is a cruel realm without emotions. The fourth and worst lesson is that monetary prosperity trumps morality. Money is "the holy of holies," argues Morph. (132) Postmodernism's critics analyse how postmodern capitalism affects individuals. These activities hinder identity-building and disrupt postmodern self-concepts, they say. For instance, things and consumption dominate people's worldviews (Dunn 51-80; Clarke 106-8; Lindholm 756-8). These products also replace more conventional forms of social engagement for modern men. "Filial piety is not the popular morality it was a century ago" (Clarke 153). Thus, music, television, and advertising have replaced the family as a source of identity. Television and music replace social connections, destabilising people's identities. Allen, Ethan's son, shows the family's fall in self-esteem. Allen seldom talks to his family. He creates an online community to communicate with his favourite bands and singers and pursue his entertainment business dream. "Top-ranked throughout the nation. A million copies in two weeks," he is thrilled to possess "Lonely Lovin' Heart" (Winter 234). Worse, this needs to be more communication. Allen passively consumes radio and TV commercials. Allen also loves other products. Ethan asks Allen why he needs so much money after realising Allen is angry because he is poor. Allen replies: "Do you think I prefer being car-free? At least 12 youngsters rode motorbikes. How would your life be if your family doesn't have a car or TV?" (72-3) Allen informs his dad that when he becomes rich, he will first avoid feeling left out when everyone else gets a vehicle, and you don't (73).

Allen's statements pierce Ethan's head, damage his self-image and shake his fatherhood identity, whether he intends to or not. Steinbeck's Winter shows that postmodern history is for sale. Ethan and Allen debate in American history early on. Allen yearns for "[p]irate ships... [p]lots of wealth and beauties in silk skirts and jewellery" (Winter 71). The son makes gold and jewellery from historical antiques. Allen and Ellen's national essay contest is another example of national history's commercialisation. The contest's "I Love America" theme encourages a patriotic spirit. The competition is commercialised. Allen writes the contest essay to win the watch, vacation, and TV appearance, not to promote his patriotism. Forming solid identities based on shared values and social groups in this environment takes more work. Allen's win is overlooked, which shows his loyalty as an American child. Allen and everyone around him, even his father, focus on financial rewards from the competition. "Newspapers and TV shows are interviewing him. Famous family member! Ethan, get a TV." (242). Ethan struggles to find his place as a postmodern man in a society that changes with production and consumption. Winter is not the best season, according to Mimi Gladstein. "The family is whole [in which] a mother, a father, and two children live together in a town and are part of the community" (47), but the novel's events show deep disintegration, alienation, and lack of communication within the family and community. Ethan's statement that "I do not listen with total concentration... I do not listen at all," explains this (Winter 52). Even in the same room, Ethan says of his wife, "I am not talking to her, but to some dark listener inside myself" (53). "You never listen, genuinely listen," his daughter says, revealing his disintegration (149). Mary's spouse is also estranged. By the book's finale, Ethan runs away and commits himself. His wife has no clue how furious Ethan is. Gladstein notes that Mary "doesn't grasp her husband's issues. His jacket is her first priority." (50). Again, appearance matters. Since his consumer-based society threatens him, Ethan seeks refuge in other communities, both real and virtual. Dunn says this "loss of connection and coherence" drives individuals to join "new organisations giving fresh social linkages, personal and societal happiness" (144). Ethan seeks new relationships with others and himself due to social fragmentation. Ethan creates two interconnected villages here. Ethan brings back his pre-war grandeur and an ecological community, which will be discussed later. Revivalism's many facets indicate the postmodern era's inability to meet people's individual and communal needs. This research defines revivalism as "a need for a personal past, particularly in the family... an interest in family trees and histories". (Dunn 155)

Ethan continually references his past. Due to his postmodern loss and confusion, he develops a little society of several periods. His father, grandparents, and aunt Deborah died. He still consults those who have died for most of his critical decisions: "I speak to numerous dead folks, including my Plymouth Rock

Aunt Deborah and old Cap'n. I fight them... It's asking your strong and sure self for advice or explanation" (Winter 53). Ethan's words now indicate that he is still trying to follow the protocols that formed his identity, and he lacks solidity and certainty at the moment. Ethan wears his "father's enormous silver Hamilton railroad watch" to reject the present and revive his lost past (134). (134). "Most people live 90% in the past, 7% in the present, and that only leaves 3% for the future," Ethan argues, dismissing the present (166).

Ethan "engages with the history of his family and his community through habits of imaginative projection which force the past into a direct engagement with the living present" because he cannot "find stable reference points in the present" (Kocela 75). Miss Elgar, Ethan's father's past friend, symbolises his inability to embrace the present. Miss Elgar constantly asks about Ethan's dad at the market. Ethan never irritates or attempts to dispel her belief that his father is alive because he knows she needs a solid, real past amid a volatile present. "Give him my welcomes, that's a wonderful child," Miss Elgar says, freezing time in the past when she was a young girl befriended by Ethan's father (Winter 139). Ethan's misfortune is that he relies on prior principles to "run for a secure anchorage in the past" (116).

It makes his transition and integration harder. A moral dilemma hits Ethan hard. Critics say postmodernism revolves around ethics. "[t]he attack on conventional social structures gave birth to a person called on to build his (but seldom her) own identity independently of the assigned qualities inhering to one's station in tradition and nature," according to Dunn (53). Ethan created his own identity to escape capitalist materialism in his world. At the novel's start, he criticises the town's pervasive corruption yet seems pleased with his position. He resists his peers and the moral decay of his day. When he cannot support his family, he turns Machiavellian and steals. Ethan deliberately cultivates social desirability, a key postmodern psychological trait. He uses dishonest and opportunistic methods to blend in with conventional consumerism and financial success. He "deliberately modified their actions and identity to match a given environment" to "control the image which others have of them" (Hamouda 104).

He must change to win over his family, friends, and colleagues. He eventually agrees with Marullo that "[w]here money is involved, the customary rules of conduct take a vacation" (Winter 58). "If the norms of thought are the laws of things, then morality and sin are relative too, and that, too, in a relative universe," argues the revised Ethan. (57). Ethan recognises that morality does not matter in a fluid, fractured world. New assessment criteria "Power and success are ethically untouchable. Thus, execution and labelling are more crucial than the deed" (187). Ethan receives Mr Biggers' bribe, cheats his pal Danny out of his property, and plans to steal a bank. "It was not a crime against men, simply against money," Ethan adds to the dishonesty (215). He also plans to send his employer to Sicily so he can manage the store alone. Patton says Ethan "becomes more like a wolf than his former moral standards would have ever permitted him to think of." (185). Ethan's moral fall peaks when he discovers his son borrowed from multiple sources for the essay contest. Allen stole from Thomas Jefferson, Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and Abraham Lincoln to win the election. Allen's plagiarism alludes to American thinker and writer Charles Van Doren's late-1950s cheating on *Twenty-One* with the show's creators. (Gladstein '49, Kocela '69, George '12, 7') Allen, like Doren, gains prominence by immorality. Allen, like his father, justifies his crimes with Machiavellian reasoning. He accepts cheating since "[e]verybody does it" (Winter 276). (276). This postmodern, fluid society views ethics and identity development as "irreconcilable with a culture of surface and multiplicity playfully displayed and pushed for their own sake" (Dunn 65). "[There's] a creeping, all-pervasive, nerve gas of immorality which begins in the nursery and does not stop till it reaches the highest corporate and political offices," Steinbeck wrote to his friend and politician Adlai Stevenson in 1959. (Qt in Banach 55).

Ethan must continuously find new ways to satisfy his need for connection and belonging, a new group to call his own, amid his shattered and corrupt world. Ecological Community Connection Searching Steinbeck's *Winter* depicts the typical postmodern person: detached, morally corrupt, and selfless. Steinbeck's tale often emphasises connectedness. This time, the link is between a person and nature as a significant force. The research attempts to show, via context and content, that the novel has a new reading centred on showing that its postmodernism and ecocriticism implications emerge from one another and produce one literary amalgamation with 'Green' Steinbeck's beautiful aesthetic expression. Postmodernism's intellectual basis may have spawned ecocriticism. To restate, contemporary man would not have felt the need for connectivity or started searching for an entity to bind himself to if postmodernism had not isolated, scepticism, and alienated him. Thus, ecocriticism may be a postmodern academic field

worth praising. Ecocriticism studies "the literary (and aesthetic) portrayal of human experience primarily in a natural and later in a culturally transformed environment" in literature (Cohen 10).

Ecocriticism considers the environmental influence of literature and other creative endeavours. Winter, Steinbeck's novel about a tight battle between idealism and the moral breakdown and a capitulation to the latter, should be understood similarly. However, it ends with a hopeful proposal of restoring morals and ethics by relying on nature's fortitude of a stone and purity of water. Winter's creative depiction of nature encompasses the entire environmental milieu that Ethan creates for himself, including the locations and other components he mixes to create an alternative society. From an ecological perspective, the environment and its inhabitants become friends, challenging the idea that nature is a passive non-human background. Instead, it is highlighted and related to the serenity and satisfaction one experiences after being welcomed by an "other," whether human or not. These characteristics provide Ethan with "psychological maturity" for "dynamic autonomy," according to Robyn Eckersley (54). Ecocritical frameworks allow dynamic autonomy "needs psychological development and sensitive mediation between oneself and the greater whole. "This does not imply supremacy over others, but rather a sense of competence and agency in one's world relationships as part of a continuous lived experience" (54). Man has gone from exploiter to a tool that helps nature stay steady. This newfound dynamic autonomy ends the logocentric relationship between man as master and nature as a passive static creature again.

A panoramic view of the setting best conveys the ecological consciousness that runs through many story threads. Place binds three narrative threads in Steinbeck's *Winter*. This tapestry includes nature, civilisation, and people and is the backdrop for self-reflection concerning society and nature. "[T]he notion of location also gestures in at least three directions at once toward environmental materiality, toward the social perception of creation, and individual emotion or connection," says Lawrence Buell, "making it an especially rich and intricate battleground for environmental criticism" (63).

The novel's natural surroundings are not only backgrounds. Nature shapes the protagonist's personality and gives him the satisfaction he desires but has never had. Ethan and two places—his "Place," which ties him to nature, and the supermarket, which connects him to society—are intertwined with this idea of place. Winter's protagonist interprets the location in many ways due to its centrality. Ethan's unique journey through nature converges at Ethan's Place. Ethan frequents "the Place" when in need. When he was young, Ethan and his wealthy family vacationed in a historic harbour-like site. "[o]n the edge of the silted and sanded up Old Harbor, just where the Hawley dock had been, the stone foundation is still there... That is my place," the song says (Winter 43).

It is fascinating rather than alarming that Ethan flees to his "Place" in nature to make life-changing decisions. Before joining the military, getting married, and having their first kid, Ethan stayed there often. He knows his place affects him. His words: "I needed the chair. I'll adapt wherever you go " (44). Again, he does not go to his place before stealing the bank or asking his best buddy to sell his meadow, as though he is shy of his postmodern self. Ethan emotionally clings to this secure refuge in psychological self-defence. The "Place" allows Ethan to establish himself in an undeveloped setting away from the social atmosphere threatening to strangle him. "The formation of an attitude of reverence for nature is vital to human psychological growth and self-realisation," Steinbeck says (Eckersley 162). Here, nature and Ethan's American ideals blend well. Ethan finds delight in "reconstructing Old Harbor for [his] mind's pleasure" on each visit (Winter 47). He needs everyone to adapt his connection to this location. Says: "I pondered whether all men need a Place, desire one, or have none. I've seen a wild animal look in people's eyes—like they need to go someplace quiet and secluded to settle down and take stock of their life " (44). It refers to the Postmodern identity issue. Due to this splintering, everyone needs a private area, but not everyone can. Winter rules the supermarket, too. Ethan may find his true buddies at the store. The shop's items naturally bring up Steinbeck's *Winter*'s "ecological community." This community seeks to psychologically heal the protagonist, unlike his prior materialistic, ethically corrupt postmodern civilisation. Ethan calls his groceries "my companions," "gentlemen," and "Dear colleagues" in the novel's start (Winter 56, 57). He treats the store's goods like people. "Discuss[ing] subjects with [his] companions on the shelves, maybe noisily, maybe not" is his natural environment (56). Ethan will not be happy until the sea, and the shop's items are in harmony. Ethan seeks acceptance and calms in nature since his wife always criticises him. Ethan is likely constantly looking for a place to start an ecological community and other elements. Ethan creates his group to compensate for living in a postmodern environment.

Ethan discovers a powerful message at the grocery store. He orders them to "sit up and listen" as if they have never heard this before (Winter 57). Ethan deliberately avoids his materialistic neighbours. He would rather disregard his family and friends' requests to pursue worldly fortune. Eco-communal advocates disengagement from corrupt social and political systems, establishing exemplary institutions and pursuing exemplary human behaviour, which fits that theme (Eckersley 163). The "exemplary personal act" and "exemplary institution" may be Ethan's connection to Old Harbor. "When man transfers part of his essence to his symbols when an object is infused with a human spirit such that a whole interpenetration emerges," Ethan and his ecological society identify. Lieb 275 Ethan's talisman symbolises many ecologically significant goods and helps him relate with the store's "green" staff. Ethan must find the serenity to go ahead. Through a talisman, he answers his existential concerns. Steinbeck realistically unravels Ethan's social and psychological problems using the talisman, a stone with an unknown form carved on it. Ethan says amulets are "stones or other artefacts inscribed with symbols or inscriptions to which are ascribed the occult powers of the planetary influences and celestial configurations under which it was formed" (Winter 202). The stone is Ethan's pure legacy, which he must safeguard. It symbolises stability since it is the most potent natural substance. "A continuous thing," it ignites, relaxes, and inspires all ages (126). The stone is called a "light-bearer" (279) because it carries light. Ethan thinks this stone talisman changed his life because "It affects me as I trace its design. It was pink like a rose in the middle of the day, but at the end of the day, it had a purple flush like blood had gotten into it" (231). Emphasising that the stone is moveable is improper here. Lighting changes it from pink to purple and red. "Its hue and convolutions and texture changed as [his] requirements changed," making the stone figure illegible (127). His aunt gave Ethan the amulet without revealing its meaning. She said the talisman "means whatever you want it to imply" (203).

Again, the outside world is the inner self. The stone's snake-like engraving may be interpreted in two ways. "Snakes, scorpions, and suchlike objects that in real life are poisonous and must be avoided gaining positive, magical abilities as images" protect the past (Hall xi). However, postmodernism still shows man's terrible nature. Steinbeck employs this snake-shaped amulet to defend American idealism against postmodern, materialist, and capitalist ideas. "The talisman becomes a vehicle to let man experience his oneness with the entire and communicate that emotion," explains Todd Lieber. "The pattern of talismanic identification becomes a ritual...for overcoming the cosmic alienation of a separate being and for asserting the oneness of creation" (266-67). Thus, the stone talisman symbolises nature, which is fundamental to the narrative and links to history, nationalism, and the past. Winter ecocritical chronicles Ethan's journey to a new existence in time and space. Ecologists Peter Berg and Raymond F. Dasmann define re-inhabitation as "learning to live-in-place in an ecosystem that has been disrupted and damaged from past exploitation" (217).

As a consequence of his temporal "re-inhabitation" with the postmodern period, Ethan's moral compass moves from idealism to pessimism. He lives in the past because it is the only thing that will keep him alive, but then he wants to rule and embrace postmodern principles as he steps out of a time warp. At the story's end, he finds a middle ground between his social environment's postmodern ideals and his family's ethical traditions, which is the genuine re-inhabitation of time. Ethan has addressed the present and recovered from his moral breakdown in the social realm. His natural-textualised sea infuses every element of his mentality. In a spatial re-inhabitation, "becoming native" is "becoming mindful of the specific ecological dynamics that operate within and around that region" (Berg and Dasmann 217).

He abandons all the other sites, which are merely geographical space-designed objects, to settle in a place that consumes him to the point that he must return there to dissolve with its natural components, of which he is a part, to die. Steinbeck's ecological perspective is that "the cosmos is a dynamic, intertwined network of interconnections in which there are no entirely distinct objects and no absolute dividing lines between the living and the non-living." (Eckersley). Ethan's aunt's necklace binds them via a third re-inhabitation. This amulet has symbolised family loyalty for centuries. It is not a premade lifestyle library. Holding the item increases self-projection and introspection. Ethan re-inhabits chronologically, geographically, and morally by combining his strong sense of the past, the locality, and his ethical sense of familial lineage. Ethan's talisman, supernatural connection with his canned products, and intense affinity to a region are all mysteries. This riddle contributes to Steinbeck's "monistic perspective," where "one thing is all things and all things are one thing... and hence share a basic relatedness" (266). Steinbeck's green ideology permeates the novel's ecological themes. Steinbeck "describes the common psychological quirk of a man identifying

with his tools or with the object of his work, infusing his spirit into his physical environment" (Lieber 265) and explores a world of connectedness and ecological continuity, where all items and elements dissolve within a greater whole. Ethan tells his canned goods that he thinks "are eaters and devoured. That's a good rule of thumb—even the fiercest and craftiest creatures are consumed by the ground" (Winter 46-7). "Earth" gathers all life, including humans. Therefore, everything will finish in the everlasting crucible of the earth. People should recognise that they are simply one portion that will never escape the others since they complement, not conflict. The prose is essential to the novel's vision. Winter's language is environmentally suggestive, but it is not Romantic poets' "green language" that praised nature in all her forms. Ethan uses nature analogies to express his emotions. Steinbeck links "the death of nature in winter" (Hall 156) to the abstract term "discontent" by using "winter" in the title. The title originates from Shakespeare's Richard III but from an ecocritical perspective. It establishes a structural relationship between nature and the human mind. Thus, the novel's title casts doubt on the paper's title, which proposes an evolving relationship between postmodernism, which confronts man with his/her dilemma of alienation and loss, and ecocriticism, which offers a solution by connecting with nature. "I hoped I could remain to watch the sunrise straight out from the Place," Ethan says, quoting Steinbeck (Winter 47). The sun rising in nature, symbolised in the "Place" as a hostess, symbolises the return of morality after postmodernism's suppression. Postmodernism and ecocriticism come together in the novel's sale of Danny's green meadow to an airport. The New Baytown country council proposes to construct an airport on the meadow as "[d]evelopment is very much reliant on transportation" (Winter 111). (2011).

Progress requires sacrificing nature. The dominance of contemporary civilisation, which has grown by consuming nature and pushing it to the brink of life, is captured here. Capitalists and environmentalists contrast when Danny refuses to sell his meadow to Ethan, who uses Mr Baker's information about the airport to propose purchasing it. The story accurately depicts the modern grief man feels for the loss of community and family in the 20th century, when "[a]nybody with money has kin" (259). Drunk Danny refused to sell his meadow. "I'm myself. Daniel Taylor" (49). Steinbeck will never make Danny's family appreciate the property. It is a grassy area of land, not a building or money.

Another thread that unravels Steinbeck's ecological worldview is Winter's ambiguous ending, which has been interpreted in several postmodern ways but makes greater sense in light of his ecological perspective. Steinbeck's ambiguous ending criticises anthropocentrism by depicting the all-powerful, clever man defeated by nature. Ethan compromises his values and makes mistakes by succumbing to society's worldly temptations. He returns to his place to commit himself, saying, "I reached the river. What's goodbye? No idea. I wanted to visit the Place, but any seafarer would have known that high tide had submerged it in murky depths" (Winter 203). He and his razors are thrown into the sea, but he pulls himself out with his talisman. Ethan appears to be seeking forgiveness rather than suicide. The scene implies that Ethan's moral abandonment betrays nature and that he will pay for it. Since water symbolises rebirth and purification, nature is the only way out of modern man's moral and ethical dilemma. Ethan's engagement with nature shows another ecological form of interaction. "Everyone's pleasure is interconnected. Instead, then accepting our destiny as passive onlookers, this proves our ecological significance" (Eckersley 53).

Conclusion

Ethan's suicide attempt in nature is poignant. He is not giving up on himself but seeking redemption from his moral degradation by merging with nature. Conclusion Finally, Steinbeck's Winter criticises postmodernism's alienation, fragmentation, and moral decay and calls for community. Steinbeck dislikes capitalism's consumerist ethos, and such an environment causes ego fragmentation, subjectivity loss, and identity issues. A typical postmodern male, Ethan faces daily challenges from a changing society and economy that challenge his masculinity. Growing up in a consumerist era where culture is a commodity gave Ethan an identity crisis. He either reinvents himself or becomes a social outcast. He eventually embraces his cultural upbringing. Nature redeems postmodern man's identity issue.

In contrast to the postmodern capitalist culture, a man may discover community and connection in nature. Steinbeck is an eco-friendly novelist with an anthropocentric viewpoint that has since evolved. Steinbeck employs beautiful patterns in Winter to express what cannot be spoken about man's role in this interrelated cosmos. To conclude, a postmodern ecocritical reading of Winter reveals Steinbeck's green philosophy, which proposes a symbiotic relationship between nature and man via a sense of place with historical, geographical, and moral dimensions. The story promotes an ecologically responsible relationship with

nature. Ecocriticism's interdisciplinary and postmodernism's conceptual frameworks are linked and evolve from each other.

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