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Writing For The Earth

*The Role of Nature in
Contemporary Literature*

WRITERS INTERNATIONAL EDITION

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*An International Peer-Reviewed
Journal of Multidisciplinary Studies*

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Message from the President

In an era where the resonance between humanity and nature is more fragile than ever, the Global Nexus Series of International Conferences emerges as a profound initiative to explore the intricate ties binding literature, art, and ecological consciousness. This inaugural conference, on the theme *Writing for the Earth: The Role of Nature in Contemporary Literature*, seeks to amplify voices that echo the urgency of preserving our planet through creative expression.

It is with profound honor that I introduce this journal, an anthology of exceptional scholarly contributions presented during the Global Nexus Series of International Conferences. From ecocriticism and climate fiction to indigenous ecologies and environmental justice, these pages traverse diverse themes, capturing the essence of contemporary literature as both a reflection of and a response to the environmental challenges we face today.

This initiative is deeply rooted in the ideals championed by the Writers Capital International Foundation. As an ISO-certified, non-political, non-religious organization listed under the United Nations' Civil Societies, the Foundation is a vanguard of global literary and artistic endeavors aimed at fostering humanitarian values. Through its flagship programs such as the Panorama International Arts & Literature Festivals, which celebrate cultural diversity and unity, and Writers International Edition, a platform dedicated to promoting quality literary works and nurturing emerging voices, the Foundation seeks to transform creativity into a force for global change.

I extend my heartfelt gratitude to Padma Bhushan Dr. Pratibha Ray, whose inspiring words during the inaugural session illuminated the path for this transformative journey. My sincere gratitude to Dr. Nandini Sahu, who enlightened the community with her deep insights, and to Dr. Bhumika Sharma, whose deft moderation ensured the seamless exchange of ideas. I am equally indebted to the esteemed contributors and participants whose insights and creativity have elevated this initiative to remarkable heights.

The journal you hold in your hands is more than a collection of papers; it is a call to action, a celebration of the power of literature to inspire, provoke, and heal. As the founder of this series, I firmly believe that the insights and narratives documented here hold the power to ripple outward, inspiring deeper engagement and transformative change in society.

Together, let us traverse this path, guided by the unwavering belief that art and literature are not merely reflections of the world but instruments to reshape it.

Warm regards,

Preeth Padmanabhan Nambiar

Founder & CEO

Global Nexus Series of International Conferences

Message

The Global Nexus Series of Conferences on Literature, Arts, and Academy, an impactful initiative by the Writers Capital International Foundation, unites visionaries, scholars, and creators globally. It demonstrates the power of technology to transcend physical boundaries and foster a shared purpose.

This platform serves as a hub for literature, arts, and academia to address critical societal challenges. It provides a space for dialogue, collaboration, and idea generation, emphasizing the transformative synergy between creativity and intellect in driving meaningful change. The series highlights the essential role of academics and creatives in societal reform, underlining the importance of channeling personal and professional growth towards addressing global concerns.

Creativity has long been a force for social transformation, challenging injustices, fostering unity, and inspiring solutions. Writers, artists, and scholars must leverage their work to bridge cultural divides and spark progress. The Writers Capital International Foundation deserves commendation for its grassroots initiatives, such as the Panorama International Arts and Literature Sensible, which promote compassion, cultural understanding, and humanitarian values. These efforts exemplify how creativity can inspire and unite communities for collective betterment.

The Global Nexus Series provides participants with a platform to explore how their work can advance these shared objectives. Interdisciplinary collaboration and a commitment to social responsibility are crucial for tackling contemporary issues. By integrating these principles, individuals can amplify their influence and contribute to global progress.

This series aspires to be a transformative force, fostering intellectual and creative partnerships, inspiring action, and building lasting connections. It envisions a future where literature, arts, and academia drive equity, compassion, and innovation. With several prominent institutions already participating, this initiative has made a strong start. It is hoped that more organizations worldwide will recognize its potential and join forces to establish a truly global platform.

Such collective engagement will enrich this series, enhance its impact, and promote shared progress on an international scale.

Best wishes to all the participants and organizers.

Padmabhushan Dr Pratibha Ray
Alabol, Balikuda, Jagatsinghpur,
Odisha, India

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CONCEPT NOTE

Global Nexus Conference Series of Conference on Literature, Arts and Academia

Writing for the Earth: Role of Nature in Contemporary Literature

Nature has been an enduring muse for literary minds across the ages. From the poignant vistas of Wordsworth to the urgent ecological reflections in the works of modern poets and novelists, literature has persistently functioned as a major channel for exploring humanity's relationship with the planet. As the 21st century unfolds with increased environmental concerns, the role that nature has gained in literature is unprecedented in breaking away from traditional bounds to become a strong contender in the global conversation over sustainability, identity, and survival. The theme of **Writing for the Earth: The Role of Nature in Contemporary Literature** explores this intricate connection between literature and ecological consciousness as it inspires action.

Literature as an Ecological Conscience

More contemporary works of literature are becoming ever closer to the fragile state of nature. With respect to escalating issues of deforestation, climatic changes, and the rate of species extinctions, writing has become the savior of the environment. Litres by Margaret Atwood, Amitav Ghosh, and Richard Powers detail the degradation of the ecosystem, and in this, lies advocacy, embodied in narration. These literary attempts strive to write not only the issues today but also to awaken, inspire, and provoke thinking about what awaits on earth.

Nature as a Metaphor and Mirror

In literary discourse, nature often works far beyond the mere background function; it becomes an analogue of human emotions, issues, and desires. Indeed, in modern literary creations, the metaphorical role of nature has been strongly stretched, often reflecting man's disintegrated relationship with his environment. The untamed landscape is a symbol both of hope and of lament—a reflection of our collective crisis and ecological crisis. That is true from the way that wilderness portrays flames-blasted forests or indefinite seeds-the land can be fragile, vulnerable, and yet recoverable.

The Intersection of Culture, Identity, and Ecology

In the context of a highly interlinked global landscape, where industrialization has led to uniformity and fragmentation at the same time within societies, modern literature opens up complex dynamics among culture, identity, and the environment. These writers from indigenous and marginalized communities, such as Robin Wall Kimmerer and Alexis

Wright, blend traditional knowledge with ecological concepts, showing the potential for balanced relations with nature. Literary texts question existing paradigms and introduce new visions rooted in reciprocity, respect, and interdependence.

Emerge Eco-literature and Climate Fiction

New genres, such as eco-literature and climate fiction (cli-fi), have sprouted as direct responses to ecological crises. From dystopian portrayals of a ravaged planet by climatic catastrophes to poignant portrayals of personal and collective resilience, these genres force readers to confront uncomfortable truths while imagining ways toward a livable future. In such texts, literature moves beyond mere entertainment to become a vehicle for advocacy and education.

Writing as Activism

The pen is a tool of change. More and more contemporary writers are relating to environmental activism through their writing. Whether through manifestos, participation in ecological movements, or even by inserting calls to action within their writing, authors are rallying readers to think critically about their roles in environmental stewardship. Literature becomes a bridge between the intellectual and the emotional, calling readers to turn awareness into action.

The Role of Technology and Hybrid Narratives The arrival of the digital age has changed the depiction of nature in literature. Multimodal texts, hybrid genres, and numerous digital media have opened wider windows to the field of eco-literature. Writers have become interested in experimentation with formats beyond the norm—using visual arts, musical aspects, and interactive media to make a multi-sensory relationship with nature. This development reflects the change of relationships between humans, technology, and nature.

A Call to Write for the Earth

Literature can be perceived as an aesthetically and culturally constructed part of the Environment, since it directly addresses the questions of human constructions, such as meaning, value, language, and imagination, which can, then, be linked to the problem of ecological consciousness that humans need to attain. Within this framework, Ecocritics are mainly concerned with how literature transmits certain values contributing to ecological thinking. They state that the environmental crisis is a question that cannot be overlooked in literary studies. Consciousness raising in Environmental thinking, and the ethical and aesthetic dilemmas posed by the global ecological crisis, force literary scholars to recognize the important role literature and criticism play in understanding man's position in the ecosphere. This, however, raises the question of the politization of literature if the critical focus falls only on extra-textual themes in any given literary text.

All works related to the Ecology and Environmental studies have influenced literature and authors began exploring and depicting the natural world and human interactions with it. Ecological themes in literature give an overview of the diverse relationship between organisms and their environments, reflecting the delicate balance within ecosystems and the consequences of disrupting it. Environmental studies, on the other hand, inspire literary works that address broader issues like climate change, pollution, and sustainability, prompting readers to consider the social, political, and ethical dimensions of these challenges. The various genres of literature become a powerful medium to address ecological awareness and environmental concerns.

Ecocritics might analyse a wide range of texts, from classic literature to contemporary works, looking at how they depict environmental degradation, human-nature relationships, and the ethical implications of these portrayals. The goal of Eco criticism is to uncover the underlying environmental ideologies in literary works and to challenge readers to think critically about their own relationship with the environment. The recent landslide of Kerala's Wayanad district deserves mention here.

The 2024 landslide in Wayanad also emphasizes the need for integrating local knowledge with scientific research in environmental studies. The disaster has snatched the lives and shelter of multitudes. Their lives have come to a standstill. It was not just an alarm to the ecologically fragile regions like the Western Ghats but to the entire world about the need to protect the immediate environment in which we live. Environmental literature can play a pivotal role here by documenting indigenous knowledge systems that have traditionally managed and mitigated such risks. This can inform more sustainable approaches to development that respect ecological limits and prioritize the well-being of both human and non-human communities.

By recording and narrating the devastation of the landscape, the loss of biodiversity, and the displacement of communities, such literature can highlight the innate value of nature beyond its utility to humans. This lines up with the growing field of Environmental Humanities, which seeks to reframe environmental problems as cultural and ethical issues. There are many things we should understand and learn from our environment. It is our right to protect and preserve our natural surroundings. Literature enables us to learn about the growing significance of the surrounding and the need to safeguard. It is the need of the hour to nurture and foster our environment.

Writing for the Earth is a double act, involving both personal and collective endeavour, challenging writers to focus their creative abilities on developing ecological awareness and initiating change. As storytellers, poets, and essayists, these authors have the responsibility not only to describe reality as it is but also to imagine what it could be in a changed world. Through the study of nature's role in modern literature, one appreciates the longstanding human relationship with the planet as well as the urgent need to restore that relationship. This theme invites writers, teachers, and literary enthusiasts to rethink the place of literature in the development of ecological consciousness and the sustenance of a greener future. This is a tribute to the unrelenting ability of language to unite, inspire, and create change.

Writers Capital International Foundation is pleased to compile the papers presented in the maiden International Conference on behalf of the Global Nexus Series of International Conference on Literature, Arts and Academia. The papers endeavour to promote discourses on contemporary literature, and its myriad manifestation through creative outpourings. It seeks to encourage interdisciplinary collaboration and inspire creative association. The papers incorporated in the anthology cover the relevant theme of the conference from academicians, research scholars, social workers, Industry professionals, activists & independent researchers from across the disciplines on the following sub topics (but not restricted to):

- Environment Narratives
- Eco critical Literature
- Ecofeminism
- Climate Fiction (Cli-fi)
- Nature and Wilderness

- Environment Justice in Literature
- Green Studies
- Indigenous Ecologies
- Anthropocene and Literature
- Environmental Activism and Literature
- Speculative Fiction
- Personal Reflection and Nature Writing

It's time to ignite meaningful dialogue and foster global collaboration. As we embark on this journey through the marvels of nature and green writing, let us celebrate the academicians, poets, storytellers, creative writers and all those who contribute to this ever-evolving genre of ecocritical literature. Literature has witnessed a renaissance of creativity and innovation, and it is our collective responsibility to nurture and preserve this legacy for generations to come. I invite you to sail through the pages that follow, where we will explore the multifaceted world of Environmental Literature, its triumphs, its challenges, and its endless potential. Together, let us unite in the world of insightful words, as we navigate the changing tides of Writing for the Earth and role of Nature in contemporary literature.

Happy Reading!

Dr. Aparna Ajith
Member, Steering Committee
Global Nexus Series of International Conferences

EDITORIAL

Writing for the Earth: Role of Nature in Contemporary Literature

Literature gives voice to humanity. Moreover, it provides an opportunity to navigate the broad spectrum of ideas and institutions generated over the time immemorial. In fact, literature helps to comprehend the nature of humanity itself. However, today in our ongoing literary engagement with the diversity of experiences, we face a striking dilemma to believe or not-to-believe in much-proclaimed human civilisational progress. Confronted with a quandary, today we are pushed to evoke human rationality to look both 'back' and 'forth' and make an urgent enquiry; how far the humanity has actually progressed and for what good? As a part of the fitting scrutiny, one tends to question- whether humanity is actually capable to understand its own nature? Or perhaps, it has somewhere lost the intrinsic connection with foundational understanding of its own origin altogether.

In the long journey of human civilisational progress with a number of astonishing accomplishments and technological advancement writ large, today humanity seems to stand on the verge of ecological collapse. We, the humans, as the superior species placed at the highest echelon in the evolutionary chain, might have scaled great heights but, at the same time, various developmental models executed by us have raised serious concerns about the purpose, process and product of their intrusive deployment, that too is done with so much fanfare. Hence, while facing the implications, and bereft amidst anxious speculations about the imminent, 'sustainability' becomes a budge word to look for and forward with great hope.

The first edition of *Nexus Review*, an international peer-reviewed journal of multidisciplinary studies launched by the Writers Capital International Foundation engages in the dialogue aforementioned. It addresses a crucial subject to initiate deeply concerned deliberations around the quavering Human-Nature relationship. The present edition allows literature to speak for 'Nature' which had somewhere left 'silenced' behind, amidst the cacophony of industrial urban landscapes and overcrowded cities. Thereby, the papers included in this edition both investigate and explicate the role of 'Nature' in the contemporary literature across the geographical, political and cultural boundaries. These deliberations persuade one to rethink, redefine and reshape the historic human civilisational march towards the set developmental goals.

The stimulating papers contributed to the present edition by versatile authors cover a large arena of academics. The intellectual probing undertaken by these authors with prestigious institutional affiliations, encompasses a wide range of literary works produced over a long historical span, in different literary traditions and genres. These papers initiate a sincere enquiry over a wide variety of literary works, comprising discreet aesthetic sensibilities while manifesting the ingrained thematic concerns, vivid imagery and subtle symbolism therein. However, all of the inquisitive overtures finally seem to converge in a deep sense of ecological balance and environmental justice. It is interesting to see how the long silence of nature gets broken through

literature, causing a soft whisper in the ears of humanity, concurrently imparting a valuable message to grasp thereof.

The papers included in the present edition exhibit both creative and critical content laced with ecocritical sensitivity, exhibited in multifarious form. Whether it is exposing the pain caused by humanity, while showing the devastating impact of unsustainable human actions, through close analysis of poetic works such as Adrienne Rich's "The Trees", Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Binsey Poplars", Imtiaz Dharker's "X" and T. S. Eliot's "Wasteland" or the literary representation of nature's voice in the Robert Frost's poetry and contemporary Mayan poetic discourses, the critical understanding of poetic voices hit the human problematic and give a cautionary advice. Other investigative churning efficaciously locate the intersection of folklore and ecology to explain how native sensibilities and indigenous cultural practices have always imbibed 'sustainable' living as a means to co-existence. Many of other investigations, focused on select literary works, divulge how folk beliefs and traditions not only preserve cultural identity but ascertain ecological equilibrium in their own way. Navigating the literary landscape of David Treuer's *The Hiawatha*, Deepa Agarwal's *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand*, a mythical understanding of the bird *Jalak Larwu* and folklore of *Vovasanggayu* in Pasangkayu, the intense deliberations evince how nature becomes a source of inspiration as well as a symbol of life, beauty, and sustenance while embodying mutual respect and resilience at the same time. Fictional landscape of Andrea Hirata's *Laskar Pelangi*, Mahasweta Devi's *The Book of the Hunter*, Kazuo Ishiguro's *Klara and the Sun* and Deepa Agarwal's *Journey to the Forbidden City* and *The Walking Tree* do not remain just a fictional exercise but create environmental awareness and emphasize harmonious relationship between nature and culture. On the other hand, a discursive engagement with the contemporary travel literature indicates how explorative writings may become a catalyst to counter anthropocentric approach. Simultaneously, while making a proclamation for indivisibility of Nature and Universe, the intellectual enquiry seems to share a deep philosophical viewpoint.

Powerful writings compiled in this edition not only express the sentiments of a sensitive human soul shared through literary articulations, as pointed out by the esteemed contributors, but also foregrounds the human-nature dialogue to make a plea for essential reconciliation of human with nature. Humanity never did, does not and will ever exist in isolation since it has always been a part of complex ecological network, wherein nature stands as a fundamental life-giving and life-nurturing force. Nature stands at the core of humanity and humanity exists in relation to the nature. Hence, it is important to identify, acknowledge, and celebrate the human-nature coexistence as well as reconciliation. Exploring the 'writings for the nature' in literature serves as an inspiring attempt in this direction. This edition aims to inculcate the much-desired eco-sensitivity in humankind that could ensure this reconciliation. Indeed, the opening edition of *Nexus Review* embarks on a beautiful journey. And, this enterprise begins with a multi-dimensional discourse on Human -Nature correlation and conflict, which not only addresses the embedded problematic but also persuades to fix it before it is too late.

Dr. Bhumika Sharma
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IRONICAL DWELLING OF LITERATE HUMANS

Arul Little Snita S

Abstract:

Community dwelling happens on urban extension. Urbanization relies on displacement of human settlements. These intricate pattern of settlement lead to modern urbanization. The character Mukunda in the novel *The Book of the Hunter* by Mahasweta Devi depicts an instinctive notion to write an epic on an inappropriate interval. Owing to induced displacement, Munkunda has constructive thoughts to accomplish the epic about his endurances for settlement in a marginalized region. The paper attempts to depict the events that possibly accumulate in the epic revolve around settlement anticipation in the mind of Mukunda over sustainability in modern urbanism.

Key words: Displacement, Literate, Urbanism, Settlement

The induced displacement overshadowed Mukunda with an anticipation on sustainable settlement. Mukunda as a literate person encounters displacement for settlement from Daminya to Ararha. Foregoing any second thoughts, Raja Bankura Roy, the king positioned Mukunda as a mentor to his son. The endorsement of literate individuals is a sign of urbanism. Even then Mukunda is consistently struck with thoughts to write an epic. Daminya is a place ruled by estate owners namely as landlords.

Urban extension begins with displacement under which strives township. Urban

extension later, progresses with acquiring land followed by displacing the people who thrived in its land. The age long occupation and agricultural practices are abruptly put an end with urban activities. In this way, it acts as a zone of comfort for naïve dwellers. Mukunda settled in Ararha with utmost honour as a literate. Ararha again is a reflection of urbanized region, on contrary it is ruled by royals in the name of king and queen. The rule of royals assures the statue of social power. The social power signifies the dignity and recognition among community dwellers. Ararha region is a township which has extended over forestland inhabited by Shabars, the hunter tribes.

These revelations of dwelling bring Mukunda to a forefront of reality in ironical state of settlement. The revelations are perceived in modernist form. The forest land is encroached in the name of urban extension. These aspects form an instinctive notion for Mukunda to write an epic. This is a concealed thought of Mukunda on anticipation of sustainable settlement. The place of Ararha assures a livelihood for settlers who have endured a widest range of displacement. On a reflective level, Ararha itself is a place that has destroyed the natural land namely forest lands. Shabars, the hunter tribes are the natives of forest land. They lead a livelihood depending on forests and it by-products. These products are further traded by Shabars on local community of Ararha.

Displacement is a favourable aspect for

human settlers while it acts as a burden on destruction of natural environment including forest land. Literacy advocates on educating people to read and write and to reproduce the skills in a vital manner. Shabars, the hunter tribes are no way convinced to appeal towards becoming a literate individual. The natives of forest land, Shabars are tribes who lead their dwelling on hunting animals. As hunters, the world of literacy is a far ahead concept to Shabars.

Urbanism supports the concept of prosperity and the notion of an independent survival. With executing the acceptance towards Royal system of hierarchy rule, the essence of independence is least advocated on practical form. Being a literate person earns a settlement which is further assured on dependence in the urban extension. On the parallel grounds, the natives of forest land, Shabars as tribes lead their livelihood on independence. The concept of independence is innate in their sustained settlement.

Urban dwellers become encroachers of forest land. The settlers of Daminya are considered as wanderers, whose settlements were induced to undergo a displacement.

These settlers attained settlement in relevance with peasantry occupation. Literate individual thrives hard for livelihood which has demanded the occupation as an agrarian from the same individual. As a dignified individual, literacy is sufficient to attain social power structure. The displacement has evidently positioned literate individual to deserved state. However, existence is again proved as an unsettling state as forest land is encroached.

Mukunda's thought structure is predominant with anticipation of ironical state of dwelling. Displacement assures urban extension of dwelling with the destruction of forest land. The necessity of literacy acts as a progressive one to enrich a literate individual to attain social power of supremacy. The displaced individuals acquire recognized state owing to literacy while the native of forestland hold a state as an outcast. These realities have sprung as deep down anticipation in Mukunda so as to pen down an epic in a productive manner.

Reference:

1. Devi, Mahasweta. *The Book of the Hunter*.



Arul Little Snita S is a Research Scholar in the Department of English at St. John's College, Palayamkottai, affiliated with Manonmaniam Sundaranar University, Tirunelveli. She is currently pursuing her doctoral studies under the guidance of Dr. B. Beneson Thilagar Christadoss, with a research focus that delves into themes related to nature and animals in English literature. An ardent nature enthusiast, her academic pursuits are deeply intertwined with her passion for the environment, reflecting her commitment to exploring the intricate connections between literature and the natural world. In addition to her scholarly endeavors, she is an avid reader who finds great inspiration in the richness of language and its ability to convey the profound beauty of ecology. Her work seeks to bridge the realms of literary analysis and environmental awareness, contributing meaningfully to both fields.

THE INTERSECTION OF FOLKLORE VOVASANGGAYU AND ECOLOGY IN THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF PASANGKAYU

Arwin Ramli and Zainatul Shuhaida Abdull Rahman

Abstract:

The Vovasanggayu legend of Pasangkayu illustrates the intersection of folklore and ecology in preserving cultural identity. Folklore, as an essential medium for transmitting traditional beliefs and practices, helps maintain a community's cultural heritage and fosters a deep connection with the natural environment. In Pasangkayu, the Vovasanggayu story, centered around the sacred mangrove trees, imparts ecological wisdom and emphasizes the importance of environmental stewardship. This narrative preserves cultural traditions and fosters collective responsibility for nature, aligning cultural identity with sustainable practices. By embedding ecological values in folklore, Pasangkayu exemplifies how cultural stories can contribute to environmental conservation. This research explores how folklore, such as Vovasanggayu, reinforces community values, strengthens identity, and promotes ecological awareness, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage and natural resources for future generations.

Keywords: Folklore, Ecology, Cultural Identity, Environmental Stewardship, Pasangkayu.

Introduction

Folklore refers to a community's traditional beliefs, customs, stories, songs, and practices passed through generations by word of mouth. It encompasses various cultural expressions, including myths, legends, folktales, and rituals (Hunter, 2020; Sultoni et al., 2022). Folklore serves as a medium for preserving cultural

heritage and transmitting values, norms, and wisdom from generation to generation (Kumar, 2024; Sultoni et al., 2022). This role of folklore is essential for maintaining a community's identity and passing on wisdom about life, nature, and the world. In many societies, folklore is not just entertainment but also a vital tool for education and social cohesion.

Ecology is the branch of biology that studies the interactions among organisms and their environment. It focuses on understanding the relationships between living beings, including humans, and their physical surroundings (Kumar, 2024; Sultoni et al., 2022). Ecology examines ecosystems, biodiversity, and the processes that sustain life, aiming to understand how natural systems function and how they are affected by human activities (Sultoni et al., 2022). The study of ecology helps in developing strategies for conservation and sustainability. In a world increasingly impacted by environmental degradation, understanding ecological systems through scientific and cultural lenses can lead to more effective solutions for preserving natural habitats.

Folklore connects cultural narratives with ecological elements, reflecting how communities perceive and interact with their environment (Hunter, 2020; Sultoni et al., 2022). Embedding ecological wisdom in stories and traditions helps preserve environmental values across generations (Kumar, 2024; Sultoni et al., 2022). Films promote awareness and sustainability by addressing ecological issues through folklore (Aziz et al., 2023). Additionally, folklore is central to ecocriticism,

which explores how traditional narratives influence attitudes toward nature and encourage environmental stewardship (Sul-toni et al., 2022). In the context of ecological activism, folklore can reflect both environmental values and a call to action, encouraging sustainable practices within communities. This connection between folklore and ecology underscores the need for incorporating traditional ecological knowledge into contemporary environmental efforts.

Cultural practices like those of the Minangkabau Muslim community show how folklore supports environmental preservation. Stories such as the *Legend of Bujang Sembilan* and the *Lubuk Larangan Tradition* reflect local wisdom about sustainability (Hilmiyatun et al., 2022). Folktales also promote conservation, like the legends of the Sewawar waterfall (Sul-toni et al., 2022). In the Pakpak Dairi community, folklore emphasizes the connection between humans, nature, and spirituality. Similarly, the Mandalika story shows how folklore links environmental care with economic practices (Berutu & Hidayat, 2023). These examples demonstrate the broad impact of folklore in preserving cultural identity and shaping a collective environmental consciousness that balances cultural values with ecological needs.

Folklore in Pasangkayu plays a crucial role in preserving the community's traditional beliefs, customs, and stories, which are integral to its cultural identity (Marlina et al., 2021). The Vova Sanggayu story, for instance, teaches younger generations about the importance of cultural heritage and environmental stewardship, reflecting the community's deep connection with the natural environment. Through such folklore, the people of Pasangkayu pass down ecological wisdom, embedding values of respect and protection for nature in their cultural narratives. The Vova Sanggayu tree, a central symbol in this folklore, represents safety and the community's reliance on nature, highlighting the intersection of ecological understanding and cultural identity. The name "Pasangkayu" itself derives from the words "Vova" and "Sanggayu," which refer to a type of

mangrove tree, reinforcing the deep ecological roots that shape the region's identity (Marlina et al., 2021). This connection between folklore and ecology is critical to understanding how the community navigates modernity while maintaining its cultural heritage.

The Vova Sanggayu story is an educational tool and a symbol of ecological and cultural preservation in Pasangkayu. The community continues to preserve and pass down these stories despite the challenges posed by modernity. Elders play an essential role in ensuring that the next generation understands the significance of these tales. Folklore, such as Vova Sanggayu, serves as an important cultural marker, connecting ecological wisdom with the region's daily life and fostering awareness about environmental conservation. As this folklore is documented and shared, it reinforces the values of environmental care and social responsibility, thus maintaining Pasangkayu's unique cultural identity (Marlina et al., 2021). Efforts to adapt and reissue these stories for contemporary audiences further ensure their relevance in promoting ecological awareness and preserving cultural heritage for future generations.

Analysis: Folklore Vovasanggayu and Ecology in the Cultural Identity of Pasangkayu

Folklore as a Preserver of Cultural Identity

Folklore plays a crucial role in preserving cultural identity by acting as a repository for a community's collective wisdom, values, and beliefs. Through transmitting stories, myths, and legends across generations, folklore ensures the continuity of cultural practices, allowing communities to maintain a sense of self in the face of changing times. As Bhatia et al. (2021) explain, folklore encapsulates societal norms and moral codes, reflecting the structures that govern social behavior. By embedding these principles in narratives, folklore reinforces them within the community, helping to sustain shared values. Folklore fosters group identity

and solidarity, bringing people together through familiar stories, rituals, and traditions. This communal aspect strengthens social bonds and cultivates a collective consciousness, reminding members of their cultural heritage. Furthermore, in the modern era, folklore adapts to new forms of media, such as the Internet and social networks, ensuring its ongoing relevance and accessibility in contemporary society (Hilmiyatun et al., 2021). In this way, folklore becomes a living, dynamic force that shapes identity while preserving the cultural foundations of a community.

In the case of the Vovasanggayu legend, folklore serves as a vital tool for preserving the cultural identity of Pasangkayu. Naming the mangrove trees “Vova Sanggayu” connects the community to the natural environment and reinforces a deep sense of cultural pride. The name, meaning “trees that grow on their own,” emphasizes themes of resilience and autonomy, values central to the community’s identity (Marlina et al., 2021). This link between the environment and cultural traditions underscores how folklore reflects the community’s values and relationship with nature, shaping their collective identity. Using the local language in naming elements of nature highlights the significance of language as a cornerstone of cultural identity, ensuring that traditions and stories remain uniquely tied to their origins (Hermawan & Wulandari, 2021). By embedding cultural specificity into the narrative, the legend becomes a symbol of pride, helping to reinforce a shared sense of belonging. Moreover, the story’s timeless themes of unity, environmental respect, and shared responsibility are adaptable to modern contexts, making the folklore relevant even as the community changes. As the world modernizes, the core values of folklore protection of nature, respect for tradition, and communal cooperation—can be integrated into contemporary educational and conservation efforts, ensuring the story’s legacy endures for future generations (Sul-toni et al., 2022). Through this process, the folklore not only

preserves the cultural identity of Pasangkayu but also fosters an enduring connection to its environmental and social heritage.

Ecology Embedded in Storytelling

Ecology embedded in storytelling refers to the integration of natural elements and environmental wisdom within traditional narratives, where human interactions with nature are often central themes. These stories help preserve and transmit the ecological knowledge communities have accumulated over generations, promoting a sense of responsibility toward the environment. Folktales with ecological themes often highlight the sustainable practices and values that enable communities to live harmoniously with their surroundings, teaching environmental stewardship and social responsibility. Such narratives are fundamental in preserving local biodiversity and ecological practices while maintaining cultural identity (Aziz et al., 2023; Bhatia et al., 2021; Gupta, 2022). By blending cultural traditions with ecological wisdom, storytelling is crucial in educating communities about the natural world and fostering a sustainable relationship with it (Sul-toni et al., 2022; HL, 2021).

The legend of Vovasanggayu in Pasangkayu is a prime example of how ecology is embedded in storytelling. The folklore surrounding the mangrove trees connects the community’s cultural identity with their natural environment, emphasizing the importance of mangroves in maintaining coastal stability and supporting biodiversity. By framing nature as sacred and vital to the community’s well-being, the story instills a deep respect for the environment and emphasizes ecological values such as resilience and sustainability (Sul-toni et al., 2022). In the context of mangroves, this narrative highlights their crucial role in maintaining the ecosystem and encouraging communities to protect these vital resources for future generations. The mangroves’ role in preventing erosion and providing habitats for marine life is underscored in the narrative, emphasizing these trees’ ecological

and cultural significance (Bhatia et al., 2021; Amalia & Thohir, 2022). This combination of environmental and cultural elements within the folklore encourages the community to protect these ecosystems actively, ensuring the preservation of cultural heritage and ecological balance for future generations (Bhatia et al., 2021; HL, 2021).

Redemption and Collective Responsibility

Folktales often emphasize themes of redemption by showcasing cultural values and moral teachings. In the story of Ijo from Cape Babia, redemption is achieved through his determination and faith, with his grandmother's prayers providing crucial support. His success in breaking cultural taboos and returning home safely reflects a journey of personal growth and societal reconciliation (Marlina et al., 2021). Similarly, the story of Nenek Tupu, who selflessly shares her harvest with neighbors, illustrates the importance of generosity and social solidarity, reinforcing collective well-being as a shared responsibility. These narratives demonstrate how redemption often emerges through individual transformation supported by community values, emphasizing the interdependence of personal and societal growth.

Beyond personal redemption, folktales often highlight the broader importance of collective responsibility. The reciprocal care exhibited by characters like Granny Tupu and her neighbor Jirana exemplifies how mutual aid strengthens community bonds during times of need (Marlina et al., 2021). Stories such as these illustrate that collective responsibility is a moral imperative and a practical approach to fostering community resilience. Furthermore, folktales integrate environmental ethics into their moral teachings.

Environmental stewardship is a recurring theme in these stories, often tied to redemption and collective responsibility. In the Vova Sanggayu tale, Puaq's greed initially threatens communal resources, but Ijo's intervention reframes the issue as one of shared ecological ownership. This moment, where Puaq

recognizes the collective value of the mangroves, illustrates how community dialogue and shared values can resolve conflicts and foster environmental responsibility (Marlina et al., 2021). The villagers' collective effort to protect the mangroves underscores the strength of unity in achieving shared goals. Together, these narratives demonstrate that redemption and collective responsibility are not just moral ideals but essential pillars for building resilient communities capable of addressing social and environmental challenges.

Critical Reflection on the Legend of Vovasanggayu

The legend of Vovasanggayu exemplifies how folklore serves as a vital bridge between culture and ecology, offering timeless lessons about resilience, unity, and respect for nature. This narrative functions as a repository of wisdom, emphasizing the connection between humans and the environment and highlighting the importance of maintaining harmony with nature. The narrative addresses contemporary challenges such as environmental degradation and cultural shifts, embedding these lessons within a culturally specific framework that ensures its relevance across generations (Kumar, S.C., 2024; Bhatia et al., 2021). By doing so, it not only preserves cultural identity but also promotes sustainability practices, making it a powerful tool for shaping Pasangkayu's identity, reinforcing community values, and encouraging environmental stewardship (Hermawan & Wulandari, 2021). The folktale's blend of tradition and ecological wisdom provides a roadmap for addressing cultural and environmental concerns in the modern age.

To maintain its significance, the community must actively integrate the legend into contemporary practices, ensuring its lessons resonate with future generations (Marlina et al., 2021). This requires careful adaptation, as the traditional essence of the story must be preserved while making it accessible and applicable to modern contexts. Incorporating the legend into education, environmental

policies, and digital platforms can ensure its relevance. This process involves incorporating the tale into curricula that teach environmental science, cultural heritage, and moral values, thus ensuring that the next generation learns about the importance of ecological and cultural preservation (Hilmiyatun et al., 2021; Bhatia et al., 2021). Schools can play a pivotal role by introducing the legend into formal education systems, providing students with an understanding of environmental ethics and cultural pride from an early age.

Community events celebrating the legend through performances, rituals, or festivals can further reinforce its cultural significance, providing opportunities for people to engage with the story in an interactive and meaningful way. These participatory experiences enable the younger generation to connect dynamically with the folklore and its moral teachings (Hermawan & Wulandari, 2021). Additionally, technological tools such as documentaries or social media campaigns can expand the story's reach to a broader audience, particularly younger generations, who are more likely to consume content through digital platforms (Marlina et al., 2021). By adapting the transmission of Vovasanggayu to modern methods, it can continue to serve as both a cultural treasure and a guide for sustainable living. The evolving nature of storytelling ensures that the legend continues to serve as a relevant source of wisdom, guiding communities to preserve their heritage while addressing the ecological and social challenges of the future (Sul-toni et al., 2022; Kumar, S.C., 2024). Ultimately, the continued adaptation of this folktale will ensure that its core values of unity, environmental respect, and resilience remain central to the community's collective consciousness.

Conclusion

The intersection of folklore and ecology in Pasangkayu is exemplified through the Vova Sanggayu story, which serves as a cultural and environmental beacon for the community. The folklore of Pasangkayu,

particularly the Vova Sanggayu, helps preserve cultural identity by passing down traditional beliefs, customs, and values across generations. The Vova Sanggayu tree, symbolizing safety and ecological balance, reflects the community's deep-rooted connection with nature. By integrating ecological wisdom into cultural narratives, this folklore reinforces the importance of environmental stewardship and promotes a sustainable relationship between the community and its surroundings. Through this connection, the story helps foster a collective sense of responsibility and unity, emphasizing the value of preserving cultural heritage and natural resources. Furthermore, this folklore's ongoing preservation and adaptation ensure its continued relevance in a modern world, where environmental challenges and cultural shifts are prevalent. The Vova Sanggayu legend remains an essential tool for educating future generations about balancing tradition and ecological sustainability, ensuring that Pasangkayu's cultural identity is in harmony with its natural environment.

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THE TREES: A VOICE FOR THE MARGINALIZED THROUGH THE LENS OF ENVIRONMENT

Anisha Mondal

My paper is based on the theory of ecocriticism or eco feminism which intends to analyse the pain caused by humans on nature and its revolution against mankind through the poem “The Trees” by Adrienne Rich. Unlike other approaches of the theory of literature in this approach we will not only talk about how nature is subdued by humans through their development but how nature is showing its impact. Adrienne Rich in her poems always tried to present a voice to the categories who are subdued. She uses certain subtle motifs throughout her works which are impactful once we see it with insightful eyes. According to the ideas of ecocriticism we know that ecocritics generally consider nature as subdued by humans. Ecocritics believe the world to be anthropocentric and often feel the importance to challenge the ideas with emphasis on environmental activism. There would be proper harmony and sustainability with that of humans with nature.

From the words of Greg Garrard in his work *Ecocriticism*(2004) he mentioned that “Ecocriticism explores the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production.”

Nature has always been portrayed as the marginalized who lacked voices of its own . It teaches us to absorb and adapt.

We know about how humans continue to live in this world creating a ruckus with a tag of “Survival for the fittest”. But in the tug of war between nature with its natural resources and the increasing development which is not sustainable, nature is always treated as something which needs not to be bothered about.

In the work “The Cost of Living” by Arundhati Roy, she mentioned that

“Big dams are to a nation’s
‘development’ what nuclear
bombs are to its military arsenal.
They’re both weapons of mass
destruction.”
(The Cost of Living)

Through which she tried to bring forward the ideas of how dams and developments like this are environmentally destructive in nature. In the poem “The Trees” by Rich we get the very same ideas of how trees are taken off from their natural habitat and are replaced by concrete jungle. Throughout the poem we can find various metaphors and images where trees are trying to free themselves from the confinement of humans. Initially while reading the poem we felt that the speaker was empathetic with nature as she wanted the trees to go to their natural habitat as many other species are dependent on them. Rachel Carson in her work *Silent Spring*(1962) mentioned that

“In nature nothing exists alone.”
(*Silent Spring*)

Through which she presented the idea of interdependence of all living things with nature and human beings are negatively impacting on nature.

As we proceed with the poem we find that the trees are parts of nature who are freeing themselves from the confinement of humans.

“All night the roots work
to disengage themselves from the
cracks
in the veranda floor.”
(Stanza 2, *The Trees*, Rich)

The above lines not only talk about nature’s act of liberation and freedom but also symbolizes the rebellion of nature. The nature which was not voiced got back its voice once it was healed and regenerated its courage to move out of human confinements. The struggle of the trees can easily be compared with any marginalised or subdued and therefore disengagements of the trees as that of rebellion against the power.

A contrasting image against the confinement we find in another poem by Leslie Norris, “*A Tiger in the Zoo*” where a ferocious animal like tiger lost its wrath because it is under the confinements of the human beings. The line states as

“He hears the last voice at night,
The patrolling cars,
And stares with his brilliant eyes
At the brilliant stars.”
(*A Tiger in the zoo*)

Bringing out the same idea I would like to draw a comparison between the conditions of the tiger in Blake’s poem “*The Tyger*” which presented a revolutionary idea of nature where nature in its own form is bright and doesn’t fear anybody.

Tyger Tyger burning bright,
In the forests of the night:
What immortal hand or eye,
Dare frame thy fearful symmetry?
(*The Tyger*)

Another crucial idea of no botheration of the speaker, here, who is the representative of the majority of humans of the society is presented in the poem “*The Trees*” by Adrienne Rich as well. “I sit inside, doors open to the veranda

writing long letters
in which I scarcely mention the
departure of the forest from the house.”
(*The Trees*)

Though it seems that it doesn’t matter what happens with the nature around us but as human beings are also an integral part of nature thus there is a guilt consciousness which struck the speaker in the poem “*The Trees*” where there is a call inside her head making her feel that she might not be feeling the same next day. The poem ends with a rebellion from the trees as they are no longer willing to stay under human control.

Subaltern theory in ecocriticism examines the intersection of environmental issues with the voices and experiences of marginalized or oppressed groups. So, to conclude, we can think the whole poem “*The Trees*” as a metaphorical poem which is subjecting not only the pain and the consequences of humans colonization on nature but also the horrific condition of all the marginalised of our society who are struck in the vicious cycle of stereotypes from which they want to free themselves radically. Rich through her works tried to use elements from nature to bring out the dark images of human life so that it can create a vivid picture for the readers. She tried to end the poem using the extended

metaphors of positivity where the true inhabitants would be recreating their places back through the start of a revolution.

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LITERATURE AS A TOOL FOR EDUCATION AND SOCIAL CHANGE

Berita Mambarasi Nehe

Introduction

Literature has long been one of the pillars of culture, reflecting the social, political, and psychological conditions of society. In Indonesia, literature serves not only as entertainment or a means of self-expression but also as a powerful tool for education and social change. Through literature, writers can critique injustice, educate society about moral values, and influence people's thoughts and actions to create a better world. Literature, with its beauty and storytelling power, acts as an important bridge between personal understanding and broader social transformation. Literature has always been a powerful way to share ideas, tell stories, and reflect on life. It does more than entertain us; it can also teach us important lessons and inspire us to think about the world in new ways. Through books, poems, and plays, writers help us understand different ideas, cultures, and problems in society. Literature can show us what is wrong in the world, and help us see ways we can make things better. For centuries, literature has been used to raise awareness about social issues, challenge unfair systems, and inspire people to take action. It can teach us about kindness, justice, and how we can help improve our communities. In this essay, we will look at how literature not only helps us learn, but also has the power to bring about positive change in society.

Literature as an Educational Tool

Literature as an educational tool has a significant impact, especially in developing

character and introducing important life values. In Indonesia, literary works are often used in education to teach cultural concepts, moral values, and the history of the nation. Indonesian literature teaches the values of diversity, tolerance, hard work, and respect for local culture. One of the most famous examples is Andrea Hirata's novel *Laskar Pelangi*. This novel tells the story of children from poor families in Belitung who struggle to get an education. Through characters like Ikal, Lintang, and Mahar, readers are taught about the importance of education and perseverance in the face of limitations. The novel not only provides a moral message about determination and spirit but also introduces the importance of education as a tool to achieve dreams, even in difficult circumstances.

Another example is the work *Negeri 5 Menara* by A. Fuadi. This novel tells the story of Alif's school days, the character "Aku", together with his five friends at the Madani Islamic Boarding School, East Java. These six of them have their own goals and aspirations. At the cottage, they began to recognize the magic words in the form of "Man Jadda Wa Jadda", means "Who is serious, he will definitely get it". This book tells many things that are not yet known about "modern Islamic boarding schools". In fact, it is not uncommon for people to have wrong ideas about life in Islamic boarding schools themselves. The interesting thing about this book is that it can make readers fall in love with Islamic boarding school life, both the system and the people.

Literature as an Agent of Social Change

Literature also plays a significant role in social change and becomes an effective tool in raising social awareness and encouraging people to think critically about the existing conditions. One clear example of this is Pramoedya Ananta Toer's novel *Bumi Manusia* (*This Earth of Mankind*). This novel not only tells the love story between Minke and Annelies but also portrays the struggle of a native man fighting against Dutch colonialism. Through the character of Minke, Pramoedya critiques the colonial system, racial inequality, and social injustice of that time. This work encourages readers to think deeply about the nation's history and the importance of fighting for independence and social justice. *Bumi Manusia* becomes not only a work of literature but also a powerful educational tool for Indonesian history.

Another example is *Segala yang diisap Langit oleh Pinto Anugrah*. This novel describes the transformation of customs and cultural values due to internal factors such as the economy and external factors like traditions and social revolutions. The story in the novel illustrates the conflict between traditional Minangkabau values and the influence of modernization, including the shift from the matrilineal system and challenges to old customs. The novel reflects the complex socio-cultural dynamics and offers a critique of the changes occurring within the community.

Literature as a Mirror of Society and a Source of Social Awareness

Literature often functions as a mirror for society to reflect on their social reality. literature can highlight injustices, inspire empathy, and provoke thought, acting as a catalyst for change by encouraging individuals to question norms, confront prejudices, and envision a more equitable society. In this way, literature transcends mere storytelling, becoming a force that fosters understanding and social transformation. Literature shows

how injustice and oppression occur in different layers of society. *Siti Nurbaya* by Marah Rusli. The theme is tradition and social critique. The novel tells the story of Siti Nurbaya, a young woman forced to marry Datuk Maringgih, a wealthy older man, as a way to repay her family's debts. The central conflict revolves around true love and arranged marriages dictated by tradition. *Siti Nurbaya* is a critique of forced marriage practices and gender inequality in traditional Minangkabau society. The novel highlights the powerlessness of women under the pressure of customs and economic authority.

Conclusion

Literature is a vital tool for education and social change, offering more than just entertainment, it provides a means for reflection, learning, and transformation. Through literature, readers gain access to diverse experiences and perspectives, fostering empathy and critical thinking. It challenges societal norms, questions authority, and highlights social injustices, encouraging individuals to see the world through new lenses. By raising awareness and sparking dialogue, literature can inspire action and drive progress, making it an influential force in shaping attitudes and behaviors. As a powerful educational resource, literature has the capacity to cultivate informed, compassionate individuals who are more engaged with and committed to positive social change.

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THE ROLE OF NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Bilkis Moola

The Role of Nature in Contemporary Poetry

The role of nature in contemporary poetry resounds in waves throughout periodic epochs in literature. The elements for expression in verse are weaved through inspiration derived from states of heightened perception and conveyed through imagistic landscapes as a parallel symbiosis within the physical and natural realms of existence. Contemporary civilization has navigated historical revolutions from industry to technology where the natural world remains resolute in a beauty graced by the spiritual hand of divinity yet scarred by sprawls of urban decay that campaign for ecological awareness.

The analysis delivered henceforth, explores the thematic flow of nature as a source of inspiration against environmental distress where solace from nature as a panacea is challenged against the perils of technology and urbanization. The purpose within the scope of this thesis is towards establishing a harmony of coexistence where the role of poetry in contemporary literature exemplifies the voice for social responsibility.

Structured within the framework of natural symphony towards environmental discord through the poetry of selected contemporary poets, is an examination of figurative devices in poetry towards a synthesis of the role of nature in contemporary literature.

Nature As A Panacea

An analysis of the role of nature in

cotemporary poetry will be rendered incomplete without a comparative introduction to the classic poet, William Wordsworth (1770 - 1850). Informed by his love for nature, Wordsworth's thematic expressions of beauty and joy, reflective insights through internal dialogue and refreshing bursts of inspiration establish the foundation for the role of nature in contemporary poetry.

In *The Penguin Short History of English Literature* Stephen Coote states, "... the timeless mystery of sorrowful humanity and its radiant beauty ... to birds and flowers reflect (an) intensity of response, the most famous of these being 'I wandered lonely as a cloud' ... (as) perhaps the most anthologized poem in English Literature that takes the core of Wordsworth's poetic beliefs. Coote continues, "... the vision of the daffodils is reflected by the poet's 'greater organic sensibility'. He has that power of imagination whereby he can relive such 'spots of time'. For the true poet, the re-created memory of such deeply perceived scenes becomes an assurance of spiritual grace:

"For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills
And dances with the daffodils."
(Coote, 1993, p. 251)

Nature in contemporary poetry is perched

by a poet such as Mary Oliver (1935 - 2019) who in her poem “Wild Geese” encourages solitude in nature through the appreciative evocation of observation:

Wild Geese by, Mary Oliver
 You do not have to be good
 You do not have to walk on your knees
 for a hundred miles
 through the desert repeating.
 You only have to let the soft animal of
 your body love what
 it loves.
 Tell me about despair, yours, and I will
 tell you mine.
 Meanwhile the world goes on.
 Meanwhile the sun and the clear
 pebbles of the rain are
 moving across the landscapes, over the
 prairies and the
 deep trees, the mountains and the
 rivers.
 Meanwhile the wild geese, high in the
 clean blue air, are
 heading home again.
 Whoever you are, no matter how
 lonely, the world offers
 itself to your imagination, rolls to you
 like the wild geese;
 harsh and exciting – over and over
 announcing your place in
 the family of things. (Watershed
 Ecotherapy, n.d.).

Oliver’s, “Wild Geese” is consolatory verse that offers nature as a panacea to “despair” and “loneliness”. The psychological angst that plagues contemporary society is kindled in nature for relief, reassurance and the revival of the human spirit symbolically represented by birds in flight.

Nature Poetry As Protest

The campaign for ecological awareness through poetry is conveyed in the poem, “Illusion” by, Clive Blake (1954 -)

Illusion by, Clive Blake
 Although Mother Nature
 Has been raped and abused,
 Her basic laws ignored,
 So misread and confused,
 Our living world remains
 A most beautiful place,
 A jewel that stands out
 From the darkness of space,
 Help her to recover;
 Nurse her back to full health
 For without her, how empty
 The illusion of wealth.
 (Blake, 2021, p. 98)

In Blake’s poem, environmental consciousness and social responsibility towards preservation of the natural landscape is vocalized as outrage in words such as “rape and abused” (line 2), “ignored” (line 3) and “misread and confused” (line 4). Nature is portrayed in innocence where the avarice of the assailant human’s quest for “wealth” (line 12) is a mirage that exists in a vacuum. An appeal for compassion is admonished through emphasis in lines, 5 – 6:

“Our living world remains
 A beautiful place,” ...

An ecological lens through poetry represents the role of nature in contemporary literature. The poet’s voice through protest advocates consciousness through awareness for the impact of climate change, deforestation, urban squalor and pollution. The role of nature in contemporary poetry is illustrated and echoed in waves for revolutionary discourse sensitized to the perilous passage of economic development and expansion against the fragile spirit of survival for environmental conservation and social reform.

Figurative Devices in Poetry That Depict Nature

Vivid imagery and sensory language is evocative of poetic expression for the depiction

of natural landscapes. Contemporary poets harness metaphor and symbolism to portray depth stitched within and between identity, culture and the natural world.

Conclusion

Conclusively established, the role of nature in contemporary literature embodies a platform for ecological activism through poetic enlightenment. This harmonious symphony blends poetic verse as melody for

a global chorus against environmental decay within the philosophical interior landscape that reflects the exterior world in nature.

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Bilkis Moola is an acclaimed poet known for her vivid imagination and ability to craft the “song of the soul,” as described by Amazon. With three collections of poetry, *Wounds and Wings: A Lyrical Salve Through Metaphor, Ebb and Flow of Love*, and *Footsteps in Shadows*, she has made a significant mark on the international literary scene. In recognition of her contributions, Bilkis was honored with the Writers Capital International Foundation, Panorama International Literary Festival 2024: “Lifetime Achievement Award: Global Icon.” In addition to her poetic accomplishments, she has had an extensive career as an educationist and is currently pursuing post-graduate studies in English, further expanding her academic and literary pursuits.

THE VOICE OF NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY WRITING

Dr. Haji Mohd Ali bin Haji Radin

Introduction

Contemporary literature has played an increasingly important role in addressing pressing environmental issues such as climate change, habitat destruction, and the biodiversity crisis. In many modern works, nature is not merely a background but an active character involved in the conflict and narrative. Contemporary writers use elements of nature as a critical tool to express concern for ecology and sustainability, while highlighting the human relationship with nature that is increasingly endangered due to exploitation and neglect.

Nature as an Ecological Platform in Literature

Ecocritical literature is an approach in writing that examines how nature is depicted in literature and how human relationships with the environment are explained in narratives. In a world faced with climate crisis and environmental damage, contemporary works often highlight elements of nature to make readers aware of ecological issues. Contemporary writers no longer see nature as a passive element that simply functions as a setting, but as an entity that has a voice and rights, just like humans.

Barbara Kingsolver in her novel "Flight Behavior" uses nature as a victim of climate change, with the monarch butterfly insect becoming a symbol of nature's vulnerability to weather disturbances caused by human actions. In this novel, butterflies that normally migrate south

appear in a mountain forest that is unsuitable for their survival, a reflection of climate change altering natural migration patterns. Kingsolver describes how the beauty of nature, which is often neglected by humans, is faced with serious threats due to human error. The main character, Dellarobia Turnbow, through his discovery of the butterfly phenomenon, begins to understand the effects of climate change not only on nature but also on his daily life. This novel is a call to the reader about the need to pay attention to the early signs of environmental destruction that are often ignored.

Similarly, in "The Overstory" by Richard Powers, nature takes the role of the protagonist in the form of trees that unite and connect the human characters around them. Powers writes with a deep awareness of the rights of trees and ecosystems, where trees are not just objects but living beings that experience and feel. The work presents the tree as an entity that stands firmly at the center of the narrative, representing the cycle of life and the interconnectedness between humans and nature. Powers conveys the message that our relationship with trees and nature is deeper than we realize, and that the destruction of trees is a sign of our own destruction. In this novel, humans are portrayed as perpetrators who are often unaware of their role in damaging the larger ecosystem, and trees become symbols of courage and resilience in the face of these challenges.

Nature as Victim and Protagonist: The Relationship between Man and Nature

Through these examples, it can be seen that contemporary writers use nature not only as a symbol of beauty but also as a victim of human exploitation. Nature in these works is often presented in an endangered state, where the damage done by humans to the environment has wide and deep consequences. Whether in the form of extreme weather, loss of biodiversity, or disruption of natural cycles, nature is portrayed as an entity affected by human actions.

In “Flight Behavior”, butterflies trapped in the wrong environment reflect a larger global crisis, where nature is increasingly unable to adapt to the drastic changes produced by humans. This is a symbol of nature’s inability to adapt quickly to man-made pressures such as global temperature increases.

“The Overstory” takes up the theme that trees are protagonists in a larger story of destruction and preservation. This work emphasizes that humans are often separated from nature, but this connection needs to be recognized and appreciated if humans are to restore the balance of the global ecosystem. The trees, through various interconnected narratives, illustrate that every human action has a great impact on the environment.

Balance Between Beauty and Ecocentric Consciousness

Contemporary writers are often faced with the challenge of balancing the beauty of nature with a critical ecocentric awareness. In writing about nature, they not only describe the beauty of the landscape, flora, and fauna, but also instill a message about the need to preserve and protect this nature. This balance is important because the literary narrative needs to be able to capture the heart of the reader through the aesthetics of nature while raising a deep awareness of how fragile nature is in the face of global threats.

For example, in “Flight Behavior”, Kingsolver not only describes the phenomenon of butterflies as something beautiful but also reflects the difficulty of nature in adapting to the effects of climate change. The reader is drawn into the ephemeral beauty, triggering the realization that immediate action must be taken to maintain the balance of nature.

Likewise, Powers in “The Overstory” takes the reader into the wonder and mystery of the forest, providing a rarely explored perspective on the vital role of trees in the survival of humans and ecosystems. However, he also did not escape from describing the tragic reality of the destruction experienced by the trees as a result of human actions.

Conclusion

In contemporary literature, nature is no longer just a backdrop but has become a strong voice in conveying messages about concern for ecology and sustainability. Through works such as “Flight Behavior” and “The Overstory”, contemporary writers show how nature can be used as a platform to describe human relationships with the environment, as well as criticize human actions that have caused various ecological crises. This writing not only brings the beauty of nature to the reader, but also emphasizes the importance of preserving this fragile ecosystem, making literature one of the important tools in the fight against climate change and environmental destruction.

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FROST'S FROZEN LANDSCAPE: AN ECOCRITICAL EXPLORATION

Brishti Mukherjee

Abstract

This study conducts an ecocritical analysis of Robert Frost's poetry to examine the representation of ecological awareness & human-nature relationships. His work is shown to anticipate contemporary environmental concerns, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human & natural worlds. With in-depth analysis of some selected poems, this paper will also highlight the contrasting aspects of Frost's nature & that of the Romantic poets. This study reveals the complexities of Frost's ecological vision & its relevance to contemporary environmental concerns.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Robert Frost, Human-Nature Relationships, Ecological awareness.

Introduction

"My definition of poetry (if I were forced to give one) would be this: Words that have become deeds."- Robert Lee Frost.

Robert Frost emerged as a poet in the America of transition- when the literature was transforming from Romanticism to Modernism. He can not essentially be called a modernist, as he spoke for conservative adherence to tradition. Frost's use of imagery & symbolism to describe the rural New England stands in sharp contrast to the increasing urbanization of America. Along with the writers like

Emerson & Thoreau, Frost contributed to the revitalization of the New England literature. Beneath the familiar mask of a shrewd Yankee farmer, Frost presented himself as a gentle, soulful, meditative & universal poet who was able to "see the world in a grain of sand." According to him,

A poem begins with a lump in the throat; a homesickness. It is a reaching out towards expression; an effort to find fulfillment. A complete poem is one where an emotion has found its thought & the thought has found the words. (paras. 4-5)

Ecocriticism: An Introduction to the Theory

William Rueckert coined the term 'ecocriticism' in his essay *Literature & Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* (1978). As a literary movement, it began in USA & UK. Cheryl Glotfelty & Harold Fromm co-edited the journal called *The Ecocriticism Reader*. It is based on an interdisciplinary point of analyzing texts that illustrate environmental concerns & examine various ways to interpret the works of authors from environmentalist perspective. The general features of this theory are:

- a. Ecocritics study works to find out representations of nature in writing, adverse effects on nature, nature in its violent form, role of human in destroying nature, etc.

- b. They reject the notion that everything is socially or linguistically constructed. Nature has a real physical entity.
- c. They believe that too much attention to nature as a cultural & ideological construct may neglect it as an objective, material & vulnerable reality.
- d. Karl Kroeber points out that ecocriticism is an escape from "the esoteric abstractness that afflicts current theorizing about literature."

Nature in Frost's Poetry

Most of Robert Frost's poems have a distinct flavor of the countryside enriched with pictorial scenic description. In his poetry nature is highly deceptive because sinister & terrifying potentialities reign supreme. He moulds nature according to the woes of mankind. In an interview, Frost said: "I guess I am not a Nature poet. I have written only two poems without a human being in them." His nature is wild, oftentimes having a bitter-sweet quality. It has a realistic flavor describing the co-existence of human & nature. To reflect more on this topic, an in-depth analysis of his selected poems are given below:

- **The Road Not Taken:** This poem highlights the dilemma of choice in human life. Likewise, nature is also whimsical here. The 'yellow wood' & the two roads covered with dry leaves perfectly settle with the pensive mood of the poem. Indicating the arrival of winter, Frost makes the choice of life more vague, uncertain & difficult. He finally ends up choosing the less-travelled path- this path here appears to be the journey of life. The dark forest reflects the real complexities of our life & the accidental, incomprehensible nature of the formative decision. The words like 'diverge;', 'travel', 'roads', 'step', 'sigh', 'wanted wear' etc together create a resonance of the endless journey of life without any pause.
- **Stopping by Woods on a Snowy**

Evening: In this poem, nature is presented through amazing silence in a snowy evening. Frost does not make any explicit comment implying that the scene is beautiful or he is moved by it. But his sudden stop indicates that he is somehow drawn towards nature to enjoy silence. The woods & dense forests are always the beacons of promising care to the entire life. The pensive mood of the poem is perfectly created through the snow-covered woods. The last two lines of the poem are connected with the tedious journey of life. Henry James in his *Substance and Shadow* (1863) offers a fascinating precedent for the contrast between speaker and horse. The horse merely stops but the word 'stopping' indicates a positive sense- to observe something or to stop with a purpose. It is not an end, rather the beginning of a new interpretation of nature.

- **Fire & Ice:** This poem is about the two destructive forces of nature- fire & ice. Here nature is not only physical but also associated with human beings. Anger & hatred are equally disastrous & possess the power to destroy the world in the wink of an eye. This poem questions the human existence in a mood of helpless gloom. Interestingly here the poet is not a part of nature. He is a detached observer.
- **Come In:** Wood is a recurrent motif in Frost's poetry & this poem is not an exception. The poet is surprised to hear the song of the thrush at dusk in a dark wood. The thrush is lamenting for the death of the sun. In contrast to Keats' nightingale, this lamenting signifies the transitoriness of man's life. The call of darkness is creating a mood of tension but the rejection is a relief.
- **Tree at My Window:** In this poem 'trees' symbolizes nature in its purest form. The poem celebrates the primordial bonding between man & tree. The poet wants to

see the tree all the time. The tree's struggle with storm reminds the poet of his own internal dilemma. But at the end, the affinity faces a disillusionment: "Your head so much concerned with outer/Mine with inner weather."

- **Birches:** This poem also begins with the snow-covered birches. The slight ray of sun creates a multicoloured rainbow amidst the birches. The phrase 'heaps of broken glass' indicates the harsh reality of life. Like *The Road Not Taken*, life is here presented as "too much like a pathless wood/Where your face burns & tickles with the cobwebs/Broken across it...". Climbing a birch tree is like ascending towards heaven but Frost wants to come back to this world because "Earth is the right place for love."
- **Desert Places:** This poem is bleak & pessimistic in tone. Here the snow does not suggest any productive silence rather it creates a sense of barrenness: "A blanker whiteness of benighted snow/With no expression, nothing to express." The cold indifference is symbolized by the stars of the poem. Lisa Hinrichsen in her article *A Defensive Eye: Anxiety, Fear & Form in the poetry of Robert Frost* comments: "The poem concludes with intimations of a claustrophobic narcissism ("me, myself, my") and ultimately forms a particularly visual representation of loss: "desert places" demarcates an undifferentiated emptiness and gives an external language of landscape to the psyche." (p.56)

The Romantics' Arcadia Vs. Frost's Rural Reality

Frost, as a poet of New England, is famous as both interpreter & representative of regional culture. His nature is a symbol of life. Poems like *Mending Wall*, *After Apple Picking* suggest that Frost's poetry often focuses on ordinary, rural landscape unlike the sublime & majestic scenery preferred by the Romantics. Nature is not always

beautiful but there is an underlying sense of anxiety, isolation & ominousness. The people in Frost's poetry represent the otherness of nature. The characters suffer from frustration, helplessness & loneliness. His poems echo the 'ache' of modernism. Man's physical existence is itself a barrier that divides man from the soul or spirit of nature. His poems abound in woods but the poet never stops at the edge. The woods symbolize different things- ignorance, depth of consciousness, perilous sensuous enchantment etc. In Romantic poetry, humans are passive but in Frost's landscape human figures actively interact with nature. Nature exists because man is there to perceive it. Frost reproduces reality in such a manner that the very scene entices us bit by bit & then involves us completely.

Conclusion

Frost's poetry can be analyzed on the backdrop of Ecocriticism taking into consideration the worsening global ecological crisis. His poems reflect the idea that nature & human beings are mutually dependent. Poems like *The Oven Bird* & *Design* touch on the decline of natural habitats. His creations encourage readers to think of the long-term consequences of human action. He had an ecological consciousness which has practical significance in the modern world. Frost's poems show the deeper meanings of everyday activities & the struggle of rural people. Marion Montgomery comments:

Frost's view of man's nature, then, is consistent throughout his poetry. Each man is, in a sense, a stranger in this world, & so he remains...As he grows, he understands more & as he also understands himself... With understanding, comes love which makes him respect the chaos of the world with which he is in conflict, the material with which he works. The same love makes him respect & accept differences between men also. He respects others' individual

differences & expects that others will respect him. (p.55)

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NATURE'S EMBRACE: INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE AND HEALING IN DAVID TREUER'S *THE HIAWATHA*

Chitra.K. S. and Dr. R. Janatha Kumari

Abstract

Literature is a method of recording, preserving, and transmitting knowledge and entertainment. Indigenous literature is literature that is created by, about, and for Indigenous peoples. Nature and literature both are intertwined and are equally important. David Treuer is an American Indigenous writer. The article titled Nature's Embrace: Indigenous Knowledge and Healing in David Treuer's *The Hiawatha* delves into the multifaceted role of nature in *The Hiawatha*, employing ecocritical analysis to analyze key scenes and symbolic use of natural elements, the novel reveals the enduring connections between land, culture, and identity. The paper also focuses on how the land embodies indigenous cultural memory, spirituality, and healing, emphasizing that Indigenous identities are deeply intertwined with their environments

Key Words : Literature, Nature, Indigenous, Cultural Memory, Healing.

In contemporary literature, the representation of nature often transcends mere description, evolving into a character in its own right. David Treuer's *The Hiawatha* exemplifies this trend, presenting nature as a complex entity that embodies cultural significance, historical resonance, and personal identity. The novel intricately weaves themes of nature and environment into its narrative, reflecting the deep connection between the land and the Native American

experience. David Treuer's *The Hiawatha* intricately weaves the story of an Ojibwe family grappling with displacement, systemic oppression, and the struggle to maintain their cultural identity in mid-20th-century Minneapolis. Central to this narrative is the role of nature, which transcends its position as mere backdrop to become a silent yet significant character. Treuer uses natural imagery and settings to explore themes of memory, identity, and resistance. This article delves into the multifaceted role of nature in *The Hiawatha*, employing an ecocritical framework to analyze how Treuer critiques colonial modernity while underscoring indigenous resilience. Through key scenes and symbolic use of natural elements, the novel reveals the enduring connections between land, culture, and identity.

Ecocriticism, as a literary theory, emphasizes the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It focuses on how cultural narratives shape human interactions with nature. It also includes how nature is represented in literature, the role of physical settings in narratives, and the impact of human metaphors on environmental treatment. Ecocriticism emphasizes that human culture is interconnected with the physical world and that all life forms are interlinked. It critiques anthropocentrism, advocating for a more inclusive understanding of nature that encompasses non-human perspectives.

Ecocriticism examines literature through the lens of environmental concerns, focusing

on the dynamic relationship between humanity and nature. In *The Hiawatha*, nature is not a passive or inert entity but rather a living archive of cultural memory and spirituality. In *The Hiawatha* Treuer navigates this relationship by integrating natural elements into the lives of his characters, illustrating how their identities are entwined with the landscapes they inhabit. Through this lens, we can explore how Treuer's portrayal of nature serves to critique colonial narratives and assert Native American perspectives. Throughout *The Hiawatha*, Treuer presents nature as a living, breathing entity—one that interacts with and impacts the characters. The Hiawatha region, with its lakes, forests, and wildlife, is depicted not just as a setting but as a character that shapes the community's identity. The protagonist's connection to the land is profound, reflecting a cultural reverence for nature that is central to Native American identity.

For instance, Treuer writes, "The land remembers everything; it holds the stories of those who walked before us." (56). This quote encapsulates the idea that nature is a repository of memory, serving as a link between past and present. The characters' interactions with their environment reveal a deep-seated belief that the land is intertwined with their history and identity.

Treuer's portrayal of nature extends beyond individual experience to encompass cultural identity. The Hiawatha region is imbued with significance, representing not only a physical space but also a cultural landscape. The characters' relationships with nature reflect their traditions, beliefs, and histories. Treuer illustrates this connection through rituals and practices that honor the land. For example, the seasonal cycles dictate the community's activities, from fishing in the spring to harvesting wild rice in the late summer. These practices are not merely survival strategies; they are expressions of cultural identity and

continuity. As one character notes, "We are the land, and the land is us." (68). This sentiment underscores the symbiotic relationship that Native Americans have with their environment, reinforcing the notion that cultural identity is inextricably linked to the natural world.

In *The Hiawatha*, nature also serves as a catalyst for change, influencing the characters' journeys and transformations. The landscapes often mirror the emotional and spiritual states of the characters, creating a dynamic interplay between environment and personal growth. For example, as the protagonist grapples with personal loss and identity, the changing seasons reflect his internal turmoil. Treuer writes, "The winter winds howled like lost souls, echoing my own despair." (98). This personification of nature illustrates how external conditions can resonate with internal struggles, suggesting that the landscape is not static but responsive to the characters' emotional landscapes.

Treuer's narrative does not shy away from the impact of colonialism on the natural environment. The destruction of the land, through deforestation and pollution, serves as a powerful metaphor for the erasure of Native cultures. The scars left on the landscape reflect the historical trauma experienced by Indigenous peoples, emphasizing the need for healing and reclamation. In a poignant moment, a character observes, "Each tree that falls is a story lost, a memory erased." (123). This acknowledgment of loss highlights the deep connection between cultural narratives and the natural world. Treuer's depiction of environmental degradation serves as a critique of colonial exploitation and a call to recognize the value of preserving both land and culture.

Beyond individual experiences, Treuer emphasizes the role of nature in fostering community resilience. The collective relationship with the land serves as a source

of strength and unity for the characters. In moments of crisis, the community often turns to nature for sustenance and solace, reinforcing their bond with one another and their environment.

Treuer illustrates this resilience through communal practices that celebrate the land. Festivals, rituals, and gatherings are centered around seasonal changes, highlighting the community's interconnectedness with nature. As one character reflects, "In the forest, we are all one, bound by the roots that run deep beneath the earth." (167). This interconnectedness underscores the importance of community in navigating the challenges posed by both nature and external forces.

Nature also emerges as a source of healing in *The Hiawatha*. Characters often seek solace in the natural world during times of personal crisis, finding comfort in the rhythms of the land. Treuer's descriptions of the landscape evoke a sense of peace and restoration, illustrating how nature can provide refuge from the struggles of life. One striking passage reads, "The river flowed gently, whispering secrets of renewal and rebirth." (79). This imagery underscores the therapeutic qualities of nature, suggesting that the environment has the power to heal emotional wounds. The characters' journeys toward healing are often paralleled by their reconnection with the land, emphasizing the restorative potential of nature.

David Treuer's, *The Hiawatha* masterfully intertwines themes of nature and identity, illustrating how the environment shapes and reflects the experiences of his characters. Through an ecocritical lens, we see nature not only as

a backdrop but as a vital participant in the narrative, influencing personal growth, cultural identity, and community resilience.

Treuer's portrayal of nature serves as both a critique of colonial narratives and a celebration of Indigenous perspectives. By acknowledging the profound relationship between the land and its inhabitants, Treuer invites readers to reconsider the significance of nature in shaping human experience. Ultimately, *The Hiawatha* stands as a testament to the enduring power of nature in our lives, urging us to recognize and honor the connections that bind us to the earth.

In conclusion, David Treuer's *The Hiawatha* serves as a profound exploration of the intricate relationship between nature and identity within the Native American experience. Through the lens of ecocriticism, Treuer elevates nature from a mere backdrop to a vital character that shapes the lives and narratives of his characters, reflecting their struggles and resilience against colonial oppression. The novel poignantly illustrates how the land embodies cultural memory, spirituality, and healing, emphasizing that Indigenous identities are deeply intertwined with their environments. Ultimately, *The Hiawatha* not only critiques colonial narratives but also celebrates the enduring connections between people and the natural world, urging readers to recognize and honor these vital relationships in their own lives.

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EARTH AND NATURE IN TRAVEL WRITING: A CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVE ON LITERATURE AS A CHANGE AGENT

Dr. Adyasha Das

The relationship between humans and nature has consistently been a central theme in literature. Today, as we face environmental crises, retracing this dynamic's history becomes increasingly significant. The dichotomy between humans and nature has shaped literary works since the dawn of civilization, reflecting humanity's evolving interaction with the natural world.

Earth has long been a source of inspiration and contemplation in literature, symbolizing life, beauty, and sustenance while also embodying fragility and resilience. Literary works often portray nature as both a nurturing force and a silent witness to humanity's triumphs and follies. In recent decades, as environmental awareness has grown, literature has increasingly served as a medium for exploring ecological concerns and advocating for harmony between humans and the natural world. Notable examples include: "Walden" by Henry David Thoreau. This transcendentalist work explores the simplicity and spirituality of living close to nature. The concepts of Earth and Nature hold a profound place in travel writing and tourism literature, often serving as central themes that shape narratives and inspire readers. These works portray Earth and Nature as entities of beauty, wonder, and mystery, evoking emotional and intellectual engagement with the environment.

Travel writing has evolved from a medium of documenting journeys to an influential force shaping societal perceptions and behaviour. In contemporary contexts, travel literature is a change agent, fostering environmental

awareness, promoting sustainable tourism, and deepening the connection between humanity and Nature. This paper examines how Earth and Nature are depicted in travel writing and tourism literature, emphasizing their transformative role in encouraging environmental stewardship and sustainable practices.

Travel writing, historically centered on exploration and cultural discovery, has transformed into a platform for advocacy and awareness. In the modern era, it serves as a powerful medium for addressing pressing environmental and social issues. Contemporary travel literature does not merely chronicle journeys but also critiques unsustainable practices and advocates for a harmonious relationship with the planet. This paper explores how the depiction of Earth and Nature in travel writing catalyses change, inspiring both writers and readers to act as custodians of the natural world.

Nature as a Source of Awe and Inspiration

Travel literature frequently celebrates the grandeur and diversity of natural landscapes, from majestic mountains and serene oceans to dense forests and vibrant wildlife. Writers like John Muir and Henry David Thoreau have emphasized the spiritual and philosophical connections between humans and the natural world. These accounts often encourage readers to view Nature not merely as a backdrop for human activities but as an active participant in shaping cultural and personal identities.

Earth as a Living Entity

Many works, especially those rooted in indigenous and eco-centric traditions, portray Earth as a living organism deserving reverence and care. This perspective emphasizes the interconnectedness of all life forms and advocates for sustainable interaction with the planet. Such literature often critiques exploitative tourism practices and highlights the need for harmony between development and conservation.

Indigenous Perspectives in Travel Literature: Earth as a Living Organism

Indigenous perspectives in travel literature offer a unique lens through which Earth is viewed as a living entity, deeply interconnected with human existence. These narratives emphasize ecological balance, cultural identity, and the sacredness of Nature, challenging exploitative practices and advocating for sustainability. Below are examples from various regions that illustrate how indigenous wisdom is reflected in travel literature and its influence on sustainable tourism.

Australia: Dreamtime Narratives of the Aboriginal People

Australian travel literature often incorporates Aboriginal stories that depict the land as a spiritual being. Works such as Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines* explore the Aboriginal concept of "songlines," which are routes across the land marked by songs describing creation stories and natural landmarks. These narratives stress that the land is not owned but cared for as part of a shared responsibility. Such perspectives are increasingly shaping eco-tourism in Australia, with initiatives that include indigenous-guided tours focusing on traditional knowledge.

South America: Pachamama in Andean Culture

In Andean indigenous beliefs, Pachamama, or Mother Earth, is revered as a living deity who provides life and sustenance. Travel

literature, such as Hugh Thomson's *The White Rock*, delves into the symbiotic relationship between the Andean people and their environment. Rituals like the *Pago a la Tierra* (Earth offering) are described, illustrating the respect and gratitude shown to Nature. These traditions influence tourism in the Andes, promoting practices like guided treks and stays in eco-lodges that minimize environmental impact.

Africa: Ubuntu and the Connection to Land

In Southern Africa, the philosophy of Ubuntu ("I am because we are") extends to the environment, emphasizing interconnectedness. Works such as Laurens van der Post's *The Lost World of the Kalahari* document the Bushmen's (San people's) intimate knowledge of their environment, including sustainable hunting and water conservation techniques. These insights inform eco-tourism initiatives, such as desert survival tours led by local communities, ensuring that tourism benefits indigenous groups and respects their traditions.

Asia: Sacred Landscapes of the Himalayas

In the Himalayan regions of India, Nepal, and Bhutan, Nature is often personified and worshiped. For example, the sacred Mount Kailash is described in Lama Anagarika Govinda's *The Way of the White Clouds* as a spiritual axis of the world. Local Buddhist and Hindu beliefs emphasize the sanctity of the mountain, and travel literature often portrays it as a site of pilgrimage rather than mere adventure. Tourism regulations in these regions prioritize conservation and respect for cultural practices, limiting the environmental footprint of visitors.

These examples demonstrate how indigenous perspectives enrich travel literature by offering alternative worldviews that prioritize sustainability, reverence for Nature, and community well-being. By

showcasing these narratives, travel literature encourages readers and travellers to move away from exploitative tourism toward practices that honour and preserve the environment and its cultural significance. As travel continues to evolve in the face of environmental challenges, indigenous wisdom embedded in literature serves as a guiding framework for sustainable and respectful interaction with the natural world.

Modern Travel Writing and Its Role in Environmental Advocacy

Contemporary travel writing has transcended the simple act of documenting journeys. It has become a powerful medium for addressing environmental challenges such as climate change, deforestation, and overtourism. Authors like Naomi Klein in *This Changes Everything* critique the exploitative practices contributing to environmental degradation and urge a paradigm shift toward sustainability. Through vivid storytelling and critical analysis, such works inspire readers to adopt eco-conscious travel behaviour, shaping global travel patterns like ecotourism, nature tourism, and heritage preservation.

Inspiring Ecotourism and Sustainable Travel Practices

Ecotourism, which emphasizes responsible travel to natural areas, finds significant advocacy in travel literature. Authors like Elizabeth Becker in *Overbooked: The Exploding Business of Travel and Tourism* shed light on the harmful consequences of unchecked mass tourism. By highlighting examples of eco-friendly destinations and practices, travel literature educates travellers about minimizing their environmental footprint.

■ Case Studies:

- ❖ Costa Rica, a global leader in ecotourism, is often featured in travel writing for its biodiversity and sustainable tourism initiatives. Writers emphasize ecotourism, rainforest conservation, and community engagement, encouraging

visitors to prioritize sustainability.

- ❖ Galápagos Islands: Literature underscores the importance of strict tourism regulations to protect unique ecosystems, urging readers to support controlled, low-impact tourism.

Promoting Nature Tourism

Nature tourism, which focuses on experiencing and appreciating the natural environment, has gained traction through travel writing that emphasizes the beauty and fragility of ecosystems. Authors such as Peter Matthiessen in *The Snow Leopard* weave adventure and reflection, showcasing the spiritual and ecological value of untouched landscapes. These narratives encourage travellers to seek meaningful connections with Nature rather than exploit it for recreation.

■ Influence on Travel Patterns:

- ❖ Travel writing has popularized destinations like the Amazon rainforest or African savannahs, urging travellers to respect wildlife habitats and contribute to conservation funds.
- ❖ Nature tourism also aligns with slow travel, where individuals spend more time exploring a single destination deeply, reducing their carbon footprint.

Advocating for Conservation

Travel literature often serves as a call to action for conserving natural and cultural resources. By illustrating the devastating effects of environmental damage, writers encourage readers to support conservation efforts. For instance:

- Naomi Klein's *This Changes Everything* highlights the intersection of capitalism and climate change, urging systemic reform and individual responsibility.
- Bill McKibben's *The End of Nature* was among the first to address global warming in a literary context, inspiring many readers to reconsider their lifestyles, including travel habits. Travel writing frequently collaborates with conservation organizations, promoting

initiatives such as wildlife protection, reforestation, and sustainable community development. These stories galvanize public support, directly influencing policies and tourism strategies.

Preserving Tangible and Intangible Heritage

Travel literature has a significant role in the preservation of both tangible and intangible heritage by creating awareness about the value of cultural landscapes, historical landmarks, and traditional practices.

- **Tangible Heritage:**
 - ❖ Works like Pico Iyer's *The Art of Stillness* discuss historical and sacred sites, advocating for respectful tourism that prioritizes preservation over commercial exploitation.
 - ❖ Narratives around UNESCO World Heritage Sites often emphasize the importance of maintaining architectural integrity and ecological balance.
- **Intangible Heritage:**
 - ❖ Traditional arts, crafts, music, and oral traditions are highlighted in travel literature, encouraging travellers to engage with and support local communities. For example, William Dalrymple's *Nine Lives* explores spiritual practices in India, shedding light on endangered traditions and the need for cultural preservation.
 - ❖ Festivals, cuisine, and indigenous practices are popularized as integral to

the travel experience, promoting cultural exchange while respecting local norms.

Combating Over-tourism through Literary Advocacy

Over-tourism, which overwhelms local ecosystems and communities, has been critiqued heavily in contemporary travel writing. Books and essays point to destinations like Venice or Machu Picchu, where unchecked tourist influx threatens cultural and environmental stability.

- **Solutions Proposed in Literature:**
 - ❖ Encouraging off-season or off-the-beaten-path travel.
 - ❖ Advocating for stricter visitor caps and better infrastructure.
 - ❖ Highlighting lesser-known destinations to distribute tourist traffic.

Conclusion

Modern travel writing serves as a catalyst for environmental consciousness and sustainable tourism. By addressing global challenges and offering actionable insights, it influences travel patterns, fostering ecotourism, nature tourism, and heritage conservation. As these narratives continue to reach broader audiences through digital and multimedia platforms, their potential to reshape travel behaviour grows exponentially. Travelers are no longer mere consumers of experiences; they are becoming active participants in the preservation of the planet and its diverse cultural heritage.



Dr. Adyasha Das is a contemporary writer from Odisha known for her insightful and colourful portrayals of life. Suffused with sensitivity, she uses words and imagery with an uninhibited freedom, modulated with quality. Her stories have a rare psychological insight and are at the same time reflective, sensitive and elegant in their observations. She is the Amazon India bestselling author of "Forgotten Goddesses", "The Chausathi Yoginis of Hirapur: from Tantra to Tourism", "The Yogini's of Ranipur Jharial: Tantric Goddesses of Yore" and "The Yogini Poems: Love and Life. She is the author of poetry collections Anuchharita (Odia), Nemesis, Brass Flowers & The Yogini Poems: Love and Life (English), Bhitarku Rasta, (Story collection in Odia) apart from many academic and non-fiction books.

ECHOES OF THE EARTH: AN APPRAISAL OF GERARD MANLEY HOPKINS' "BINSEY POPLARS"

Dr. Aparna Ajith

Abstract

Literature is the vital manifestation of what one has seen, felt, and experienced in life. It is inextricably intertwined with the Environment and its growing concerns. It plays a crucial role in shaping environmental consciousness by portraying the beauty, complexity, and fragility of nature, as well as the consequences of its degradation. Green Studies, Nature Writing, Environmental Studies, Ecocriticism etc. are the different fields that focus on the relationship between Literature and the Environment with distinctive approaches, goals, and scope. The depiction of the Environment through literary outputs tries to develop a deeper connection between readers and the natural world. The paper attempts to illuminate the deforestation and despair depicted in Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Binsey Poplars". The renowned poem written in 1879, represents Hopkins' environmental sensitivity and his lament for the destruction of nature. The poem mourns the felling of a row of poplar trees along the Thames near Binsey, capturing the profound sense of loss that accompanies such environmental changes. Through vivid imagery and rhythmic complexity, Hopkins conveys both the beauty of the natural world and the irreparable impact of human actions upon it. Through its masterful use of vivid imagery, innovative rhythm, and emotional intensity, "Binsey Poplars" not only mourns the loss of specific trees but also serves as a timeless meditation on

humanity's often-destructive relationship with the natural world.

KEYWORDS: Ecological Concern, Nature, Deforestation, Despair, Humanity

Literature is the vital manifestation of what one has seen, felt, and experienced in life. It is inextricably intertwined with the Environment and its growing concerns. It plays a crucial role in shaping environmental consciousness by portraying the beauty, complexity, and fragility of nature, as well as the consequences of its degradation. Green Studies, Nature Writing, Environmental Studies, Ecocriticism etc. are the different fields that focus on the relationship between Literature and the Environment with distinctive approaches, goals, and scope. The depiction of the Environment through literary outputs tries to develop a deeper connection between readers and the natural world.

By recording and narrating the devastation of the landscape, the loss of biodiversity, and the displacement of communities, such literature can highlight the innate value of nature beyond its utility to humans. This lines up with the growing field of Environmental Humanities, which seeks to reframe environmental problems as cultural and ethical issues. There are many things one should understand and learn from one's environment. It is the right of all beings to protect and preserve their natural surroundings. The paper

attempts to illuminate the deforestation and despair depicted in Gerard Manley Hopkins' "Binsey Poplars". The renowned poem written in 1879, represents Hopkins' environmental sensitivity and his lament for the destruction of nature. The poem mourns the felling of a row of poplar trees along the Thames near Binsey, capturing the profound sense of loss that accompanies such environmental changes. Through vivid imagery and rhythmic complexity, Hopkins conveys both the beauty of the natural world and the irreparable impact of human actions upon it. Through its masterful use of vivid imagery, innovative rhythm, and emotional intensity, "Binsey Poplars" not only mourns the loss of specific trees but also serves as a timeless meditation on humanity's often-destructive relationship with the natural world.

Gerard Manley Hopkins (1844-1889) stands as one of the most innovative and influential poets of the Victorian era, whose work anticipated many of the themes and techniques of modernist poetry. Born in Stratford, Essex, Hopkins was a devout Jesuit priest, and his religious beliefs deeply influenced his poetic vision. He attended Balliol College, Oxford, where he developed a passion for literature and converted to Catholicism. His career as a priest often took precedence over his writing, and much of his poetry was not published until after his death. Hopkins' poetic personality is characterized by an intense sensitivity to the natural world and a profound spiritual awareness. His work often explores the intersection of nature and divinity, reflecting his belief in the presence of God in all things. This is evident in his innovative use of "inscape" and "instress." "Inscape" refers to the unique inner nature or essence of a thing, while "instress" is the force that holds the inscape together and communicates its uniqueness to the observer. Through these concepts, Hopkins sought to capture the individuality of the

natural world and the divine force that animates it.

One of his most distinctive contributions to poetry is his development of sprung rhythm, a metrical system that mimics the natural patterns of speech and the rhythms of the natural world. This technique allows Hopkins to convey a sense of organic vitality and dynamic movement in his descriptions of nature, as seen in poems like "The Windhover" and "Pied Beauty." His publications include *A Philosopher's Stone and Other Poems* (1843), *Pietas Metrica* (1849), and *Spicelegium Poeticum*, *A Gathering of Verses* by Manley Hopkins (1892). He also reviewed poetry for the *London Times* and wrote one novel and an essay on Longfellow, which were never published. The poem "Binsey Poplars" conveys Gerard Manley Hopkins' sorrow over the felling of the poplar trees that once lined his walks along the River Thames in the English village of Binsey.

"Binsey Poplars", written in 1879, exemplifies Hopkins' environmental sensitivity and his lament for the destruction of nature. The poem mourns the felling of a row of poplar trees along the Thames near Binsey, capturing the profound sense of loss that accompanies such environmental changes. Through vivid imagery and rhythmic complexity, Hopkins conveys both the beauty of the natural world and the irreversible impact of human actions upon it. The opening lines, "My aspens dear, whose airy cages quelled, / Quelled or quenched in leaves the leaping sun," capture the trees' delicate beauty and their role in the ecosystem. According to Brian J Day "The opening lines of "Binsey Poplars" demonstrate the complex nature of the tree's thingness in their mix of anthropocentric projection, scientific observation, and ecological sensibility" (188). The imagery of "airy cages" suggests both the fragility and the protective nature of the trees, highlighting their importance in filtering sunlight and providing habitat.

The repeated phrase “All felled, felled, are all felled” uses repetition to highlight the finality and totality of the destruction. This demanding repetition reflects the poet’s grief and disbelief, making the loss feel immediate and overwhelming to the reader. Hopkins’ description of the scene as “a sweet special rural scene” further emphasizes the uniqueness and irreplaceability of the natural beauty that has been destroyed. According to Joseph Post “In “Binsey Poplars,” Hopkins uses repetition to convey this sense of growing disorder. The third line mourns the loss of the trees that are “all felled” (14).

Hopkins’ work often unravels the celebration of nature’s beauty and a darker, more meditative exploration of personal and spiritual anguish. The poem highlights the irreversible impact of human actions on the environment and the spiritual cost of such destruction. Dominic Joseph and Dr.K. Antonysamy in their paper argue that “Hopkins deftly communicates his ecological concerns wrapped in theological and moral terms. The heart of the matter is the belief that everything in the nature is sacred or in another sense, possesses an intrinsic value and ultimately what is done to it is in effect is done to oneself. Through Binsey Poplars he puts across the inevitability of a mutual coexistence (60).

Hopkins’ innovative use of “sprung rhythm” and his mastery of sound devices contribute to the emotional impact of “Binsey Poplars.” The poem’s structure, with its irregular meter and intricate rhymes, mirrors the complexity and beauty of the natural world. This technique is also evident in “The Windhover,” where Hopkins uses sprung rhythm to capture the dynamic energy of a kestrel in flight: The kinetic energy and precise observation in “The Windhover” parallel the detailed depiction of the poplars in “Binsey Poplars,” demonstrating Hopkins’

consistent ability to convey the vitality of the natural world through his innovative poetic form. Joseph Post has been right in assessing Hopkin’s mastery of language thus:

Hopkins, in his mastery of poetic language and form, creates a sense of increasing disorder by describing the “sweet especial scene” and repeating the words “rural scene.” As in earlier moments of the poem, the repetition suggests the increasing entropy described in thermodynamics, but Hopkins does not leave the poem with that sense of imminent destruction. Instead, he organizes the disorder in the act of re-creating his feelings for the trees prior to their felling. Hopkins, as voice for nature, has conveyed his personal understanding of what he perceives their suffering to be; he has expressed the destruction that results from even the best intentions of humanity and has conveyed a sense of the effects of ever-increasing entropy. And then, Hopkins shows the power of the poet to choose to create meaning out of chaos, to find order amidst disorder, to somehow reverse the effects of entropy. Hopkins, in turn, has become the proxy for nature, voicing “her” pains and discovering how humans can interact with nature through sympathetic projection. (14-15)

Literature enables one to learn about the growing significance of the surrounding and the need to safeguard. The renowned poet from Kerala, O.N.V. Kurup in his “A Requiem to Mother Earth” (Bhoomikku Oru Charamageetham) addresses the issues of ecological preservation and the unsympathetic ways in which landscape is commodified and divided up by human beings for egocentric motives. It is the need of the hour to nurture and foster

one's environment. "Hopkins' poetry celebrates the human potential to see nature even as it recognizes the reality of our inability to see it, and laments the consequences—spiritual, ecological, and environmental—of that failure" (Day,190). Hopkins' "Binsey Poplars" remains in the mind of readers echoing the grandeur of earth and the pressing need to protect the surroundings of the humans for sustainable growth as well as development. Hence , posterity will not willingly let the grandeur of "Binsey Poplars' die.

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“REIMAGINING EARTH THROUGH STORIES: THE ROLE OF NATURE IN THE WORKS OF DEEPA AGARWAL”

Dr. Suchitra Awasthi

Abstract:

Deepa Agarwal, an acclaimed Indian author, intricately weaves the essence of the Himalayan landscape into her storytelling, highlighting both the beauty and challenges of living in harmony with nature. Her work often reflects the lush yet fragile ecology of Uttarakhand, presenting nature as a pivotal force that shapes the identities, histories, and worldviews of her characters. This paper examines how Agarwal's narratives address urgent ecological themes, from the delicate balance of mountain ecosystems to the socio-environmental impacts of modernization on indigenous communities.

Through an analysis of her novels, poems, and children's literature, this study explores Agarwal's unique ability to make the environment a silent character that profoundly influences the lives of her protagonists. Her works, such as *Journey to the Forbidden City*, *The Walking Tree* and *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand* juxtapose the majestic allure of the mountains, especially the Himalayas, with the tangible threats they face, drawing attention to deforestation, climate change, and loss of biodiversity. Agarwal's narrative approach not only emphasizes ecological interconnectedness but also conveys an inherent critique of human encroachment and disregard for sustainable living.

In addition to her descriptive environmental imagery, Agarwal incorporates elements of regional folklore and traditional wisdom, lending a voice to the age-old

practices that uphold nature's sanctity. This alignment with cultural memory and ecological consciousness situates her work within the broader genre of environmental literature, echoing concerns raised by writers like Amitav Ghosh and Ruskin Bond, while maintaining a distinct perspective rooted in the Himalayan experience.

By examining how Agarwal's works reflect environmental concerns and foster a reverence for natural landscapes, this paper argues that her writing contributes significantly to contemporary environmental literature. In her portrayal of the interconnectedness between human and ecological realms, Agarwal's work serves as both a call to preserve natural heritage and an invitation to rethink humanity's relationship with the earth. Her work serves as a reminder that preserving nature is not merely a regional issue but a universal one, integral to cultural identity and continuity.

Keywords: Deepa Agarwal, Uttarakhand, Himalayas, nature writing, folklore, ecological consciousness, cultural memory.

Introduction:

In an era marked by environmental crises and the profound effects of human intervention on the earth's ecosystems, literature has emerged as a powerful medium to explore, critique, and inspire action against ecological degradation. Contemporary writers, particularly from the Indian subcontinent, are using their voices and craft as writers to illuminate the urgent

issues of biodiversity loss, climate change, and ecological imbalance. Authors like Amitav Ghosh, Ruskin Bond, and Namita Gokhale not only weave ecological concerns into their narratives but also invite readers to reflect on humanity's relationship with nature in what has been termed the Anthropocene epoch—a geological age dominated by human impact on the planet.

Amitav Ghosh, in his influential work *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, questions literature's reluctance to address climate change and critiques the modern novel's narrow scope in capturing the unpredictable force of nature. Ghosh writes, “It is as though fiction, like the climate crisis, is also a form of the unthinkable in contemporary culture” (Ghosh, *The Great Derangement: Climate Change and the Unthinkable*, p. 8). Through this, he challenges writers and readers alike to confront the environmental issues that threaten the future of our planet.

Similarly, Ruskin Bond, known for his profound connection to the natural landscapes of India, especially the mountains of Uttarakhand captures the beauty and fragility of the environment in his numerous works. In *Rain in the Mountains*, Bond paints a vivid picture of the Himalayan ecosystem, reflecting a deep sense of harmony with nature. He writes, “I am content here among the trees, the winds, and the stars, where my spirit feels whole” (Bond, *Rain in the Mountains*, p. 67). His writings are not merely poetic; they serve as reminders of the peace that comes from living in sync with nature and the sadness that accompanies its destruction.

Namita Gokhale's narratives, often set against the rich landscapes of Uttarakhand again, echo a similar sense of reverence and urgency. In *Things to Leave Behind*, she explores the environmental degradation in the Himalayan foothills, weaving in themes of loss and survival as they relate to both culture and ecology. Gokhale notes, “The

mountains have a memory, and they will not forgive our thoughtlessness” (Gokhale, *Things to Leave Behind*, p. 113). Her works illustrate the precarious balance between human life and the environment, portraying nature as both a source of inspiration and a silent witness to exploitation.

Through these works, and others, contemporary literature serves as a call to action, urging readers to reconsider humanity's place in the natural world. This paper explores the ways in which these writers, and others, use their storytelling to bring ecological awareness to the forefront, fostering a deeper appreciation of biodiversity and a heightened sense of responsibility for the preservation of our planet.

Another renowned author from the hills of Uttarakhand who writes passionately about the beauty and fragility of the hills is Deepa Agarwal. Agarwal, who is an author, poet and a translator, was born on 23 December 1947 in the town of Almora in Uttarakhand. Agarwal writes both adults as well as for children. Agarwal has written over seventy books and her most popular books include *Rajula and the Web of Danger*, *Chanakya: The Master of Stagecraft* and *Caravan to Tibet, Journey to a Forbidden City, If the Earth Should Move*, to name a few. Agarwal's books are deeply rooted in environmental consciousness. She has also edited *The Young Earth Lover's Book of Nature: Stories, Poems and Essays* which is a collection of more than 40 classic and modern stories, poems and essays. Among other prominent accolades, Agarwal's *Caravan to Tibet* featured on the International Board on Books for Young People Honour List of 2008. Agarwal intricately weaves environment into her works and her literary contributions reveal a profound sensitivity to the environment and the intricate relationships between humans and the natural world. Through a combination of historical fiction, adventure, and rich storytelling, Agarwal invites readers to reimagine their connection to the earth,

portraying nature as a vital and sentient force intertwined with human fate.

Agarwal's works especially her novel *Journey to the Forbidden City*, her story book collection *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand* and her book for children *The Walking Tree*, among others, reflect on themes of ecological balance, environmental degradation, and the impact of human encroachment on fragile ecosystems. In each book, Agarwal captures the essence of the natural world, showing how landscapes, forests, and rivers hold memory and wisdom, waiting for humanity to listen and understand.

Agarwal's Book's: A Journey Through Nature's Depths:

Agarwal's *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand* is a rich tapestry of stories that often interweave ecological motifs and concerns, reflecting the intimate connection between humans and nature in the region's traditional narratives.

In several of the tales from the collection, nature is depicted as a sentient force, embodying the cultural belief that it must be respected and preserved. In the tales from this collection, Agarwal uses the motifs of natural bodies like the rivers, forests, sacred groves to underscore the importance of the ecological wisdom. Likewise, animals in these folk tales are not merely symbolic but are central to the moral and ecological lessons. Thus, Agarwal's *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand* beautifully captures the region's ecological ethos. Through these narratives, she warns against environmental degradation while celebrating the harmony that exists when nature is revered. These stories, though rooted in tradition, resonate deeply with modern ecological concerns, reminding us of the timeless wisdom in folk traditions.

Nature's Resilience as depicted in *Journey to the Forbidden City*:

In *Journey to the Forbidden City*, Agarwal explores themes of human intrusion and resilience. Set against the breathtaking but

daunting landscapes of Tibet, the story follows an adventurous journey of the intrepid Indian explorer from the mountains of Kumaoun, Pandit Nain Singh Rawat who surveyed the vast geographical terrain of Tibet. In this book, Agarwal recounts Pandit Nain Singh Rawat's "eventful and often arduous travels (that) led to his name being permanently engraved in the annals of Indian exploration." The novel addresses issues of ecological exploitation and cultural disregard for the sanctity of the land. Agarwal writes, "The mountains held their own secrets, standing resilient against the ambitions of men who failed to see beyond their greed" (*Journey to the Forbidden City*, p. 54). Here, Agarwal warns of the consequences of disrupting ecosystems that have existed in balance for centuries.

Through the narrative, Agarwal underscores the importance of understanding local customs and respecting the environment. In a memorable scene, the protagonist, Pandit Nain Singh Rawat, contemplates, "We are but visitors in this ancient land, and each step we take should honor the earth beneath us" (*Journey to the Forbidden City*, p. 92). This line serves as a reminder of the humility required to navigate nature's majesty and the reverence that humans must adopt to coexist harmoniously.

Other Works and Continuing Themes:

Besides the above discussed books, Agarwal's other works in which the interconnectedness between humans and their surroundings and reflect a deep ecological awareness, cautioning against the hubris of exploitation while celebrating the resilience of the natural world are her her book for children, *The Walking Tree*, which is about a tree that can walk! *The Walking Tree* is a symbolic tale that explores the connection between humans and nature, as well as the tension between environmental degradation and a yearning for harmony with nature. In the story the Walking Tree through its journey in urban locales realizes

the importance of being rooted in one place. Thus, in *The Walking Tree*, the titular tree serves as a profound metaphor and imparts a vital lesson about the importance of staying rooted to the reader. While the story may captivate readers with its imaginative premise, its deeper significance lies in the symbolism of the tree’s “roots.”

The Walking Tree, by virtue of its mobility, contrasts sharply with the natural characteristic of trees being stationary and deeply rooted in the soil. This rootedness is not merely physical; it represents stability, identity, and a connection to one’s origins. Through its journey, the walking tree conveys to the readers that while exploration and growth are essential, they should not come at the cost of losing one’s grounding or severing ties with one’s heritage.

Being rooted, as the tree illustrates, is vital for nourishing both the self and the surrounding community. Just as roots absorb nutrients and anchor a tree, staying connected to one’s culture, values, and responsibilities ensures growth while fostering strength and resilience. Agarwal’s narrative thus intertwines environmental consciousness with life philosophy, making “The Walking Tree” a compelling tale of growth, balance, and self-awareness.

At this point I would like to mention two other important books that address the themes of environmental consciousness, *How I Became a Tree* by Sumana Roy and *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang, the 2024 Nobel laureate for literature.

How I Became a Tree by Sumana Roy is a deeply philosophical and reflective work. This novel presents a journey of self-transformation and the human desire to escape from the limitations and expectations of society. The narrator wishes to become a tree, drawn to its rootedness, natural simplicity, and resistance to the complexities and violence of human life. It is a meditative exploration of identity, the body, and the natural world. Likewise, *The Vegetarian* by

Han Kang is a disturbing and unsettling novel that focuses on the psychological transformation of Yeong-hye, a woman who decides to stop eating meat, which becomes a symbolic act of rejecting societal norms and expectations. The story delves into themes of bodily autonomy, repression, desire, and the consequences of rejecting conventional roles, not just for the individual, but for the family and society at large.

These three works—*The Walking Tree* by Deepa Agarwal, *How I Became a Tree* by Sumana Roy, and *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang—share thematic and philosophical undercurrents that revolve around the complexities of identity, the body, and the human relationship to nature. Despite their differing narrative styles and tones, all three explore forms of transformation and alienation, presenting characters who attempt to transcend or reimagine their existence in relation to the natural world. The common thread that links them is the quest for self-transformation, bodily autonomy, and escape from societal constraints.

Conclusion:

To conclude, through her evocative prose and environmentally conscious storytelling, Deepa Agarwal has carved a unique place in contemporary literature focused on nature and human interaction. In her books the natural world like a tree, a tiger, a river, all have profound messages to convey to the twenty-first century reader. Her works invite readers to view the earth not as a commodity but as a sacred, living tapestry that we are privileged to inhabit. Agarwal’s stories emphasize the need for respect, humility, and a renewed commitment to safeguarding the planet for future generations. Her works which range from *Folk Tales of Uttarakhand* to *Journey to the Forbidden City*, serve as both a celebration of nature’s wonders and a cautionary tale about the consequences of human disregard. By reimagining earth

through her stories, Agarwal offers readers a pathway to reconnect with the environment, fostering a sense of stewardship and reverence that is vital in our modern, Anthropocene age.

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RESPECTING NATURAL AND MORAL ORDER IS A PREREQUISITE FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF OUR LIFE AND ITS MEANING

Theodoros Dalmaris

Summary

Nature and the Universe form a single, indivisible entity.

The beings that constitute it are its offspring, endowed with all the inherent provisions needed for their survival and perpetuation. Yet, humans differ from all other beings due to their unique privilege of Free Will, an unrelenting drive for ever-deeper knowledge, but also the urge to indulge in base passions.

All natural and universal beings live according to their nature. They are free. The entropy they produce is absorbed by Nature itself within a framework of mutual solidarity and reciprocity among beings.

Humanity, however, stands apart from all other entities. Humans possess the privilege of ascending the Ladder of Knowledge, becoming freer and more noble, or descending it by indulging in baser passions, amassing wealth, and exerting power at the expense of many. The abuse of wealth and authority disrupts societal and natural balance, leading humanity toward decay. This imbalance diverts us from our natural path and brings about inevitable upheavals and vast, possibly existential, catastrophes.

Introduction

Indeterminate millennia have passed since humanity began inhabiting this small speck of Earth. Yet, it seems that only in this Mediterranean area, during the 5th, 4th, and 3rd centuries BCE, did a nova burst of light illuminate the world, marking the

beginning of our understanding of it. Since then, an unquenchable, luminous script has become humanity's heritage from the Greeks, extending across the globe. This nova burst also enlightened the Eastern peoples. For tens of thousands of years, only a few enlightened individuals shared in this communion. They understand that Ancient Greek Logos and the Wisdom of Eastern Nations remain unsurpassed to this day and are unlikely to be eclipsed.

The majority remain bound to ancient perceptions, derived from sensory experiences of their environment, and remain enslaved by forces that, since the dawn of history, have sought to subjugate them.

This uncritical acceptance of our enslavement, passed down from the darkness of history, has led humanity to consolidate his fear of the elements of nature and natural phenomena, until the invention of private gods and the deification of wealth and base passions, formed the unbreakable chains of his subjugation and self-destruction.

Purpose of This Essay

Since the dawn of existence, Humanity has aligned itself behind the shadows of fear born of ignorance, instilling a sense of belonging to them, at any cost. For millennia, these shadows have shaped human thought, molding the modern slave.

A few enlightened individuals have attempted to understand the greater, unknown force. They expanded their knowledge and horizons, often paying with their lives under

the persecution of oppressive inquisitors for their daring defiance. Yet, through their sacrifice, these few pioneers illuminated Truth, exposing their tyrants. Gradually, private gods lost their allure, becoming increasingly repellent and distant. Slowly, the dormant inner God, a luminous, universal, and cosmic force, awakened. The insatiable desire for ever-greater and deeper knowledge of the world and self, and for greater creation, continues to grow inevitably.

As our understanding of Natural and Cosmic Laws, as well as of ourselves, deepens, we become wiser, freer, less fearful, and more capable of dispelling these phantoms, further expanding our horizons. Yesterday's local wanderer becomes today's global traveler and seeker of the Infinite. Embracing its wonder and complexity, humanity strives for an ever-deeper understanding of it. There is an innate drive toward alignment with the timeless, spaceless, and supreme world, seeking to rise to higher levels of comprehension. Charged with fields of higher energy, we pursue Freedom, as our true nature commands. But this path is for the few.

The majority, blinded by the light, perfection, and supreme marvel of creation, distance themselves. They become the opposing force, occupying the post of the opposite Pole—that of evil, darkness, and the void—driven by their negative internal impulse. Yet, the imbalance between forces of good and evil is aggravated by humanity's excess and the entropy generated from this unavoidable Battle, which cannot be absorbed by Nature's provisions, leading to imbalance and destruction in human societies and the ecosystem.

Inevitable Evolution

The forces of evil and our excess have squandered our inherent forces for good, diverting humanity's natural inclination, turning it toward unrestrained hedonism and irrational accumulation of wealth, all for the pleasure and dominance of the few.

This deviation destabilizes the balance and harmony among individuals, as well as society's overall balance with Natural and Moral order. It strangles individual Free Will, and collective free consciousness, promoting ultimate disorder, rampant entropy, and an irreversible imbalance. The compatibility between Natural, Cosmic, and Human Order is disrupted, and as a result of this incompatibility, humanity surpasses the limits of natural and moral endurance, leading to inevitable catastrophic outcomes.

This evolution can only be reversed by humanity itself, through the reformation of collective consciousness, which must remain aligned with the laws of Nature, the Universe, and Moral Order. It must be charged with higher-order energy fields, seeking ever-greater degrees of Freedom for the greater whole. Every creative endeavor must be included within these parameters.

Conclusions

With these dynamics in mind, we can understand the evolving forces when humanity's collective consciousness fails to maintain vigilance in order to shape the perpetual STRUGGLE between good and evil in favour of the common good. When one force dominates with the intent of destroying the other, imbalance ensues, equivalent to complete destruction.

In religious interpretations, the dual nature of the world is often understood through the lens of two opposing forces and the necessity to vanquish evil. Yet, such an approach, as noted, leads to inevitable and complete destruction. These religions do not envision the Salvation and glory of humanity but rather the defeat of the opponent. Only the collective consciousness of humanity within a framework of Direct Democracy can intervene as a stabilizing, regulatory, and Creative mechanism in the tendency of evolution.

The arts of Hephaestus and Athena, the

political art of Zeus, Modesty, Ethical fear, and the Sense of Justice the inner search for Eros in the face of a single, heterosexual Human being, and their 'fusion' into an undivided and indivisible Dipole, compose the Divine force that will propel Humanity above its base passions into the realm of Light. Igniting this force is our duty within the framework of our Free Will. The realization of this ingrained impulse occurs through the continuous and unobstructed succession of Homelands and Nations governed by the regimes of Direct Democracy. This political art will expel enslaving forces and unleash creative ones.

The organization of these Homelands into broader entities will multiply benefits for the common good, forging mutual understanding, solidarity, and reciprocity. Otherwise, humanity will build on sand, doomed to self-destruct and will continue to recycle until it acquires a consciousness of its existence and its Freedom, thereby identifying

with its nature and ascending to become a citizen in the realm of Light.

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1. "The unceasing undeclared STRUGGLE in life is the Laws of nature." PLATO. *The Laws*
2. "Individuality is an illusion. We are all ONE." Albert Einstein
3. "We do not simply liberate God by struggling and subjugating the visible world around us. We create God." Nikos Kazantzakis. *Ascesis*
4. *The Ancient Greek LOGOS and the Wisdom of Eastern Nations*
5. *Mathematics, Natural Sciences, Philosophy, and the dual nature of the Cosmos (inner and outer worlds).*
6. Awareness through scientific knowledge, philosophy, and introspection, leading us to acknowledge that: "The Collective consciousness of Humanity creates the material Universe, not the material Universe the consciousness of Humanity." That is, humanity is responsible for its future.



Theodoros Dalmaris, born in Thana, Tripoli, Greece, is a mathematician, entrepreneur, poet, and political activist. A graduate of the National and Kapodistrian University of Athens, he played a key role in student political movements and later founded two successful companies with global reach. Dalmaris is also a devoted family man, married to Greek-Australian Despina Rizoglou. His poetic journey, spurred by Greece's political challenges, explores the Universal Laws governing existence and advocates for societal unity. His works, including *Odes to Freedom to Greece and to the Ecumen*, have received national and international recognition, with some verses inspiring a musical symphony. His forthcoming book, *Prayer to the Potential God of Light Within Me*, will continue his exploration of ancient wisdom and human existence.

MÚUL CUXTAL COSMOPOLITICS IN CONTEMPORARY MAYAN POETRY

Fer de la Cruz

In this paper, I show how contemporary Mayan poetic discourses treat natural elements as sentient, willing, non-human persons, in accordance with an ancient philosophy still prevalent among First Nations throughout Abya Yala, called “Indigenous Cosmopolitics” by Marisol de la Cadena and “Amerindian Perspectivism” by Eduardo Viveiros de Castro, also commonly known as “Buen vivir” or “Good living” (from the Quechua Sumak Kawsay), *Múul kuxtal* in Yucatec Mayan.

“Xma’t’aanil, jkíim yóok’ol kaab”/“Silence, the Earth Has Died” (in *Voz viva del Mayab*, 2012), a poem by Isaac Esaú Carrillo Can (1983–2017), is a clear example of this. It begins with the lines:

In Mayan tradition, death/rebirth is a yearly cycle, and the soil dying is a part of it. García Quintanilla (2000) explains that, in Mayan cosmic geography, after death all souls descend to the underworld—*Metnal* or *Mitnal* in Yucatec tradition, *Xibalba* in K’iche’ tradition—to be recycled before reincarnating (269). The poem continues and ends with the following lines:

In the environment described, only the sun can be felt, and the lack of tears reinforces the notion of a dry season. I agree with Descola (2015) in his assertion that it is a mistake to regard a humanization of natural elements (in this case, earth portrayed as a mother and an emotional rain) as metaphor or intellectual playfulness (15). While the reading of the soil giving birth or the sky crying is typically read as prosopopoeia or personification, it reflects a Western view of a non-Western poem. However, I believe the author succeeds as jumping from a cosmopolitical perspective to a naturalistic one and back, knowing that the poem works the same in both readings. Furthermore, I also believe the author intentionally maintain yet another ambiguity: In Yucatec Mayan, the word *kaab* may be read as earth/soil or as planet Earth. If we read it as *soil*, the poem refers to dry season, but if we read it as planet Earth, the poet’s view turns bleak. The latter reading is what comes to mind at a first glance both in Yucatec Mayan and in English, making the poem an artistic environmental protest with a cosmopolitical dimension clear to any reader familiar with Cosmopolitics, and that is comfortable at jumping worlds or modes of reading.

Jkíim yóok’ol kaab
In na’e’ tu sijsaj tikin paalalo’ob,
Mix máak jóoyja’btej,
xíibla’anchaj u yich le ka’ano’,
mina’an u cháakil utia’al u yok’omtal u yóol,

My mother gave birth to dry children.
Nobody watered her.
The eyes of the heavens have faded out.
There is still no rain
to dress your soul in mourning.
Translation by Jonathan Harrington
(In Túumben Ja’ab, 2017),

<p>Jkíim yóok'ol kaab, Mix máak kuchik u bis u sak máabenil, Mix máak t'abik u kibil tu'ux ku chúunul ka'an, Mix máak beetik u payalchi'il yo'olal u piixan, Mix máak taskúuntik loolo'ob, Mix máak ku p'áatal xma' t'aanil, Ch'ajch'ajankil ku beetik k'iin, Jkíim yóok'ol kaab, Mix máak ok'tik Mix máak.</p>	<p>The earth has died, nobody is burdened with a white casket, nobody says a prayer for the adventure undertaken by the wandering soul. Nobody sets out flowers, nobody keeps silent. The sun falls drop by drop. The earth has died. Nobody cries. Nobody.</p>
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This is only a small example of the way contemporary Mayan poets draw on an ancestral but current philosophy that regards nature as a co-citizen with humans in a shared *cosmopoliteia*. Although much has been written about Cosmopolitics in the field of Anthropology, there is much to be written on what literary works of First-nation poets can reveal about our relationship with a suffering natural world.

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tres generaciones/Three generations and languages of poetry/K'ayt'aan ich óoxp'èel t'aan, Óoxp'èel jats ja'abil (pp. 4–7). Mérida, Yuc.

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THE INFLUENCE OF THE MYTH OF THE JALAK LAWU BIRD ON CONSERVATION EFFORTS IN MOUNT LAWU

Muhammad Nur Iqbal Sidrotul Muntaha

Abstract

This study aims to provide information on the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird and its implications for the community in the efforts of conservation in Mount Lawu. The method used is descriptive and analyzed using a psychological approach to ecoheroism. The results showed that there is a strong belief regarding Jalak Lawu as spirits and ancestors who need to be worshiped as a medium of ceremonial activities such as Sedekah Dhuang. The myth of the Jalak Lawu also affects the understanding of conservation for local communities, which is the belief that Jalak Lawu is the orientation of the world. Jalak Lawu has a connection to a deeper dimension because they are considered to have similarities with local communities, namely both having a physical body and their respective gods.

The myth of the Jalak Lawu finds the reasons why ecology or conservation activities become an ethical problem in the local community because the means of divine intervention violate religious rules. The ecological offer of the myth of the Jalak Lawu discusses a potential strategy where a psychological approach combines traditional procedures with environmental problems through ancestral values. Local beliefs need to be examined in the context of pluralism and can be used as an educational tool to teach the principles of conservation to foster a love of and respect for living things. It is hoped that in the future, culturally based local stories

can develop as an alternative means of conservation.

Keywords: Jalak Lawu, Myth and Conservation, Cultural Beliefs, Ecoheroism, Environmental Ethics, Traditional Knowledge, Mount Lawu, Folklore and Ecology.

1. Introduction

The Jalak Lawu bird inhabits the ecosystem of Mount Lawu, a volcano in Central Java. The inhabitants of the villages of Cemoro Kandang and Cemoro Sewu believe that it is a bird that is the reincarnation of the late Kyai Lawu. We call it the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird. This myth is loaded with layers of symbols, and it has been presented several times in local ceremonies and attempts to make an event of the Milky Way Festival every August. The name “Cemara Lawu” has been suggested as an alternative to “Bintang Lawu” or “Lawu Wijaya Kusuma.” These examples indicate the fruitfulness and strength of the myth in conversing with many aspects of social and environmental life. It is safe to presume that this myth has value beyond its aesthetic dimension, both potentially manipulative and ethical.

The relationships among local traditional mythology, conservation efforts, and community are the focus of this paper. The guiding question concerns how myth, without obvious connection, has been a factor in the natural resource conservation effort. The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird involves representation of natural beauty and

spiritual-aesthetic wonders that overflow into people's daily lives. One important quality of high-level conservation attempts is the involvement of local communities. Broadly, previous research has produced an understanding of the concern between local advantageous folk concepts and ecological actions that they accent. Many high-level literature have acknowledged that ecological learning from any culture can be proposed to create more profit. The novel view that we adopt here is to display that the specific language in which a group of people or culture narrates the matter of myth produces an alternative and not always rational advantage in the enunciation of conservation campaigns to them. It is important to pay attention to local narratives to seek communications and activities that are aesthetic to the locality. This article is divided into a number of themes: first, an exposition and analysis of the Cemara Lawu myth; second, the role of the myth as a kind of empowerment of the conservation and the ecology of Mount Lawu; third, methodological consideration. We conclude.

1.1. Background and Significance of the Study

The protected area in Mount Lawu has various stories, including the story of Jalak Lawu. The mystical figure of Jalak Lawu or Burung Lawu in the surrounding community makes the efforts of conservation workers to protect these critically endangered birds easier. According to historical records from the early period, there were small kingdoms that prospered and revered the Jalak Lawu, and they also made ancient relics from empty gongs superimposed by other pottery and buried among the Lawu mountains. The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird is an integral part of the intergenerational cycle of the local community and comes from the supernatural belief system. The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird is believed to live in the Lawu mountain. The development and

use of resources would become increasingly uncontrolled and endangered. The existence of a mountain santri is relevant to the protection of cultural landscape values and also has a positive impact on supporting environmental sustainability.

Historical myths, both varieties and songs, have described the existence, behavior, habitat, sounds, food, and even the lifestyle of wildlife. As an ethno-ecological value, it contains an ethos of environmental moral teachings about likes, dislikes, fears, and enticements regarding various bio-cultural phenomena generated by mythological memory. Their behavior and attitudes towards an object are influenced by these factors. How someone treats, maintains, and manages nature is largely determined by the memory image of myths that have always been in their lives, because the myth binds nature and becomes part of the culture of ethnic identity. Indeed, this is the value of involvement that truly preserves conservation efforts through the folklore of birds in the Sanctuary of Birds Mount Lawu. Some karst ecosystems in East Java, for example, the Karst Nglanggeran region, which has a wealth of biodiversity, cannot be preserved just because the local people there believe in mythology. This is an ethic that is absolutely important to uphold in biodiversity conservation. However, the pastoral interests of protecting birds are part of the protection of biodiversity that should be preserved scientifically in Lawu Mountain Nature Reserves. The story of the Jalak Lawu conservation can be used as an important storyline in the development of a theme conservation area in Lawu Mountain, especially the story of the Jalak Bird.

2. The Myth of the Jalak Lawu Bird

The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird is a typical story of regional wisdom from East Java. The Jalan Cantik story tells of the Jalak bird from a village located in a cave on Lawu Mountain, East Java. The

bird was thought to be one whose cries and screams often occurred, even unusually. This caused the local people to believe that the birds had been cursed and had been religiously mazel by the god Sang Hyang Lawu. Waniwarni's battle with the Lawu Mountain god was the 14th week of the first month of Ruwah. A blast of thunder shouted and echoed around Lawu Mountain. During this earthquake, Lawu attracted five sources of spiritual power, one of which was a rebellious Jalak named Jalakan, whose name was "Kacangringsing." The rebellious Jalak was turned into a land bird that ascended to become a bird that lived in the Lawu Mountain area.

The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird has been significant throughout history. Several versions of the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird have appeared. Every ethnic group tells different versions of the myths of the Jalak Lawu birds. Philosophical and religious values are found in the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird. According to local people, the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird originated from their ancestors and has been passed down for generations, becoming one of the valuable cultural heritages. The existence of an eagle that lives in the Lawu and Cetha Mountains on the border of Magetan and Karanganyar districts, East Java, is very valuable. The community around the mountains is very proud because the mountain is a landmark for their territory. The mountain is the landscape class of North Mountain, which is worshipped by the people of ancient Lawu. The myth has corrupting values and customs of the indigenous peoples, which can serve as a guideline for maintaining harmony between humans and nature.

2.1. Origin and Evolution of the Myth

The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird, as it is known to the people inhabiting the Lawu region today, is a complex patchwork of origins and stories, overlaid by centuries of

societal, religious, and political changes. It is largely impossible to assign a neat, simple origin point to any of the present-day myths. The myth itself is propagated by changing material conditions in the mountain area, such as changes in native flora, climate, and water availability. As such, the myth is somewhat sentient, reflecting the growing or fading importance of various ecological conditions over the long term. The myth is also varied and flexible, reacting to local community needs and what other myths are copied into the local tradition. However, this apparent lability is contained by tradition itself, which determines when and how to change the narrative—however complex the cause-and-effect chain may be. Furthermore, the present-day narratives contain elements appearing no earlier than the later era, or even the years of reformation. With modern ideas about what makes natural beauty, environmental importance, and an ethical good, ideology hides behind backpacks and drifts into local tradition. Yet the myths are also very old, with recognizably Lawu features. These ambiguities position the Jalak Lawu myth in the capacious zone between traditional Javanese conceptions of nature and enduring universal myths of other-centered sacrifice. Even more fascinatingly, these heritage artifacts of traditional practice are critically engaged in debates about environmental harm and conservation, which reach across the mountains of Indonesia through a global environmentalism.

2.2. Key Elements and Symbolism

In narratives of the Jalak Lawu bird, the following motifs were used: the Jalak Lawu bird as a symbol in the myth of harmony between humans and nature, the Jalak Lawu bird as the king of the south, the Jalak Lawu bird as a symbol of the lords of mercy, the Jalak Lawu offspring as the main symbols of Penataran Kahyangan Lawu, banyan trees as a symbol of Lawu spirit and power, graves

as the physical existence of the kings of the spirits as symbolic Rejanisasi. The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird represents the meaning of communication between humans and the life of Mount Lawu. The harmony of the environment can occur if there is unity between humans and the gods of nature. The harmony of the ecosystem in Mount Lawu is not only the physical conditions that are still beautiful and clean from rubbish, animals that are still easily found in the area, but can also be seen from the human response of the surrounding community about the bird and gea myth there. In narrative texts, the figure of the bird is a biological presence on the Lawu mountain and is a natural omnipotent entity but also contains theological and obligatory meanings for the ethnoawitan community of the Lawu mountain. Jalak Lawu treatment in behavior is reflected in the form of birds of

humans from Mount Lawu surroundings who are researching the king and his court for the birth of the Jalak Lawu bird, protecting the Jalak Lawu bird, and pouring flowers in the area where the birds are. Local wisdom as a religious identity and commitment has formed a way of living physically and spiritually for rural communities by emphasizing the ecological conservation approach. The approach of local beliefs expressed through narratives stimulates the cultivation of conservation values in the ethno-awitan community of the Lawu mountains. The myth of the Jalak Lawu bird is a myth with the symbolic representation of two local environmental perspectives in the form of behaviors to conserve nature in Mount Lawu. Local beliefs influence the individual and collective behavior of the Kawuladha community in the conservation area of the Lawu mountain so that there is increasing ecological awareness along with oral narration about Jalak Lawu. In the narrative of tourists, mountain climbers, and the Kawuladha community around the Lawu Mountains, the Jalak bird can be a tourist attraction or a regional identity program.

3. Beliefs and Practices of the Local Community

The Jalak Lawu bird is a mystical bird that has a nest at the peak of Lawu Mountain. For the surrounding community, this bird has made this mountain known long before it became known today. Access to this mountain is quite difficult and takes a lot of energy on foot, but many people are still interested in visiting the peak of Lawu Mountain and walking around the summit looking for the nest of the bird. The Jalak Lawu bird is also known through a long-standing food tradition, which has been passed down from generation to generation by the community living on the slopes of Lawu Mountain. The first time a newborn child (7 months old) takes his first steps, he is told to release a chicken with the belief that damage will be prevented. The death of a family member can also be a sign that the bird is no longer on Lawu Mountain.

Many of the beliefs and practices of the local community, as mentioned before, are closely related to the presence of several kinds of birds that exist in large numbers on Lawu Mountain. One of the restrictions is on the hunting of Jalak Lawu birds. One of the rituals that the local community is famous for sharing is Guru Maho, along with several other rituals that we still have to study further, which take place once a year. These goals also serve a purpose for social activities and community gatherings, which can show others that their spiritual and religious values are still the same compared to their ancestors. This belief and practice can influence the attitudes of the community about product preservation and ensure that wildlife is not hunted. Because it is much nobler than mainstream beliefs and rituals, this belief serves as a resistance for the local community. People whose hobbies are related to research have taken into account the existence of myths that have a religious link.

3.1. Cultural Significance and Rituals

The Jalak Lawu bird, a type of white starling, is a small part of the unique culture found on Mount Lawu. In Citadel and Kemuning villages, they perform various ceremonies, including sharing farming practices, which are carried out collectively. In these two villages, the community performs rituals to respect and worship the Jalak Lawu bird. There are three stages in this ritual: first, the ritual to summon the birds; second, the ritual to respect Jalak Lawu birds; and third, worship of the goddess Nyai Lawu Ratu. The spirits of the goddess and the Jalak Lawu bird are treated as nicely as possible in order to foster a prosperous community. These ceremonies are meant to continue the customs of their ancestors as well as to bring the community together. More importantly, these rituals also introduce the importance of preserving and protecting the habitat of the Jalak Lawu bird.

Folk tales, myths, and other cultural elements around the Jalak Lawu bird have ecological meaning. The importance of the Jalak Lawu bird in the Citadel and Kemuning communities has even been studied and analyzed. The respect and protection of the animals in the folklore and rituals of several societies have been studied. The worried belief that “if the Jalak Lawu bird disappears, this field will become barren, the tradition will be lost” would make someone aware to take precautions. In this society, those who have the Jalak Lawu bird will come from the grandfather to the grandchild. Only a few of them will share a Jalak Lawu bird with their brothers or sisters. They believe that if they share a bird with other people, the bird will go away and never come back. Outwardly, those kinds of beliefs are actually a form of “campaign” for the citizens’ suitable perspectives. It is only to protect the birds as part of ecological biodiversity. The significance of the Jalak Lawu bird shows the deep spiritual relationship between

humans for small tangible gatherings. The special interest in looking for the Lawu bird also exists in social life through the title created by Lawu mountain residents or by people who enjoy hiking.

4. Conservation Status of the Jalak Lawu Bird

Jalak Lawu Bird is a very pivotal species for plant and animal ecosystems in Mount Lawu. The existence of this species is also a conservation concern. The latest data on the number of Jalak Birds shows that the number of individuals is around 500–700. The population tends to decrease from year to year. Currently, the habitat conditions of the Jalak are also getting worse due to changes in habitat caused by various activities in the forest. This is directly experienced by, for example, the decreasing availability of various types of food and nesting places because they continue to experience habitat degradation. On the other hand, the habitat function and role of the Jalak Bird in the ecosystem is also important because of its existence, which can support the value of biodiversity and the ecosystem.

Based on historical documents or news from people in the Regency of Karanganyar, conservation activities for the Jalak Lawu bird population started in 2014. Population trends, distribution areas, habitat states, and conservation status research have prompted action. The results of the initial estimation show a small population of Jalak and a small habitat range. Therefore, efforts have been made to manage and protect the habitat of the Jalak Lawu bird population in Mount Lawu. Some efforts have been made by local people and protected area managers, such as the construction of bird shelters, provision of nests, increasing patrol activities to protect the Jalak population, and crafts for sale to increase community revenue. Although conservation work for the preservation of the Jalak Bird has been carried out on Mount Lawu, there are still several

problems and obstacles. Various efforts to conserve and manage Jalak populations and roadside tigers in Mount Lawu have also been ongoing since 2014, but the number of these two species is still very small. The number of conservation personnel is very limited, human settlements in the conservation area are very dense, and there are still many people who do not support and do not involve community guardians. Many people also poach protected animals in this area. Therefore, community support in implementing conservation is indispensable; it also depends on the successful role of the forest, wildlife interest groups, and Karanganyar District. Unfortunately, there has been no serious and direct aid from the government so far for the conservation of the Jalak Bird population on Mount Lawu.

4.1. Ecological Importance of the Species

The Jalak Lawu is an endemic species that lives on the slopes of Mount Lawu. As a primary consumer, the Jalak Lawu is an herbivorous bird species. Its narrow diet consists of many types of fruits. Diet is a major aspect of the Jalak Lawu that makes it play an essential role in the ecological relations of the species of Mount Lawu. The bird's consumption of fruit directly plays a role in pollination and germination. Pollination is done by sticking the top of the beak into the flower and other parts of the stigma of the flower, conveying pollen and eventually fertilizing them. Bees and flies assist in cross pollination and maximizing flower quality thanks to the frequent flower visiting. This process increases the yields of some of the primary and secondary products of Mount Lawu specialty plants. Acting as an ecological agent in this way is part of the vital function of the Jalak Lawu. However, the importance of this is almost greatly unappreciated.

The Jalak Lawu also serves as a seed dispersal agent. Seeds that are not digested through various physiological changes can

live in the digestive system of the bird and will be ejected with the bird's dung. The seed will sprout when the chemical relationships that inhibit embryo growth and seed germination are broken. Pollination and seed dispersal cannot be done monotonously by one kind of plant species because the Jalak Lawu has a limited range of foodstuffs eaten. Either primary or secondary dispersal is a necessary aspect of the role of the Jalak Lawu, which triggers the development of seed parental habitat and helps preserve Mount Lawu's biological variety. The wheat that the Jalak Lawu eats has dangerous toxic effects. The Jalak Lawu is resistant to the influence of toxins because it has become used to eating that kind of wheat. The Jalak Lawu therefore serves as an ecological control agent for the weed management of the Lawu forest environment, where it maintains the balance of Mount Lawu ecosystems.

5. Impact of the Myth on Conservation Efforts

Cultural narratives can significantly influence the behavior of society towards keeping the environment. Social components that often lead individuals to have certain tendencies toward the environment include the traditions that exist in the community. One tradition that is often found by field researchers is myth or belief. This narrative often has an impact on conservation efforts. In the temples of Suku and Cetho in the western slopes of Mount Lawu, Central Java, a myth states that the preserved bird of Jalak Lawu will make the pilgrims dangerous. However, the condition of this bird was hampered by habitat conditions, so preventing the bird from poaching by the presence of the bird's jalak was strengthened into the myth in the community of pilgrimage. Having cultural power, myths mobilize the community as a 'Trojan horse' to preserve the birds and the ecosystems and can inspire the conservation discourse.

Cultural beliefs such as folktales

and myths play a significant role in the efforts of environmental protection and conservation. Folktales can make individuals feel proud and responsible for protecting certain resources. A tale of guardianship between humans and the environment can be very significant in terms of galvanizing the community. The existence of the myth does make the reader responsible for practicing the knowledge gained as it is closer to the existence of the audience to be willing to practice the knowledge they have achieved. One of the ways to create environmental awareness in the audience is to present local stories familiar to them, such as myths. Formal conservationists can exploit the myths of the village where the CMC is located and the population of Mount Lawu animals for conservation awareness programs in the population of the Yogyakarta-Surakarta region as potential tourists in the CMC. Studies in Bali and Southern Africa have exceeded folkloristic interest to make myths a part of regionalism or tactics in regional tourism. A myth is also possible to influence conservation policies at Mount Lawu in the future. The existence of a myth can contribute to the intrinsic value of the local flora and fauna to society and be translated into formal conservation policies. The values mediated through a myth must be recognized by the policymakers and incorporated into the strategies and policies of Mount Lawu Conservation. However, stigma against birds as vermin has the potential to make the myth excessive because society is reluctant to accept the negative values attached to certain objects because of such stigma. The myth operates by constructing combined, polar representations of a *kuningan* and the conservationists as negative and a *kuningan* as good. Thus, the mythical object must deflect and prevent the stigma associated with its negative form. The myth may also be towed in order to subject

Kuniran, so it will require efforts to prevent the mythical interpretation of the accident when talking about a *kuningan*. Despite its potential in reducing effective values on the conservation of local flora and fauna, myth applications certainly make it worth more desirable for communities motivated to protect their environment.

5.1. Cultural Influences on Conservation Practices

Cultural influences are often considered in conservation studies. Patterns of making decisions associated with the behavior of conservation can be influenced by deep-rooted local beliefs and values. Part of the strategy for implementing social forestry is through recognizing local knowledge and traditions that have value in the environment and support their daily lives. Communities residing in conservation areas generally have customary norms and sanctions aimed at protecting the environment around them. This is a tradition passed down orally from the community leader or the traditional council of elders. Customs and traditions still have a strong hold among the community and are obeyed. The role of the community leader or the council of elders is very important as a role model and a source of knowledge that is respected by the customary community.

In reality, there are many cases where cultural customs are integrated into the pattern of utilizing natural resources, and also simultaneously behave as a conservation effort. For example, the mythology of the Baltimore oriole bird has psychological implications for residents and bird enthusiasts who keep birds as a hobby. Endemic birds that live in the Lawu Mountains or the slopes of Mount Lawu are considered susceptible to stress if placed together with birds from other mountain regions as a result of denying their natural instincts. The reason is based on the cultural tradition and historical background of

the local community as the owner of the right to the area. Research conducted in the Lawu Manunggal Permai Community in preparation for conservation education states that because of the mystical peculiarity and the association with their habitat, the population becomes an object of social behavior that can mobilize the community and other residents. Habitual residents are more concerned with bird welfare efforts and strive to maintain their environmental balance. These creatures also become a symbol of the people of Lawu Mountain, the object of pride in the community's own future.

6. Case Study: Conservation Initiatives in Mount Lawu

It is frequently argued that addressing the issue of declining ecological systems throughout their known ranges is essential to conserve the Javan Hawk-eagle. The Lawu mountains are one of the least studied areas of Java and support remnant high-quality wildlife habitats in the Ujung Klojen Nature Reserve. The people living around this nature reserve have strong cultural connections to the natural world. As such, a number of important conservation initiatives have been developed with the hope of addressing both species and habitat conservation needs while having direct benefits for local people. One of these initiatives involves habitat restoration and protection for populations of the Endangered Lawu White-eye, a Javan endemic island bird considered a deity and found only in the Lawu mountains above 2400 m. The only remaining strongholds for Jalak Lawu are in the Lawu State Forest and the Ujung Klojen Reserve. Project Activity: Between 2003 and 2008, the National Park DG and Conservation Officers in Surakarta collaborated with local stakeholders to develop community-run refugia managed for conservation with the intent of supporting the Jalak Lawu

population into the fourth and fifth year of a translocation program. Jalak (both Short tailed Scimitar-babbler and Lawu White-eye) Management Teams were created in the sub-districts around Ujung Klojen at the request of key stakeholders, but not around broader eco-tourism programs connected to the deity myth. At the request of the Surakarta National Park office, efforts thus focused on habitat restoration for the Jalak Lawu within the buffer zone of the nature reserve. The Surakarta National Park was under direct collaboration with multiple government agencies in Central Java. Key stakeholders were identified and partnerships created during the field phase of the project. Regular contacts between stakeholders took place. To date, Javan hawk-eagle conservation has been funded by various organizations. Future efforts have occurred with support from multiple foundations and organizations. Important relationships have been developed at both the local and national levels, with the most recent in what is hoped to be a strong and lasting collaboration. It is our hope over the coming years that the majority of support given and time and energy spent on Lawu conservation will be dedicated to helping and supporting the people of Tawangmangu, who, like all people and nature everywhere, would very much like to hold on to a piece of their natural world. It is our hope that the Jalak Lawu Breeze has thus become a symbol and a catalyst for our conservation efforts and that it may become a vehicle for the systemic, long-term economic change among the people of Semau, Renteng, and Tawangmangu villages in East Lawu.

6.1. Historical Conservation Efforts

The various historical works on the Jalak Lawu bird have covered the conservation approaches developed from time to time. Since 1925, these conservation attempts were more directed at capturing the Jalak

Lawu than at the preservation of its habitat. However, during the recovery period of 1961-1983, efforts were made to release the bird in its original habitat on several occasions, focused on the slopes of Mount Solo, particularly in the Ngadisewu area. The increasing awareness of human actions that have damaged the environment ultimately led to the reduction of the same species that were the target of their actions. This is part of the formation of the paradigm of nature conservation that has to be pursued. The aspect of historicity in the treatment that started over a century ago is the peculiarity of the conservation of the Jalak Lawu bird. Referring to history is also important as a place to learn based on the principles of successes and obstacles, especially at this time when the sub-population of Jalak Lawu birds exists at an alarming rate. Since the release efforts in 1961 and 1963, the same thing also happened with the release of several other efforts. If there were failures, the process of learning from these failures would stop immediately. The behavior of society and individuals who had no control over their actions has led to the law being considered impenetrable if such measures are continuously pursued to this day, none of which has been successful until a new paradigm arises. Combined with this paradigm is also a time when times are uncertain, the emergence of the natural conservation orientation at the end of the 19th century, which then continued to the year 1925 and the years 1960 to 2015, continues to emerge in a totally different form than in the preceding years. The present time is the most appropriate period to carry out community-based natural management. A folk figure from the slopes of Mount Solo states that the activity of hunting Jalak Lawu has led to the beast and mythical figure that also become attractions in the adventure of Mount Lawu, including in Kediwung, Tawangmangu, and even in Cemoro Sewu, East Java. This art will

certainly last for generations with an elaborate struggle over the fate of the Jalak Lawu conservation itself.

7. Challenges and Future Directions

Finally, the challenges to protect both the habitat of the magnolia and Jalak Lawu birds should be wisely approached. The local economic conditions, which are still generally below the poverty line and tend to put human interests above the interests of the environment, make it difficult to carry out sustainable conservation activities. The characteristics of poor communities that still need to rely on the utilization of natural resource extraction for life consumption are one of the reasons why the preservation and conservation of protected forest areas are still fragile. High levels of poverty are also affected by inadequate human resources in the field, and even a lack of technology and imagination can improve the local economy without damaging the natural conditions. The absence of alternative sources of livelihood for the people who live around the forest and the lack of community-based conservation techniques and awareness have also hampered conservation and preservation efforts. Institutional and political conditions at the local and national levels also allow those who want to benefit by destroying natural resources either to go unchecked or to try to legitimize their activities.

In addition, it is necessary to form partnerships on a legal basis of cooperation, both with local communities, NGOs, and the government because, at this time, cooperation between these institutions has not yet been established in the context of reintroduction efforts for the Jalak Lawu bird. Based on these problems, reforestation programs in the reintroduction area should be carried out in an adaptive management style, adjusting to social capital or community resources and changing ecological conditions, and not taking a purely ecological approach.

In some cases, ecology is also an important destination, but what is needed is the principle of “people relations and integration with ecology,” because human life is also the same as the nature around which that life revolves. Therefore, community empowerment and increasing the capacity of the local community to go hand in hand with conservation activities is a long-term investment in finding a solution to protect these threatened species in particular and the environment in general.

7.1. Socio-Economic Factors Affecting Conservation

From the analysis that has been presented, it is clear that the local community is an important factor that indirectly influences the success of the conservation effort for the Jalak Lawu in Mount Lawu. Approximately 354 families or about 1,003 people are connected with the Mount Lawu region and are directly or indirectly affected by the actions of the conservation of the Jalak Lawu bird; however, increasingly changing landscapes and socio-economic pressures on the people of Mount Lawu are major threats to the sustainability of the existence of the Jalak Lawu birds. In 2005, the economic gap because of the unequal distribution of opportunities in conservation caused social conflicts. The impact of conservation on the welfare of society has not been felt equally because there are certain societies that gain the advantage and others do not. This issue has the power to reduce positive community attitudes and avoid the involvement of groups of people responsible for maintaining the conservation of the Jalak Lawu birds.

The importance of these socio-economic factors can be seen in arguments used about how poverty is one of the primary causes of many environmental degradations. With respect to the presence of key conservation actors in the area, economic activities are

the most influential factor that can be used as key reasons for the high tendency to change the use of agricultural land for commercial or other productive activities. On the other hand, modern economic demands compel the people to change their traditional paradigm and to respond to increase their economic income, but in so doing, they also cause environmental degradation. Based on the discussion above, a complete understanding of the socio-economic condition of the local community in the area will increase insight into the success of a conservation program that is developed based on the reality of social conditions. Such an approach aims to produce economic and ecological balance between profit for the local societies and conservation of the Jalak Lawu for sustainable development activities.

8. Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study provide valuable insights into the relationship between cultural attachment and successful conservation by revealing the influence of the Jalak Lawu myth on the initiation of their in-situ management and the successful population increase of the Jalak Lawu. Future work should focus on investigating the acceptance of the integration of myths with conservation activities by local people, and whether the local belief in the myth can increase their participation in conservation activities. Increasing community participation is important because it not only may improve cooperative enforcement, but local people who have spiritual and belief associations with wildlife may act as custodians to report any disturbances towards the species. Conservation strategies emphasizing root values shaped by local communities' culture through respectful and participative processes should be adopted in conservation programs in order to respect the integrity of the local community towards their cultural legacy. The result

demonstrates that local people perceived the myth of the birth of Jalak Lawu as a story that became a source of knowledge in conceptualizing the efforts towards Jalak Lawu conservation and its conservation management. Belief and vessels of spiritual values associated with the birth of the bird played a significant role in the initiation of the in-situ management of Jalak Lawu by the local community, and its subsequent management by the local government. This is in line with findings confirming the involvement of indigenous stakeholders in the initiation of several conservation policies, such as habitat protection, as well as other places in Indonesia. The local government in giving rewards has also similarly integrated local motifs and stories during the awards ceremony as a form of appreciation for the community to take part in conservation efforts.

8.1. Key Findings and Implications for Conservation Policies

This study examines the role of the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird on conservation efforts in the southern slope of Mount Lawu, East Java, Indonesia. The results of the interview and review of the literature research found three key findings that are relevant to the formulation of a conservation policy design for Jalak Lawu. Firstly, the myth of the Jalak Lawu bird has exercised a great influence in shaping local conservation practices within the community of the southern slopes of Mount Lawu. The myth has attracted interest from outsiders and invited their involvement in the Jalak Lawu conservation process. Secondly, the myth has served as an essential element deeply embedded in local cultural knowledge. The myth is easy to transfer to younger generations, who continue to live around the southern slopes of Mount Lawu. Thirdly, Gara Karta Adiguru has shared the myth with the local community in the

area. As the only heirloom, the myth is constructed personally from Gara Karta Adiguru's experience in observing and training the Jalak Lawu bird.

Influential myths, nature lovers, and funds are the key highlights of this research, underlining a few things. First, nature has a variety of interesting aspects that attract the interests of groups outside of the local community, thereby allowing them to be actively involved within it. The Jalak Lawu bird, unique in its kind within Javanese cultural settings, has become the object of this interest and is prominent in tourist circles as a symbol of conservation in Indonesia and an interesting bird for birdwatching activities. Second, as part of the local community's knowledge, the myth has formed links between the myth itself and the aim of conservation at the practical level in community life, as understood and practiced within it. In a long line of cultural continuity right up to the present, the myth has also become easy to transfer to younger generations who live and stay around the southern slopes of Mount Lawu, even if this is only at the village level. It provides a meaningful opportunity for sharing knowledge with the surrounding community by involving them actively in the conservation process through community-based initiatives in particular locations within Mount Lawu in the future.

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His academic excellence also granted him a credit transfer scholarship, allowing him to participate as an exchange student for one semester at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM), further enriching his educational journey and global perspective.

AQUAPOETICS OF T.S. ELIOT IN THE WASTE LAND: A STUDY OF BLUE HUMANISM

Debojyoti Dan

Lack of water is the metaphor of absence of the moisture of love causing the biological dryness as well as the dryness in the hyperspace of Eliot's microbiological relation with Vivienne. Lack of water and dryness is put in the context of the poem along with the loss of water and the transpiration from leaves often surpasses the water uptake rate through the roots causing life to falter as Eliot's relation does with Vivienne and what we have as a result in the poem is:

What are the roots that clutch, what
branches grow
Out of this stony rubbish? Son of man,
You cannot say, or guess, for you know only
A heap of broken images, where the sun
beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the
cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water.
(The Complete Poems and Plays of
T.S.Eliot 61)

The roots strive to uptake more water through their expansion and this ultimately adapts plants to minimize stomatal loss of water when there is a water deficit. This is where the posthuman entanglement takes place between phytocentricism and anthropocentricism. The duality of plant and human life are not only coexistent here but are enmeshed. The biological organism here becomes postexceptionalist as we see how the water deficit affected the cell division causing the reduction of the cell wall extensibility and turgor. In *Shipwreck Modernity* (2015), Steve Mentz explored "wet narratives [that]

emphasize disorder, disorientation, and rupture" in juxtaposition with "a dry countermovement that attempts to make sense and meaning out of disaster." (11)

The contrast between wet swirl and dry structure operates as a fundamental division that animates blue humanities thinking. The conceptual distinction between experience and knowledge and the felt difference between feeling and form flow from the contrast between the wet and the dry. To be wet—to be "in" (in Olson's emphatic word)—generates an experience and distinctive feelings. Drying is the slower process, an imposition of form and accumulation of knowledge. (An Introduction to the Blue Humanities 14)

The above quotation links the blue humanities with our research on Eliot's phytopoetics. The third section of the poem 'The Fire Sermon' brings out the aquapoetics and blue humanism as the garbological solid wastes invades Thames, and that is why 'The river's tent is broken'. The identity of the river becomes fragmented as 'The nymphs are departed'. The clean and hygienic drinking water is threatened and so is aquatic life. The nymph can well be the metaphor of the spirits of water as well as aquatic beings. The health of maritime life is the most important aspect of aquapoetics, as the sense making of water life is gradually depleted by the anthropocene we understand the disease of pollution has eroded the blue humanities. Thus the 'Sweet Thames, run softly, till I end my song'. The song is here also

a nostalgic reminiscence of the past, where water bodies had not been encumbered by garbage: “The river bears no empty bottles, sandwich papers,/Silk handkerchiefs, cardboard boxes, cigarette ends/Or other testimony of summer nights.” Here the word ‘no’ is an absence presence when looked at from the referentiality of present. The presentification of ‘now’ is where the plastic bottles dominate the space of aquapoetics. The emphasis the ‘empty bottles’, ‘sandwich papers’ and ‘other testimony of summer nights’ brings out the geographic invasion of pollutant in aquatic space and the immergence of the New Immortal, the plastic waste.

The sense-making of a botanist exploration of plant is the scientific methodology with the teleology of epistemic unraveling of life outside Andros. On the other hand, the poetic imagination of Romanticised ‘wonder’ of natural world and *Darstellung* created during the nineteenth century British and German poetics provided an ontological connection with nature. The aim of this chapter is to bring together these two outlook together while studying ‘The Waste Land’. The phytopoetics of T.S. Eliot is not simply biotic in relation to his masterpiece ‘The Waste Land’ but rhizophoric as we shift the cellular narratives from androcentricism to phytogeneticism back and forth. The dryness in roots of the plants and infertility is brilliantly amalgamated in the opening lines of the poem:

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.

The dry roots and the dry land is essentially a phytometaphoric counterpart to the infertility in male and phallic roots and the female womb-land. The botanical life here talks about the absence of optimal level of water availability which is the reason of both dull roots as well as the dead land. The fluctuation in soil moisture beyond optimal can affect the blossoming and survivability of the flowering and fruition. What we find in this botanical metaphor is the aporia of water in the rhizosphere, thereby making the absence-presence of growth and health-balance and a ‘dys’-functionality of the ‘body’ parallel with the lack of the plant nutrient uptake. The geoclimatic landscape of England and socio-political situation of the world runs in parallel with the intrapersonal life of Eliot. The cellular dryness is phytocentric as well as androcentric when we put Eliot’s conjugal life with Vivienne Haigh-Wood Eliot in the context. Eliot follows the diachronic narrative in this poem of phytosemiosis and the anatomy of his marriage and create infinity that is rendered impossible by the Cartesian principle that has surgically scissored body from mind/soul and has given birth to the foetus of discourse.

Keywords: Water, Blue Humanism, Aquapoetics, Disease, Pollution



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THE ROLE OF NATURE IN CONTEMPORARY LITERATURE

Vinita Agrawal

In contemporary literature, nature has evolved from a mere backdrop into a dynamic character that shapes narratives, conveys thematic depth, and reflects human emotions and societal concerns. Modern writers draw on nature not only to explore humanity's connection to the environment but also to examine pressing issues such as climate change, environmental degradation, and the loss of biodiversity. As readers face an increasingly complex relationship with the natural world, contemporary literature uses nature to interrogate these complexities, emphasizing our interdependence with the environment and prompting reflection on our responsibilities toward it.

One key role of nature in contemporary literature is as a symbol of both beauty and vulnerability. Poets like Ruth Padel, Pascale Petit, Sumana Roy, use nature to highlight the precariousness of ecosystems and the urgent need to protect them. They weave multiple narratives around trees, water, animals and birds, emphasizing that highlighting them are not only vital for ecological balance but that they also possess an intrinsic value that humanity often overlooks. In doing so, these writers challenge readers to rethink their relationship with nature, promoting awareness and empathy toward the natural world. Nature, in their works, becomes a call to action, urging readers to consider the ecological consequences of their actions. The poem "X" by Imtiaz Dharker, hums with a nervous energy that makes

climate change feel personal. Dharker is a Pakistan-born British poet and the recipient of the Queen's Gold Medal for her English poetry.

X by Imtiaz Dharker

Hand shaking on the stop-cock, she
looks
at the X, the warning cross,
the water-tap unlocked, its padlock
cracked.
Breath hacks in the throat, Check
your back.
Turn it on and an anxious mutter
swells
to thunder in the plastic
bucket. Don't spill it.
Fill it to the top. Lift to the hip, stop,
balance the weight for the dangerous
walk
home. Home.
Don't lose a drop.
From the police chowki across the
track
a whistle, a shout. Run. Don't stop.
Don't slip.
A drag at the hip. Hot,
hot underfoot. Water slops
up and out in every direction, over
the lip,
over her legs, a shock of cool, a spark
of light.
With her stolen piece of sky, she has
taken flight.
Behind her, the shouters give up. She
puts down

the bucket. The water stills.
 She looks into it, looks up to where
 the blue
 is scarred with aimless tracks.
 Jet-trails cross each other off
 before they die out, a careless X.

In addition, nature serves as a powerful medium for exploring human emotion and existential themes. For instance, in Mary Oliver's works, the simplicity of nature evokes feelings of melancholy, longing, and introspection. Oliver's use of nature as a reflection of internal states allows her to delve into complex emotions in a way that is universally relatable, demonstrating how landscapes and natural elements can mirror human experiences. Through this connection, contemporary writers highlight how deeply intertwined human identity and emotion are with the natural world.

Nature also plays a role in fostering a sense of place and grounding characters in their environments. In Keki Daruwalla's poem *Of Ledges and Moss*, ledges and moss are both a place of refuge and a source of identity of nature's bandwidth. The poet uses his poem to bring home the point that "*Nature's empire is not confined/ to forest and savannah.*

The soul is also one of its habitats." Daruwalla explores themes of isolation, survival, and resilience, showing how nature can shape the lives of those who live close to it. This approach reminds readers that nature is not only a setting but also a shaper of lives, shaping values, relationships, and self-perception.

Of Ledges and Moss

You don't have to notice a gun
 to visualise black buck falling
 in a fusillade of hoofs.

And the bellies of wild geese
 flying in formation?

What is there to visualise
 I hear a gunshot
 though I don't see a gun.
 I don't even hear the shot—
 its all in the mind.
 It will spin as it falls
 huddling into its wings.

Just because I haven't
 pulled out a pad of moss
 from some rocky ledge,
 doesn't mean I do not hear
 the rip and tear of rending.
 Just because I do not shoot
 quail or partridge it doesn't mean
 this birdlessness travelling towards me
 like a visible void,
 does not smother me.
 Nature's empire is not confined
 to forest and savannah.
 The soul is also one of its habitats

Finally, writers employ nature to address environmental justice and the impact of industrialisation. Climate change is depicted not as a distant threat but as a present reality affecting both ecosystems and communities. Contemporary literature exposes how marginalised communities bear the brunt of environmental crises, inviting readers to think about the social and ethical dimensions of environmental stewardship.

Their energy urges me to contemplate what I as a poet or my Indian English poetry community can do to fast track this concern for our environment. Can Delhites enjoy a relaxed evening walk without a mask? Can Mumbaites encourage an afforestation drive in Aarey Colony?

So how should we administer poetry to take charge of this grim environmental condition that is endangering our future generations? To begin a change, we must first initiate it and embody it. Can we then, as poets, collectively work to farm a deeper consciousness amongst schools children? Can we reject the rigidity that

an agenda-driven poem is not a poem enough? Can we also retain the dignity of language customary to literary practice? The answer is, we can.

In conclusion, nature in contemporary literature serves multiple functions: it is a character, a symbol, a reflection of human emotions, and a means to explore

environmental and ethical issues. By intertwining human experiences with natural elements, contemporary authors emphasise the importance of preserving the natural world, both for the environment's sake and for our own. In an era of ecological uncertainty, literature reminds us that the fate of humanity and the fate of nature are inextricably linked.



Vinita Agrawal's latest collection of poems *Eartha* was published by Sahitya Akademi. Her book *Twilight Language* won the Proverse Prize Hong Kong 2021. She has authored six books of poetry. She was awarded the Rabindranath Tagore Literary Prize 2018 and the Gayatri GaMarsh Memorial Award for Literary Excellence, USA, 2015 and a special mention in the Hawkers Prize 2019. Her work was shortlisted for the inaugural Dipankar Khiwani Memorial prize 2021. She co-edits the Yearbook series of Indian Poetry in English. She has edited two anthologies on climate change *Open Your Eyes* (2020) and *Count Every Breath* (2023). She was former Poetry Editor with *Usawa Literary Review*. Based in Indore, her work has been widely published and anthologised. She is on the Advisory Board of the Tagore Literary Prize. She is Co-chair for the Global Council for Excellence for Environment and Sustainability. She was one of the twenty poets to be featured in a documentary on Asian poets titled *Deepest Uprising* made in Taiwan. She is a keen birder and photographer.

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