

**THE CHILD ECHOES NATURE'S SILENCED CRY: AN  
ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF SELECT WORKS OF GILL LEWIS**

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STUDY OF SELECT WORKS OF GILL LEWIS

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In partial fulfillment of the requirement of the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy in  
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## MIZORAM UNIVERSITY

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#### CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled **“The Child Echoes Nature’s Silenced Cry: An Ecocritical Study of Select Works of Gill Lewis”** is the bonafide research conducted by Jane Mary Joseph under my supervision. Jane Mary Joseph worked methodically for her thesis being submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Department of English and Culture Studies, Mizoram University. This is to further certify that she had fulfilled all the required norms laid down under the Ph.D. regulations of Mizoram University. Neither the thesis as a whole or any part of it was ever submitted to any other University.

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**DECLARATION****Mizoram University****November 2025**

I, Jane Mary Joseph, hereby declare that the subject matter of this thesis is the record of work done by me, that the contents of this thesis did not form basis of the award of any previous degree to me or to do the best of my knowledge to anybody else, and that the thesis has not been submitted by me for any research degree in any other University/Institute.

This is being submitted to the Mizoram University for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English.

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(JANE MARY JOSEPH)

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# **Chapter I**

## **Introduction**

According to Cheryll Glotfelty, ecocriticism can be defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (8). It began in the late 1980s in the USA and in the early 1990s in the UK and is still considered an emergent theory. The first wave of ecocriticism was concentrated on “nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness” (Buell 138). Ecocritics here upheld the idea of preserving nature. The environment in this wave meant the natural environment or the biotic community. The second wave of ecocriticism focused on how society devalues the natural world. It dealt with the issues of environmental justice and exposed crimes of ecological injustice in urban spaces. Ecocriticism is essentially interdisciplinary and calls for concerted efforts between writers, natural scientists, historians, anthropologists and literary critics, amongst others. It makes one look into oneself and the surroundings, and critique the manner in which one interacts with the environment. The primary challenge that ecocritics are faced with is to lay stress not only on how nature is “culturally constructed” (Garrard 10), but also on how nature “really exists” (Garrard 10). It is here that one should note how, similar to other critical analyses which examine aspects like race, identity and gender, ecocriticism too, deals with reality. Further, in this day and age, the study of ecocriticism is increasingly relevant in the light of how man has exploited nature.

Literature uses ecological sensibility to bring forth changes in the mind of the reader. It also instils knowledge of environmental issues and creates a sense of awareness regarding environmental justice. The truth that human life is dependent and connected to the elements and cycles of nature has been conveniently overlooked by the modern anthropocentric man. As a result, mankind is now encountered with

isolation and alienation, besides the more evident issues such as climate change and global warming.

A lot of writers today gravitate towards the use of ecocritical approaches in their works. At the core of ecocriticism is “a commitment to environmentality from whatever critical vantage point” (Buell 11). Though a serious focus on the environment was lacking in literary works of earlier periods, nature was greatly used as a significant backdrop against which writings took form. The scientific awareness on the part of the writers then was not immense and such a lack of knowledge posed difficulties in writing about an issue whose importance was not realized by society in general. Therefore, the inclusion of aspects of nature had to be restricted to the landscape and the setting.

One such writer who has dealt with diverse issues pertaining to nature is Gill Lewis. What is noteworthy in her nature writing is that she draws on the serious threats faced by nature through the eyes of children. While most adults in her works seem to have a general disregard for their natural surroundings, it is the children who act as the forerunners to save the environment.

Lewis grew up in the city of Bath in an ordinary house with a picturesque garden. Her life revolved around the animals, birds, and insects that lived in the garden. She even had a small hospital in the back garden for the animals she lived with. Even at a very young age, Lewis was found to have a close affinity with the wild. On one occasion, she was discovered with a sick hedgehog under rose bushes which she was trying to forcefully feed.

Her works reflect her passion for wild animals and wild places. In them, she draws on the people she has been inspired by and had the fortune to know during her

time as a veterinary doctor, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. She currently lives in Somerset with her family, an important part of which are her numerous pets. Lewis is known to dream up new stories and write from a tree-house in her garden where she finds company in squirrels. Besides being the recipient of several other prestigious awards, her critically acclaimed novel *Sky Hawk* won the US Green Earth Book Award in 2012, while *White Dolphin* won the same award in the year 2013. The following year, another novel by Lewis, *Moon Bear*, won the German Environmental Prize for Children's Literature.

### **Objectives**

The research attempts to -

1. Provide a critique of human society through its treatment of nature.
2. Study the physical landscape as a living entity.
3. Situate nature and children in the power hierarchy.
4. Explore the need to reclaim the wild.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The study focuses on the works of Gill Lewis and her pertinence to environmental studies. It covers the numerous facets of ecocriticism based on both the American variant which is celebratory in nature and the British one which believes that "technology is the problem" (Bate 37). The dual nature of the study becomes essential and indispensable in that, human society in all ages, both resorts to nature and finds succour in it, while also inflicting immense harm on it through its reckless activities. The works which have been selected for the thesis also give voice to the land as a living being and do not merely treat it as a non-living entity. Another major question pertaining to the environment discussed by Lewis is that of the threat of

extinction faced by numerous life forms. While most ecocritics believe that “no true wilderness any longer exists on the planet” (Barry 248), Lewis propounds the idea that it does exist, but is forgotten by man. The destruction of the natural world can be associated with the aspect of power play and the hierarchy of power. In such a structure of power, man places himself at the apex level with all other forms of nature and the land well below him. The dominant narrative for many centuries has been the Western anthropocentric view that nature is important in so far as it serves man’s purpose. This is now challenged by theorists who see the connection between man and nature not in hegemonic terms, but in an ecologically egalitarian way.

This thesis also looks into how one can draw parallels between nature and children in terms of oppression. The study of postcolonialism, feminism and Marxism can also be studied in line with ecocriticism. In all these theories, one section is privileged and possesses power which is used to suppress the latter. What unfortunately goes unnoticed by man in this struggle for power is that the subdued section does not always remain subjugated. Lewis’s works echo this idea and show how if man wants to “avoid environmental catastrophe” (Barry 248), he will have to treat it with respect.

The texts that have been selected for close reading are -

*Wild Wings* (2011) is a powerful novel about how two young children, Callum and Iona, try to protect an osprey (named Iris), a bird belonging to an endangered species, from poachers. They strive to do so despite their cultural differences. It deals with the universal themes of life and death, compassion and respect for nature. The novel powerfully displays the deep bond that the two children develop because of the osprey, to the extent that Callum promises Iona (who is dying) to take care of Iris and

track her. It is a portrayal of how man can overcome barriers of race and gender to co-exist with each other and nature.

*White Dolphin* (2012) dwells on the life of Kara, a young girl whose mother has mysteriously disappeared. She also faces bullying at school which makes life extremely difficult for her. Kara meets Felix, a new boy in town, and though they initially do not get along, they unite to help an injured dolphin. While trying to uncover the truth behind her mother's disappearance, Kara also tries to save the local reef from commercial dredging. Though there are powerful opposing adults who are driven by greed for material wealth, they eventually save both the dolphin and the reef.

*Moon Bear* (2014) revolves around the life of Tam, a boy who is forced to leave his home in the mountains after those in power clear the forests for the creation of a highway. After moving to a new place, he loses his father to a stray landmine. Following this, he has to shoulder the responsibility of his family and move to the city. While there, he bears witness to the cruelty meted out to encaged bears that are kept in captivity to extract their bile for huge amounts of money. He specifically finds himself growing close to a young cub that he had earlier encountered in the forest and is determined to save it from the greedy adults.

*Scarlet Ibis* (2014) documents the life of Scarlet, a twelve-year-old who takes care of her brother, Red, suffering from Asperger's syndrome. She does her best to keep her brother happy and content through his love for birds. Their life, however, takes a drastic turn and they are separated and go on to live in different foster homes. Red has a deep love for the scarlet ibis and longs to see it in Trinidad. The scarlet ibis, in this book, serves as a symbol of hope for a beautiful future where they are united.

*Gorilla Dawn* (2015) is about two children, Imara and Bobo who are held captive by a rebel group called the Black Mamba. Imara is taken in by them and is called the 'spirit child' after she is scarred. Bobo ends up in this situation after looking for his father who went missing while protecting the gorillas. Both these children display great courage in the face of adversity and act as beacons of strength. It further draws on the problems that come with war and pictures its devastating impact.

*Sky Dancer* (2017) is the story of Joe, a boy who lives near the moorlands which are home to hen harriers, an endangered species, also known as 'sky dancers'. He is a gamekeeper's son who finds himself in a dilemma, having to choose between the traditions and practices, and the protection of hen harriers. His relationship with the moors changes after his father's death and they cease to give him solace. Despite the challenges that he faces, Joe stands up for what he believes is right. It is a beautiful novel that deals with the concepts of family, friendship, trust, loss and change.

*Run Wild* (2018) is a novel that tells the story of a group of children who seek refuge from home and school in a rundown building. They leave behind their differences and come together when they find a wolf there. It brings forth the idea of creating wild spaces in urban areas. They call the place 'Wolf Land' and long to save it from development. The book also shows how children act as saviours of nature, even in the face of hopelessness.

*Eagle Warrior* (2019) follows the story of a child, Bobbie, who is fascinated by a golden eagle. She is threatened by her family with the threat of being sent to a boarding school, far away from home and the bird. However, there are other people who do not admire it and instead, constantly look for opportunities to harm the bird. The love that Bobbie has for the bird is a testament to how man can rise above all

difficulties and show resilience in saving nature. At its best, the story sheds light on the importance of environmental protection.

*The Closest Thing to Flying* (2019) is about two girls, Semira and Hen, who live a hundred years apart. The ideas of freedom and hope are central to this work. The two characters are tied together by their hope to live freely. The image of bicycles is important in the stories of both these girls. It symbolises freedom, of giving them a sense of flying.

### **Review of Literature**

The following texts have been chosen for review of literature -

*Silent Spring* (1962) by Rachel Carson is widely given the credit of aiding in the launch of ecocriticism. It depicts how the peace that existed in a pastoral world has now given way to destruction of the environment. The central focus of the book is on the adverse effects of pesticides and its effects on birds in particular.

*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996) edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm is considered to be the first general book on ecocriticism. It provides a complete introduction to ecocriticism while tracing its beginnings. Further, the essays in the collection lay emphasis on the different approaches to ecology and are directed towards facilitation of a deeper insight into the ecological crisis pervading the world today.

*The Song of the Earth* (2000) by Jonathan Bate focuses on the value of works in written form in an era where man is disconnected from nature. It provides critical analyses of texts adhering to the romantic tradition. These interpretations are also informed by social and political history, in relation to ecocriticism.

“Children in Nature and History” (2003) by Bernard Mergen looks into what meaning a place holds in the minds of children. It also seeks to provide an understanding of how nature is perceived differently by adults and children. Another area of stress is that of how factors like race, culture and gender shape the relationship between children and nature.

“The Human Relation With Nature and Technological Nature” (2009) by Peter H. Kahn, Jr., Rachel L. Severson, and Jolina H. Ruckert dwells on how technological nature has assumed the place of actual nature in the modern world. It attempts to shed light on the nexus between the destruction of the natural world and technological advancements. The effects of technological nature on man, both physical and psychological, are discussed together with evolutionary and cross-cultural accounts of man’s relationship with nature.

“Surveying the Landscape: A New Approach to Nature Writing” (2010) by David Landis Barnhill provides an insight into how nature writing is related to the social life of man. The aspect of spirituality is also of concern as it is tied to nature, politics and society. It further seeks to understand the relationship between nature writing and our social and political systems, and how the former can help in changing the destruction brought about by the latter.

“The Uninhabitable Earth” (2017) by David Wallace-Wells provides an alarming description of the imminent destruction owing to global warming and serves as a wake-up call to save the earth before it is rendered uninhabitable. It addresses the issue of how technology aggravates the effects of climate change. Though unnerving, the article suggests how the earth can be salvaged if the political and scientific systems find measures to mitigate the damage in the coming years.

## **Research Methodology**

The study involves an analytical and interpretative study of the primary texts *Wild Wings* (2011), *White Dolphin* (2012), *Moon Bear* (2013), *Scarlet Ibis* (2014), *Gorilla Dawn* (2015), *Sky Dancer* (2017), *Run Wild* (2018), *Eagle Warrior* (2019) and *The Closest Thing to Flying* (2019).

The research is based on the usage of the theoretical tools of the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism. The texts in concern have been read through the principle ideas of deep ecology, shallow ecology, bioregionalism, socialist ecology, radical ecology, human ecology, spiritual ecology, rational ecology, and postcolonial ecocriticism. The research also interprets the afore-mentioned works on the basis of natural sciences and attempt to prove that they derive the essential truths contained therein from the laws of nature. It also examines both the abiotic and the biotic components of the ecosystem, in addition to the identifiable forms or entities which are part of the ecosphere including the landscape, water bodies, fauna and flora. The research also studies the interconnectedness of these aspects with the life of man.

## **Chapter Division**

### **Chapter I: Introduction**

This chapter introduces the concept of ecocriticism and its beginnings. It further provides an introduction of the author Gill Lewis and an insight into the texts selected for close study. The chapter also states the theoretical framework within which the study is conducted.

### **Chapter II: Children and Wild Spaces**

This chapter provides an overview of man's treatment of nature through the views of children in the selected texts. It discusses how nature and the land have life. The sense

of oneness that children have with the land is depicted both through instances of children advocating the rights of other living beings, as well as those of children growing to be more humane in the company of nature. The concepts of biophilia and biophobia are discussed at length. Children develop either a love for nature or a disregard for it depending on the exposure they have during their formative years. This chapter also focuses on how man develops a close bond with the land. The ideas of place and placelessness also examine the relationship that one has with the land, either as a native or as a tourist.

### **Chapter III: Nature, Children, Power**

This chapter focuses on man's struggle for power over nature and children. Man has, over the years, done everything within his reach to exert his place of power over both. These differences in hierarchical levels are discussed at length in this chapter. It also looks into how power never really rests in the hands of man and how there can be a reversal of roles. The theoretical framework for this chapter includes Foucault's concept of power, socialist ecology, radical ecology, human ecology, spiritual ecology, and rational ecology. All these theories focus on how man should consider himself not as a separate being but as a part of the intricate web of life.

### **Chapter IV: Nature's Fury: A Call to Rewild the Land**

This chapter looks into the potential threats that await man and is an account of nature's fury. Further, it takes in its ambit the aspect of postcolonial ecocriticism and shows the effects colonialism has on the land through the actions of man, Man's callous nature and its reflection is studied and depicted through instances of nature's destruction. The chapter also entails the possibilities of the earth turning uninhabitable in a few centuries. The urgent need to form an affinity with the wilderness forms the centre

around which the chapter develops. It further shows how the land needs to be rewilded so as to maintain the ecosystem.

### **Chapter V: Conclusion**

This chapter sums up all the issues discussed in the previous chapters. It also brings forth and offers reasoned results and conclusions that have been inferred through the research.

Lewis exhibits profound concern for nature in her works. For a true critic of environmentalism or ecocriticism “nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves” (Barry 243). This becomes evident through her books. The concern of environmentalism is never studied in isolation in her works and is closely tied to the studies of politics, society and even gender. This thesis draws on the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism and on how it is multi-faceted. While celebrating nature and the solace and company it gives man, it is also equally important to look into how man has exploited nature to a great extent and is continuing to do so, all for his short-lived gains. Lewis dwells on these aspects in her works and thereby, contributes in unparalleled ways to generating awareness about the need of the hour - to safeguard the only home one has.

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## **Chapter II**

### **Children and Wild Spaces**

The geography of a place has always been at the core of place-based ecocriticism. Lawrence Buell opines that “environmental literature constructs places in a particular way not just by naming objects but by dramatizing in the process how they matter” (267). This renders place attachment a “resource in the articulation of environmental unconscious” (Ibid., 44). Apart from such an association, the biophysical elements of the environment constitute geography.

Cheryll Glotfelty, in her Introduction to *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, defines ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xix). Drawing on this, literature becomes a means to critically view the numerous concerns that the environment is afflicted with in the present world. She further discusses questions that ecocritics and theorists are concerned with,

How is nature represented in this sonnet? What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this novel? Are the values expressed in this play consistent with ecological wisdom? How do our metaphors of the land influence the way we treat it? How can we characterize nature writing as a genre? In addition to race, class, and gender, should place become a new critical category? (xix).

This chapter revolves round the notion of place as a means of interrogating the environmental and socio-political pressures that are seen as adversely affecting our environment ever since the advent of industrialization and modernity, as well as the solutions that have been prescribed as an antidote to those forces.

Each of the novels taken up for study in this thesis has distinct faces of ‘place’ embedded in them. The relationship that a character has with his natural surroundings

very often defines what a place means to him. In *Run Wild*, children form a bond with the place in which they find a wolf.

Each day, I look forward to going to Wolf Land. We listen out for the wolf's call when he hears us. Then our own howls mix with his in this metal and concrete landscape. It feels as if we change in the moment we slip under the wire fence. It's as if we leave our normal selves behind and become wolves. Wolf Land is our territory, and no one can touch us here.

It's our freedom.

I haven't seen Connor as happy as he is here for a long time. Connor doesn't draw dinosaurs now; instead, he draws all the living things he finds here. He fills his notebook with animals and plants. His beetle pictures are the best. He's found ten different types. He draws in all the little details, like the fine hairs on a beetle's leg. Scott showed him how to shade his pictures so that they look 3D. Connor looked so proud when Scott told him he could be a proper artist one day. Jakub has a notebook too, and he fills that with cartoons of an action hero he calls Wolf Man. The hours fly by as Connor and Jakub poke under stones and scramble through the bushes.

This is our place now (Lewis 59-60).

Regardless of whether the place is a dwelling, neighborhood, village, city, or the wilderness, it is a "meaning constructed by experience" (Tuan 152). Place-based ecocriticism heavily rests on the belief that while attaching importance to the sense of geographical space, it should be centered round the relationship that man has with the nature, especially with the local environment in which he dwells. It should entail "a living physical location, geographical and biological, as well as subjective human

experience” (Ball 237). This is essential since both factors change over time, often resulting in the change of place.

Evernden states that “place-as-environment and place-as-subjective experience are equally interrelated, inseparable, and interdependent as are organisms and environments themselves” (Ibid.). Place forms meaning through experiences which resist objective views. In *Gorilla Dawn*, Imara talks of how the villagers are one with the land. “‘There is no one guarding this village,’ she said. But see how fat the cattle are. These people have kinship with the land here. They won’t give it up easily (Lewis 8).

Gill Lewis’ appreciation of nature finds parallels with Emerson’s notions of the natural world. His ideas which gave birth to Transcendentalism in 1836 advocate the idea of spirituality as the essence of nature. Nature surpasses all other sources of solace for man.

The tempered light of the woods is like a perpetual morning, it is stimulating and heroic ... The incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them ... These enchantments are medicinal, they sober and heal us. These are plain pleasures, kind and native to us (Emerson 4).

This explains how man and nature are essentially one and how man is dependent on nature as a child is on its mother. Additionally, man also reciprocates this love that nature bestows on him. This is best seen through the character of Madam Popescu,

They came and took them away. They took Petre with his bad leg and Lukas who had been left for dead down by the river. They took Elena and Victor, Magda and Sergey. Marius and Erik.’ She closed her eyes and a sob racks

through her body. ‘They took sweet little Anna-Maria too. All my beautiful children. Gone (Lewis, *Scarlet Ibis* 197-98).

While the concept of place is dependent on the factors of human presence and particular experiences to acquire its meaning, space exists without this reliance. It refers to a more general abstraction which entails both the cosmos and geography. In the texts taken up for study in this thesis, it is evident how the notion of place is shaped by the social and cultural relationships that its inhabitants have with the land. Lewis depicts how places are born out of a land’s history, together with the personal connections and attached memories, making each land distinct from the other. This also signifies that the same place holds different meanings to different individuals depending on their experiences and cultures.

The relationship that the children in Lewis’ works have with the wild is a reflection of how one forms a strong bond with the surroundings one grows up in. Tam, a young boy, inherently has a deep relationship with nature:

The bears got to know me. I’d call out, ‘It’s me, bears, only me.’ And they snuffled their noses against the bars, putting paws through for treats of fruits. I got to know the bears too, not just Biter and Mama’s cub, but all seven of them, all their different characters.

I gave them names instead of the numbers on their cages (Lewis, *Moon Bear* 93-94).

In *Sky Dancer*, Joe states,

I say nothing because deep inside, I know that wherever we go, this place will always be my home.

Like Dad.

It's in my blood.

It's in my DNA.

It's in my soul (Lewis 242).

Landscapes are not meant “to be read and grasped, but rather to be lived by people with bodies and lives in their own particular ... context” (Lefebvre 143). No two landscapes can hold the same meaning for an individual as the experiences he has with one are different from those he has with the other. Similarly, the meaning that one person attaches to a certain landscape need not necessarily be the same as the meaning another person attributes to it. In *Moon Bear*, we see how a bottle of honey transports Tam back home,

I lifted the lid and scooped some honey, sucking the smoky bitter-sweetness from my fingers. I closed my eyes. I tasted the forest, the leaves and flowers. I tasted the damp earth where the bear cub had curled safe inside his den. I tasted Ma sewing her flower-cloths, and Mae and Sulee playing in the sun-bright pools below the waterfalls. I tasted Grandfather in his poppy field, calling the bees, and Pa smiling from under his wide-brimmed hat. I tasted all these things (Lewis 47-48).

It is here that the concepts of biophilia and biophobia come into play. Children who grow up in the lap of nature develop an affinity with it (biophilia). On the other hand, children who live their lives in cities are often seen as having an aversion towards nature (biophobia). In *White Dolphin*, Lewis describes at length how children form this bond, especially with the natural surroundings in which they grow up.

My fingers hover above the sand and I start to trace the outline of an ‘a’. It's the shape of Gull Rock from the shore, one rounded side and one step, a dark

cave circled in the centre. I start the top loop of the 'a' where the rocks are stained white with centuries of seabird mess. Gannets nest on the seaward side. I've watched them twist in the air and dive for fish, like white missiles into the water. Dad and I have seen puffins, too, scoot along above the waves. I curl my finger down to the base where grey seals haul out on the flat rocks and have their pups on the narrow pebble beach that faces the mainland shore. Submerged rocks and underwater caves and arches spread out into the sea. A wrecked warship has become part of the reef. I run my fingers across in wave patterns in the sand. Mum once showed me a photo she'd taken of a cuckoo wrasse, a fish with bright blue and orange markings, swimming through a rusted porthole and another of pink and white feather-stars living along the old gun-barrels. The whole reef spreads out from Gull Rock to the shore, an underwater safari park, a hidden wilderness (38).

Further, children find a solace in nature, as Patrick says, "When we lived with Dad, I came here to get away from home. I'd stay all day. It's my escape from school too. I can put up with Mad Dog because I know this place is here" (Lewis, *The Closest Thing to Flying* 93).

Since this relationship children have with the natural world follows either an exposure to nature or unfamiliarity with it, it becomes essential to strike a healthy balance. Children have an intrinsic love for nature and the wild. Research shows that this association with nature positively impacts the cognitive development of children, heightens creativity, diminishes stress and boosts physical activity. The school plays an essential role in bringing up children who love nature.

Every chance we got, we followed her journey. We were in the school ICT rooms at most break times and lunch until Mrs. Wicklow found out. We couldn't believe it when she asked us if she could put Iris's journey up on the whiteboard so the whole class could follow her too. She'd stop lessons half an hour early so we could look at photos of dawn in the desert, of Berber shepherds in the high Atlas Mountains, flocks of birds on estuary mud flats, and cattle grazing green lowland pastures (Lewis, *Wild Wings* 251).

On the other hand, children who have had negative experiences with nature or have been exposed to negative representations of nature in the media form an antipathy to it. This aversion impedes the building of a child's bond with nature and should be addressed by gradual exposure to different elements of nature and through education.

In his book *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph explores how places change with time and attributes it to "modifications of buildings and landscapes as well as to changes in our attitudes, and is likely to seem quite dramatic after a prolonged absence" (31). He goes on to discuss how place and memory are entwined and how a memory attached to a place and the meaning it holds during a particular period might change with the passage of time, especially on returning to the place after a period of absence.

There is the common sensation of returning to a familiar place after an absence of several years and feeling that everything has changed even though there have been no important changes in its appearance. Whereas before we were involved in the scene, now we are an outsider, an observer, and can recapture the significance of the former place only by some act of memory (Relph 31).

Similarly, the relationship that one has with a place also changes when they spend more time in it. In such cases, there is an evolution over time on account of various factors such as cultural shifts, environmental changes and personal experiences. Initial impressions of the place might be formed through exploration and discovery, while later notions might be shaped by their relationships with others in the community and by the influence of memories.

She said she wouldn't live anywhere else.

She was Granny Mountain.

She even looked like a mountain. Her facewash full of wrinkles, like a craggy rock. She had wisps of snow-white hair on top of her head. She stomped in her big boots across the Scottish hills as if she was a mini mountain troll (Lewis, *Eagle Warrior* 3).

In *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing and the Formation of American Culture*, Buell argues how literary works produce “environmental reflection by expanding preconceived understandings of the nonhuman environment as a dimension of personal and communal sense of place” (260). Thus, depending on how the place transforms, based on economic shifts, historical events and urban development, an attachment or a detachment to the land comes to exist.

‘He can't live in a cage. It'll kill him,’ says Scott.

Finn smiles. ‘He won't have to. He's going to live in Scotland, where he'll be able to run across mountains.’

‘He's a wolf,’ says Asha. ‘You can't just set him free.’

Finn shakes his head. ‘He's not a wolf. Well, not completely.’

Scott looks at me, then at Finn. ‘What do you mean?’

‘He’s a wolf-dog,’ says Finn. ‘He’s a cross between a wolf and a dog. A lot of people want a wolf-dog because they think they look cool or tough, but actually they can be difficult to look after. They have the wild in them. People love the puppies but can’t cope with them when they become young dogs.’ (Lewis, *Run Wild* 87-88).

In the works of Lewis, the idea of nature as home is central. She depicts how both children and adults form an affinity with or disregard for their natural surroundings.

And as it turns, we turn with it. You and me ... we are all part of it. Everything we are, everything we do connects us with it. Breathe this air. Drink this rain. The earth pulses with the life it gives us. But if we lose our love of it, then we lose everything. But most of all, we lose ourselves. We lose our soul. So Bobo, what gives me the right to sit back and do nothing to protect it? With every dawn, I must ask myself: Who am I? What is my part in this? How am I going to use this day, to make tomorrow a better world? (Lewis, *Gorilla Dawn* 51-52).

To a great extent, the characters’ identities are also shaped by their association with nature. Lewis’ books delve into the process of immersing ourselves in nature, thereby, finding fulfillment. In his work “A View of Geography”, Tuan stresses on how the earth is man’s home. He states,

Home obviously means more than a natural physical setting. Especially, the term cannot be limited to a built place. A useful point of departure for understanding home may be not its material manifestation but rather a concept: home is a unit of space organised mentally and materially to satisfy a people’s

real and perceived basic biosocial needs and, beyond that, their higher aesthetic-political aspirations (102).

It also acts as a safe haven, a place where one returns to for comfort and solace. The sounds, sights and smells of nature provide a soothing effect on the body and mind. It also enables a sense of perspective and reminds us of our place both in the universe and in the cycles of life. In the words of Cresswell, “home is an exemplary kind of place where people feel a sense of attachment and rootedness. Home, more than anywhere else, is seen as a centre of meaning and a field of care” (24). Also, the love that man has for nature makes him come alive, like the children in *Run Wild* experience:

She slips off her shoes and socks, digs her toes into the dirt and stares at them.

‘When did we last do this?’

I look across at her. ‘Do what?’ I ask.

‘Go barefoot,’ she says.

‘I don’t know,’ I say. ‘Years ago maybe. It was probably in your garden.’

Asha grins. ‘Do it. Do it now.’

I kick off my shoes and pull off my socks. I press my feet against the ground and feel the warmth through my skin.

It feels good to touch the earth.

Asha sighs. ‘Just think, there was a day when we ran barefoot for the last time together and we didn't even know.’

‘Well, it’s not today,’ I say. I stand up and grin. ‘Race you!’

Asha laughs and runs after me. The stones spike against my feet, but I don't stop until Asha catches hold of me and pulls me down. We lie in the long grass and catch our breath.

It feels like we're five years old again.

Asha picks the white puffball of a dandelion and holds it in front of me. 'Blow and make a wish,' she says.

I smile. Last time we did this, I think I wished I could ride on a unicorn. Wishes were easy back then. Now what do I wish for? To be more popular? To be clever? For Dad to find a job? To be a happy family like we were before? I don't know. I blow and watch the dandelion seeds drift up and away.

Asha closes her eyes. 'I could sleep here all day.'

I lie next to her and stare up at the sky. It's a pale hazy blue, criss-crossed by aeroplane vapour trails. It's quiet too. The drone of traffic and hum of city life seem so far, far away.

I feel my body sink against the small stones and soft grass. I dig my fingers deep into the earth, and it's as if everything is draining out of me. I lie still and listen to the lap of small waves from a riverboat and the pop of seed heads bursting in the heat.

Everything is quiet.

Everything is still.

For the first time in a long while I feel I can breathe.

I watch a heron flap above us, its wings beats slow and lazy. It's a huge bird, filling up the sky. It flies down to the river, its wings outstretched and its legs ready to land. It vanishes somewhere into the reeds in the old dock. As we

lie still, the wasteland comes to life around us. A flock of small birds flurry down to a white puddle. Butterflies dance in shafts of sunlight, and small bees buzz from flower to flower. Three cormorants fly low, heading up the river. I prop myself up on my elbows and just watch. The more I look, the more I see.

It's not a wasteland.

It's a lost world.

A hidden wilderness.

Connor must be thinking the same, because he folds his arms around his knees and says, 'It's like the Land That Time Forgot.'

I smile because it's one of Connor's favourite old movies, where explorers find a hidden world full of dinosaurs.

'We'll have to give it a name,' says Asha. 'It belongs to us now.'

'It belongs to the wolf,' says Jakub. 'We'll call it Wolf Land' (Lewis 38-42).

In ecocriticism, the emerging concept of wilderness as home is of prime importance. Traditionally, the belief was that the wilderness is an uninhabited and untamed space, which is distant. While in the city, Tam misses home and the forests,

I stared up through the small skylight, to a thin sliver of moon. It was a crescent moon, like the white crescent on his chest. It was the same moon that hung over the forest canopies and reflected in the still waters below the waterfalls where I'd seen him in his den. I thought of Grandfather.

I pushed my face into Sôok-di's fur and breathed in the deep scent of the earth, of the leaf litter, of the forest paths and the cool mountain rain. I closed my eyes and let the images fill the room and shine brightly in the darkness.

I belonged there. Sôok-dii belonged there too (Lewis, *Moon Bear* 109).

Wild spaces were largely perceived as uncivilized and hostile. The earliest settlers and explorers regarded it as a place to subdue, tame and turn into a cultivated landscape. This situates human beings at odds with the wilderness, fostering an opinion that prioritized man's needs over nature.

‘When you were our age, where did you go?’ ... ‘Did you ever have somewhere away from school and home? Somewhere you ran barefoot with your friends?’ I ask.

Mrs. Stone sits back in her chair. ‘Well, I was lucky. We had woods at the back of our road. My friends and I spent hours together there.’

‘What happened to them?’ I ask.

‘Well, we all grew up and moved on,’ says Mrs. Stone.

‘I mean the woods,’ I say. ‘What happened to them?’

Mrs. Stone frowns. ‘There are houses built there now.’

‘But you remember what it felt like, running wild in those woods?’ I say.

‘Of course,’ she says.

‘If you could go back in time and see yourself there, what would you say? How could you tell you and your friends that the woods have gone? How would you tell them that there would be a day they would play in there for the last time?’

Mrs. Stone opens her mouth and then closes it again. A breeze flaps the window blinds, and it's as if a small piece of wild has slipped into the room with us.

‘We're losing our wild place too,’ I say. (Lewis, *Run Wild* 80-82).

The domination over nature in the present day has undergone profound transformation and presents the wild as home. The wilderness is now considered as intrinsic to human existence. Such a shift in thought places nature at the center of both our cultural and ecological identities.

The perspective that nature existed to be controlled by man to serve his ends contributed to the degradation and exploitation of natural environments. In the twentieth century, ecological awareness grew and led to the realization that the wild was not an adversary but an essential aspect of the ecology. This transformation in the thought process was influenced by movements like bioregionalism and deep ecology which emphasize the relationship between all life forms and ecosystems.

Furthermore, the idea of the wild as home extends beyond personal sentiment to entail a broader ecological standpoint. The concept of wilderness as home also stresses on the importance of preserving these wild areas as essential components of one's natural surroundings. The wilderness, without human interference, functions as a complex ecosystem seething with biodiversity. Such an ecosystem is not only home for man and countless other species but also plays a crucial role in sustaining ecological balance. Therefore, man needs to protect the wild and not exploit it, to maintain the cycle of the ecosystem, of which both biotic and abiotic elements are vital. In the essay "The Trouble with Wilderness", William Cronon argues,

Wilderness is the natural, unfallen antithesis of an unnatural civilization that has lost its soul. It is a place of freedom in which we can recover our true selves we have lost to the corrupting influences of our artificial lives. Most of all, it is the ultimate landscape of authenticity (80).

The notion of wilderness as home also has deep implications for the preservation and conservation of natural spaces. When man accepts the wilderness as home, he advocates its safeguarding. Such a shift in approach encourages conservation efforts, for instance, the establishment of protected areas to ensure that these spaces remain unmarred for future generations.

When the wilderness becomes home, it questions the idea of man and the natural world as separate entities. It inspires us to comprehend that we are not merely guests in the wild but are an important part of this ecosystem. As Lewis says, “the world is not just about us, is it? It belongs to the eagles too. What kind of world would we have if we lost all the wild” (*Eagle Warrior* 73). This realization calls for a more sustainable perspective to the existence of man - one that aspires to harmony with nature and not dominion over it. “And no amount of books or culture can teach you that. You have to feel it. You have to be connected to the earth to feel it” (*Ibid.*, 73-74). The rise of ecotourism also bears evidence of how an acceptance of the wild as home shapes man’s interaction with the wilderness. Travelers increasingly pursue experiences that allow them to engross themselves in natural environments, resulting in a deep sense of stewardship. This direction reflects a growing desire to view the wilderness as home, a place where man can find inspiration, solace, and a deeper comprehension of our place in the ecosystem.

The idea that man is his truest self when he is amidst nature is central to Cronon’s essay. He is of the opinion that “the inclination to idealise wilderness comes from the Romantic Sublime movement that situates wilderness as an escape from civilisation and as a space to reclaim an authentic self” (Gibson). The decision to be in nature stems from man’s core self and is a conscious choice he makes. It is here that

man is able to align his actions with his inner self. Even though man may lead a secluded life in the city, out of necessity, his core desires and values lead him to escape to the wilderness.

However, it becomes crucial to acknowledge the complexity associated with the concept of wilderness as home. Not all wild spaces are safe and suitable for human habitation, and exist best when left untouched by man's intervention. The wilderness is home not just for man, but also for a myriad species. It brings forth recognition of the value of the wilderness as home in its own right as well as home for man's sense of belonging to the natural world. "She headed out over the moor, following the rutted paths up between the heather. She knew every curve of these hills and each stream and valley" (Lewis, *Eagle Warrior* 61). Essentially, a view supporting the wild as home summons us to re-imagine man's place in the rich tapestry of nature.

One of the key advocates of the notion of wilderness as home is American author and environmentalist, Edward Abbey. In his iconic work, "Desert Solitaire", he passionately expounds the deserts of the American Southwest as his home. He asserts that these seemingly arid, barren landscapes are not voids to be overpowered but rather places to be respected and embraced. Abbey's view suggests that, for some, the wilderness can provide a sense of attachment, much like a traditional home. This sense of belongingness extends beyond an individual's personal sentiments to encompass a comprehensive ecological perspective. As they walked across the fields together, Granny stopped being so moody. She always got better once she was outside. Granny belonged to the mountain (Lewis, *Eagle Warrior* 26).

The wild, when undisturbed, functions as an intricate ecosystem abounding in biodiversity. These ecosystems not only act as homes for innumerable species but also

play key roles in maintaining the ecological balance. The idea of wilderness as home stresses on the need to preserve such areas as essential components of the earth's health.

As stated in *A Place to Call Home*,

In general terms, place identity can be defined as an interpretation of self that uses environmental meaning to symbolize or situate identity. Like other forms of identity, place identity answers the question - Who am I? - by countering - Where am I? or Where do I belong? (Cuba and Hummon 112).

Such an identity arises because places are “bounded locales imbued with personal, social, and cultural meanings” (Cuba and Hummon 112). Based on these experiences, an identity is formed, maintained and altered.

Furthermore, the concept of wilderness as home has deep implications for the preservation and conservation of natural spaces. When individuals perceive wilderness as their home, they are more likely to champion its protection and stewardship. This shift in view can encourage conservation efforts, for instance, the establishment of protected areas, wildlife refuges, and national parks, to ensure that these homes remain whole for future generations. Also, when the wilderness becomes home, it challenges the belief that the natural world and human civilization are fundamentally separate. It inspires us to realize that we are not mere visitors in the wilderness but are interrelated with these ecosystems. This recognition summons a sustainable approach to man's existence, one that seeks harmony with nature rather than domination over it. It is portrayed in *Run Wild*,

I try to picture in my head a different skyline when the metal frames of the gasworks have been torn down, when tall trees fringe the horizon instead.

Cormorants and herons will make their nests here. Finn says that in the winter, flocks of migrating geese and ducks will come to rest and feed in the ponds, and in the summer, swallows and swifts will skim for water. He says we'll have kingfishers too.

Finn says it will be magical.

He says it will be for everyone.

I know he's right.

Everything will change.

Everything has changed.

Yet, I still feel like I've lost something. It was our place, our world for just a while.

And now our wolf has gone.

I feel tears prick my eyes and look up into the clear blue sky.

Maybe the wolf was part of the change. Maybe we needed him to give us new ways to see.

Bright puffy clouds slide across the sky, pushed by a fresh wind. Their cloud shadows slip beneath them, dark shapes that race each other across the ground. For a moment cloud shadows look like wolves, and I feel my heart skip a beat.

And I know that the wolf is always here inside.

Like an imprint of some other wilderness.

We only need to look to find it.

And to remember.

There is another side to us.

We are part wolf.

Part wild (Lewis 104-106).

Historically, wilderness was often perceived as a hostile, untamed frontier that needed to be conquered and controlled by humans. This perspective contributed to the exploitation and degradation of natural environments. However, as ecological awareness grew in the twentieth century, so did the realization that wilderness was not an adversary but a vital aspect of our planet's health.

One of the central philosophical underpinnings of wilderness as home is the idea that humans are not separate from nature but are an integral part of it. This notion challenges the dualistic view that places humans on one side and nature on the other. Instead, it recognizes that we depend on the natural world for our survival and well-being. In this sense, wilderness is not an alien territory but a place to which we belong, a home where we coexist with other species and ecosystems.

“He’s part wolf,” says Finn. ‘Part wild.’

Like us, I want to say. The wild is in us too.

Maybe even a city can be part wild.

The land around the gasworks is still a wild space, even without our wolf.

We’ve been given the chance to save it” (Ibid., 88-89).

In his article, “Humanity and Its Place in Nature: Rethinking the Reality of ‘Wilderness’”, Smith writes that the dualistic idea that separates nature and man leads to the creation of wilderness areas where human habitation is restricted. It completely ignores the fact that man inhabited these places for years without causing permanent damage to them. Man is not separate from his natural surroundings, but is an essential part of it. He is assigned with the responsibility of taking care of both human and non-human life forms. Further, “if we only count the pristine as nature then we are missing

the nature that is all around us, in places we actually live, and we lose our sense of responsibility to protect it” (Smith 1). The separation of man from nature does not reflect reality.

The concept of wilderness as home also highlights the importance of place-based identities. It suggests that our sense of belonging and rootedness is deeply tied to the specific landscapes and ecosystems we inhabit. This idea aligns with the principles of Bioregionalism, which emphasize the importance of understanding and caring for the unique characteristics of a particular region. When we view wilderness as home, we develop a deeper connection to our local environments and are more motivated to protect and preserve them.

In his essay “Beyond Ecology: Self, Place, and the pathetic Fallacy”, Neil Evernden states:

The tourist can grasp only the superficialities of a landscape, whereas a resident reacts to what has occurred. He sees a landscape not only as a collection of physical forms, but as the evidence of what has occurred there. To the tourist, the landscape is merely a façade, but to the resident it is the outcome of how it got there and the outside of what goes on inside. The resident is, in short, a part of what the place, just as the fish is a part of the territory (99).

Furthermore, the concept of wilderness as home challenges the traditional notion of progress that often leads to the exploitation and destruction of natural resources. Instead of viewing nature as something to be conquered and exploited for human advancement, it encourages us to see it as a source of inspiration, wonder, and sustenance. This shift in perspective has profound implications for environmental

conservation and sustainability efforts. It encourages us to reevaluate our actions and prioritize the well-being of the ecosystems that support us.

Moreover, when we see wilderness as home, we are more likely to recognize the moral and ethical responsibilities that come with this sense of belonging. We become stewards of our environment, advocating for policies and practices that promote ecological health and biodiversity. This perspective also fosters a sense of humility and gratitude for the gifts of nature, which can lead to more sustainable and harmonious ways of living.

The ecocritical concept of wilderness as home represents a significant shift in our understanding of our relationship with the natural world. It challenges the notion of wilderness as a distant and separate entity and instead positions it as an integral part of our ecological and cultural identities. This perspective encourages us to recognize our interconnectedness with nature, develop place-based identities, and take on the responsibilities of stewards of the earth.

She looked right into me. And suddenly I knew then, in that one moment, I was as much part of her world as she was of mine. I couldn't help thinking that maybe - just maybe - deep in her bird soul, she knew the promise I had given to Iona (Lewis, *Wild Wings* 130).

By viewing wilderness as home, we have the potential to transform our relationship with the environment and move towards a more sustainable and harmonious coexistence with the natural world.

In the words of Gill Lewis herself,

The last 18 months have shown just how powerful young people's voices can be. Greta Thunberg has energised the world. In the UK there are more young

people having their voices heard; Dara McNulty, Holly Gillibrand, Bella Lack, Mya Rose-Craig. I'm not sure the big companies are listening at the moment, but I think, as this generation reaches adulthood, we will more have politicians, scientists, town planners, etc etc that have a greater understanding of the need to protect the wild world. At least I hope this is the case. But I think this is going to be a combined effort. I think to separate youth from older age groups is divisive to a certain extent. We all grow older! And we need to celebrate all ages for wisdom, for initiatives, etc etc. We need to work together. But I do think that youth has an important part to play to make the world listen ... it's their future. On a smaller scale, children can make us notice the small things, the incredible wonders on our own doorstep, back yards, gardens and parks and woodlands ... and that's where a love of nature begins (04 Apr. 2020).

It becomes important to instill biophilia in children because "If children do not love the living things on this planet, they will become disassociated and will not care for them. If humans do not love the planet and the complexity of life upon it, then we have no future" (12 Sep. 2023).

The land should be viewed as a living entity.

In fact most of the biomass of living things occurs beneath the land - within the soil. The land, the oceans and the atmosphere are all interconnected with living matter - from the oxygen, carbon dioxide in the air, to the ocean currents and phytoplankton etc - planet earth is planet life (12 Sep. 2023).

According to Gill Lewis, the wild should be considered as home.

We are human, and we are animals on this planet and our very existence and future is dependent upon a livable planet. We do need to protect true wild

places (there are not so many really) such as the oceans and the forests and areas that have few humans living in these areas. Much of our rural landscapes across the world are given over to agriculture and indeed many rural areas have low biodiversity because large fauna have been removed and there are monocultures of plants such as grasses/rice/palm oil plantations etc. I think we must see the wild as living alongside us in rural and urban areas - some cities have green spaces and these should allow wildlife to flourish - we need to reduce the 'tidy' mentality of cutting grass and spraying 'weeds' and enhance wild space wherever we can. We need to see the wild as home, to embrace the wild plants and animals that can live alongside us - for our mental, spiritual and physical health (12 Sep. 2023).

In the complex fabric of human existence, the relationship between children and the land is of profound significance. Children have always been deeply intertwined with their natural surroundings, playing in its folds, learning from nature, and growing with its rhythms. However, the present day has ushered in unparalleled shifts, changing the dynamics of this relationship. This chapter delves into the intricate interaction between the land and children, examining both the depth of their closeness to nature and the challenges that corrode it in the contemporary world. At the core of children's affinity with the land lies a primeval instinct, rooted in the evolutionary history of man. Across civilizations and cultures, children are born into surroundings where the land served as the essential backdrop for their exploration and growth. From the farmers tilling fertile soil to the nomads traversing vast plains, the land remained a close companion in one's journey of childhood.

In their instinctive curiosity, children embrace nature as a canvas for discovery and imagination. In the wild, they find a space teeming with treasures to be unearthed. Streams evolve into winding pathways, trees turn into castles, and meadows transform into captivating realms where fantasies come alive. Through these experiences, children build an intimate connection with the environment, recognizing themselves as indispensable parts of its complex web of life.

The role of environmental education forms the center of fostering the affinity children have with the land. By instilling an understanding of ecological principles and a sense of stewardship, children are empowered to become custodians of nature. Through experiences such as gardening, conservation projects, and nature walks, children develop a deep affection and reverence for their natural surroundings. This, in turn, helps them recognize its worth beyond utilitarian reasons.

Further, environmental education acts as a nexus between classroom knowledge and real-world implementation. This enables children to be witnesses to the tangible results of their actions on nature. Whether by cleaning local waterways or planting trees to preserve biodiversity and mitigate global warming, children become forces of positive change, thereby embodying the principles of environmental justice and sustainability.

Lewis' novels taken up for study in this thesis stress on the need to bring about a shift in focus in man's lifestyle, value systems and perceptions, from anthropocentrism to ecocentrism - the underlying principle of deep ecology. "The main driving force of the Deep Ecology movement, as compared with the rest of the ecological movement, is that of identification and solidarity with all life" (Sessions 452). It champions the same rights for all living organisms as man to exist and grow.

Such a co-existence is the essence of the ecosystem and helps bridge the gap between the 'absolute' and the 'other'.

Deep Ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right (Ibid., 270).

Deep ecology marks a departure from man as the center to nature as the center, an idea which is in stark contrast with most of Western philosophy and religion. "The arrogance of stewardship consists in the idea of superiority which underlines the thought that we exist to watch over nature like a highly respected middleman between the Creator and Creation" (Naess 187).

Arne Naess, a seminal thinker and pioneer of deep ecology lists eight key points of the tradition in *Deep Ecology for the Twenty-First Century*:

- (i) The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves. These values are inter-dependent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human and non-human world for human purposes.
- (ii) Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are also values in themselves.
- (iii) Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- (iv) Present human interference with the non human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening.

- (v) The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease of the human population. The flourishing of non-human life requires such a decrease.
- (vi) Policies must therefore be changed. The changes in policies affect basic economies, technological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be deeply different from the present.
- (vii) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent worth) rather than adhering to an increasingly higher standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between big and great.
- (viii) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to participate in the attempt to implement the necessary changes (14).

Despite its inherent importance, the affinity children have with the land faces great challenges in the modern landscape. The mushrooming of digital technologies and urbanization have reshaped the profiles of childhood, which distance children from the natural world. In an era dominated by concrete jungles and screens, nature has become increasingly elusive, consigned to the periphery of children's experiences. Moreover, inequalities in access to green spaces magnify existing discriminations, and deprive disadvantaged communities of opportunities to form a meaningful relationship with nature. Children who grow up in urban surroundings marked by limited recreational spaces and environmental degradation find the absence of nature a perceptible void, reducing the sense of attachment to the greater ecological tapestry.

In the present day, children are increasingly detached from the natural world and spend more time indoors with screens and less time outdoors engaging with nature. This increasing separation has extreme overtones for children's emotional and mental well-being, as well as their relationship with the broader ecosystem. In *The Closest Thing to Flying*, Lewis depicts this idea:

“‘Goldfinches!’ said Patrick. ‘My favourites.’

The Professor turned her beady eye on Patrick. ‘Well it’s a relief to know young people still pay some attention to the world beyond their screens’” (Lewis 215).

Ecopsychology, a field that traverses the relationship between nature and humans, offers an insight into the need to reconnect children with nature for both their psychological development and their overall health. Children have a natural affinity for the environment they live in. Right from a young age, they develop an interest in engaging in imaginative play in natural settings, exploring outdoor spaces, and interacting with plants and animals. This innate connection is a reflection of a deep-seated bond between nature and humans that has evolved over the years. However, mass changes, including increasingly structured lifestyles, urbanization, and technological advancements have contributed to the weathering of this bond. In “Can’t See the Forests for the Trees”, Richard Mertens identifies that “the idea of pure and untrammelled nature has also served a more spiritual purpose, preserving the image of an unfallen world, untainted by war, industrialism, and other afflictions of civilization” (39). He explains that there are numerous forested areas where people work and live. This fact is ignored by conservationists because they focus on the need to create national parks and preserves that separate nature and human society. He argues “that

in many parts of the world globalization and the policies that go along with it are in fact helping to create” (Ibid., 38) forested areas. Every effort at restoration, even those credited to policy decisions and globalization should be encouraged. Mertens rejects the principle “that humans and human thriving are inevitably harmful to nature” (Ibid., 39). Human activities and the growing population have placed the earth in great peril. However, humans, who form an essential part of nature have started to recognize their indispensable contribution to healing and protecting nature. This realization of their role in safeguarding nature is a positive change that enables man to consider himself as a part of nature.

He sounds like the old Scott from primary school, when we found a baby blackbird and tried to collect ants and worms to feed it. I suddenly feel bad. The wolf is in pain, and I haven’t done anything to help him ... We can’t leave him like this. He drops low and moves slowly, holding out his hand. The wolf lowers its head and sniffs the air (Lewis, *Run Wild* 46).

The concept of a nature deficit disorder also stresses on the adverse effects of limited or no exposure to nature on children’s cognitive, emotional, and physical development. Studies show that spending time in nature reduces anxiety, stress, and attention deficit symptoms and promotes emotional resilience, creativity, and problem-solving skills. Nature serves as a source of wonder, inspiration, and sensory stimulation, offering children opportunities for exploration, discovery, and self-expression. Further, engaging with nature nurtures a sense of interconnectedness and environmental stewardship, instilling in children a regard for their natural surroundings and a desire to preserve and protect it for future generations. By forming a deep appreciation for the beauty and complexities of nature, children develop an

environmentally responsible behavior and attitude, and become advocates for conservation efforts and sustainable living. Early educational experiences are essential in shaping how children form a bond with nature and build a desire to protect it. Children are inherently born with a sense of connectedness to their environment, a concept which ecopsychologists consider an innate affiliation with other living organisms. This reflects a natural inclination to form a relationship with the natural world. The bond that children form with nature is seen in *Run Wild*,

Scott shrugs and turns his head away from me. It seems that the wolf is listening too. He pads softly closer and lies down in the dirt near to us. Scott reaches out, and the wolf crawls closer and pushes his nose into Scott's hand.

I should tell Scott to stop, but Scott and the wolf seem to trust each other. Maybe they see something of themselves in each other.

'People don't like wolves,' Scott says. His fingers trace along the soft fur of the wolf's nose. 'They think they're in trouble.'

The wolf moves closer and rolls onto his back so that Scott can scratch his belly. He seems more like a dog today.

'I reckon he's run away,' says Scott. 'I reckon he's run away from somewhere bad and found that it's just as bad here. He's got no one.'

'He's got us,' I say.

Scott looks at me and smiles. For a moment it lights up his face. 'Yeah,' he says. 'He's got us.'

'We'll come every day,' I say.

'Every day,' says Scott (Lewis 56-57).

However, this relationship can be challenged and potentially eroded by societal processes. In Western culture, children are often encouraged to undergo separation-individuation where their sense of self differentiates from others, leading to an autonomous ego. If this social individuation extends to the natural environment, the child's developing sense of self can become disconnected from nature, viewing it as something to be controlled and dominated rather than a part of themselves.

Ecopsychology emphasizes on the reciprocal relationship between nature and man, and recognizes that our welfare is closely intertwined with the health of the ecosystems of which we are a part. Children, as inherently impressionable and curious beings, are especially receptive to the influence of the environment they live in, including the natural world. Therefore, cultivating a meaningful and positive relationship with nature from an early age is crucial in furthering holistic development and instilling a sense of purpose and in the world. This is best seen in Lewis' works where children form a deep relationship with nature. For instance, in *Run Wild*, Connor maintains a notebook where he jots down his experiences with nature. "Even his drawings had the wild in them" (Ibid., 91). Connor's been obsessed with dinosaurs for years. He has notebooks full of his drawings of them. He knows all their names and when they lived. He even told the museum they were wrong when they put a T-rex with a stegosaurus.

Connor said they never could have been seen together as they existed eighty million years apart. I know what an archaeopteryx is. It has always been Connor's favourite. It's a weird dinosaur, like a bird, with feathers and claws (Ibid., 12).

Policy makers, educators, and parents play critical roles in encouraging the ecopsychology of nature and children. Schools should include environmental education, nature-based curriculum, and outdoor learning initiatives to allow children opportunities to appreciate and explore the natural world. Likewise, parents should promote nature walks, outdoor play, and gardening to build meaningful relationships with their natural surroundings and create memories that enkindle a love of the outdoors. The ecopsychology of nature and children reinforces the profound impact that nature has on the development and well-being of children. When children associate themselves with the natural world, they foster a sense of environmental consciousness, resilience, and empathy, empowering future generations to accept their role as stewards of the earth. As we labor to build a more harmonious and sustainable society, enabling an enduring and sustainable connection between nature and children is of paramount importance.

Man's exploitation of nature and the potential threats it holds form a complex issue that has been a central concern throughout human history. In "Wilderness", Mark Woods says that man has developed "a 'received wilderness idea' that is historically shaped from Western notions of wilderness" (351). In support of his stance, he cites the Wilderness Act of 1964 which defines wilderness as "an area where the earth and its community of life are untrammelled by man, where man himself is a visitor who does not remain" (Ibid., 350). Right from the earliest civilizations to the present modern industrial age, man has altered landscapes, continuously extracted resources, and disrupted ecosystems in pursuit of his own interests and motives. The roots of man's exploitation of nature can be traced back to the dawn of civilization. As human society evolved, the exploitation of natural resources proved essential for progress and

survival. Ancient civilizations such as the Mesopotamians, Egyptians, and Greeks exploited land for agriculture, forests for timber, and rivers for irrigation and transportation. While these practices were often sustainable within the limits of technology and population size, they laid the groundwork for more intensive exploitation in later centuries.

The Industrial Revolution marked a pivotal turning point in man's relationship with nature. It "reworked the earth's landscape, altering the foundations of a society based on agriculture and placing it on the road to modern economic development" (Steinberg 261). The advent of mechanization, mass production, and urbanization fueled unprecedented levels of resource extraction and environmental degradation. Forests were clear-cut, rivers were polluted, and ecosystems were disrupted on a massive scale to fuel industrial growth and meet the demands of a rapidly expanding population. The rise of capitalism further incentivized the exploitation of nature, as profit-driven motives often took precedence over environmental concerns.

William Cronon fervently declares that the wilderness "is not a pristine sanctuary where the last remnant of an untouched, endangered, but still transcendent nature can for at least a little while longer be encountered without the contaminating taint of civilization" (69) but is an outcome of that civilization. According to him, the modern perspective about wilderness was led in the late 1800s by men like John Muir, William Wordsworth and Henry David Thoreau. They transformed the image of the wild by "freighting it with moral values and cultural symbols that it carries to this day" (Ibid., 72). This led him to assert that the modern environment movement is itself a grandchild of romanticism and post-frontier ideology" (Ibid.,72). The ideology of subjugating nature was replaced by the idea that it was an urgent need to safeguard

nature from man. Cronon, however, refutes the very romanticized idea that there exists a duality between nature and humanity. He, instead, is of the belief that “idealizing a distant wilderness too often means not idealizing the environment in which we actually live, the landscape that for better or worse we call home” (Ibid., 85). Much like Gill Lewis who lives amidst nature, in the company of animals and insects, Cronon also reminds us to “celebrate the wildness in our own backyards, of the nature that is all around us if only we have eyes to see it” (Ibid., 86).

Several factors contribute to man’s exploitation of nature. Economic imperatives drive industries to extract resources at unsustainable rates to meet consumer demand and maximize profits. Technological advancements enable more efficient extraction and utilization of natural resources, often at the expense of environmental sustainability. Population growth exacerbates resource depletion and puts additional strain on ecosystems, leading to increased competition for finite resources.

Cultural attitudes and beliefs also play a significant role in shaping human behavior towards nature. Anthropocentric worldviews, which prioritize human interests above all else, often justify the exploitation of nature as necessary for human progress and prosperity. This mindset perpetuates the notion that nature exists solely for human benefit, leading to the commodification and exploitation of natural resources without regard for their intrinsic value or long-term sustainability.

Humankind’s relationship with the natural world was profoundly affected.

New sources of energy and technology were developed, different ways of farming and feeding the population emerged - all that accompanied the shift to the industrial mode of production. The industrial revolution was part of a

tremendous ecological structuring, a new and significant chapter in the earth's environmental history (Steinberg 261).

The exploitation of nature has far-reaching consequences for both the environment and human society. Ecosystem degradation, loss of biodiversity, and habitat destruction threaten the stability and resilience of natural systems, jeopardizing the health and well-being of countless species, including humans. Deforestation contributes to climate change by releasing carbon dioxide into the atmosphere and disrupting the Earth's carbon cycle. Pollution from industrial activities contaminates air, water, and soil, posing serious risks to human health and ecosystems alike.

Socially, the burden of environmental degradation often falls disproportionately on marginalized communities and vulnerable populations who lack the resources and political power to protect themselves from the adverse effects of pollution and resource depletion. As Fikret Berkes, a prominent scholar in socio-ecological systems theory, elaborates, "Socio-ecological systems theory recognizes that human societies are embedded within, and interact with, ecosystems in dynamic ways" (78). This perspective allows for a distinct analysis of how the relocation of indigenous tribes affects not just the physical environment, but also the cultural identity and social fabric of affected communities. By studying the socio-ecological nuances of indigenous displacement, one can ascertain the fundamental drivers of environmental change and promote more equitable and sustainable land management systems. Environmental injustice aggravates current disparities and perpetuates economic and social disparities between and within societies.

Addressing man's exploitation of nature requires a multifaceted approach that addresses the root causes of environmental degradation while promoting sustainability

and equity. Adopting sustainable practices that minimize resource consumption, reduce waste, and prioritize environmental stewardship is essential for mitigating the impacts of human activity on the natural world. This includes investing in renewable energy sources, promoting sustainable agriculture, and implementing policies that protect natural habitats and ecosystems.

Shifting cultural attitudes towards nature is also crucial for fostering a deeper sense of respect, reverence, and interconnectedness with the natural world. Embracing ecocentric philosophies that recognize the intrinsic value of all living beings and emphasize the importance of living in harmony with nature can help cultivate a more sustainable and ethical relationship with the environment.

Education and awareness-raising efforts are instrumental in empowering individuals and communities to take collective action towards environmental conservation and sustainability. By promoting environmental literacy and fostering a sense of environmental responsibility from an early age, we can inspire future generations to become stewards of the planet and advocates for positive change.

At the policy level, governments must prioritize environmental protection and sustainability by enacting and enforcing regulations that hold industries accountable for their environmental impact. Incentivizing green technologies, investing in conservation efforts, and incorporating environmental considerations into decision-making processes are critical steps towards building a more sustainable and resilient future for all.

Man's exploitation of nature is a pressing global challenge that demands urgent attention and collective action. By understanding the root causes and consequences of environmental degradation, promoting sustainable practices, and fostering a deeper

connection with the natural world, we can work towards building a more equitable, resilient, and sustainable society for generations to come. Only through concerted effort and collaboration can we hope to address the complex and interconnected issues surrounding man's exploitation of nature and chart a course towards a more harmonious relationship with the planet we call home.

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## **Chapter III**

### **Nature, Children, Power**

This chapter focuses on man's struggle for power over nature and children. Man has, over the years, done everything within his reach to exert his place of power over both. These differences in hierarchical levels are discussed at length in this chapter. It also looks into how power never really rests in the hands of men and how there can be a reversal of roles.

One of the most important proponents of the concept of power is Michel Foucault. During his time, Marxism was the predominant theory and this was reflected in his seminal works. Power can be understood as the ability of one being to exert influence on the action of another human being. Foucault defines power as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation" (*The History of Sexuality Volume 1*, 92). He is of the opinion that in medieval society, power had been largely consolidated through the presence of a sovereign authority who possessed absolute dominance over the subjects through an open show of violence.

Power, however, is viewed in a different manner in the modern world. The Foucauldian concept of power is not based on domination. It is not the cruel domination of the weak by the strong. This is evident in the works of Gill Lewis, where as opposed to the general domination of children by adults, the former has the power to save nature. The most striking aspect of Foucault's idea of power is that it should be productive - it mirrors reality and truth. Foucault suggests that power is comprehensible as to the techniques through which it is employed. The different forms of power which exist in society include administrative, legal, economic and military. All these factors possess a shared dependence on certain methods or techniques of application, and always draw some power by citing scientific truths.

Another important feature of Foucauldian power is that it functions only as a chain. It is never restricted to anybody's hands nor is it reduced to a commodity or a symbol for wealth. Power is functional and is utilised through an organisation where man as an individual not only oscillates between its lines, but is in the process of experiencing and using this power. This is best seen in *Run Wild* when, in the beginning, the Norton sisters have authority over Wolf Land but it is eventually the children who convince them to safeguard the place.

It's been our wild place, somewhere where we haven't been told what to do or been marked or graded by school. Even friendship hasn't been measured in the number of likes. It's been real. I think of running barefoot with Asha across the grass. I now know what our wolf gave us and what we would miss.

"Well?" says Margaret.

"Freedom," I say. "Freedom to run wild."

There's a pause when no one speaks. A grasshopper chirps in the grasses and a flock of small birds whirrs past.

Alice smiles. "I can't speak for my sister," she says, "but I like the thought of leaving a piece of wilderness in the city, somewhere for people too" (Lewis, 102-03).

The most important feature of the Foucauldian concept of power is that power is not a thing which can be owned by particular individuals or groups or by the state. It is based on the idea that a king exists only if he has subjects. Lewis depicts this idea of equality through her work, "Maybe the people in the Land of Money could hide from storms like this. But not here. No one could hide here. It's power made equals of

men” (Lewis, *Gorilla Dawn* 241). Therefore, power indicates the different groups of relationships between individuals, or that are deliberately employed by various groups of individuals. Organisations and even governments are solely the setting of a great complex set of power relations that are displayed on every step of the social structure. Foucault separates his model of power by a criticism of power representations in which power rests entirely with the executive and administrative bodies which control the nation. At its core, the state exists because of the functioning of a great number of intricate micro-relations at every level of the society. The larger plans of the state rests on the concerted efforts of a total network of individualized and local tactics of power where everyone is involved.

Power also brings about various kinds of behavioural practices and discipline in the life of man. Foucault advocates the concept that power is not a negative, repressive or coercive thing that compels one to act against one’s own wishes but a positive, necessary, or productive force in human society. In his book *Discipline and Punish*, he states,

We must cease once and for all to describe the effects of power in negative terms: it excludes, it represses, it censors, it abstracts, it masks, it conceals. In fact, power produces reality, it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production (120).

Yet another foundational condition for the relation of power is the likelihood of resistance. Foucault stresses on how important it is to have resistance as a precondition for the functioning of power relations. In the absence of such resistance, struggle, and contestation, there would exist complete subservience, dominion, and obedience.

Power can escalate through the social sphere only through the expression of resistance. Resistance is a central aspect of power. It is a state of action that stays inherent to power itself and is present at all levels.

“Well, you’re out of luck. There’s none around here,” grumbled Granny. “Angus sees to that. We should have eagles and peregrine falcons and owls and red kites. But they’re killed the moment they fly over the grouse moor” (Lewis, *Eagle Warrior* 79).

Foucault is of the opinion that power can be implemented over free subjects only, whereby freedom indicates the capacity to behave and react in diverse ways. If this is affected by slavery or violence, then the question of power relationships does not arise as there is no existence of power in the absence of revolt or refusal.

Foucault’s works are aimed at developing a framework to study power and knowledge. Power is founded on knowledge and makes use of it. Power produces knowledge by moulding it in line with its unnamed purposes. Power rebuilds its own areas of practice through knowledge. According to Foucault, the relationship between power and knowledge is such,

Power produces knowledge (and not simply by encouraging it because it serves power or by applying it because it is useful); that power and knowledge directly imply one another: that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, nor any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations (27).

Foucault asserts that the relationship between power and knowledge is reciprocal in nature as power produces knowledge and knowledge produces power. He further emphasizes the idea that sovereignty follows power. Gaventa says,

His work marks a radical departure from previous modes of conceiving power and cannot be easily integrated with previous ideas, as power is diffuse rather than concentrated, embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitutes agents rather than being deployed by them (1).

One of the key points in Foucault's concept of power is that it surpasses politics and views power as an everyday phenomenon. This marks the reason why state-centric power attempts like revolutions do not necessarily cause a change in the social structure. To a section of people, Foucault's ideas on power is extremely detached from structure and agency that there appears to be minimal scope for actual action. Despite this, he has been a huge influence in laying down how standards can be incorporated as to be beyond one's comprehension and causes man to discipline himself without any coercive forces.

As opposed to several opinions, Foucault was of the belief that there existed numerous opportunities for resistance and action. He was an active political and social observer who noticed that the organic intellectual had a role. His views about action were based on man's abilities to realise and examine socialized rules and restraints. In any case, the absolute truth is a socially produced power. Challenging power is not to seek such a truth but of separating its power from the different forms of dominance - economic, cultural, and social, within which it functions at a given point in time. Discourse can be viewed as a site of both resistance and power, with the capacity to "evade, subvert or contest strategies of power" (Gaventa 3).

Discourses are not once and for all subservient to power or raised up against it.

We must make allowances for the complex and unstable process whereby a

discourse can be both an instrument and an effect of power, but also a hindrance, a stumbling point of resistance and a starting point for an opposing strategy. Discourse transmits and produces power; it reinforces it, but also undermines and exposes it, renders it fragile and makes it possible to thwart (Foucault, *The History of Sexuality Volume 1* 100-01).

Socialist ecology, also known as ecosocialism, derives from the doctrines of Marxism, socialism, and alter-globalization. Globalization supports the development of capitalism which in turn builds an oppressive social structure. Here, the term 'power' follows from the core to the periphery in a hierarchy. The resulting power-politics acts as a catalyst for the degradation of the ecology. "Since the beginning of the Industrial Revolution unlimited economic growth has been an assumed goal of every industrial society - regardless of its dominant ideology" (Hutton 11). This explains why social ecologists champion the taking down of capitalism or any centre of power so as to avoid ecological degeneration. It stresses on how the means of production should be commonly owned and not by the state alone. It aims at the transformation of a post capitalist society. Socialist ecology argues that ecology and environment are important issues and encourages the dialogue between ecology and economy to reconstruct ecological socialism.

Socialist ecology believes that the rise of capitalism as the dominant economic system has caused the current climate crisis. It, therefore, suggests an alternate socio-economic approach to combat the challenges that climate change comes with. When we refer to the man-caused climate crisis, we consider the innumerable catastrophes prevalent in many places on the earth owing to climate change. For instance, the increased intensity and frequency of floods and droughts, and higher sea levels due to

carbon dioxide emissions from the burning of fossil fuels such as oil and coal. Also, “excessive amounts of gases emitted from industrial sources and automobiles have increased the planet’s ability to “trap” this energy, causing an increase in average global temperature” (Martinez 403).

The key features of socialist ecology are centred around a critique of capitalism and the view that it must be replaced with a new socio-economic system like a socialist one. Ecosocialists are of the opinion that a socialist state is different from a capitalist one in its expression of growth. Socialist ecology draws from the features of socialism. The first of these is the presence of a strong and managerial state that has control over the economy and provides for the welfare of its citizens. Secondly, reformists and modern socialists advocate the control of fundamental parts of the economy such as energy or infrastructure, with regards to climate change, by the state. Lastly, there should exist an equality of conditions and outcomes. This indicates that all the citizens of a state have quite the same access to life and similar gains. So as to achieve this end, there should be an elimination of social inequalities based on class, gender, and race. In Lewis’ works taken up for study in this thesis, one perceives numerous instances of the rich exploiting the poor, and also of man exercising his power over both his natural surroundings and on children.

I look across the wild moor, along the row of shooting butts spreading out in an arc up the long rise of the hill. I remember being a part of a line of beaters last year that drove the grouse to these butts and recorded the highest number of grouse shot in the history of Hartstone. Kingsmoor is wilder than Sheep’s Back. No vehicles can get up here and all the drinks and lunches are brought up by Bracken and Bramble. This is the best shooting on the moor, and

probably in northern England. Henry Knight charges more for those who want to shoot here. It's as wild as it can get (Lewis, *Sky Dancer* 107).

The important characteristics of socialist ecology take form in the inability of capitalism to find a solution to the climate crisis that the world is faced with. Some ecosocialists also believe that capitalism itself has caused this climate crisis. The industrial revolution reworked the earth's landscape, altering the foundations of a society based on agriculture and placing it on the road to modern economic development.

Humankind's relationship with the natural world was profoundly affected. New sources of energy and technology were developed, different ways of farming and feeding the population emerged - all that accompanied the shift to the industrial mode of production. The industrial revolution was part of a tremendous ecological restructuring, a new and significant chapter in the earth's environmental history (Steinberg 261).

Neo-Marxist political-economic theory can be studied to understand how capitalism has affected the environment. Capitalism aims at exploiting natural resources and human labour in order to maximize profits. This further led to their commodification. Before capitalism came into the picture, nature was the main source of sustenance but was also taken advantage of in terms of its cyclical flows. There was a marked shift from the use of renewable resources like water and soil to non-renewable resources such as coal, which do not have a cyclical flow and will result in its end. According to ecosocialists, nature began to be exploited for its exchange value and not for its important role in sustaining life.

Radical ecology is based on man's deep sense of predicament in the modern world. It opines that environmental issues are rooted in political and structures, upholding elementary systemic reforms rather than peripheral solutions. Further, it considers the dominance of nature and man in the name of class, sex, and race at the same level, while also challenging traditional approaches to ecological concerns. This theory encourages man to facilitate changes for a new ecological principle. It can be viewed as the highly advanced stage of social ecology.

It pushes social and ecological systems towards new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment. It challenges those aspects of the political and economic order that prevent the fulfilment of basic human needs. It offers theories that explain the social causes of environmental problems and alternative ways to resolve them. It supports social movements for removing the causes of environmental deterioration and raising the quality of life for people of every race, class and sex (Merchant 2).

The dominant culture seen globally today is that of an ever colonialist and acquisitive industrial capitalism that values profit over life. It is a system which devalues the natural world in its entirety, including human beings, into resources to be controlled and ordered, exploited and used in the search for economic growth and development. Such a technocratic system is responsible for the destruction of the ecology of life. For instance, Lewis shows her readers in *Sky Dancer* how man has exploited nature. It is so shocking when you read about it. In just the last ten years, over a third of the African elephants have been wiped out by poachers. Just imagine if elephants became extinct in our lifetime?" (Lewis 154-55). Radical ecology attempts

to champion a socially just and sustainable world through the variation of the conditioning aspects that stay alive both in the individual consciousness and in the political-judicial, social-economic, and technological systems, in a manner that greatly defines man's life.

Shallow environmentalism, as opposed to deep ecology, is human-centred. It sees human beings as somehow above and apart from nature, as the most valuable and at the pinnacle of evolution, and attributes value to nature such that humans are invariably entitled to steward, control, and dominate. "The shallow ecology movement can be summed up as an anthropocentric viewpoint with an entirely instrumental view of the surrounding environment, seen inherently as a resource-based account and the retaining of resources for human usage" (Baard 25). In this way, it sustains quite a few of the basic world views which have propelled collision courses with ecological disasters. Deep ecology, on the other hand, questions the very foundation of the modern way of life, which is materialistic, growth-oriented, scientific, and industrial. It probes this pattern from an ecological approach - from the viewpoint of man's deep oneness with other organisms.

Social ecology enhances deep ecology with its examination of the way in which designs of social entities such as imperialism, capitalism, and patriarchy are important in understanding the present ecological crisis. Social ecologists have discussed how the exploitation of one's natural surroundings has been accompanied by the exploitation of other human beings in different capitalist, industrialist, militaristic, and hierarchical forms. They show how social transformation is not derived from an alteration of consciousness, but also demands a radical reformation of the socio-economic order. In *Scarlet Ibis*, Scarlet feels sorry for the encaged gorillas.

We watch the baby gorilla climb down from its mother and explore a tree stump, working its fingers into the cracks. I read the information about the gorillas, how they live in large family groups in the wild, and forage in a wide area of jungle for food. I feel sorry for them cooped up here in the small enclosure (Lewis 138).

Deep ecologists have made counter statements and the debate still continues between deep and social ecologists. This has created a valuable and fertile range of examination from which radical ecologists draw inspiration and insights. Combining a political review with a recognition of the spiritual and psychological facets of man's state, radical ecology has become a creative and diverse movement. It is neither an inflexible movement, nor does it propose a fixed ideology. Radical ecology is a crucial experience, which involves working out through both thought and praxis, of how one can actually envisage, represent and perceive both these methods to counter the disastrous stride of industrial growth for a new way of life in mutual co-existence with the other species in the natural world. It entails efforts and demonstrations in egalitarian social forms, activity-oriented science, new economics, and a reinvigorated spirituality.

Its visionary nature inspires many people forming the anti-globalisation movement and practitioners of direct action, as well as many working in mainstream political fields, ecological preservation, organic agriculture and permaculture movements and many fighting for the rights of indigenous people ("Radical Ecology").

Human ecology is an interdisciplinary study that analyses the intricate relationship between human beings and their environment, taking in its ambit the

natural and social environments. It details how man's activities affect the environment and, inversely, how changes in the environment affect the human society. Human ecology lays stress on numerous disciplines to comprehend how the interactions take place and provide sustainable solutions. Ecology and human ecology are both based on a fundamental concern which is the interaction between organisms and their surroundings or environments. However, they are different in their points of focus. While ecology concentrates on natural ecosystems and the relationships among different species which exist in these systems, human ecology is largely based on the human dimensions - how human behaviour, society, and culture interact with and change the environment.

‘We’ll soon have coach-loads of people coming here to our bay. Everyone will want to see her. She’ll become like a side show in a theme park.’

‘People love to see dolphins,’ says Carl. ‘It gives us a chance to tell them about what the Marine Life Rescue team do, and the dangers facing our sea life too.’

Felix slaps the water with his hand. ‘But that’s it,’ he shouts. ‘That’s exactly what we need her for. We need to use her to tell them about the reef.’

I shake my head. ‘And make her something for people to stare at? People should be interested in the reef without putting a dolphin on display’ (Lewis, *White Dolphin* 173).

The key concepts of human ecology theory are formed on the understanding that man is part of a larger ecosystem and plays an essential role in its dynamics. This relationship is marked by a continuing interaction and processes of adaptation between

human beings and their surroundings. Essential to this theory is the idea of sustainability and the effects of human activities on the health of the earth.

Human behavioural ecology is a field of human ecology that focuses on the adaptive feature of human behaviour as a response to the state of the environment. It draws heavily on evolutionary biology to explain how behavioural patterns and decision-making have been shaped by the forces of natural selection. Such a study depicts how man allocates resources, shapes social alliances, and manages risk, with a special interest in the strategies and exchanges that bring about both maximum reproductive success and survival.

“People are like rivers,” said Iona. “That’s what I think.”

I sat up and squeezed the water from my sleeve. “What d’you mean?”

Iona rocked back on her heels and looked right at me. “You’ve got to learn to look beneath the surface, to see what lies deeper in” (Lewis, *Wild Wings* 33-34).

Human behavioural ecology also provides an insight into the diversity and universality of human behaviour across societies and cultures, divulging the complex balance between cultural growth and biological orders. The examination of human activities and their influence on ecology is critical in understanding the dynamic connection between human beings and their environments. This study not only sheds light on the challenges faced by the environment but also facilitates formulation of effective policies for sustainable living.

Human activities have immensely altered the ecosystems of the earth and have affected climate, biodiversity, land use, and water bodies. The scale of these impressions ranges from pollution at the base levels to global phenomena, for instance,

mass extinction of different species and climate change. These alterations compromise the unification of ecosystems but also pose serious threats to livelihoods and man's health.

The core of the religion of humanism: a supreme faith in human reason - its ability to confront and solve the many problems that humans face, its ability to rearrange both the world of Nature and the affairs of men and women so that human life will prosper. Accordingly, as humanism is committed to an unquestioning faith in the power of reason, so it rejects other assertions of power, including the power of God, the power of supernatural forces, and even the undirected power of nature in league with blind chance (Ehrenfeld 5).

A primary cause of environmental degradation is the extraction and overuse of natural resources such as water, timber, and fossil fuels. Together with industrialisation, deforestation, and urbanisation, it has given rise to a multitude of ecological issues like loss of habitats, soil degradation, and pollution.

Human ecology provides important perception into how human behaviour and societal organization can be aligned with environmental conservation goals. By appreciating the reciprocal nature of relationships between human beings and their environments, plans can be devised to minimize unfavourable impacts and promote sustainability. One of the main contributions of human ecology to preservation of nature is its stress on combined approaches which take into account both socio-economic aspects and ecological actions. This integrated inquiry comprises the expansion of sustainable agricultural methods, urban planning that also involves green spaces, and the development of economic systems which value environmental resources.

Applying the theory of human ecology to problems in the real world includes an integrated and strategic approach. By recognizing the complex interactions between human beings and their environments, it is possible to manage global challenges, for example, unsustainable expansion of urban spaces, loss of biodiversity, and climate change. This utilisation of human ecology reinforces creative solutions that are both socially equitable and environmentally sustainable, advancing the way for a cordial relation between human societies and natural environments.

The planet earth is currently in an era called the Anthropocene and this concept is closely tied to human ecology.

These were new Tall Apes. They were not the harmless Watchers who kept their vigil on the gorilla family. They were not the Hunters who moved silently through the forest with their dogs. These new Tall Apes were not of the forest. The thunder from their fire-sticks had silenced the birds and sent the animals deep into the undergrowth (Lewis, *Gorilla Dawn* 43).

Man is the most powerful species today and this placement has led to the resulting climate change and other alterations in the ecology like changes in the atmosphere, organisms, water, land, and environment. These shifts are often irreversible in nature and have a lasting influence on the earth and its systems.

Spiritual ecology is a term that refers to the relationship between spirituality, religion and the environment. It attempts to give a spiritual aspect to the ongoing ecological crisis which poses a threat to the future of our planet. Such an issue is not just an environmental problem that is taking place in the physical world but also connotes a deeper crisis of man's soul. It is precisely this crisis with which spiritual ecology is concerned. It lays emphasis on the importance of meditation and prayer as

they are the media through which man comes into touch with the divine. They are silent ways of talking to oneself and consequently feeling as one with the whole of creation. This, in turn, drives man to respect creation and protect nature which is a part of it. Such a regard for nature is seen across Lewis' works taken up for study in this thesis. The children are all seen to have a reverence for the land, rivers, forests, animals and birds.

Spiritual ecology is an encompassing approach that brings together ethical, spiritual, and ecological views to combat environmental challenges and foster a more harmonious and sustainable relationship between human beings and nature. It focuses on the sacred and spiritual connections between humans and nature, shedding light on the great mutual dependence of spiritual and ecological well-being.

This universe itself, but especially the planet Earth, needs to be experienced as the primary mode of divine presence, just as it is the primary educator, primary healer, primary commercial establishment, and primary lawgiver for all that exists within this life community. The basic spirituality communicated by the natural world can also be considered as normative for the future ecological aid (Berry 120).

Spiritual ecology looks into how spiritual and religious systems shape one's behaviour and attitude towards nature. This area of study also recognizes the effect of spiritual principles on sustainable practices and nature conservation efforts.

Spiritual ecology recognizes that one's environmental and ecological challenges are not just material or physical in nature but also have profound ethical and spiritual dimensions. It lays stress on the relationship of all forms of life and seeks

to unite spiritual awareness and values with environmental actions and discussions. This is seen in *Moon Bear* when Tam gives names to the bears.

The bears got to know me. I'd call out, 'It's me, bears, only me.' And they snuffled their noses against the bars, putting paws through for treats of fruit. I got to know the bears too, not just Biter and Mama's cub, but all seven of them, all their different characters.

I gave them names instead of the numbers on their cages (Lewis, *Moon Bear* 93-94).

At its centre, spiritual ecology inspires individuals and communities to create a deep sense of respect and reverence for the natural surroundings, giving birth to a correlation between humanity and the environment. It finds encouragement in numerous spiritual and religious traditions, native knowledge systems, and philosophical views that highlight the sanctity of nature.

Proponents of spiritual ecology partake in practices such as rituals, meditation, and contemplation to cultivate a bond with nature and to build ecological responsibility and awareness. They are also champions of sustainable living, environmental conservation, and social justice from a spiritual outlook. Cultural ecology comprises traditional ecological knowledge, which constitutes the practices and belief systems local and indigenous communities have formed over the years in relation to their environmental surroundings. Spiritual ecology respects and values this knowledge as it comprises sacred and spiritual dimensions, stressing on the need to preserve indigenous perception for both ecological and cultural conservation.

Cultural ecology examines the concept of landscapes being sacred, which are either natural or cultural sites worshipped as sacred by indigenous communities.

Spiritual ecology explores the spiritual meaning of these landscapes, delving into how they are protected, respected and integrated into spiritual or religious practices. Both these ideologies acknowledge the significance of these sacred areas in understanding the bond between the environment, culture, and spirituality. Man also resorts to nature when he needs healing. “He suffered dreadful shell shock, and the way he coped with it was to walk for hours across the hills watching birds. He said they gave him peace knowing there was so much beauty still to be seen in a cruel world. He gave me his love of wild things and wild places too” (Lewis, *The Closest Thing to Flying* 219). Spiritual ecology, influenced by ethical and spiritual principles, stands for ecological sustainability, stewardship and the ethical treatment of the environment. This emphasizes the moral responsibility man has towards nature.

The consciousness of viewing the human soul as part of the soul of the world is pivotal in reversing the current crisis threatening the ecological world. Irrespective of class, creed or community, revering and worshipping nature is a practice that has been present since time immemorial. The Indian traditional doctrine of *Vashudhaiva Kutumbakama* indicates that the whole of creation is one family and that every object of nature forms an intrinsic part of nature. However, there has been a drastic shift in the way in which man treats nature. It has been objectified and degraded to the level of a mere commodity. “High above, small birds flit over our heads, their colours electric in the sunshine. I always wonder if they know that there’s a whole world beyond those windows where some birds are flying freely. Maybe they can’t imagine life another way. Maybe it would be too hard if they could” (Lewis, *Scarlet Ibis* 29). It is this that the concept of spiritual ecology seeks to address - to restore the age-old

values of respecting the environment instead of dominating it, and to bring about a peaceful co-existence between nature and man.

Rational ecology refers to the ecological rationality which emphasizes the role of the rationality of human beings to preserve the environment and maintain ecological sustainability. Ecological rationality establishes “the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support” (Dryzek 36). Human beings who assert that they are rational animals have the responsibility to maintain a sustainable ecology. Economic, political, legal, social and cultural values better the standard of man’s life. Such values are greatly dependent on the ecosystem which aids and sustains mankind.

Gill Lewis says that nature, during the Covid-19 pandemic, has been freed from man’s cruelty:

I think the recovery of wildlife in some areas has been astonishing. Also the reduction in pollution. Just in the area of Somerset that I live, the skies seem clearer and quieter, the roads are quieter and suddenly we can hear the wild world more. In Lockdown, one of my daughters and I go for a 16 mile cycle a day along country lanes. There are no cars. Only a few tractors. We’ve seen foxes and buzzards. There seem to be lots more of the little birds in the hedgerows.

I wonder if we can make these changes for the threat of a virus, maybe we can make these changes to protect our future from climate change. I think humans have a fault of being very short-sighted. When the virus emerged in China, it seemed impossibly far away. Then when Italy reported many cases and deaths, our government still didn’t appear to take it seriously...it was still in another

country...not affecting the UK...yet!!! And now it is here we are seeing the reality of it. I hope we can learn to look toward the future and make changes...to know what needs to be done to protect the natural world and consequently protect human survival. This pandemic is difficult and challenging, but I hope countries can be brought together to see that we are a community on this small planet, and we need to look out for each other across the world.

I think we need to have areas across the world that are protected and rewilded. This can be done to the benefit of people and agriculture...eg the Monteverde Rainforests in Costa Rica were protected and enables constant water in the valleys below. Sadly, it's still a battle in many countries with the wrong people in power.

I think the lockdown has helped people to re-connect with nature, have time to reflect, but also reconnect with each other more (04 Apr. 2020).

The concepts of power and ecology are closely tied to each other and, in general, refer to the ways in which the dynamics of power affect resource management and environmental issues. Power need not necessarily have a negative connotation to it. It can be viewed as a positive means to achieve the end of building an inclusive existence between human beings and other life forms on the earth. Such a bond is vital to the health of the ecosystem and man plays an indispensable role in creating and maintaining this genial relationship. This study further involves comprehending how different institutions, such as local communities, governments, and corporations exercise influence and control over natural resources, and how these power struggles impact man's well-being and ecological systems.

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## **Chapter IV**

### **Nature's Fury: A Call to Rewild the Land**

The fear that the earth could turn uninhabitable in a few centuries has been repeatedly raised by scientific models and assessments. Human development has heralded an age of intersecting crises - pollution, disease, socio-economic inequality, climate change, and ecological destruction. This chapter combines the breadth of these interlaced emergencies and underlines the pressing need for integrated and comprehensive action. Propelled by a surging population, extractive capitalism and imperialism, man hastens past nature's material limits, damaging critical ecosystems, and sparking irreversible shifts in the biophysical systems which support human civilization. Vulnerable populations disproportionately bear the grave repercussions of these actions, thereby further establishing global inequities. Terrestrial and marine biomes face crucial tipping points, while the escalation of challenges to access to food and water foretells a bleak scene for global security.

The article, "The Uninhabitable Earth" by David Wallace-Wells, argues that global warming is worse than what one thinks and the common focus on sea-level rise merely brings to the fore the surface of what aftermath is possible within the lifetime of the present generation's lifetime. It maintains that even with collaborated effort, "parts of the Earth will likely become close to uninhabitable, and other parts horrifically inhospitable, as soon as the end of this century" (1). This work goes beyond typical climate change dialogues to detail a series of cascading and accelerating environmental disasters and societal breakdowns, emphasizing that many devastating effects are already baked into the future of man.

A major immediate threat beyond rising oceans is the thawing of Arctic permafrost. While initially not a primary concern for climate scientists, this

“permanently frozen” (Ibid. 1) soil contains an immense 1.8 trillion tons of carbon, which is more than twice the amount currently in the earth’s atmosphere. When permafrost thaws, this carbon can be released as methane, a greenhouse gas that is 34 times more powerful than carbon dioxide over a century, and 86 times more powerful over two decades. The article highlights an incident where the Svalbard seed vault, a universal food bank designed for agricultural survival, was nearly flooded due to melting permafrost, illustrating the immediacy of this threat. The continuous upward revision of the projected release date for this trapped carbon underscores its urgency.

The article posits that humanity suffers from an intense collapse of imagination when contemplating real-world warming dangers, despite an apocalyptic popular culture. This lack of alarm is attributed to factors like the “timid language of scientific probabilities” (Ibid., 2), climate denialism, the simultaneous speed and slowness of change, and the assumption that climate change will primarily affect “elsewhere, not everywhere” (Ibid., 2). The author, having conducted dozens of interviews and reviewed hundreds of scientific papers, presents a “portrait of our best understanding of where the planet is heading absent aggressive action” (Ibid., 2) stressing that these scenarios provide one with the real schedule rather than mere predictions.

Regarding the scale of warming, the article notes that two degrees Celsius of warming, once considered a catastrophic threshold, is now the Paris Agreement’s goal. Experts give highly unlikely chances of even meeting this goal, with the U.N. Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) median projection suggesting four degrees of warming by the beginning of the next century if current trends continue. The upper end of this probability curve runs as high as eight degrees, and even these projections do not fully account for amplifying effects like the albedo effect

(less ice means more absorbed sunlight), increased cloud cover, or the dieback of forests, all of which accelerate warming. Historically, temperatures can shift by as much as five degrees Celsius within thirteen years, and the last time the planet was four degrees warmer oceans were quite higher. The earth has undergone five mass extinctions before, most of which were caused by climate change from greenhouse gases, not asteroids, with the most notorious event 252 million years ago beginning with five degrees of warming and ending with 97 percent of life dead. Humanity is currently adding carbon to the atmosphere at least ten times faster than during that event, and the rate is accelerating. This dire outlook has led scientists to a quiet “apocalyptic conclusion: No plausible program of emissions reductions alone can prevent climate disaster” (Ibid., 2).

The consequences of rising temperatures extend to heat death, where human survival becomes impossible in many regions. Humans, like heat engines, require constant cooling, which becomes impossible if the air cannot draw heat off the skin. At seven degrees of warming, large parts of the equatorial band and tropics would become lethal. While 11 or 12 degrees of warming could kill over half the world’s population directly, pain points will emerge much sooner. The critical factor is wet-bulb temperature, which combines heat and humidity, with 35 degrees Celsius being the “true red line for habitability” (Ibid., 4). The planet has already seen a 50-fold increase in dangerous or extreme heat events since 1980. Even if Paris goals are met, cities like Karachi and Kolkata could become nearly uninhabitable due to annual deadly heat waves. At four degrees, the deadly 2003 European heat wave, which killed 2,000 people daily, would become a normal summer. Six degrees of warming would make summer labour impossible in the lower Mississippi Valley, and heat stress in

New York City would exceed that of present-day Bahrain. The World Bank projects that by the end of the century, the coolest months in tropical South America, Africa, and the Pacific will be warmer than the warmest months of the late twentieth century. This heat is already causing chronic kidney disease in regions like El Salvador, linked to dehydration from working in fields that were comfortable just two decades prior.

Another critical impact is the end of food. For every degree of warming, yields of staple cereal crops decline by 10 percent, potentially leading to 50 percent more people to feed with 50 percent less grain if the planet warms by five degrees. While some suggest crops could be grown in newly warmed northern regions, existing agricultural areas are already at optimal temperatures, and relocating crops northward is problematic due to poor soil quality. Drought is predicted to be an even greater problem than heat, with “unprecedented droughts nearly everywhere food is today produced” (Ibid., 5). By 2080, southern Europe, Iraq, Syria, and much of the Middle East, along with parts of Australia, Africa, South America, and China’s breadbasket regions, are projected to experience a severe drought which is permanent in nature. The American plains and Southwest could face droughts worse than any in a thousand years. This compounds an already severe global hunger crisis, with an unprecedented “quadruple famine” (Ibid., 5) striking Africa and the Middle East in 2017, potentially killing 20 million people.

The melting ice also threatens to unleash climate plagues. Trapped in Arctic ice are diseases that have not circulated for millions of years, posing a threat because human immune systems would have no defence. More recently, remnants of the 1918 flu, which killed up to 100 million people, have been found, and scientists suspect smallpox and bubonic plague are also in Siberian ice. While some organisms might

not survive thawing laboratory conditions, a boy was killed and 20 others infected by anthrax released from retreating permafrost in 2016, demonstrating the real-world danger. Epidemiologists are more concerned by existing diseases that are “relocated, rewired, or even re-evolved by warming” (Ibid., 6). As tropics expand and mosquitoes migrate, diseases like dengue, malaria, and Zika will spread to new regions. Malaria, for instance, thrives in hotter regions because its parasite reproduces ten times faster for every degree increase in temperature, with the World Bank estimating 5.2 billion people will contend with it by 2050.

Unbreathable air is another imminent threat. Carbon dioxide concentrations have crossed 400 parts per million and could hit 1,000 ppm by 2100, at which point human cognitive ability declines by 21 percent. Warming also increases ozone formation, with Americans potentially facing a 70 percent increase in unhealthy ozone smog by mid-century. Globally, 2 billion people could be breathing air above WHO safe levels by 2090, with ozone exposure linked to increased autism risk in children. Pollution from fossil-fuel burning already kills over 10,000 people daily, and wildfire smoke kills 339,000 annually, in part due to extended fire seasons. Wildfires are projected to become twice as destructive by 2050, potentially causing massive carbon emissions if rainforests like the Amazon, which provides 20 percent of the world’s oxygen, dry out and burn. Furthermore, industrial pollution can become literally unbreathable when natural ventilation systems are disrupted by melting Arctic ice, leading to an Air Quality Index over 800 and contributing to a third of all deaths in the country that year.

Climate change is also linked to lasting war and social unrest. For every half-degree of warming, societies see a 10 to 20 percent increase in the likelihood of armed

conflict, suggesting a planet five degrees warmer would have at least half again as many wars. The U.S. military is “obsessed with climate change” (Ibid., 7) not just due to sea-level rise drowning bases but because of the potential doubling of global crime rates and conflict. The relationship is attributed to agricultural and economic pressures, forced migration, and even individual irritability heightened by heat.

The economic consequences point to a permanent collapse in the economic. Research by Solomon Hsiang and colleagues indicates that every degree Celsius of warming costs, on average, 1.2 percent of GDP. Their median projection is a 23 percent loss in per capita earning globally by the end of this century. More alarmingly, there is a 12 percent chance of a more than 50 percent reduction in global output by 2100, and a 51 percent chance of a 20 percent or more reduction in per capita GDP if emissions do not decline. This is far worse than the Great Recession’s approximately 6 percent global GDP drop. The article argues that the history of swift economic growth since the 18th century might be largely due to the discovery of fossil fuels, implying a potential return to “subsistence living” (Ibid., 8) once they are depleted.

Finally, the article describes oceans being poisoned. Beyond coastal inundation, which threatens a third of the world’s major cities and 600 million people, the oceans are absorbing over a third of humanity’s carbon emissions. This leads to “ocean acidification” (Ibid., 9) which on its own could add another half-degree of warming. It is already causing “coral bleaching” (9) and impacting marine life, as oysters and mussels struggle to grow shells in more acidic waters. A terrifying feedback loop is where under-oxygenated waters foster microbes that make the water “anoxic” (Ibid., 9), creating “dead zones” (Ibid., 9) that expand like cancers, choking off marine life. This process is fairly advanced in areas like the Gulf of Mexico where

toxic hydrogen sulfide is bubbling from the sea. This hydrogen sulfide was the ultimate cause of the mass extinction 252 million years ago when it poisoned all life on land, taking millions of years for the oceans to recover.

Despite the overwhelming threats, the article concludes by acknowledging a peculiar optimism among some leading climate scientists. While the challenges are immense - needing a halving of carbon emissions each decade, zeroing out land-use emissions, and inventing technologies to extract twice the carbon annually than all plants currently do - scientists like Peter Ward, Wally Broecker, and Jim Hansen maintain confidence in human ingenuity. They suggest that global warming might be a great filter, explaining why civilizations might burn themselves out too quickly to encounter each other. Yet, they believe that because humanity has engineered this doomsday, it will also find a way to engineer its way out, through solutions like carbon capture and geoengineering, even if they cause other smaller problems. For these scientists, the alternative is unimaginable, holding a faith that humanity “will find a way to forestall radical warming, because we must” (Ibid., 11).

In his book *The End of Nature*, Bill McKibben contends that anthropogenic global warming and climate change has toppled the state of the environment, resulting in a fundamental defilement of the whole of nature:

We have changed the atmosphere, and thus we are changing the weather. By changing the weather, we make every spot on earth man made and artificial.

We have deprived nature of its independence, and that is fatal to its meaning.

Nature’s independence is its meaning; without it there is nothing but us (54).

The concept of placelessness is closely tied to the exploitation of land by the human race. Instances of such placelessness comprise superhighways, airports, and railways.

They do not allow man to have a genuine relationship with nature. In the essay “Place and Placelessness”, Edward Relph writes,

Roads, railways, airports, cutting across or imposed on the landscape rather than developing with it, are not only features of placelessness in their own right, but, by making possible the mass movement of people with all their fashions and habits, have encouraged the spread of placelessness well beyond their immediate impacts (90).

Places which are imbued with history, social significance, and culture are sites of identity and memory where its inhabitants create meaning through interactions and the formation of relationships. However, in this age of globalization, these places have been subject to profound transformations. Such places are created with the aim of achieving functionality, efficiency, and consumption, thereby prioritising utility over man’s experience. In *Sky Dancer*, Lewis shows how the moors are maintained for grouse shooting,

Ella opens the page at the beginning. ‘These first few pages are the lists of plants and animals on a heather moorland,’ she says. ‘But everything after that are the animals and plants we could have if we let the wild come back. You see, we’d still have the heather, but we’d have woodland and bog and scrub and grasses. The list goes on, and on and on.’

‘But Ella,’ I say. ‘This is moorland.’

‘Only because we keep it this way,’ she says. ‘Just imagine for one moment, if these hills were woodland again. Countries like Norway have brought back their forests and it’s brought back the wildlife, and tourists too. We’d have hen harriers and maybe even eagles’ (Lewis 183).

Non-places foster transience and anonymity where man passes through in the absence of an engagement with his natural surroundings and the subsequent formation of meaningful connections. As opposed to non-places, places like neighbourhoods, markets and parks are sites of forging social bonds where memories are created. They are characterized by historical narratives and by the shared experiences of their inhabitants.

The anthropologist Marc Augé argues that postmodernism indicates the need for an absolute rethinking of the concept of place. Traditionally, place has been viewed as a fantasy of a community on a specific area. Augé says that these places are losing their importance gradually and are being constantly replaced by non-places:

The multiplication of what we may call empirical non-places is characteristic of the contemporary world. Spaces of circulation (freeways, airways), consumption (department stores, supermarkets), and communication (telephones, faxes, television, cable networks) are taking up more room all over the earth today. They are spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together (110).

This chapter explores the symbiotic convergence between ecocriticism and children's literature as two interdisciplinary genres whose intersection could professedly bear fruit in the all-embracing, arduous process of educating children ecologically, culturally, religiously and aesthetically. Special stress is laid on the fictionalization of the bond between children and animals, and on the

depiction of the ecological mentality as nonviolent, adaptive, responsive, and attentive to the environment, perceiving other creatures as subjects worthy of respect, whose different voices must be attended to, and with whom one is

emotionally engaged, interwoven in an ecological and spiritual continuum (Elnady 9).

An important function of ecocriticism and of children's literature is to bring about consciousness of the readers towards urgent "environmental issues such as pollution, desertification, climate change, production and consumption malpractices, radiation, toxicity, and transgression against plants and animals" (Ibid., 11), amongst other things.

Father is a feather merchant. He owns a warehouse on Cutler Street and it is filled with the feathers and skins of birds from around the world. Plumes of all colours of the rainbow are stacked high; hummingbirds from South America, egret feathers from the Everglades, golden pheasants from the far East. Father says trade is booming, and that the milliners who make the feather topped hats cannot make them fast enough.

Mother runs the household. She organizes Father's diary and says that good business requires knowing the right people in the right places. She knows the most fashionable ladies who love to purchase the rarest of bird skins and feathers from Father's warehouse (Lewis, *The Closest Thing to Flying* 14-15).

In each of the novels taken up for study in this thesis, Lewis portrays how man has invited the wrath of nature by exploiting it to meet his selfish ends. "The world won't stop until it has destroyed everything and taken what's beneath our soil (Lewis, *Gorilla Dawn* 317). To overturn the destructive direction in which the current civilization is headed to, children's literature has become the most advantageous space for the growth of ecocritical consciousness in both children and adults. The message to be conveyed appears to be directed to

various countries that are currently committing irreversible crimes against their natural environments under the spell of progress: you will bring about your own collapse ... if you are not heedful of nature's bounty; your civilization will prosper so long as nature remains intact (Oppermann et. al 1).

This ecocritical idea can be wholly comprehended only in "children's literature which is considered by scholars as the most fertile soil for sowing the seeds of ecological awareness in young hearts and minds" (Elnady 12). Such a didactic nature of ecocriticism and children's literature is the foundation of the works of Gill Lewis, whereby every viable effort is deployed towards the ecological awakening of children while also paying attention to the need to mould all this into an aesthetic and refined framework. This realisation comes to exist only when man tries to truly understand the needs of nature.

High above, small birds flit over our heads, their colours electric in the sunshine. I always wonder if they know that there's a whole world beyond those windows where some birds are flying freely. Maybe they can't imagine life another way. Maybe it would be too hard if they could (Lewis, *Scarlet Ibis* 29).

The umbilical cord between children's literature and ecology has increasingly influenced contemporary discourses about the relationship between man and nature. The recent grim transgression against most forms of nature specifically calls attention to the need to go back to the roots where children can absorb anew the process of conserving nature. The judgment of works of art such as literature for children from an ecocentric viewpoint forms the primary concern of ecocriticism. Sidney I. Dobrin believes that "ecocriticism and children's literature are bound together in intellectual

pursuit, their methodologies and purpose overlapping to the point of inseparability” (21). The intersection and confluence of both these genres can be attributed to their essential emphasis on man’s perilous position when confronted with highly endangered manifestations of nature, especially in the twenty-first century. Towards that end, both ecocriticism and children’s literature employ identical strategies such as “illustrations, animal imagery, fables, adventures, juxtaposition, and varying back-to-wilderness techniques” (Elnady 14).

Tessa Strickland Stones underlines the interest of both these genres in the ecological education of children so that they would be inseparably tied to the natural surroundings as they grow up. The “true value of stories in education is the way in which they offer children images and ideas that help them join up the ecology of their inner worlds, or selves, with the ecology of the outer world ... the older, wilder world of stones, woods and water” (7).

“There are some places in Scotland where they have stopped shooting grouse and are letting the wild come back.”

“I hope that happens here,’ said Bobbie. She watched the cloud shadows slide across the valley floor. The river glittered gold in the evening light and the sky was tinted with pink. This was her world, where she wanted to be. She didn’t want to have to leave, ever” (Lewis, *Eagle Warrior* 82-83).

While ecocriticism provides for the rehabilitation and orientation of the perception and behaviour of human beings towards nature, the artistic portrayal of the same values in children’s literature unites fact and fiction and will supposedly “redirect human consciousness to a full consideration of its place in a threatened natural world” (Love 237). Both disciplines eventually contribute to analysing “not only the reflection

of the vegetative world in literature, but also the tropes that construct humanity's relationship with the phenomenal world" (Kar 66). By highlighting this rigid yet rich bond, ecocriticism and children's literature can greatly contribute to the enhancement of ecological concerns and also to man's apprehension of himself and of the universe as a whole.

The destruction of nature has emerged as a great challenge that man faces in the present day. The impacts of the continuous and alarming exploitation and depletion of natural resources extend far beyond ecological imbalance. This, in turn, paves the way for environmental disasters on an unprecedented scale. Climate change, pollution, and deforestation comprise only a fraction of the numerous consequences. "She would freeze if she stayed up here. People died in these mountains every year, caught out by the weather, unprepared (Lewis, *Wild Wings* 10). Ecosystems collapse and disrupt vital ecological processes with the loss of biodiversity. A cascade effect throughout the food chain is triggered when a loss of habitat threatens myriad species with extinction. Rampant pollution jeopardizes man's health and exacerbates the climate crisis. From wildfires to hurricanes, increasing global temperatures lead to intensified natural disasters.

Exploitation of natural resources causes an escalation in resource scarcity and poses dire implications for mankind. When finite reserves of fossil fuels diminish, energy security becomes increasingly precarious and, in turn, fuels geopolitical tensions and conflicts. Another pressing concern is water scarcity, worsened by pollution, over-extraction and climate variability. The shrinking of arable land and decline in agricultural productivity, uncertainty in food security, imperilling the livelihoods of millions universally. The exhaustion of marine resources and fisheries

further aggravates the burden on critical ecosystems, and threatens the maintenance of marine life and also of coastal communities. For instance, Lewis describes how water bodies are at risk because of man's activities.

'The dredging ban is lifted in a week's time,' I say. 'Then dredgers from up and down the coast will come and haul their metal rakes across the seabed for scallops. It's not just scallops they'll be ripping out, but everything else, all those things you've seen today. There'll be nothing left' (Lewis, *White Dolphin* 103).

The destruction of one's natural surroundings causes rapid displacement and societal interruption on a large scale. Such vulnerable communities bear the brunt of environmental degradation and are left to grapple with the loss of homes, cultural heritage, and livelihoods. This leads to intensifying the gulf between the rich and marginalized populations.

Gaard's question as to what the value of ecocritical literature, which can also be added to children's literature, is valid even today.

As temperatures around the planet rise, as safe drinking water becomes scarce and costly, as food costs soar, populations swell, ... and the global violence against women, children, animals, and ecosystems proceeds unabated - what in the world are we doing by reading environmental literature? (322).

In her opinion, the answer lies in bringing together concerned people across the world to come up with creative ideas to reciprocate such violations of nature in all possible ways. By incorporating direct and indirect examination of ecological threats, writers like Gill Lewis help raise a generation of eco-conscious people, especially children and thus, mitigate the onslaught of environmental perils and crises. As William

Rueckert says, “The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community” (107).

It is here that the benefit and beauty of analysing children’s literature against the backdrop of ecocritical study comes into play.

Rather than delve deep into dry scientific qualification and theorizing, the intersection of ecocriticism and children’s literature will presumably contribute to vividly revolutionizing the very recesses of man’s ecological awareness (Elnady 16).

The works for children written by Gill Lewis which are taken up for study in this thesis are examined for their emphasis on the relationship between nature and man. This is neither a simplistic viewpoint nor one opted for convenience. Instead, it is more of an observance of the author’s authentic concern with the bond between man, especially children, and nature. Peter Hunt lays stress on the “similarity of children to animals, the inevitability of child-like irresponsibility in both, and the resultant need for adult authority” (*International Companion Encyclopedia of Children’s Literature* 133). Gaard focuses on the appearance of animals in children’s literature as one of the most significant parts of ecocriticism. She states that “given the predominance of animal fables in children’s literature, this branch of ecocriticism has developed an emphasis interrogating the relationship of culture and nature through the relationships of children and animals” (325). This is a continuing, reciprocal process which will benefit both worlds. Amy Ratelle asserts that “the reliance of animals in children’s literature over the past two centuries has become a key means by which the civilizing process that children go through has been mediated by the animal body” (10). Shun Yin Kiang

is also of the opinion that “animality brings continuity to human and animal lives and ... the everyday reciprocity of friendship can connect different life worlds” (147). Lewis, in *Moon Bear*, delves into how man often subjects animals to cruelty. The Doctor metes out extreme ruthlessness to the bears he has kept in captivity.

He was running a good trade. When people heard that General Chan’s daughter was getting better, they wanted bile from the Doctor’s bear farm too. People came for treatments for stomach upsets, sores, chills, and bruises. They came for almost everything. For some it was a tonic, a good luck drink to be washed down with rice whisky at weddings. The Doctor even turned the small office into a shop. Sometimes tourists arrived in mini-buses with cameras to have their photo taken with the bears. The Doctor would let them feed the bears fruit on the ends of sticks. He loved to taunt Biter to lash out and show his strength. Biter impressed people. His bile was the priciest of all and the Doctor would label some bottles with Biter’s name though I suspected they didn’t all contain his bile (135-36).

Furthermore, engaging with the endangered place of nature in the postmodern world, children’s literature can help divert the attention of young readers towards the unity of both spheres, for instance, stressing on qualities such as compassion, love of adventure, generosity, innocence, and kind-heartedness. While most adult characters in Lewis’ works consider themselves powerful and triumphant by destroying nature, it is the children who attempt to subvert this thought. As opposed to portraying man as antagonistic to nature and using it for his selfish interests, Lewis encourages children to safeguard nature, not merely as protectors, but with the realization that all life forms are a part of nature.

In keeping with the narrative structure of Lewis' works taken up for study in this thesis, the only plausible link between human beings and ecological awareness is, in general, language. For Lewis, it is also a most effective bridge between the idyllic world of children and their harsh realities" (Elnady 18). Her works are proof that she is keen on improving this capacity and resolute in attaining perfection as she is of the opinion that the language used in works for children should not be difficult. Above all else, Lewis' works maintain that like ecopoetry, nature writing for children should be delightful rather than didactic. According to Scott Slovic, ecopoetry "guides us to pay deeper attention to our physical senses and ... to develop and clarify and articulate our feelings about the world's meaning, its value" (136). This is primarily because of the use of language regarding "humorous events, well-liked familiar experiences, and animals" (Lynch-Brown and Tomlinson 46). The affinity between ecocriticism and ecopoetry is that the language is "evoking and refraining, naming and marveling" (Garrard 6), something that best fits children. This is indicative of a continuous process of acculturation where, through the most effectual medium of language, child readers are "culturally attuned to the nuances and intricacies of nature at large" (Elnady 19). In the words of Kate Rigby, "culture constructs the prism through which we know nature. We begin to internalise this prism from the moment ... that we are inducted into the logos, the world as shaped by language" (154).

It is mainly through the multiplication of prospects of language that Lewis shapes the world of her crowd of child readers especially with regard to environmentality which further points towards the urgent need of intensifying children's awareness of environmental perils. Youssef hints at the exigency of

cultivating interest in poetry and music, in children as these “will lead them one day to the right path” (*Children’s Poetry: Poems and Songs* 179). He holds that

nothing competes with music and singing when it comes to touching one’s feelings, sublimating and uplifting them. Man is not the only being who is subject to these effects; animals too are susceptible to them. It is sufficient to observe Arabian horses dancing to some tunes as a mark of their being touched by the music being played. It has been said that some experiments prove that cows produce more milk while listening to music and songs and that human production itself can be doubled the same way. This applies not only to the civilized man but to the primitive man as well (181).

The example of animals being responsive to songs and music points out that poetic language and nature are inseparable in the mind of the writer. This is an archetype of the undertaking of ecocritics, who, “while acknowledging the role of language in shaping our view of the world ... seek to restore significance to the world beyond the page” (Rigby 155). When the language used in works of art are suitable for children, there arises a sense of love and respect for one’s natural surroundings in the young minds. Such feelings of regard for the natural surroundings further translates into the realization that rewilding the land is extremely necessary. Garrard proposes that “ecocriticism is essentially about the demarcation between nature and culture, its construction and reconstruction” (179). This is most apt as the genre of nature writing serves the preservation and dissemination of both nature and national culture.

The current state of the environment is distressing. There is a dire need of writers drawing for children “an ecological map most appropriate for this blossoming stage” (Elnady 22). When issues affecting nature are discussed in literature addressed

to child readers, children grow to become more inclined towards safeguarding their natural surroundings. Lewis' works underscore the need to diminish the attachment of children to urban spaces and create in the child's inner consciousness a close relationship with nature. Once they acknowledge this bond, they will grow to be environment-friendly and will naturally seek to serve, develop, beautify and conserve nature. "By perfecting the type of language used in writing for children, writers could help the latter to reproduce meanings and concepts ... to develop on the social level, and to be able to interpret the surrounding environment" (Yousseff, "The Child and Language" 5).

It is equally important, at this juncture, to note that Lewis has imbued in the young minds, the ecocritical approach together with the sanctity attributed to nature, which is devoid of a moralizing nature. Stephen Thomson says, "in teaching children to read stories, ... it is of the highest importance to be ideologically aware, and to pass that ideological awareness on to the children" (144). For Hunt, "no work, even the most apparently simple book for children, can be innocent of some ideological freight" (*Literature for Children: Contemporary Criticism* 16). Even while dealing with something as serious as nature's fury on its exploitation by man, Lewis delights her young readers, "enhancing their ideological awareness and whetting their appetite for aesthetic pleasure" (Elnady 29).

Another area which contributes to the destruction of nature today is tourism. The negative impacts of tourism arise when the level of the visitor use surpasses the ability of the natural environment to bear this use within the acceptable levels of change. When tourism is uncontrolled, it poses an imminent threat to nature and this is evident across the world today. It puts huge pressure on a natural area and leads to

factors such as loss of habitat, increased pollution, heightened pressure on endangered species, soil erosion, discharge into water bodies, and makes it prone to forest fires. Additionally, it puts an exertion on water resources and compels local populations to engage in an unhealthy competition for the use of critical resources.

Since tourism is a global industry and many countries depend greatly on tourism to generate revenue, create employment opportunities and promote cultural exchange, the adverse aspects of tourism are overlooked. The exploitation of nature on account of tourism can be broadly studied under the heads of habitat destruction, overuse and misuse of natural resources, and pollution. A primary concern is the physical damage to natural landscapes. Attractive tourist destinations record excessive footfall on mountains, forests, and beaches, which in turn leads to the degeneration of fragile ecosystems. For instance, the abuse of coastal areas to build resorts has caused the annihilation of habitats like mangroves and reefs which are necessary for climate regulation and biodiversity. The overuse of natural resources, especially water, is a growing concern of tourism. Recreational facilities, resorts, and hotels use large quantities of water, often at the expense of indigenous communities. Pollution is another major problem associated with tourism. The inflow of tourists directly increases the amount of waste in the form of sewage, chemicals, and plastic which find their way into natural environments and harm ecosystems. Another element is marine pollution brought about by cruise ships with great quantities of untreated sewage and waste being dumped into water bodies.

In *Sky Dancer*, we see how man kills animals and birds for sport.

Hartstone is one of the oldest grouse moors in England. Even now it feels like it is a step back into the past. According to the Knight family, driven

grouse shooting really took off right here. It's a story I've heard Henry Knight tell a thousand times to shooting guests. Over a hundred and fifty years ago, Sir William Knight discovered he could kill loads of grouse if he hid in a ditch and waited for a line of people to scare the birds and drive them towards him. Apparently, when Queen Victoria visited, she was so impressed by the huge numbers of grouse shot in this way that she did the same at Balmoral, her estate in Scotland. Estates all over the country took up driven grouse shooting after that, but Henry Knight says it all began here, at Hartstone Moor. It's still known as the best grouse moor in England and Henry Knight wants to keep it that way.

In just over a month's time the moor will be alive with gunfire at the start of the grouse-shooting season.

Grouse shooting begins on the twelfth of August.

The Glorious Twelfth.

The Guns and the loaders will be hunkered down in the shooting butts, the circular stone shelters camouflaged on the moor, where they'll be waiting for the beaters to drive the grouse forward.

And there's nothing like it, with the smell of gunpowder and the grouse streaking like arrows overhead. It's one big party. And the best bit is that I get paid fifty quid for just walking across the moor in a line with other beaters, waving a white flag to scare the grouse and drive them forward to fly to the Guns.

The twelfth of August was the most important date in Dad's calendar; more important than Christmas, or New Year, or even our birthdays. It was everything Dad worked for, to look after the moors and keep the grouse numbers high for the next shooting season. Now the moors seem empty without him (Lewis 20-21).

Nature's resources such as rivers, oceans, forests have been utilized to aid man's development. The Industrial Revolution proved to be an important turning point as rapid industrialization gave rise to extraction of natural resources on a large scale. During this period, fossil fuels, especially coal, oil, and natural gas, became the lifeline of major, modern economies, transportation, powering factories, and urbanisation. This exploitation of natural resources continued and ever since poses a great threat to the earth. Over the years, soil degradation, deforestation, and burning of fossil fuels have become commonplace. In 2019, scientist signatories from 153 countries declared explicitly that the earth is threatened with a climate emergency.

The relationship between colonialism and environmental degradation is a complex, overlooked facet in the study of the ecological crisis that the world is facing on a large scale. As the earth is met with critical problems like resource depletion and climate change, it becomes imperative to analyse and comprehend how colonial practices of the past continue to affect the present and form a part of the environmental questions that man has to deal with, today. Colonialism was essentially founded on the exploitation of indigenous people, natural resources and the land. Since the sixteenth century, massive destruction of native social ecology was prohibited in different parts of the world. This resulted in the exploitation of natural resources in the colonial territories which further led to degradation of environmental surroundings.

Colonialism is a prevalent and manipulative system of governance that leaves a lasting impression not only on the social, economic, and political structures of colonized areas but also on their natural surroundings. While the political limits of past colonies might have been altered, the environmental remnants of colonial reign continue to outline the ecosystems, landscapes and ecological practices in these areas. The relationship between nature and postcolonial civilisation is complex, denoted by both strength and destruction, as formerly colonized regions navigate the long-term effects of colonial environmental practices and policies.

This chapter examines the numerous ways in which colonialism has affected the natural world; focusing on extraction of resources, land use, ecological changes, and the lasting impact on postcolonial environmental justice. One of the deepest ways in which colonialism affected the environment was through the exploitation and large-scale depletion of natural resources. Motivated by the greed for wealth, colonizers stripped huge ranges of raw materials, with little concern for the consequences it would have on the ecology. This sort of exploitation was visible particularly in the colonies of Asia, Africa and the Americas. In these parts, the native populations were forced to work in mines, fields, and plantations, under severe conditions which sometimes posed threats to the lives of the labourers. The aim was to mine valuable reserves like gold, silver, timber, cotton, rubber, and other goods which were sent back to Europe to encourage industrial growth.

In many areas, the extraction of resources led to extreme environmental degradation. In tropical regions, deforestation became pervasive where European influences like the British and the Dutch cleared large expanses of rainforests to set up palm oil and rubber plantations. Such monocultures were lucrative for the colonisers

but extremely disruptive to local ecosystems and gave rise to soil degradation and erosion.

The extraction of resources led to substantial environmental damage, especially through mining. For example, the Belgian colonization of the Congo caused wide-scale destruction of rainforests, and the extraction of gold, copper, and diamonds, and produced toxic waste and changed entire landscapes. In many cases, the excessive exploitation of natural resources also contributed to the downfall of local economies and conventional ways of life, rendering communities without the resources to reinstate the ecological balance which once bore them.

This chapter also explores environmental questions and convergence of postcolonial thought. It highlights the essence of nature as a place of resistance, cultural memory and identity in postcolonial contexts. Bookchin developed his ideas on ecological utopia where he imagined the collective existence of the universe only through creation of ecological societies. He says,

We must create an ecological society - not merely because such society is desirable but because it is directly necessary. We must begin to live in order to survive. Such a society involves a fundamental reversal of all the trends that mark the historic trend of capitalistic technology and bourgeois society (83).

In many postcolonial societies, the natural surroundings are not just of ecological and economic significance but also have deep spiritual, historical and cultural meanings. It is nature that sustains these native communities. An enduring concept in postcolonial discourse is the sanctity that nature holds and its vital role in forming the identity of a society. The cruel appropriation of the land by the colonizers and the consequent

struggles for repossession depicts the complex link between the colonized and nature. One can see a striking example of such domination in *Moon Bear*.

The chief stepped towards Grandfather. 'Puan,' he said. 'The soldiers are here to take us. No one can be left behind.'

Grandfather took his pipe from his mouth. 'You know I cannot come.'

The chief paced to the window. 'You have no choice. They will burn out homes to make way for the road to the new dam.'

Grandfather eased his bad leg underneath him. 'Your father and I once fought side by side for our freedom, and yet now you give it away on the promise of a parcel of land and a new home.'

The chief turned to face him. 'That was forty years ago, Puan. Times have changed. The world has changed. We must change too.'

Grandfather leant forward through the screen of smoke. 'This is not the way.'

I dug my nails into the roll of cloth. I shouldn't be here, listening to Grandfather speaking out against the chief.

The chief leant against the window frame and stared out into the darkness. I couldn't see his face, but his shoulders were slumped. 'I do this for our children. Puan,' he said. 'We will have schools and hospitals and good homes. The big dam will give us electricity. Our country will be rich. Our children will lead better lives. Isn't this what you want for them, too?'

Grandfather got to his feet and learnt out of the window. He spat onto the ground below. The air pulsed with the throb of engines. It shook the timbers of our house. It filled the night. A million trucks it seemed.

Grandfather shook his head. 'This was once the richest land in the whole world. It was called the "Land of a Million Elephants".' He turned round to look at the chief. 'But I do not think there are many wild elephants in Laos now' (Lewis 15-17).

To the indigenous people, nature is much more than a geographical region to be inhabited and exploited. It is deeply interwoven with the identity, culture, and history of its natives. They perceive nature as a sacred, living entity that defines, nurtures and sustains them. Several indigenous cultures have a rich tapestry of myths, stories, customs and rituals that are a celebration of their bond with nature. These traditions mirror an understanding that nature is not only a material commodity but an indispensable part of their very being and existence.

However, colonialism enforced a new directive that gave more importance to economic prosperity and imperial rule over nature's sacredness. The colonisers considered the spiritual bond that the natives had with nature as superstitious and primitive. This resulted in a removal or destruction of such systems and encouraged capitalist and unfair customs. The burden of Western agricultural practices and economic systems altered settings and replaced localised, sustainable systems with industries which focused on short-term profits over ecological balance in the long run. In the postcolonial context, the revival of nature becomes representative of resistance to colonist legacies. Postcolonial activists and thinkers argue that the relationship between nature and human beings should be reconsidered as part of the wider process of decolonization. Avik Gangopadhyay shows this relationship between nature and man through his book, *Literary Theories and Criticism Beyond Modernism*,

Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all

ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subjects the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of languages and literature (282).

Rewilding the land is a necessity for the earth and all forms of life that it supports. It advocates a radical shift in how one interacts with and manages the land. In *Run Wild*, we see how the Norton sisters eventually agree to let the children have Wolf Land when she says “I like the thought of leaving a piece of wilderness in the city, somewhere for people too” (Lewis 103). In this age of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, rewilding stands as a beacon of hope for reviving ecosystems to their former state of magnificence. Before delving into the need to rewild the land, it is important to understand the present state of the ecosystems of our planet and the ongoing crisis that the biodiversity is faced with. Human activities such as urbanization, climate change, deforestation, and industrial agriculture have led to extensive fragmentation, habitat destruction, and degradation. With habitats shrinking, species often struggle for their survival. As a result, biodiversity is reducing at a worrying rate, with species being threatened and going extinct at a pace not witnessed since the large-scale extinction events of the preceding times. The loss of biodiversity weakens the strength of ecosystems and the resources they provide to humanity, in addition to being a threat to the survival of innumerable plant and animal species. Ecosystem aids which are essential for man’s well-being such as water purification, soil fertility, and climate regulation, are more and more at risk due to the degradation of the ecosystem. It involves the reintroduction of native species, restoration of natural

ecosystems and minimal human intervention to allow nature to take its own course at healing itself. At the foundation of a healthy ecosystem lies its biodiversity.

Rewilding a land follows reestablishment of habitats and restoration of native species. Allowing an ecosystem to function naturally, rewilding the land safeguards the complex web of life and ensures the subsistence of innumerable species including those that are endangered or threatened. At the core of rewilding the land lies the appreciation of the interrelation of all life forms. The ecosystem sustains on biodiversity and each species play a distinct role in retaining ecological balance. When apex predators are returned to a landscape, the changes can be felt throughout the food web. This process is called a trophic cascade. It takes place when animals at the apex level of a food chain alter the numbers of not only their prey, but also of species with which they have no immediate association. Their impacts flow down the food chain. In some cases, there are radical changes in the landscape, the ecosystem, and even the atmosphere and the chemical structure of the soil. Consider the classic rewilding case of how rivers were changed by wolves in the Yellowstone National Park. After being hunted and extinct in the early twentieth century, the absence of wolves caused an unevenness in the food chain, triggering a trophic cascade in which elk, the natural prey of wolves, multiplied. The phenomenon transpired again in the reverse order, when fifteen wolves were reintroduced in the wild in 1994, thus restoring the natural balance. With reintroduction, the wolves preyed not only on the elk, and thereby reduced their numbers, but also caused changes in the elk's patterns of behaviour. The elk began to avoid bare regions like gorges and valleys where they could be hunted without difficulty. As a result of this, the areas affected began to regenerate, and numerous species such as bears, mice, birds, and beavers returned. Soil erosion

decreased significantly and plant life flourished along the banks once again. The maintenance of the riverbanks led the streams and rivers to change course. Few critics of rewilding are of the opinion that man should protect existing wildlife first and only then work towards a re-establishment of missing species. However, nothing conserves the ecosystems better than keystone species. While safeguarding local villages and towns from flooding, beaver dams also offer habitats for otters, fish, water voles, and frogs. In Ireland, the rebirth of the pine marten forced back the grey squirrel, and allowed recolonisation by red squirrels. Thus, the rebuilding of an ecosystem ensures the migration, modification and flourishing of countless species when faced with environmental variations.

Rewilding also helps in separating carbon dioxide from the environment and encouraging climate change. It improves carbon storage by advocating the growth of grasslands, wetlands, and forests which act as carbon vessels and add to climate resistance. Further, it aids in water and soil conservation. A healthy ecosystem regulates water flow, prevents soil erosion, and maintains water quality. Wetland restoration and reforestation are rewilding initiatives which help in protecting land and water from degradation. Ecosystems which function naturally not only provide man with clean water and air but also extends natural respites against forest fires. Another key advantage it provides is the prevention of floods. A forest's tree canopy delays the rate at which rainwater reaches the forest floor and the tree roots act as channels to draw rainwater deeper underground. This indicates that the rainwater does not run overland into streams, rivers or waterways. The tree-covered soil absorbs rainwater at sixty-seven times the speed at which it is absorbed by grass-covered soil. Trees also stop soil particles washing into waterways and forming sediment build-up, which can

cause additional flooding downstream. Tree roots also act as anchors as they hold soil together and prevent erosion and dangerous landslides in times of heavy rain and flooding.

Through tourism based on nature, rewilding the land provides sustainable incomes for pastoral communities. Increasing the value of wilderness, rewilding offers a new set of options where traditional sectors such as farming, which is highly subsidised and unprofitable, can no longer keep communities alive. In the hills of southern Norway, the reappearance of trees was supplemented with enrichment and diversification of the local economy. Here, the marginal revenue from farming is complemented by nature-based tourism, snow sports, outdoor education, hiking, forest products, hunting, and fishing.

Rewilding the land also has cultural and social implications. Indigenous communities almost always have ineffable cultural bonds to the land and the native species that inhabit it. Cella argues that “literary narratives that incorporate an ecosomatic imperative ... have the capacity to reorient our sense of and behavior toward both the human body and natural world” (587). By integrating indigenous practices and knowledge into rewilding efforts, one preserves and respects traditional systems and cultural heritage while also restoring ecosystems. Another crucial factor of rewilding the land is its ability to create a bond between nature and people. In a progressively urban world, people have become detached from the natural world, leading to a disregard for its value and a reduced sense of environmental management.

We know precisely and scientifically what the effects of pollution, waste of natural resources, the population explosion ... are going to be. If we do not want

a theistic explanation ... we seem to follow some tragic historical necessity (von Bertalanffy 8).

Through the restoration of natural habitats and the reintroduction of wildlife, rewilding can help create possibilities for man to connect once again with nature, enabling a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the environment. On the Covid-19 pandemic and the subsequent lockdown, Gill Lewis says,

I think the recovery of wildlife in some areas has been astonishing. Also the reduction in pollution. Just in the area of Somerset that I live, the skies seem clearer and quieter, the roads are quieter and suddenly we can hear the wild world more. In Lockdown, one of my daughters and I go for a 16 mile cycle a day along country lanes. There are no cars. Only a few tractors. We've seen foxes and buzzards. There seem to be lots more of the little birds in the hedgerows.

I wonder if we can make these changes for the threat of a virus, maybe we can make these changes to protect our future from climate change. I think humans have a fault of being very short-sighted. When the virus emerged in China, it seemed impossibly far away. Then when Italy reported many cases and deaths, our government still didn't appear to take it seriously...it was still in another country...not affecting the UK...yet!!! And now it is here we are seeing the reality of it. I hope we can learn to look toward the future and make changes...to know what needs to be done to protect the natural world and consequently protect human survival. This pandemic is difficult and challenging, but I hope countries can be brought together to see that we are a

community on this small planet, and we need to look out for each other across the world.

I think we need to have areas across the world that are protected and rewilded. This can be done to the benefit of people and agriculture...eg the Monteverde Rainforests in Costa Rica were protected and enables constant water in the valleys below. Sadly, it's still a battle in many countries with the wrong people in power.

I think the lockdown has helped people to re-connect with nature, have time to reflect, but also reconnect with each other more (albeit via internet) (04 Apr. 2020)

Against the backdrop of nature under threat, there lies a call for a global response centred around implementation of regenerative practices in the management of natural resources. Greta Gaard states that children's literature prepares "children all over the world to resist ... culturally, economically, and environmentally destructive developments" (334). An urgent paradigm shift must transpire that replaces wealth-oriented, exploitative capitalism with an economic framework that prioritizes justice, resilience, and sustainability. Man should promote a global cultural change which gives rise to affinity with nature and collective well-being, supported by the recognition of nature's finite resources and the interdependence of all forms of life. The essential objective is to steer away from this precipice, and make concerted efforts to harness economic resources, political will, and societal values in order to navigate toward a future where mankind's progress does not come at the expense of social equity and ecological integrity.

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## **Chapter V**

## **Conclusion**

In earlier times, children considered the wilderness their playground. Their joy was tied to the objects of nature like the woods, rivers and insects. They often spent their days in farms or fields. This formed a deep connect with nature. The children in Lewis's books are representative of how children have a greater sensitivity towards the cause of nature than adults. Unlike most nature writers who approach nature from the perspective of an adult, Lewis uses the views of children to draw on the serious threats that nature is faced with and how one is in "the early stages of a mass extinction episode" (Garrard 176). Her books show how the bond between children and the natural world is born out of an exploration of the wilderness and not as an outcome of didactic approaches mostly resorted to. The selected novels show how the more children experience nature, the deeper their love for nature will be.

During their formative years, it is essential that children discover their ecopsychological self or their sense of self in relation to nature. Place-based literary ecocriticism believes that a place has not only geographical connotations to it, but is of great personal, cultural and social significance to both individuals and communities. Essential to the birth of such an affiliation are the experiences that children have during their childhood. These associations should nurture the perception of children that leads them to feel one with nature. As a result of technological advances, "children are experiencing fewer and fewer hours to be *children* – to run around outdoors, to improvise games with friends, to create imaginary worlds, to build forts and playhouses, and to discover and explore nearby woods and streams" (Blizard and Schuster 172). The sense of natural kinship that arises gives form to the attitudes they have towards the natural world which they will carry as a framework throughout their lives. Lewis's works taken up for study are representative of how those children

who grow up in the lap of nature nurture a great sense of concern towards it. Another great way to foster empathy for nature in children that Lewis hints at is through their relationships with animals. At a young age, children are drawn towards animals and develop a bond with them. Her novels show how animals are a source of wonder for children, and how children cultivate a sense of responsibility and care towards nature through them.

Further, Lewis's works hold a mirror to life when nature provides an escape to children from unhappy environments at home and sometimes, even from a stressful school life. This can also be tied to how the views and interests of children are, more often than not, suppressed by adults. "Natural environments are said to have restorative qualities that help in relaxing and coping with everyday stress" (Gill). As reflected in the works concerned in this study, the adults are portrayed as generally not having the same level of attachment to nature as children. On many occasions, when children try to save nature from being further destroyed, man exerts undue power over them, just as he does over nature itself. The research looks into how no one group can have ultimate power over the other.

Though Lewis's works are positive in tone and reflect how children can aid, to a great extent in saving the earth, they also show the hurdles faced by children in the process. This gives rise to the question of how far the safeguarding of nature solely by children is viable. In the present world, "man has alienated himself by exploiting nature" (Hedgpeth 61). While Lewis depicts hope in her works, she also obliquely hints at the dangers man is faced with if he continues to treat nature thoughtlessly. She also stresses on the need to reclaim the wild as she believes that the wilderness has not vanished but time and man have abandoned it. The central idea she attempts to bring

forth is to build oneness with the land and rewild the landscape as true nature exists in the harmonious co-existence of man and the wild.

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## ABSTRACT

### THE CHILD ECHOES NATURE'S SILENCED CRY: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF SELECT WORKS OF GILL LEWIS

AN ABSTRACT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL  
FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH AND CULTURE STUDIES

SCHOOL OF HUMANITIES AND LANGUAGES

NOVEMBER 2025

THE CHILD ECHOES NATURE'S SILENCED CRY: AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY  
OF SELECT WORKS OF GILL LEWIS

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Submitted

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Ecocriticism has received a growing interest from writers and researchers on different levels to assess its significance. It provides the readers the ability to understand the environmental issues of human society better and encourages a positive response while dealing with such problems. As a genre, ecocriticism also focuses on the different negative attitudes and behaviors towards nature to the extent that may cause damage to natural resources and adversely affect future generations. Furthermore, it played an essential role in rebuilding a harmonious and balanced relationship between human and non-human beings by enabling a peaceful coexistence among all the entities that together form nature. This thesis entails the essential theoretical framework for ecocriticism and studies its mechanisms to analyze literary texts. It also attests the relationship between ecocriticism and children's literature to depict the best methods of using children's literature to build a strong background for future generations and to shape their attitudes toward natural resources for the creation of a sustainable society.

One such writer who has dealt with diverse issues pertaining to nature is Gill Lewis. What is noteworthy in her nature writing is that she draws on the serious threats faced by nature through the eyes of children. While most adults in her works seem to have a general disregard for their natural surroundings, it is the children who act as the forerunners to save the environment. Even at a very young age, Lewis was found to have a close affinity with the wild. Her works reflect her passion for wild animals and wild places. In them, she draws on the people she has been inspired by and had the fortune to know during her time as a veterinary doctor, both in the United Kingdom and overseas. She currently lives in Somerset with her family, an important part of which are her numerous pets. Lewis is known to dream up new stories and write from a tree-house in her garden where she finds company in squirrels.

This thesis explores the numerous facets of the relationship that man and nature have with each other through select works of Gill Lewis. The texts that have been selected for close reading are *Sky Hawk* (2011), *White Dolphin* (2012), *Moon Bear* (2013), *Scarlet Ibis* (2014), *Gorilla Dawn* (2015), *Sky Dancer* (2017), *Run Wild* (2018), *Eagle Warrior* (2019) and *The Closest Thing to Flying* (2019).

Lewis's works hold a mirror to life when nature provides an escape to children from unhappy environments at home and sometimes, even from a stressful school life. This can also be tied to how the views and interests of children are, more often than not, suppressed by adults. As reflected in the works concerned in this study, the adults are portrayed as generally not having the same level of attachment to nature as children. On many occasions, when children try to save nature from being further destroyed, man exerts undue power over them, just as he does over nature itself. The research looks into how no one group can have ultimate power over the other. Children, in Lewis's novels, assume power, and so can nature, when man invites its wrath by its continuous destruction.

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

According to Cheryll Glotfelty, ecocriticism can be defined as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (8). It began in the late 1980s in the USA and in the early 1990s in the UK and is still considered an emergent theory. The first wave of ecocriticism was concentrated on “nature writing, nature poetry, and wilderness” (Buell 138). Ecocritics here upheld the idea of preserving nature. The environment in this wave meant the natural environment or the biotic community. The second wave of ecocriticism focused on how society devalues the natural world. It dealt with the issues of environmental justice and exposed crimes of

ecological injustice in urban spaces. Ecocriticism is essentially interdisciplinary and calls for concerted efforts between writers, natural scientists, historians, anthropologists and literary critics, amongst others. It offers a critique into the manner in which man interacts with the environment. The primary challenge that ecocritics are faced with is to lay stress not only on how nature is “culturally constructed” (Garrard 10), but also on how nature “really exists” (Garrard 10). It is here that one should note how, similar to other critical analyses which examine aspects like race, identity and gender, ecocriticism too, deals with reality. Further, in this day and age, the study of ecocriticism is increasingly relevant in the light of how man has exploited nature.

Literature uses ecological sensibility to bring forth changes in the mind of the reader. It also instills knowledge of environmental issues and creates a sense of awareness regarding environmental justice. The truth that human life is dependent and connected to the elements and cycles of nature has been conveniently overlooked by the modern anthropocentric man. As a result, mankind is now encountered with isolation and alienation, besides the more evident issues such as climate change and global warming.

A lot of writers today gravitate towards the use of ecocritical approaches in their works. At the core of ecocriticism is “a commitment to environmentality from whatever critical vantage point” (Buell 11). Though a serious focus on the environment was lacking in literary works of earlier periods, nature was greatly used as a significant backdrop against which writings took form. The scientific awareness on the part of the writers then was not immense and such a lack of knowledge posed difficulties in writing about an issue whose importance was not realized by society in general. Therefore, the inclusion of aspects of nature had to be restricted to the landscape and the setting.

Lewis exhibits profound concern for nature in her works. For a true critic of environmentalism or ecocriticism “nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves” (Barry 243). This becomes evident through her books. The concern of environmentalism is never studied in isolation in her works and is closely tied to the studies of politics and society. This thesis draws on the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism and on how it is multifaceted. While celebrating nature and the solace and company it gives man, it is also equally important to look into how man has exploited nature to a great extent and is continuing to do so, all for his short-lived gains. Lewis dwells on these aspects in her works and thereby, contributes in unparalleled ways to generating awareness about the need of the hour - to safeguard the only home man has.

The research is based on the usage of the theoretical tools of the interdisciplinary nature of ecocriticism. The texts in concern have been read through the principal ideas of postcolonial ecocriticism, deep ecology, shallow ecology, social ecology, socialist ecology, radical ecology, human ecology, spiritual ecology, and rational ecology. The research also interprets the afore-mentioned works on the basis of natural sciences and attempts to prove that they derive the essential truths contained therein from the laws of nature. It also examines both the abiotic and the biotic components of the ecosystem, in addition to the identifiable forms or entities which are part of the ecosphere including the landscape, water bodies, fauna and flora. This research is an attempt to study the interconnectedness of these aspects with the life of man.

## **Chapter II: Children and Wild Spaces**

Each of the novels taken up for this study has distinct faces of ‘place’ embedded in them. The relationship that a character has with his natural surroundings very often defines what a place means to him. Regardless of whether the place is a dwelling,

neighborhood, village, city, or the wilderness, it is a “meaning constructed by experience” (Tuan 152). Place-based ecocriticism heavily rests on the belief that while attaching importance to the sense of geographical space, it should be centered round the relationship that man has with nature, especially with the local environment in which he dwells. It should entail “a living physical location, geographical and biological, as well as subjective human experience” (Ball 237). This is essential since both factors change over time, often resulting in the change of place.

Evernden states that “place-as-environment and place-as-subjective experience are equally interrelated, inseparable, and interdependent as are organisms and environments themselves” (Ball 237). Place forms meaning through experiences which resist objective views. Gill Lewis’ appreciation of nature finds parallels with Emerson’s notions of the natural world. His ideas which gave birth to Transcendentalism in 1836 advocate the idea of spirituality as the essence of nature. Nature surpasses all other sources of solace for man. “The tempered light of the woods is like a perpetual morning, it is stimulating and heroic ... The incommunicable trees begin to persuade us to live with them ... These enchantments are medicinal, they sober and heal us. These are plain pleasures, kind and native to us” (Emerson 4).

While the concept of place is dependent on the factors of human presence and particular experiences to acquire its meaning, space exists without this reliance. It refers to a more general abstraction which entails both the cosmos and geography. In the texts taken up for study in this thesis, it is evident how the notion of place is shaped by the social and cultural relationships that its inhabitants have with the land. Lewis depicts how places are born out of a land’s history, together with the personal connections and attached memories, making each land distinct from the other. This also signifies that

the same place holds different meanings to different individuals depending on their experiences and cultures. In *The Closest Thing to Flying*, Lewis depicts how a man who had been badly injured during World War Two found peace in nature's bosom. In the words of his daughter, he "suffered dreadful shell shock, and the way he coped with it was to walk for hours across the hills watching birds. He said they gave him peace knowing there was so much beauty still to be seen in a cruel world" (Lewis 219).

It is here that the concepts of biophilia and biophobia come into play. Children who grow up in the lap of nature develop an affinity with it (biophilia). On the other hand, children who live their lives in cities are often seen as having an aversion towards nature (biophobia). In *Eagle Warrior*, Bobbie is a child who is extremely attached to nature. "Bobbie's life is here, on the mountains with the moors and eagles, not in some boring city" (Lewis 58). Since this relationship children have with the natural world follows either an exposure to nature or unfamiliarity with it, it becomes essential to strike a healthy balance. Children have an intrinsic love for nature and the wild. Research shows that this association with nature positively impacts the cognitive development of children, heightens creativity, diminishes stress and boosts physical activity. On the other hand, children who have had negative experiences with nature or have been exposed to negative representations of nature in the media form an antipathy to it. This aversion impedes the building of a child's bond with nature and should be addressed by gradual exposure to different elements of nature and through education.

In his book *Place and Placelessness*, Edward Relph explores how places change with time. He goes on to discuss how place and memory are entwined and how a memory attached to a place and the meaning it holds during a particular period might

change with the passage of time, especially on returning to the place after a period of absence.

There is the common sensation of returning to a familiar place after an absence of several years and feeling that everything has changed even though there have been no important changes in its appearance. Whereas before we were involved in the scene, now we are an outsider, an observer, and can recapture the significance of the former place only by some act of memory (Relph 31).

In ecocriticism, the emerging concept of wilderness as home is of prime importance. Traditionally, the belief was that the wilderness is an uninhabited and untamed space, which is distant. Wild spaces were largely perceived as uncivilized and hostile. The earliest settlers and explorers regarded it as a place to subdue, tame and turn into a cultivated landscape. This situates human beings at odds with the wilderness, fostering an opinion that prioritized man's needs over nature. The domination over nature in the present day has undergone profound transformation and presents the wild as home. The wilderness is now considered as intrinsic to human existence. Such a shift in thought places nature at the centre of both cultural and ecological identities. "And I know that the wolf is always here inside. Like an imprint of some other wilderness. We only need to look to find it. And to remember. There is another side to us. We are part wolf. Part wild" (Lewis 106).

### **Chapter III: Nature, Children, Power**

One of the most important proponents of the concept of power is Michel Foucault. During his time, Marxism was the predominant theory and this was reflected in his seminal works. Power can be understood as the ability of one being to exert influence on the action of another human being. Foucault defines power as "the

multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organisation” (92). He is of the opinion that in medieval society, power had been largely consolidated through the presence of a sovereign authority who possessed absolute dominance over the subjects through an open show of violence. However, power is viewed in a different manner in the modern world.

Foucauldian concept of power is not based on domination. It is not the cruel domination of the weak by the strong. The most striking aspect of Foucault’s idea of power is that it should be productive - it mirrors reality and truth. Foucault suggests that power is comprehensible as to the techniques through which it is employed. The different forms of power which exist in society include administrative, legal, economic and military. All these factors possess a shared dependence on certain methods or techniques of application, and always draw some power by citing scientific truths.

Socialist ecology derives from the doctrines of Marxism, socialism, and alter-globalization. Globalization supports the development of capitalism which in turn builds an oppressive social structure. Here, the term ‘power’ follows from the core to the periphery in a hierarchy. The resulting power-politics acts as a catalyst for the degradation of the ecology. This explains why social ecologists champion the taking down of capitalism or any centre of power so as to avoid ecological degeneration. It stresses on how the means of production should be commonly owned and not by the state alone. It aims at the transformation of a post capitalist society. Socialist ecology argues that ecology and environment are important issues and encourages the dialogue between ecology and economy to reconstruct ecological socialism. In *Moon Bear*, Lewis depicts how the indigenous community is exploited by outsiders.

When the soldiers first came, our chief said we would not move. But more soldiers came a second time with General Chan and other men in suits from the city. We were promised new homes, electricity, televisions, paddy fields, and a school. We were promised better lives. And when the soldiers came a third time, the chief agreed that we would move.

Grandfather said the chief had sold our freedom.

Pa said he had no choice (Lewis 19-20).

Radical ecology is based on man's deep sense of predicament in the modern world. It considers the domination of nature and the domination of man in the name of class, sex, and race at the same level. It encourages man to facilitate changes for a new ecological principle. It can be viewed as the highly advanced stage social ecology.

It pushes social and ecological systems towards new patterns of production, reproduction and consciousness that will improve the quality of human life and the natural environment. It challenges those aspects of the political and economic order that prevent the fulfilment of basic human needs. It offers theories that explain the social causes of environmental problems and alternative ways to resolve them. It supports social movements for removing the causes of environmental deterioration and raising the quality of life for people of every race, class and sex (Merchant 2).

Human ecology offers an in-depth perception into the interchange between man and the environment. It focuses on the relationship between man and all the objects of nature as they are in a state of constant interaction with each other. It studies the impact man has on his environmental surroundings and vice-versa. The theory of human ecology is based on the assertion that human beings have to deal with and use space

with other species so as to maintain an equilibrium in the ecology. This explains why Lewis shows through the characters of children that man needs to form a healthy relationship with nature. “She looked right into me. And suddenly I knew then, in that one moment, I was as much part of her world as she was of mine. I couldn’t help thinking that maybe - just maybe - deep in her bird soul, she knew the promise I had given to Iona” (Lewis, *Wild Wings* 130). There is an attempt on the theoretical level to narrow the growing gap between nature and human beings. It rests on the belief that man’s treatment of the environment is a projection of not just the external environment but also of his values and goals. Different societies, cultures, and communities set different goals towards nature. This interrelationship is crucial since both nature and human beings form intricate fragments of the ecosystem.

Spiritual ecology is a term that refers to the relationship between spirituality, religion and the environment. It attempts to give a spiritual aspect to the ongoing ecological crisis which poses a threat to the future of our planet. Such an issue is not just an environmental problem that is taking place in the physical world but also connotes a deeper crisis of man’s soul. It is precisely this crisis with which spiritual ecology is concerned. It lays emphasis on the importance of meditation and prayer as they are the mediums through which man comes into touch with the divine. They are silent ways of talking to ourselves and consequently feel one with the whole of creation. This, in turn, drives man to respect creation and protect nature which is a part of it. The consciousness of viewing the human soul as part of the soul of the world is pivotal in reversing the current crisis threatening the ecological world. Irrespective of class, creed or community, revering and worshipping nature is a practice that has been present since time immemorial. The Indian traditional doctrine of *Vashudhaiva Kutumbakama*

indicates that the whole of creation is one family and that every object of nature forms an intrinsic part of nature. However, there has been a drastic shift in the way in which man treats nature. It has been objectified and degraded to the level of a mere commodity.

High above, small birds flit over our heads, their colours electric in the sunshine.

I always wonder if they know that there's a whole world beyond those windows where some birds are flying freely. Maybe they can't imagine life another way.

Maybe it would be too hard if they could (Lewis, *Scarlet Ibis* 29).

It is this that the concept of spiritual ecology seeks to address - to restore the age-old values of respecting the environment instead of dominating it, and to bring about a peaceful co-existence between nature and man.

Rational ecology refers to the ecological rationality which emphasizes on the role of the rationality of human beings to preserve the environment and maintain ecological sustainability. Ecological rationality establishes "the capability of ecosystems consistently and effectively to provide the good of human life support" (Dryzek 36). Human beings who assert that they are rational animals have the responsibility to maintain a sustainable ecology. Economic, political, legal, social and cultural values better the standard of man's life. Such values are greatly dependent on the ecosystem which aids and sustains mankind.

#### **Chapter IV: Nature's Fury: A Call to Rewild the Land**

Rewilding the land is a necessity for the earth and all forms of life that it supports. It suggests an absolute shift in how man interacts with the land and manages it. In this age of biodiversity loss and environmental degradation, rewilding stands as a beacon of hope for reinstating ecosystems to their former state of magnificence. In *Sky*

*Dancer*, Lewis gives an account of rewilding the land, “the forests grew back quicker than they thought. And all the birds and other animals started coming back. And the flooding stopped and the people had clean water, and there was a big study to show that the trees soaked up lots of carbon” (98). Before delving into the need to rewild the land, it is important to understand the present state of the ecosystems of our planet and the ongoing crisis that biodiversity is faced with. Human activities such as urbanization, climate change, deforestation, and industrial agriculture have led to large-scale fragmentation, habitat destruction, and degradation. With habitats shrinking, species often struggle for their survival. As a result, biodiversity is crumbling at a disturbing rate, with species being threatened and going extinct at figures not witnessed since the extensive extinction events that occurred back in the day.

The loss of biodiversity undervalues the power of ecosystems and the help they provide to humanity, in addition to being a threat to the survival of innumerable plant and animal species. Acts of the ecosystem which are essential for man’s well-being such as water purification, soil fertility, and climate regulation, are at high risk due to the degradation of the ecosystem. It involves the reintroduction of native species, restoration of natural ecosystems and minimal human intervention to allow nature to take its own course at healing itself. At the foundation of a healthy ecosystem lies its biodiversity. Rewilding a land follows revival of habitats and reintroduction of indigenous species. Allowing an ecosystem to function naturally, rewilding the land safeguards the complex web of life and ensures the sustenance of innumerable species including those that are endangered or threatened. As Lewis puts it,

You and me ... we are all part of it. Everything we are, everything we do connects us with it. Breathe this air. Drink this rain. The earth pulses with the

life it gives us. But if we lose our love of it, then we lose everything. But most of all, we lose ourselves. We lose our soul (*Gorilla Dawn* 51).

Rewilding the land also has cultural and social implications. Indigenous communities almost always have strong cultural ties to the land and the native species that inhabit it. By embodying indigenous practices and knowledge into rewilding efforts, one preserves and respects traditional systems and cultural heritage while also restoring ecosystems. “A sea breeze lifts my hair and whispers past me through the dry dune grasses. I hear the curl of surf unfurl along the sand. Above, a seagull cries. I open my eyes and watch it sail across, powder white against a deep blue sky. This whole place feels alive somehow. I feel part of it, as if it’s in me too” (Lewis, *White Dolphin* 264). Another crucial facet of rewilding the land is its prospect to reunite people with nature. In an increasingly modernized world, people have become separated from the natural world, leading to a loss of value in the minds of man and a reduced idea of environmental stewardship. Through the restoration of natural habitats and the reintroduction of wildlife, rewilding can help create possibilities for man to build oneness with nature, encouraging a deeper appreciation for and understanding of the environment.

## **Chapter V: Conclusion**

In earlier times, children considered the wilderness their playground. Their joy was tied to the objects of nature like the woods, rivers and insects. They often spent their days in farms or fields. This formed a deep connect with nature. The children in Lewis’s books are representative of how children have a greater sensitivity towards the cause of nature than adults. Unlike most nature writers who approach nature from the perspective of an adult, Lewis uses the views of children to draw on the serious threats

that nature is faced with and how one is in “the early stages of a mass extinction episode” (Garrard 176). Her books show how the bond between children and the natural world is born out of an exploration of the wilderness and not as an outcome of didactic approaches mostly resorted to. The selected novels show how the more children experience nature, the deeper their love for nature will be.

During their formative years, it is essential that children discover their ecopsychological self or their sense of self in relation to nature. Place-based literary ecocriticism believes that a place has not only geographical connotations to it, but is of great personal, cultural and social significance to both individuals and communities. Essential to the birth of such an affiliation are the experiences that children have during their childhood. These associations should nurture the perception of children that leads them to feel one with nature. The sense of natural kinship that arises gives form to the attitudes they have towards the natural world which they will carry as a framework throughout their lives. Lewis’s works taken up for study are representative of how those children who grow up in the lap of nature nurture a great sense of concern towards it. Another great way to foster empathy for nature in children that Lewis hints at is through their relationships with animals. At a young age, children are drawn towards animals and develop a bond with them. Her novels show how animals are a source of wonder for children, and how children cultivate a sense of responsibility and care towards nature through them.

Further, Lewis’s works hold a mirror to life when nature provides an escape to children from unhappy environments at home and sometimes, even from a stressful school life. This can also be tied to how the views and interests of children are, more often than not, suppressed by adults. As reflected in the works concerned in this study,

the adults are portrayed as generally not having the same level of attachment to nature as children. On many occasions, when children try to save nature from being further destroyed, man exerts undue power over them, just as he does over nature itself. The research looks into how no one group can have ultimate power over the other.

Though Lewis's works are positive in tone and reflect how children can aid, to a great extent in saving the earth, they also show the hurdles faced by children in the process. This gives rise to the question of how far the safeguarding of nature solely by children is viable. While Lewis depicts hope in her works, she also obliquely hints at the dangers man is faced with if he continues to treat nature thoughtlessly. She also stresses on the need to reclaim the wild as she believes that the wilderness has not vanished but time and man have abandoned it. The central idea she attempts to bring forth is to build oneness with the land and rewild the landscape as true nature exists in the harmonious co-existence of man and the wild.

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