

Romantic Ecology: Ecocritical explorations in William Wordsworth's select works

Arti Kumari Singh
BA 6th Semester
Department of English, Duliajan College

Abstract: This paper explores William Wordsworth's profound ecological vision and his portrayal of Nature as a living, moral, and spiritual force. Through an ecocritical lens, it examines how Wordsworth's poems—such as “*The World is Too Much with Us*,” “*Lines Written in Early Spring*,” “*Daffodils*,” “*To a Butterfly*,” “*The Tables Turned*,” “*Written in March*,” and “*Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*”—reveal a deep interconnectedness between humanity and the natural world. The study argues that Wordsworth's poetic imagination transforms Nature from a passive background into an active presence that teaches, heals, and reforms. His depiction of Nature as a teacher and moral guide challenges the industrial and materialistic tendencies of his age, emphasizing instead simplicity, harmony, and spiritual renewal. Through close textual analysis, the paper demonstrates how Wordsworth's works anticipate modern environmental thought, presenting Nature as both resilient and vulnerable—a source of inspiration that also demands ethical responsibility. The poet's recurrent lament for humanity's alienation from Nature underscores his early ecological awareness and his conviction that moral decay parallels environmental degradation. Ultimately, the study concludes that Wordsworth's Romantic ecology envisions a symbiotic relationship between humans and Nature, wherein true wisdom and happiness arise not from material progress but from living in harmony with the natural world. This ecocritical exploration reaffirms Wordsworth's enduring relevance as a poet whose vision of Nature continues to inspire environmental consciousness and spiritual introspection in the contemporary world.

Keywords: Ecology, Environment, Nature, Poetry, Romanticism.

Introduction: From the earliest periods of English literature, Nature has held a vital place in shaping human imagination and moral vision. It has been more than a backdrop for human experience—it has been a living presence,

a symbol of divine order, beauty, and truth. However, with the rise of industrialization and the mechanized worldview of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, this organic relationship between humanity and Nature began to erode. Against this backdrop, the Romantic poets, particularly William Wordsworth, sought to re-establish the harmony between man and the natural world. Wordsworth's poetry reflects a deep ecological sensitivity and an awareness that Nature is not merely an object of observation but a spiritual and moral force that sustains human life.

This paper, titled "*Romantic Ecology: Ecocritical Explorations in Wordsworth's Select Works*," examines how Wordsworth's poems express an early form of ecological consciousness that resonates strongly with modern environmental thought. His works such as "*The World is Too Much with Us*," "*Lines Written in Early Spring*," "*Daffodils*," "*To a Butterfly*," "*The Tables Turned*," "*Written in March*," and "*Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*" reveal Nature as a moral guide, teacher, and healer capable of restoring harmony in the human spirit. Through an ecocritical approach, the study explores how Wordsworth challenges materialism and industrial progress, advocating instead for simplicity, reflection, and spiritual communion with the natural world. Ultimately, the paper argues that Wordsworth's poetic vision represents an early articulation of "Romantic Ecology," one that calls for the preservation of both Nature's purity and humanity's moral and emotional integrity.

Objectives of the Paper:

1. To examine William Wordsworth's portrayal of Nature as a moral, spiritual, and educational force through an ecocritical reading of his selected poems.
2. To analyze how Wordsworth critiques industrialization and materialism, emphasizing humanity's estrangement from the natural world and the need to restore ecological harmony.
3. To explore the relevance of Wordsworth's Romantic vision in shaping modern environmental consciousness and understanding the interdependence between human life and Nature.

Methodology:

The paper employs a qualitative and analytical methodology grounded in ecocritical theory, focusing on William Wordsworth's selected poems to

explore his representation of Nature and its moral and spiritual significance. The study uses textual analysis as its primary method, closely reading poems such as “*The World is Too Much with Us*,” “*Lines Written in Early Spring*,” “*Daffodils*,” “*To a Butterfly*,” “*The Tables Turned*,” “*Written in March*,” and “*Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower*.” Through this approach, the paper interprets imagery, symbols, and themes to reveal how Wordsworth constructs a vision of Nature as a living, guiding presence. The research further adopts an ecocritical framework, drawing from concepts in environmental humanities to evaluate Wordsworth’s response to the industrial and social changes of his time. By situating his poetry within both Romantic and ecological contexts, the study investigates how his ideas anticipate modern concerns about environmental degradation and the loss of spiritual connection with the natural world. Secondary sources such as critical essays, scholarly interpretations, and theoretical works on Romanticism and ecocriticism are also consulted to support the analysis. This combination of close reading and theoretical application enables a comprehensive understanding of Wordsworth’s poetic ecology and its enduring relevance in contemporary environmental thought.

Discussion:

William Wordsworth believed that Nature was central to human life. It had the ability not only to move emotions but bring peace and even reform the bad within society. Unlike Industrial progress, whom he often criticized for separating humans from nature, Nature provided a source of truth and wisdom. His poems often depicted birds, flowers, rivers, and landscapes, not simply as things of beauty, but as friends and teachers who present greater truths of life and the soul. As he famously writes in his poem, “*The Tables Turned*”.

“Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher”.

Here, in these powerful lines, Wordsworth places Nature over books and formal learning. For him, the teachings of the natural world, its harmony, simplicity, and strength are richer than human knowledge. He suggests that through the appeal to Nature, people can cultivate not only intellectual understanding but also spiritual depth and moral conviction. Nature, in

Wordsworth's eyes, is thus a teacher of the heart and mind, guiding human beings towards wisdom and harmony with the world.

Nature, to William Wordsworth, is not just a background or a pleasant setting in his poems, but the very essence of his poetry. He sees nature as a living force that directs human beings, comforts them in times of mourning, and teaches them moral lessons. For him, nature is like a teacher, a mother and even a divine being who can guide human beings towards the divine. Rather than looking to material wealth or society for meaning, Wordsworth looks to fields, flowers, rivers, mountains, birds, and even small creatures like butterflies. He feels that Nature is speaking a language that people can learn to hear if they let their hearts be open. This is why in so many of his poems, ordinary natural things like a daffodil, a butterfly, a primrose are made such mighty symbols of joy, wisdom, and peace. Nature, in his imagination, not only gives beauty but also shapes character, heals sorrow, and reminds people of the deep connection they have with the world itself. For Wordsworth, the role of Nature is to guide human life, to inspire imagination and to remind us that true happiness is not found in wealth or material possessions but in living near the natural world. In his poem, "The World is Too Much with Us", he describes,

"This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
the winds that will be howling at all hours".

These lines show how nature is alive, powerful and eternal, yet people fail to appreciate it. This shows how human beings lose something essential when they ignore the majesty of the natural world. At the same time, Wordsworth is criticizing human beings for their turning away from this beauty and giving their attention to materialism and industry. This reveals how human beings lose something essential when they ignore the majesty of the natural world. Nature continues to show its power and beauty, but individuals stay busy in their own selfish pursuits and cannot recognize it. In this poem, "Lines written in Early Spring", he says,

"Through primrose tufts, in that green bower.
The periwinkle trailed its wreaths."

Here the flowers represent innocence and peace, blooming quietly and happily. Wordsworth is not simply admiring flowers, he is holding up nature as a

mirror to humanity. The flowers' gentle growth and quiet unity reminds one of what society could be if it chooses cooperation over conflict. Yet, instead of following nature's example, people often scar the world through war, greed, or exploitation of the environment. Wordsworth's sadness seems timeless, because even today, despite knowing better, we continue to disturb the harmony that nature offers freely. In "Daffodils", Wordsworth describes,

"A host of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees
fluttering and dancing in the breeze".

The daffodils here are more than just flowers; they become companions to the poet, offering joy and a sense of belonging. This shows how nature is not only visually beautiful but also spiritually uplifting, nature acts as the friend who rejuvenates the life of being, it restores the mind and soul. Even when the poet is away from the scene, the memory of the Daffodils continue to lift his spirits, showing that nature has a lasting, comforting presence. This reflects a deeply personal truth: moments spent in harmony with the natural world can become a source of strength and peace, helping to navigate the stresses and sadness of human life. Nature, in this sense, is a healer, reminding us that serenity and joy are available if we pause to notice and appreciate it. In "To a butterfly," Wordsworth captures that delicate beauty of nature and its transient but valuable character through the delicate image of a butterfly resting nearby. The poet's gentle appeal,

"stay near me—do not take thy flight!
A little longer stay in sight!"

expresses a wish to preserve a brief moment of natural loneliness. The butterfly becomes symbolic of transience – or reminder that the most delicate expressions of beauty in nature tend to pass away quickly. Nature in this poem is an emotionally complex presence, evoking tenderness and still reflection, and reminding us of the innocence of childhood that such images can evoke. The poem implies that natural beauty cannot be owned but must be perceived with awareness and gratitude. The butterfly's short visit reflects how life's loveliest moments are often the most fleeting, but still linger in our minds and enrich our inner lives. We learn that even exposure to nature

can promote peace and spiritual refreshment if we realize it to the fullest. Through this Wordsworth celebrates the enduring power of nature to uplift and restore the human spirit. In “The Table Turned,” Wordsworth emphasizes that nature is the best teacher, offering wisdom far beyond what books or formal learning can provide. He states,

“Come forth into the light of things,
let Nature be your teacher”,

Nature is presented here as a living guide whose teachings are direct, experiential, and very significant. In contrast to restricted study, which tends to restrict knowledge to theory, nature involves all the senses, learning patience, observation, and perception through direct experiences. The poem highlights the healing and spiritually and enlightening function of nature, showing that time spent outdoors refreshes the mind, awakens emotion, and inspires reflection. We are reminded that even brief encounters with natural beauty like the song of a bird, the movement of a stream, or the movement of leaves can bring clarity and joy that are not available in books alone. Nature, in Wordsworth’s imagination, supports knowledge, enriches the spirit and returns us to the world on terms human education generally cannot. In “Written in March”, Wordsworth praises the renewal and resilience of nature, portraying it as a living force that overcomes human interests and intellectual pursuits. He describes how

“The cock is crowing,
The stream is flowing
The small birds Twitter,
The lake doth glitter,”

using lively imagery to capture nature awakening after the stillness of winter, filled with sound, activity, and light. The landscape echoes the infinite cycle of rebirth and life, showing nature remains strong despite human anxieties or achievements. Through this vivid portrayal, Wordsworth is able to express that wisdom is not in intellectual striving but in the understanding and appreciation of nature’s limitless energy. While human knowledge tends to isolate us from innocent pleasure, nature instructs in renewal, patience, and faith. Even after hardship or decay, nature renews itself with subdued strength and beauty, teaching a strong lesson that harmony and renewal do not come

from thinking but from living in tune with the natural world. In “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower”, Wordsworth depicts nature as a molding and directing power in human existence, illustrating how deeply human development is connected to the natural world. The poem begins,

“Three Years She Grew in sun and shower,
Then Nature said, A lovelier flower
on earth was never sown,”

where Nature, as guardian and educator, personified, takes claims over Lucy as her own creation. By doing this, Wordsworth is implying that proper development and innocence are the result of no human oversight but if the power of nature to nurture. The natural world is a moral and emotional compass, shaping Lucy’s character in harmony with its soothing beauty. In parallel, the poem also portrays nature as symbolic of harmony between humans and nature, as Lucy becomes inseparably linked to the landscape. Her soul merges with mountains, meadows, and streams. This image reflects Wordsworth’s belief that human life achieves its fullest meaning when it moves in rhythm with nature’s quiet order.

The human and nature relationships, as it appears in Wordsworth’s poetry, are one of deep emotional and spiritual connection. According to him, nature and human are bound together through a living bond, each reflecting and influencing the other. Nature, for him, is not lifeless or separate from people, it contains a soul that speaks to the human heart. When people open their hearts to its beauty and simplicity, nature awakens their emotions, refines their thoughts and brings peace to their restless minds. Wordsworth realized that human beings often forget this sacred connection, losing themselves in material desires and intellectual pride. But by coming back to nature, one can regain purity, calmness, and moral strength. Nature becomes a silent companion, sharing human joys and sorrow, and a reminder of the world’s divine order.

In his poem, “The World is Too Much With Us,” Wordsworth laments that disconnection of humanity from nature, criticizing materialism. He describes-

“Getting and Spending, we lay waste our powers;
little we see in Nature that is ours,”

Here, he shows how industrial greed has dulled human sensitivity to the natural world. The poet longs for a renewal, hoping to be “a pagan suckled in a creed outworn,” so he could still feel divine presence in nature, highlighting the loss of spiritual communion. In “Lines Written in Early Spring,” he contrasts nature’s harmony

“Through primrose tufts, in that green bower,
The Periwinkle trailed its wreaths,”

with the moral degradation of mankind, lamenting that “what man has made of Man.” Here, Nature represents purity and divine order, while humanity disrupts it, but its beauty remains restorative and spiritually uplifting. In “Daffodils,” Wordsworth elaborates on the deep emotional connection between human beings and nature. When he sees “a host of golden daffodils,” their beauty fills his heart with joy and peace, and later, in solitude, the memory of the flowers brings him comfort and spiritual renewal:

“And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.”

This shows how nature uplifts the human spirit and becomes a source of lasting happiness and inspiration. In “To a Butterfly,” Wordsworth finds in the creature’s delicate grace “stay near me – do not take thy flight!”, a symbol of fleeting yet precious beauty, capturing the tender transience of life and the poet’s childlike wonder toward nature. In “The Tables Turned,” he encourages leaving books behind for the wisdom of nature,

“Come forth into the light of things,
Let Nature be your teacher,”

emphasizing that nature offers more profound moral and emotional education than academic study. Similarly, in “Written in March”, celebrates the renewal and strength of nature,

“The cock is crowing,
The Stream is flowing,”

as a symbol of hope and cyclical vitality, surpassing dry human intellect. And lastly, in “Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower,” Nature is both caregiver and guider. Nature said,

“A lovelier flower
on earth was never shown,”

shaping Lucy into balance with its rhythms, suggesting that human life reaches its fullest meaning when United with the natural world. Together, these poems establish that for Wordsworth, nature is not just a canvas against which human life is played out but a living, moral and spiritual power that can repair the breach between man and God.

Environmental concern is a central idea in William Wordsworth’s poetry, expressing his deep anxiety about the growing distance between human beings and the natural world. In his view, nature is not just a source of beauty and comfort but the origin of moral and religious life too. While human beings neglect or misuse nature, they disconnect themselves from the simplicity and purity that feed the human soul. Wordsworth realized the devastation of nature as the loss of humanity’s inner harmony, warning that greed, industrialization, and materialism undermine our connection to the living earth. By his poetic vision, he sought to awaken sensitivity and respect for the natural world, urging us to realize that each aspect of nature like the sky, rivers, trees, and even the smallest living things possesses its own spirit and significance. His concern for the environment was both emotional and ethical; he believed that nature had to be conserved for the conservation of human virtue.

In “The World is Too Much with Us,” Wordsworth mourns humanity’s material obsession

“Getting and Spending,
we lay waste our powers”

which is the exploitation and neglect of the natural world. The words

“This sea that bares her bosom to the moon;
The winds that will be howling at all hours,”

give voice to the living force of nature that humans have lost touch with. This shows Wordsworth’s understanding of how industrialisation cuts the emotional and spiritual links with the earth. In “Lines Written in Early Spring,” Wordsworth celebrates nature’s harmony, “Through primrose tufts, in that green bower” – but does bemoan, “Have I no reason to lament/what man has

made of man?" suggesting that human moral and environmental corruption are the two sides of the same coin. In "Daffodils," the lines, "A host of golden Daffodils;/ Beside the lake, Beneath the trees," is a source of joy and spiritual rebirth, emphasizing the way immersion in nature elevates human spirit and promotes a sense of harmony with the world. In "To a Butterfly," William Wordsworth values the delicate insect by saying, "stay near me – do not take thy flight!" as a symbol of the delicate balance of nature easily disturbed by human infusion, emphasizing the need for gentleness and preservation. In "The Tables Turned," the call "come forth into the light of things,/ Let Nature be your teacher," Wordsworth calls for a return to nature's wisdom against man – made learning and material progress that destroy both spirit and environment. In "Written in March," celebrates natural renewal. The lines "The cock is crowing,/ The stream is flowing," presenting the strength and resilience of nature as an encouraging alternative to human indifference, reminding readers to the earth's enduring vitality and In "Three Years She Grew in sun and shower," nature personified declares, "She shall be sportive as the fawn," illustrating its strength to form and balance human life. Here, the harmony of Lucy and nature represents an ideal ecological balance of human beings in reverence and reciprocity with the natural world.

William Wordsworth's poetry describes Nature as a living presence, moral guide, spiritual renewal, and emotional comfort. In poems like "The World is Too Much with Us," "Lines Written in Early Spring," "Daffodils," "To A Butterfly," "Written in March," "The Tables Turned," and "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower," he depicts Nature as a teacher and friend who forms human thought, feeling, and character. Wordsworth held that nature has more profound lessons than books or intellectual study, which cultivate purity, patience, and wisdom in those who enjoy its companionship. He mourned humanity's growing separation from nature brought by industrialisation and materialism, warning that this distance leads to moral and spiritual decay. Yet, his writings also celebrate nature's sustaining energy and the ability to cure, demonstrating that peace and harmony could be attained when human beings dwell in proximity with the outdoors. Through his deep reverence for Nature, Wordsworth not only refined its purpose within literature but also emphasized its timeless impact on the human mind.

Conclusion:

William Wordsworth's poetry stands as a timeless testament to the sacred bond between humanity and Nature. Through his lyrical vision, he transforms the natural world from a mere backdrop into a living, spiritual force that educates, consoles, and elevates the human soul. His works, such as "The World is Too Much with Us," "Lines Written in Early Spring," "Daffodils," "The Tables Turned," and "Three Years She Grew in Sun and Shower," reveal his conviction that Nature is the ultimate moral guide and a source of purity and truth. Wordsworth's ecological consciousness anticipated many of the environmental concerns of the modern age, warning against materialism, industrial exploitation, and the growing alienation of humans from their natural surroundings.

Through an ecocritical lens, Wordsworth's poetry teaches that the preservation of Nature is inseparable from the preservation of human virtue and spirituality. His poetic philosophy advocates simplicity, reflection, and a return to the rhythms of the natural world as pathways to inner peace and ethical living. The Romantic ecology he envisioned thus continues to resonate in contemporary environmental discourse, reminding readers that reconnecting with Nature is not only an aesthetic or emotional act but a moral necessity. Wordsworth's enduring message—that true wisdom lies in living in harmony with the earth—makes his works profoundly relevant in today's age of ecological crisis and spiritual disconnection.

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From Harmony to Exploitation: Humanity's Triple Role in the Anthropocene through Two Indian Novels

Daisy Priya Gogoi

Assistant Professor

Department of English, Khowang College

Abstract

Derived from the Greek word 'anthropos', meaning 'human', the concept of the Anthropocene is that the present world has evolved into one where humans dominate over nature and use it as per their convenience. It has caused nature much harm and made the balance of nature unstable. Literature is the reflection of society. In fact, if one seeks to understand the context and history of a particular age or epoch, the literature produced in that time line would act as a window to observe the workings of the society, their cuisine, the economic and the socio-political scenarios, and even the major trends and fashion of the time. Therefore, in an age where environment and its preservation have become a primary concern of the leading countries of the world, it is inevitable for literature not to be created on this concept. There are various fictions and non-fictions featuring various aspects of the Anthropocene. For this paper, the two texts chosen are *Bitter Wormwood* by Easterine Kire and *O My Beloved River* by Kanseng Shyam. The purpose of choosing these two novels is because both the novels, through their fictional characters and their bond with nature, depict three roles into which humans fit into in the present Anthropocene scenario of the Earth- the cause, the victim and the witness. It is humans who, for their own selfish desires, devastate nature and exploit the resources.

Keywords: Anthropocene, nature, humanity, literature, Earth.

Discussion

The term 'Anthropocene' is now firmly embedded in earth science literature. Introduced by Paul Crutzen, it is used to refer to a new geological epoch characterized by the increasing human impact on Earth's geological, biological and climatic systems. Following the Holocene, the epoch which is gaining more focus of critics, climate enthusiasts and writers is the

Anthropocene. Derived from the Greek word ‘anthropos’, meaning ‘human’, the concept of the Anthropocene is that the present world has evolved into one where humans dominate over nature and use it as per their convenience.

The core concept that the term is trying to capture is that human activity is having a dominating presence on multiple aspects of the natural world and the functioning of the Earth system, and that this has consequences for how we view and interact with the natural world—and perceive our place in it. (Mahi 78)

Human activity on Earth has turned so destructive that the entire natural world is at stake. Ironically, the beings which would face the brunt of its damage is the human race itself. The 21st century has witnessed changes in climate and the melting of the glaciers, which are red alerts for what is to come in the future if humans continue to exploit the natural resources for the fast-paced modern life. What will be left for our future generations will be nothing but a barren land where even the fresh air we breathe might become scarce and poisonous. These concerns have sparked literary experimentation by various writers who seek to inform the masses of the dangers of human exploitation through their fictions and non-fictions.

Literature is the reflection of society. In fact, if one seeks to understand the context and history of a particular age or epoch, the literature produced in that time line would act as a window to observe the workings of the society, their cuisine, the economic and the socio-political scenarios, and even the major trends and fashion of the time. Therefore, in an age where environment and its preservation have become a primary concern of the leading countries of the world, it is inevitable for literature not to be created on this concept. There are various fictions and non-fictions which highlight various aspects of the Anthropocene. For this paper, the two texts chosen are *Bitter Wormwood* by Easterine Kire and *O My Beloved River* by Kanseng Shyam. The purpose of choosing these two novels is because both the novels, through their fictional characters and their bond with nature, depict three roles into which humans fit into in the present Anthropocene scenario of the Earth- the cause, the victim and the witness. It is humans who, for their own selfish desires, devastate nature and exploit the resources. Thus, humanity is witnessing the melting of glaciers, the rise of the water levels, the loss of important plants

and animal species, the increase of greenhouse gases, climate change and the depletion of the ozone layer. Furthermore, older generations of humanity, born at an age when man was not a slave to technology and the modern advancements, become witness to the sad reality of how humans themselves have destroyed mother nature. This paper shall, thus, analyze how these two selected texts portray the triple role that humans blend into in the present epoch of the Anthropocene.

Mose was born in 1937. No one knew the date but it was in late September just as the fields were being readied to be harvested. His mother, Vilaü, was in the fields, tying together the stalks of ... She tried to continue working, but the pains came again and intensified. Their field was an hour and a half away from the village, so the young mother birthed her son in the field shed.

Vilaü's mother-in-law, Khrienuo, helped her to wash the infant with a little water from the stream." (Kire 190)

Thus begins the first paragraph of the book *Bitter Wormwood* by Easterine Kire, highlighting the bond of human beings with nature. When technology was not so far advanced as we see in the present 21st century, people worked with their own limbs in the fields. They toiled hard, sowed seeds themselves, ploughed using animals and harvested the crops. They did not rely on the modern methods of agriculture and scientific pesticides to keep away insects. Instead, it was all left to the mercy of the gods. "Harvest-time was such a crucial time and if there was a sudden storm the grain could fall off the stalks and be lost" as the writer states. The serene bond of humans with nature and free spirit that this life provides is in stark contrast with the confined structure of modern school education, a fact highlighted in *O My Beloved River* by Kanseng Shyam in very first chapter. The protagonist of the text, Kurfuk, feels more like the mouthpiece of the river Nulfulu, rather than a human. It is as if the river itself is narrating her story through the character and describing its transformation through the ages.

In both joy and sorrow, the village remained united, each household playing its part. They engaged in community fishing, hunting, sporting, and worked together during cultivation and harvest seasons. Life was harmonious. (Shyam 153)

The traditions, the local songs, the prayers, the birth rituals and even the final rites of the dead are performed in sync with nature. Nature was treated as something sacred, and humans lived in perfect harmony with it. The second chapter of *Bitter Wormwood* is named “The Tree Ritual”, referring to the tree that was to be selected for the gate of their clan. Unfortunately, Mose’ father dies while felling the tree and thus, the tree is abandoned as it became taboo to use that tree. For Kunfuk’s tribe, it was a ritual to bathe the newly born in the Nulfulu river “welcoming the baby into the tribe, into the rhythm of nature, and into the protection of the sacred water (Shyam 1461). The river also believed to serve as a “conduit between life and death, a link between the physical and spiritual realms (Shyam 1471) and the elders would chant their prayers while the dead were bathed with utmost care in the Nulfulu river.

However, as the modern way of life invaded these tribes, the sacred bond between human and nature began to dwindle. Even the ones like Kunfuk, who wanted to live like the earlier times, had to accept the fact that his children were born into a time that needed education in schools and degrees. They needed skills different from those that Kunfuk possessed. Gathering herbs and vegetables from forests, swimming and fishing, such skills were not enough for their children to create a living. While they were learning more things in schools, they were losing the link with their old traditions and customs that were intricately linked with the river or nature in general. Modernity brought with it the destruction of the natural world. Humanity started becoming the cause or the reason for the destruction of the harmonious bond between nature and itself.

... fueled by changing times and the promise of modernity, meant that the remaining patches of forest were cleared to make room for new households and agricultural fields. The land that once belonged to the forest was now filled with homes, paths, and farmland. Even Kunfuk’s home, once surrounded by lush greenery, was now in the midst of a growing settlement. The seasons still came and went, but they no longer carried the abundance they once had. (Shyam 460)

The discrepancies that appear between the bond of humans with nature with the advent of time and advancement of human science is evident in the

chapters of both the texts. Furthermore, the contrast between the bond between nature and human beings and the bond among human communities is crystal clear. Kire's *Bitter Wormwood* mostly focuses on the Naga insurgency that took place in Indian history. However, there are also various scenes in the book which can be interpreted depicting the contrast between the harmonious relationship between nature and humans, as opposed to the violent and negative relation between humans and humans. As the novel begins, Mose is birthed in the lap of nature in the fields. However, later in the novel, innocent Khrienuo, the grandmother of Mose, is killed in the fields by Indian soldiers. The destructive nature of human beings- slaughtering each other to show power and dominance- is in stark contrast to the nurturing nature of the mother Earth. In *O My Beloved River*, when Kurfuk's tribe realized that they would get a huge amount of money by selling their land, as it was close to the oil mining grounds, readily agreed to it. The prospect of attaining easy money and a new life in the town was too tempting for them to resist. No one seemed to care for the natural destruction of the land. The river and nature fed them, raised them and it gave them their identity. However, humans forget it and take nature for granted. The new and luxurious way of life brought by technical advancements is irresistible for mankind. Even his own child wanted to sell his land.

...It is better we sell it now, make some money, and move to the city. A new era, a new beginning in life can be ours there. We can be part of the modern world, Father.

Kurfuk's mind raced. How could his own flesh and blood, Prukok, the one who had played by Nulfulu, who had run through the fields with his brothers, want such a thing? To turn their back on the land, to erase the stories of their ancestors from the soil that had cradled them for generations. (Shyam 810)

In both texts, the invasion of modernity, human greed for power and money reflects how far science and the human mind has conquered in this world, but at the cost of nature. Humans are the reason that the harmony of the God gifted world is destroyed and polluted. Both texts represent this nature of human beings- the cause or the reason for the destruction, exploitation and pollution of nature.

However, it is ironical that although humans are destroying nature, the ultimate victims of this exploitation will be Man himself. Intertwined with

war, political conflicts and the erosion of traditional way of life, Kire's *Bitter Wormwood*, highlights how the peaceful life of their community was disrupted by the politics of human beings where people were spiritual lived with customs, traditions and considered the land, rivers and hills sacred. But the soldiers killed these innocent people in their own fields, turning the sacred into a sacrilege. This type of violation of the harmonious natural world through bloodshed, war, deforestation is not just physical, but a spiritual violation. Mose's tribe and their identity is linked to their landscape, and by destroying it, the soldiers destroy the villagers' culture and their identity. The sad reality of today's world is witnessed in Kunfuk's words:

Kunfuk laughed and cried simultaneously when he saw people buying plastic containers of water. The sight felt surreal; a cruel reminder of how far his Mangpu had come from the days when water flowed freely from the river and wells. The laughter bubbled up from deep within him, but it was hollow, tinged with bitterness. (Shyam 574)

Kunfuk's tribe drank water from the river Nulfulu. The river also gave life to the animals and plants in the forest. The tribe never had to worry about getting nutritious food or clean water. They had the Nulfulu river. However, with the discovery of oil in the area, people started selling their land and the trees were cut down to make way for factories and buildings- "a bustling hub of industrial civilization" (Shyam 1164). The river was turned into a water park and littered with plastic bottles and other garbage, while the cutting down of the forest made many species of animals flee. Apart from losing the fresh herbs and plants that the people lost by selling away their land, the Tringyu tribe also sold away their own identity. The people chose "chosen comfort over legacy, wealth over memory" (Shyam 908). Both the novels, thus depict how it is humanity which ultimately has to suffer the brunt of their own misdoings.

The two texts establish a clear contrast between an initial pastoral ideal and a subsequent ecocalyptic reality. The opening of *Bitter Wormwood* sets a pastoral scene with Mose being born in the fields and washed with stream water, demonstrating a life "in sync with nature" where traditional communities worked the land harmoniously. Similarly, the traditions of Kunfuk's tribe—from birth rituals in the Nulfulu river to community life tied

to cultivation—depict nature as sacred and life-sustaining. However, the narrative shifts sharply into the ecocalyptic, marked by destruction. The polluted Nulfulu river, once a sacred source of life, is turned into a garbage-filled water park, while the cutting down of forests leads to the flight of animals and scarcity of clean water. The texts, therefore, function as a crucial warning, charting the transition from a symbiotic existence to an inevitable environmental collapse fueled by human greed and technological advancement.

Another important reflection on these two novels is how the writers portray humans as the ones who play the role of the witness to the changes human activity brings to the natural world. If Nature is personified, then Mose and Kurfuk, and also their heirs become the mouthpieces through which nature seems to narrate its tale. Mose's life began in a setting where nature was the primary source of their livelihood, be it the crops in the fields or a squirrel from the wild. They respected nature, as seen in case of 'genna day', when no one goes or works in the fields as they believe it displeases the spirits. Kire, using frame narrative to incorporate different narrators' perspectives, narrates the changes in Nagaland—how the villages and clans changed over time into colonies and populated cities. Forests, where it was once believed were dwelling places for evil spirits, were then used by refugees and youths of the Underground (Naga rebel organization) seeking safety, and eventually became polluted with bloodshed after Indian soldiers hunted them down there. The conflict in Nagaland, including constant wars, the laying of new roads, and the intrusion of technical and developmental activities, directly disturb the environment. The beautiful Naga Hills, long rivers, trees, wild animals, and medicinal herbs are ruined by deforestation, contamination, and a resulting ecological imbalance. Mose's life traces the history from a peaceful, traditional village life - in harmony with nature - to one marred by violence and political upheaval.

The paper's central argument that humans "dominate over nature and use it as per their convenience" directly opens the door for analysis through Deep Ecology. This theory fundamentally challenges anthropocentrism—the belief that humans are the centre of existence and all of nature is merely a resource to be exploited.

The Deep Ecology movement is a philosophical and political perspective that emerged in the 1970s as a response to the growing

environmental crisis. This essay will explore the historical and ideological origins of the Deep Ecology movement, examining its key influences and ideas, as well as its significance and impact on environmentalism and society at large. (Mohmmadi)

This theory fundamentally challenges anthropocentrism—the belief that humans are the centre of existence and all of nature is merely a resource to be exploited. The traditional life in both novels, characterized by rituals like the tree selection in *Bitter Wormwood* and respecting the river’s rest in *O My Beloved River*, reflects a non-anthropocentric worldview where nature holds intrinsic, sacred value. Modernity, however, brings with it a destructive anthropocentric shift, highlighted when Kunfuk’s own son chooses “a new beginning in life” in the modern city over the ancestral land and its stories. This greed for money and the “luxurious way of life” demonstrates the core conflict: the failure to realize that the “Earth belongs as much to the other animals and plants as to us”, leading to the destruction of the fragile connection with nature. The ultimate suffering of humanity, as the “victim” and “witness”, is the tragic consequence of this failure to recognize the intrinsic value of the non-human world.

The two texts can be analyzed from a Post colonial ecocritical lens as well. In *Bitter Wormwood*, the violence of the Naga insurgency is not merely a human conflict but an ecological violation. The same fields that were the birthplace of Mose and the source of livelihood are desecrated when his grandmother, Khrienuo, is killed there by soldiers, contrasting the “nurturing nature of the mother Earth” with the destructive nature of humanity. This political conflict directly results in environmental degradation through deforestation, contamination, and ecological imbalance as the beautiful Naga Hills are ruined by developmental activities and war. Furthermore, in *O My Beloved River*, the temptation to sell land for oil mining and move to the city reflects how global resource-driven economies perpetuate the exploitation of indigenous lands, causing the tribes to lose their identity by choosing “comfort over legacy, wealth over memory”. The environmental destruction is thus inseparable from the history of political and economic subjugation.

In Kunfuk’s Tringyu tribe, they considered the river Nulfulu sacred and did not cross the river at night, respecting it to let the gods rest. “If you take from the river when it sleeps, it may not give again when it wakes”

(Shyam 1569) advised the elders. If it was extremely necessary, the tribe's priest, Zawuraq, performed a ritual, offering a prayer and asking for a safe passage. Kunfuk recalls how he played in the river as a child, the lush greenery surrounding it, the animals that survived on its water. He also recalls the time when the river raged and swept away the village and also the times when it provided them the best of harvest. However, he also reminisces how with the passing of time modern techniques started replacing the old customs. He nostalgically recalls his childhood and the loss of the community life before the city.

The Nulfulu was no longer the mighty force that had once shaped their lives. But it was hard to let go of the memories, the smell of fresh fish caught from the river, the joy of watching the children swim and fish, the sense of connection with nature that seemed to be slipping away with every passing year. (Shyam 524)

It is also through Kunfuk that the reader gains hope of the river Nulfulu's revival, which ultimately does occur. It is as if the Nulfulu river, although it gave up on humans who forgot all that the river had given it when money blinded them, revived itself just for people like Kunfuk who never gave up on it. Kunfuk carried his tribe's tradition, oral stories and songs and passed it on to his grandchildren.

Like the river, I will eventually disappear, and all that will remain are the stories. But those stories, my dear ones, are more than just memories. They are the echo of what we left behind, what we have lost, and what we must still protect. (Shyam 146)

His tales were key factors in helping the youth organizations that fought for the preservation of Nulfulu river. The emotional bond that he shared with the river ultimately fueled and ignited the spark in his son and the youths to keep fighting for the environment- for the river Nulfulu. The readers, through Mose and Kunfuk, and their offsprings, experience the changes that their homelands undergo due to human interference with nature. Thus, they become witness and mouthpieces of nature itself and its story. This role of humans as a helpless witness stuck between the dilemma of accepting the new changes that although are hazardous, but necessary, and the want to preserve the old ways of community life is highlighted by Kire and Shyam in their texts.

Conclusion:

Analyzing both *Bitter Wormwood* by Easterine Kire and *O My Beloved River* by Kanseng Shyam makes the readers contemplate on which direction the world is heading towards. Human interference is not always beneficial for the natural world and at times it breaks the pure bond that humans were supposed to share with nature. The world is not for humans to dominate over. The Earth belongs as much to the other animals and plants as to us. Humanity needs to realize this, or else we lose the fragile connection with nature. The two texts reveal how humans first become the cause of destruction, but ultimately it is they who suffers from a loss of identity and culture because of this exploitation of nature. Unless and until humans take responsibility for their actions, they shall become mere witnesses to the destruction that the future awaits. Sustainable development is essential for the survival of humanity in the future.

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Eco-Critical Perspectives on Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*

**Jyotimoyee Talukdar
BA 6th Semester
Department of English
Duliajan College**

“There is something infinitely healing in the repeated refrains of nature—the assurance that dawn comes after night, and spring after the winter”

-Rachael Carson

Abstract: Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) has traditionally been read through the lenses of Gothic fiction, Romanticism, and scientific transgression; however, an ecocritical perspective reveals the novel as an early and prescient meditation on humanity's fraught relationship with the natural world. Set against the sublime landscapes of the Alps, the Arctic, and pastoral Europe, *Frankenstein* foregrounds nature not merely as a backdrop but as an active force that mirrors, resists, and responds to human ambition. This paper explores how Shelley critiques anthropocentric notions of mastery over nature through Victor Frankenstein's obsessive pursuit of scientific knowledge, which results in ecological and moral imbalance. The act of artificial creation disrupts natural processes of life, reproduction, and kinship, anticipating modern anxieties surrounding environmental exploitation and technological overreach. By situating *Frankenstein* within contemporary ecocritical discourse, this study argues that the novel offers an early critique of ecological irresponsibility and foreshadows present-day concerns of the Anthropocene. Ultimately, *Frankenstein* emerges as a cautionary tale that underscores the ethical necessity of harmony, responsibility, and respect in humanity's interaction with the natural world.

Keywords: Anthropocentrism, Ecocriticism, Nature, Romanticism, Scientific Hubris

Introduction:

Nature and environment always occupies a predominant space in literature, not solely as an overpowering teacher but as a guide and source of wisdom. Throughout all cultures and ages writers and poets have always

used Nature as a central agent to explore and express human emotions, moral truths, experiences and philosophical ideas. Nature works as a mirror reflecting human being's experiences and at the same place it reflects the harmony, resilience and the consequences of human actions. Ancient myths, which represent natural things carrying symbolic meaning to Romantic writers and poets depicting environment as spiritual awakener to ecological writers, that emphasize environmental responsibility, Nature bears a resemblance to a powerful teacher, shaping human consciousness. By portraying Nature in its grand form, as a mentor, literature reminds us to make balance, have patience and have respect towards it. Nature and human life are deeply intertwined.

Eco-Criticism and Literature:

Over the past few decades, literature has progressively been studied through different and interdisciplinary standpoints that go beyond traditional methods of interpretation. Among these standpoints, "Eco-Criticism" has turned up as a significant and intriguing field of study. "Eco-criticism", sometimes referred to as "literary ecology" or "green-criticism" focuses on exploring the sinuous relationship between literature and the natural environment. Eco-criticism explores how nature, landscapes, ecological concerns, environmental crises and all other aspects of nature are presented in literature and how these representations bring psychological effect and shape the attitudes of beings towards Nature. In other words, eco-criticism bridges the gap between the world of literary studies and ecological awareness. It underscores that literature cannot be created in separation or isolation from the natural world, as its origin is from the Natural itself. Eco-criticism explores and studies how poets and writers use language and imagination to engage with environmental issues. As human beings face global issues like climate changes, deforestation and environmental degradation, eco-criticism makes a way to explore literature not only through artistic point of view but also as a text that reflects human beings' relationship with Nature.

The term "Eco-criticism" was first widely used in the 1970 and 1980s. William Rueckert, who is credited with coining the term in 1978, described it as "The application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature." Another major eco-critic, Lawrence Bell, in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) said that "Eco-criticism is a study of literature and environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmental praxis."

These definitions show that eco-criticism is about promoting awareness and responsibility of human beings towards the natural environment.

Western Literature includes eco-critical perspectives in their works, for example William Wordsworth's "Lines written a Few miles above Tintern Abbey" (1798) or Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, which emphasizes that beauty, spirituality, the power of nature, challenges of industrialization and its impact like alienation of human beings from the natural world. Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* presents both the beauty and terror of nature, as well as the dangers which humans have created by trying to interfere in the natural cycle of beings. Indian Literature as well has always given a prominent role to Nature through spirituality. The ancient Vedas and Upanishads always described the greatness and sacredness of natural objects like flowers, rivers, trees, animals etc. Poets like Kalidasa, celebrated natural beauty in works like *Meghadutta* and *Ritusamhara*.

Both Western Literature and Indian Literature, acknowledge that literature is not only about stories or poems, it is also about our surroundings, our environment. Western Literature shows Nature as a voice of conscience, a mirror to human ambition and a plea for balance in the age of technology. Indian Literature gives its own touch, through cultural traditions where rivers are worshipped, animals are guardians and earth itself is divine and sacred.

Nature in Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*:

Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) is more than a parable of scientific ambition and tragic downfall- it is also an evocation of humanity's relationship with the natural world. Eco-criticism, a modern critical approach that studies literature in relation with environmental concerns, emphasizes the readers to read *Frankenstein* not just as a Gothic narrative but also as a story where Nature plays a huge role as a teacher, healer, and moral guide. The novel's main storyline is about Victor Frankenstein, a young scientist who is driven by an unquenchable desire for gaining unconventional knowledge, creates a being, who was brought to life from death. The novel is also given a second title as "Modern Prometheus" as Victor is over ambitious and faces his downfall due to his same attitude towards life. His own creation, ambition, quest for reaching to a point where nobody ever made, brought his downfall in the end. Both Victor and his creation had to go through lots of ups and downs, alienated themselves from society, family and were forced to face the consequences of Victor's unchecked ambition, ignorance and lack of

responsibility. Victor can be seen as a scientist as well as a being from the industrial revolution era, representing the restless spirit of the early nineteenth century. As a scientist, he represents humanity's thirst for knowledge, power, superiority, which includes disrupting the boundaries of the natural cycle of creation and destruction. Victor mirrors the industrial mindset, efficiency, innovation, discovery and control over nature. Just like machines in an industry he creates something new from fragmented body parts, stitched and attached together and giving it a life and bringing into existence from death.

In the novel, Shelley has given Nature a prominent role as a teacher, a constant source of solace and a force of restoration for Victor Frankenstein, equipoising his obsession with Science, discovery, invention and all other industrial ambition. While Victor is portrayed as a scientist, personifying the restless, industrial spirit of progress, Shelly consistently contrasts these moments with when nature provides him peace and guidance. Whenever Victor is overwhelmed with his restlessness and ambition, he automatically moves towards nature for solace, recovery and right direction, indicating that the natural environment possesses a healing wisdom that human innovation often lacks. As a guide, a philosopher, nature reminds Victor of all the limitations that humans have over nature and its continuous cycle, and the danger of violating nature's laws. After creating the creature, Victor goes through lots of hardships, suffers both mental and physical torment, yet it is the serene beauty of Alpine valleys that provides him strength and kind of re-charges his soul. He often seeks refuge in the natural landscapes, near the lakes, and rivers, and the majestic mountains provide him comfort. The places soothe his disconcerted and distressed mind, offering him peace that his success in creating a creature, his achievement in his ambition could never. Nature provided him harmony during the mess and chaos, even though the harmony was temporary, he was sufficiently relieved in nature. Nature is represented in light, joy and brightness, in contrast to the dark, suffocating and filthy laboratory in Victor's dormitory. The contrast symbolises the oppositeness of both the environments and the kind of energy it gives to Victor.

As we move forward, and explore more in the story line, we find that the role of nature in shaping the creature's nature and behavior is equally significant as Victor's. The Creature who has been abandoned by his creator after his birth and was rejected by all other human beings, at that point nature became a parental nurture to him. The rivers, mountains, forests, and the

changing seasons acted as his protector, teacher and guide. Nature shields him, instructs him and offers directions to him. In the absence of parental care and social integration, it was nature that provided the creature survival, knowledge, moral insights and sense of belonging.

From the moment of his creation, the creature is thrust into a hostile, malicious world, due to Victor's abandonment and negligence. Victor runs away in panic and fear, leaving his creation, his child in his condition without any guidance, care, nurture, or comfort. In this helpless and unshielded condition, Nature provided him the first refuge. The woods shield him from the cruelty of humankind, the leafy canopy and shadows provided physical protection from the sun, rain and people's eyes, while the streams and fruits sustained his body. When villagers drove him away with stones and hatred, nature again became his protector. The forest, in particular, acts as a womb. In eco-critical terms, Shelley portrays nature as an alternative caregiver that refuses to abandon the helpless. In winter, Nature protects the creature through fire-which he discovered accidentally. Here, fire acts as a protector from cold and predators, underscoring the eco-critical idea that Nature is not passive but offers ways and tools for survival whenever humans fail. Unlike Victor, who disrupts the natural laws, breaks the cycle of life and death, the creature accepts nature's gift with humility and dependence.

Nature's protection also amplifies beyond the physical form. The sublimity of mountains, lakes, forest and sky provides the emotional strength to the creature. When humiliated by the De Lacys, he moves back into the wild landscapes where grandeur absorbs his anguish. The Alps and the glaciers, in their immensity, provide him refuge from human cruelty. Through an eco-critical perspective, this shows that Nature has unlimited power to absorb all the negativity and trauma caused by humans in society.

For the creature, who received no guidance or instructions from Victor, Nature becomes the first and most enduring teacher. On a literal level, rivers and stars guiding his movements, streams carry him to new lands, and celestial bodies oriented him at night. Unlike Victor, whose journey has always been with twisted plots, because of his ambitious and industrial mindset, the creature always follows natural landmarks. Shelley has splendidly portrayed the inter-connection between human psyche and environment by mirroring the emotional state and the weather, the landscapes. Sublime landscapes mirror

his inner states; when he feels peace, blooming fields and spring blossoms reflect renewal; when consumed by rage, storms and lightning embody his fury. Focusing on the Creature's relationship with Nature, through eco-criticism, it reveals Shelley's prophetic awareness of human's dependence on and estrangement from the environment.

Transformation From Creature To Monster:

The creature's creation outside the natural order marks the first step in his transformation. As a being, assembled from different dead bodies from the grave and stitched altogether, he is born into a world that denies or does not accept someone like him. In the initial level, he was very much connected to Nature, he was innocent, he used to wander in nature and had feelings like sympathy, empathy and belongingness. But his attempt to find solace in the natural world was constantly thwarted by human beings' behavior, rejection and humiliation. Every time he tried to create a connection with people or ever tried to reach out to them, he was always responded with hate, violence, and horror. His experience with De Lacy's family and others gradually destroyed his innocence and innate goodness in him. Nature once protector, his refuge, gradually becomes a trauma, a reflection of his inner turmoil. The mountains, forests, rivers that once soothed him, now mirrors his isolation. The natural world was exact, and beautiful but after all of his experiences, the same nature feels different and exhausting. From an ecological perspective, this shift in the feeling about Nature marks a breakdown of the creature's ecological identity. He is no longer in harmony with Nature.

Victor plays a major role in the creature's descent into monstrosity. The novel does not merely narrate a story of an ambitious scientist and his experiments- but also represents a psychological and moral study of how ignorance, negligence, pride and lack of empathy can corrupt innocence. Victor succeeded in creating the creature, out of his ambition, a greed for discovering something unconventional. But instead of taking responsibility for his own creation, he cowardly flees away, he totally abandons his creation, who was unaware of this cruel world. This abandonment marked the creature's first experience of loneliness. Through this, Shelley exposes Victor's failure as both a parent and scientist. When the creature approaches Victor, requesting for understanding and companionship, Victor refuses his proposal. Victor acted as a false God, being deaf to the sufferings of his own creation. At this, the

creature warns him that if Victor continues denying him or his existence, he would destroy all of his loved ones. And Victor actually ends up losing all of his loved ones. The deaths are not mere acts of revenge but symbol of Nature's justice, punishing humans for tampering with its sacred order. After losing everyone, Victor becomes isolated, consumed by guilt and despair.

Conclusion:

In conclusion, from an eco-critical perspective, *Frankenstein* portrays Nature both as a nurturing and corrective force. Initially, for Victor, nature was a peaceful place for him to relax, to enjoy the beauty, he used to find solace in the sublime landscapes of the Alps and the serenity of lakes. But, once he violated nature by breaking its law and acting against it, from that point onwards, Nature turned drastically against him. Nature started mirroring his violations. Shelley represents Nature in a way where we can say that it reflects our own behavior and attitude towards Nature. If we are in harmony with Nature, it brings peace to us and if we try to break the natural cycle and harm Nature, it will definitely bring destruction to us.

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