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The Misreading of Ecocriticism as Romantic Revival

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Abstract— *Drawing on ecocriticism, deep ecology, biocentrism, and the critique of anthropocentrism, this paper investigates the conceptual position and critical divergence between Romanticism and Ecocriticism. While Romantic poetry foregrounds imagination, sublimity, and spiritual renewal, ecocriticism emphasizes ethical responsibility, environmental damage, and nonhuman agency. Through comparative close readings, the study demonstrates a shift from Romantic imaginative transcendence to ecocritical material attentiveness. Rather than rejecting Romantic views of nature, ecocriticism extends them—moving from aesthetic appreciation to ecological accountability. In the end, the paper highlights a key transition from inspiration to realization, asserting that ecocriticism re-situates human existence within a shared, more-than-human world governed by biocentric justice and ecological humility.*

Keywords— ***Biocentrism, Deep Ecology, Ecocriticism, Ecological Responsibility, and Romanticism.***

Romanticism strikes through the emotional resonance of myths, spirituality, diction and the events of past whereas ecological literary criticism drives an unwanted emotions, conditions and thoughts out-of-the environmental sustainability and inhabitation. Poets in the Romantic period persevered their emotional tranquilities into a larger historical, mythical, cultural and spiritual lens but writers in ecological literary criticism looked into an actual sense and practical consciousness of the surrounding and widely focuses on attention of landscape, wilderness and totally the ecosphere. The critique of ecological literary criticism encountered the ecological justice, presence and order to the ecological objects where the romanticism framed with drawing the reader's imagination by captivating their attention towards ordinary objects. William Wordsworth, S.T. Coleridge, P.B. Shelley, John Keats and other poets of the period had constructed their poetry conventionally and dialectically. As Tilottama Rajan argues, in her *The Supplement of Reading: Figures of Understanding in Romantic Theory and Practice*, that romantic poetry situates as "a figurative understanding" (Rajan 2) rather than an operative object of the surrounding. Poets of the Deep Ecology, Rainer Maria Rilke, Robison Jeffers, Gary Snyder, Wendell Berry and Mary Oliver not just touch the surrounding but take as a whole of object and subject and both of them as the events of past and present. Rilke's poetry evokes not only human awareness towards the environment but also explored a human duty and participatory consciousness in nature. His poetry, such as *Duino Elegies* (1923), *Sonnets to Orpheus* (1923), *New Poems* (1907-1908) and *Letters to a Young Poet*, places of interest of nature as presence and immanent sacred. Upon sense of poets, poetry create space of semination rather than propagation and dissemination in Gary Snyder's works. In *Riprap (1959), Myths & Texts(1960), The Back Country(1968)*, *Turtle Island (1974)*, *Mountains and Rivers without End (1996)*, *Axe Handles (1983)*, *No Nature(1992)*, and other collections of poetry, and proses such as *Earth House Hold (1969), The Practice of the Wild (1990)*, and *A Place in Space (1995),* and *The Gary Snyder Reader: Prose, Poetry, and Translations*, *1952-1988(1999),* Snyder's attention of deep ecology depicted as the biosphere consciousness that is not just pleasing or pleasuring or peeping responsibility but it is the answerable and accountable of the ecological

presence, health; particular places, plants and person-like-animals.

Ecocriticism moves beyond Romantic revival, shifting focus from literary representation to material ecological presence. While Romanticism c aptures rural spaciousness and emotional serenity, deep ecology grounds literature in physical wilderness and biocentric interdependence. Gary Snyder's *Turtle Island* and *The Back Country* replace Romantic abstraction with place-attachment, inhabitation site, and deep ecological awareness. Similarly, Wendell Berry's *Standing by Words* transcends Romantic imagination by confronting environmental degradation and embedding human responsibility within the biotic community. Therefore, ecocriticism interrogates humanity's destructive impact, re-framing nature not as an aesthetic venue for human reflection, but as an active ecosphere requiring ethical accountability and offer. In the essay "Poetry and Marriage: The Use of Old Forms", it illustrates

"There are, it seems, two muses: the Muse of Inspiration, who gives us inarticulate visions and desires, and the Muse of Realization, who returns again and again to say, "It is yet more difficult than you thought." (Berry 97).

Berry's distinction between the Muse of Inspiration and the Muse of Realization offers a convincing context for contrasting Romanticism with ecocriticism. Romantic masterworks by Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, and Shelley embody the Muse of Inspiration, framing nature as a catalyst for aesthetic wonder, imaginative transcendence, and spiritual renewal. In contrast, ecocritical poetry by Robinson Jeffers, Gary Snyder, Rainer Maria Rilke, Wendell Berry, and Mary Oliver appeals the Muse of Realization. This modern paradigm directly confronts material ecological crises, including habitat degradation, biodiversity loss, and the consequences of anthropocentric dominance. Moving beyond passive aesthetic appreciation, ecocriticism interrogates the complex interdependencies binding human and nonhuman life within the ecosphere. Eventually, this literary progression marks a vital trajectory from inspiration to realization: shifting human perspective from viewing nature as a realm of romantic retreat to acknowledging a shared, vulnerable planet requiring ethical accountability and active ecological stewardship.

Ecocriticism departs from Romanticism by shifting attention from subjective reflection to material ecological inquiry. In Wordsworth's "Tintern Abbey," nature functions anthropocentrically as a catalyst for memory, emotional elevation, and spiritual renewal. Conversely, ecocriticism grants agency to nonhuman ecosystems, moving from aesthetic admiration to ethical responsibility. Snyder's "The Call of the Wild" in *Turtle Island* exemplify this shift, replacing Wordsworthian personal awe with environmental ethics, nonhuman agency, and sustainable order. In the end, while Romanticism uses nature to enrich human consciousness, ecocriticism embeds humanity within a shared ecological community, demanding moral accountability and active environmental stewardship.

Jeffers's ideas in his poetry emphasizes the rejection of human-centeredness, inhumanism and geological consciousness. His vision of 'organic wholeness' is 'the greatest beauty' that encourages ecological humility, decentering the human-subject and recognizing nature as valuable beyond its relationship with humanity. He illustrates in the poem "The Answer";

Often appears atrociously ugly. Integrity is wholeness, the greatest beauty is

Organic wholeness, the wholeness of life and things, the divine

beauty of the universe. Love that, not man

Apart from that, or else you will share man's pitiful confusions

or drown in despair when his days darken (." (13-7)

Jeffers's lines express a central ecocritical principle: the intrinsic value of the natural world and the interconnectedness of all life. The phrase "organic wholeness" challenges anthropocentrism, the certainty that human beings are the centre of existence and that nature occurs mainly for human use. Jeffers, instead of human supremacy, urges readers to rise the universe as an interconnected ecological whole in which humans are merely one part of it. His statement "Love that, not man apart from that" calls for an ethical shift from the human-centered thinking towards an ecocentric perspective that recognizes the independent worth of nonhuman life and the wider natural world. Jeffers's poem "Camel Point" develops three central ecocritical ideas: decentering the human, recognizing nonhuman autonomy, and understanding humanity within deep time. He also provides the clearest poetic expression of inhumanism through;

We must uncenter our minds from ourselves;

We must unhumanize our views a little, and become

confident

As the rock and ocean that we were made from. (16-9)

The verb "*uncenter*" challenges the assumption that human interests, experiences, and achievements determine the value of the universe. The word "*unhumanize*" does not mean becoming cruel or abandoning humanity; it means

reducing the dominance of exclusively human perspectives. The rock and ocean represent forms of existence that precede human beings and will continue beyond human history. The poem also describes human development as a temporary disturbance within a much older landscape. Its observation that human populations rise and fall like a tide places civilization within geological and ecological time. Nature is not simply a passive setting for human activity; it possesses its own continuity and significance. "Hurt Hawks" offers animal suffering, wild freedom, and nonhuman autonomy. The lines go on;

The wild God of the world is sometimes merciful to those

That ask mercy, not often to the arrogant.

You do not know him, you communal people, or you have forgotten him;

Intemperate and savage, the hawk remembers him;

Beautiful and wild, the hawks, and men that are dying, remember him. (13-7)

The above lines challenge the anthropocentric assumption that humanity possesses the authority to control nature. The "wild God" symbolizes the untamed forces of existence, which operate beyond human social conventions and expectations. Nature is neither entirely benevolent nor subject to human wishes; it possesses its own power and conditions of survival. The contrast between "communal people" and the hawk is particularly significant. Jeffers suggests that organized human society has become disconnected from the wildness that remains fundamental to existence. The hawk, despite its suffering, retains its fierce independence and dignity. Its wounded condition does not erase its intrinsic worth. Through this representation, Jeffers challenges the tendency to measure an animal's value according to its usefulness, productivity, or ability to survive. The poem's portrayal of the injured hawk also raises an important ethical question: should human beings interpret animal suffering exclusively through human ideas of mercy and compassion? Jeffers complicates this question by presenting the hawk's freedom and wild identity as inseparable from its existence. Thus, the bird is not merely an object of human sympathy; it is a nonhuman being whose life possesses significance beyond human emotional responses.

Maria Rilke's explored nature as presence and idea of participatory consciousness. In the poem "Onto a Vast Plain", he says

Be earth now, and evensong.

Be the ground lying under that sky.

Be modest now, like a thing

ripened until it is real,

so that he who began it all

can feel you when he reaches for you. (25-30)

These lines convey an ecocritical perspective of modesty, rootedness, and connection to the natural environment. The command "Be earth now" urges the speaker to connect with the earth instead of viewing nature as an entity to be dominated or taken advantage of. The depiction of "the earth resting beneath that sky" highlights the link between terrestrial and heavenly components, showcasing life as a component of a greater ecological system. The term "modest" implies that true satisfaction arises from patience, maturity, and embracing one's role in the world, rather than from human supremacy. From a biocentric viewpoint, the text questions anthropocentrism by urging humans to abandon their sense of superiority and acknowledge their role in a broader community of life. At last, Rilke's imagery promotes ecological humility and a greater understanding of humanity's connection to the earth and the broader forces of life. "The Panther" portrays animal captivity as a type of ecological harm that robs a wild animal of its liberty, independence, and relationship with its natural habitat. The initial lines,

His vision, from the constantly passing bars,

has grown so weary that it cannot hold

anything else. It seems to him there are

a thousand bars; and behind the bars, no world. (1-4)

the above recited lines indicate how unending imprisonment reduces the panther's perception and limits its interaction with the world. The depiction of "a thousand bars" represents the immense force of human domination, while the phrase "and behind the bars, no world" implies the mental devastation brought on by detachment from the creature's original environment. Viewing it through an ecocritical lens, the cage symbolizes human-centered dominance, where people take the liberty to confine and showcase nonhuman beings for their own ends. Rilke confronts this anthropocentric perspective by focusing on the panther's anguish instead of the concerns of its keepers or onlookers. The panther's captivity constitutes ecological violence as it interferes with the animal's mobility and its connection to the broader ecosystem. Ultimately, the poem promotes a biocentric viewpoint by asserting that animals have inherent worth separate from human ownership, entertainment, or usefulness. Through the panther's quiet anguish, Rilke encourages readers to examine the moral validity of confinement and acknowledge the independence and worth of nonhuman beings.

The critique of ecological literary criticism scopes the environmental justice, order and presence along with nature worship. Snyder, the pioneer poet laureate of deep

ecology, whose concept of practice of the wild, bioregionalism and reinhabitation. These concepts recognize wilderness is not just voice of every living beings but the inherent place in the planet. His famous statement, from the essay "The Etiquette of Freedom" in *The Practice of the Wild*, “Nature is not a place to visit, it is home,” (Snyder 7) expresses a fundamental ecocritical perspective by challenging the separation between human beings and the natural world. It rejects anthropocentrism, which treats nature as a resource or recreational space for human use, and instead recognizes humanity as an integral part of the ecological community. The metaphor of “home” emphasizes belonging, interdependence, and the intrinsic value of the environment. From an ecocritical perspective, the statement calls for ecological responsibility and challenges the exploitation and degradation of the Earth. In the end, Snyder advocates an ecological consciousness in which humans learn to live with nature rather than merely exist within or dominate it. In the poem “The Call of the Wild”, Snyder gives how the wilderness in American regions pictured the environmental chaos and destruction through warfare and modern technology. He says;

A war against earth.

When it is done there’ll be

no place

A Coyote could hide. (63-6)

The expression “A war against earth” reinterprets environmental degradation as a form of conflict, implying that human actions like industrialization, habitat loss, and the overuse of natural resources represent an attack on the planet itself. The above phrase reveals the tragic results of modern technology. It illustrates how the extinction of bionetworks deprives faunas of protection, safety, and liberty. The coyote signifies as an emblematic of wilderness and ecological individuality. It also implies the susceptibility of wildlife amid human control. The line breaks the lonely word “no place,” that highlight the total absence of place for nonhuman existence. Snyder challenges the idea of anthropocentrism that human concerns take superiority over those of other species. Rather than feeling pity for it, he emphasizes the inherent worth of wildlife and the entitlement of nonhuman entities to thrive without human dominance. The poem's environmental voice is thus not just a tribute to nature; it serves as a condemnation of habitat destruction and the suppression of nonhuman life. Snyder advocates for an ecological consciousness that views the Earth as a communal home instead of a resource to be exploited. In the poem “Mother Earth: Her Whales”, he says;

Sound, and rise again

Flowing like breathing planets

In the sparkling whorls

Of living light. (73-6)

Snyder articulates the doctrines of deep ecology by questioning human-centered perspectives and recognizing the inherent worth of nonhuman survival. From a profound ecological viewpoint, whales are not simply resources meant for human use or economic gain; they are sentient beings whose lives hold intrinsic worth. Snyder’s depiction of whales within the broader patterns of the Earth highlights the interdependence of all life forms and the necessity of preserving ecological harmony. The phrase “Flowing like breathing planets” depicts life as an element of a large and interlinked ecological network. The juxtaposition of living beings and planets blurs the strict lines separating individual organisms from the environment and implying that nonhuman entities are part of a collective planetary life. Also, the depiction of “the sparkling whorls / Of living light” conjures the beauty, energy, and intrinsic value of nature independent of its utility to humans. From a deep ecology standpoint, this perception enquiries the confidence that human interests should be prioritized over the presence of other species. The commercial exploitation of whales leads to ethical and ecological issues as it undermines the intrinsic worth of nonhuman life and interrupts the connections that support marine ecosystems. Finally, Snyder’s ecological perspective surpasses the safeguarding of nature for human advantage to acknowledge that whales and other nonhuman entities have their own inherent right to live and thrive. The poem expresses a profound ecological philosophy rooted in biocentric reverence, ecological interconnectedness, and the denial of human-centered supremacy over the planet. In the poem “Milton by Firelight” in *Riprap and Cold Mountain Poems*, highlighting practices of the wild and landscape. He says;

Fire down

Too dark to read, miles from a road

The bell-mare clangs in the meadow

That packed dirt for a fill-in

Scrambling through loose rocks

On an old trail

All of a summer's day. (31-7)

The above lines convey the concepts of deep ecology via the connection among human experience, nature, and the autonomous being of the environment. The lines imply place and position distanced from contemporary society, where folks face shadow, loneliness, and the boundaries of dependence on technology. The word “bell-mare” rings up

in the field and emphases the sounds of wildlife in the ecosystem. Snyder's mentioning of "packed dirt for a fill-in" suggests possible anthropological alteration of the landscape, while "loose rocks" and "old trail" illustrate the physical presence and material essence of the nonhuman surroundings. From a profound ecological viewpoint, these visuals confront the certainty that nature is solely for human benefit. The natural resources in the ecosystem such as the meadow, stones, shadows, and animal noises hold not just sense but means of transcending their practicality for humans. He also observes the disparity between a road-connected landscape and an ancient path that may also indicate the conflict between human alteration and direct interaction with nature. His exclusive deep ecological perspective emphasizes by acknowledging the inherent worth of nonhuman life and by signifying the ecological connections that regardless of human concerns. Snyder never treated that Nature is more than just a setting for human actions but it is a vibrant ecosystem where humans are involved as a component of a broader ecological network.

Therefore, Snyder's poetry embodies biocentrism by rejecting human supremacy and affirming the intrinsic worth of the ecosphere. Challenging anthropocentric exploitation, Snyder frames humanity as an equal participant within an interconnected community rather than its ruler. Key concepts such as bioregionalism and reinhabitation dismantle the human-nature divide, critiquing industrial civilizational priorities. In "The Call of the Wild," the endangered coyote reveals the destructive impact of human expansion, while "Mother Earth: Her Whales" uses cosmic imagery to highlight ecological interdependence. Ultimately, Snyder's poetry demands a fundamental shift in human consciousness: transitioning from viewing the Earth as property toward recognizing humanity's ethical membership in a vibrant, more-than-human world.

The account of ecological literary study illustrates the situation of isolating of ecosystem when it rejects the human supremacy. Unlike Romanticism, this study of sustained life is not constant process without the presence and pursuit of environment and consciously processes the course of wilderness and landscape. Mary Oliver, a poetess of natural phenomena, demonstrated the ecological network is/must be present rather than the human understanding. Oliver's "Spring Azures," the lines;

Well, who knows

Who knows what hung, fluttering, at the window

between him and the darkness (23-5)

these lines evoke mystery and the fragile boundary between human consciousness and the natural world. The image of "fluttering" suggests the delicate movement of a living creature, possibly a butterfly, while the word "the darkness" symbolizes uncertainty, vulnerability, or the unknown. The lines draw attention to the presence of nonhuman life beyond human understanding and challenges the assumption that nature exists only to serve human needs. The uncertain phrase "Who knows" acknowledges the limits of human knowledge and encourages humility towards the more-than-human world. Thus, Oliver's imagery highlights the mystery, independent existence, and intrinsic value of nature, inviting readers to respect what they cannot fully comprehend the natural phenomena. In "A Dream of Trees," Oliver conveys a profound purpose for a tranquil existence which linked to nature and removed from city life. The depiction of "trees," a "peaceful home," and a "humble green land" in the poem symbolizes ecological balance, simplicity, and a wish to exist within nature. The juxtaposition of the verdant scenery with "factories, schools, laments" implies a discontent with industrial growth, urban development, and the demands of contemporary society. The wish to reside "a short distance" from disturbing cities and industrial sites confronts a human-centered society that values progress and output more than environmental health. In the end, the poem portrays nature as a wellspring of connection and encouraging readers to reflect on the environmental price of contemporary society. Oliver's poem "Red Bird" illustrates biocentrism by honoring the inherent worth of a nonhuman agency and its ability to enhance the natural environment. In the poem,

I am thankful

That red bird appears throughout winter

Igniting the scenery

In a way that nothing else can" (15-8)

The red bird symbolizes life, beauty, and persistence in the desolation of winter. The expression of words "Firing up the landscape" in the poem implies that the bird's bright presence that alters the speaker's assessment of the surroundings, highlighting the ecological importance of even a tiny being. The poem portrays the bird not merely as a resource for humans but as a living entity whose presence merits recognition independently. Finally, Oliver fosters environmental consciousness by urging readers to acknowledge their relationship with the more-than-human realm and to nurture appreciation, mindfulness, and reverence for all types of existence.

Ecocritical literary writers offer complementary ecocritical bases that challenge anthropocentrism and affirm nonhuman intrinsic value. In Turtle Island, Snyder critiques human supremacy, framing ecological belonging

as an ethical imperative. Equally, Oliver fosters ecological consciousness through disciplined reflection and deep reverence for nature. Grounded in biocentrism and deep ecology, their poetry refutes human utility as the measure of nonhuman worth, reconceptualizing flora and fauna as an interconnected community rather than a commodity. Thus, ecocriticism neither flatly rejects Romanticism nor merely replicates its subjects. While Romanticism provides vital paradigms for emotional attachment and aesthetic sublimity, ecocriticism encompasses this inquiry into environmental ethics and material practice. Its defining movement transitions from inspiration to realization—shifting human perception from mastery to shared existence. Finally, ecocriticism re-situate humanity within a dynamic, more-than-human world governed by ecological humility, moral responsibility, and accountable coexistence. The introduction of the paper should explain the nature of the problem, previous work, purpose, and the contribution of the paper. The contents of each section may be provided to understand easily about the paper.

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