

The Ecological Paradigm and Human-Nature Interdependence: An Ecocritical and Dystopian Analysis of Literary Metaphor

Academic Research Article

Dr. Vadnala Jyothsna Devi

Abstract:

This article investigates the intricate, multi-layered dynamics governing human-nature relations through an interdisciplinary framework combining ecocriticism, Deep Ecology, ecofeminism, and dystopian literary analysis. Divided into explicit structural sections, the study begins by tracing the foundational environmental and ethical realities of ecosphere-human co-dependence. It then charts the critical paradigm shift in humanities toward an environmental interpretation, utilizing the philosophical coordinates of ecocentric metaphysics and gender-nature subjugation dualisms. By re-evaluating sustainable literary heritages—ranging from Romantic poetry to modern dystopian narratives like William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies' and George Orwell's 'Animal Farm'—this paper demonstrates how spatial isolation, ecological collapse, and political corruption intersect. Ultimately, the paper provides an integrated framework for an 'Ecological Vision,' framing literary criticism is not as a passive aesthetic exercise, but as an ethical imperative for planetary accountability.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Deep Ecology, Ecofeminism, Anthropocentrism, Dystopian Literature, Human-Nature Interdependence, Environmental Ethics.

1. Introduction: The Concept of Ecology and Human Relation

Nature operates as a dynamic ecosystem, embedding a vast number of living organisms and non-living components in a highly systematic, interrelated web essential for mutual existence. Within this system, a massive variety of living organisms depend entirely on ecosystems for survival, including sophisticated human civilizations; crucially, however, nature alone does not require reliance on human intervention. The foundational premise of ecological study emphasizes that human persistence is structurally inseparable from the ecosphere. From the ancient to the modern era, human societies have utilized all manner of abundant natural resources for ongoing existence: each and every drop of consumed water, the air breathed, and all minerals and physical assets are extracted straight away from the surrounding environment.

Over millions of years, evidence demonstrates that drastic evolutionary changes have occurred across ecological biomes and ecosystems, resulting in the extinction of many living beings and widespread physical, environmental variations on Earth. Archaeological evidence reinforces the realization that humans constitute an integrated, trival part of nature. Simultaneously, it is crystal clear that humanity has become the predominant living force on Earth, influencing the global environment across all metrics—resulting in the widespread loss of biodiversity, accelerated extinction of species, and systemic ecological

disruption. Although nature in its entirety possesses a persistent capacity to revamp and regenerate itself, intensifying human pressures trigger profound disruptions. In a research journal, Natalia Rios states that “In other words, there is no ‘saving nature’ because it is not nature that is in danger. Honestly acknowledging that humans are not essential to the functioning of nature could have important implications for modern legal systems”.⁽¹⁾

Large-scale climatic anomalies such as cyclones, tsunamis, and catastrophic wildfires profoundly affect both the biotic and abiotic environments. The key drivers of these contemporary natural calamities are traced directly to anthropocentric, man-made activities, including the high emission of greenhouse gases and the unmitigated release of industrial wastes. These practices induce global warming and the severe acidification of world oceans. Because nature and humanity cannot be isolated, the cascading consequences of human activity on delicate ecosystems yield profound, adverse impacts on global biodiversity. Cosmo politically, environmental issues have risen to a highly noticeable, prioritized position among populations, and a growing awareness of climate volatility is gradually forcing societies to adapt and implement ecofriendly methodologies. Ultimately, the concept of environmental ethics crystallizes this imperative, formalizing the precise structural and moral relationship between humanity and the Earth's biotic and physical configurations. In Sustainability, Collective Self-Regulation, and Human–Nature Interdependence article David K. , Yang Li Sewell assert that:

“Humanity faces twin challenges. On the one hand, we must adapt to the changing climate and ecosystem disturbances (IPCC, 2022)”.⁽²⁾

2. The Ecological Paradigm Shift in Literary Studies

Amidst an accelerating global ecological crisis characterized by climate volatility, habitat destruction, and systemic biodiversity loss, the humanities have experienced a critical, profound reorientation. This intellectual and pedagogical transformation crystallized into ecocriticism, a highly specialized and inherently interdisciplinary branch of cultural studies dedicated to investigating the intricate, reciprocal dynamics between literature and the physical environment. Human civilization is fundamentally unimaginable when isolated from its foundational botanical matrix. Consequently, ecocriticism functions not merely as an aesthetic appreciation of classical nature writing, but operates as a rigorous ideological critique. In Ecocriticism: An Essay , Nasirulla mambrol illustrates ecological literary texts as:

“This form of criticism has gained a lot of attention during recent years due to higher social emphasis on environmental destruction and increased technology. It is hence a fresh way of analyzing and interpreting literary texts, which brings new dimensions to the field of literary and theoretical studies. Ecocriticism is an intentionally broad approach that is known by a number of other designations, including “green (cultural) studies”, “ecopoetics”, and ‘environmental literary criticism’”.⁽³⁾

By evaluating how individuals and communities interpret, depict, and confront environmental degradation, ecocriticism introduces an explicitly earth-centered approach to literary interpretation, seeking to bridge the historical conceptual divide between human culture and ecological preservation. It systematically exposes and deconstructs the pervasive anthropocentric biases embedded within canonical and contemporary literature, evaluating whether specific textual representations actively challenge the structural exploitation of the non-human world. Creative narratives trace the intricate networks through which flora shapes daily lifestyles, architectural methodologies, localized mythologies, and the collective identity of communities living alongside nature.

3. Theoretical Coordinates: Deep Ecology and Ecofeminism

To fully comprehend the critical, transformative capacity of ecocriticism, it must be contextualized alongside major philosophical developments in contemporary ecology. Chief among these theoretical frameworks of Deep Ecology, which soundly rejects the utilitarian, resource-oriented view of nature in favor of an eco-centric metaphysics. This perspective attributes profound intrinsic value to all living entities, completely independent of their usefulness to human socio-economic projects. Within literary analysis, this philosophical coordinate allows scholars to decode narratives based on whether they treat nature to a passive, inert background for human drama, or portray the environment as an active, agentic participant in the shared narrative web.

Concurrently, ecofeminism provides a crucial critical lens by exposing the parallel, interlocking structures of domination that link the historic subjugation of women with the ongoing exploitation of the natural environment. Ecofeminist literary theory argues that patriarchal ideologies rely heavily on binary hierarchies—such as culture/nature, rational/emotional, and male/female—to justify the systematic mastery, containment, and commercialization of both the feminine and the ecological. By forcefully challenging these ingrained dualisms, ecofeminist readings uncover how literary works can dismantle exploitative, patriarchal socio-economic models, advocating instead for deeply relational, egalitarian, and socially just structures of ecological stewardship. In *Ecocriticism: An Essay* Nasirulla Mambrol illustrates deep ecology and ecofeminism as:

“Deep ecology and ecofeminism were two important developments. These new ideas questioned the notion of “development” and “modernity,” and argued that all Western notions in science, philosophy, politics were “anthropocentric” (human-centred) and “androcentric”(Man/male-centred). Technology, medical science with its animal testing, the cosmetic and fashion industry all came in for scrutiny from environmentalists. Deep ecology, for instance, stressed on a “biocentric” view ⁽⁴⁾

4. Sustainable Literature: Historical and Romantic Foundations

The literary lineage of environmental consciousness is rooted deeply in historic texts, arising as a direct cultural counter-response to the aggressive mechanics of human industrial revolutions against the natural world. For instance, William Wordsworth, a prominent Romantic poet, explores human-nature reciprocity with immense depth. In 'Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey,' Wordsworth rejects the rigid Enlightenment view of nature as a mere machine to be mastered and commodified. Instead, he presents the natural world as an essential, living spiritual partner, demonstrating that human psychological wholeness and emotional stability are irrevocably tied to the preservation of organic, unaltered landscapes. His verses establish an early, vital ecological ethic, emphasizing that human experience is fundamentally incomplete and alienated when severed from organic environments. He described nature in lyrical ballads as :

Once again

Do I behold these steep and lofty cliffs, That on a wild secluded scene impress Thoughts of more deep seclusion; and connect The landscape with the quiet of the sky. The day is come when I again repose Here, under this dark sycamore, and view These plots of cottage-ground, these orchard-tufts, Which at this season, with their unripe fruits, Are clad in one green hue, and lose themselves 'Mid groves and copses. ⁽⁵⁾

Similarly, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poetry directly addresses the ethical and moral boundaries governing humanity's interactions with the non-human realm. In 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner,' the arbitrary, unprovoked slaughter of the albatross serves as a profound allegory for humanity's destructive

transgression against the cosmic, ecological order. Coleridge explicitly critiques the violent impulses of human hubris, mapping out the severe psychological devastation and spiritual alienation that inevitably follow the disruption of environmental balance. Through the Mariner's eventual redemption—achieved exclusively when he spontaneously and unbidden blesses the ocean's living creatures—the poem operates as an early, powerful argument for environmental ethics, long-term sustainability, and a reverent, protective stewardship toward all living entities.

Is this the man? By him who died on cross, With his cruel bow he laid full low The harmless Albatross. The spirit who bideth by himself In the land of mist and snow, He loved the bird that loved the man Who shot him with his bow.' he other was a softer voice, As soft as honey-dew: Quoth he, 'The man hath penance done, And penance more will do.'⁽⁶⁾

5. The Dystopian Anatomy of Ecological and Social Collapse

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, the speculative, prophetic apprehensions of the Romantics materialized into urgent, material planetary crises, fundamentally transforming the nature and urgency of environmental literature. Modern narratives transition from romantic reciprocity into severe dystopian warnings, utilizing isolated settings to demonstrate how rapidly human societies and internal morality collapse into tyranny, behavioral decay, and structural violence when environmental and institutional frameworks are dissolved.

William Golding's 'Lord of the Flies': Atavistic Breakdown and Environmental Oppression

William Golding, in his novel 'Lord of the Flies,' uses a wild, unregulated tropical island setting to show psychological breakdown and primitive behavioral decay. This specific geographic isolation removes all external societal pressures and legal frameworks, creating a closed behavioral vacuum. The island's terrain and natural features divide cleanly along ideological lines: the stable beach platform represents democracy, assembly, and rational order, while the volcanic castle rock represents military dictatorship and primal regression. Golding weaves climatic oppression directly into the narrative; the intense tropical heat, blinding sunlight, and violent storms mirror the psychological deterioration and rising hostility of the stranded boys. Golding explicated the tropical island profusely as:

"The shore was fledged with palm trees. These stood or leaned or reclined against the light and their green feathers were a hundred feet up in the air. The ground beneath them was a bank covered with coarse grass, torn everywhere by the upheavals of fallen trees, scattered with decaying coconuts and palm saplings. Behind this was the darkness of the forest proper and the open space of the scar. Ralph stood, one hand against a grey trunk, and screwed up his eyes against the shimmering water."⁽⁷⁾

Furthermore, the untamed jungle core provides immediate, effortless sustenance through abundant fruit, which ironically removes the immediate, structural need for an organized, cooperative economy—thereby accelerating the boys' rapid collapse into tribalism and savagery. The breakdown is further externalized through the systematic destruction of key characters who embody civilizational principles: Piggy represents empiricism, the scientific method, and Enlightenment values, meaning his physical vulnerabilities and eventual brutal murder symbolize the total destruction of reason by primitive, unchecked force. Conversely, Jack Merridew explicitly rejects democratic systems in favor of military tribalism, weaponizing hunting rituals and survival anxieties to establish absolute, tyrannical authority. Roger represents institutionalized cruelty operating entirely devoid of legal boundaries, utilizing the island's natural debris—such as massive volcanic boulders—as direct instruments to execute state violence and enforce compliance.

George Orwell's 'Animal Farm': Spatial Isolation and the Architecture of Totalitarianism

In a parallel allegorical manner, George Orwell's 'Animal Farm' explores political corruption and totalitarianism within a fenced, agricultural property. This contained geographic space serves as a closed political and economic ecosystem. The physical infrastructure of the farm transforms directly into an instrument of state power and ideological manipulation. Specifically, the barn wall functions as a public canvas for shifting state ideology, where the ruling elite physically alters the fundamental Seven Commandments to prove that whoever controls the present also controls the past, executing a total erasure of historical truth.

“But is this simply part of the order of nature? Is it because this land of ours is so poor that it cannot afford a decent life to those who dwell upon it? No, comrades, a thousand times no! The soil of England is fertile, its climate is good, it is capable of affording food in abundance to an enormously greater number of animals than now inhabit it. This single farm of ours would support a dozen horses, twenty cows, hundreds of sheep - and all of them living in a comfort and a dignity that are now almost beyond our imagining. Why then do we continue in this miserable condition? Because nearly the whole of the produce of our labour is stolen from us by human beings.”⁽⁸⁾

Resource exploitation is materialized through the continuous windmill project, representing industrial advancement and economic distraction; the grueling physical labor required to construct it deliberately exhausts the populace, successfully preventing political resistance. Finally, the domestic farmhouse establishes a rigid, spatial class hierarchy. Snowball represents progressive planning, technological advancement, and theoretical ideology, whose forced exile symbolizes the total erasure of intellectual debate. Napoleon employs ruthless political strategies, physical intimidation, and structural corruption to centralize executive power, as the physical mechanism of state violence to suppress dissent through terror. By moving inside the human quarters, the ruling elite physically and socially detach themselves from the working class, consolidating a two-tiered caste system and seizing absolute control of the food supply. Within this closed ecosystem, characters align with specialized political functions:

The Dystopian Anatomy of *Animal Farm*

From a dystopian perspective, *Animal Farm* is a study in totalitarian state-building and the death of an ideology. It illustrates how a utopian dream can be systematically hijacked to create an oppressive political state. The novel features a classic dystopian trope: the citizens believe they are living in a liberated paradise while their rights are actively stripped away. The illusion keeps them compliant. Napoleon uses his trained canine force as a secret police network. The constant presence of these predators creates an atmosphere of fear, paranoia, and self-censorship among the animals. A core element of dystopian fiction is the manipulation of truth. By physically altering the Seven Commandments on the barn wall, the regime proves that whoever controls the present also controls the past. Sabina Cowen, in Triple C's Book Review opines on: *Animal Farm* by George Orwell that:

“George Orwell, renowned for his contributions to dystopian fiction, imbues his texts with an air of “what if?” throughout most of them. It is no different with *Animal Farm*. When I first encountered *Animal Farm* on a bookshelf, a vibrant pink swine-reared cover staring back at me, I simply picked it up based on the author. Frankly, I had zero clue what it was about, just that it had something to do with animals. But Orwell's reputation for symbolism-heavy prose suggested something dense, distant, and designed more for analysis than enjoyment.”⁽⁹⁾

The Dystopian Anatomy of *Lord of the Flies*:

From a dystopian perspective, *Lord of the Flies* explores **atavistic breakdown** and behavioral decay.

Instead of a powerful government crushing the citizens, this dystopia forms because there is no government at all, proving that human nature can create its own hell. The island starts as an idealized republic governed by the conch shell. Jack establishes a totalitarian regime by capitalizing on a manufactured threat: "The Beast." In dystopian fashion, the citizens willingly surrender their personal freedoms to a dictator in exchange for protection from an imaginary monster. As the boys join Jack's tribe, they paint their faces. This mask removes their individual identities and morality, transforming them into a uniform, unthinking mob that carries out state-sanctioned violence. The deliberate murder of Piggy and the destruction of his glasses represent the ultimate dystopian victory: the total elimination of science, logic, and rational thought. One of the literary review states about the novel as:

"Lord of the Flies is a dramatic investigation of civilization, morality, and humanity's inherent dark side".⁽¹⁰⁾

Both *Animal Farm* and *Lord of the Flies* use isolated settings to explore how easily human societies collapse into tyranny and violence.

6. Man-Nature Interdependence: Biophysical Realities and Disruptions

The interconnectedness of the environment and humanity represents a gentle, invariable co-relation. Mankind relies wholly on the Earth for biophysical survival, evolutionary fitness, and financial steadiness; in turn, the conservation of natural resources and ecosystems relies heavily on human stewardship, diligence, and careful management to maintain structural balance. Real sustainability lies in coordinating these elements in a supportive delivery bond, ensuring that both the biosphere and humanity blossom simultaneously. Mirjam Degroot, in his research on Humans and Nature Public visions on their interrelationship ensures that

"A hermeneutical approach to environmental ethics would try to articulate moral ideas by interpreting the meaning of practices, moral intuitions and experiences that are part of collectively shared notions and meanings. By articulating and explicating the moral meanings and intuitions that play a part in public life, hermeneutics can help strengthen the socio-cultural fabric that not only enables individuals to form their moral intuitions, but also helps them to live out these ideas in their practices. Instead of starting with abstract moral ideas, which are the result of often poorly understood theoretical discourses, a hermeneutical ethics aims to re-interpret the meanings that, to some degree, already structure our actual practices".⁽¹¹⁾

The essential illustration of this interdependence is found in the basic photosynthetic and respiration processes of living organisms, where oxygen released by flora is consumed by fauna, and carbon dioxide exhaled by fauna is absorbed by flora. The presence of abundant forests, healthy oceans, and diverse plant life maintains the atmospheric balance of oxygen, preventing the deterioration of human existence.

Similarly, the hydrological water cycle purifies and penetrates water globally through continuous evaporation, condensation, and precipitation. Natural forests and wetlands within these ecosystems serve as intrinsic filtration methods, enabling rivers, lakes, and aquifers to resume their originality and remain secure for consumption. However, when human societies degrade these natural phenomena in the unmitigated pursuit of industrial civilization—characterized by massive deforestation and unplanned urbanization—the water cycle is severely disrupted, leading directly to catastrophic impacts such as prolonged droughts, violent floods, and acute water scarcity.

This interdependence extends directly into modern pharmacology and agricultural stability. A vast array of life-saving drugs—ranging from simple aspirin to highly complex cancer treatments—are derived

directly from herbs, fungi, and marine organisms. Furthermore, global agricultural systems depend fundamentally on complex soil microorganisms and natural pollinators, such as insects, bees, butterflies, and birds, to successfully reproduce. The absence or decline of these critical pollinators alters the structural durability of the soil and diminishes global food production, directly threatening the survival security of billions of citizens globally. In an article on Fundamentals of Environmental Science and Ecology; Esade's environmental scholars argues that

“The current geological epoch – the **Anthropocene** – is defined precisely by this disruption: human activity has become a planetary-scale force, altering climate, biodiversity, and the chemistry of oceans and atmosphere”.⁽¹²⁾

The Role of Ecosystem Disruption

Due to the systemic overexploitation of natural resources driven by anthropogenic activities—such as massive deforestation, intensive overfishing, and the uncontrolled release of chemical pollution from industrial complexes—the inheritance and resilience of world ecosystems face severe destruction. This sharp declination triggers gushing, interconnected failures, most notably the accelerated propagation of zoonotic diseases, widespread soil deterioration, and the rapid acceleration of global warming. These outcomes vividly explicit that when nature is compromised, it directly destabilizes human wellness, socioeconomic security, and civilizational survival.

The broader climatic conditions of the Earth are held constant by complex, deeply interconnected biomes. Forests, peatlands, and global oceans act as critical carbon sinks, assimilating billion tons of greenhouse gases annually and significantly reducing the severe impacts of climatic volatility. If these regulatory biomes are disturbed or cleared, a direct threat is leveled against human safety, physical properties, and global economic stability. Rapid technological developments, exploding populations, extensive agricultural clearings, the burning of fossil fuels, and the unmitigated pollution of air and water converge toward drastic anthropogenic climatic changes. This enormous exploitation of natural assets systematically degrade the ability of nature to naturally regenerate, resulting in an absolute imbalance, the degeneration of many species, and the fracturing of the ecological equilibrium upon which humanity depends. In an article on Fundamentals of Environmental Science and Ecology; an ecologist Aldo Leopold articulated that

“The proper role of humanity is not as conqueror of the natural world but as a member of the broader biotic community – one species among many, with responsibilities that extend beyond narrow human interests. This ethical reorientation, grounded in ecological science, is perhaps the most important adaptation humans now need to make”.⁽¹³⁾

7. The Imperative for Conservation, Sustainability, and Environmental Ethics

Mitigating these multi-layered crises demands an immediate shift toward rigorous conservation methods and comprehensive environmental ethics. Protecting marine and terrestrial regions, renovating severely diminished landscapes, and executing the systemic restoration of wetlands assist significantly in the re-establishment and preservation of biodiversity. This reinforces long-term ecosystem sustainability, securing a harmonious co-existence between humanity and the environment. By establishing proper coordination and restrictive economic planning activities that operate strictly within defined ecological limits, global societies can mitigate environmental issues thorough rehabilitation of degraded biodiversity. In this paradigm, every individual across world societies is responsible for playing an active, transformative role.

Crucially, humanity must shift its foundational focus away from the historical, anthropocentric bias that positions nature as an external entity, existing solely to be subjugated, commodified, and exploited. Instead, communities must adhere to an eco-centric worldview that fully recognizes the inherent, sacred values of all living beings. Only when we accept the environment as a pivotal, inseparable partner in our survival rather than an exploitable element, can safeguard biomes and permanent retention of the environment take place. In an article on Fundamentals of Environmental Science and Ecology; a research from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology confirms that

“Human adaptation to novel environments is a complex interplay between genetic change and cultural innovation – and that cultural adaptation can occur far faster than biological evolution”.⁽¹⁴⁾

The interdependence of human beings with the environment is an inevitable, multifaceted reality. Mankind depends wholly on the natural world for their survival, economic prosperity, and psychological well-being. In return, ecosystems rely on human stewardship, diligence and careful management to maintain their balance. Recognizing this multi-faceted reality, many nations contribute to the welfare of the planet through the implementation of binding international environmental agreements, such as

“The Kyoto Protocol, The Montreal Protocol-1989, The Convention on Biological Diversity-1992, The Convention for the Protection and Development of the Marine Environment, Paris-1992, and The Convention on the Protection and Use of Transboundary Watercourses and International Lakes, Helsinki-1992”.⁽¹⁵⁾

8. Conclusion: Framework for an Integrated Ecological Vision

Ultimately, the preservation and conservation of the Earth represent not only the most fundamental requirement of human life, but it is completely essential for long-term human survival and existential continuity. Re-establishing a profound relationship with the environment demands deploying technology ethically, respecting baseline ecological limits, and executing sustainable practices which are mandatory to restore damaged biomes. This restoration contains an indispensable spiritual dimension: a deep spiritual connection with nature fosters heightened self-awareness and a state of holistic belongingness, motivating a clear moral and ethical responsibility to protect the environment for generations to come. In an article on Fundamentals of Environmental Science and Ecology; a research from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Anthropology frames that

“Through the lens of a “new ecology” that recognizes human societies and natural systems as deeply intertwined, with feedback loops running in both directions. We shape ecosystems; ecosystems shape us”.⁽¹⁶⁾

By drawing vegetation and the wider non-human world directly into human moral discourse, industrial practices like tree-felling are repositioned not merely as economic or resource deficits, but as a severe existential and moral rupture of a sacred, codependent bond. Therefore, contemporary literary criticism must operate through an integrated 'Ecological Vision.' This advanced methodology demands a complete departure from classic anthropocentrism, repositions humans as equal participants within a complex web of life, and expands moral philosophy to fully recognize non-animal organisms. By generating vivid emotional and cognitive connections to the botanical and physical landscape, literature and its critique serve as indispensable catalysts for grassroots conservation and ethical planetary accountability.

The widespread destruction of our planetary life-support systems forces a fundamental reassessment of our narrative responsibilities. Engaging with literature is no longer a passive aesthetic exercise; it is an urgent call to reconstruct our moral kinship with the living earth.

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