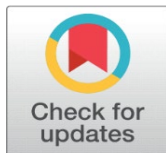
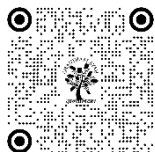


THE AMALGAMATION OF HUMAN AND NATURAL WORLD: A STUDY OF DELIA OWENS' NOVEL *WHERE THE CRAWDADS SING*

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ABSTRACT

In the times of digital world, people tie their relationships with technologies and untie their relationships with natural world. It leads humans to despair and lose their peace of mind. So, people are slowly starting to search for their peace and find solace in natural world which consists of both the living and nonliving things as they are understood to be trustworthy than people and it heals the human psyche and body in an optimistic facet. This scenario is well depicted in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. This paper focuses on the protagonist's endeavor in overcoming humiliation, disappointment, challenges, obstacles with the synthesis of ecology and finds comfort in the mother Nature. And also, it explores how the study of ecopsychology aids to create an affinity between human and nature which results in healthy life.

Keywords: Digital World, Natural World, Human Psyche, Solace and Ecopsychology

1. INTRODUCTION

Ecocriticism is an umbrella term which deals with several approaches, ideas, concepts, theories, fields etc. It is an interdisciplinary study that deals with literature and ecology. It was first originated as an idea called "literary ecology" by Joseph Meeker in his work *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* in 1972. But the term "ecocriticism" was coined by William Rueckert in his essay *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism* in 1978, in which he applied ecology and ecological concepts in literature. And also, an American literary critic Lawrence

Buell defines ecocriticism as an “increasingly heterogeneous movement” that takes an earth-centered approach (1). Moreover, in 1996, Cheryll Glotfelty, a co-founder of ASLE and the first professor of literature and environment in the United States says that ecocriticism is a fusion of literature and external surroundings. In this broad area, ecopsychology is one of the fields that approaches the environment and human psychology exclusively. [Bhandari \(2022\)](#)

Ecopsychology is an emerging field which has sprouted in 20th century by the psychologist Sigmund Freud and the professor Robert Greenway. But later, the professor cum historian Theodore Roszak coined the term “ecopsychology” in his book *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology* in 1992 even though this term was introduced and used by a group of psychologists and environmentalists formerly. It is an interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary field that sheds light on the fusion of ecology and psychology and also promotes the sustainability of self. It helps in understanding and building the harmonious relationship between human and nature by diagnosing the problem and suggesting successful pathways to healing. “It is also described as a marriage between psychology and ecology in the early 1960s by Greenway”. This paper analyses the meaningful relationship between human and nature and also shows how the protagonist shines as a star in the society when united with the ecology. [Bildungsroman \(2022\)](#), [Cheryll \(n.d.\)](#), [Delia \(n.d.\)](#).

“Bildungsroman” is one of the notable literary genres originated in Germany and also referred as coming-of-age novels in English Literature which was coined by a philologist Karl Morgenstern in 1819 and was popularized by Wilhelm Dilthey in 1870. It is an amalgam of two German words *bildungs* and *roman* which means education and novel. This genre focuses on the emotional transformation and the ethical growth of a central character from childhood to adulthood. Generally, the plot starts with a loss that haunts the main character emotionally and he continues to lead the life by confronting the countless consequences every day and night to acquire the real meaning of life with self-confidence. During this period, the protagonist gains his maturity and learn the lessons that the life teaches and lastly fly in the society as a colourful butterfly with beautiful wings. As such, the debut novel by the American author Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* is a genre of bildungsroman but merged with mystery and it won the best sellers award in 2019 and 2020. She also received many awards for her nature writings. The author as a zoologist and a nature lover has illustrated the flora and fauna of the marsh and its surroundings to intensify the relationship of the human beings with them.

2. OBJECTIVES

- 1) To analyze the importance of human and nature relationship.
- 2) To strengthen the people's emotional bond with the natural world.
- 3) To understand the interconnectedness of human life with ecosystem that results in sustainable life-style.

The novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* depicts the six-year-old protagonist Kya's wild and lonely life in the marsh of North Carolina. At first the child is left alone by her mother, later siblings and finally by her father at the age of ten in the woods and water. Her drunkard father is a soul reason for the family to get dissolved as he possesses the habit of abusing his wife and children when he consumes alcohol. Since it spoils the tranquillity of everyone's mind, they scatter like autumn leaves. Everyone wanted to escape from his violence, so they left the family leaving Kya with

her father and she is being unaware of happenings around her in that budding age continued to live with him. As years passed, she realizes that all chose their own path to live their harmonious life in another place. Though Kya remains in marshland she finds a hale and healthy life with nature: sea, waves, sand, sky, frogs, sea gulls, moon, and trees which she considers as her own family members. The unification and emotional bond of the protagonist with the natural world makes her realize nature is her real mother, friend, tutor, and nurturer that embraces and wipes her tears in hard times and pats her shoulder in happy times. Her synthesis with the milieu of the marshland vanishes her desolations and benefits to live an ecologically harmonious and sustainable life. [Diane Barth \(2017\)](#), [Ecocriticism \(2022\)](#), [Ecopsychology \(2022\)](#).

3. LITERARY SURVEY

There are a number of literary reviews are done to this novel from the perception of transpersonal ecopsychology, ecological allegory and imagery and so on. A research article, published in *Essays & studies* analyzed "An ecological allegory in the novel of Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*" by Marianne Kimura. It dealt with the author's ecological concerns and ideas as chief in this paper, that is an intricate allegory that depicts two ecological interactions between mankind and nature. [Fromm and Glotfelty \(1996\)](#), [George \(1788-1824\)](#), [Graham \(2020\)](#).

Another research article, published in *SoCul: International Journal of Research in Social Cultural Issues* "Struggle as Seen in Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing*" by Fionny I Gustaman and Imelda S. Lolowang had analyzed the protagonist's various forms of struggles such as accepting the facts of life, achieving the goals, and getting the affection. But this paper differs from the above insights. As it is mainly focuses on amalgamation of the principles used in ecology and psychology under the umbrella term of ecocriticism. To support this study, the researcher applies the concepts, ideas, approaches used in the above field. It explores the protagonists inner and outer problems which affect her tranquility. Consequently, affinity with nature supports to overcome her difficulties and also to live her life emotionally sustainable. Roszak clarifies his view in *The Voice of the Earth: An Exploration of Ecopsychology* in his 1992 book that how mutual relationship between the human and the natural world helps in understanding the self and also the external world.

4. METHODOLOGY

The method of this study is qualitative research which means collecting and analyzing non-numerical data; words, quotation, proverbs, observation, definition, dialogues, and proverbs instead of using numerical data such as tables, numbers, figures, calculation etc. According to Creswell, qualitative research is defined as the method of understanding the problems of society and people that based on creating a difficult and complete picture, words, formants and conducted in an ordinary setting. And also, Yilmaz is defined that qualitative research is an emerging, explanatory and naturalistic approach to the study of the society and its social situations which happens in natural background. Both of these definitions clearly depict the similar meanings of the qualitative research. According to the preceding assertions, the researcher should collect data from various pathways. [Gustaman and Lolowang \(2022\)](#), [Henry Reed Quotes \(n.d.\)](#), [Holmstedt \(2021\)](#), [IPL \(n.d.\)](#), [Karine Aigner \(2020\)](#)

The research methodology of the present study would be textual analysis of Delia Owens' *Where the Crawdads Sing* from Eco psychological point of view and for

this purpose the researcher collected data from libraries and internet sources. In addition, the published articles were also referred. Furthermore, the study was navigated through the analysis of the text with the perspective of green studies.

The primary source is the text of the novel named *Where the Crawdads Sing* by Delia Owens. The articles, journals, books, and online sources are used as the secondary sources in this research. Klein (2005), Mambrol (2018), Meeker (1972).

5. DISCUSSION

A child's development depends on its parents, siblings, friends, teachers, school, society etc. If a child lacks love, care, support from anyone, it has to face various difficulties such as physical, mental, cognitive etc. And also, a child tends to have lower in self-esteem, self-confidence, motivation, courage etc. In addition to that, society gives pressure when a person lives his life as unaccompanied. Similarly, the protagonist of the novel encounters numerous problems; loneliness, disappointment, humiliation, betrayal, search for identity, lack of economical and moral support when all of her family members abandoned her in the lonely marshland. At first, when her loveable mother left, she becomes puzzled, disappointed and feels isolated which results in lose her peace of mind. The bitter-sweet memories of her mother haunt her mind and become emotionally traumatized and she searches for her mother's return throughout the day like a child and its mind always wants and searches for its mother's presence inherently. But the mother of Kya, never returns to marsh till the end of the novel. "Her face was still, her lips a simple thin line under searching eyes. But Ma didn't come back that day either" (11). Nasrullah (2022)

Another disappointment is encountered by her that her siblings who move away from the marsh because their brutal father shouts and punches them violently. Because, her father feels failure of getting an honourable discharge from the army due to injurious on leg when he fought in World War II which is the root cause for her father's anger and violent behaviour. And after a few years, her careless father also left her unattended in the marsh. And now, she thinks everyone is left and everything is lost: she no longer receives any kind of affection. Being an abandoned child, she is unaware of what to do further and needs some souls to share and bear her feelings. It breaks her heart and thinks of how her life will be without her siblings' love and care and even the irregular presence of her unloving father.

The abandoned girl decides to live and survive the world all alone in her shack of marshland where no provisions are available for the further living. So, she walks towards the town named Barkley Cove, a few miles from marshland, to purchase her groceries. People in the village mock her by seeing her wild appearance and nicknamed her as marsh girl and swamp trash. In the supermarket, she feels sheepish and humiliated by the cashier named Mrs. Singletary due to the ignorant of counting numbers, dollars and even not heard the names of many grocery items. It makes her to flee Marshland with eyes full of tears and heartfelt of heaviness.

The struggle of life between marsh and town gears up worse even more when the truant officer from Barkley Cove catches Kya to admit in school which is divided for two racisms; white and black people. Even though it is totally different and new to her knowledge, she is admitted in school meant for whites as she is born to white parents. As a new comer, she is asked to introduce herself first and question to spell out the word for dog. She introduces herself by telling her full name that Catherine Danielle Clark but not able to spell out the correct word for dog. Instead, she spells the word: g-o-d by recollecting the letters which once taught by her Ma and Jodie.

Everybody in the class laugh at her ignorance, teases her and her attire as well. And this humiliation results her in tears. So, her mind is emotionally constipated, and it needs to be free from the toxic. Therefore, she flees to her shack from the school as she felt helpless, confused, and wiped out in the society. According to Klein, a person who felt humiliated is defined as puzzled, disappointed, abandoned and fury. As, the experience he faces remain as a scar in his mind that never be eradicated in any situation.

Kya experiences psychological distress from her childhood to adulthood. When she becomes an adult, the situation and the problems are changed differently according to her age. A boy named Tate Walker becomes her friend, lover, and life partner in the end of the novel but in the beginning of their relationship, he loved and betrayed her for his career. And another boy named Chase Andrews also betrayed and try to abuse her sexually in the marshland. As she yearns for love, she likes to have a good relationship with him, but everything is collapsed with the thirst of his sexual desire. When she is aware of his conspiracy, she becomes furious and murdered him in the fire tower. Her mental distress lashes out to assassinate a person who is deceitful. Later, she understands that everybody in her life has emotionally abused her, and her life is filled with challenges and obstacles without her family members and also without a trustworthy in the society.

The amalgamation of Human's life and natural world pacts in the view of eco-literature in which the emotional connection with the ecosystem develops a harmonious relationship of living and non-living beings. And it transforms people's perception towards the natural world positively. According to Henry Reed, "All human beings are interconnected, one with all other elements in creation". Likewise, the protagonist unites with the environment in the marsh and finds comfort in the presence of sea when her mother left her alone in the land which shows in the line "Later, near sunset, Jodie found Kya on the beach staring at the sea" (13). To overcome solitude and uncertainty, she passages to beach in the evening at the time of sunset which makes her understand that her glitches and miserable feelings will disappear in the dusk like the sun slowly disappears into sea. It also says that she walks towards the sea without her knowledge and sits on the beach gazing at the sea in the evening. She notices that it looks very calm and silent, not showing its inner feelings explicitly. By seeing this tranquillity of sea, she comes to learn more about life that needs self-control and patience which support to stable her inner harmony of mind. It teaches to control her feelings in unpleasant situations and helps to take up a rightful decision in a puzzled state as well. [Owens \(2018\)](#)

When she is humiliated, abused, and betrayed by the townspeople, schoolmates and the two boys, she remembers her brother's word "Kya, ya be careful, hear. If anybody comes, don't go in the house. They can get ya there. Run deep in the marsh, hide in the bushes. Always cover yo' tracks: I learned ya how. And ya can hide from Pa, too" (13). His words depict that marshland is her only protector that watches like a guardian-angel to safeguard her innocent life from hazards and evildoers. She realizes that intersection between mankind and the environment are important in every human's life and recognizes that marsh is her only lifesaver and savior, where she can run and hide herself into the bushes like chicks hide themselves inside the wings of mother hen to flee from the predators like eagle, owls and snacks etc. She gets relief in marshland which hugs her in pitiable situation as all mother does. It shows that whenever she is in need of her mother to share her miserable feelings, she finds only marshland as her mother to share all. And, it transforms a person's characteristics of pessimism into optimism.

When she is in distress or glad in her life, she runs to the shore to share her thoughts and feelings to get healing. According to Kowsalpathy Saravanan, happiness will be multiplied when we share it with other people and also sorrow will be decreased when we share it with other people. Kya knows that "When no one came, she got the pot of grits and walked through the woods to the seashore. Hands to her mouth, she held her head and called, "'kee-ow, kee-ow, kee-ow" (21). It shows that she wants to share her feelings with seagulls. When she calls it out loudly, number of birds come to the shore especially a large sea gull arrives down and sits near Kya on the sand. She says to the seagulls, "it's my birthday, she told the bird" (21). With a heavy heart and rolling tears, she tells the bird, today is her birthday. This shows that she has an unfathomable connection with nature which always gives its shoulder to dismiss her from disappointment and longingness.

And also, as an independent girl, she rules her own world alone in the sea. Her actions resemble that a chick breaks out its shell to see and conquer the new world. In addition to that, she conquers like Shakespearean character Julius Caesar, as a military general, conquered an area immediately after seeing it for the time. He says, "I came, I saw; I conquered." (Shakespeare, 1599). This phrase suits her well as she conquers her life all alone in the woods and water. Therefore, when a man befriends with nature, he can achieve anything in his life and nobody in this world is orphan if we are united with the ecosphere. [Roszak \(1993\)](#).

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, Literature can be studied from the perspective of green studies. The unification of human and natural world is significant in this digital era. Man should be united with his environment and all other living and non-living beings is clearly understood through the protagonist of this novel. And also, the way she approaches the natural world results in harmony and strengthens her emotional thinking and makes her to realize human and natural world are one among the universes. Thus, the union with nature helps her to forget her agony like rejection, awkwardness, ignorance, unfaithfulness, and mortification etc. "[Veni \(2022\)](#).

According to the poet Lord Byron, the poem lines from *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* is obviously supported for the conclusion of this paper. He said,

"There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
There is society where none intrudes,
By the deep sea, and music in its roar:

I love not man the less, but Nature more.... (Byron, CLXXVIII).

Therefore, the relationship with nature frees her mental turmoil and supports to sail further in her enigmatic life. And, it demonstrates nature as a redeemer who redeems and provide redemption from her sadness and to conclude, every human being should love all other beings that reinforces the value of ecocentrism in every person. The finding of the paper is the synthesis of human-nature tie-up results in sustainable lifestyle and nature-centered as well.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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