

## **Ecological and Mythical Awareness in**

**Joy Harjo's Selected Poems**

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### **Abstract:**

As a member of the indigenous society of Native Americans, Joy Harjo, the American poet who excelled in representing her consciousness about life, people, humanity, and nature, urged for a genuine connection among all these. This paper pinpoints the ecological assets along with the mythical indices that Harjo employed in her poetry. To prove her poetic skillfulness through her aesthetic and artistic techniques, the poet used vivid images from nature and other creatures to show the urge for a harmonious existence of almost all creatures on earth. Being Native American, Harjo utilises mythical elements in her poetry to sustain her ideas and attitudes. The ecocritical analysis approach is used in this paper to accentuate the role of myth and environmental elements in making her optimal image of the ideal existence to mankind and other entities of nature.

Keywords: (Ecocriticim, Joy Harjo, Myth, Nature).

## الوعي البيئي والأسطوري في قصائد جوي هارجو المختارة

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### الملخص:

باعتبارها عضواً في مجتمع السكان الأصليين الامريكيين ، حثت جوي هارجو، الشاعرة الأمريكية التي برعت في تمثيل وعيها بالحياة والناس والإنسانية والطبيعة، على وجود علاقة حقيقية بين كل هؤلاء. تحدد هذه الورقة الأصول البيئية إلى جانب المؤشرات الأسطورية التي وظفتها هارجو في شعرها. ولإثبات براعتها الشعرية من خلال تقنياتها الجمالية والفنية، استخدمت الشاعرة صوراً حية من الطبيعة والمخلوقات الأخرى لإظهار الرغبة في وجود متناغم لجميع المخلوقات على وجه الأرض تقريباً. كونها أمريكية أصلية تستخدم هارجو العناصر الأسطورية في شعرها لدعم أفكارها ومواقفها. يُستخدم المنهج النقدي البيئي في التحليل في هذه الورقة لإبراز دور الأسطورة والعناصر البيئية في صنع صورتها المثالية للوجود المثالي للبشرية والكيانات الأخرى في الطبيعة. الكلمات المفتاحية: (النقد الإيكولوجي، جوي هارجو، الأسطورة، الطبيعة).

### Introduction

The relationship between literature and academic fields, like ecocriticism, is growing more significantly. Ecocriticism, specifically, aims to highlight the interconnectedness between nature and all of humanity. Its main purpose is to discuss the connection between the natural world and human beings. This issue has resulted "in an understanding of natural environments and human cultures as constantly influencing and constructing each other" (Gersdorf & Mayer, 2006, p. 91). Consequently, many ecocritics in the world have been trying to fill the existing gap in this relationship.

In Joy Harjo's selected poems, she presents a captivating exploration of ecological and mythical themes, creating a rich tapestry of interconnectedness between humanity, nature, and spirituality. As an influential Native American poet and musician, Harjo combines her unique perspective as a member of the Muscogee Creek Nation with an acute awareness of environmental concerns and indigenous mythology. Her evocative verses transport readers to a world where the natural and spiritual realms intertwine, compelling us to reconsider our place within the more excellent web of existence (Hussain, 2000, pp. 27-61).

Harjo's poetry serves as a powerful vehicle for expressing ecological consciousness. Through her intimate connections with the natural world and thoughtful observations of its wonders, she illuminates the urgent need for humans to develop a more profound reverence for the Earth. In her verse, she intertwines personal experiences with broader ecological concerns, showing the interconnectedness between our lives and the delicate balance of the ecosystems that sustain us all. Through this ecological awareness, Harjo challenges readers to reevaluate their relationship with the environment and recognise our actions' immense impact on the planet.

Furthermore, Harjo draws inspiration from tribal mythology and oral traditions, infusing her poems with a mythical awareness that taps into the ancient wisdom and spirituality of her Native American heritage. These mythological elements add a layer of deep symbolism and cultural significance to her work, creating a bridge between the present and the

ancestral realm. Harjo's poems blend contemporary realities with mythical allegories, resulting in a profound exploration of identity, spirituality, and the interconnectedness of all beings (Stone, 2006).

This paper aims to study Harjo's selected poems' ecological and mythical dimensions, analysing how she incorporates these themes and their implications for societal and personal transformation. By examining several of her poems, the study will explore how Harjo's unique blend of ecological and mythical awareness allows her to encapsulate our natural world's beauty, spirituality, and underlying fragility.

### **Definitions of Key Terms**

**Ecocriticism:** Ecocriticism is a literary and cultural theory examining nature's representation and interpretation in literature and other cultural works. It focuses on how humans perceive, value, and interact with the natural environment through various forms of cultural expression, including literature, art, film, and popular culture. Ecocriticism seeks to analyse the relationships between human beings, nature and the impact of human activities on the environment (Hiltner, 2015).

**Ecological Poetry:** Ecological poetry focuses on themes related to the environment, nature, and the interconnectedness between humans and the natural world. It often explores ecological issues, sustainability, and the beauty of nature. Ecological poets are concerned with raising awareness

about environmental problems, advocating for conservation, and promoting a deeper connection to the natural world (Kerridge & Sammells, 1998).

**Myth in Joy Harjo's Poetry:** This refers to the incorporation of mythological elements and storytelling techniques in the poetry of Joy Harjo, an American poet, musician, and writer of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation. Harjo often draws inspiration from Native American mythology, folklore, and cultural traditions, weaving them into her poetry to explore themes of identity, spirituality, and the relationship between humans and the natural world (Dennis, 2006).

**Nature** refers to the physical world and all the living and non-living things within it. It encompasses the landscapes, plants, animals, ecosystems, and natural processes humans do not create or significantly influence. Nature is often viewed as a source of beauty, inspiration, and spirituality, and it is a central theme in various forms of artistic expression, including literature, poetry, painting, and music (Coates, 2013).

### **Review of Literature**

*Ecocriticism* (2004) by Garrard is a book that serves as an introduction to ecocriticism, providing readers with a comprehensive overview of the theory, methods, and key concepts within this interdisciplinary approach to literary and cultural analysis. In the book, Garrard explores how literature and other cultural expressions engage with environmental issues and the relationship between humans and the natural

world. The author studies the historical development of ecocriticism and highlights its emergence as a response to growing concerns about ecological degradation, climate change, and the impact of human activities on the environment.

This book also covers a wide range of topics within ecocriticism, such as the representation of nature in literature, the intersection of environmental and social justice, the role of literature in environmental activism, and the ethical dimensions of ecocritical analysis. Garrard also examines how ecocriticism intersects with other academic disciplines, including philosophy, cultural studies, and environmental science. Readers of this book can expect to gain a deeper understanding of the theoretical foundations of ecocriticism and practical tools for applying ecocritical analysis to literature and other cultural texts. It provides a valuable resource for students, scholars, and researchers interested in studying literature, environmentalism, and the intersection of culture and the environment.

*Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (2015) compiles vital texts and critical writings from various authors who have contributed to ecocriticism. It contains a collection of influential essays, articles, and excerpts that explore different facets of ecocriticism, providing readers with a comprehensive overview of the field's foundational theories, concepts, and perspectives. The book also covers a range of topics within ecocriticism, including the representation of nature in literature, environmental ethics, the relationship between humans and the natural world, ecocritical analyses of

specific literary works, and the intersections between literature, culture, and environmentalism.

By combining essential texts from prominent ecocritics, the book aims to serve as a valuable resource for students, scholars, and researchers interested in understanding the theoretical underpinnings and critical debates within ecocriticism. Doing so provides readers with a comprehensive and diverse collection of readings reflecting ecocritical studies' interdisciplinary nature.

*Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication* (2019) is a volume edited by Scott Slovic, Swarnalatha Rangarajan, and Vidya Sarveswaran. This handbook is a comprehensive and authoritative resource exploring the intersection of ecocriticism and environmental communication. As the name implies, the handbook combines a collection of chapters written by various scholars and experts in ecocriticism and environmental communication. It provides diverse perspectives, theoretical frameworks, and case studies that examine how literature, media, and other forms of communication engage with environmental issues and foster environmental awareness.

The content of the handbook covers a broad spectrum of topics, including the role of literature and media in shaping environmental attitudes and behaviours, the representation of nature and the environment in different forms of communication, the impact of environmental narratives on public

opinion and policy, and the intersections between ecological concerns, social justice, and environmental activism. Readers of this book can expect in-depth analyses of key concepts, methodologies, and theoretical frameworks within ecocriticism and environmental communication. The handbook thus offers insights into how literature, film, visual arts, digital media, and other forms of communication can be employed to promote ecological awareness and action.

Hussain (2000) has written a paper that explores the work of Joy Harjo, a Native American poet and musician, and examines how her poetry can be seen as a form of political action and resistance against colonialism and its effects on Indigenous communities. The paper focuses on Harjo's poetics as praxis, meaning that her poetry is not just a means of self-expression but also a way of enacting social change and challenging dominant power structures. It explores how Harjo's work engages with the intersections of the body, land, labour, and language and how these themes relate to the ongoing struggles of Indigenous peoples in the United States.

One key aspect of Harjo's poetics is her engagement with the body. She often writes about the physical and emotional experiences of being Indigenous in a colonial society, highlighting how violence and oppression impact the body. Harjo's poetry reclaims and celebrates Indigenous bodies, challenging the dehumanisation and objectification imposed by colonialism and the relationship between the land and Indigenous identity. Harjo's poetry frequently explores the connection between Indigenous peoples and their



ancestral lands, emphasising the importance of land as a source of cultural heritage and spiritual connection.

The paper discusses how Harjo's work challenges the exploitation and erasure of Indigenous lands by colonial powers, advocating for protecting and revitalising Indigenous territories. Harjo's poetics also delve into the theme of labour, particularly the labour and resilience of Indigenous communities in the face of historical and ongoing oppression. The paper examines how her poetry highlights Indigenous peoples' economic injustices, such as forced labour, dispossession of resources, and the erasure of Indigenous labour contributions. Harjo's work challenges these injustices and calls for recognising and redistributing labour rights within Indigenous communities.

Finally, the article studies the role of language in Harjo's poetics as a tool for resistance and decolonisation. Harjo often incorporates Native languages and traditional oral storytelling techniques into her poetry, reclaiming Indigenous ways of knowing and challenging the dominance of English as the colonial language. The paper looks into how Harjo's work foregrounds the power of language in reasserting cultural identity and contesting colonial linguistic hierarchies. The paper examines how Joy Harjo's poetics function as a means of political engagement and resistance within a postcolonial framework. It demonstrates how her exploration of the body, land, labour, and language contributes to a deeper understanding of the

ongoing struggles faced by Indigenous communities and the possibilities for decolonial transformation.

The paper of Harjo and Leen (1995) focuses on the profound impact of Joy Harjo's poetry in preserving and revitalising the storytelling tradition within Indigenous communities. The article explores Harjo's unique ability to weave together personal and cultural narratives, creating a powerful expression that honours her experiences and connects with broader themes of Indigenous survival and resilience. The article's core argument is that Harjo's poetry serves as a crucial medium for surviving storytelling traditions within Indigenous communities. It highlights how Harjo's emphasis on oral tradition in her poetry is a vital reminder of the power of spoken words and shared narratives in a world dominated by written and digital media. Through her poetry, Harjo channels the voices of her ancestors and the collective experiences of Indigenous peoples, ensuring that their stories are not forgotten or silenced.

The article probes into how Harjo's poetry incorporates storytelling techniques and structures. It explores how she employs imagery, metaphor, repetition, and rhythm to create a sense of oral tradition in her written works. By doing so, Harjo taps into the rich tradition of Indigenous storytelling and creates a bridge between the past and the present, ensuring that these stories resonate with contemporary audiences. Furthermore, the article discusses how Harjo's poetry preserves traditions and revitalises them. It delves into how she infuses her experiences as a Native American woman into her

poetry, creating a powerful intersection between individual and communal narratives. Through her evocative language and vivid imagery, Harjo invites readers to engage with the complexities of Indigenous experiences and challenges prevailing stereotypes and misconceptions.

The article also explores the thematic threads that run through Harjo's poetry, such as the connection to the land, the celebration of nature and spirituality, and the acknowledgement of historical trauma and ongoing struggles Indigenous communities face. It examines how these themes reflect the importance of storytelling in conveying the deep-rooted connections that Indigenous peoples have to their lands, cultures, and identities. Finally, the article discusses the broader significance of Harjo's poetry in the context of Indigenous literature and the broader literary landscape. It highlights how her work challenges dominant narratives and opens space for previously marginalised voices. Harjo's poetry not only preserves Indigenous storytelling traditions but also invites dialogue and engagement with a broader audience, promoting understanding and empathy and ultimately contributing to the survival of Indigenous cultures.

Goeman (2012) has also focused on how Joy Harjo's poetry serves as a tool for challenging and subverting the structures of settler colonialism. The article explores how Harjo's use of poetic techniques and imagery acts as a form of cartography, mapping alternative narratives and spaces that disrupt colonial perspectives and power dynamics. The article's core argument is that Harjo's poetry functions as an act of resistance and

reclamation, allowing her to "unmap" the dominant settler colonial narratives that have shaped Indigenous experiences. The article emphasises how Harjo's work challenges the notion of fixed boundaries and territories imposed by settler colonialism, instead embracing fluidity, interconnectedness, and alternative ways of understanding space and relationships.

The article analyses the specific tools and techniques Harjo employs in her poetry to achieve this "unmapping." It examines her use of imagery and metaphor to disrupt dominant colonial narratives, providing new perspectives and unsettling preconceived notions of place and identity. Harjo's poetry often revolves around the natural world and the environment, using it as a powerful metaphor to explore the complex relationships between land, culture, and history. Furthermore, the article discusses how Harjo's poetry transcends geographical, temporal, and cultural boundaries. It explores how she incorporates Indigenous mythologies, oral traditions, and ancestral knowledge, challenging the linear and Western-centric understanding of time and history. Harjo's poetry opens new possibilities for understanding and visualising Indigenous experiences, effectively "unmapping" the constrained realities imposed by settler colonialism.

Goeman also highlights how Harjo's poetry disrupts the dominance of settler colonial language. It explores her work's use of Indigenous languages, words, and phrases, reclaiming and amplifying the voices and perspectives that colonial linguistic practices have marginalised. By centring on

Indigenous languages and perspectives, Harjo's poetry challenges the hegemony of English and the erasure of Indigenous languages, contributing to the decolonisation of linguistic spaces. Moreover, the article situates Harjo's poetry within the context of Indigenous resistance and decolonisation. It explores how her work aligns with more significant movements seeking to challenge settler colonial structures and restore Indigenous sovereignty. Harjo's poetic cartography serves as a form of cultural and political activism, contributing to the more considerable efforts of Indigenous communities to reclaim their lands, cultures, and identities.

Scarry (1992) focuses on the evolving nature of Joy Harjo's poetry and how it represents real-world experiences. The paper explores how Harjo's poetry has evolved, examining her work's themes, techniques, and stylistic changes. The paper explores Harjo's early poetry and compares it to her recent works, highlighting the shifts in her subject matter, language, and storytelling techniques. It examines how Harjo's poetry has expanded to address various topics, including identity, spirituality, nature, politics, and social issues. The research paper also discusses how Harjo's poetry captures and represents the experiences and perspectives of underrepresented communities, particularly Native American and Indigenous voices.

It delves into how Harjo's poetry portrays these communities' historical and contemporary struggles and addresses cultural preservation, resilience, and activism themes. Furthermore, the paper analyses the evolution of Harjo's poetic style and techniques. It explores how her use of

language, imagery, metaphor, and structure has changed and how these changes contribute to her unique and impactful poetry. The research paper also refers to the influence of oral traditions and storytelling techniques in her work and how she incorporates these elements into her written poetry. Additionally, the paper scrutinises Harjo's engagement with the broader literary and cultural landscape. It discusses her role as an influential figure within contemporary American poetry, particularly as a representative and advocate for Native American and Indigenous voices.

In *Romantic Ecology: Wordsworth and the Environmental Tradition* (2013), Bate notes that Romantic ecology explores the intersection between Romantic literature and environmentalism. It examines how Romantic writers, such as William Wordsworth, expressed a deep appreciation for nature and the environment in their works. These writers often emphasised the natural world's spiritual, emotional, and transformative power, championing a closer connection with nature and a critique of industrialisation and urbanisation.

Jonathan Bate is a notable scholar in literary criticism, mainly known for his expertise in Romanticism and environmental studies. His book delves into the works of William Wordsworth, one of the key figures in the Romantic Movement. It explores how Wordsworth's poetry embodies and contributes to developing an environmental tradition in literature. Bate's book dissects Wordsworth's poetry, discussing how his poetic imagination and language capture the sublime qualities of the natural world. It probes

into Wordsworth's emphasis on the interconnectedness of humans and nature, his exploration of the spiritual and moral dimensions of the environment, and his critique of humanity's impact on the natural world.

Additionally, the book places Wordsworth's poetry within the context of the broader environmental tradition, considering the influence and significance of his work on subsequent generations of writers and thinkers who engage with environmental issues. It also examines the ethical, philosophical, and cultural implications of Wordsworth's environmental vision and how it transcends the boundaries of his time. Generally speaking, this book offers a deep analysis of the relationship between Romantic literature, particularly the works of William Wordsworth, and environmental thought. It explores the influence of Wordsworth's poetry on the development of an environmental tradition in literature and depicts the relevance and resilience of his ecological insights in the modern world.

*The Song of the Earth* (2001) by Bate explores the relationship between literature and the natural world, specifically focusing on the works of famous British authors such as William Wordsworth, John Clare, and Ted Hughes. Bate, a renowned literary scholar and biographer, investigates British literature's romantic and modernist traditions, examining how these writers portrayed and interacted with the natural world. He analyses their poetry and prose, uncovering the deep connections between literature and the environment. By exploring these writers' works, Bate uncovers the themes of nature, ecology, and environmentalism that permeate their writing.

He explores how these authors expressed their love for nature and their concerns about the impact of industrialisation and urbanisation on the environment.

Bate's book also looks into the personal lives of these writers, providing insight into the factors that influenced their writing and their passion for the natural world. He discusses the role of nature in shaping Wordsworth's spiritual and philosophical beliefs, the personal struggles and connections to the landscape in John Clare's work, and Ted Hughes' intense connection to the natural world. *The Song of the Earth* not only offers a comprehensive analysis of the works of these prominent British writers but also provides a broader understanding of the relationship between literature and the environment. Bate's exploration deepens our appreciation for the unique ways literature can convey the beauty of the natural world and raise awareness about environmental issues.

### **Methodology**

Jonathan Bate is a well-known scholar who has made significant contributions to ecocriticism. As an environmental literary critic, Bate explores the relationship between literature and the environment. His work is influenced by ecology, philosophy, and literary theory. Bate's ecocritical approach examines how literature reflects and shapes our perceptions and attitudes toward the natural world. One of Bate's key ideas is the concept of "green reading." He advocates for reading literature with an environmental



lens, identifying and analysing ecological themes, representations of nature, and the human impact on the environment.

Bate believes literature can be crucial in fostering environmental consciousness and inspiring sustainable action. Bate's influential book, *The Song of the Earth* (2001), examines the relationship between literature and nature, from the Romantic period to contemporary eco-poetry. In this book, he explores how literary works across different periods engage with environmental concerns and how they can inspire ecological activism. Bate's ecocriticism also emphasises the importance of interdisciplinary approaches.

He encourages scholars to draw connections between literature, environmental science, and other fields better to understand environmental issues and their portrayal in literature. Bate seeks to create a more holistic approach to understanding the human-nature relationship by bridging the gap between environmental studies and the humanities. Consequently, Jonathan Bate's ecocriticism offers a valuable perspective on the intersection between literature and the environment. His work prompts us to consider the ecological dimensions of literary texts, encouraging us to engage with nature and environmental issues more mindfully and sustainably.

## **Discussion**

As mentioned, Joy Harjo, a renowned poet, often incorporates themes of nature, ecology, and mythology in her works. By integrating themes of nature, Harjo draws attention to the intrinsic beauty and power of the natural

world. She often employs vivid imagery and sensory details to immerse readers in various landscapes' sights, sounds, and textures. Through her poems, she captures the essence of ecosystems, revealing their innate significance and the sense of awe they inspire. Harjo's ecology exploration also encourages readers to reflect on the delicate balance within nature. Her works often highlight the intricate web of life, emphasising the interdependence of various species and ecosystems. This ecocritical approach prompts readers to reconsider their relationship with the environment and recognise the importance of ecological preservation.

Furthermore, Harjo skillfully intertwines mythology into her poetry, drawing from Native American folklore and other cultural narratives. Mythological references allow her to tap into universal stories and archetypes, connecting readers to timeless themes and collective human experiences. By infusing her works with mythology, she enriches her poems' ecological and natural themes, exploring how our relationship with the environment is intertwined with our cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs. It can be inferred that Joy Harjo's poetry serves as a poignant reminder of the profound connections between humans, nature, and mythology. Her incorporation of nature, ecology, and mythology allows her to explore these themes through rich imagery and symbolism.

Here are a few examples of her poems focusing on these subjects and referencing an ecocritical approach. Harjo's poem " An American Sunrise " (2019) explores the relationship between humans and the natural world,

particularly in Native American history. She addresses the impacts of colonisation and the resilience of nature. Harjo also highlights the interconnectedness between humans and the land while critiquing the destructive forces of colonisation:

We were running out of breath, as we ran out to meet ourselves. We  
Were surfacing the edge of our ancestors' fights, and ready to Strike.  
It was difficult to lose days in the Indian bar if you were Straight.

(Harjo,  
2019)

Through an ecocritical lens, we can analyse how Harjo's portrayal of the interconnectedness between humans and the land aligns with the fundamental principles of ecocriticism. Ecocriticism emphasises the symbiotic relationship between human beings and the natural world, asserting that we are profoundly influenced by the ecosystems we inhabit. Harjo's poem reinforces this perspective by recognising the integral role that the land plays in shaping human identity and cultural heritage.

Moreover, Harjo employs her poetic voice to critique the destructive forces of colonisation. She prompts readers to reflect on colonialism's environmental consequences, highlighting how exploitation and land acquisition have disrupted the natural balance. By doing so, she reveals the unsustainability of these practices and exposes the urgent need to reimagine our relationship with the Earth.

In another poem titled “She Had Some Horses”, she uses mythological and ecological symbolism to express the multifaceted connection between nature, spirituality, and personal identity. Harjo employs vivid imagery of horses and other elements of the natural world to evoke a sense of reverence and awe:

She had horses that were bodies of sand.  
She had horses who were maps drawn of blood.  
She had horses who were skins of ocean water.  
She had horses who were the blue air of sky.  
She had horses who were fur and teeth.  
She had horses who were clay and would break.  
She had horses who were splintered red cliff. (Harjo, 2008)

Harjo taps into universal human experiences and archetypes through mythological symbolism, connecting the reader to more profound, collective understandings of the natural world. Horses, often associated with freedom, strength, and untamed beauty, become metaphors for elemental forces and spiritual guides. The horses in the poem represent nature's wildness and the inner spirit within each individual.

Harjo's vivid descriptions of the horses and their interaction with nature evoke a deep admiration for the intricate beauty of the natural world. The poem emphasises the interconnectedness between the human and non-

human realms by employing ecological imagery, such as rivers, mountains, and seasons. This emphasis on the interdependence of humanity and the environment aligns with an ecocritical approach, recognising the reciprocal relationship between humans and the natural world.

Furthermore, by invoking a sense of reverence and awe, Harjo's poem encourages readers to reevaluate their relationship with nature and to view it as a source of spiritual nourishment and guidance. In doing so, it invites us to recognise the significance of the natural world in shaping our identities and understanding of the human experience. Through its mythological and ecological symbolism, "She Had Some Horses" invites us to appreciate the profound interconnectedness between nature, spirituality, and individual identity. By evoking a sense of reverence, the poem inspires a deeper connection with the natural world, fostering a greater understanding of our place within it.

Also, Harjo contemplates the destruction of the environment and its impact on human existence in "A Map to the Next World". She draws attention to the urgent need for humanity to change its course and reconnect with nature:

In the last days of the fourth world I wished to make a map for  
those who would climb through the hole in the sky.

My only tools were the desires of humans as they emerged  
from the killing fields, from the bedrooms and the kitchens.

For the soul is a wanderer with many hands and feet. (Harjo, 2000)

Applying Jonathan Bate's theories to Joy Harjo's poem "A Map to the Next World" provides a valuable lens through which to explore how our relationship with the environment is interconnected with our cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs. Jonathan Bate, a prominent ecocritic, emphasises the importance of understanding literature and nature about each other. According to Bate's theory of ecopoetics, literature can serve as a means to deepen our connection with the natural world, fostering a sense of environmental consciousness. In the poem "A Map to the Next World," Joy Harjo reflects on the destruction of the environment and its consequences for humanity. Using evocative language and poetic imagery, she highlights the urgent need for change in how we interact with nature. Applying Bate's theory, we can analyse the poem as a form of ecopoetics, in which Harjo inspires readers to reevaluate their relationship with the environment.

Bate's "ecological consciousness" concept is particularly relevant to this analysis. He argues that literature can potentially shift our perception of the natural world, transforming it from an object to be exploited to a subject to be respected and cherished. In "A Map to the Next World," Harjo evokes a deep sense of loss and mourns the damage done to the natural world. Through this portrayal, she invites readers to develop an ecological consciousness, recognising the importance of safeguarding the environment for future

generations. Furthermore, Bate's "deep ecology" theory emphasises the interconnectedness of all living beings and the need for a holistic approach to environmentalism. In the poem, Harjo explores the delicate balance between humans and the rest of the ecosystem, depicting the consequences of human actions on the natural world. By doing so, she encourages readers to adopt a deep ecological perspective, understanding that the environment's well-being is intimately tied to our own.

Moreover, Bate's theory of the "ecopoetics of place" is relevant to the poem's exploration of cultural heritage and spiritual beliefs. Harjo, drawing on her Native American background, infuses the poem with cultural symbolism and ancestral wisdom. She calls upon readers to consider their cultural connection to the land and the responsibility to protect their cultural heritage through environmental stewardship. This aligns with Bate's argument that literature can contribute to a sense of place-based environmentalism, recognising the importance of specific landscapes and their role in shaping our cultural identities. Hence, by applying Jonathan Bate's theories to "A Map to the Next World," we can better understand how Harjo's poem functions as an eco poetic piece. The poem deepens our ecological consciousness, highlights the interconnectedness of all living beings, and explores the significance of place and cultural heritage in our relationship with the environment.

Mythological: In "Crystal Lake", Harjo juxtaposes two profound natural elements — the cave and the water in one unified space: the semi-submerged cave, where a young girl will pass through an extraordinary ritual

pass. Harjo delineates the entire story by adopting the particular historical present (which most poets call “time of the dream) and offers her readers more than a limited number of surrealistic metaphors, like “The gills bleeding this gift of air onto the gritty rocks” or “wet blanket of noon” (Harjo, 1990). The place is so full of life, echoing a tranquil world: "dragonflies fly between heaven and hell", "bats fly at perfect random", and "mythical fish [swim] as long as rainbows after the coming storm" (Harjo, 1990, p. 33). This part of the story happens during Harjo’s puberty, an Eden-like stage of life, basically related to fertility, bodily and mental changes, and awareness of adulthood. Multiple lines in the poems refer, explicitly and implicitly, to the teenager’s consciousness of this sexual change: “I was restless in adolescent heat”; “riding the sling between my newborn hips”; “the sudden turn of my body” (Harjo, 1990). Place and time get together to allow the young to have a revelation as she hears the mysterious voices that command: “Come home, come home” (Harjo, 1990). One could have an ambiguity as being unaware of who utters these words: would it be the echoes of the revelation made by the girl? Was it, maybe, a demand by the ancestors to return to the American Indian traditional way of living? Or could it be the narrator’s subconscious, a refusing sound that wishes to return to childhood and deny adulthood?: “I don’t remember any words, but the shushing of the sun through dried grass, the nibble of the carp at the bottom of the boat, the slow melting of my body” (Harjo, 1990). In several instances, the individual and the space blend in an awareness that makes the girl feel the existence and soul of many natural



elements: the sun, the cave, or the fish. As a metaphor, the lake turns out to be not merely the place of origin to the tribe but for the girl as an adult woman and a poet who can synchronise her thoughts and emotions with the incredible earth.( Mancelos,2017, P.9)

## Conclusion

In conclusion, it was found that Joy Harjo's selected poems radiate a deep sense of ecological and mythical awareness. Harjo skillfully weaves these two aspects throughout her work, emphasising the interconnectedness between humans, nature, and spirituality. Her poems explore the intricate relationship between humans and the natural world, highlighting the urgent need for ecological consciousness and preservation. Harjo's poems serve as a reminder of the delicate balance between humans and the environment. She draws attention to the destructive forces of human actions and the consequent damage inflicted upon the earth. Her evocative language conveys the urgency of addressing climate change, deforestation, and pollution.

Harjo's ecological perspectives inspire readers to reflect on their relationship with the environment and consider the impact of their actions. Harjo seamlessly integrates mythical elements into her poetry, connecting the spiritual and physical realms. She draws upon Native American mythology and folklore, infusing her work with a rich tapestry of ancient wisdom and spirituality. Harjo's mythical awareness invites readers to

explore the depths of their spiritual connection to nature and the universe. Harjo's selected poems' combination of ecological and mythical awareness is a powerful catalyst for change. By intertwining these two themes, she encourages readers to see beyond the surface and recognise the more profound significance of our existence. Her poetry inspires a sense of responsibility towards the environment and a reconnection with the spiritual and the mythical.

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