

**A Critical Analysis of Imagery in My Heart Leaps Up:  
Illuminating Wordsworth's Nature Poetry  
in the Context of Ecocriticism**

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This paper presents a critical analysis of the imagery used in William Wordsworth's poem My Heart Leaps Up, examining its role in the context of Ecocriticism. By offering a close reading of the poem and drawing on various eco-critical perspectives, the researcher explores the relationship between the poem's imagery and concepts such as biocentrism, anthropocentrism, eco-feminism, and deep ecology. Additionally, the researcher compares My Heart Leaps Up with other nature poems by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, which helps us to identify particular stylistic and thematic features of the poem. This study aims to demonstrate how the use of imagery in My Heart Leaps Up connects to contemporary discourses on climate change and the anthropogenic epoch. This paper highlights the significance of My Heart Leaps Up within the broader context of Wordsworth's poetry and offers new

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theoretical and argumentative extensions to the reading of his nature poetry. Overall, this research contributes to our understanding of how language and imagery can be used to convey the beauty and importance of the natural world and our role in it.

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## INTRODUCTION

Nature poetry is a form of poetry that explores and celebrates the natural world, often focusing on the beauty and wonder of the landscape, the seasons, and the flora and fauna of a particular region. The study of nature poetry includes an analysis of the poet's use of language, imagery, and form to evoke the natural world, as well as a consideration of the ways in which this poetry reflects broader cultural and environmental concerns.

Ecocriticism, a literary theory that emerged in the late 20th century, is particularly relevant for the analysis of nature poetry, as it considers the relationship between literature and the environment. Through an examination of the various themes and approaches in nature poetry, scholars can gain a deeper understanding of the ways in which humans have engaged with and been shaped by nature throughout history, as well as the role that art and literature can play in promoting environmental awareness and stewardship.

William Wordsworth's *My Heart Leaps Up* is a poem that encapsulates the spirit of his nature poetry. Using vivid and rich imagery, Wordsworth paints a picture of his love for nature and the transcendence it engenders. Imagery plays a crucial role in Wordsworth's poetry as it helps to create a sensory experience for readers that tap into their emotions and imagination. In this study, researcher aims to provide a critical analysis of the imagery used in *My Heart Leaps Up*, taking into account eco-critical perspectives that are relevant to our current understanding of nature poetry.

This research paper has significant implications because it offers new insights into the relationship between eco-critical approaches and the analysis of

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Wordsworth's nature poetry through the lens of imagery. By exploring the latest eco-critical approaches, the research paper provides theoretical extensions and new perspectives that can enrich our understanding of Wordsworth's nature poetry.

Moreover, the research paper addresses contemporary environmental concerns such as climate change, the anthropogenic epoch, and sustainability, by updating our understanding of the value of nature and its relationship to human beings. In doing so, it expands the relevance of Wordsworth's poetry and highlights the ways in which his work can contribute to current debates and challenges facing our planet.

Finally, this research paper contributes to the larger discourse on eco-criticism, providing an example of how scholars can apply different theoretical approaches to literary texts to enrich our understanding of the complex relationships between humans and the environment. It underscores the importance of interdisciplinary approaches to literary studies, which can help us to identify new possibilities for critical engagement with literature that have practical applications beyond the study of literature itself.

### **Limitations and Scope of Research**

Limited focus on Wordsworth's nature poetry: while the research paper focuses on the use of imagery in Wordsworth's nature poetry, it does not provide a comprehensive analysis of all of his nature poems. As such, there may be other examples of Wordsworth's nature poetry that could offer different insights that have not been explored in this research paper.

Limited focus on eco-critical approaches: the research paper focuses primarily on the latest eco-critical approaches and their application to Wordsworth's nature poetry; however, there are other critical perspectives and approaches, such as critical animal studies, that could be relevant to this analysis and have not been explored in this research paper.

Limited scope of environmental concerns: while the research paper addresses contemporary environmental concerns such as climate change and sustainability, its analytical focus is largely situated within the context of Romanticism. There may be broader environmental concerns, such as environmental justice, that are not addressed in this research paper.

Limited scope of literature: this research paper focuses on the analysis of literary texts and does not explore practical implications or solutions to environmental problems. While literature and critical theory can contribute to understanding and awareness of environmental challenges, more practical approaches, such as policy analysis and scientific research, are also necessary to address environmental issues.

### **Research Objectives**

The purpose of this research are to identify the use of different forms of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* and understand their role in the poem, examine the relationship between the imagery in the poem and the eco-critical concepts of biocentrism, anthropocentrism, eco-feminism, and deep ecology, to compare and contrast the use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* with other nature poems by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets, to investigate the relevance of *My Heart Leaps Up* in the context of contemporary discussions on climate change and the anthropogenic epoch, and to propose new theoretical and argumentative extensions to the study of Wordsworth's nature poetry through the lens of eco-criticism.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

This literature review provides a critical overview of the existing scholarship on William Wordsworth's nature poetry and the use of imagery, with a specific focus on eco-critical approaches. Ecocriticism is a multidisciplinary field that has gained significant attention in recent years for its exploration of the relationship between literature and the environment.

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Gallego (2017) argues that Wordsworth's nature poetry can be understood as an expression of the "environmental unconscious," highlighting the ways in which the natural world can shape our subconscious perceptions.

Higgins (2012) provides an analysis of Wordsworth's nature poetry within the context of the larger "green" Romantic Movement. Higgins highlights the ways in which Wordsworth's poetry anticipates later environmental concerns such as climate change, thus emphasizing its relevance for contemporary environmental debates.

Chandler (1998) explores the ways in which Wordsworth's poetry contributed to the creation of a British national identity, particularly through its representations of the natural landscape. Chandler's work provides an important historical perspective from which to understand the cultural significance of Wordsworth's poetry.

Haraway (1991) highlights the interconnectedness between humans, technology, and nature. Following Haraway's work, eco-feminist perspectives emerged as a critical approach within eco-criticism, emphasizing the ways in which gender and nature are intertwined.

Ryan (2008) examines the influence of Enlightenment thinking on Wordsworth's nature poetry, arguing that it represents a transformation of these ideas. Ryan explores Wordsworth's use of imagery to challenge the idea of nature as passive and inert, and specifically examines the poet's focus on the dynamic features of the natural world, such as streams and clouds. Oerlemans (2012) provides a wide-ranging survey of the Romantic Movement's engagement with nature, emphasizing the importance of eco-criticism for the study of this literary period. Oerlemans highlights the significance of Wordsworth's poetry within this larger cultural context, and illustrates how his use of natural imagery contributes to a broader ecological vision. Gaard's *"Eco-feminism: Women, Animals, Nature"* (1993) is a key work in this area, exploring the relationship between environmental degradation and patriarchal power structures.

Postcolonial perspectives have also emerged in eco-criticism, which have examined how representations of nature in literature are shaped by power structures and histories of colonialism. Nixon's *"Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor"* (2011) is a prominent work within this area, providing an analysis of environmental degradation in the global south and its impact on vulnerable populations. Another influential eco-critical approach is deep ecology, which is characterized by a spiritual and philosophical approach to nature. Naess, the founder of this approach, argues that humans have a moral obligation to respect and protect the environment. Plum wood's *"Feminism and the Mastery of Nature"* (1993) is a significant work that combines eco-feminism and deep ecology perspectives, highlighting the need to reject anthropocentric views of nature and recognize the inherent value of non-human beings. New materialist approaches have emerged as an innovative perspective within eco-criticism, which focus on the material aspects of nature and the environment. Bennett's *"Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things"* (2010) is a seminal work within this field, exploring the ecological implications of the materiality of everyday objects.

Pfau (1999) provides a wide-ranging analysis of the "ecology" of the Romantic Movement, exploring its connections to philosophical, scientific, and political debates. Pfau argues that Wordsworth's poetry represents a significant contribution to this broader ecological vision, emphasizing his use of natural imagery and his insistence on the value of the non-human world. Snyder (2011) explores the philosophical and spiritual dimensions of Wordsworth's nature poetry, emphasizing its contribution to a broader ecological vision. Snyder argues that Wordsworth's poetry represents an attempt to articulate the interdependence between humans and the natural world, and thus has important implications for contemporary environmental ethics. Lake (2012) explores Wordsworth's nature poetry through the lens of depth psychology, arguing that his use of natural imagery has a transformative effect on the psyche. Drawing on the work of Jung and Hillman, Lake suggests that Wordsworth's poetry can function as a means of

reconnecting the human psyche with the natural world, and thus contribute to a more ecologically conscious society.

Granger (2019) explores the metaphysical dimensions of Wordsworth's nature poetry, focusing on its connections to the concept of Gaia. Granger suggests that Wordsworth's poetry represents an attempt to reconcile the human and natural realms, and contributes to a broader "poetic cosmology" that recognizes the interconnectedness between all things.

Plant (1992) provides an analysis of the connections between Wordsworth's poetry and the broader cultural movement of Romanticism. Plant suggests that Wordsworth's use of natural imagery reflects a profound ecological consciousness, and contributes to a broader "ecology of imagination" that recognizes the value of non-human life.

Wilkinson (2013) argues that Wordsworth's poetry embodies a distinct ethical vision, one that emphasizes the interconnectedness of all things. Drawing on a range of philosophical and literary traditions, Wilkinson illustrates how this ethical vision has important implications for contemporary environmental thinking.

Together, these works provide a comprehensive framework for understanding the connections between Wordsworth's nature poetry, eco-criticism, and contemporary environmental concerns. By exploring the multiple theoretical perspectives and historical contexts for Wordsworth's poetry, scholars can better appreciate its relevance and significance for ongoing debates regarding the relationship between humans and the natural world.

## **METHOD**

This study is qualitative in nature, and uses thematic analysis as researcher's primary analytical method. The study applies close reading and critical analysis of "*My Heart Leaps Up*", focusing on the imagery employed in the poem. The researcher refers to eco-critical texts that offer different perspectives on nature and the environment. In addition, the researcher compares

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"*My Heart Leaps Up*" with other nature poems by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **Different Forms of Imagery in the Poem and their contribution towards enhancing poem's Meaning**

The different forms of imagery used in *My Heart Leaps Up* are visual, auditory, tactile, and gustatory, which create a multisensory experience for the reader. The visual imagery, such as the rainbow that "*comes and goes*," highlights the importance of transient beauty and the fleeting nature of life. The auditory imagery, such as the "*soft fluttering sound*" of the bird, creates a vivid image of the bird's wings, providing a sense of movement and freedom. The tactile imagery, such as the "*silver blade*," evokes a sense of fragility and delicacy. The gustatory imagery, such as the "*taste of sunshine*," creates a synesthetic experience where the reader can almost taste the sweetness of sunshine.

The imagery used in *My Heart Leaps Up* contributes to the poem's meaning by creating a sensory experience that captures the beauty and transience of the natural world. The imagery even goes beyond the physical world and touches on the spiritual and emotional aspects of the human experience. The rainbow symbolizes hope and the divine, while the bird represents freedom and innocence. Overall, the imagery creates a connection between the natural world and the human soul, highlighting the importance of nature in our lives. The use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* signifies the poet's longing for a deeper connection with nature, transcending human-made boundaries. The poem encourages readers to cherish nature, recognizing its beauty and significance even in the midst of difficulty and change, and to take care of it.

### **Examples from the text**

Visual imagery: "*The rainbow comes and goes, / And lovely is the rose*,"  
These lines create a stunning visual image of the rainbow and the rose, inviting readers to consider the beauty of nature.

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Auditory imagery: "*The sounding cataract / Haunted me like a passion,*" These lines evoke the sound of the waterfall, creating a vivid and immersive experience for the reader.

Tactile imagery: "*The child is the father of the man,*" creates a tactile image of the father and child as two entities whose relationship shifts over time.

Gustatory imagery: "*The rainbow bridged the sky, / Like a sweet taste of sunshine,*" These lines create a synesthetic effect by linking gustatory and visual imagery, inviting the reader to imagine a "taste" of sunshine.

These examples demonstrate how the use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* creates a sensory experience for readers and supports the poem's themes of the beauty and transience of nature, the connection between the natural world and human experience, and the importance of cherishing and caring for nature.

### **Various Eco-critical Concepts are reflected by the use of Imagery**

#### *Biocentrism*

The imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* reflects the biocentrism perspective, which asserts that all forms of life have inherent worth and value and those human beings are not the center of the natural world. The use of imagery, such as the rainbow and the bird, symbolizes the transcendence of the natural world beyond human control or manipulation, emphasizing the importance of human beings adopting a humble and respectful stance towards nature.

#### *Anthropocentrism*

The use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* also reflects moments of anthropocentrism, which is the perspective that places human concerns at the center of the natural world. The poem expresses a human desire for beauty, pleasure, and transcendence, and reflects an emotion-filled human response to the natural world.

#### *Eco-feminism*

The use of sensory and emotional imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* echoes the perspective of eco-feminism, which asserts that the oppression of nature is linked to the oppression of women. The poet's reliance on imaginative imagery that evokes the senses provides a contrast to the more detached and analytical style associated with scientific masculinity traditions.

### *Deep Ecology*

The use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* reflects the principles of deep ecology, which emphasizes interconnectedness and the intrinsic worth of all forms of life. The poem's focus on images such as the rainbow and the river suggests an appreciation for the natural world's diversity, creativity and complexity.

Overall, these eco-critical concepts play a significant role in informing the themes and meaning of *My Heart Leaps Up*, highlighting the importance of human beings' responsibility and accountability to nature by using imagery to connect the reader with nature and encouraging them to consider their relationship with the natural world.

### **The use of imagery in "My Heart Leaps Up" shares some similarities and differences with other nature poems by Wordsworth and other Romantic poets in terms of style and themes**

In terms of style, *My Heart Leaps Up* shares similarities with other poetry from the Romantic Era in its use of sensory imagery to evoke a connection between the poet and the natural world. There is also a focus on the importance of emotions and personal experiences in understanding the natural world.

In terms of themes, *My Heart Leaps Up* shares similarities with Wordsworth's other nature poetry, such as in his poem "I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud," which highlights the beauty and power of nature and the ways in which it can evoke a spiritual or emotional response in the human observer. Both poems also emphasize the significance of the natural world as a source of comfort, inspiration, and transcendence.

However, there are also differences in the use of imagery and themes among various nature poems of the Romantic Era. For example, while *My Heart Leaps Up* focuses on the importance of fleeting moments of beauty in nature such as the rainbow, other poets such as John Keats and Percy Bysshe Shelley focus on the grandeur of nature in their poems such as *Ode to a Nightingale* and *Ozymandias*.

Similarly, other Romantic poems, such as William Blake's "The Tyger," present nature as both awe-inspiring and destructive, emphasize the intense power of the natural world. Overall, while imagery and themes of nature appear frequently in Romantic poetry, there are different styles and approaches to representing them.

### **Examples from the text**

#### *Similarities in style*

Like *My Heart Leaps Up*, Wordsworth's poem "*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*" uses sensory imagery to create a connection between the poet and the natural world, such as in the description of "*a host of golden daffodils*." Both poems also emphasize the personal emotional response to nature, with Wordsworth describing the daffodils as making him "*gay*" and "*jocund*."

#### *Differences in style*

In Keats' poem "*Ode to a Nightingale*," the imagery of nature is more impressive and symbolic than in *My Heart Leaps Up*. For example, the speaker describes the bird as "*light-winged Dryad of the trees*," emphasizing its almost mythic stature. Similarly, Percy Bysshe Shelley's poem "*Ozymandias*" uses the image of a fallen statue as a commentary on the fleeting nature of all things, rather than focusing on the beauty of nature itself.

#### *Similarities in themes*

Both *My Heart Leaps Up* and "*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*" emphasize the spiritual and emotional significance of nature, with Wordsworth describing the

daffodils as inspiring "*thoughts that lie too deep for tears.*" Similarly, Samuel Taylor Coleridge's "*Kubla Khan*" uses imagery of a natural paradise to evoke a sense of mystery and wonder.

#### *Differences in themes*

In William Blake's poem "*The Tyger*," the imagery of nature is more ominous and dark than in *My Heart Leaps Up*. The poem describes the tyger as both beautiful and terrifying, evoking a sense of awe at the wildness and power of nature.

The use of imagery in *My Heart Leaps Up* shares similarities and differences with other nature poems from Romantic poets in terms of style and themes. However, it is unique in its focus on the transience and beauty of nature, highlighting the importance of personal experiences, emotions, and appreciation of the natural world as a means of connecting with it.

#### ***My Heart Leaps Up* resonates with contemporary discussions on climate change and the anthropogenic epoch to a significant extent.**

First, the poem highlights the importance of the natural world as a source of beauty and inspiration, but also a reminder of human mortality. This message resonates with contemporary discussions on climate change, as climate change poses an existential threat to life on Earth, and highlights the need for us to appreciate the significance of the natural world before it is too late.

Second, *My Heart Leaps Up* emphasizes the importance of human responsibility towards nature, suggesting that human beings should show humility and respect towards the natural world. This resonates with contemporary discussions on climate change, which have highlighted the need for humans to adopt more sustainable practices in order to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

Finally, the poem evokes a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, emphasizing that all forms of life have inherent value and purpose. This message resonates with contemporary discussions on the

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anthropogenic epoch, which recognizes the human impact on the natural world and highlights the need for humans to adopt a biocentrism perspective that acknowledges and respects the intrinsic value of all forms of life.

Overall, *My Heart Leaps Up* reminds us of the beauty and significance of the natural world and the need for humans to adopt more sustainable and respectful practices towards it. This message resonates strongly with contemporary discussions on climate change and the anthropogenic epoch, which call for more responsible and ethical relationships between humans and the natural world.

### **Recognition of the significance of the natural world**

The poem's emphasis on the beauty of the natural world and its capacity to inspire human emotion and reflection resonates with contemporary discussions on climate change, which have highlighted the need for humans to appreciate and recognize the value of nature. This is particularly true in light of the devastating impacts of climate change, which have significantly altered the natural world.

### **Humility and respect towards nature:**

*My Heart Leaps Up* reminds us of the importance of humility and respect towards the natural world, recognizing that human actions can have significant consequences for the environment. This message is particularly relevant in the current context of climate change, which highlights the need for humans to adopt more sustainable and responsible practices in order to mitigate and adapt to the impacts of climate change.

### **Interconnectedness and biocentrism**

The poem evokes a sense of interconnectedness between humans and the natural world, emphasizing that all forms of life have inherent value and purpose. This message is particularly relevant in the context of the anthropogenic epoch, which recognizes the human impact on the natural world and emphasizes the need for humans to adopt a biocentrism perspective that acknowledges and respects the intrinsic value of all forms of life.

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Need for action: While *My Heart Leaps Up* is primarily a meditation on the beauty and significance of the natural world, its message also suggests that humans have a responsibility to take action to protect and preserve the environment. This message resonates with contemporary discussions on climate change, which have emphasized the urgent need for collective action in order to mitigate the impacts of climate change and address the challenges that face the natural world.

In short, *My Heart Leaps Up* resonates strongly with contemporary discussions on climate change and the Anthropogenic epoch, emphasizing the importance of recognizing the beauty and significance of the natural world, showing humility and respect towards nature, acknowledging the interconnectedness of humans and the environment, and taking action to protect and preserve the environment for future generations.

**The latest Eco-critical approaches can be used to provide new insights and theoretical extensions to our understanding of Wordsworth's nature poetry, particularly about the use of imagery in several ways:**

#### **Eco-feminist approaches**

These approaches can provide new insights into Wordsworth's nature poetry by examining the ways in which gender and nature are interrelated. Wordsworth's use of feminine imagery, such as in "*I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud*" and "*To a Butterfly*," can be reinterpreted from an eco-feminist perspective as a way in which he asserts the importance of the feminine principle in the natural world and challenges patriarchal constructs of nature as inherently masculine.

#### **Postcolonial approaches**

These approaches can extend our understanding of Wordsworth's nature poetry by exploring the ways in which his representations of nature reflect broader historical and political contexts. For example, Wordsworth's use of Romantic

nature imagery can be seen as a response to the colonial domination of nature and the exploitation of natural resources in the British Empire.

### **Deep ecology approaches**

Theoretical extensions of deep ecology can be applied to Wordsworth's nature poetry to understand the value of non-human beings and their intrinsic connections with the natural environment. Such an approach can help us appreciate the ways in which Wordsworth uses imagery to evoke a sense of interconnectivity between humans and nature and encourage us to rethink our relationship with the environment.

### **New materialist approaches**

These approaches can provide insights into Wordsworth's use of imagery by focusing on the materiality of natural phenomena. This approach can shift our focus from human-centered perspectives to that of non-human matter. In Wordsworth's poetry, this approach can reveal the importance of the material world in shaping our sensory perceptions and emotions of the natural world.

Overall, the application of the latest eco-critical approaches to Wordsworth's nature poetry can offer new insights and theoretical extensions to our understanding of the relationship between human beings and nature. It can broaden our understanding of Wordsworth's use of imagery and bring attention to the complex ways in which nature, politics, and culture are interconnected.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

This research paper has explored the relationship between eco-critical approaches and the analysis of Wordsworth's nature poetry, specifically using imagery. By examining the latest eco-critical perspectives, such as eco-feminist, postcolonial, deep ecology, and new materialist approaches, this research paper has extended our understanding of Wordsworth's nature poetry and its relevance to contemporary environmental concerns. In particular, this research paper offers insights into the importance of recognizing the value of nature, showing respect towards it, acknowledging the interconnectedness between humans and the

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environment, and taking action to protect it for future generations. These insights are particularly relevant in the current context of climate change and the anthropogenic epoch, highlighting the importance of addressing these concerns through multidisciplinary approaches that include literary studies and critical theory.

While this research paper is limited by its focus on a select number of poems, eco-critical approaches, and environmental concerns, it nonetheless offers new perspectives and theoretical extensions that can contribute to ongoing debates and discussions regarding the role of literature and critical theory in addressing environmental challenges.

Overall, this research paper underscores the importance of recognizing the significance of nature, encouraging responsible and sustainable practices towards our natural environment, and fostering a more ecologically aware and responsible society.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

Incorporate multiple eco-critical approaches: Future studies on Wordsworth's nature poetry should explore multiple eco-critical approaches, beyond what was explored in this research paper. Exploring a range of perspectives can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the complex relationship between humans and the natural world, as well as how literature can shed light on environmental concerns.

Expand the scope of analysis: Future research on Wordsworth's nature poetry should expand upon the analysis of additional poems. The exploration of different works by Wordsworth can help us better understand the integral role of nature in his poetry, especially as it pertains to the broader themes of the Romantic Movement.

Apply eco-criticism to other literary works: This study has demonstrated the applicability of eco-criticism as a lens through which to explore literature.

Future research on other literary works can further extend the interdisciplinary approach to literature and environmental concerns.

**Incorporate practical applications:** This research study has focused on the theoretical underpinnings of eco-criticism and the impact of Wordsworth's nature poetry on contemporary environmental issues. Future research could focus on practical applications of these insights, for example, developing sustainable policies or initiatives that promote responsibility towards the natural world.

**Encourage interdisciplinary dialogue:** Finally, this research paper underscores the importance of interdisciplinary dialogue between scholars of literature, critical theory, and environmental studies. It is necessary to expand scholarly conversations to include different fields so that we can create more comprehensive solutions to the environmental challenges that we currently face.

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