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## Antithetical Stances towards Nature in Rose Tremain's *Rosie: Scenes from a Vanished Life*

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### Abstract

The present study attempts an ecocritical approach to Rose Tremain's memoirs *Rosie: Scenes from a Vanished Life* (2018). Ecocriticism is concerned with the literary representation of man-environment relationship; it is a literary theory that engages diverse disciplines of humanities and science. Based on this propensity for interdisciplinarity, this study draws on Greek mythology; the Gaia-Prometheus myth; science, James Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis; and ecology, the dichotomous concepts of human-nature connectedness and ecophobia. Dividing the different generations in the memoirs into two, the elders and the youngster, the study investigates how these generations relate to nature; which generation enjoys an interconnected stance to nature, and which one holds an ecophobic attitude. What nature represents to these generations, and the effect of their different allegiances with it on their lives are approached. The study also traces the failures and successes of these members and shows to what extent they are conditioned by their different stances toward nature.

### Key Words

Nature; Rosie; generation; connectedness; ecophobia; Gaia, Prometheus; human-nature relationship



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### Introduction

Rose Tremain (1943 -- ) is a prominent contemporary English novelist and short story writer. Starting from 1976, she has published fifteen novels, children fiction, five collections of short stories, and her autobiography, *Rosie: Scenes from a Vanished Life*, the subject of the present study. Tremain has been both awarded and shortlisted for prestigious literary prizes including the Orange Prize for *The Road Home* (2008), the James Tait Black Memorial Prize for *Sacred Country* (1992), Booker Prize, shortlist, *Restoration* (1989). In addition to these prizes, the United Kingdom awarded Tremain the CBE, the highest-ranking Order of the British Empire award, and DBE, the Most Excellent Order of the British Empire for her contribution to literature. Nature often plays a decisive part in the life of Tremain's characters; it either punishes or awards them, depending on their actions. *Rosie* chronicles only the early stages of Tremain's childhood and adolescence with occasional references to events, mainly literary, of later years of the novelist's life. The present study focuses on how Rose Tremain and her extended family differently relate to nature, an issue which is crucial both for ecocriticism and the expanding field of environmental studies.

Several Green parties had been founded in Europe and New Zealand from the 1970s with aims set within ecological perspectives. These aims meant to tackle and curb environmental crises such as global warming, greenhouse gas emission, and ozone layer damage. Along with the foundation of these Green parties, or even a decade earlier, the emergence of ecocriticism had been prepared for mainly by the publication of Rachel Carson's *Silent*

*Spring* (1962), a book that highlights the ruinous effect of pesticides on the environment. Ecocriticism is a literary discipline which depicts the relationship between humans and nature; the literary study of Green issues in literature is what constitutes the discipline. It is a project that "conjoins environmental issues with the study of literature" (Oppermann, 2011, p. 153). Ecocritics believe that this discipline merits them with "a direct intervention in current social, political, and economic debates surrounding environmental pollution and preservation" (Heise, 1997, p. 4). Ultimately, they hope for contributing to raising awareness of environmental crises and aim to offer solutions for easing them. Different literary tools are used by ecocritics in their ecological pursuit with a genuine belief in their mission. For his part, Greg Garrard (2012) expresses his belief that "To confront the vast, complex, multifarious agglomeration of ecological crises with the apparently flimsy tools of cultural analysis must be seen by the ecocritic as a moral and political necessity, even though the problems seem perpetually to dwarf the solutions" (p.16). Garrard endorses the use of cultural tools of analyses in tackling ecological crises even though they might seem ineffective in the face of such ecological impasse. He believes that moral and literary obligations of ecocritics necessitate their contribution to setting right and reducing fatal environmental practices.

The 1960s is considered by scholars the decade that "marked the beginning of the kind of environmental consciousness that provides the backdrop to ecocriticism" (Marland, 2013, p. 847). The term ecocriticism was first coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in which he investigates the issue of "translat[ing] literature into purgative-redemptive biospheric action" (1996, p.121). The following two decades witnessed the publication of many literary studies with the same ecological and ecocritical interests. But the two journals which formally launched the new literary discipline of ecocriticism are the American *ISLE*, first issued in 1992, and the

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English *Green Letters* launched six years later in the UK. Interestingly, despite the dates of the first issues of these journals, the entry of ecocriticism is neither found in the 2000 edition of J. A. Cuddon's *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*, nor included among the literary theories overviewed in Habib's comprehensive guide to literary criticism: *A History of Literary Criticism: From Plato to the Present* (2005).

In tracing the stages which constitute the fairly recent history of ecocriticism, critics divide them into three major 'waves', though the main characteristics of these waves often overlap. Lawrence Buell, who first used the 'wave' metaphor, does not support the notion of drawing "definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies" (2005, p.17), the idea that each wave has its own set of distinctive characteristics, or that there are crystal clear barriers between each wave of ecocriticism is not of much value here. Since the space of the present study does not allow for a detailed discussion of these waves, only the major characteristics of each one will be reviewed. Generally speaking, the first wave of ecocriticism is concerned with "the recuperation of forms of writing that foregrounded the non-human world and that might foster environmental sensibility" (Marland, 2013, p. 849). Man's instrumental stance toward nature is targeted in an attempt to cultivate ecological awareness. Also, this wave negotiates the cultural divide between humans and nature; the philosophic and religious notions that man is the master of the universe, in addition to anthropocentric concepts, are presented as having a ruinous effect on the environment. A plea for a connection between man and environment is offered in an attempt to converge the long-established cultural divide between man and nature.

The second wave of ecocriticism represents continuity to the issues raised by the first wave. In addition to widening the scope of the debate on the cultural divide between man and nature, this wave attempts to engage "with a broader range of landscapes and genres and a greater internal debate over environmental commitment that

has taken the movement in a more sociocentric direction" (Buell, 2005, p.138), the shift here goes to the man-nature relationship concerning man as a social construct. Further, some ecocritics such as Ursula Heise (1997) and Patrick Murphy (2009) plead for interdisciplinary ecocriticism seeing this move as a "construction of eco-bridges between literature and science" (Heise, p. 5). This view is further supported by Garrard (2012) when he points out that seeking ecological solutions requires engaging "interdisciplinary scholarship that draws on literary and cultural theory, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and environmental history, as well as ecology" (p. 16). Dealing with environmental crises requires integrating diverse branches both of science and humanities to offer comprehensive and effective solutions. For instance, tackling the issue of animal agency requires integrating disciplines such as zoology, economics, forestry, animal behavior, sociology, and folklore to deconstruct the human-animal divide.

The third wave of ecocriticism further pursues the scholarly ecological mission of attempting to offer solutions to current environmental crises. The main target of this wave is achieving cosmopolitanism. Ecocriticism has been dominated by American and British studies, which has raised the alarm for the need to expand the geographical scope of nature-oriented literature. Patrick Murphy (2009) argues for reconsidering the current state of the exclusive ecocriticism discipline and advocates for a "transnational ecocritical theory" which crosses the borders of ecocritical studies.

By that [transnational ecocritical theory] I do not mean a single, unifying theory for ecocritical literary practice around the world. Rather, I mean a theory that would transect, that is, cut across, the limitations of national perspectives and boundaries. It would do so both in terms of the theories, concepts, and beliefs on which it would draw for developing critical approaches and methods and in terms of the kinds of literary and cultural texts that it would compare, analyze, and

appreciate. Although, not always treating examples beyond a particular national literature, practitioners of such theory would always seek an awareness of different practices and possibilities for literary production. (p. 63)

Murphy's plea aims to offer an inclusive and wider global scope of ecocritical works, which includes diverse nations with diverse cultures and ethnicities. This trans-cultural approach is likely to provide a comprehensive view of the present ecological situation. In his support of Murphy's plea, Slovic (2010) notes that this third wave is characterized by "strong comparatist impulses . . . raising questions about the possibility of post national and post-ethnic visions of human experience of the environment" (p. 7). Comparative studies of these trans-ethnic and trans-national works would, hopefully, lead to breaking barriers among ethnicities and nations. This trend does not aim to wipe out identities, on the contrary, it is expected to lead to "consider[ing] the importance of retaining ethnic identities . . . [and] placing ethnically inflected experience in broader, comparative contexts" (Slovic, 2010, p. 7). It is expected that the merging together of ecological, cultural, and ethnic studies will add more dimensions to ecocriticism.

One of the recently added dimensions to ecocriticism is Ecophobia. Simon Estock (2011) uses the term "ecophobia" when he attempts to draw attention to "a growing need to talk about how contempt for the natural world is a definable and recognizable discourse" (p. 2). Estock explains that Ecophobia refers to such an unfavourable attitude which he defines as "an irrational and groundless hatred of the natural world" (2009, p. 208). The term had been used earlier by David Sobel to refer to "a fear of ecological problems and the natural world. Fear of oil spills, rainforest destruction, whale hunting, acid rain, the ozone hole, and Lyme disease. Fear of just being outside." (qtd in Estock, 2011, pp. 3-4). Despite the difference between the two definitions, which Estock (2011) shows a keenness to highlight, the term ecophobia ascribes

to the growing interest in investigating the reasons behind ecological crises. It is noteworthy that in tackling Ecophobia, Estock pleads for integrating it into ecocriticism as he sees that,

Theorizing ecophobia does not mean offering a new perspective, one that ecocritics have somehow missed; of course, ecocritics have long theorized on matters of anthropocentrism. Theorizing ecophobia does not dismiss but rather builds on that history, offering a vocabulary that is new, a vocabulary for conceptualizing something we do (and have been doing for a long time) and for which we haven't had appropriate descriptive or theoretical words. (2011, p.5)

Estock does not claim to have developed a new perspective which has not been included in ecocriticism studies; he offers new terminology for issues that touch on man-nature relationship. This new vocabulary, hopefully, will help in pinpointing ecological crises, hence, help toward solving them.

### **Why Gaia hypothesis?**

Gaia and Prometheus are two creatures of Greek mythology; one is the goddess of Earth, and the other is a titan, who is viewed as a supporter of humans. Gaia is attributed a positive image for she is shown to be "the giver of good advice" (Bevan, 1902, p. xxxi). She is also represented as the one who gives Zeus "sage instruction" through which the latter "won his ultimate victory" (Bevan, 1902, p. xxvi) over his enemies. The myth goes on to relate that Zeus was antipathetic to mankind, that he has "taken no account of mankind on his accession to power, and to have regarded them rather as rubbish" (Bevan, 1902, p. xxi). The hostile attitude of Zeus is counteracted by support offered by Prometheus for mankind; the Titan steals "fire from heaven in a hollow fennel-stalk and gave it to men, Zeus for punishment chained him up, and set an eagle upon him to devour his liver" (Bevan, 1902, p. xx); the major

consequence of this act led to viewing Prometheus as a champion and "benefactor of humanity, who successfully deceives Zeus" (Loney, 2014, p. 505). The gift of fire given to humans symbolizes bringing them "wisdom . . . and all the sorts of crafts it will teach them – from writing to building houses, from agriculture to medicine" (Franssen, 2014, p. 24). Prometheus' support for humans is not positively viewed though; the titan is represented in the myth as "subtle, shifting-scheming" (Hesiod, 1988, p.18). Based on that Greek myth, the relationship between Prometheus and Gaia often symbolizes that between humans and nature; it is often seen as an antithetical relationship that produces a ruinous impact on planet Earth.

The binary division between the human and non-human or man and nature has often been emphasized by many philosophers. The views of Enlightenment philosophers, in particular, those of Rene Descartes, are often mentioned to exemplify such a dualism; they expose a mindset that denies animals any sort of intelligence or even the ability to speak a language of their own. In his *Discourse on Method and Meditations on First Philosophy*, the French philosopher asserts, "the fact that they [animals] do something better than we do does not prove that they have any intelligence . . . rather it proves that . . . it is nature that acts in them, according to the disposition of their organs just as we see that a clock composed exclusively of wheels and springs can count the hours and measure time more accurately than we can with all our carefulness" (1998, p.33). Descartes admits that animals have organs similar to humans', but he uses this evidence to deny them any intellectual ability. If animals excel in some activities, this, by no means represents evidence of human peerness. Cartesian philosophy eventually leads up to machine-like functioning of animal organs, which is often quoted by eco-critics and environmentalists alike in their investigation of the reasons behind man's sense of superiority over non-human animals. More importantly, this philosophy signifies the concept of anthropocentrism which highlights a "consistent set of

explicit and implicit concepts . . . and ideologies that place the human being at the center of the Earth . . . This worldview is often associated with a utilitarian attitude towards Nature . . . without taking into reasonable account the needs and rights of other life forms and Earth systems themselves" (Verhagen, 2008, p. 3). Anthropocentrism emphasizes human superiority to other living (and non-living) organisms, which often leads to unnecessary and irrational practices that create chaotic exploitation of Earth's natural resources. Besides, anthropocentrism marks the dualistic nature of western thought which often sets diverse barriers between humans and nature, white race and other races, culture and nature, civilized and uncivilized . . . etc. However, other philosophers such as John Dewey expressed a rejection of binary opposition between man and nature. Dewey's philosophy advocates conciliatory views that trigger the need to overcome these "crippling dualisms of western modernity" (Reid and Taylor, 2003, p.2).

In the field of science, another conciliatory theory is expressed by the English scientist James Lovelock and the American Lynn Margulis. In the 1970s, these scientists developed their Gaia hypothesis about the earth's system. Gaia is the name driven from Gaea, which had been suggested to Lovelock by his friend William Golding, the Noble laureate novelist. Lovelock points out the interrelatedness of organisms.

[T]he temperature, oxidation state, acidity, and certain aspects of the rocks and waters are at any time kept constant, and that this homeostasis is maintained by active feedback processes operated automatically and unconsciously by the biota. (1990, p.19)

This hypothesis indicates the inter-dependence of all planet Earth's organisms and that "the living organisms regulate the atmosphere in their own interest" (Lovelock, 2003, p. 769). The theory echoes the essence of ecology, which is defined as "the study of the interactions between organism and the environment" (Buell, 2005, p. 139). The interrelationship between earth and living organisms is

evident in the hypothesis because life is maintained despite the long age of planet earth. Elements such as air and water are not exhausted despite the dependence of a countless number of living organisms, man included, on them for their survival.

The publication of Gaia hypothesis became a huge success with readers; Lovelock works and interviews have been widely debated in diverse fields such as science, literature, and economy. And though the hypothesis is a work of science, it, as Ursula Heise (2008) has noted, "became shorthand for holistic approaches to the natural environment that emphasized balances, interdependencies, and the need for preservation rather than scientific analysis and technological exploitation" (p. 24). Furthermore, one of the messages that Lovelock repeatedly sends to people is that "humans need to behave to preserve conditions that make life possible on Earth" (Ramage and Shipp, 2009, p. 249). The technological development and the consequent global warming and gas emission jeopardize the harmonious relationship between earth and living organisms, including humans. Thus, Prometheus fire or man's technology is certainly viewed as having an antithetical attitude towards Gaia Earth.

For the purpose of the present study, nature and environment will be used interchangeably as their definitions prove to be highly interrelated. *OED* defines environment as "the natural world, as a whole or in a particular geographical area, especially as affected by human activity." Nature, on the other hand, is defined as "the material world . . . plants, animals, and other features and products of the earth itself."

### **Concepts of Positive Human-Environment Relations**

In studying the human-environment relations, scholars of diverse disciplines attempted different approaches. Several concepts have been developed to highlight positive aspects of man-nature relationship; environmental identity, anthropomorphism, biocentrism are but some of them. In the field of psychology, the

core of connectedness with nature is believed to be "cognitive;" it is a bond that refers to "*the extent to which an individual includes nature within his/her cognitive representation of self*" (Schultz, 2002, p. 67). Our self-perception draws on our stance to nature, which in turn takes part in understanding ourselves. Further, Susan Clayton (2003) describes "environmental identity" as "one part of the way in which people shape their self-concept: a sense of connection to some part of the nonhuman natural environment, based on history, emotional attachment, and/or similarity, that affects the ways in which we perceive and act toward the world; a belief that the environment is important to us and an important part of who we are" (pp.45-6). This concept acknowledges the emotional bond between humans and nature as well as the importance of the part played by nature in shaping our identity. Another positive dimension of man-nature relationship is Anthropomorphism, Buell defines it as "The attribution of human feelings or traits to nonhuman beings or objects or natural phenomena" (2005, p.134). Many literary and artistic works make use of this concept; both living and non-living organisms are personified, often given an agency of their own, and show their defiance of human practices.

Biocentrism is yet another positive aspect of man-environment relationship; its emphasis is on the moral rights of all living organisms. Paul W. Taylor (2011) pleads for the "inherent worth" of non-humans; he points out, "To have the attitude of respect for nature is to regard the wild plants and animals of the Earth's natural ecosystems as possessing inherent worth (p.71). Since each other species and community of living organisms has "a good of its own"; they have the desire to survive and work hard toward this goal, therefore, these creatures deserve to have their rights respected. Frans C. Verhagen (2008) describes the essence of biocentrism as a "consistent set of beliefs, assumptions, biases or ideologies that place the biosphere at the center of a person's way of life, thought and feeling. It represents a partnership model between humans and Nature" (p.7). The nature of this concept is both ethical egalitarian

as it advocates that non-human organisms have the right to live, and that humans should respect and observe these rights.

These concepts of diverse disciplines share the common ground of defying the traditional views of the human-nature divide, with their ruinous impact on Gaia Earth.

### **The Gaia-Prometheus Generations**

In Rose Tremain's *Rosie*, there are three generations in the family of little Rosie; her maternal grandparents, Roland and Mabel Dudley; parents, Jane and Keith; and her sister Jo. However, age is not the only divide; the attitude of each generation towards nature represents another divide. The seniors hold the traditional anthropocentric dichotomous attitude, which is, in some cases, labeled "ecophobia", this will be presently investigated. The juniors, though, experience a sense of connectedness to nature. The opening of the memoirs establishes the first sign of an ecological relationship or a strong interaction between nature and humankind, the former is represented by birds, the latter by Rosie in her infancy. The writer remembers lying in her "pram and looking up at a white sky. Across the sky, some lines are drawn, like musical staves. Fluttering shapes arrive and land on the staves: birds on telegraph wires" (Tremain, 2018, p.1). This infantile memory represents Rosie's first allegiance with nature, birds, and clear sky, though her mother has often rejected this memory because she believes that "Babies can't capture anything" (Tremain, 2018, p.1). The memory decides the pattern of such a relationship and signals the first stage toward cultivating an environmental identity. A few years on, during her early school years, this allegiance is further emphasized by Rosie's anticipation of going to the countryside to spend the annual three holidays "Christmas . . . Easter and summer" (Tremain, 2018, p.2), and description of her love of the place as "unaccountable" (2). Yet, in her description of her grandparents' rural residence, Rosie is keen on making a distinction between man-made places and nature.

The big house stood on a hill in Hampshire, where the wind was always strong. It was never a beauty. The colour of its brick was too screechy a coral red. Its white-painted gables were too massive. It reminded people of a lumpy three-masted ship, riding its waves of green and beautiful land. (Tremain, 2018, p. 2)

In the above passage, the house is described as big, but the wind is described as always strong, which signifies its prominence and constant power; the house, though big, is diminished and dwarfed by nature. The image she creates is that of a boat, the house, sailing in the sea, the surrounding landscape, which emphasizes little Rosie's perception of the prominence of nature over man-made objects. Beauty is yet another dimension of this early perception; this house is denied beauty, and at the same time nature is perceived abundant with beauty. Rosie's allegiance with the landscape liberates her of traditional anthropocentric attitude which often engages in humans' attitude towards nature.

However, the juniors of this big house do not enjoy a similar harmonious relationship with the family seniors. The memoirs are dominated by scenes of troubled relations, especially between Rosie and her mother, created by the former's feeling of deprivation of maternal love. As for the father, he is almost absent from his family's life as he seems to be preoccupied with his literary career. The relationship between Keith and his family is further deteriorated because he deserts them when Rosie is less than ten years old. Yet, the youngsters' stance to nature helps in soothing the effect of their troubled family relationship; Rosie expresses how she and her sister prefer to be outdoors in nature, rather than indoor with the seniors. She describes their manner of leaving the dining room and the big house after finishing breakfast as "running straight out of the dining room . . . to . . . the restless elms . . . out into the ever-unfolding green spaces . . . pushing your bikes towards a great wood of beech and fir" (Tremain, 2018, p. 6). The girls' speed and eagerness to go

to the wood indicate a preference of the company of nature to that of the seniors which is a manifestation of a further ecological bond. This stance echoes Lovelock's assumption that "in a Gaian world our species . . . is simply an inevitable part of the natural scene" (2000, p.118). The girl's interconnectedness with nature is non-hierarchical; her description of the elms as "restless" signifies a propensity for identification with trees. Rosie's anthropomorphism is evident in sharing the trees a feeling of restlessness; her impatience to leave the family house makes her feel restless.

In their study of the relationship between children and trees, Ulrich Gebhard and his colleagues point out that "perceiving an object as humanlike may evoke feelings of empathy for the object that permit it to be regarded as something worthy of moral consideration" (2003, p.92), thus, anthropomorphism helps towards maturity, and refined feelings, marked by having 'empathy' for living organisms. Further, Edith Cobb points out that "the child's ecological sense of continuity with nature is . . . aesthetic and infused with joy in the power to know and to be. These equal, for the child, a sense of the power to make" (1977, p. 23). Children's ecological relationship is seen both as epistemological and emotional nurtures; it provides children with the knowledge that extends beyond the limits of formal education. Cobb adds that "The exaltation that the child feels is a passionate response to an awareness of his own psychophysical growth potential as a continuity of nature's behavior. This pattern of response is intimately connected with the needs of mental (i.e., spiritual) health" (1977, 33). Cobb's views on the effect of children's interconnectedness with nature further suggest that it provides them with mental health, therefore, maturity, both needed in dealing with life's occasional crises. Accordingly, when Keith deserts his family, Rosie and her sister show an understanding of the situation which surpasses that of their mother. The little girls do not panic or even grieve for the loss of their father, "We didn't cry. Jane wept and clung to Nan. We just sat there, saying nothing. Perhaps we were

thinking that life wouldn't change much without Keith, because he had hardly ever spent any time with us" (Tremain, 2018, p.38). Rosie's father neither showed much affection for his children nor spent enough time with them, so when he completely deserts the family, they realize that this already absent paternal affection will not be much missed.

Alternatively, the older generation lacks this sense of connectedness with nature, which affects their well-being. In his study on the relationship between humans and nature, Schultz (2002) describes what leads to our separation from nature.

We are all a part of nature . . . our bodies are formed of Nature . . . . Yet as individuals, societies, and a species, we spend our lives trying to escape from nature. We separate ourselves from the natural environment with clothes, cars, houses . . . we live our lives as though the natural environment was something abhorrent - something that needs to be tamed and controlled. (p.61)

Man prefers to spend time inside built environment, a preference that suggests a tendency to escape the natural environment. The more built environment we create, the more we alienate ourselves from natural environment. This attitude goes against the grain of our being part of nature and the convection of our oneness with nature. The seniors of Rosie's family prefer the snugness of an indoor life with an urban style; they intentionally separate themselves from the natural environment, and act in a way that shows signs of indifference to it. Rosie's grandparents "had created a beautiful world around themselves" (Tremain, 2018, p. 5), yet they prefer the built environment to the natural one. Their daily routine is described as follows, "The grown-ups mainly put themselves into a drawing-room existence, where they smoked and drank and played cards . . . and waited for meals to arrive" (Tremain, 2018, p.13). This life style indicates their preference to enjoy what Schultz calls a sense of "protection, safety, and an increased comfort of living" (Schultz, 2002, p. 62). On the other hand, spending time with nature leads to

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humans having “a sense of intimacy, or at least caring, for . . . place” (Schultz, 2002, p. 68). These refined feelings are not limited only to place, or conditioned by childhood, their effect extends to the well-being of man during the different stages of life cycle.

Philosophers with ecological interests who stated views on man-nature relationship, stress the importance of maintaining a harmonious relation with the environment and man’s benefit from it. John Dewey is one of the American philosophers who strongly stressed the importance connecting educational methods to natural environment, arguing that education “should embrace the substantive human experience with the green world rather than artificial divisions between . . . humans and nature” (Armitage, 2003, p. 65). The importance of nature to humans goes way beyond the primary stage of their education; Dewey believes in the positive effect of human connectedness with nature both in childhood and later phases of life. He pleads the necessity of "the adaptation of nature and life and mind to one another . . .objective nature lends itself to man's sense of fitness, order and beauty" (p. 276). Dewey seeks integration between nature, life, and mind in a complementary functioning that leads to mental well-being. He is keen to describe nature as “objective” because he believes that it “exists independently of human cognition and thus can receive claims for its intrinsic value” (Armitage, 2003, p. 54). Dewey emphasizes the ecocentric view that endows nature with an entity of its own regardless of human material attitudes and needs which lead to its exploitation. As human needs vary; they are conditioned by time and place, accordingly, the value of nature is, from human perspective, relative, meanwhile, nature remains indifferent and independent of the diverse human stances toward it. Thus, Dewey’s view goes against the grain of anthropocentrism which elevates humans to all Earth organisms.

More recently, in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, the importance of man's allegiance with nature is also supported by Clayton's view that "[t]he natural environment may enable a person to become both a

more perceptive knower and a more positively valued known. We understand ourselves better and like ourselves more" (2003, p.49). Clayton's emphasis on the positive effect of holding an ecological relation with nature extends to our cognitive ability and self-understanding. Man, and nature are not seen as separate entities; there is a common ground that they both share; nature here is shown to be the provider of man's well-being.

The older generation in Tremain's *Rosie*, acts in a way that shows its deprivation of the afore mentioned well-being. Rosie's mother considers nature dirt to be cleaned when she leads her kids, immediately after their return from outdoor-play, "away to the bathroom, perhaps complaining . . . that we stank of chicken manure" (Tremain, 2018, p. 26). The mother's conduct corresponds to Estock's view on human history which is "often a history of controlling the natural environment . . . of maintaining personal hygiene to protect ourselves from diseases and parasites that can kill us, and of first imagining agency and intent in nature and then quashing that imagined agency and intent" (2011, p. 6). Dirt is often associated with nature, which is noted by Cynthia Rosenfeld (2019) to be an aspect of Prometheus discourse.

The mother's haste to clean her children, in addition to her urban life style which mostly keeps her inside the family's built environment, signify her antagonization of nature. Her assumption that her children's being in nature necessitates immediate cleaning, indicates a belief in nature as a potential threat to their life. Her fear of their being contaminated by dirt, therefore catching disease, motivates her to rush them into the bathroom. Endowing nature with harmful effect and mainly focusing on its negative aspect: the bad smell, and acting in accordance indicate a further antagonization of nature, hence a further estrangement from it. In addition, in telling her children that they stink of chicken manure shows that the mother conceives nature mainly by its apparent unpleasant characteristics.

Rosie's mother detachment from nature has its grave consequence; it deprives her of the well-being prescribed by Dewey

and Clayton. The crisis of her husband's desertion causes her panic, grief, and desolation to the extent that she leaves it to her daughters' nan to tell them the bad news because she "couldn't get the words out" (Tremain, 2018, p. 38). She inflicts misery on her daughters by taking them away from their school, and as Rosie puts it "from . . . friends, from the games . . . from the warmth and guidance of good teachers, and worst of all, away from Nan" (p.39). She decides to send her daughters to a faraway boarding school because she "needed to be left alone" (p.39). Rosie's enumeration of what she and her sister miss; the social and physical environment of the school, marks the scale of their loss. Many social and psychological studies have established a strong relationship between school environment and students' wellbeing (Topia-Fonllem et al. 2020), both social and physical environments of schools are interrelated not only to academic performance of the students but also to "their life satisfaction and social life" (OECD 2017). Indeed, the mother's decision indicates her overlooking the fact that school environment is crucially important for the wellbeing of children. They are taken away from a school environment with which they are well familiar and strongly attached, especially when "warmth and guidance" are missing in their family.

A further evidence of the negative impact of the mother's ecophobia, hence her deprivation of self-understanding and lack of wellbeing, is yet another grievous decision she takes a few years later on. She almost ruins Rosie's academic life by refusing her permission to join Oxford University though the latter has often entertained the dream of joining this prestigious academy. Rosie tells of how "it was so easy to conceive a clichéd picture of myself already there cycling along the Broad with copies of *Paradise Lost* and *Hamlet* in a wicker basket, with clever new friends by my side" (Tremain, 2018, p. 153). This dream echoes Rosie's literary talent which needs academic training and study to be polished. Instead, the mother decides to send her daughter to some "finishing school in Switzerland" (Tremain, p.161). This is a school that prepares girls

for "secretarial work" (Tremain, p. 174), a career seen by teachers and students "to facilitate the dreams and ambitions of others, the male of the species" (Tremain p. 175). The school and its curricula prepare students for the service of some businessman or a diplomat, thus, this kind of education does not only deprive Rosie of polishing her literary talent, but it also facilitates following a career that is completely irrelevant to her plans. Hence, the scale of profound pain inflicted on her by Jane's decision.

However, in Switzerland, Rosie proves to be capable of reconnecting with nature even if the academic issue of this exile causes her confusion and disappointment. She remembers experiencing "a feeling of profound disorientation. And some anger" (Tremain, p. 169). This poignancy does not hinder her from taking part in agrarian activities though she lacks the required experience.

...I remember that I found great consolation from how things *looked* in this part of Switzerland . . . Perhaps, in a world that once again felt random and wrong to me, I responded to its orderliness.

When the time for the grape harvest, the *vendange*, came around, Mademoiselle Clara and Miss Allen allowed us to spend part of our weekends helping with this . . . We probably picked grapes in 'the wrong way,' but at least we didn't have to be paid.

... I remember that we all got hot in the fields . . . (Tremain, pp. 173-4)

Rosie does not do that work for a living; it is a sheer voluntary work. This participation with the local community in a work that directly relates to nature proves that her constant interconnectedness with the environment can be a healing power at a time of crisis.

On the other hand, Rosie's constant biocentric stance goes against the grain of what Heise refers to as "place-oriented discourse associated with movements such as . . . bioregionalism"

(2008, p. 29). These movements push towards human attachment to their private places and strengthen ties with the local environment. This strong bond is boosted by the commitment to one's place, having good knowledge of the local community's habits, history, and traditions. Thus, these movements prioritize local commitments to the global. Furthermore, place-oriented concepts have been developed in several disciplines such as economy, geography, anthropology, philosophy, and literature, thus defying concepts that promote globalization. The ongoing confrontation between the two camps is summed up by Heise (2008) as "Identities defined by nation or nationalism tended to be viewed as oppressive, while those shaped by hybridity, migration, borderlands, diaspora, nomadism, and exile were valued not only as more politically progressive but also as potential grounds for resistance to national Hegemonies . . . ." (p. 57). The second camp accords with globalization that seeks an international identity that goes beyond borders and cultures. The ecological dimension of globalization eco-cosmopolitanism, which Heise defines as, "an attempt to envision individuals and groups as part of planetary "imagined communities" of both human and nonhuman kinds" (2008, p. 61), echoes a stance that wipes away national and cultural borders utilizing absorption in activities related to ecology. Rosie's biocentric stance fits her into this eco-cosmopolitanism which, eventually, relieves her feelings of disappointment and frustration.

Rosie's connectedness with nature culminates in an experience she goes through when she is about fourteen years old. This experience proves to be a decisive one; it is when she decides to be a writer when she realizes that writing is going to be her chosen future career.

But there is also one memorable moment, a summertime epiphany, when I was thirteen or fourteen, which confirmed in me the certainty that writing was the *only* thing I wanted to do, and that my life would be somehow half lived . . . if I couldn't establish this at the centre of my world.

It was a summer afternoon at Crofton . . . The sun was just beginning a showy descent above the hayfield . . .

I . . . stood still on the path. The perfume of the hay . . . the sky the colour of coral, the silence surrounding me – all combined to fill me, suddenly with a profound feeling of wonder, a fleeting sense of the marvelous, which, in its intensity, was almost a visionary experience (Tremain, 2018, p.122-3).

This is a moment of deep meditation both on identity and the future; from now on her future is being decided and formed. This epiphany is labeled by human ecologists as "environmental epiphany" (Vining and Storie p.156). The experience is marked by a strong sense of place, and it does not occur in an indoor space, but in an outdoor green space, which accords with human ecologists' conviction that "Natural outdoor environments play an essential . . . role in epiphanic experiences" (Vining and Storie, 2018, p.160). It is noteworthy that as young as she is, Rosie can still experience such moments of vision; human ecologists assert that "these experiences can happen at any time of life, even as early as toddlerhood, and that they are often very memorable experiences that persist for years" (Vining and Storie, 2018, p. 172). On the other hand, the scale of humans' relatedness to nature plays a vital part in shaping identities. Susan Clayton (2003) emphasizes the link between identity and nature "The natural environment thus seems to provide a particularly good source of self-definition, based on an identity formed through interaction with the natural world and on self-knowledge obtained in an environmental context (51). Rosie's interaction with nature has always been both healing and illuminating in difficulties faced in her life. Hence, if nature has proven to be both a healer for Rosie's troubled family relationship and an escape from her unpleasant town-life, now, at her early teens, it provides her with a strong sense of identity and enlightens her about her future by means of epiphany.

On the other hand, this moment seems to separate her from the present and directly relates her to the future. The only clear connection here is that with nature; she discharges herself from any human connection and achieves this epiphany by integrating with nature. Her sense of time is also integrated with nature; time here is not mechanical, it is solar marked by observing the natural phenomenon of sunset. Rosie's avoidance of telling time on a clock signifies her intentional discharge of artifacts of industrial civilization, Prometheus gift to man. Her other senses are further engaged; smell, sight, and hearing are proven to be alert, adding to the poignancy of the experience. Accordingly, benefitting from nature brings her closer to Lovelock's Gaia's hypothesis which promotes the self-regulating system of organisms. At this epiphanic moment, it is Rosie who reaches a life- long decision as a consequence of such a connection. Further, her detailed enumeration of natural phenomena and how they have led toward her perceptive moment imply her willingness to acknowledge indebtedness to nature as well as her response to the singularity of the place.

## Conclusion

Ecocriticism is a literary approach that allows for the engagement of diverse branches both humanities and science. The present study draws on this interdisciplinarity and engages the Greek myth of Gaia and Prometheus, Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis, and the ecological concepts of biocentrism and ecophobia. In Rose Tremain's memoirs *Rosie: Scenes from a Vanished Life*, the family members who belong to two different generations, share the same immediate environment, their country house. Yet these generations hold different attitudes towards their rural environment.

The old generation builds a country house and chooses to live there, yet it does not connect with its immediate environment. Its preference for indoors- activities both exhibits an ecophobic stance to nature and aligns it with Prometheus; it is a stance that creates dire consequences both on its members' lives and the decisions they make for others. The values of being positive knowers and the experience of mental well-being which humans enjoy through the adaptation of nature, life, and mind to one another, are missing in the lives of these seniors. They suffer an inability to properly handle their family crises which, in consequence, results in panic, muddled thinking, and making wrong decisions that prove disappointing and frustrating for others

On the other hand, the young generation is proven to be complying with Lovelock's Gaia hypothesis which promotes views of Earth organisms' interconnectedness and interdependence. The biocentrism of this generation, represented by Rosie, compensates for her troubled relationship with her parents. Enjoying a positive environmental identity provides Rosie, at an early age, with maturity through which she overcomes deep family crises. Both biocentrism and environmental identity help Rosie toward an epiphany through which she decides for herself her lifelong literary career.

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