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An Ecocritical Content Analysis of Man-Nature Relationship in Jesse Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky"



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Abstract: *This study performs an Ecocritical content analysis of the representation of man and nature relationship as represented in Jesse Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky". The key themes focused on are Man-Nature relationships, Landscape as Character, Human Interaction with the Environment, and Ecological Consciousness, environmental motifs and the portrayal of the natural world within the text. The purpose of the study is to explore the Ecocritical dimensions portrayed in "Clearing in the Sky." The content analysis investigates the representation of nature, animals, birds, mountains, and fruit in the text and the complex interplay between humans and the natural environment as portrayed in Stuart's his most influential work. The findings contribute to a deeper understanding of the ecological dimensions of man-nature relationships, and their impact on humans within the literary text. Jesse Stuart has portrayed a positive picture of a man-nature relationship and reinforced the close bond between Jess's father and nature.*

Key Words: Ecocritical, Nature, Man, Relationship, Content Analysis

Introduction

Man-Nature Relationship

Meyer (2015) and Artmann (2023) are of the view that if nature is viewed and handled as a lifeless and soulless object, ecological destruction may not affect humans. The exploration of the complex relationship between humanity and the natural world has become a dominant trend in the contemporary literary era. This research conducts a content analysis by employing an Ecocritical lens to Jesse Stuart's celebrated work, "Clearing in the Sky." The researches prove that the man-nature relationship has long been a topic of research both within academic texts and on the societal level. As an interdisciplinary approach, Ecocriticism looks at how nature is portrayed in literature. It investigates the relationships and

interdependence of man on the natural world. This study conducts Ecocritical content analysis of Jesse Stuart's, "Clearing in the Sky". The analysis explores the underlying ecological themes and their implications for understanding the man and nature relationship through an Ecocritical lens. The use of ecological setting and vocabulary makes "Clearing in the Sky" a literary text for performing Ecocritical content analysis. The story revolves around the theme of the close bond between man and nature. The text can be contextualized within the realms of Ecocriticism. Walsh et al. (2020) and Beery et al. (2023) maintain that Aristoteles and Descartes see humans and nature as distinct entities. They view human intelligence as superior though defending people's resource-intensive consumption and mobility patterns. They have been contributing to the current social-ecological crises.

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Literary analysis has consistently focused on the strong relationship that exists between humans and the natural world along with the interactions that occur between man and natural surroundings through a variety of perspectives. This study is grounded in the broader context of Ecocriticism that examines the portrayal of nature and environmental concerns in literature. The content analysis contributes to the understanding of this close bond. By conducting an Ecocritical analysis of Jesse Stuart's literary masterpiece, "Clearing in the Sky," the study develops a wordlist of various categories related to nature, natural environment and settings. The contemporary discourse is presently being shaped by environmental issues. Viewed in this context, modern literature becomes a vital source for researchers to reflect on human relationships with nature and the natural world. The aim of such research is to contribute to the growing body of Ecocritical texts for the exploration of the multifaceted layers of the man-nature relationship. The study offers valuable insights into ecological awareness offered in Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky". According to Niemelä et al. (2023), diverse human-nature relations coexist when considered from the perspective of the sociocultural nature of human-nature relations.

Background

The present study conducts the ecological content analysis of "Clearing in the Sky" by Jesse Stuart to investigate the significance and the role of the man-nature relationship in the Ecological text context. It emphasizes that it is significant to comprehend and assess the strength and the impact of man-nature relationships through Ecocritical content analysis.

Significance of the Research

The study is significant as it explores man and nature relationship in the context of ecological perspectives. The analysis is done by developing a wordlist of different categories. It emphasizes the importance of examining how nature, animals, birds, mountains, and fruit are portrayed in literary works. The results of representation lead to comprehending the subtleties of the man and nature interactions. Such an approach adds to the analyses of modern environmental texts for their wider ecological implications.

Research Objectives

The primary objectives of the research are as follows:

Content Analysis

The Ecocritical analysis of the text is based on content analysis methodology. The analysis focuses on an in-depth analysis of vocabulary items, themes and treatment of nature, natural objects and the natural environment. This method leads to a quantitative approach for exploring the text and comprehending the concept of the interaction between man and nature as expressed in "Clearing in the Sky."

Ecocritical Lens

The ecocritical framework is applied to explore the ecological dimensions of the text. The study uncovers the deeper layers of meaning embedded within Stuart's work by analyzing the representation of nature, environmental issues and the human-nature interface presented in Clearing in the Sky. The main purpose is to achieve an in-depth Ecocritical analysis of the selected text. The study focuses on the systematic exploration of the relationship between man and nature as the key ecological theme present in the text.

Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study were formulated as follows; 1) to analyze the relationship between humans and nature in Clearing in the Sky and 2) to reveal how the characters of the story perceive or come to realize the relationship between humans and nature.

1. To explore Jesse Stuart's depiction of the natural environment in Clearing in the Sky.
2. To depict the role of nature in shaping the characters' experiences and relationships.
3. To trace the impact of the natural world on human activities in Clearing in the Sky.
4. Identify the language and imagery used in the text reflect Ecocritical perspectives, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human and natural elements.
5. To trace the contribution of the text to an Ecocritical understanding.

Research Questions

The research questions are presented to guide the analysis and investigation. These questions address the role of nature words, animal and bird imagery, mountain references, and fruit descriptions in the text. They also aim to uncover the underlying messages and

implications of these representations within the context of the man and nature relationship. Here are some research questions:

1. How does Jesse Stuart depict the natural environment in "Clearing in the Sky"?
2. What role does nature play in shaping the characters' experiences and relationships?
3. To what extent does the language and imagery used in the text reflect Ecocritical perspectives, emphasizing the interconnectedness of human and natural elements?
4. How does the representation of rural landscapes and ecosystems in "Clearing in the Sky" contribute to the broader discourse on regional ecologies and environmental concerns?
5. In what ways does Jesse Stuart address the impact of human activities on the natural world in "Clearing in the Sky," and how does this contribute to an Ecocritical understanding of the text?

Limitations

This study has some limitations of the research, including the focus on a single literary text and the subjective nature of content analysis. It also recognizes the potential challenges in interpreting the author's intentions and the limitations of content analysis as a research method.

Literature Review

Soga and Gaston (2024) assert that according to a recent meta-analysis, exposure to nature is positively correlated with pro-environmental behaviours. Ecocriticism serves as a mediator between humanity and the natural world, creating a welcoming, supportive, and cultured atmosphere for social beings in the universe. In a recent analysis by Ives et al. (2017), a plea was made for a more comprehensive exploration of the bond between humans and nature. To aid this endeavour and elucidate the reasons and methods for reestablishing people's connection with nature, our discussion is structured around the five nature connection categories identified by Ives et al. (2017): (1) material, (2) experiential, (3) cognitive, (4) emotional, and (5) philosophical connections. According to Collado et al. (2013), these various dimensions of connection to nature do not operate in isolation—in reality, they interact with and are influenced by one another. Engaging with the natural

world through direct experiences can influence one's understanding of the environment and foster positive attitudes toward it. The worldwide research trends of interpreting literary texts for comprehension, exploration, and analysis contribute to the expanding body of knowledge. This pattern not only expands our understanding but also opens up new avenues for research. Literary texts are explored and analyzed in different styles. Ecocritical text analysis has recently been acknowledged as a prominent style in the global research domains. Frederick (2012) opines that modern ecological awareness highlights the need for preserving a subtle balance between the natural environment and humanity. A state with plants, animals, birds and humans living together in a harmonious coexistence that is without overwhelming or causing harm to others is known as an ideal ecological state. Buell (1995) argues that all works of literature, even when they do not directly address environmental issues, by definition comprise elements of the environment. According to Garrad (2004), the Ecocriticism approach has gained widespread acceptance in literary studies, particularly in America, since the early 1990s. Ecocriticism underscores the idea that the environment shapes human nature and, reciprocally, humans significantly impact the natural world. This approach challenges the conventional belief in human dominance and the right to control and exploit nature, advocating instead for a more comprehensive and sustainable relationship with the environment. Grotfelty (2005) highlights that Ecocritical theory delves into the "interconnections between nature and culture" (p.21). Expanding on this, Grotfelty (2005) contends in the same work that humans bear responsibility for environmental issues. She highlights that Ecocriticism includes a wide range of genres beyond nature writing, as long as the pieces delve into ecological consciousness. As a result, the analysis of the connection between humans and the natural world emerges as a significant focus in Ecocritical research. Soga and Gaston (2023) state that the effectiveness of biodiversity protection may be impacted by Nature Connection (NC), also known as Connection to Nature, which presents a viable technique for bringing about the behavioural shift. Clark (2011) notes that Ecocritics challenge anthropocentrism and the prevalent belief that the natural world should primarily be viewed as a resource for humans. They also critically examine shifts in ideas about the material and cultural foundations of modern society.

Previous Studies

Apriati's (2013) thesis, titled "A Study of the Interaction between Humans and Nature in the Children's Book Julie by Jean Craighead George (An Ecocritical Examination)," delves into the complex dynamics between people and the natural world as portrayed in the mentioned children's book.

In Basu's (2020) article, "Examining the Connection between Humanity and the Environment in Amitav Ghosh's The Hungry Tide," the emphasis is on the interplay between humans and the natural surroundings depicted in Ghosh's novel. Basu investigates how the characters in the story engage with their surroundings, specifically the Sundarbans mangrove forest in India. The study evaluates a number of factors, including character portrayal, thematic development, and the use of descriptive language. The purpose is to determine how the characters' interactions with nature affect their identities and relationships.

Shah and Kumari (2019) in order to explore the novel's ecological themes conduct an eco-critical analysis of Khaled Hosseini's "And the Mountains Echoed." They focus on the relationships between the natural world and human characters. The authors highlight that by investigating how human behaviours influence the environment, Hosseini exceeds conventional ecological literature. Basically, they explore ecological elements like landscapes and animal symbolism. They also address the socio-cultural and political dimensions of the narrative. This analysis emphasizes the interdependence of society, individuals and the environment in the story. In their research paper titled "Psychosocial Analysis of Kamila Shamsie's In the City by the Sea," (2018) Premlatha and Swamy explore the effects of psychological and social elements on the characters' experiences within the novel. The focus of their study centres on the character development of Hassan, an 11-year-old boy navigating life under house arrest in a dictatorial regime.

Methodology

The methodology employed in the study is based specifically on content analysis. It explains the rationale behind selecting content analysis as the research method and elaborates on the process of conducting a content analysis of nature words, animal and bird references, mountain descriptions, and fruit imagery.

Word Categorization will be used to create categories like nature words, animal and bird words, mountain words, and fruit words—and assign relevant words to each category. The frequency of words in each category is calculated and analyzed in view of their contextual usage in the text.

Data Analysis and Discussion

Data Analysis

The study executes an Ecocritical content analysis of Jesse Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky". The analysis focuses on nature and natural objects related to words in the selected text in order to analyze the man and nature relationship. The Ecocritical analysis traces the abundant presence of nature, natural objects and natural environment-related words in the text. The analysis focuses on developing ecological wordlists categorized as nature words, animals and birds words, agriculture and farming words, mountain and river words and fruit words for the ease of the readers. These wordlists offer a thorough understanding of the man-nature relationship.

Results

The results of the study are obtained by applying an Ecocritical lens. The results of the study confirm that Jesse Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky" is a suitable Ecocritical text to be used for ecological content analysis. The text is replete with ecological words. The man-nature relationship is the central theme of the text. The text depicts the close bond between man and nature. The story is set in a natural setting and activities connected to land and cultivation. The study develops a wordlist of man-nature relationship-related activities.

Nature Words

The Ecocritical content analysis is done to find out the frequency of nature words in "Clearing in the Sky". The contextual analysis of nature words exposes that the writer puts a strong emphasis on the use of ecological words. According to Smith (2019), key nature words such as woods, hickories, leaves, wildflowers and trees reveal the beauty of nature and the strong bond between man and nature. The author's father recollects his memories about the fragrance of fresh dirt, hunting for squirrels, the activities of cultivating the land on the top of the mountain and the impact and the importance of being

connected to the land. These references demonstrate the positive relationship between man and nature as well as indebtedness to nature and the charms of the natural world.

Mountain Words

The mountain top termed as a clearing in the sky is an integral part of the story. It can be said that the present story may not exist without the mountain top, climbing up and cultivating on a mountain top. There are a number of words in the text that reveal that the mountain remains a prominent setting in the story. The story is replete with mountain words such as mountain, steep, bluff, and slope. These words also confirm the significance of mountain words. On the one hand, the mountain symbolizes a challenge for a heart patient yet on the other hand it serves as a rewarding trait of nature and the natural environment. The mountain words reflect the close bond between man and nature.

Data Analysis

Table I

Natural Elements

Clearing	Field	Bush
Corn	Loam	Earth
Ground	Grass	Cliff
Land	Hill	Sandy
Mountain	Pine	Frost
Patch	Shade	Spring
Sky	Leaves	Trunks
Slope	Boughs	Branches
Trees	Meadow	Stream
Valley	Pasture	Flower
Wind	River	Cloud

Discussion

The list of nature-related words demonstrates the extended variety of elements that elucidate the strong relationship between man and nature. The word list clearly highlights the interaction between human activity and the natural world. It presents a colourful ecological picture. Agriculture words like "Alfalfa," "Corn," and "Farm" highlight human reliance on the soil

Animal & Birds Words

The Ecocritical content analysis of the text shows the presence of animal and bird words. The keywords are fox squirrel, rabbits, hounds, and birds. The presence of animals and birds in the natural surroundings and man's attachment to them specify man's strong relationship to wildlife. The old man recollects hunting for squirrels and the hounds making rabbits circle strengthening the symbiotic relationship between man and nature rooted in traditional activities of the farmers.

Fruit Words

The presence of fruit words like tomatoes, yams, and potatoes demonstrates the author's father's fruit of successfully cultivating the land on the mountaintop. In other words, the fruit words suggest a fruitful connection between man and nature, where the land provides sustenance and satisfaction to a person connected to nature and the natural environment.

as the source of survival. Words like "Boughs," "Leaves," and "Meadow" suggest the artistic and reflective qualities of nature. Words like "river" and "fence" indicate how humans tend to alter and use the natural environment for practical needs. The opposite words like "Hot" and "Frost" show the contrast and display the array of experiences. The wordlist emphasizes the harmony and beauty that humans acquire from nature and the natural landscape.

Table 2

Agricultural and Farming Activities

Farm	Climbed	Hickory
Tomatoes	Fence	Maize
Grow	Yams	Pumpkins
Potatoes	Alfalfa	Species
Plough	Cattle	Trunks
Ploughed	Fertile	

Discussion

The above wordlist not only exhibits the strong ecological relationship between man and nature but also displays a vibrant show of farming and agricultural activities. Every phrase serves as a dramatic brushstroke portraying the symbiotic link between man and the natural world, from the basic act of ploughing fertile areas to the cultivation of numerous crops like tomatoes, maize, yams, and pumpkins. Cattle tending and climbing hickory fences represent

the cultivation of the earth, which is the essence of agriculture. Alfalfa and many plant species are mentioned, which highlights the varied harmony created by human hands cooperating with the environment. As mute witnesses, trees and the sun can stand for the enduring bond between agriculture's foundational energy and the radiant energy that keeps it going. This list, taken as a whole, tells the story of how humans coexist with the cycles of growth and harvest, weaving their existence into the natural rhythms of the world in an everlasting embrace.

Table 3

Topography and Geography

Steep	Bluff	Valley
Hill	Climbing	River
Slope	Ground	Stream

Discussion

The list as a whole highlights the complex interrelationship between man and nature by incorporating a wide range of topographical and geographical features. People are compelled to traverse and engage with the natural environment because steep bluffs, hills, and slopes provide an impression of difficult terrain. Climbing is mentioned; implying that humans are trying to reach these heights and that there is a dynamic relationship between

people and the harsh terrain. Valleys and river valleys, where people are nestled in the arms of natural forms, are the first places where the idea of connectedness is introduced. The ground and stream highlight the more subtle aspects of the landscape, highlighting the small details that affect how people and the environment interact. The entire list emphasizes the beneficial interaction that exists between humanity and the planet's topography, emphasizing both the challenges and peaceful coexistence within the intricate network of the natural world.

Table 4

Wildlife (Animal and Bird) Words List

Squirrels	Fox Squirrel	Rabbits	Hounds
Mule			

Discussion

The wildlife words list contains a variety of animal and bird species. The list is significant as it displays man-nature interactions. The rabbits being animals living on

the ground add diversity. Squirrels and the Fox Squirrel refer to animals residing in trees. The Hounds represent predator species. Mules being domesticated animals possess cultural and utilitarian values. All these inclusions emphasize the vibrant relationships across

ecosystems as well as harmony and diversity in the natural world.

Table 5

Human Activities and Interaction

Place	Fence	Grow
Climbed	Ploughed	Climb
Patch	Wind	Climbing

Discussion

The wordlist of human interactions with nature and the natural world displays a man-nature strong relationship. The word "Fence" refers to man's desire to regulate space within the natural environment. "Place" shows belonging to the surroundings. The term "Grow" emphasizes that man is deeply involved in development and nurture processes. It further highlights that man is dependent on nature for survival. "Climbed" and "Ploughed," are agricultural activities

that express the human desire to explore and conquer nature. The word "Patch" refers to the cultivation of a specific piece of land. The word "wind" represents the fundamental forces that influence the environment that influence human behaviour. The word "Climbing" frequently used highlights how constantly man interacts with the natural world from a variety of perspectives. Overall, the entire list demonstrates transformative aspects of the man-nature relationship. It paints a complete picture of man-nature interactions.

Table 6

Food (Fruit and Vegetable) Words

Alfalfa	Hay	Tomatoes	Potatoes
Yams	Corn	Beans	Pumpkins
Maize			

Discussion

The food words list combines fruit and vegetable words. The list includes alfalfa, hay, tomatoes, potatoes, yams, corn, beans, pumpkins, and maize. It demonstrates multiple human interactions with nature and the natural world in the context of agriculture and food. These diverse crops show that man uses many methods to grow a variety of foods to satisfy their needs. Alfalfa and hay production demonstrates man's relationship with animals as well as the human ability to provide animal feed. Tomatoes, potatoes, yams, corn, beans, pumpkins and maize show that humans grow a variety of fruits and vegetables. These crops demonstrate man's dependence on the natural world for diverse food sources. Overall, the food list demonstrates man-nature as a mutually useful and harmonious relationship.

River Words

Little Sandy River

Discussion

The content analysis of the text is employed to explore the River Words present in the text. The specific focus is on the man-nature relationship investigation. The content analysis highlights that the river has a dual role as both a physical entity and a symbolic force in human lives specifically those living close to nature. The content analysis demonstrates the various ways how humans interact with the river. The character expressing a deep sense of necessity on the river for survival and recreation generates the theme of interconnectedness and dependence on nature. This ecological content analysis provides important insights into the strong interactions between humans and their natural environment like the setting of the Little Sandy River.

Table 7

Word Frequency List

Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency	Word	Frequency
Land	15	Wind	3	Hot	2
Mountain	15	Ground	3	Cloud	2
Steep	9	Grow	3	Cliff	2
Farm	8	Potatoes	3	River	1
Trees	8	Hill	3	Grass	1
Slope	8	Bluff	3	Mule	1
Tomatoes	7	Pine	3	Pumpkins	1
Clearing	7	Climb	3	Maize	1
Patch	6	Meadow	2	Species	1
Squirrel	5	Hickories	2	Sandy	1
Wild	5	Boughs	2	Wisp	1
Valley	4	Climbing	2	Frost	1
Sky	4	Field	2	Branches	1
Place	4	Shade	2	Bush	1
Corn	4	Pasture	2	Vines	1
Grown	4	Leaves	2	Spring	1
Climbed	4	Loam	2	Stream	1
Fence	4	Cattle	2	Hounds	1
Yams	4	Fertile	2	Leaf	1
Alfalfa	4	Rugged	2	Flower	1
Plough	4	Sun	2	Trunks	1
Ploughed	4	Earth	2	Weed	1
		Hickory	2		

Table .7 Total Text Words = 2213

Words in Table = 67

Discussion

The above table displays the complete list of ecological words used by Jesse Stuart in the text of his most famous work "Clearing in the Sky." A total of 67 Words are repeatedly used in the text. The table confirms that

Jesse Stuart's "Clearing in the Sky is replete with ecological wordlists. The frequent and extended use of ecological words in the text turns the short story into a literary text suitable for ecological content analysis.

Table 8

Category-wise Word List

Nature Words	Mountain Words	Animal and Bird Words	Farming & Land Words	Fruit Words
Alfalfa	Clearing	Cattle	Grow	Hickories
Bluff	Cliff	Hounds	Grown	Hickory
Boughs	Climb	Mule	Plough	Maize
Branches	Climbed	Squirrel	Ploughed	Pine
Bush	Climbing		Patch	Potatoes
Cloud	Hill		Rugged	Pumpkins
Corn	Mountain		Place	Tomatoes
Earth	Slope		Trees	Yams
Farm	Steep		Trunks	
Fence	Stream		Valley	
Fertile			Vines	
Field			Weed	
Flower			Wild	
Frost			Wind	
Grass				

Nature Words	Mountain Words	Animal and Bird Words	Farming & Land Words	Fruit Words
Ground				
Hot				
Land				
Leaf				
Leaves				
Meadow				
Pasture				
River				
Sandy				
Shade				
Sky				
Species				
Spring				
Sun				

Table .8 Category-wise Word Lists

Discussion

The above table clearly displays the category-wise word list. The analysis develops five categories Nature Words, Mountain Words, Animal and Bird Words, Farming & Land Words and Fruit Words. These category-wise words are used in the text of Clearing in the Sky by Jesse Stuart selected for Ecocritical content analysis. The list confirms that the text demonstrates extensive use of Ecocritical content.

Findings and Analysis

The findings are derived from Clearing in the Sky's comprehensive content analysis. The analysis concentrates on the text, characters and incidents that show the ecological point of view of the author. The findings show how Stuart emphasizes the need to have a peaceful relationship with nature, the interconnectedness and interdependence of humans and the natural world and the impact of human activities on the environment. The ultimate destination should be a harmonious relationship with nature.

Qualitative Discussion

The content analysis of the text, "Clearing in the Sky"

reveals the strong relationship between man and nature. The selected text examines love for the natural world. It emphasizes the beauty of the landscape, the role of wildlife and the satisfaction derived from cultivating the land. The author's father demonstrates and proves that man and the environment can coexist peacefully. This content analysis focuses on the Ecocritical components found in the text. The purpose is to highlight the significance of the link between man and nature.

Conclusion

The key conclusions of this study restate Stuart's Clearing in the Sky's importance as an Ecocritical literary work. It highlights the value of promoting a greater comprehension of the relationship between man and nature and the influence of literature on the development of environmental consciousness. This study contributes to the explorations of Ecocriticism and Ecocritical content analysis by investigating how human activities impact the environment and the possibility of strengthening man-nature close bond. The present study will lead to further content analyses of Ecocritical texts in future.

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