

Respect of Nature in Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*: An Ecocritical Study

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ABSTRACT

*This research paper discusses the different definitions of ecocriticism highlighting their similarities and differences to reach out a definition that is most accurate and comprehensive. The paper also studies the nature of ecocriticism, its history, importance and concerns. Then a brief history of American ecocriticism is surveyed. After that, the paper analyzes in detail Aldo Leopold's masterpiece *A Sand County Almanac* as an example of a non-fiction work that calls for respecting nature in general. This paper attempts to both show how far Leopold has redefined the relation between man and nature, and also tries to study the famous and significant land ethic theory. Moreover, the values of wilderness suggested by Leopold have been examined to reflect the importance for readers to protect, love and respect nature.*

Keywords

Ecocriticism
Aldo Leopold
Land ethic
Wilderness
Nature

المخلص

تناقش هذه الورقة البحثية التعريفات المختلفة لمفهوم النقد البيئي مسلطة الضوء بذلك على أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بينهم سعياً للوصول إلى تعريف دقيق وشامل. كما تدرس هذه الورقة البحثية أيضاً طبيعة النقد البيئي وتاريخه وأهميته ومجالات اهتماماته لتنتقل بعد ذلك لسرد تاريخ مختصر لأدب النقد البيئي الأمريكي. ومن ثم تحلل هذه الورقة البحثية بالتفصيل رواية أدو ليوبولد (ساند كونتي ألمانك) كمثال على عمل أدبي يدعو إلى احترام الطبيعة بشكل عام. وتحاول هذه الورقة البحثية إثبات محاولة ليوبولد إعادة صياغة العلاقة بين الإنسان والطبيعة ذلك إلى جانب دراسة نظريته بعنوان أخلاقيات الأرض الشهيرة والهامة. علاوة على ذلك، فلقد تناول البحث بالدراسة قيم الحفاظ على البرية كمحاولة لتحفيز القراء على حماية البيئة وحبها واحترامها.

كلمات مفتاحية:

النقد البيئي، أدو ليوبولد، أخلاقيات الأرض، البرية، الطبيعة

This paper attempts to provide an ecocritical analysis of Aldo Leopold's

A Sand County Almanac. The researcher, throughout this paper tries to explore how far an ecocritical perspective can be applied on Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*. Recently, ecocriticism has been a main topic of interest to many researchers and scholars. Generally, ecocriticism focuses on the relations between humans and the landscapes. Since the end of the twentieth century, the world has paid a serious attention to the existing dangers and the expected ecological disasters. Ecocriticism has emerged as a result to this enlightened awareness to the importance of saving nature.

It is a common mistake to consider ecocriticism a single unified literary theory. On the contrary, it includes many subgenres that do extend to cover the entire ecosphere. Another common mistake is to label any literary work an ecocritical once it deals with nature. An ecocritical literary work must discuss the relation between both the human and the non-human. Ecocriticism seeks for a better understanding of nature and practical ways to protect it.

The word ecocriticism is derived from Greek *oikos* and *kritis*. "Oikos" means "household" related to humans and nature while "kritis" means judge. "The arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order." (Howarth, 163) in every possible aspect.

The term "ecocriticism" has been defined by a number of thinkers and critics who have focused mainly on the relationship between man and the earth. Ecocriticism is an interdisciplinary approach that combines many branches of science in order to reach applicable solutions to the contemporary environmental situation.

Due to the nature of the ecocritical studies, the researcher adopts the interdisciplinary approach in order to study the relation between the human and the natural background. The interdisciplinary approach allows the researcher also to answer certain main questions to the present study. First, how is nature represented in literature in general and in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* in particular? Second, how has the concept of wilderness changed over time? Third, how far the ecocritical concept of (land ethic) is crystallized in Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac*? Fourth, in what way has literature affected humankind's view to nature?

In order to achieve a precise definition of 'ecocriticism', a short overview of the historical development is preferred. Ecocriticism has been officially introduced by the publication of two major works, namely *The Ecocriticism Reader* (1996) by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) by Lawrence Buell. Cheryll

Burgess Glotfelty is the founder of Ecocriticism in the United States of America and the first American Professor of Literature and Environment in the University of Nevada. As a pioneer in this field, she attempts to define ecocriticism as:

The study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of moods of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (1996: xviii)

Cheryll Burgess Glotfelty points out that the worldwide environmental crisis is ignored by scientists and scholars. Even recently, there was no indication that literary studies have seriously considered this crisis. This idea is reflected in the absence of conferences, journals or dedicated studies that focus on this global environmental crisis.

Nevertheless, a number of prominent American writers have dedicated their books for this case. In his book *The Environmental Imagination* (1995) Lawrence Buell surveys the American Pastoral experience in the light of political, aesthetic, social and environmental background. Likewise is Timothy Morton's *Ecology without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (1998). In his book, he tries to reach a concise definition of nature as used in ecocriticism. Morton tracks the changes of the definition and reaches the conclusion that nature can be anything and that the domain of ecocriticism is very broad and comprehensive as it is not limited to any literary genres.

Glen A. Love is also one of the key figures of ecocriticism. Glen A. Love has always been preoccupied with studying and analyzing the various relations between the natural sciences and humanities. He also has focused his works on investigating the relations between human nature and ecocriticism. In his book, *Practical Ecocriticism*, he says:

At the beginning of the third millennium and of a new century often heralded as "the century of the environment," a coherent and broadly based movement embracing literary environmental interconnections, commonly termed "ecocriticism" is emerged...Ecocriticism, unlike all other forms of literary inquiry,

encompasses non human as well as human contexts and considerations. On this claim, ecocriticism bases its challenge to much postmodern critical discourse as well as to the critical systems of the past (3).

Furthermore, Glen A. Love highlights the idea that human behavior is similar to an empty vessel that is filled and also shaped by culture, genetic orientations and cultural influences (3).

Writing in a similar vein, Lawrence Buell provides a detailed definition of ecocriticism. In his book, *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005), he notes that ecocriticism is “the environmentally oriented study of literature and (less often) the arts more generally, and to the theories that underlie such critical practice” (138). In his book, he distinguishes between two waves of ecocriticism. The first wave is known for its focus on certain genres such as “nature writing, nature poetry and wilderness fiction” (138). Whereas the second wave highly focused on environmental justice issues, or as Buell describes “social ecocriticism that sheds light on urban and degraded landscapes just as seriously as natural landscapes” (22).

From the previously mentioned definitions, ecocriticism focuses on nature writing and ecological themes in all literature. Saving nature and its issues have been a prime concern. As an academic discipline, ecocriticism began in the 1990s although it goes back to the late 1970s as a mere general field of nature writing. Being such a new area of study, many scholars and critics are still preoccupied with defining the nature of ecocriticism, its aims and scope.

It is worth to mention that ecocriticism does not only target studying nature in literature but it is more like a step towards building a promising world view, a universal code of ethics and a comprehensive man's idea of a global community to include the different non-human life forms and the physical environment as well in relation to the various aspects of human life. In his book *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrard sheds light on the place of environment to ecocriticism. He notes that the role of an ecocritic is to “define, explore and even resolve ecological problems.” (6) and only by this an ecocritic contributes to the uniqueness of ecocriticism among other literary theories. Discussing the idea of the main subject of ecocriticism, David Mazel introduces to the reader a series of questions that reflects a great interest in and a clear focus upon environment. He says:

Our reading of environmental literature should help us realize that the concerns are not exclusively of the order of “Shall these trees be cut? Or shall this river be dammed?” –important as such questions are – but also of the order of “What has counted as the environment, and what may count? Who marks off the conceptual boundaries, and under what authority, and for what reasons? Have those boundaries and that authority been contested, and if so, by whom? With what success, and by virtue of what strategies of resistance?” These are the levels on which I would like to see ecocriticism theorize the environment (1996: 143)

In another attempt to specify the genre of ecocriticism, Peter Barry, in his book *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory*, sets certain tasks for ecocritics to achieve. These tasks include reading literary works from an ecocritical point of view, applying ecological topics to the presentation of the natural world and praising efforts for respecting non-human nature. He highlights the idea that one of the fundamental concerns of ecocriticism is to analyze the relation between the human and the non-human, via the history of human culture.

Ecocriticism endeavors to answer many questions. Some of these questions have been introduced by Loretta Johnson in *The Fundamentals and Future of Ecocriticism*. For example, “Would a shift toward an ecological perception of nature change the ways human inhabit the earth? Do authors impute certain values and make assumptions when they present the environment and non-human life in their works? (3) Actually, these questions are fundamental to any ecocritic to try to answer.

William Rueckert coined the term ecocriticism in 1978 in his essay “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism” where he argued that ecocriticism is the “application of ecological concepts to the study of literature, because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world we all live” (107).

Studying the previously mentioned definitions, one can notice that ecocriticism is a comprehensive term that includes all possible relations between literature and the physical world.

The German biologist and philosopher Ernest Heinrich Haeckel used the term ecology in 1876 to refer to “the branch of biology that deals with the relationships between living organisms and their environment”

(Johnston, 193). Therefore, Ecology refers to the interrelationship among the environment, society and the individual. So an ecocritical study of any literary text should cover these three components.

So, it is safe to say that ecocriticism is the critical and literary study of the environment. But, what is an environment? The word environment refers to the totality of all the physical surroundings, circumstances and conditions on earth especially as affected by human activity. According to *Collins Dictionary of Environmental Science*, physical environment is the combination of external conditions that influence the life of individual organism. The key idea around which ecocriticism revolves is that everything is deeply interrelated and nothing is separate. Although ecological topics have been the concern of literary studies for a long time, yet the ecological movement in the last few decades has gained a clear momentum that drew obvious attention of many critics, scholars and writers.

It is worth noting that ecocriticism differs from other literary approaches in the idea that in most literary studies and theories “the world” is usually associated with society and other social aspects whereas ecocriticism expands the limits of using “the world” to cover the overall ecosphere with all its human and non-human components and the relations among them.

By the 1980s and the early 1990s, ecocritics have paid an obvious attention to the study of nature in general and ‘green’ issues in particular. By the twenty first century, the limits of ecocriticism have expanded even more. The concept of environment has no longer refer to natural or wilderness areas, but rather it “includes cultivated and built landscapes, and cultural interactions with those natural elements” (Wallas, 18). It is clear that ecocriticism moved from what may be described as pure traditional nature at the beginning to ‘culture’ in general. In his essay “Ecocriticism” in *Beginning Theory*, Peter Barry considers the ‘outdoor’ environment as a step that moves ecocriticism from studying just nature to culture. He lists certain fields of interest to ecocriticals, namely, the ‘wilderness’ (e.g. forests, lakes and mountains), ‘the countryside’ (e.g. hills, fields and woods), and ‘the domestic picturesque (e.g. parks and gardens).

Since its beginning, ecocriticism has developed from the study of nature to cover a wide variety of fields that encompass many literary genres. Ecocritics nowadays study different topics and ideas with an emphasis on the welfare of ecosystem, adopting ecophilosophy, following environmental ethics and guided by ecological disciplines. In *A Century of Early Criticism*, David Mazel reflects how far ecocriticism evolved

from being confined to the tight rubrics of studying nature to the wide horizon of increasing the environmental awareness. Writing in a similar vein and approaching the same idea, Joseph Meeker, in his book *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology*, affirms the idea that human beings have the responsibility to set the role of literature in the survival of mankind and the natural environment, and also to “examine the insight it offers into human relationships with other species and with the world around us”. (3-4).

The ecocritical essence, that is based on the notion that ecocriticism is a combination of both human and non-human contexts, has been established after a certain historical development. Ecocriticism had its beginning as a discipline in the 1990s with the known writings of Thoreau and Emerson. Their contributions and writings to the genre of ecocriticism were the first prominent steps that are followed by Alicia Nitecki’s *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* whose main purpose was to publish brief essays and books reviews on both nature and environment. Furthermore, some American universities have included ecoliterary courses in their studies curricula.

In 1990 and in the University of Nevada, Reno composed the first academic position in literature and environment. Moreover, in 1991 MLA (Modern Language Association) special session was organized by Harold Fromm, entitled “Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies” and in 1992 Glen Love chaired a session entitled “American Nature Writing: New Contexts, New Approaches” and in the same year a new international ecocritical association was born entitled Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). Nowadays, the members of this association have reached more than 1000 from different parts of the world. ASLE has always encouraged new interdisciplinary and innovative approaches to the study of culture and the environment through different forms such as poetry, creative writing, scholarships, nature writing and art. Nowadays, the association for the study of Literature and Environment has many scholars all over the world, for example: Brazil, Sweden, China, Turkey, India, Germany, Finland, Taiwan, and so on.

Lately, it has been noted that many scholars consider the term ecocriticism vague and sometimes misleading. Stephanie Sarver says, “I admit to using the term to identify a range of approaches to the study of literatures that share a common concern with the relationship between humans and the non-human world. This concern, however, is better labeled an environmental approach to literature than ecocriticism” (Web 12th May 2018). Similarly, David Taylor comments on the broad sense that many scholars label ecocriticism with. He says “ecocriticism suggests a revaluation of the readers own cultural constructions of

environment” (Web 13th June 2018). Ecocriticism is rather a description of the humanistic understanding of the relationship with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction. Thomas K. Dean writes “Although ecocriticism can touch virtually any discipline... [it] advocates for an understanding of the world that works to heal the environmental wounds humans have inflicted upon it”. (Web 8th June 2018)

The importance of studying literary works on ecocritical perspectives is highly recommended by many critics. For example Kent Ryden says “The ecocritical stance reconnects literary study to both the processes and problems inherent in living on this heavily burdened planet, focusing our attention on the land beneath our feet, on our complex relationship to that ground, and on the implications of our behavior toward that ground” (Web 16th October 2018). Ryden highlights the human relationship with the ground. Similarly, many other critics focus on the same idea. Don Scheese notes that “Ecocriticism is most appropriately applied to a work in which the landscape itself is a dominant character” (Web 19th Aug. 2017). Like Scheese, Allison B. Wallace views ecocriticism as any writing that emphasizes on place. He remarks, “Writing that examines and invites intimate human experience of place’s myriad ingredients: weather, climate, flora, fauna, soil, air, water, rocks, fire, minerals, ice as well as all the marks there of human history”. (Web 17thJan. 2018). Based on what is mentioned before, the ecocritical main concern can be summarized in the following two points:

- 1) Man lives in a natural environment. This explains the reason why he is both a life-long wanderer and always identified with physical and cultural environment. The environment is the root of the humans through which he wanders searching for his identity and self-achievement.
- 2) The greatest challenge as many indicators show is the survival of the earth.

The ecological function of art is to connect the human with the surrounding environment, in a relation like a Microcosm to the Macrocosm respectively. Through this relation, every human being acquires experience and knowledge. Environment influences persons and inspires them to live ecologically. The land, sea, air, temperature, rivers, plants, animals and seasons affect the character and the thinking of a person. Moreover, the emotional and ethical commitment to a certain place shapes the personality and the decisions of human beings.

Ever since the dawn of the human civilization man has depended on nature to survive. Land has come to symbolize power and stability. A reunion between man and his home nature has been always a source of

relief to humans. Ecocriticism provides an opportunity for human beings to a better understanding of nature. For a long time, human beings were not fair to nature. Man has always felt the urge to conquer nature and to be superior to other forms that inhabit this biosphere. Ecocriticism tries to change this long inherited tradition by emphasizing on a new dimension of the relation between man and nature; a relation that considers nature a co-inhabitant and not a subordinate.

Since ecocriticism is interdisciplinary by nature, it depends on many literary sources and various scientific genres for example environmental studies, natural sciences, cultural and social studies. This interdisciplinary nature is clearly reflected in the target of ecocriticism in seeking to connect both nature and man through various means and also tries to analyze this relationship from different angles: sociological, anthropological, psychological, philosophical and scientific. This idea is mainly achieved also because of the various concerns of ecocriticism. In his book *Ecocriticism*, Greg Garrad lists out the various concerns of ecocriticism as follows:

- Pollution
- Wilderness
- Apocalypse
- Dwelling
- Animals
- The Earth

First: Pollution

The word pollution is derived from the Latin *polluere* which means to defile. Up to seventeenth century, the word was used to refer to moral contamination of a person. This meaning was gradually transformed into an exterior objective one. Pollution has many levels in ecocriticism whether implicitly or explicitly. Pollution and its problems require the environmentalists to address these problems in cultural as well as scientific angles. The pollution of nature, global warming, desertification and their cultural corresponding results are examples of ecocritical concerns.

Second: Wilderness

Wilderness has many different meanings. The absence of humanity is one of them. However, ecocritics use wilderness to refer to the landscape of the ultimate authenticity; an ecological community that integrates the entire habitat. Wilderness also refers to nature; a place not yet contaminated by civilization. To ecocriticism, wilderness will always hold out the promise of a healthy strong relationship between man and nature. Wilderness is usually associated in ecocritical narratives with the

desire to escape and return to nature where man can be identified with familiar physical and cultural environment.

Third: Apocalypse

Apocalypse is the final destruction of the world. Apocalyptic works seem a main component of any environmental discourse especially lately. Nuclear war, Tsunamis and other natural disasters, bio-engineering inventions and the list goes endlessly and diversely. Lawrence Buell's in *The Environmental Imagination* notes that, "apocalypse is the single most powerful metaphor that the contemporary environmental imagination has at its disposal" (93).

Feeling the imminent danger and taking the first step towards saving the earth, a powerful environmental organization has been founded. "Earth First" adopted the idea of saving Earth from apocalypse. Seeing death of species, Earth first has situated humans generally on the side of evil. Apocalyptic works seem to see almost no hope for the earth; that is why ecocritics focus on both saving the earth and man's effort for the rebuilding of the damaged nature.

Fourth: Dwelling

Dwelling goes back to the sixteenth century where primitive people have been known for dwelling harmoniously with nature. Dwelling refers to a long term of peaceful living in nature. Dwelling differs in its meaning from wilderness and apocalypse. Wilderness and pastoral refer mainly to the aesthetic perspective of nature, whereas apocalypse refers to a prophetic destruction of nature. However, dwelling represents a long term association of humans with nature.

Fifth: Animals

Animals have important role in ecocriticism. Jeremy Bentham suggests that cruelty to animals is just as horrible as slavery. This is simply because everyone has moral obligations regardless of race, nation or species. Some ecocritics differentiate in their obligations between wild and domestic animals. One of the key concerns of ecocriticism is that some species may become extinct. Humans have been held responsible for the extinction of these species. Ecocriticism thus discusses the troubled relation between the human and animals focusing on the bad treatment of the former to the latter and the extinction of the latter due to the cruelty of the former.

Sixth: The Earth

Recently it has been noticed that the earth painfully suffers from humans' atrocities to the extent that planet Earth is considered by many

scientists a dying planet. Andrew Ross comments on a paragraph of the Earth taken by Apollo astronauts by saying:

In recent years, we have become accustomed to seeing images of a dying planet, variously exhibited in grisly poses of ecological depletion and circulated by all sectors of the image industry, often in spots reserved for the exploitation fare of genocidal atrocities” (171)

It is important for ecocritics to give greater consideration to the aggravating problems of the earth. Not only focusing on nature, but they also should focus on the future of the earth as the rest of humans as well. Nature alone is, by no means, the only concern of ecocritical studies. Other related areas of study include geographical regions, cities and even technology. A survey of ecocriticism in America shows that the neglected genre of nature writing starts with Gilbert White’s *A Natural History of Selbourne* (1789) and extends to America through Mary Austen, Aldo Leopold, Edward Abbey, Terry Tempest and many others.

By logic, the natural world comprises people as well as animals, plants and even “inert” bodies such as stones and rivers. Even though they are “inert”, ecological works allow these entities to communicate and interact with humans for both good and bad. Christopher Manes remarks that “In addition to human language, there is also the language of birds, the winds, earthworms, wolves and waterfalls – a world of autonomous speakers who intents” (*The Ecocriticism Reader*, 15). Similarly, some ecocritics have stressed the link between respecting the non-human world and avoiding the environmentally harmful traditions modern society adopts. Ecocritics highly confirm the need to establish and maintain healthy relations between human subjects and the natural world in its broad sense. Mircea Eliade writes: “All over the world learning the language of animals, especially of birds, is equivalent to knowing the secrets of nature” (98).

This paper focuses on the American idea of wilderness and nature since it studies the work of an American writer. The American own concept of wilderness seems to be both of picturesque and of sublime. By picturesque one means graphic, visually in particular, capable of being represented in a picture. While by sublime, it denotes an elevated style of writing of great excellence. The representation of American wilderness differs from any other representation of the same idea in other ecocritical works. This is because natural areas in the United States have diminished to the extent that public parks are considered by Americans the main source of wilderness experience. Tucker emphasizes this idea by saying,

“wilderness... is essentially parks” (58). Nevertheless, true wilderness can be accessible only to a privileged few. Thus, national parks with their natural landscapes provide a large audience with the experience of wilderness.

Due to its interdisciplinary nature, ecocriticism focuses on describing the relation between nature and culture. As explained earlier, ecocriticism adopts many disciplines to read, interpret and narrate the history of nature. American ecocriticism, consequently, responded strongly to the years of Depression and World War II. As in Rachel Carron's *Silent Spring* (1962) which aimed to arise awareness about the use of pesticides that can poison ground water and damage nature. American ecocriticism developed further from description and advisory to public support of causes and recommendations of policies. This was reflected in the presented stories that support ethical choices which affect land and people positively. American ecocriticism also shaped new traditions based on American scientific advancement in the use of satellite photographs and telescopes.

In the twentieth century, American ecocriticism was affected deeply by the damage of the American nature. This is a result of the obvious growth of population that did negatively affect the natural resources. However, those losses of natural resources aroused a new trend of American ecocriticism that values nature and creates a deep sense of appreciating land. The most well-known of American ecocriticism to date is Laurence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*(1995). This book focuses on ecocriticism and provides a reconsideration of nature writing in literature. It also gives a detailed and thorough critique of ecocriticism in American fiction. Other famous and influential works of American ecocriticism are Paul Shepard “Place in American Culture” and Neil Evernden “Beyond Ecology”. Both of these works along with others have considered the topic of the relation between man and the surrounding living and non-living worlds. These works highlighted the importance and inevitability of preserving the non-human world. It is a mistake to consider a human an individual out of the surrounding contexts. On the contrary any human, not just the Americans, is a component of place, defined by place and is obliged to protect and preserve that place.

After shortly surviving ecocriticism, its definitions, nature, and concerns as well as briefly viewing the development of American ecocriticism over time, this research studies Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* as an example of a literary work that is concerned with ecology and deeply respects nature. In this context, Lawrence Buell

suggests four different criteria for evaluating a text for its consciousness of the environment:

First: The nonhuman dimension. A good literary work - from an ecocritical angle - is the one in which the non-human dimension is totally integrated along with the human world not existing separately away from it.

Second: The depiction of the human interests should never be at the cost of everything else.

Third: Humans should be portrayed as considerate to the environment. Furthermore, any human action that may damage the environment should be clearly represented.

Fourth: Environment is in a state of continuous change rather than in fixed unchanging consideration.

In other words, ecocriticism promotes the concept that human culture is deeply connected to the surrounding physical world, affecting it and being affected by it. Ecocriticism focuses and studies the connections between human culture and the surrounding nature. Thus, there is no wonder that the ecological function of art-in general- is to connect humans with the biosphere.

The first and foremost principle of ecology is that everything is connected in a way or another. All the different forms of life are dependent on and interwoven with other lives. No life exists in isolation and all living beings are intimately coupled with many other living beings. Each and every living and non-living being is interconnected to one another in a network full of relationships that connect between them.

Thus, literature is asked to show ecological realities in addition to honestly portraying the degradation and the damage of nature. Actually, this is one of the reasons why ecocriticism keeps growing as a discipline because of the continuous global environmental crises. Ecocriticism shows how environmentally concerned literary works can help in solving ecological problems by shedding light on major ecological issues. Aldo Leopold is one of the major American writers in whose work one comes across a true connection between people and nature with the hope that readers will treat the land with love and respect it deserves.

Admired by an ever-growing number of readers and imitated by hundreds of writers, Aldo Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* serves as a touchstone for ecocritical works. First published by Oxford University Press in 1949 - one year after Leopold's death- it has become a classic work that always referred to as an example of what a literary work considers nature should be. While writing *A Sand County Almanac*, Aldo Leopold would have never imagined the great impact his book would

have. More than two million copies have been printed and it has been translated into nine languages.

Known for his interest in wildlife and nature, Aldo Leopold was famous for being a writer for scientific journals and ecological magazines. Later on, Leopold focused mainly on reaching out to the ordinary reader to deliver his own message. Throughout straight twelve years, Leopold wrote and rewrote a number of essays that aimed to increase readers' awareness about the importance of protecting nature.

Although Leopold died a week before the publication of the book, his daughter Luna Leopold edited the book to be published by Oxford University Press. Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* reflects the true connection between people and nature, hoping that people will treat nature with respect and love it deserves.

This paper mainly discusses Leopold's ideology in *A Sand County Almanac* from three different angles. First, the relationship between man and nature, second, land ethics, and finally the values of wilderness.

First: The Relationship between Man and Nature

Concerning the relationship between man and nature, there are two points nowadays: anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Anthropocentrism highlights the idea that man is the center of the universe whereas nature is at service to men. On the other hand is ecocriticism that believes that nature is the source. Ecocriticism encourages the harmonious coexistence between man and nature. To Leopold, man is part of nature who should always respect it. Consequently man and nature affect each other.

1- Man as Part of Nature

Aldo Leopold confirms the idea that man is only a mere part of nature. "In short, a land ethic changes the role of homo species from conqueror of the land-community to plain member and citizen of it" (Leopold, 312). It is even more interesting to note that Leopold considers all creatures whether animals, plants, or material things friends and neighbors. "Leave the rest of us in peace. By 'us' I mean the birds, the stream, the dog, and myself" (Leopold, 88). The pronoun 'us' reflects how far Leopold considers other species his friends and partners. Leopold maintains that animals and human beings should be equal in their rights simply because humans and animals are both members at the same nature. "This time I get the lunch all the way out and sit down to eat. A chickadee watches me, and grows confidential about his lunch" (Leopold, 84). When the author sits for lunch, a chickadee also enjoys the same right and tries to hide his lunch as well. Then Leopold and the naughty chickadee enjoy having lunch peacefully

together as friends in the open air. It is not a matter of being just a friend of animals and plants; moreover Leopold sees the pine as his child because he planted it and his dog as his teacher because the dogs show him how to find birds.

It goes without saying that Leopold does not believe that man is the master of nature, but rather only a member of it whereas other species are neighbors and friends. Nowadays, man destroys nature by pollution ignoring that he is not the master and he is not living alone in nature.

2- Love and Respect for Nature

Every creature in *A Sand County Almanac* is known for its intelligence and vitality. To Leopold, these creatures reflect the fineness of nature. Although Leopold does not directly motivate readers to show their respect to nature, he succeeds in urging readers to deeply respect, appreciate, and love nature after reading. In “February”, Leopold gives a vivid description of the life of an eighty-year-old oak that dies at the end because of a lightning bolt. When it was alive, the oak was healthy and strong that it did overcome all the hardships such as plant diseases, insects, human damage, and so on. The oak was useful during its life and even after its death. When it was alive, the oak used to provide oxygen, food and shelter whereas after its death it used to warm people and also used as wood.

Leopold also shows respect for the equality of all creatures in nature. It is really worth noting that throughout the whole book, there is no word that directly shows how far the author loves and respects nature; nevertheless, reader can easily feel that in the way Leopold describes nature. Most people avoid skunk, yet in *A Sand County Almanac* it is described as a lovely, smart and adorable animal. Leopold uses vivid personification to show how cute the skunk is. He even uses ‘he’ to replace ‘it’ and this denotes Leopold respect and love for animals.

3- Mutual Effect of Nature and Human Beings

Leopold highlights the idea that nature and human beings do affect each other. To him, human behavior causes whether good or bad influence on nature and also the other way around. In *A Sand County Almanac*, Leopold provides many examples of this mutual effect. For example, Leopold tells the story of a cowman who killed the wolves in order to protect his herds. The herds grew so

large to the extent that the grassland was no longer able to provide enough grass. The shortage of grassland brought lots of sufferings to human beings. In short, the improper action of the cowman caused many damages to nature and in return it led to nature pay back on man.

In the past, people cared more about nature. There was almost no pollution and the nature was healthier. Actually, the survival of many species is seriously threatened by human's misbehavior which in return affects man negatively. All what is the humans are asked is to live harmoniously with nature for the humans' sake as well as other species as well.

Second: Land Ethics

In this famous essay, Leopold introduces his idea that the land is a circular system. In this system, humans are not the master and energy is endless. All the creatures included in this system are equal. In the light of all that, Leopold aims to improve the ethical treatment to the land through the following points:

1- Extinction of Ethics

Anthropocentrism believes that nature is only for humans to control and to use it the way they like in order to be satisfied only. Unfortunately, this idea indirectly gave the right to humans to pollute nature and to damage the whole ecosystem to the extent that nowadays humans have to face serious environmental crises. In the shadow of such an attitude and ideas, Leopold's ethics redefine the relationship between man and nature. Leopold's philosophy is "an ecological ethic [that] is a limitation on freedom of action in the struggle for existence. An ethic, philosophically, is a differentiation of social from anti-social conduct" (Leopold, 308). In his ethic, Leopold tries to control people's relation with nature via three main steps. The first is to arrange the relationship between human beings themselves. The second step is to handle the relation between individual and society. The last step is to handle the relation between humans and the land. Leopold's ethic, in other words, rotates around the relationship between person, land and nature.

2- Land Community

Leopold's land ethic clarifies the idea that the land does not merely mean the soil but it also contains other things such as plants, animals, water and so on. To him, nature as a whole is a community that should never be controlled by humans. "All ethics

so far evolved rest upon a single promise: that the individual is a member of a community of interdependent parts. His instincts prompt him to compete for his place in that community, but his ethics prompt him also to cooperate” (Leopold, 311-312).

According to Leopold, all members of nature should be treated equally and with respect since all these members have the same right to survive. Not only do humans have feelings and thoughts but also all other creatures. Thus, nature and man relationship must be based on mutual respect in order for them both to survive.

3- Criteria of Land Ethic.

To Leopold, men are supposed to love, respect and protect land. Nevertheless, what are the criteria of land ethic? In what way can a human activity be judged as proper or improper? Leopold answers these questions by saying “A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends to otherwise” (344). So, stability, integrity, and beauty are the true criteria to judge upon any human behavior. This standard actually seeks for a rich ecosystem where stability, beauty, and integrity guide equally all creatures in nature to reach a state where all species live in harmony with human beings.

Third: The Value of Wilderness

Leopold in the last part of *A Sand County Almanac* discusses the value of wilderness. He divides it into the following:

1- The Recreational Value of Wilderness

This is the most obvious value of wilderness. This is mainly because wilderness, to many people, is the place for a number of outdoor activities. To Leopold, wilderness can alter the ideas and the feelings of people towards the environment. So if the wilderness is attractive and beautiful, people will enjoy it. On the contrary, if it is dirty and polluted, people will destroy it. “The value of reaction is not a matter of ciphers. Recreation is valuable in proportion to the intensity of its experiences, and to the degree to which it differs from and contrasts with workaday life. By these criteria, mechanized outings are at best a milk*and-water affairs” (Leopold, 356). Nowadays, most people tend to enjoy ‘mechanized outings’ than to enjoy wilderness. Modern mechanized life has

dethroned wilderness. Leopold hopes that people can give more space for the primitive recreation of wilderness instead of the unhealthy mechanized life.

2- The Aesthetic Value of Wilderness

Beside the economic and the practical values of wilderness, it does have an aesthetic value as well. In order for any human to enjoy the aesthetic value of wilderness, he/she must have made some aesthetic accomplishment. Leopold highlights this idea by saying “The swoop of a hawk, for example, is perceived by one as the drama of evolution” (382). So, in order to enjoy the aesthetic beauty side of wilderness, one should bear certain aesthetic features. The aesthetic side of wilderness is clearly reflected in its harmony. This aesthetic side of wilderness is the main source of inspiration for many people. This aesthetic side is responsible for appreciating many values in both individuals and ecosystems and thus combining between both the holistic view and with individual considerations.

3- The Cultural Value of Wilderness

Leopold believes that wilderness has a cultural value due to its relationship with American culture. Leopold says that: “Wilderness is the raw material out of which man has hammered the artifacts called civilization. Wilderness was never a homogeneous raw material. It was very diverse, and the resulting artifacts are very diverse. These differences in the end-product are known as cultures. The rich diversity of the world’s cultures reflects a corresponding diversity in the wilds that gave them birth” (348). Actually Leopold thinks that human civilization stems from wilderness whose variety consequently leads to a variety of humans’ culture. To Leopold, the cultural value of wilderness can be summarized in three points, namely first helping people to remember their national origins, second helping people to remember their true position in the food chain of the ecosystem and finally helping people to apply the ethical guidelines called “sportsmanship”.

4- The Scientific Value of Wilderness

Leopold believes that wilderness has a scientific value. He says “In general, the trend of the evidence indicates that in land, just as in the human body, the symptom may lie in one organ and the cause in another. The practices that we now call conservation

are, to a large extent, local alleviations of biotic pain. They are necessary, but they must not be confused with curse. The art of land doctoring is being practiced with vigor, but the science of land health is yet to be born” (360). Leopold likens wilderness to a body with a balanced health that can get sick due to human beings. The symptoms of the sickness and illness of wilderness appears on land. Thus, Leopold calls for the appearance of a new science concerned with land health. He also notes “a science of land health needs, first of all, a base datum of normality, a picture of how healthy land maintains itself as an organism” (360). He further adds that the study of land health differs from one place to another and no result of a certain land can be generalized on wilderness. He explains by saying “one cannot study the physiology of Montana in the Amazon; each biotic province needs its own wilderness for comparative studies of used and unused land” (362). So the study data of a certain area can be of no importance to another area. Consequently, it is a must to protect the available wild areas, large or small, as distinct norms for land science and this is the scientific value of wilderness.

5- The Ecological Value of Wilderness

According to Leopold, wilderness is of ecological importance as it plays a major role in saving the ecosystem in general. Wilderness is also vital to maintain all the different and various species and breeds and this in return provides people with everything they need. In wilderness, all the living creatures, including humans, live together in a natural competitive and cooperative way.

To conclude, *A Sand County Almanac* is Leopold’s masterpiece in which he gives a vivid description of the place where he chose to live. *A Sand County Almanac* is an example of a work that covers the famous five concerns of ecocriticism by Lawrence Buell and Greg Garrard as explained earlier in this paper. Moreover, in this book, Aldo Leopold succeeds in suggesting a new angle of man-nature relationship. He believes that man is not the master of nature. On the contrary, man and any other human being are equal and thus he/she has no right to pollute and damage nature. Moreover, Leopold succeeds in suggesting a significant theory called ‘land ethic’ which is considered by many the basis for many further ecological ethics. This theory aims mainly to the stability, beauty, and integrity of biosphere in general. Finally,

Leopold succeeds in giving a detailed explanation of the value of wilderness which consists of the recreational, aesthetic cultural, scientific and ecological values.

Generally, *A Sand County Almanac* is a work that contains many valuable ecological ideas presented in a clear, simple and interesting language. This helped him to reach out for millions of readers to introduce his ideas about the relation between man and nature so that serious environmental crises can be avoided or even solved.

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