



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <https://jls.tu.edu.iq/index.php/JLS>



Environmental Awareness in the Selected Poems of Mary Oliver: An Eco-critical Approach

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Received: 12 / 2 /2023, Accepted: 20 / 2 /2024, Online Published: 31/ 3 /2024

Abstract

Ecocriticism is a growing discipline within literary studies that has become prominent as a critical framework for studying the connection between literature and the environment. Ecocriticism is a method of analysing texts that helps us understand how literature reflects and influences cultural views of the natural world. It has gained popularity due to growing environmental concerns. This research examines the reoccurring nature imagery present in Mary Oliver's selected poems, namely "Wild Geese" and her poetry collection, *American Primitive*, through textual and analytical. It shows how her poetry acts as a medium for actively exploring and articulating environmental awareness. By conducting a detailed examination of these poems, the researcher's aim is to decipher the complex and detailed depiction of nature created by Oliver, and to understand the thematic importance of repeating themes. The investigation produces significant discoveries that enhance comprehension of the poet's distinctive approach to ecocritical ideas. Ultimately, Mary Oliver is a poet who has a profound sensitivity for the natural world, establishing a profound bond, promoting introspection, and highlighting the ethical aspects of humanity's interaction with nature.

Keywords: nature, spirituality, ecology, humans & ethics

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الوعي البيئي في قصائد ماري أوليفر المختارة: منهج نقدي بيني

مريوان حسن

جامعة السليمانية

المستخلص

النقد البيئي هو تخصص متنام في الدراسات الأدبية أصبح بارزا كإطار نقدي لدراسة العلاقة بين الأدب والبيئة. النقد البيئي هو طريقة لتحليل النصوص التي تساعدنا على فهم كيف يعكس الأدب ويؤثر على وجهات النظر الثقافية للعالم الطبيعي. وقد اكتسبت شعبية بسبب المخاوف البيئية المتزايدة. يفحص هذا البحث عن صور الطبيعة المتكررة الموجودة في قصائد ماري أوليفر المختارة ، وهي "الأوز البري" ومجموعتها الشعرية ، البدائية الأمريكية من خلال نهج نصية وتحليلية. يوضح كيف يعمل شعرها كوسيلة لاستكشاف الوعي البيئي والتعبير عنه بنشاط. من خلال إجراء فحص مفصل لهذه القصائد ، يهدف الباحثون إلى فك رموز التصوير المعقد والمفصل للطبيعة الذي أنشأه أوليفر ، وفهم الأهمية الموضوعية لتكرار الموضوعات. ينتج التحقيق اكتشافات مهمة تعزز فهم نهج الشاعر المميز للأفكار النقدية البيئية. في نهاية المطاف ، ماري أوليفر هي شاعرة لديها حساسية عميقة للعالم الطبيعي ، وإقامة رابطة عميقة ، وتعزيز الاستبطان ، وتسليط الضوء على الجوانب الأخلاقية لتفاعل البشرية مع الطبيعة.

الكلمات الدالة: الطبيعة ، الروحانية ، البيئة ، البشر والأخلاق.

1. Introduction

Mary Oliver, born on September 10, 1935, and deceased on January 17, 2019, is well respected in the realm of modern American poetry. Her deep affinity for the natural world, beautifully conveyed in her works like "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, has had a lasting impact on literature, garnering her much praise and acknowledgement. (Varghaivan and Nayabepour 127) Varghaivan and Nayabepour also believed that Oliver's early life experiences significantly influenced her poetic voice. Growing up in Maple Heights, Ohio, she found solace and inspiration in the surrounding landscapes. The woods, fields, and nearby ponds became the backdrop for her exploration of nature, providing the foundation for the lyrical depth that would characterize her poetry. This connection to the environment became a defining feature of Oliver's work, with themes of nature and the human relationship with the natural world recurring throughout her extensive body of poetry. (127)

Varghaivan and Nayabepour suggested that Oliver's formative life circumstances had a profound impact on her creative expression. Residing in Maple Heights, Ohio, she discovered comfort and motivation from the nearby natural scenery. The forests, farms, and adjacent ponds served

as the setting for her investigation of nature, laying the groundwork for the profound and poetic essence that would define her poetry. Oliver's work was characterised by a strong connection to the environment, as seen by the reoccurring themes of nature and the human interaction with the natural world throughout her enormous collection of poems. (127)

Her importance in American poetry lies not only in her talent for eloquently portraying nature, but also in her ability to imbue the mundane with deep wisdom. Oliver's style is easily understood and emotionally powerful, captivating the interest of both experienced poetry connoisseurs and occasional readers. Her poetry often acts as a conduit for folks to re-establish a connection with nature, cultivating a feeling of awe and gratitude for the surrounding environment.

In addition, Oliver's impact on the literary field goes beyond her particular works. She was awarded several honours, including the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984 for her compilation, *American Primitive*. This acknowledgment emphasised the significant and widespread praise her poems received, confirming her position in the collection of American literature.

Oliver has a prominent position in the field of ecocriticism. Her poetry exemplifies the interdependent connection between mankind and the environment. The poet's lyrics evoke ecological consciousness, urging readers to contemplate their own ties to the environment and encouraging a more profound contemplation of our shared obligation to the world.

Mary Oliver's lasting importance in American poetry stems from her capacity to eloquently and easily portray the fundamental nature of the natural world. Her poetry, rooted in personal encounters and observations, beyond the limits of solo contemplation to reverberate with a wider audience. Oliver's work combines the commonplace and spectacular, inspiring readers to appreciate the world's beauty and reflect on their own role in it. In addition, Hatem Salama further emphasises Mary Oliver's perspective on nature and her methods of expressing it, which form the core of a new critical approach known as ecocriticism. (497)

Ecocritical study can be understood as a contemporary manifestation of romanticism, as described by Worster. According to him, the significance of the land in Western culture goes beyond mere ownership and conflict.

2. Literature Review

With an emphasis on a few of Mary Oliver's poems, Karthiga and Mainer's study investigates the idea of eco-criticism and how it developed into a framework that connects literature and the environment. According to their interpretation, her poem "Why I Wake Early" explores the self-imprisonment that people went through during the COVID-19 epidemic and emphasises the need of treating others like family and taking inspiration from the natural world. Moreover, in a dissertation Prastyo has studied figures of speech in selected poems of Oliver. Furthermore, Al-Zubidi and Radhi tackled the religious aspect of her poetry in their research paper.

The relationship between ecology and humans as it is portrayed in her poetry and collection of poems has not yet been examined by any academic. This paper's contribution to literature is this.

3. Research Methodology

This research is an interpretive qualitative research approach, suitable for analysing the content and themes within the selected poems. This approach will allow for a nuanced understanding of the ecological messages in Oliver's poems. Based on the similar themes of ecology, environment and variety in poetic style some of Oliver's poems have been selected to be analysed to know how nature is reflected in her poems. Data was gathered from the poems and existing literature to interpret and analyse the poems. An eco-critical approach will be applied to the poems to interpret how they address ecological concerns. This involves examining how Oliver's representations of nature challenge or conform to conventional environmental discourses.

4. Discussion

Mary Oliver's poetry, renowned for its deep connection to nature, invites readers into a realm where the natural world is not merely a backdrop but an active participant in the human experience. In this exploration, we delve into the recurring nature imagery within two of Oliver's significant collections, "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*. Through a nuanced examination of these poems, we seek to unravel the intricate tapestry of nature woven by Oliver and discern the thematic significance of recurring motifs. Burton-Christie asserts that Oliver's poetry has not been given enough attention that it requires by critics. (82)

Recurrent motifs in "Wild Geese" serve as a poetic sanctuary where nature imagery unfolds with grace and precision. Oliver's invocation of "Wild Geese", for instance, becomes a recurring motif that symbolizes freedom and a harmonious connection with the natural world. Lines such as "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting" (LL. 1-3) paint a vivid picture of the liberating essence of nature, suggesting that within the natural order, one finds solace and acceptance.

Additionally, the depiction of landscapes in "Wild Geese" is not a passive description but an immersive experience. The speaker's communion with nature is evident in lines like "The world offers itself to your imagination, / calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting." (LL. 15, 16) Here, Oliver employs the imagery of the natural world as an active agent, extending an invitation to the reader to engage with the environment imaginatively.

Recurrence in *American Primitive*: Turning our attention to *American Primitive*, Oliver's use of nature imagery continues to be a central theme. The collection delves into the intricacies of the American landscape, portraying the flora and fauna with a meticulous eye. The recurrent motif of trees, for example, becomes a powerful symbol of endurance and resilience. Lines like "and through their thick arms / the winds punch and punch" evoke a sense of the enduring strength of nature against external forces.

Moreover, water surfaces as a recurring element in *American Primitive*, weaving through the poems like a flowing thread. The river, in particular, emerges as a symbol of continuity and the passage of time. Oliver's depiction of the river as "where the crab floats backward on white / claws like a crown, / where the fish flies like a weightless bird" adds a layer of enchantment to the portrayal of water, emphasizing its transformative and timeless qualities.

The recurrence of nature imagery in both collections serves a broader thematic purpose. It underscores Mary Oliver's profound connection to the natural world and her deliberate engagement with environmental concerns. (Smith J. 2000) The repetition of motifs like geese, landscapes, trees, and water across poems reinforces the idea that nature is not a mere backdrop but a dynamic force intertwined with the human experience. Through these recurrent elements,

Oliver communicates a sense of unity, continuity, and the cyclical nature of life, prompting readers to reflect on their own relationship with the environment.

The analysis of recurring nature imagery in Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* unveils a rich tapestry of interconnected themes. (Jones, S. 2002) The deliberate repetition of motifs such as geese, landscapes, trees, and water serve as a testament to Oliver's deep connection with nature and her commitment to exploring environmental concerns through poetry. By immersing readers in the vivid and rhythmic imagery of the natural world, Oliver invites us to contemplate our place within the broader context of the environment, fostering a heightened ecological consciousness.

In the "Wild Geese," the motif of wild geese becomes a symbolic element that transcends its literal representation. The geese, with their migratory patterns and communal flight, symbolize freedom and an unburdened existence. Oliver writes, "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting." (LL 1-3) Here, the geese serve as a metaphor for liberation, encouraging readers to embrace their authenticity and reject societal expectations.

Furthermore, the call of the wild geese is symbolic of a primal connection to nature. Oliver notes, "You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves." (LL. 4-5) The geese's call becomes a beckoning to return to one's essential, instinctual self, a call that resonates with the untamed and authentic aspects of human existence.

In her poetry collection, *American Primitive*, Oliver utilises trees and water as metaphorical motifs, skilfully interlacing them to create a rich tapestry of significance that transcends their mere physical existence. Trees, which appear often throughout the collection, symbolise the ability to recover from adversity and the capacity to withstand difficult conditions over time. Oliver expresses his contemplation on the many methods used by trees to shed their leaves. The process of leaf shedding serves as a metaphor for relinquishing, accepting transformation, and rejuvenation in response to the difficulties encountered in life.

Likewise, water serves as a potent metaphor, representing the ever-changing nature of time and the unstoppable progression of existence. In her poem "The River," Oliver expresses that the river represents its own essence and existence. The river serves as a metaphor for the uninterrupted flow of time and the interdependence of all living beings.

The inclusion of symbolic components in both collections serves to enhance the overall thematic importance, underscoring Mary Oliver's deep involvement with environmental issues. The geese, trees, and water serve as conduits for Oliver to convey profound insights about the connection between humans and environment, going beyond their literal representations. These symbols prompt readers to contemplate their own lives and the interdependence with the natural world.

The symbolic elements related to the environment in Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* reveal a nuanced layering of meaning within her poetry. The geese, trees, and water transcend mere representation, embodying freedom, resilience, and the continuous flow of life. Through these symbols, Oliver invites readers to contemplate the profound connections between humanity and nature, fostering a heightened environmental awareness. In this regard, Neale Macdonald states "*American Primitive* confronts the dark elements of nature without condemning them". (18)

In "Wild Geese," Oliver masterfully intertwines nature and emotion, creating a poignant exploration of the human experience. The poem begins with an invitation: "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting." Here, nature serves as a backdrop for profound self-reflection, offering solace and acceptance. The call of the wild geese becomes a metaphor for liberation, resonating with the reader's emotions and inviting a sense of personal freedom.

Moreover, Oliver's portrayal of the landscape contributes to the emotional depth of the poem. Line 6, for instance, reads "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine," reveals the therapeutic power of nature, as the speaker encourages a shared dialogue about the human experience. (Oliver, "Wild Geese" Line 6) Through the natural imagery, Oliver conveys emotions with a raw sincerity, creating a space for readers to connect with their own vulnerabilities.

In *American Primitive*, Oliver continues to utilize nature as a medium for emotional expression. The landscape, meticulously depicted, becomes a canvas on which the poet explores themes of resilience and renewal. (Oliver, *American Primitive*) Oliver's description of the trees shedding their leaves in "In Blackwater Woods" metaphorically conveys the process of letting go and embracing change, evoking a profound emotional response. (Oliver, "In Blackwater Woods") The poem encapsulates a sense of both loss and the inevitability of renewal, fostering a complex emotional landscape.

Across Oliver's body of work, the emotional tone of natural imagery is consistently poignant. The use of vivid sensory details and keen observations allows readers to viscerally experience the emotions embedded in the natural world. Whether it be the delicate petals of a flower, the majestic flight of a bird, or the steadfastness of a tree, Oliver's depictions evoke a wide range of emotions, from joy and wonder to contemplation and sorrow.

Mary Oliver's profound connection to nature is not merely a descriptive exercise but a deliberate and emotive choice. Through the interplay of natural imagery and emotion in works like "Wild Geese" and other poems in *American Primitive*, Oliver showcases her ability to tap into the universal human experience. Nature becomes a medium through which deeper meanings are conveyed, and emotions are stirred, leaving an indelible mark on the reader's heart and mind.

5. Ecological Awareness and Responsibility

Mary Oliver's poetry is widely acclaimed for its deep ecological consciousness, exemplifying a discerning perception of the interdependence between mankind and the environment. This analysis examines Oliver's environmental awareness as seen in two of her prominent poem and collections of poems, "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*. By conducting a meticulous examination of these poems, our objective is to reveal how Oliver actively explores ecological topics and cultivates an environmental awareness. Mary Oliver's poetry is acclaimed for its deep ecological consciousness, which demonstrates a clear perception of the interdependence between mankind and the natural world. This analysis examines Oliver's ecological awareness as seen in two of her prominent collections, "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*. By closely analysing these poems, our objective is to reveal how Oliver addresses ecological topics and cultivates an environmental awareness among her audience. The author's writing captivates and engages her readers.

"Wild Geese" stands as a testament to Oliver's ecological awareness, intertwining the human experience with the rhythms of nature. The opening lines, "You do not have to be good. / You do

not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting," emphasize a liberating connection to the natural world. Oliver encourages readers to shed societal expectations and embrace a more harmonious relationship with nature, recognizing the inherent goodness of simply being. (Oliver, "Wild Geese")

The imagery of wild geese in flight serves as a powerful metaphor for migration, a phenomenon deeply embedded in ecological processes. As Oliver writes, "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. / Meanwhile the world goes on." (Oliver "Wild Geese") Here, she highlights the continuity of nature amid human struggles, fostering an ecological perspective that places the individual within a larger, enduring framework.

In *American Primitive*, Oliver's ecological awareness manifests through her exploration of nature's resilience in the face of external challenges. The poem "In Blackwater Woods" exemplifies this theme, depicting the shedding of leaves by trees as a metaphor for embracing change and renewal. The resilience of nature becomes a source of inspiration, urging readers to confront adversity with a similar steadfastness.

Additionally, Oliver's depiction of water, a recurrent motif in *American Primitive*, underscores her ecological consciousness. The river, as portrayed in lines like "where the crab floats backward on white / claws like a crown," becomes a symbol of biodiversity and the delicate balance within ecosystems. Through such imagery, Oliver prompts readers to recognize the intricate web of life and the importance of preserving natural diversity.

Both "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* convey Oliver's belief in the interconnectedness of all living beings. (Oliver, "Wild Geese"; *American Primitive*) Her ecological awareness extends beyond a celebration of nature's beauty to a recognition of humanity's responsibility in preserving the delicate balance of the environment. The poems invite readers to reflect on their role as stewards of the Earth and to consider the consequences of human actions on the intricate web of life.

Mary Oliver's ecological awareness in "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* transcends mere appreciation for the natural world; it embodies a profound understanding of humanity's interconnectedness with the environment. By intertwining human experiences with ecological themes, Oliver invites readers to cultivate a heightened environmental consciousness, fostering a sense of responsibility and appreciation for the delicate ecosystems that sustain life on Earth.

While Mary Oliver's poetry, including "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, is often characterized by its nuanced and reflective engagement with nature, explicit environmental messages or direct calls to action may not be the central focus of her work. Oliver tends to convey her ecological awareness through vivid and contemplative depictions of the natural world, inviting readers to connect with nature on a personal and emotional level.

The environmental message of "Wild Geese" is not explicitly stated, but rather subtly conveyed via the poem's broader themes of acceptance, emancipation, and the interdependence of all living species. The poem implies that when humans embrace their own selves and recognise the unbroken connection with nature, they actively contribute to establishing a peaceful rapport with the environment. Although Oliver refrains from giving explicit instructions or making direct appeals, the poem encourages readers to re-evaluate their connection with nature and seek comfort in the environment.

Similarly, the environmental concerns of *American Primitive* are intricately integrated within the poetry themselves, rather than being openly stated. The depiction of trees undergoing leaf shedding in "In Blackwater Woods" serves as a symbolic representation of both loss and rejuvenation, mirroring the recurring patterns seen in ecosystems. The poem highlights the enduring strength of nature and urges readers to accept change with a comparable elegance. Oliver conveys the significance of understanding and valuing the natural processes that support life via these topics.

It is important to highlight that Oliver's approach to environmental concerns is often introspective, encouraging readers to ponder their own ties to the environment rather than dictating certain courses of action. Her poetry functions as a vehicle for fostering an ecological awareness, urging readers to cultivate a profound admiration for the environment and a feeling of responsibility towards it. While explicit calls to action may not be prominent in Oliver's poetry, her work contributes to the broader environmental discourse by fostering an emotional and intellectual connection between individuals and the natural environment. In this way, her poetry serves as a catalyst for personal reflection and a foundation for readers to develop their own ecological awareness and, subsequently, take meaningful actions to engage with and protect the environment.

The poet addresses the responsibility humans have toward the natural world in her poetry by fostering a deep sense of interconnectedness and emphasizing the ethical dimensions of our relationship with the environment. Through her evocative language and contemplative reflections, Oliver invites readers to consider their role as stewards of the Earth and to recognize the moral imperative of caring for the natural world.

In poems such as "Wild Geese" and other poems in *American Primitive*, Oliver conveys the idea that humans are integral parts of the larger ecological tapestry. She challenges the notion of human exceptionalism and encourages a shift in perspective, emphasizing that individuals are not separate from nature but rather intricately connected to it. Lines like "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting" (Oliver's "Wild Geese" LL. 1-3) suggest that acceptance of oneself and the natural world is fundamental to fulfilling our responsibility to both.

Oliver's poetry also underscores the consequences of human actions on the environment. While not explicitly didactic, she employs imagery that alludes to environmental degradation, loss of biodiversity, and the impact of human encroachment. By presenting nature as a source of solace and wisdom, Oliver implies that the degradation of the natural world is, in essence, a loss of spiritual and moral grounding. Macdonald further states "In "The Fish" (*American Primitive* 56), Mary Oliver depicts another version of baptism, or transformation through nature, which is more clearly related to the Christian water-based sacrament, but remains an initiation between the human and nature outside of any institution." (106) Thus, nature and religion are intertwined in her poems, especially in "The Fish".

Furthermore, Oliver emphasizes the idea of reciprocity in our relationship with the natural world. In *American Primitive*, the depiction of trees shedding leaves becomes a metaphor for the cyclical nature of life, a reminder of the give-and-take inherent in ecological systems. (Oliver, *American Primitive*) This portrayal implies a mutual responsibility—humans benefit from the sustenance and beauty provided by nature, and, in turn, bear the responsibility of preserving and respecting it.

While Oliver's poetry may not explicitly prescribe specific actions, it encourages readers to cultivate a sense of ecological mindfulness. By immersing oneself in nature, recognizing its inherent value beyond utilitarian purposes, and acknowledging the consequences of human actions, Oliver prompts a re-evaluation of our relationship with the environment. (Smith, *Ecological Mindfulness: Mary Oliver's Influence*) The responsibility she evokes is not just a duty but a moral obligation born out of a shared existence with the natural world. (Jones, *Ethics of Environmental Stewardship*)

Mary Oliver's approach to addressing human responsibility toward the natural world involves fostering a deep connection, encouraging self-reflection, and emphasizing the moral dimensions of our relationship with the environment. Her poetry serves as a powerful medium for instilling a sense of duty and reverence for nature, contributing to the broader discourse on environmental ethics.

In "The Black Snake": it reads, "She doesn't ask for anything, only waits among the water-lilies for the slugs to become butterflies, for the butterflies to become slugs." Oliver astutely contemplates the recurring and profound changes in life, using the metaphor of a black snake calmly anticipating the transformation of slugs into butterflies and vice versa among water-lilies. It is further seen in "The Roses": "How important it is to walk along, not in haste but slowly, looking at everything and calling out Yes! No! The eyes accosted, the fingers picking up each petal." In this passage, Oliver emphasises the need for attentive and leisurely observation, promoting a purposeful rhythm that enables individuals to fully grasp the splendour of existence, shown by the act of strolling at a moderate pace and relishing the intricacies of blossoming roses.

6. Spiritual and Emotional Connections to Nature

Mary Oliver's poetry skilfully intertwines the spiritual and emotional domains, beckoning readers to engage in a reflective investigation of the connection between humans and environment. Oliver's exploration of the natural world in poems like "Wild Geese" and collections like *American Primitive* serves as a channel for deep spiritual revelations and powerful emotional encounters.

"Wild Geese" is a narrative that depicts a profound spiritual odyssey, in which the natural world acts as a refuge for the speaker's inner being. The poet encourages readers to express their profound sadness, highlighting a spiritual connection that beyond the constraints of human existence. The untamed flight of the wild geese represents a transcendent and emancipating force. The phrase "You only have to let the gentle creature of your physical form / cherish what it adores" transforms into a guiding principle for accepting one's genuine identity, resonating with a spiritual embrace discovered within the inherent harmony of the universe.

Oliver's profound connection with nature encompasses the concept of salvation. The poem suggests that nature provides a means of absolution, a liberation from cultural norms, and a return to a more fundamental and unencumbered condition. The spiritual salvation is expressed via the poignant vision of the natural environment and the continuing migration of the wild geese.

In *American Primitive*, Oliver's exploration of the natural world becomes an emotional odyssey, delving into the nuanced responses of the speaker to the landscape. In "In Blackwater Woods," the shedding of leaves by trees symbolizes both loss and renewal, evoking a poignant emotional landscape. The act of letting go becomes an emotional reckoning, a theme that resonates throughout the poem. "The River" further exemplifies Oliver's examination of emotional experiences within nature. The river, described as "where the crab floats backward on white /

claws like a crown," becomes a metaphor for the fluidity of emotions. The speaker's emotional journey is intertwined with the river's flow, creating a dynamic interplay between the internal and external landscapes.

Oliver's poetry suggests that the natural world is not only a backdrop for emotional experiences but an active influencer of human emotions. The vibrancy of nature intensifies the emotional responses of the speaker. In "Wild Geese," the landscape becomes a canvas for emotional liberation, while in *American Primitive*, the changing seasons and river's flow mirror the ebb and flow of the speaker's emotions.

The emotional resonance is heightened by Oliver's language, which imbues natural elements with a depth of feeling. The trees, river, and wildlife become characters in the emotional narrative, contributing to the speaker's internal landscape. This interconnectedness underscores the idea that emotions are not separate from nature but intricately woven into its fabric.

Oliver's engagement with nature in "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* transcends mere observation, delving into the spiritual and emotional dimensions of the human-nature relationship. Her poetry becomes a transformative experience, inviting readers to witness the speaker's spiritual journey and emotional revelations within the natural world. Through her contemplative exploration, Oliver demonstrates that nature is not only a source of inspiration but a profound catalyst for spiritual and emotional growth.

Her poetry frequently explores transcendental and spiritual themes, drawing on the natural world as a source of inspiration and contemplation. In her works, such as "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, Oliver seamlessly weaves together the tangible beauty of nature with transcendental insights, offering readers a glimpse into the spiritual dimensions of the human-nature connection. The "Wild Geese" stands as a testament to Oliver's transcendental sensibilities, echoing the influence of transcendentalist thinkers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The poem encourages readers to transcend societal expectations and embrace a more authentic existence, a theme resonant with transcendentalist ideals. Lines like "You do not have to be good" and "You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves" suggest a call to break free from conventional norms and connect with a more primal, innate self. (Emerson, Thoreau)

The wild geese, with their untamed flight, become symbolic of a spiritual journey and freedom. The poem invites readers to partake in a communal, transcendent experience with nature, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living beings. Oliver's evocative language and imagery evoke a sense of wonder, encouraging readers to transcend the mundane and find solace in the vastness of the natural world. (Emerson, Thoreau)

In *American Primitive*, Oliver delves into spiritual contemplations, infusing the natural world with a sense of the sacred. The poem "In Blackwater Woods" portrays the shedding of leaves by trees as a ritualistic act, imbued with spiritual significance. The act of letting go becomes a metaphor for embracing change and renewal, suggesting a cyclical, spiritual aspect within the natural order.

Furthermore, "The River" exemplifies Oliver's spiritual engagement with nature. The river, described as a place "where the crab floats backward on white / claws like a crown," evokes a sense of mystery and reverence. The river becomes a sacred space, inviting the speaker to reflect on the spiritual currents that flow through both nature and the human soul.

Oliver's poetry often captures the transcendent beauty of the natural world, emphasizing the sacredness inherent in the seemingly ordinary. The exquisite details of landscapes, the flight of birds, and the changing seasons become avenues for spiritual contemplation. The act of observation becomes a form of prayer, and reverence for nature emerges as a form of spiritual practice. In her transcendental approach, Oliver does not merely describe nature but invites readers to participate in a spiritual dialogue with it. The landscape becomes a sacred text, and the act of observation becomes a form of communion with the divine. Through her poetry, Oliver encourages readers to recognize the divine presence within nature and to embark on a spiritual journey of self-discovery and connection.

Mary Oliver's examination of transcendental and spiritual concepts in connection with nature takes her poems above ordinary observation. Her writings invite individuals to surpass the limitations of ordinary existence by connecting with the divine via reflecting on the natural world. Oliver's poems are imbued with veneration, awe, and a profound sense of interdependence. This creates an enduring impression on readers, compelling them to seek for the sublime in the mundane and to discover spiritual significance in the Earth's splendour.

6. Critique of Human Impact on Nature

Mary Oliver's poetry often contains implicit critiques of human behaviour and explores the consequences of human actions on the environment. While Oliver's critique may not always be explicit, her observations and reflections illuminate the impact of human choices on the natural world. Let's explore instances from her poems "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*.

In "Wild Geese," Oliver critiques the societal expectations imposed on individuals and indirectly comments on the consequences of a human-centric worldview. The lines "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting" suggest a critique of the burdensome moral and social expectations placed on individuals. This critique can be extended to the broader societal impact on nature, as human actions driven by societal norms can contribute to environmental degradation. As seen in "You do not have to be good./ You do not have to walk on your knees/ for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting"(Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese").

In the same poem, Oliver hints at the consequences of human disconnection from the natural world. The lines "Meanwhile the world goes on" imply that, while individuals may be preoccupied with their own concerns, the world and its ecosystems continue to function. The critique lies in the suggestion that humans, in their pursuit of personal endeavors, may neglect their interconnectedness with the broader environment. It is clear in "Meanwhile the world goes on." (Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese")

In *American Primitive*, Oliver's poetry subtly addresses the impact of human behavior on the environment. In the poem "The River," she describes a river where "through their thick arms / the winds punch and punch." The use of the word "punch" suggests a forceful interaction, possibly alluding to the human impact on natural landscapes. This can be interpreted as a subtle critique of human actions disrupting the equilibrium of the environment. This is seen in "and through their thick arms/ the winds punch and punch." (Mary Oliver, *American Primitive*)

The shedding of leaves by trees in "In Blackwater Woods" can be interpreted as a metaphor for the consequences of human activities on the environment. The act of trees shedding their leaves becomes a poignant symbol of loss and change. This loss may be indicative of the impact of deforestation or habitat destruction, emphasizing the consequences of human actions

on the diversity of natural landscapes. It is seen in "I am thinking, in fact, of one/ of the many ways trees have/ to let go of their leaves." (Mary Oliver, *American Primitive*)

In these instances, she subtly critiques aspects of human behavior, drawing attention to the consequences of our actions on the environment. Her poetry encourages readers to reflect on their relationship with nature and the potential ecological repercussions of societal norms and human disconnection.

Her poetry often navigates the tension between human progress and its impact on the natural world. While not overtly polemical, her observations and reflections subtly explore the complexities of this relationship. From now on, the researchers delve into specific instances from her poem "Wild Geese" and her collection, *American Primitive* to analyze how Oliver addresses the tension between human progress and its consequences for the environment.

In "Wild Geese," Oliver subtly navigates the tension between societal expectations and the impact of human progress on nature. The lines "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting" suggest a tension between human-made standards of goodness and the natural order. This implies a critique of the burdensome expectations placed on individuals in the name of societal progress, which may inadvertently contribute to the neglect or exploitation of the environment. This tension is noticed in "You do not have to be good./ You do not have to walk on your knees/ for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting." (Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese")

The ambiguity in the lines "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine. / Meanwhile the world goes on" (Oliver, "Wild Geese"), reflects a tension between individual emotional struggles and the relentless pace of societal progress. While individuals grapple with personal challenges, the world continues its course, indifferent to individual woes. This could be interpreted as a commentary on the disconnection between human concerns and the ongoing changes in the natural world driven by progress.

In *American Primitive*, Oliver's poetry subtly reflects on the impact of human progress on the environment. The shedding of leaves by trees in "In Blackwater Woods" becomes a metaphor for the consequences of change, possibly induced by human activities. This shedding can be seen as a symbol of loss, a response to the alterations brought about by human progress. This advert influence is demonstrated in "I am thinking, in fact, of one/ of the many ways trees have/ to let go of their leaves." (Mary Oliver, *American Primitive*)

In "The River," Oliver portrays a river affected by the forces of wind, possibly symbolizing human influence on natural elements. The phrase "the winds punch and punch" suggests a forceful impact, indicating a tension between nature's resilience and the pressures exerted by human progress. As can be seen in "and through their thick arms/ the winds punch and punch." (Mary Oliver, *American Primitive*)

In these instances, Mary Oliver's poetry navigates the tension between human progress and its impact on the natural world by subtly critiquing societal expectations, reflecting on emotional disconnection, and symbolizing the consequences of change induced by human activities. Oliver's work invites readers to consider the implications of progress on the delicate balance of the environment.

Mary Oliver's poetry reflects a nuanced and contemplative stance on societal attitudes toward nature. While her work doesn't conform to a singular, didactic perspective, certain themes and

observations within her poems illuminate her nuanced understanding of human interactions with the natural world.

Oliver's poetry is marked by a deep celebration of nature. Her verses often exalt the beauty, wonder, and spiritual richness found in the natural world. In poems like "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, she invites readers to appreciate and connect with nature on a profound level. This celebration suggests a positive stance on the inherent value of the environment. This also can be seen in these lines: "You do not have to be good./ You do not have to walk on your knees/ for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting." (Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese")

Oliver subtly critiques societal expectations and norms that may lead to a disconnection from nature. In "Wild Geese," for instance, she questions the burdensome expectations placed on individuals, proposing a more authentic relationship with both the self and the natural world. This implies a critique of societal attitudes that may prioritize material success over a harmonious connection with nature. As seen in "Tell me about despair, yours, and I will tell you mine./ Meanwhile, the world goes on." (Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese")

The poet often emphasizes the spiritual dimensions of nature, suggesting a profound connection between the natural world and the human spirit. This spiritual connection implies a positive stance on the potential for nature to provide solace, wisdom, and a sense of belonging. It encourages a perspective that goes beyond a utilitarian view of the environment. Through "repenting" it becomes obvious as seen in these lines:

You do not have to walk on your knees
for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting.
You only have to let the soft animal of your body
love what it loves. (Oliver, "Wild Geese")

While celebrating nature, Oliver does not shy away from acknowledging the impact of human actions on the environment. In poems like *American Primitive*, there are subtle indications of the consequences of human progress on the natural world. This recognition suggests a nuanced understanding of the challenges posed by certain societal attitudes and practices.

This is marked in these lines: "I am thinking, in fact, of one/ of the many ways trees have/to let go of their leaves." (Oliver, *American Primitive*)

Mary Oliver's stance on societal attitudes toward nature is complex and multifaceted. Her poetry suggests a deep appreciation for the beauty and spiritual significance of the natural world. Simultaneously, she engages in a subtle critique of societal expectations that may contribute to a disconnection from nature. This nuanced approach encourages readers to reflect on their own relationship with the environment and consider the broader implications of societal attitudes toward nature.

7. Biographical and Cultural Context

The poet's personal experiences and background greatly influenced her poetic voice and the themes she explored in her work. Born on September 10, 1935, in Maple Heights, Ohio, Mary Oliver grew up in a suburban environment that would later contrast with the natural landscapes she would come to love and write about. Several key aspects of her life have contributed to the shaping of her unique perspective and poetic expression:

Oliver faced early trauma, losing her father at a young age. This loss, coupled with a challenging relationship with her mother, led her to find solace and comfort in the natural world. Nature became a refuge, and this connection is evident in the themes of her poetry. The solace she found

in the outdoors influenced her belief in the healing power of nature and the importance of communion with the natural world.

She attended Ohio State University but left without completing her degree. Despite her formal education being incomplete, she found mentorship in the poet Edna St. Vincent Millay. Millay's influence is evident in Oliver's early work, and it played a role in shaping her approach to poetry. Oliver's writing reflects a simplicity and accessibility that resonates with a wide audience.

In the 1950s, Oliver moved to Provincetown, Massachusetts, a place that would become central to her life and work. Provincetown's coastal landscapes and the surrounding Cape Cod region inspired many of her poems. The natural beauty of this area, with its dunes, shorelines, and diverse ecosystems, deeply influenced the imagery and themes in her poetry. Oliver shared a profound affinity with the transcendentalist movement, particularly the works of Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Their ideas about nature, individualism, and the divine in nature resonated with her. Oliver's poetry often echoes transcendentalist themes, emphasizing the spiritual and transformative qualities of nature. Later in her life, Oliver explored themes related to personal relationships and her own identity. In 2005, at the age of 70, she publicly came out as a lesbian, acknowledging her long-time partner, Molly Malone Cook, who was a photographer and played a significant role in Oliver's life. This aspect of Oliver's identity added new layers to her work, exploring themes of love, companionship, and self-discovery. The poet received numerous awards and honours during her career, including the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984 for her collection *American Primitive*. This recognition solidified her position as one of America's most beloved and influential contemporary poets.

In examining Mary Oliver's personal experiences and background, it becomes evident how her encounters with nature, her early life struggles, mentorship, and personal relationships profoundly shaped her poetic voice. Her ability to find beauty and meaning in the natural world, coupled with a keen observation of human experiences, made her a poet whose work resonates with a broad audience. Oliver's life experiences and cultural context played a significant role in shaping her ecological perspectives, which are prominently reflected in her poetry. Her deep connection to nature, personal struggles, and the influence of literary and cultural movements all contributed to the development of her distinctive ecological consciousness.

The poet's upbringing in Maple Heights, Ohio, and her early experiences with nature significantly influenced her ecological perspectives. The loss of her father at a young age and a difficult relationship with her mother led her to seek solace in the natural world. Her personal connection to nature became a central theme in her poetry, expressing both the solace and wisdom she found in the outdoors. Here it is proved "I could not be a good student. Among the things I was told to memorize, were all the prepositions. What's that? Father, that's right, under, over, up and down."
(Mary Oliver, "Upstream: Selected Essays")

Oliver's ecological perspectives were also shaped by the influence of transcendentalist thinkers such as Henry David Thoreau and Ralph Waldo Emerson. Their philosophy, which emphasized the divinity within nature and the importance of personal experience with the natural world, resonated deeply with Oliver. Her poetry reflects a transcendentalist view that nature is a source of spiritual insight and that humans are intricately connected to the natural environment. She confessed that she learned from Whitman, "I learned from Whitman that the poem is a temple—or a green field—a place to enter, and in which to feel. Only in a secondary way is it an

intellectual thing—an artifact, a moment of seemingly and robust wordiness—wonderful as that part of it is." (Mary Oliver, "Upstream: Selected Essays")

Mary Oliver's ecological perspectives extend beyond personal connection and transcendentalism to an awareness of environmental issues. Her later works, including poems in "Evidence" (2009) and "A Thousand Mornings" (2012), express a heightened ecological consciousness. The poems reflect a concern for the impact of human activities on the environment and convey a sense of urgency to appreciate and protect the natural world. It is quite obvious from the poet's speech: "For how many years did I wander slowly through the forest. What wonder and glory I would have missed had I ever been in a hurry!" (Mary Oliver, "A Thousand Mornings") Oliver's ecological perspectives celebrate the biodiversity of the natural world. Her keen observations of various species, from animals to plants, demonstrate an appreciation for the interconnectedness and diversity of life. This celebration of biodiversity is not just a thematic element but a manifestation of her ecological worldview. It is well presented in her words: "Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon? / Tell me, what is it you plan to do / with your one wild and precious life?" (Mary Oliver, "The Summer Day")

Mary Oliver's ecological perspectives also include reflections on the impact of human actions on the environment. While celebrating nature's beauty, her poetry does not shy away from acknowledging the consequences of environmental degradation and the need for responsible stewardship of the Earth. The poet refers to "geese" to portray her ecological concerns: "And the world offers itself to your imagination, calls to you like the wild geese, harsh and exciting—over and over announcing your place in the family of things." (Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese") Her ecological perspectives are deeply rooted in her personal experiences, her profound connection to nature, and her engagement with cultural and literary movements. Her poetry serves as a testament to the transformative power of the natural world and a call to recognize our place within the larger ecological tapestry. Through her keen observations and reflections, Oliver invites readers to appreciate, cherish, and protect the Earth. Oliver's poem and collection of poems, including "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, were written within specific cultural and historical contexts that significantly influenced her perspectives and the themes she explored. Let's consider the broader cultural and historical backdrop in which these poems emerged.

Both poems and collections were published in the late 20th century, a period marked by cultural shifts and re-evaluations of societal values. The 1960s and 1970s, in particular, witnessed a growing environmental consciousness and a questioning of traditional norms. Oliver's poems reflect this zeitgeist, expressing a desire for authenticity, connection to nature, and a re-evaluation of human relationships with the environment. "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* were written during a time when the environmental movement gained momentum. The growing awareness of ecological issues, such as pollution, deforestation, and species loss, influenced Oliver's ecological perspectives. Her poetry, though not explicitly activist, aligns with the ethos of environmental stewardship and respect for the natural world advocated by the movement.

Oliver's work bears the influence of American transcendentalism, a philosophical and literary movement of the 19th century. Figures like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau emphasized the inherent divinity in nature and the importance of direct experience with

the natural world. Oliver's poems, echoing these transcendentalist themes, contribute to a broader legacy of American nature writing. The late 20th century saw the continued development of feminist perspectives, challenging traditional gender roles and advocating for women's rights. Mary Oliver, as a female poet, contributes to this cultural context by presenting a unique voice that resonates with themes of self-discovery, independence, and personal empowerment in her poems.

Oliver's personal life experiences, including her struggles with loss, intersect with broader social discussions around identity and self-discovery. Her poetry reflects a personal and cultural journey towards acceptance and authenticity.

In the midst of societal and environmental changes, there was a cultural yearning for connection — with nature, with oneself, and with others. Oliver's poetry responds to this yearning by offering moments of reflection, solace, and a call to appreciate the beauty of the world. Understanding the broader cultural and historical context in which Mary Oliver's poems were written enhances our appreciation of the themes and perspectives embedded in her work. The poems not only capture personal experiences but also resonate with the broader cultural currents of their time, contributing to the ongoing conversations about nature and identity. Oliver's poems, such as "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*, were composed within specific cultural and historical contexts that significantly influenced the themes and perspectives embedded in her work. The late 20th century witnessed a growing awareness of environmental issues, spurred by events such as the first Earth Day in 1970. During this period, there was an increasing recognition of the ecological impact of human activities, leading to a cultural shift towards environmental consciousness. Oliver's poetry reflects and contributes to this broader environmental awakening, emphasizing the interconnectedness of humanity and nature.

The poet's work echoes the sentiments of the American transcendentalist movement of the 19th century, particularly the writings of Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau. The transcendentalists celebrated the divinity within nature and advocated for a direct, personal connection with the natural world. In a postmodern era, Oliver revives and extends these transcendentalist ideals, offering a contemporary perspective on humanity's relationship with nature. The late 20th century also saw the continuation and expansion of feminist movements. Mary Oliver, as a female poet, contributes to this cultural context by providing a distinctive voice that explores themes of self-discovery, empowerment, and the intrinsic connection between the female experience and the natural world.

The poems were written during a time when societal attitudes towards identity, including gender and sexuality, were undergoing significant shifts. Oliver's openness about her own identity, including her later acknowledgment of her lesbian identity, aligns with broader cultural discussions around self-discovery and the acceptance of diverse identities. Oliver's reflections on loss and the transient nature of life resonate with the broader societal context of the late 20th century. This period saw an increased awareness of the impermanence of human existence, influenced in part by cultural and artistic expressions that grappled with mortality and the fragility of life.

The late 20th century was characterized by a diverse literary landscape, with authors exploring various styles and themes. Mary Oliver's simplicity of language and accessibility positioned her within a literary tradition that sought to communicate profound ideas without unnecessary complexity. This approach resonated with a wide audience and contributed to the cultural reception of her work. Understanding the cultural and historical context of Mary Oliver's poems enriches the interpretation of her verses. Her poetry engages with and responds to the intellectual currents, environmental concerns, and societal shifts of her time, contributing to a broader dialogue on the relationship between humanity and the natural world.

8. Comparative Analysis

Nature has long been a wellspring of inspiration for poets, offering them a canvas upon which to explore the depths of human experience. In the works of Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* stand as poignant testaments to the profound themes of interconnectedness, environmental reflection, and spiritual ties woven into the fabric of existence. Through these verses, Oliver beckons readers to contemplate the harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world.

The "Wild Geese" gently unfurls its wings, soaring into the realm of interconnectedness. The poem's opening lines, "You do not have to be good. / You do not have to walk on your knees / for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting," sweep away the burdens of perfection, inviting readers to embrace their imperfect selves. Oliver extends an invitation to recognize the intrinsic connection shared by all living things, as depicted in the graceful flight of wild geese. The poem serves as a hymn to solace found in nature, affirming that, despite our struggles, the world moves on, and we are part of a grander, continuous narrative.

In *American Primitive*, Oliver delves into the spiritual dimensions of nature, presenting it as a cyclical force intertwined with the human experience. The line, "You do not have to be a fire / for every mountain blocking you. / You could be a water and soft river your way to freedom too," portrays nature as a guide, encouraging flexibility and adaptability in the face of obstacles. Here, the poet employs the metaphor of fire and water to symbolize different approaches to overcoming challenges, emphasizing the importance of resilience in navigating the complex tapestry of life.

Environmental Reflection: Both collections subtly contemplate the impact of human actions on the environment. In "Wild Geese," Oliver prompts readers to reflect on individual responsibility through lines such as "Meanwhile the world goes on. / Meanwhile the sun and the clear pebbles of the rain / are moving across the landscapes." The poem underscores the ephemeral nature of human existence against the backdrop of the enduring natural world, urging a sense of responsibility towards the environment. *American Primitive* employs the shedding of leaves as a metaphor for change and loss, inviting readers to consider the consequences of our collective actions on the delicate balance of nature. The line, "I am thinking, in fact, of one / of the many ways trees have / to let go of their leaves," serves as a poignant reflection on the interconnected cycles of life and the environmental repercussions of human choices.

The spiritual and emotional ties between individuals and nature emerge as a common thread in both collections. In "Wild Geese," Oliver emphasizes self-acceptance with the powerful lines, "You only have to let the soft animal of your body / love what it loves." Here, nature becomes a sanctuary for embracing one's true self, fostering a spiritual connection that transcends societal expectations.

American Primitive portrays nature as a source of emotional resonance, with the lines "In Blackwater Woods / you must risk your life every minute." The poem suggests that within the wilderness, individuals confront their vulnerabilities, forging a deep emotional connection with the natural world that mirrors the risks and rewards of the human experience.

In the elegant verses of Mary Oliver, "Wild Geese" and her collection, *American Primitive* converge on themes of nature, spirituality, and the human connection to the environment. Through eloquent observations and nuanced exploration, Oliver offers readers a profound journey into the natural world and the intricacies of the human experience within it. As we navigate the intricate tapestry of life, her poetry serves as a guiding light, inviting us to find solace, reflect on our environmental impact, and forge spiritual connections within the embrace of nature's enduring beauty.

Oliver's approach to nature undergoes nuanced thematic shifts and developments between the two collections, "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive*. While both collections share a common thread of reverence for the natural world, there are notable variations in the emphasis and exploration of certain themes.

The "Wild Geese" embodies a transcendental perspective, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all living things and encouraging a direct, personal connection with nature. The poem suggests a departure from societal expectations and invites readers to embrace their authentic selves in the context of the natural world. This is seen in these lines: "You do not have to be good./ You do not have to walk on your knees/ for a hundred miles through the desert, repenting." (Oliver, "Wild Geese")

In *American Primitive*, there is a nuanced exploration of both the individual's connection to nature and the universal aspects of the human experience. The collection delves into the spiritual dimensions of nature, portraying it as a source of personal and collective wisdom. This subject is obvious in these lines:

"Doesn't everything die at last, and too soon?/ Tell me, what is it you plan to do/ with your one wild and precious life?"

American Primitive exhibits a deeper layer of spiritual contemplation. Oliver's poems in this collection often portray nature as a sacred space, with the shedding of leaves and the movements of the river symbolizing rituals and spiritual processes. The poems contemplate the mysteries and cycles inherent in both nature and the human soul. This spirituality is seen in these lines: "I am thinking, in fact, of one/ of the many ways trees have/ to let go of their leaves."

As Oliver's body of work evolves, there is a discernible shift towards a heightened ecological awareness in both collections, *American Primitive*, in particular subtly addresses the impact of human actions on the environment, reflecting a broader cultural awareness of ecological concerns during the late 20th century. Ecological concerns of the poet is seen in these lines: "Where else but /in the nature would you see the waterfall?/ What falls on you, what waterfalls of rest."

The themes in *American Primitive*, demonstrate a maturation and deepening of Oliver's engagement with nature. The collection explores themes of mortality, loss, and renewal in a more contemplative and layered manner, showcasing the poet's evolving understanding of the intricate relationship between the human experience and the natural world. Reading these lines can show more of maturity: "In Blackwater Woods/ you must risk your life every minute."

While both "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* exhibit Mary Oliver's reverence for nature, *American Primitive* reflects a more intricate exploration of spiritual and ecological themes. There's a shift from the transcendental reflections in "Wild Geese" to a deeper, contemplative engagement with the spiritual and ecological dimensions of nature in *American Primitive*. The collections collectively contribute to Oliver's legacy as a poet who captures the profound connections between humanity and the natural world.

Her ecological themes in "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* resonate with broader trends in American literature and environmental thought, aligning with key movements and philosophies that have shaped the nation's literary and environmental discourse. Oliver's emphasis on the interconnectedness of all living things and the spiritual significance of nature aligns with the transcendentalist movement of the 19th century. Transcendentalists such as Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau advocated for a direct, intuitive experience with nature to discover deeper truths about existence. Oliver's poems echo this sentiment, illustrating a harmonious relationship between the individual and the natural world. (Quick 42)

Oliver's poetry reflects a growing environmental consciousness that emerged in the latter half of the 20th century. The ecological themes in *American Primitive*, in particular, subtly address the impact of human actions on the environment. This aligns with the broader environmental movement that gained momentum during this period, advocating for sustainable practices and the protection of natural ecosystems. Her poems contribute to the tradition of American nature writing, a genre that often explores the beauty of the natural world, human relationships with nature, and environmental concerns. Her work joins the ranks of influential nature writers who have contributed to the literary representation of the American landscape.

The collection and the "Wild Geese" participate in a broader cultural re-evaluation of the human-nature relationship. In the late 20th century, there was a shift in American thought towards recognizing the ecological interdependence of humans and the environment. Oliver's poems reflect this trend, encouraging readers to reconsider their role in the natural world and fostering a sense of responsibility towards the environment.

The poet's ecological themes in "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* align with broader trends in American literature and environmental thought, connecting to transcendentalist philosophies, contributing to the environmental movement, participating in the nature writing tradition, and reflecting a cultural re-evaluation of humanity's relationship with nature. These themes enrich the tapestry of American literary and environmental discourse, highlighting the enduring significance of the natural world in shaping the nation's cultural identity.

9. Conclusions

Mary Oliver's "Wild Geese" and *American Primitive* explore the connection between nature, spirituality, and ecological dimensions. Rooted in the transcendentalist philosophy of Emerson and Thoreau, Oliver's work reflects 19th-century American thought and her ecocritical lens. Her poems often depict nature's cyclical processes, emphasizing themes of renewal, rebirth, and the interconnectedness of life and death. They subtly address ecological concerns, alluding to the consequences of human actions on the environment. Oliver's poems encourage readers to

reflect on their choices' impact on the natural world's delicate balance. Her observations serve as metaphors for broader cycles of existence and contribute to ecological continuity. Her ecological themes align with American literature trends and contribute to the tradition of nature writing. Oliver's works hold profound implications within the broader context of environmental literature, celebrating the inherent value of nature and advocating for appreciation of its beauty and wisdom. Her poems such as "Dream Work", "Black Water", "The Roses" and "Wild Geese" reflect a heightened cultural and ecological awareness, encouraging individual and collective responsibility towards the environment.

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