

**T.C.
İNÖNÜ ÜNİVERSİTESİ
SOSYAL BİLİMLER ENSTİTÜSÜ**



**REPRESENTATION OF THE DISADVANTAGED IN JASMYN
WARD'S WORKS: AN ECOCRITICAL READING OF
SALVAGE THE BONES AND SING, UNBURIED, SING**

YÜKSEK LİSANS TEZİ

Danışman: Prof. Dr. Zeynep YILMAZ KURT **Hazırlayan:** Mehmet Resul ÖNALAN

Malatya – 2023

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***(JASMYN WARD'IN ESERLERİNDE DEZAVANTAJLI OLANLARIN TEMSİLİ:
SALVAGE THE BONES VE SING, UNBURIED, SING'İN EKOKRİTİK BİR
OKUMASI)***

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MALATYA – 2023

ONUR SÖZÜ

Hazırladığım Yüksek Lisans Tezinin bütün aşamalarında bilimsel etiğe ve akademik kurallara riayet ettiğimi, çalışmada doğrudan veya dolaylı olarak kullandığım her alıntıya kaynak gösterdiğimi ve yararlandığım eserlerin kaynakçada gösterilenlerden oluştuğunu, yazımda enstitü yazım kılavuzuna uygun davranıldığını taahhüt ederim.

Mehmet Resul Önalın



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my gratitude to all those who provided support and encouragement throughout the process of writing my thesis. First of all, I want to express my deepest gratitude to Zeynep YILMAZ KURT, my excellent thesis advisor. I am truly thankful to her for expanding my knowledge of literature and demonstrating her remarkable character. I owe her a great deal of gratitude for all the wisdom she provided and the countless things I have learned from her. Secondly, I'd like to thank my beloved İrem GÖKTAŞ, who has been with me since the beginning and has not only shared her great ideas with me but also supported me. Finally, I'd like to thank my wonderful family, who provided me with every condition and supported me during the entire procedure, and the Modadil Academy team members and students.

ABSTRACT

Representation of the Disadvantaged in Jasmyn Ward's Works: An Ecocritical Reading of *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*

This study examines American novelist Jasmyn Ward's two novels, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, within the ecocritical framework. Generally focusing on the lives of lower-class poor black people in her novels, Jasmyn Ward reflects on their struggle for survival in their economically and physically oppressing circumstances. Her two novels, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, deal, especially, with such issues as poverty, drug addiction, misogyny, and natural disasters. This study aims, in this context, to employ ecocritical concepts such as biophilia, ecofeminism, and eco-spirituality to analyze these two novels. Both novels, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, are set in rural landscapes which provide an abundance of material related to nature as well as natural disasters, the traditional perception of nature as having its own soul, ghosts, etc. Thus, both books cover a wide range of topics related to ecocriticism, making them suitable for analysis from an ecocritical perspective. Existing literature and research indicate that ecocriticism, including its subcategories, is a relatively new field with limited scholarly attention. This study, intends, for this reason, to contribute to the development of ecocriticism by evaluating these two novels in terms of the interconnectedness and integrity of the forces of nature.

Keywords: ecocriticism, environment, human beings, Jasmyn Ward

ÖZET

Jasmyn Ward’ın Eserlerinde Dezavantajlıların Temsili: “Salvage the Bones” ve “Sing, Unburied, Sing” Üzerine Bir Ekokritik Okuma

Bu çalışma, Amerikalı yazar Jesmyn Ward’ın *Salvage the Bones* ve *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, adlı romanlarını ekokritik bir çerçevede incelemektedir. Ward, romanlarında bozulmuş kırsal alanlarda yaşayan yoksul siyahi insanların mücadelesini yansıtır. Özellikle *Salvage the Bones* ve *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, adlı iki romanında yoksulluk, uyuşturucu bağımlılığı, kadın düşmanlığı, doğal afetler ve siyahi ailelerin yaşam mücadelelerini ön plana çıkılmaktadır. Bu çerçevede, bu çalışma Jesmyn Ward’ın *Salvage the Bones* ve *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, adlı romanlarının analizinde biophilia, ecofeminism ve eco-spirituality gibi ekokritik kavramları kullanmayı amaçlamaktadır. Bu çalışma için söz konusu romanların seçilme nedeni ise, “ekokritizm” kavramının kapsamlı bir şekilde ele alınmasıdır. *Salvage the Bones* ve *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, romanları, ekokritizm ile ilgili geniş bir konu yelpazesini kapsamaktadır ve bu nedenle ekokritik bir perspektiften analiz için uygun görülmektedir. Var olan literatür ve araştırmalar, ekokritizm ve alt kategorilerinin, sınırlı akademik ilgiye sahip, nispeten yeni bir alan olduğunu göstermektedir. Bu nedenle, bu çalışma, doğadaki varlıkların birlik ve bütünlüğünü örnekleyen bu iki romana odaklanarak, ekokritizm alanına katkıda bulunmayı amaçlamaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: ekoeleştirici, çevre, insan, Jesmyn Ward

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

Since nature is essential for the survival of humans, there has always been a close connection between human beings and the natural world. Since the beginning of time, nature has provided human beings with a range of benefits like the environment they settle in, the source for their food, and other resources. Therefore, people have been concerned, since ancient times, with how their actions influence the environment and how the environment, in turn, affects them. Dreese believes in the importance of environmental influence on individuals as that “[p]erhaps there is no place more influential in the development of the human identity than the place where one grows up” (2). However, this does not necessarily imply that humans have a favorable relationship with nature. Hettinger explains the human relationship with nature as follows: “[I]t is true that humans, too, suffer as a result of the recent onslaught on the environment. But, the success of this argument depends on a conception of human flourishing that deeply connects humans with nature” (85). It is not difficult to witness the degradation of the environment in today's world. Dating back to the Industrial Revolution, individuals have had varying and largely negative effects on the environment. As a result, environmental catastrophe has become unavoidable. And this environmental catastrophe has come to the attention of those who are concerned with literature and culture rather than the authorities. Nevertheless, it is impossible to assert that environmental researches were taken seriously, particularly before the 1960s. The importance of nature in the scholarly cycle has become more recognizable with the help of environmental studies. In his *The Green Studies Reader*, Laurence Coupe states that the link between nature and culture is the twenty-first century's most pressing intellectual issue (xvii). Soper explains the connection between the environment and human beings as follows: “In recent times, it [the connection between environment and human beings] has come to occupy a central place on the political agenda as a result of ecological crisis, where it figures as a general concept through which we are asked to re-think our current use of resources, our relations to other forms of life, and our place within, and responsibilities towards the eco-system” (2). In the opening part of her article, Soper emphasizes our dependence on the ecosystem and our connection and affiliation with nature and other species. Not only does the connection and affiliation

with nature argument apply to environmentally motivated affirmations of our connection with the outer world, but it also applies to any and every concept that would have us consider human characteristics and culture as understandable in terms of elements shared with the rest of the animate life (41). The future of the ecosystem, with which we have so much in common, is unclear. However, the interdependence of animate and inanimate parts reveals the importance of ecosystems for the environment. Borlik implies the importance of interdependence as that, “[h]uman flourishing is predicated on ecological stability, while the natural world is revealed to possess purposes aloof from human interests” (7). Consequently, numerous scientific publications on the natural world have appeared in recent years, each applying a separate set of terms. And when we consider the impact that these terms have had, *ecocriticism* is the phrase that emerges as one of the most remarkable terms, and it is the one that is discussed in the academic field by providing new terms.

1.1. Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism is a relatively newly formed discipline of studies in literature and culture that developed in the late 20th century as a means of responding to the ecological crisis and the need to address environmental issues through several forms of societal output. Ecocriticism’s origins may be traced back to the necessity to address environmental concerns through diverse kinds of cultural production. Studies that have contributed to the development of ecocriticism involve three stages; each of these stages, attributed as waves, has its points of view, concerns, and techniques. In this sense, different ideas about how to evaluate ecocriticism have led to different approaches that are regarded as distinct waves of criticism. Even though the grounds of the field are established in the ideas spread by critics, who represent the beginning of ecocriticism as the first and second wave, their ideas are followed by the third and fourth wave critics when we come to the 2000s. The *first wave*, which began in the 1970s and put nature and people at the center of attention, evolved as time passed. Later on, the idea that nature and human ideas don’t contradict each other, but rather complement each other, starts to be more common. With this change, from the ideas of the first-wave thinkers, the idea of the *second wave* starts to become more common. The second wave is primarily concerned with depictions of nature in literature and

highlighting the connection between humans and nature. And then, the emergence of the *third wave* comes to the forefront as a reaction to the criticisms and constraints of the second wave. The third wave aims to broaden the scope of inquiry beyond literary texts and incorporate a diverse range of cultural expressions, including but not limited to cinema, visual arts, music, and popular culture. The statement acknowledges that environmental concerns extend beyond written literature and have roots in diverse cultural expressions. Marland brings the idea of the fourth wave in her article written in 2013 by focusing on the word “material”. Marland focuses on the emergency of the fourth wave as follows: “The fourth wave should be regarded as co-existent with rather than superseding the third (or indeed the other strands of ecocriticism) and has only very recently been identified. It is the emergent field of material ecocriticism” (855). As Marland states, it is not possible to put the fourth wave into a frame because it is a very new perspective. Therefore, like living beings, these waves have evolved over time and have taken on different formats as a natural consequence of their improvement and contributed to the development of ecocriticism as a whole.

Ecocriticism is a broad term that is commonly used to refer to the analysis of literature from an environmental perspective. The fields of literature and environmental studies have experienced a significant increase in terminology over the past few decades. As a distinct area of literary criticism, ecocriticism especially starts to gain importance towards the end of the 20th century. There are some significant works, like Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land*, Leo Marx’s *The Machine in the Garden*, and Annette Kolodny’s *The Lay of the Land*, that emphasize the value of the natural world and life forms. While Smith depicts the American West in *Virgin Land* concerning its social, economic, cultural, and political aspects, Marx’s work, *The Machine in the Garden*, describes a pastoral landscape that is corrupted by technology as a result of American industrialization. *The Lay of the Land* by Kolodny is another significant work that focuses on the environmental crisis by portraying the land in the image of a woman. These works, referred to as “proto-ecocritical works” by Wrestling, have greatly contributed to the development of ecocriticism (26). The term “eco-criticism” was then first used in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay, “Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism”. Rueckert determines nature and the environment as the focal point in this work. In her “Alexander von Humboldt’s ‘Kosmos’ and the

Beginnings of Ecocriticism” Jenkins claims that the term was used over a century before it was introduced (89). For many critical approaches, *ecocriticism* is an umbrella term that can be applied to many different aspects of the relationship between humans and non-humans.

As a direct response to the destruction of the natural environment, ecocriticism has begun to acquire a new level of significance. Especially in recent years, the ecological crisis has become a global problem. The growing degree of the crisis, which has been expressed by the increasing degradation of the ecological balance and the damage it has brought to the ecosystem, has further raised interest in the environment. So, the notion of ecology began to get more attention. However, the term *ecology* did not enter the English language until 1873 (Glottfelty et al. 21). The introduction of this terminology into the field in 1873 shows how early awareness actually existed. In terms of its etymology, both *eco* and *critic* come from the Greek language, *oikos*, and *kritis*. What is important at this point is that when the words come together it means “house judge”. Depending on the etymology of this word, it can be deduced that the “house judge” is significant in the sense that it illustrates nature’s “dominant” position in the universe. In other words, nature asserts that it is alive and that it has control over the lives that it contains. While some scholars use the affix of “*enviro*” instead of “*eco*”, some others prefer “*eco*”. *Environ* is a French word that means “surrounded” or “encircled” and this word evokes *anthropocentrism*¹, the belief that humans have an advantage over non-humans. The second one, however, can be evaluated from an *ecocentric*² perspective. In the context of environmental ethics³, the term “anthropocentrism” refers to the notion that human beings are the primary source of value and that all other living creatures exist solely to serve human objectives (Kopnina 109). However, the second one (eco) identifies the importance of all elements in the universe, both human and non-human. That is, it values the relationship between organisms and the environment. So, the idea that is known as ecocentrism, as opposed

¹ Anthropocentrism refers to a particular belief system or worldview that places humans at the forefront, considering them to be the most significant or central entities. This perspective regards other beings and the environment as existing primarily to serve human interests.

² Ecocentrism is a perspective that highlights the interdependence and interconnectedness of all living beings and ecosystems, in contrast to anthropocentrism, which prioritizes human interests.

³ Environmental ethics aims to cultivate a more profound comprehension of our obligations and advance the welfare of present and future generations, as well as the world around us as a whole, by studying the ethical aspects of our association with the environment.

to anthropocentrism, is distinct: “Ecocentrism sees the ecosphere – comprising all Earth’s ecosystems, atmosphere, water and land – as the matrix which birthed all life and as life’s sole source of sustenance” (Gray 130). Ecocentrism is a way of looking at the world that embodies the intrinsic value of ecosystems, as well as the natural and physical components that make up ecosystems, in addition to the ecological processes that geographically and temporally connect ecosystem components (130). Howarth, another scholar studying ecocriticism, argues in his work “Some Principles of Ecocriticism” that ecocriticism develops indistinctly because its authors lack a shared sense of canon (60). He believes that there is no common understanding among authors. Howarth’s perspective that there is no shared canon is true because ecocriticism has not been a commonly accepted canon until quite recently. Yet, in recent years, ecocriticism has become a lingua franca, at least among certain groups of scholars. So, this term gets more important over time and gives scholars something they can agree on. In literary studies, eco-criticism is handled by a world-centered approach, and literary studies in this context have increased in recent years. In addition to the works of Buell and Glotfelty, Greg Garrard’s book, *Ecocriticism*, Scott Slovic’s *Fundamentals of Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature*, and Serpil Opperman’s articles do provide a deep insight into the field of Ecocriticism.

Although there are divergent views on ecocriticism, some of these views have made a particular contribution to this area. Cheryll Glotfelty gives one of the most well-known definitions of ecocriticism. In the introduction to *The Ecocritical Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* she states that ecocriticism is,

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 modes of production and economic class to its reading texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies (xviii).

Even though definitions of ecocriticism have been made over the past few years beyond the quotation given above, the above definition of Glotfelty has contributed significantly to the fact that ecocriticism is a literary theory and has given a basis to all academics and students of ecocriticism worldwide. This definition of Glotfelty is an accepted opinion, not only in America but also in other parts of the world. She noted in many of her works that authors either ignore or underestimate the global environmental crisis. Her opinion is also supported by the inadequacy of literary studies in this field.

For English Literature, Glotfelty states that the studies need to redraw the boundaries in order to 'remap' the rapidly changing environment of literary studies (xv). Continuity and reshaping of literary works create a different significance at this point. Howarth states this interest in literary works as that "[e]cocriticism seeks to redirect humanistic ideology, not spurning the natural sciences but using their ideas to sustain viable readings. Literature and science trace their roots to the hermeneutics of religion and law, the sources for early ideas of time and space, or history and property" (58). In a way similar to Glotfelty and others give the following definition:

The ecocritic wants to track environmental ideas and representations wherever they appear, to see more clearly a debate which seems to be taking place, often part-concealed, in a great many cultural spaces. Most of all, ecocriticism seeks to evaluate texts and ideas in terms of their coherence and usefulness as responses to environmental crisis (5).

Thus, ecocritics make an effort to highlight the significance of the ongoing crisis by focusing on texts. And the relationship between man and nature is not a new topic in literary studies. The interaction between humans and the natural world has long been a subject of interest and discussion among individuals seeking to better understand the environment. It is inconceivable to man, who is one with nature in many aspects, to isolate himself from it. Therefore, the human-nonhuman relationship has manifested itself in a variety of disciplines. One of these areas is literature.

Nature has a big impact on culture and literature, and the cultural significance is demonstrated by Holmes as follows: "Recovering nature from functionalism, ecocriticism both registered nature's aesthetic dimension as well as its presence in and impact on cultural practices" (Holmes et al. 1). The formation of ecocriticism as a distinct discipline, on the other hand, is a relatively recent phenomenon. Buell, in his study titled *The Future of English Literature Studies in an Age of Globalization* also states that even though literary critics have always been interested in the relationship between man and his physical environment, ecocriticism did not emerge as a separate discipline until the 1990s (11). Buell, in this sense, focuses on two separate words which are *is* and *where*. Buell's *where* and *is* terms are particularly important among these studies. He prioritized these two terms to refer to man and the physical world, as well as the link between them. That is, the word "is" emphasizes the existence of living things in nature. The setting in which these creatures exist is what is meant by "where". Firstly, for Buell, if there is no *where*, the existence of *is* is equally a problematic

situation (300). This explanation of Buell could be classified as *ecocentrism* rather than *anthropocentrism*, which is defined as a system of ideas that prioritize human interests over non-human ones. Ecocentrism, on the other hand, is a set of beliefs that recognizes the importance of all living and non-living aspects of the biosphere. Therefore, *is*, in this context, refers to *humans*, and *where* refers to “environment/non-human”. So, obviously, *where* and *is* have a close relationship. Just as they can be mutually constructive, they can also be mutually destructive. However, Buell asserts the non-humans’ power over humans. In other words, the acquisition of identity is dependent on the existence of an environment in the first place. In fact, “*is*” would be useless in the absence of “*where*”. As a result, interdependency plays a crucial role in this case. Jelica Tomic explains this interdependency between humans and non-humans in her article, *Ecocriticism–Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment*. She tries to explain ecocritical terminology by concentrating on ecology, ecocriticism, and language studies as a whole. She states that spiritually, the environment (*where*) affects the being (*is*) (47). And she also makes a comparison between the ecological side of things and the study of ecology through language. It needs to be noted that these terminologies, constructed by *is* and *where*, make a significant contribution to the field of ecocriticism. Tomic, therefore, has contributed to the relationship between nature and its components by focusing on these terminologies.

The primary concern of the twenty-first century, for Buell, would be the Earth’s survival (300). The negative traces left by man on the earth have become more obvious, and have come to light in the twentieth century. The loss of biodiversity, as well as the degradation of the air and water, explain why people should take action to help the ecosystem. As mentioned before, the crisis that developed and became more serious, particularly with the ongoing destruction of the ecological balance and environmental destruction, stimulated interest in the environment. Thus, one of the ways whereby human beings fight for the world in which they live comes in the form of ecocriticism. Even though recent attention has focused on ecology and literary criticism to protect the environment, it is still a troubling issue since this area is new and not fully defined. The integration of environment and literary criticism, on the other hand, is particularly important.

It seems unlikely that the realm of ecocriticism can be reduced to a single form. Since ecocriticism has an interdisciplinary structure, it is simply untrue to claim that it is entirely dependent on any certain genre. When we look at ecocriticism in a broader context, it is possible to trace an amalgamation of the ideas of well-known ecocritics such as Lawrence Buell, Herald Fromm, Glen A. Love, William Howarth, and Scott Slovic, together with Cheryll Glotfelty and William Rueckert. The Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), founded in 1992, influenced the development of Ecocriticism. Thus, ecocriticism starts to get popularity and recognition throughout the world, particularly in the United States and England. The introduction of new concepts into the terminology will inevitably allow the field to expand and be studied more thoroughly. In this way, the term *deep ecology*⁴ is one of the most remarkable ones for the field because it is a very important sub-term that supports the ecology. Thus, it is possible to assert that nature is regarded as a whole that contains its intrinsic value. Tosic, another scholar who works on deep ecology, equates the term ecology and deep ecology as the same. The terms *ecology* and *deep ecology* are the most significant ones mentioned by Tosic. Ecology is the scientific investigation of the interaction between organisms and their surroundings (Tosic 45). Particularly compared to deep ecology, it is already a well-known term. Deep ecology is a way of thinking that puts the question of humanity's place in nature rather than the question of the best possible social and political structures for human beings. That is, the answer to this more fundamental problem must lead to, or at least be consistent with, the solution to the societal and political problems. (Eckersley 28). Dreese defines this topic in terms of a biocentric perspective as that "[d]eep ecology challenges the hierarchy that has polarized humans and nature and advocates a biocentric perspective, which acknowledges the mutually reciprocal relationship required for a sustainable ecosystem" (5). The terms ecology and deep ecology are noteworthy because they are based on the notions of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism that were previously discussed. Anthropocentrism is closer to ecology, whereas ecocentrism, which emphasizes the value of the non-human over the human, is closer to deep ecology. As another researcher who studies deep ecology, Filipova emphasizes that "[d]eep ecology presents

⁴ Deep ecology, according to Tosic, emphasizes the role of the individual, who is urged to conduct as a world and Earth citizen and to assume responsibility for it (45).

ecocentrism as a desirable move away from a destructive disregard for the non-human” (81). The phrase “deep ecology” is developed by Arne Naess, who states some key principles of deep ecology. Naess asserts that “[t]he well-being and flourishing of non-human life on Earth have value in themselves, independent of the usefulness of the non-human world for human purposes” (68). Sessions defines deep ecology, on the other hand, as that:

Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right (270).

Nature is valuable within itself, even without human beings. However, the inter-relationship of nature with other living components is also valuable. Because the spirit of nature has always been closely connected to the spirit of man. Similar to the aforementioned quotation, the principles mentioned by Naess and George Sessions serve as a warning to humans to take necessary steps in order to save the earth. They believe that attitudes toward anthropocentrism should change and that ecocentrism, which emphasizes the priority of the environment, needs to become more widely respected. In addition to humans, existing animals and plants are in danger as natural resources are depleting on a daily basis, and their negative influence on living beings is also continuing to increase. This danger has emerged as a consequence of changing conditions and ecological collapse. But human beings, who live in the ecosystem and are citizens of it, have the most important part to play in minimizing this degradation. Particularly at this point, ecocriticism plays an important role in the development of environmental consciousness. Ecocriticism, which is a form of literary criticism, is one of the ways of taking this kind of action. It has the potential to address public awareness about environmental issues positively and it is a part of the environmental process.

In this sense, different ideas about how to evaluate ecocriticism have led to different approaches that are regarded as distinct waves of criticism. Even though the grounds of the field are established in the ideas spread by first and second-wave critics, people in academic circles have started to talk about the third and even fourth waves since the early 2000s. The *first wave*, which began in the 1970s and put nature and people at the center of attention, improved as time passed. Following that, the view that nature and human ideas are not mutually exclusive, but rather serve to enhance one

another, gains popularity. With this change, the idea of the *second wave* starts to become more common. Then, the *third wave*, which is the next step after the second wave, starts to be discussed. In the third wave, unlike the second, nature becomes more important than human beings. Thus, the social and physical dimensions of the environment are also discussed. Marland talks about the *fourth wave* in her 2013 article, “Ecocriticism”, by focusing on the word “material”. Therefore, like a living being, these waves have evolved over time and taken on different shapes as a natural consequence of their development.

1.2. First Wave

Ecocriticism is a generic term that most closely corresponds to the environmental study of literature. This literature and environmental studies have increased dramatically in recent decades. The first wave of ecocriticism appeared in the 1970s and 1980s, and its primary focus was on the depiction of nature in works of literature. The scholars who participated in this wave of scholarship concentrated their attention on the manner in which literary texts depicted the natural world and the manner in which those depictions influenced attitudes in society toward the environment. The writings of authors such as Henry David Thoreau, William Wordsworth, and Ralph Waldo Emerson are considered to be at the heart of this movement of ecocriticism because it is believed that they exemplified a “green” awareness that appreciated the natural environment while condemning human exploitation of it. Even though they are classified as *first* and *second waves*, there is no clear dividing line between them and they cannot be separated thoroughly. The waves that developed under the title of ecocriticism are frequently used to describe the diachronic development of eco-criticism. When we look at its evolution over time, it is clear that the shifts of waves are not entirely the case for ecocriticism. Differentiating ecocriticism in terms of different waves does not help but rather sets barriers between different periods and disturbs integrity between different approaches. However, the concept of anthropocentrism has been widespread in some periods, while it has been ecocentrism in others. The notion of “wave” is discussed by Lawrence Buell in *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005). According to Buell, the waves should not be interpreted as separate strings. Buell also mentions that there will not be a wave

metaphor exactly, though he is the first one to reveal the terms, *first* and *second wave*. Buell's explanation is as follows:

No definitive map of environmental criticism in literary studies can't herefore be drawn. Still, one can identify several trend-lines marking an evolution from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or newer revisionist wave or waves increasingly evident today. This first-second distinction should not, however, be taken as implying a tidy, distinct succession. Most currents set in motion by early ecocriticism continue to run strong, and most forms of second-wave revisionism involve building on as well as quarreling with precursors. In this sense, "palimpsest" would be a better metaphor than "wave" (17).

It is possible to assert that the existing first and second-wave notions are actually in use despite Buell's explanation. In her article, Marland explains who the first-wave ecocritics are and how they came to the center of attention as that

[w]riters such as Henry David Thoreau, John Muir, Mary Austin, Edward Abbey, Wendell Berry and Annie Dillard were lauded for the quality of their environmental imagination. The landscapes they engaged with were often wilderness or semi-wilderness, and their writings reflect the legacy of American Transcendentalism, with its emphasis on the educative value of wild nature and intense individual connection with the landscape (849).

As Marland also states, the first wave saw a rise in the significance of terms like "wild," "wilderness," "nature," and so forth, as well as the importance of "understanding nature" and "understanding the value of environmental sensitivity". Thus the first wave focuses exclusively on the texts' environmental message. So, it emphasizes the significance of human connection with the non-human environment. As a result, the first wave promotes ecocentrism through ecocritics' earth-centered attitude. The primary importance of first-wave ecocriticism is its contribution toward approving the study of the relationship between literature and the environment as an acceptable field of study. The initial group of ecocritics, known as first-wave ecocritics, establishes a bridge for the following waves of ecocriticism by directing their attention toward the portrayal of nature in literature. This paves the way for the expansion of the field to encompass other types of cultural output. Thus, first-wave ecocriticism plays a crucial role in the development of ecocriticism as a field of study. Furthermore, this positive attitude toward nature provides a new evaluation of the human-nonhuman bond. This human tendency toward nature can be associated with the term *biophilia* in the first wave.

Even though human beings have had a connection with nature throughout their history, the term "biophilia", coined in the 20th century, has made this connection even

more important in academic circles. The term was first used in 1973 by the German psychoanalyst Erich Fromm in his work *The Anatomy of Human Destructiveness*. It was later coined by an American scientist, Edward O Wilson, in his book *Biophilia* in 1984. While Fromm used the phrase to describe someone who has a deep passion for life and everything alive, Wilson believes that heredity plays a part in people's genetic predisposition to pay attention to nature and other living organisms and to form relationships with them. Nature and other kinds of life are seen to be connected by the *biophilia theory*, which proposes that people have an intrinsic need to interact with nature. Biophilia, according to Wilson, is defined as an "innate tendency to focus on life and lifelike processes" (1). Humans have embraced and incorporated nature to such an extent that they can describe their tendency toward nature through many metaphors based on animals and other living things. Such spiritual concepts and extensive metaphorical links with nature might be regarded as the belief that human beings have a much closer affinity with nature. The appearance of the natural world is universally admired because of the remarkable diversity that it contains. This kind of love is frequently cited as proof of biophilia in academic circles. According to Wilson, the value that humans place on nature has existed throughout history, and he believes that this value is a natural ability that all people share. A mutual relationship exists between humans and nature, a bond that is vital for individuals to continue living their lives in the world. To put it another way, it is possible to say that there is an innate tendency towards nature. That is, our internal environment is connected with our external environment. Also, Jana Krčmářová agrees with Willson by stating that the human mind represents the external world through the use of a node connection structure. People have begun to write new things in recent years in order to explain the value of nature in a certain framework and act appropriately, and in order to promote awareness in the field of nature. And they attempt to demonstrate this understanding in various ways through literary writings. Although it is a relatively new field, ecocriticism is at the center of environmental studies. However, in the recent past, literary attention to the destruction of nature was likely not a priority for the majority of authors. And Love describes the situation as that:

[t]he decision of those who profess English has been, by and large, that the relationship between literature and these issues of the degradation of the earth is something that we won't talk about. Where the subject unavoidably arises, it is commonly assigned to some category,

such as "nature writing," or "regionalism," or "interdisciplinary studies," obscure pigeonholes whose very titles have seemed to announce their insignificance (203).

Even though this was the situation regarding environmental issues in the past, we can say with some certainty that things are different now as claimed by Filipova while describing the possible influence of ecocriticism on literature as follows: “[w]ith its approach to global literatures in the context of shared and related environmental challenges, ecocriticism has the potential to acknowledge the demands of literary, social and environmental diversity” (157). Nevertheless, the first wave’s increasing relationship with the natural world adds new levels to the old ones. In his thesis, Jozef Kováčik asserts the development that has taken place over time as follows: “[h]owever, with technological progress followed by extensive growth of urban areas, environments began to take different shapes, now it being possible for one to live in a place which was mostly human-constructed, a state unimaginable by the first wave” (4). As a result, the idea of the “second wave”, which places also an emphasis on the significance of the social aspect about human and natural environments, starts to be discussed.

1.3. Second Wave

In the second wave, especially following the impact of man on nature, the idea of “urban landscape” began to gain significance alongside “natural landscape” (Buell 22). The basic distinction between the two waves for Buell is that the first one prioritized environment writing, nature poetry, and wilderness fiction (138). The second one, however, “has so far concentrated strongly, for example, on locating vestiges of nature within cities and/or exposing crimes of eco-injustice against society’s marginal groups” (Buell 24). So, in the second wave, the socio-centric viewpoint is far more prevalent than the ecocentric perspective. In the second wave, as the social dimension gained importance, new terms began to develop as well. Kováčik states this change as: “[t]he shift of focus ecocriticism has experienced might appear as so substantial that the first wave becomes irrelevant and loses an ability to contribute to the discourse on environmental issues, whose scope is no longer solely on nature but has incorporated fields of study such as feminism or environmental justice” (5). *Ecofeminism*, the intersection of environmental concerns with feminist ideology, came into focus in the process of the second wave.

As a research area of ecocriticism, “ecofeminism” is an issue addressed in the second wave. Although it became evident in the 1970s and 1980s, the root of ecofeminism goes back to even earlier. The term was first coined by the French feminist Françoise d'Eaubonne in 1974 (Merchant 84). Legler gives, probably, one of the most detailed explanations of ecofeminism as follows :

Ecofeminist literary criticism is a hybrid combination that incorporates ecological and feminist literary criticism and viewpoints, thereby providing a theoretical vantage point which enables literary and cultural critics to investigate how nature is portrayed in literature and the ways embodiments of nature are metaphorically and conceptually linked with representations of gender, race, class and sexuality (227)

Legler states that the discrimination, against children, non-whites, the poor, and the environment are (in a number of different ways) interrelated, and hence must be opposed equally according to ecofeminism (7). Ecofeminism argues that the relationship between nature and woman is similar. The struggle of women to survive and the vulnerability of nature under destruction are interconnected. Therefore, the use of these two concepts, that is *eco* and *feminism*, in tandem refers to the similarity of this struggle. Lawrence Buell and his colleagues also outline the key purpose of ecofeminist literary criticism as follows. “[e]cofeminist literary criticism, centered on the ecological feminist thought ideology, can be commonly understood as a politically engaged discourse that examines the conceptual links between the manipulation of woman and the nonhuman” (425). Zapf, a scholar who is also engaged in the field of ecocriticism, directs attention to the development of ecofeminism as that

[t]hus, the linking of ecological issues with questions and perspectives of gender studies has led to the emergence of ecofeminism as an important, and already in itself highly diversified, branch of ecocriticism; and the bringing together of issues of race and class with environmental issues has opened up new areas of research and cultural-political practice such as 'environmental justice' (52).

The relationship between women and nature has thus been the focus of literature, which offers viewpoints from various contexts. As a result, the ideas of environmental justice, social class, gender, etc. have actually been highlighted. So, the idea of *environmental justice*⁵ has come to the fore. Being an important issue addressed in the second wave environmental justice is a term that focuses on understanding the unequal assessment of the environmental effects and potential dangers among demographic

⁵ Environmental justice seeks to enable the meaningful participation of marginalized and disadvantaged communities in decision-making processes as well as the protection of their rights to a healthy and sustainable environment.

groups, notably those based on race and/or class. In her book *Environmental Justice in a Moment of Danger*, Sze focuses on environmental justice and the effect of literature on environmental studies as follows:

Literature offers a new way of looking at environmental justice, through visual images and metaphors [...] This new way of looking references the “real” problems of communities struggling against environmental racism, and is simultaneously liberated from providing a strictly documentary account of the contemporary world. It allows for a more flexible representation of environmental justice, one with a global view and historical roots (163).

People living in rural areas, for example, are more intertwined with nature and have a less negative influence on nature, whereas people living in urban areas have a different impact on nature. The first group causes, generally, less harm to the environment while the second group has a more negative impact on it. However, at this point, the problem is that when we look at the impact of climate change, people living in rural areas are more negatively affected by this change compared to the other group who live in metropolitan cities.

Eco-spirituality is another notion that can be connected to the second wave and gained popularity in the 1980s, particularly in the academic world. This term that is related to ecocriticism is in general, a concept that involves both the human and ecological fields. Choné asserts that the spiritual tendency towards nature has existed in literature since the 17th century (1). However, in the 19th century, the works of Henry David Thoreau and George Perkins Marsh on spiritual tendency gained attention as well (1). According to Hettinger, eco-spirituality has the following meaning: “[t]hinking about the human-nature relation in spiritual terms is historically revealing; it can help us understand how we have arrived at our present situation. It is pragmatically useful; it can improve our treatment of the natural world. And it is conceptually illuminating; religion can help us better understand how we should think about and relate to the planet” (83). One of the best explanations of eco-spirituality belongs to Valerie Lincoln. Lincoln states that eco-spirituality “is a manifestation of the spiritual connection between human beings and the environment” (227). Lincoln furthers her ideas about eco-spirituality as follows: “[e]cospirituality incorporates an intuitive and embodied awareness of all life and engages a relational view of the person on the planet, inner to outer landscape, and soul to soil” (227). In certain respects, eco-spirituality is connected

to the living things found in nature as well as to nature itself. In this sense, Hettinger asserts the relationship between nature and the beings in nature as that

[t]he ecospirituality suggested here involves a dramatically altered way of understanding and relating to this world. This earth is our home and our creator. It continues to provide for us the sustenance of our existence. It ties us to other forms of life and individuals by bonds of kinship: all of us are offspring of the same earth parent. The mountains, the seas, the endless prairie, the grasslands, the wetlands, the deserts and rainforests are all infinitely precious, both manifesting and partially constituting a proper object of religious concern (94).

Moreover, Fritjof Capra on reveals his ideas on eco-spirituality as that “[w]hen you think about it, you will see very soon that, ultimately, deep ecological awareness is spiritual or religious awareness, so deep ecology as a philosophy is a link between science and spirituality” (201). Describing this spiritual connection, White also says: “What people do about their ecology depends on what they think about themselves about things around them. Human ecology is deeply conditioned by beliefs about our nature and destiny-that is, by religion” (51). So, the natural world and the surrounding environment cannot be separated from our thoughts. For this reason, people’s ideas and the implementation of their ideas are crucial.

Along with the first and second waves, it is also important to understand the concepts of “deep ecology” and “social ecology⁶” that underpin the waves. As previously stated, deep ecology is a concept developed by Naess and it is a critical approach that regards the question of our proper place in nature as logically preceding the question of the most acceptable social and political arrangements for beings. Deep ecology embraces ecocentrism, which is emphasizing the importance of non-humans over humans. It also emphasizes the importance of our natural responsibility and duties. The rest of the social events are taking place in the background. However, social ecology is the polar opposite of this by emphasizing that social issues take primacy and cannot be ignored. In this light, it is worth emphasizing that social ecology is actually closer to anthropocentrism. Especially at this point, deep ecology comes to the fore in the process known as the first wave. That’s why in the first wave environmental sensitivity is essential while the second wave has social aspects. Loretta Johnson explains this difference between waves and asserts the changes between them in her essay as “[f]rom unbuilt to built environments, from wilderness to urban landscapes”

⁶ Social ecology aims to address ecological and social situations by examining the fundamental reasons behind environmental deterioration and social inequality.

(8). Thus, the waves that have evolved over time bring about the emergence of new discourses. In short, the second wave also changed over time, which led to the rise of the *third-wave* concept.

1.4. Third Wave

The “third wave” in ecocriticism, has emerged in particular with the handling of new issues over time. The third wave, as developed by Scott Slovic and Joni Adamson, was first mentioned in an article, published in *Multiethnic Literature of the United States* (MELUS) as:

Literary expression of environmental experience is as diverse as any other body of writing, of course. Yet until recently, the community of ecocritics has been relatively non-diverse and also has been constrained by a perhaps overly narrow construing of “white” and “non-white” as the primary categories of ethnicity. Therefore, this issue will explore what seems to be a new third wave of ecocriticism, which recognizes ethnic and national particularities and yet transcends ethnic and national boundaries; this third wave explores all facets of human experience from an environmental viewpoint (6-7).

The third wave, which emerged in the early 2000s, focuses on ethnicity, especially it relates to environmental literature. Slovic explained the main functions of the third wave, which acts as an interethnic bridge, as follows:

global concepts of place are being explored in fruitful tension with neo-bioregionalist attachments to specific locales, producing such neologisms as “eco-cosmopolitanism,” “rooted cosmopolitanism,” “the global soul,” and “translocality”); strong comparatist impulses are raising questions about the possibility of post-national and post-ethnic visions of human experience of the environment, while some (as in the 2009 special issue of MELUS) consider the importance of retaining ethnic identities but placing ethnically inflected experience in broader, comparative contexts (including postcolonial contexts); earlier varieties of ecofeminist scholarship have evolved into the new wave of “material” ecofeminism (7).

It is possible to see a change in the opposite direction over time by looking at the waves in ecocriticism. The first wave, which encompasses the years 1970-1990, asserted that humans are superior to nonhumans (nature). So, in the first wave, humans and nature are opposed to one another. When we come to the second wave, which extends to the 1990s and early 2000s, we can see that the situation has taken on a new dimension, with human-nature equality coming into play. As a result, human superiority over non-humans or non-human superiority over humans is not a prominent issue in the second wave. On the contrary, a mutual construction exists. And then, “environmentalism” gains importance in texts during the third wave. One of the best ways to describe how things have shifted over time is expressed by

Goodbody as that “[i]n the Middle Ages, nature was commonly described as a book. In the Renaissance, it was believed to be organized in the manner of the human body. In the Modern Age, it has most commonly been regarded as a machine” (256). As a possible cause for this change in the conception of nature as mentioned by Goodbody, nature and nature's position have shifted into new dimensions over the years. And over the past years, the way in which people describe nature and the significance they ascribe to it has shifted significantly. The above-mentioned notion of *material ecofeminism* coined by Slovic has led to the emergence of a *fourth wave*. Marland discusses the issues of *material ecocriticism* and offers the potential of the fourth wave in her 2013 article titled *Ecocriticism*. It is also worth mentioning that, as Buell, the person attributed with originating the wave notion, confesses that a distinction like first and second cannot be drawn completely (17). Of course, discussing such a diverse range of ideas in such a short period of time has contributed to the evolution of the umbrella term “ecocriticism” in the academic milieu.

After this detailed background review in ecocriticism, it is possible to pick certain concepts up for ecocritical analysis of Jasmine Ward's novels. The first, book *Salvage the Bones* takes place in the Mississippi region, United States. It is based on the Batiste family consisting of a father and four children. The family is portrayed while waiting for the hurricane, Katrina, which took place in Mississippi in 2005. The way this family interacts with the natural world provides us with pretty useful examples of biophilia. The book portrays the characters' obvious inclination towards nature and its occupants. Eco-spirituality is another important term that can be seen in *Salvage the Bones*. It is possible to see that the characters in the book, especially 14-year-old Esch, have a strong spiritual bond with the natural world. Moreover, she feels closer to the natural forces rather than human beings. Sometimes it can be China, a dog, and sometimes even Hurricane Katrina, which hit that area and caused a lot of damage. When compared to humans, Esch exhibits a more strong emotional and spiritual bond with other entities. Therefore, in this study, this connection will be discussed and examined with the notions of both biophilic tendency and eco-spirituality. Furthermore, *Salvage the Bones* intersects with the notion of ecofeminism, which is a sub-term of ecocriticism. Esch is the only female character in the book who appears in the foreground. There exists no alternative female figure

from whom she can draw inspiration. China, a dog/ non-human, is the only other female character with whom she can associate herself as she is surrounded totally by men. Thus, Esch builds a strong mutual relationship with China and the constructive tendency between these two beings demonstrates how this book provides eco-feminist examples. In addition to China, Esch emphasizes with Hurricane Katrina by comparing its process of formation to a baby in a mother's womb. Esch's inclination towards these non-human beings makes it possible to consider *Salvage the Bones* from an eco-feminist point of view.

The aforementioned terms can also be seen in the other book of Ward, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. The novel is about a mixed-race family who lives in a fictional town called Bois Sauvage, Mississippi. The book effectively portrays the family as a prominent entity that engages in unique interactions with the natural world and its components. In the novel, the reader is introduced to Leonie, one of three narrators and primary characters, whose mother is identified as having close bonds with nature. In some parts of the book, when her child is sick, Leonie uses herbs to heal him as she has learned from her mother. Leonie's mother, Mam, tells her daughter that nature has everything she needs (Ward 69). Following her mother's example, Leonie turns to nature whenever she gets into difficulty. Moreover, the other two narrators, Jojo and Richie, are represented in a close spiritual relationship with nature. Leonie's son Jojo is somehow involved with non-human beings, also the "gris-gris bag" that involves a feather, an animal tooth, and a rock given to him by his grandparents to keep him safe all relates to eco-spirituality. So, this book shows the reader that these people have made a connection with nature and have taken this connection much further. Richie, one of the narrators, is a dead person, but his soul shows up to Jojo. This is one of the most important parts of the book. Richie is stuck in time in nature, but a white snake wakes him up at the end of the book. Richie's interaction with the white snake and other occurrences in the book demonstrate the spiritual connection in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Consequently, Ward's two novels illustrate the idea of interconnectedness between different forces of nature.

The emergence of ecocriticism as a field of study and the growing environmental awareness among individuals is a sign of a significant shift that has occurred over time. Ecocriticism has gained considerable recognition, particularly in academic circles, and

its impact is increasingly evident in various literary works, particularly in Europe and the United States. Considering that Americans have been fascinated by the sceneries of the “New World” ever since European explorers first set foot on the continent, it is not astonishing that ecocriticism initially took root in the United States (Westling 26). The writings of African-American author Jesmyn Ward can be evaluated in a manner that is consistent with the ecocritical perspective. Ecocriticism and its related sub-terms can be interpreted in various ways, particularly in *Salvage the Bones* (2011) and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* (2017). American novelist Jesmyn Ward reflects the difficulties of lower-class colored people living in a dilapidated countryside. In two of her novels, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, especially, she portrays colored families in their struggle against poverty, drug addiction, misogyny, natural disasters, etc. Considering the multiple victimizations of her disadvantaged⁷ characters in the mentioned novels, this thesis reads *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* from an ecocritical perspective for their concern with the destruction of nature, the subjection of the poor, unequal treatment of women and abuse of children. The poor communities’ effect on the environment is stated by Mohammad A. Nuri as follows: “[p]eople living in the poor communities do less harm to the environment and are not least responsible for such human-induced climate change issues as global warming. But unfortunately, these people are the first victims of the climate change induced disasters” (8). So, people living in rural areas, for example, are more intertwined with nature and have a less negative influence on nature, whereas people living in urban areas have a different impact on nature.

Three main chapters have been developed for the purpose of this study. The primary goal of the first chapter is to examine ecofeminist exploration along with a focus on understanding the victimization of women and children in Ward’s books *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. The question of whether there is a relationship between nature-women, and the extent of this connection, has been debated within a particular framework, particularly in the twentieth century. In her book about nature, Soper says that “[a]s woman, then, nature is all things that women are, her sexuality everything it has been said to be: tender and nurturing, alluring and

⁷ In both of Ward’s novels, humans and nonhumans are shown as being at a disadvantaged level, therefore the term “disadvantaged” applies to larger entities that go beyond humans.

gratifying, irresistibly but dangerously compelling, formidably cold and voraciously hot.” (105). Considering that this connection or wholeness exists in both of Ward’s works, it is possible to assert that this point of view can contribute to literary studies by combining the eco-feminist perspective with these two novels. Since these novels demonstrate how the ideas of nature and woman may come together to form a whole, as well as the extent to which they can influence one another. The second title focuses on the impoverishment of both families and their vulnerability to natural disasters along with eco-spiritual dimensions. The spiritual connection that exists amongst the beings in these novels has been brought to light in a variety of ways. The connection between the internal and external worlds is a fundamental aspect of eco-spirituality. And it is possible to deduce from Ward’s works that diverse forms of life share unique relationships with one another and with the natural world. Therefore, the analysis of this concept throughout Ward’s books holds a significant place in the canon. In the third and final chapter, the term biophilia will be analyzed in Ward’s book *Salvage the Bones* by exploring interconnections between human nature, exploitation, and environmental degradation. This term, which underlines human’s emotional bond with nature, as emphasized by Barbiero, was conveyed to the reader in various ways (6). The internal dispositions of the characters in Ward’s novel toward nature and its components serve as various examples of the biophilic perspective. Therefore, the present study underscores the significance of examining how to handle the emotional tendencies toward animate and inanimate entities in *Salvage the Bones*.

The concepts of nature and culture are closely connected. And the interaction between these factors has been increasingly evident in recent times. Catrin Gersdorf and Sylvia Mayer say that: “[a]t the beginning of the 21st century it no longer makes sense to think of nature and culture in oppositional terms” (14). The reason why these books were chosen for this study is that they both provide a variety of content about the umbrella term “ecocriticism”. Thus, the events in these two novels provided the opportunity to analyze them from an ecocritical perspective. Furthermore, the investigation of relevant sources and research findings has led to the view that ecocriticism, including its subcategories, is a relatively recent field of study and has not yet been extensively researched. The present study aims to contribute to the field of ecocriticism by evaluating two novels that establish the integrity among the beings in

nature. An ecocritical perspective will be adopted to achieve this goal, and the sub-terms of ecocriticism will be the primary focus of the analysis.



CHAPTER II: UNVEILING ECOFEMINIST THEMES IN JASMYN WARD'S *SALVAGE THE BONES AND SING, UNBURIED, SING*

In *Salvage the Bones*, the author presents a multi-layered literary narrative of the tragedy of Hurricane Katrina and the consequences of that disaster (Vicent 104). Ward describes her experiences with Hurricane Katrina in *Salvage the Bones* (2011), focusing on her own community, poor African-Americans, who were heavily affected by the catastrophe (Carvalho 21). Thus, Ward mirrors fourteen-year-old Esch's and her family's experiences while waiting for Katrina, addressing issues like ecology, motherhood, and poverty in various ways to the reader. In the novel *Salvage the Bones*, the negative impact of humans on nature, which has recently increased, and the effect of deteriorated ecology on human beings as a response, are revealed through the characters. The book literally demonstrates that the impact of the environment on people has risen and that people must get along with each other because they have no choice but to live together, and there is no safe place for humans and non-humans. In truth, we destroy ourselves every day by destroying the biosphere from which we came and will return (Tong 304). Each of the book's twelve chapters uncovers that the characters are getting closer to destruction with each passing day. Just like in the book, the effects of the negative conditions that appear every day as a result of environmental destruction appears in different dimensions in real life. Therefore, Ward's book *Salvage the Bones* is an example of how ecological degradation is conveyed in various ways. *Salvage the Bones* is a novel that relates the story of how rough the nature of the Southern United States is, as well as the struggles that 14-year-old Esch and her family faced while waiting for Hurricane Katrina in these difficult natural conditions. Bois Sauvage, the home of Esch and her family, represents both the positive and negative effects that nature can have on people as well as the ways in which it may provide them with necessities like food, water, and shelter. Bois Sauvage becomes a perfect example of both the historical and ecological problems experienced by locals when combined with the sociocultural elements profoundly established in the Southern Mississippi lands (Clark 5).

Jesmyn Ward's second novel, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, was released in 2017. Ward's novel employs a multi-narrative approach, wherein a diverse set of narrators offer

distinct viewpoints on the events depicted in the book. The town of Bois Sauvage, Mississippi serves as the environment for the actions of these characters. The book explores themes encompassing familial dynamics, racial discrimination, supernatural events, and concerns related to the interaction between human beings and the natural world. In the book, Hurricane Katrina does not make an appearance. However, Katrina (or her influence) is also there in the background of the story. Because of the region where the characters in the novel reside, several aspects of the book deal with topics such as ongoing violence, fluctuating weather conditions, and the impact that climate change has on the people who live in those locations. *Salvage the Bones* demonstrates that humans are not superior to the natural elements, such as plants and animals, that are omnipresent in their environments. The book demonstrates the interdependence between natural elements and their environment. Organisms in natural ecosystems rely on natural resources to fulfill their requirements. Thus, it demonstrates that non-human and human components complement one another. The events of *Sing, Unburied, Sing* take place on the Gulf Coast of Mississippi. These events that took place in the book are about an African-American family. The narration is performed by Leonie, an African-American mother, her multi-racial thirteen-year-old son, Jojo, and also Richie, the ghost of a twelve-year-old African American child who died in an attempt to escape from Parchman Farm jail in the early 20th century. In the book, the narrators connect the past and the present in different ways to show the reader what happens. The book demonstrates how the main character, Jojo, and his family, who also serve as one of the book's narrators, interact with their natural surroundings and how they manage to coexist peacefully with them. And also the ways in which they are mutually beneficial in a variety of contexts. In some episodes, nature serves as the setting for the characters' journey to find a location to relax and let off stress. So it shows the integrity of nature and human beings. As a result, both *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* provide a variety of content about ecofeminism, eco-spirituality, and biophilia.

Ecofeminism, a concept that will be discussed in Jasmyn Ward's two different novels, is a feminist critical approach to environmental experience, vision, value, and behavior that focuses on claims of gender discrimination. The reader is confronted in various ways by the reality that the characters in Ward's novels are predominantly female, either human or non-human, and these female characters are reflected during

their struggle for survival. Specifically, the connection between women and nature in *Salvage the Bones* is one of the most essential supporting aspects of the ecofeminist perspective. Ecofeminism also asserts that the fight for environmental subsistence is closely connected to the fight for women's empowerment and other aspects of social justice (Hay 75). That's why the efforts of the female characters in *Salvage the Bones* — both human and non-human—are essential for this study.

The novel opens with China, the family dog adopted by the son Skeetah, giving birth to a number of puppies. Witnessing this process brings up to Esch, family's only daughter, memories of her own mother while giving birth to her younger brother, Junior. Their mother dies in labor, even though her other siblings were born easily and quickly in their home, Pit. Mama is taken to the hospital by Esch's father, Daddy after she gives birth, but she dies there. It is a difficult birthing and in the novel, Junior is depicted as "purple and blue as a hydrangea" (Ward 6). Ward also opens the story by describing a family's rural poverty, as well as certain key themes such as violence and motherhood, including how the natural world affects individuals in various aspects. Especially Skeetah's attitude and his nervous attitude during China's delivery are defined in terms of a man's concern for a woman as follows: "Skeetah ignores Junior because he is focused on China like a man focuses on a woman when he feels that she is his, which China is" (7). This case exemplifies, at the same time, interspecies connections. Christopher Lloyd studying Ward's novel also focuses on this tendency and states that the characters in Ward's novel are connected species in the context of ecological and socioeconomic breakdown, as they are surrounded by nature and closely linked to the animal world (11). Lloyd conveys meaning to both humans and nonhumans. He claims that all of this is closely linked. Esch and China combine to form each other, reflecting each other's inner essence (11). Although Esch insists on Skeetah helping China while she is giving birth to her first puppy, Skeetah does nothing because he thinks that China does not need any help. She is a mother and she can/should do it by herself. Thus, Skeetah does not interfere with the nature of China. The book, thus illustrates that motherhood entails exhibiting strength and resilience in the face of challenges. While watching the birth of the first puppy, Esch again thinks about her own mother, Mama. She thinks that Skeetah should help China but then she also thinks that this is the thing that killed her mother. In this case, China is identified with Mama and

the puppies with Junior as follows: “Maybe you need to help her push, I say. Sometime I think that is what killed Mama. I can see her, chin to chest, straining to push Junior out, and Junior snagging on her insides, grabbing hold of what he caught on to try to stay inside her, but instead, he pulled it out with him when he was born” (Ward 8). Esch, the main character, concentrates on the similarities between humans and non-humans, noting that the concept of motherhood is the same for both as reflected in China and Mama. There is a degree of mutual interdependence that exists between the things that live in nature and nature itself as has already been explained by the terms *where* and *is*. The living organisms in nature can be regarded as *is*, and nature itself can be considered as *where* at this point. China and Esch are both *is*. So, these two entities, both of which are parts of nature, share common features.

Esch and China, whether they are animals or human beings, are both female beings in nature. As a result, their mutual interconnectedness is also significant in terms of “ecofeminism”. According to Rosemarie Tong, ecofeminists claim that feminist and ecological concerns are linked conceptually, symbolically, and linguistically because women are culturally linked to nature. (268). In *Salvage the Bones*, the relationship between Esch and China is mutually constructive and they develop strong ties. Because, as a mother, China is a very important figure for Esch. Even if it is an animal, the things they share, the processes they undergo, and most probably the pain they feel are identical. Similarly, Tong states in her book that it is socially constructed and ideologically reinforced that women have a strong affinity to nature (287). And it is obvious that the culture and environment in which we grow up, the people we get in touch with as well as animals and other non-human beings all have a variety of effects on us. In addition to this, as animals become older, their connection to the people around them grows stronger. By analyzing Ward's work, it can be seen that the bond between Esch and China demonstrates the deep connection that both kinds of beings have for one another.

In a later chapter, while Esch and her brother Skeetah are at the market purchasing food for China, which the family can not afford to buy, Skeetah describes the importance he places on China as well as the “equal” bond that exists between human beings and animals as follows: “That’s ’cause some people understand that between man and dog is a relationship” (Ward 27). In the grocery store, Esch quietly takes the

pregnancy test while no one is looking. This is due to the fact that she previously had a sexual relationship with Manny, a close friend of Skeetah's and a local boy in the area. And after a while, Esch stops menstruating and has begins to vomit on occasion. Esch has a strong suspicion and secretly takes a pregnancy test. The essential aspect to note here is that after Esch witnessed China's birthing, she began to suspect that she herself might be pregnant. Esch expressed this situation as "[m]ay be it's China that made me get it" (27). Again, it is China who inspires her about her possible pregnancy as well as she is the only female character that Esch can look to for guidance. China compensates for Esch's lack of a role model in her close surroundings as her mother died while she was a child. She will follow China's model and will become a mother. For Esch, the image of motherhood may have become actually a real thing for the first time. Even though the theme of motherhood has been implied since the beginning of the story, it really comes to the surface with China and Esch for the first time. She gains an initial understanding of this concept through China, and then she notices that she herself is pregnant too.

With China, the mother figure reappears in the later chapters of the book. Esch's description of China as a role model for parenting her puppies in particular, demonstrates how much Esch is affected by China. Esch deifies her motherhood as that "[h]er eyelids droop, and suddenly she looks tired. Her breasts are all swollen, and the puppies pull at them. She is a weary goddess. She is a mother so many times over" (Ward 35). Surrounded by men only, Esch keeps her pregnancy as a secret from them while giving all her attention to China. Finding parallels with China in terms of the similar process they both undergo, she relies on China. She chooses China as a mate as she believes that people around her will not fully understand her and may perhaps give her difficulties. As soon as she discovers she is pregnant and informs Manny, the boy who impregnates her, about this, Manny refuses to accept her and walks away. Not only do the males in the family fail to understand Esch, but Manny, the would be father of her baby keeps distant from her. It is Big Henry only, one of her brothers' friends, who adopts a protective stance towards Esch in the following episodes, it is China who increases Esch's feelings as a mother and acts as a major figure for her, whether or not China is aware of these issues at the time. Clark describes the environment that influences Esch in the same manner as follows. "The close connection of Esch and the

physical and social environment she inhabits is highlighted by her understanding of being pregnant and the manner this is represented” (13). Additionally, after China gives birth, Esch not only forms a stronger link with China, but also builds a stronger bond with her brother Skeetah. And it is mostly because of China that they have become so close to one another. As soon as the puppies were born, Esch realizes that since then, she has spent a lot more time with Skeetah than she did before the puppies were born (Ward 50). As a result of Esch’s encounters with China’s puppies, the idea of motherhood emerges as an important issue in her life, and the bond between Esch and China, which share the same ecological environment, begins to deepen.

Esch, who is also expecting a child, has kept her pregnancy a secret from everyone around her for a long period. Even though her brother informs her that Esch’s stomach has grown and that she has acquired weight, she refuses to share this information with anybody. She likes to keep her current status hidden because she believes that the men in her life will not understand her and that her current situation can become even worse as a result. Later on, Esch begins to change her mind after witnessing China’s puppies and Skeetah’s protective attitude toward the puppies of China. Skeetah prefers to keep China away from dog fights since she has recently given birth to puppies. Esch believes that the same thing may happen to her as well. As she realizes the importance of motherhood through Skeetah’s concern for China. And she believes that she may take advantage on the connection between her and her pregnancy by thinking as follows: “Any dog give birth like that is less strong after. Even if you don’t think it. Take a lot out of an animal to nurse and nurture like that. Price of being female” (Ward 78). This statement “price of being female” changes Esch’s perception of pregnancy. And again it is China that shows Esch the importance being of a mother/female. Another important issue that connects China and Esch as female characters is the language that male characters used for China. Even though Skeetah is extremely fond of China, the language he employs, while referring to China, is negative. We don’t know whether he does it consciously or unconsciously. He refers to her as the “bitch”. Skeetah uses it several times throughout the novel, and the word is actually a derogatory term for the female protagonist. “That’s my bitch” (82). This phrase is not only used by Skeetah, but also by another male character, Manny, in the story as: “His bitch must’ve gave it to him” (82). It is used against women, particularly among the

general public. Even if the mutual construction between Esch and China has a negative connotation, there is still a construction between the two characters.

The Mississippi region, which is one of the poorest and most vulnerable areas in the United States to hurricanes, is a dangerous place for individuals who choose to live there. Daddy, the father of the Batiste family, is preparing for a hurricane in these challenging conditions, while his children are generally unconcerned about what is going on around them. This tropical storm, Katrina, which devastated New Orleans in 2005, is the most powerful storm that hit the United States in recent times. It influences the lives of more than 1417 people and caused the destruction of more than 75 billion dollars. Physical, mental, and psychological aspects of the recovery process are still happening more than ten years after the incident (Ramon 92).

Ward's work consists of twelve chapters, each of which depicts a single day in the life of the main characters. The presence of the hurricane is not very noticeable and does not have an impact, particularly until the sixth chapter. Even after that, the real influence of the hurricane is felt in the eleventh chapter. It is stated as: "The storm, it has a name now. Like the worst, she's a woman. Katrina. There's another storm? Randall asks. What you think I been talking about? I knew it was coming, Daddy says. Like the worst, I repeat. A woman. He shakes his head, frowns at the coop. We going to try something" (Ward 99). Esch's father refers to the hurricane at this point and emphasizes its destructive force as a woman, and this is noteworthy. This usage is being used to emphasize the destructive strength of the hurricane, as in "Like the worst, she's a woman. Katrina". When China is giving birth to her puppies at the beginning of the novel, Esch, who was also influenced by her determination and strength, undergoes a change in her perspective on motherhood after witnessing the strength of a female character. Similarly, we see that the hurricane, another natural phenomenon, comes to the fore and connects the non-human with the human in this situation as well.

Hurricane Katrina shows that the state has been destroying the environment of the Gulf Coast to enable the oil and petrochemical industries and thus this has made the region and its residents, especially poor, black people, the most vulnerable to the storm and the toxic exposure that comes with it (Bares 24). Due to the long-term loss of natural resources, industrial growth, and an increasingly negative attitude toward nature,

the impact of nature on people has taken on a new dimension. The human beings themselves are to blame for this situation. The negative consequences of these factors, on the other hand, have a disproportionate impact on impoverished and rural populations. In fact, the Batiste family is one of these impoverished African-American residents of the area. Bares, who also works at Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, observes a notable contradiction in the romanticized portrayal of rural existence. The Bois Sauvage terrain is filled with abandoned gas stations, which serve as a testament to the detrimental impact of human activity on the environment, as well as a manifestation of consumerist capitalist values. (25). At the opening of the novel, Esch describes the region where the Batiste family lives as follows:

My mama's mother, Mother Lizbeth, and her daddy, Papa Joseph, originally owned all this land: around fifteen acres in all. It was Papa Joseph nicknamed it all the Pit, Papa Joseph who let the white men he work with dig for clay that they used to lay the foundation for houses, let them excavate the side of a hill in a clearing near the back of the property where he used to plant corn for feed. Papa Joseph let them take all the dirt they wanted until their digging had created a cliff over a dry lake in the backyard, and the small stream that had run around and down the hill had diverted and pooled into the dry lake, making it into a pond, and then Papa Joseph thought the earth would give under the water, that the pond would spread and gobble up the property and make it a swamp, so he stopped selling earth for money (Ward 16)

This definition of Esch is quite helpful for getting to know the area and especially for ecological damage given to the area. They reside in a neighborhood known as the Pit. This area is both a man-made and natural environment. These places are mainly lower-income people who live in this neighborhood. Therefore, the people living in this region are those who struggle with poverty and hunger. So, there aren't many job opportunities in this underdeveloped area, which affects the people who live there. One of these families is the Batiste family. Though Ward refers to the place as "natural," it is actually a region with negative effects in terms of social structure, known as the Bois Sauvage (wilderness). Since this area is particularly prone to hurricanes and other forms of extreme weather because of its geographical positioning, "Mother Nature" reveals her darker side in this region. Furthermore, the region is not particularly productive, both in terms of food production and in other aspects. Since people in this region pollute the environment and try to change it in different ways, social fragmentation and economic poverty bring environmental deterioration with them. The term "Bois Sauvage," which means "savage woods," also refers to the duality of natural realms and the attributes that result from this duality (Clark 344). In fact, with the definition above,

Esch manages to convey a sense of the nature that is slowly being destroyed in this place to the reader. This awful course of nature is a scenario that exists not only in the Pit but also across the world.

The natural environment has a great influence on people, as discussed in the preceding sections. In Ward's novel, the black African American family experiences the worst of nature, whereas the white family experiences a bit more good fortune. It is because the impoverished people reside in the lower parts of the woods, and the socially better off and wealthy people live in the upper parts of the forest. Ward made this distinction quite explicit in her novel *Salvage the Bones*. Even though one of the primary goals of this study is not to draw attention to this distinction, the different effects of Mother Nature on people, the social structures that cause these effects, and the results of nature as a response to humans are all important as well.

The mother figure is always regarded as a gap in the Batiste family's set of needs. This is due to the fact that Esch and her siblings' mother passes away while giving birth to their youngest kid, Junior. As a result, the family is far removed from the concept of motherhood. The main character, Esch, is probably the individual who experiences the most significant impact resulting from this deficiency. Given that she is the only female member of the household. And she believes that no one completely understands her. And she is unable to share anything with male members of the family since, she thinks that men are unable to understand her and are too distant. It is especially difficult for Esch to tell about her pregnancy, consequent to her relationship with Manny. Even if she later talks to Manny about her pregnancy, Manny refuses the baby and turns away from her. As a result, Esch, who is surrounded by only men, is more distanced from them. Although China is not a human and cannot communicate with Esch, the things she does serve as a guide for Esch. Esch is profoundly impacted by this circumstance, particularly after China gives birth to her puppies, and it is thanks to her that the concept of motherhood becomes more apparent. Thus, China becomes, in the book, a female role model for Esch. Their relationship gets stronger over time. For Esch, China's existence makes more sense. While she is pregnant, she likes watching China who makes feel her better in this process. Another important character who influences her deeply is "Medea" in the book about Greek mythology that she read. Yet, still, the real being is China. Another option comes to China, which is going to be linked to

motherhood from now on. This is “Hurricane Katrina”, which is also non-human and a part of mother nature in the external world. Without an option, Esch must embrace her motherhood and seeks solutions from the novel's various role models, including her own mother, as well as the dog China, Medea, whose tales she reads, and now even Hurricane Katrina (Carvalho 14).

Hurricane Katrina is the consequence of climate change which is becoming more and more visible every day. Bois Sauvage area is hit by the storm. In fact, one of the main themes of the book is climate change and its influence on the individual lives, especially African Americans. Climate change, as one of the worst disaster on the environment, thus becomes an important issue in Ward's *Salvage the Bones* which can be analyzed from an ecocritical perspective. One of the ways that human beings fight for the world in which they live and the manifestation of that competitive fight in the domain of culture and spirit demonstrates the necessity of action or the alarming demand to take action in this regard (Tosic 2). One of the causes of the current ecological catastrophe is a lack of proper contemplation of nature's tendency to estimate the value of other species or ecosystems in our conventional understanding and judgment (Krčmářová 13).

Daddy, the Batiste family's father, has been preparing for Hurricane Katrina since the beginning, although she (Katrina) does not show herself in any significant manner for a long period. However, then the hurricane begins to take shape slowly but surely. The 12 different days each of which corresponds to a chapter, show the coming of the natural catastrophe. So from the beginning to the end, Ward shows the effects of Katrina on the Batiste family. As Hurricane Katrina, which is an environmental problem that directly affects people's lives, approaches, all the characters in the novel get into the struggle for survival. Katrina, which has a devastating effect and is included in the 5th category of hurricanes, drags the family into a difficult position. The first sign of what would become storm Katrina appeared on August 23, 2005, over the Bahamas as a category 1 storm. It became a category 5 storm very rapidly, causing destruction from Florida to Texas as it moved westward. Mississippi, Louisiana, and Alabama, which are already among the poorest states in the country, are the ones that are most severely damaged. The hurricane causes a substantial number of deaths and displaces a great number of people. During the hurricane and the flooding that followed in late August of

2005, it is estimated that around 1,833 persons lost their lives. In addition, along the Gulf Coast and in the city of New Orleans, millions of people were forced out of their homes and into the streets.

Hurricanes form over water when air rises on the ocean. And after emerging as a cycle, it brings clouds with it. Thus, it would accelerate around the world and cause a big hurricane to form. The writer develops a parallelism between humans and non-humans. In this situation, it is noteworthy to highlight the connection that exists between the process of a mother giving birth and the formation of a hurricane. In fact, this is exactly how the main character, Esch, grows her stomach. Ward divides the book into twelve sections, each of which forms a different chapter. And in each of these episodes, Katrina gradually begins to accumulate and continue to expand, even though it is not mentioned in the initial chapters. And as time passes, it takes shape and becomes stronger until it becomes a threat, especially to the people in the Mississippi region. Esch's pregnancy, which parallels Katrina's experience, takes significance. As has mentioned earlier, after having a sexual relationship with Manny at the beginning of the book, Esch gets pregnant. As a result, Esch's stomach begins to take shape and grow gradually over a while. In the same way that Katrina evolves and takes shape. While Katrina and Esch's baby aren't exactly the same in duration, they are two things that slowly take shape and become more visible as they take shape. Individuals who engage in activities that result in environmental destruction and pollution are responsible for initiating harm to the ecosystem. As a result of these damages, physical results are seen especially as a result of the melting of glaciers and anomalies in the natural cycle. Katrina, one of these results, takes shape over time. Like the baby that slowly takes shape in the womb at the end of Manny and Esch's relationship, Katrina begins to take shape and emerge in Mother Nature. "Skeetah pulls his shirt back over his head, looks down at my body to my chest, my stomach, my feet. What does he know? I shift, barely help myself from folding my arms. Maybe you're gaining weight" (Ward 77). Esch's pregnancy is a distressing and potentially life-threatening thing for her, just as Katrina's expansion is a life-threatening situation for all humans. Not knowing how she will be treated by the male characters in her close surroundings and also knowing that she will be judged by them, Esch develops a stronger emotional affinity with China. So, the similarity between Esch, and non-human China comes to light once more. Hurricane

Katrina, which mother nature gives birth to as a result of environmental degradation and which may be the stimulus for humanity, influences people in different ways and reaches different dimensions. The Batiste family is also influenced to varying degrees by this hurricane. With the coming of Katrina, the members of the family also use different thoughts while referring to Katrina as: "Like the worst, she's a woman. Katrina" (99) and also "The hurricane laughed" (187). The experiential interactions between characters and their surroundings provide the novel with relevance to the field of environmental studies, thereby increasing the ecocritical perspective that examines the relationships between humans and non-human entities to a position of significance. Because the protagonists' connections with non-humans, such as the dog China and the environment, have distinct meanings.

While talking about the hurricane with his son, Esch's father Daddy makes a comparison between the hurricane and a woman. The thoughts are expressed in the novel as follows: "Daddy says. Like the worst, I repeat. A woman" (99). Women, as a group, may exhibit higher levels of vengefulness, anger, and unpredictability compared to men. Close to this point of view, Dreese mentions these characteristics of women in his book on ecocriticism as follows: "Nature and women, considered dangerous and unpredictable, need to be subdued and controlled" (9). Longshore is another person who stresses these characteristics of women and mother nature as well. Longshore asserts that "US hurricanes used to be given only female names, a practice that meteorologists of a different era considered appropriate due to such characteristics of hurricanes as unpredictability" (5). So Daddy's comparison of the hurricane to a woman may be related to this. However, considering the aforementioned statement as a mere observation, it can be argued that the female characters portrayed in the novel demonstrate heightened levels of aggression and a more determined tendency toward seeking revenge. Given that male characters around them occasionally attempt to cause harm to female characters. China is the most notable among these female characters. It is possible to use the effort she put up while fighting the dog named Kilo. And also the terminology used by those that are observing her can reveal this viewpoint. "You see how boss China is. You think the other girl on the Pit going to be weak?" (Ward 77). The importance of being a woman for China is particularly noticeable. Because she is a

mother, she may interpret many things differently. And, as reveals by Ward “Price of being female” (78), that is the power of being a woman, is represented strikingly.

Day by day, Esch's belly gets bigger and bigger, and Katrina grows in size and approaches Mississippi. Meanwhile, Daddy continues his preparations and makes every effort to avoid being overtaken by nature. Esch is beginning to think more deeply at this point. The things that she thinks about, are particularly her growing belly and the environment around her. Esch's attention shifts towards the environment in a precise manner, leading her to consider the following: “The sun is over the tops of the trees, flooding down into the small clearing around the house. All of the fans are blowing at all of the windows, so the house hums as if it is alive” (105). Esch is surrounded by three mother figures, China, Katrina, and Medea who are associated with destruction, fear, and even death, in the previous chapters. A significant amount of environmental effects may be indicated in this section, where Esch and three other mother figures are represented. Esch describes this situation as follows:

I listen for the boys and the dogs somewhere out in these woods, but all I can hear is the pine trees shushing each other, the oak bristling, the magnolia leaves hard and wide so that they sound like paper plates clattering when the wind hits them, this wind snapping before Katrina somewhere out there in the Gulf, coming like the quiet voice of someone talking before they walk through the doorway of a room (125)

The concepts of strength and devastation are represented by China, Katrina, and Medea. Esch experiences a mixture of fear and inspiration upon contemplating the prospect of visiting a site where the aftermath of violence and death has left a visible impact on the surroundings. Skeetah's language in the following pages, when China fights dogs for another time, demonstrates motherhood all the way through China. With the expression “make them know, make them know, make them know” (135), it is demonstrated that China, who is obviously a mother figure, is not weak, but rather powerful. Therefore, it is stated that motherhood actually relates to strength. She proves herself, by her strength and power as well as her warlike attitude and the destructive force she has naturally. Motherhood is one of the main forces that contribute to China's strength. Concentrating on the statement, “make them know”, Clark states that Esch also wants to “make them [male characters] know” like other female figures: mythological heroines, her mother, and China. So her violent reaction is a strong expression of how she wants to be seen (351). And, while China is fighting with another

dog, Manny insults China by whispering to his cousin Rico that “she ain’t shit, ain’t got no heart” (Ward 136). Manny, who, now insults China had previously insulted and humiliated Esch as a woman too. In *Salvage the Bones*, Ward depicts both human and non-human males and females with differing aspects. In the same way, as Manny abuses Esch, Kilo, the male dog, abuses China. Kilo injures one of China's breasts, which is the physical symbol of motherhood as well as a mother’s strength and weakness. Even though she gets heavily damaged and injured at the beginning of the fight, China refuses to give up and continues to fight until victory is achieved. Throughout this time, Skeetah, who never gives up his belief in China, never stops shouting at her as that “make them know” (135). It is China who wins the battle. As a result, she not only saves her own life but also the lives of her puppies as well as has a positive impact on Skeetah’s life indirectly, by helping him make money. Characterized by her physical features distinct from those of human beings, China makes an important influence on human beings which makes *Salvage the Bones* as the representation of the mutual and powerful bond between the human and non-humans.

Toward the end of the novel, Esch reads the story of Medea and Jason, a couple who are identified with their tragic story in Greek mythology. When she sees that water can be fatal in her own life, she remembers reading at the end of the book that water represents death in Greek Mythology as that “[i]n ancient Greece, for all her heroes, for Medea and her mutilated brother and her devastated father, water meant death” (170). Esch realizes this on the eleventh day of the hurricane. That is the day Katrina will make a huge impact on the Gulf Coast. Water, which generally gives life to living creatures, begins to reveal its violent face this time. Just like China's violence when she injures her puppies during the fight with Kilo, Katrina demonstrates her savage side by hurting all the living things in nature. And Katrina is very cruel in causing all of this trouble. In fact, when China hurts its puppies, its mouth gets bloody and wild in a similar way. During Hurricane Katrina, which is classified as a category 5 storm, Esch was reminded of another category 3 hurricane that she had experienced when she was younger. Despite being classified as a third-category hurricane, the devastation caused by the storm has taken on extreme dimensions. Katrina, which is in the fifth category, will, on the other hand, be quite damaging. When Esch reconsiders this violence, she becomes much more worried, this time, about the baby that she is carrying in her womb

this time. Esch is taking measures to keep her baby safe, knowing the potential harm that Katrina may cause, similar to China's efforts to protect its puppies. Even though the experiences of China and Esch differ in some ways, it is obvious that they have both gone through processes that are fundamentally similar and have produced consequences that are similar. In the book, Ward uses human and non-human characters to depict the relationship between individuals and the environment.

On the day that Hurricane nears their house, Skeetah notices some noises outside and looks out to see what is happening. China responds to him with a loud bark, which can be considered as an actual warning to the Baptiste family. China's warning, which exemplifies, in fact, animal intuition and her strong connection with nature saves the Baptiste family's life. As China barks and groans, Esch is once more reminded of China's attitude which is nearly identical to her own mother's groan. As a mother would do, China warns them to save their lives. Esch speculates on China's warning of them as follows: "The dog barks loudly, fast as a drum, and something about the way the bark rises at the end reminds me of Mama's moans, of those bowing pines, of a body that can no longer hold itself together, of something on the verge of breaking" (174). And short after China's warning, the floor of the house where the family resides begins to slowly get wet with water. The weather is becoming increasingly bad. Donated with all her power and violence, Katrina comes closer and closer. The house begins to fill with water. Randall is instructed to open the attic door by Daddy. The family then takes refuge in the ceiling. All that can be heard is the strong sound of rain and wind in the darkness. Skeetah realizes within minutes that the water has reached the ceiling as well, and he immediately begins working to clear a path through the ceiling. It is as if Katrina is chasing after them. "Randall climbs out and into the hungry maw of the storm" (180). With "hungry maw" Ward highlights Katrina's motherly role once more. Ward's symbolic language, particularly in this section of the book, demonstrates how devastating and terrifying nature, as a mother figure, can be to the "beings" it resides. "The storm cries, The storm screams, I have been waiting for you" (180). Ward uses the hurricane to personify the feminine power of it and to highlight the connection between beings and non-beings throughout *Salvage the Bones*.

As the water level increases, the entire family begins to climb to the roof for protection. Meanwhile, Esch's family learns that she is going to have a child. Skeetah has kept Esch's pregnancy a secret, though he has known it for a long time. However, the life of the baby in the belly is now considered essential as well. As a result, Skeetah informs his father that his sister is pregnant and that they should take care of the baby. China, on the other hand, is attempting to save her puppies. Esch is able to keep one of the puppies. However, the other two get caught in the water. China pursues them in order to save them, despite Skeetah's warning not to do that. China does not reappear. Katrina is responsible for the death of China, another mother figure. Therefore, "mother nature" can have negative aspects as well as positive aspects against its children. Ward brings this to the fore with Katrina's violence. The impact of Hurricane Katrina causes significant hardship for the Batiste family. In contrast, Skeetah, on the other hand, suffers the most significant loss, having lost his best friend, China. Throughout the course of the novel, China is portrayed as an important example of the powerful dependence between the natural world and humanity, and the potential for mutually beneficial collaboration between the two entities. In this way, China serves as a role model for Esch by exhibiting maternal behavior toward her offspring on various occasions.

Ward's other novel, *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, also discusses the link between women and the natural world, as well as how both are oppressed. In an article on ecofeminism, Manisha Rao discusses the oppression of nature and women as follows: "Ecofeminism is based on certain fundamental claims that point to the existence of important connections between the oppression of women and oppression of nature" (126). The woman-nature interrelation is revealed in *Sing, Unburied, Sing* through two female characters: Leonie, one of the main characters, and her mother, Mam. Leonie's mother always tells her that if she pays enough attention to nature, she would discover that everything she needs is already contained inside it. Leonie refers to her mother's motto as that "Mama always told me that if I look carefully enough, I can find what I need in the world" (69). Her mother leads Leonie to the woods covered with numerous herbs and plants that have healing power on humans. Mam refers to the variety of these herbs and plants as that "[t]hat right there is cow parsnip. You can use the young leaves like celery when you cook, but the roots is more useful. You can make a decoction for cold

and flu. And if you make them into a poultice, you can ease and heal bruises, arthritis, and boils” (69). According to Powell, the interpretations of feminists and environmentalists are brought together in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the unique connection that exists between women and the natural world. This is done in order to arrive at a more complete understanding of the special connection that exists between women and the natural world (10). Thus the close relationship that Mam has with the natural world, in other words, the close relationship that a woman has with mother nature, plays a significant role in Ward's novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*.

The novel opens with Leonie and her friend Misty going to Parchman, a nearby town, to pick up Leonie's husband, who is in prison there. Both Leonie and her close friend Misty take drugs with them to Parchman and use them on the way. Misty even tells Leonie that they can sell the drugs. Even though this frightens them at first, Leonie accepts it later. Leonie finds out that Kayla, her daughter, is sick after a certain part of their trip. Kayla coughs and throws up all the time. Jojo, Leonie's son, on the other hand, is Kayla's real caretaker. Leonie isn't too happy about what's going on. She is well aware of the fact that she is not a good mother. After that, they come to a gas station and attempt to encourage Kayla into drinking something. But even though she is drinking, Kayla cannot stop throwing up. After that, they proceed on their journey. However, Kayla's situation is not looking very well at the moment. They pull over at a different petrol station and inquire about purchasing some medication there. However, they have not discovered anything. Later, Leonie plans to use the knowledge that her mother taught her when she was younger about the therapeutic potential of herbs. She resents, however, why she did not learn more than she did as follows “[s]he thought that if she taught me as much herbal healing as she could if she gave me a map to the world as she knew it, a world plotted orderly by divine order, spirit in everything, I could navigate it” (71). Therefore, ecological healing is conveyed in a variety of events throughout Mam and Leonie in Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. At this point, there is a strong link between mother and nature and between woman and nature. Mother nature gives another mother, Leonie, something to help her daughter Kayla get better. So, the need for people to communicate with other species becomes much more obvious. Thus, Ward shows readers man's innate tendency towards the external world. The tendency to appreciate

nature is functional in primitive civilizations because people there interact with nature directly, and the exploration goes hand in hand with connecting with other beings and understanding and embracing all kinds of relationships within the ecological system (Krčmářová 7). The reader is faced in various ways by the reality that the characters in Ward's novels are predominantly female either human or nonhuman, and also by the struggle of these female characters for survival. Specifically, the connection between women and nature in the novels *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* are some of the most essential supporting aspects of the ecofeminist perspective. Thus these works demonstrate how the concepts of nature and women are related and how they make a cohesive whole in terms of internal consistency. In her book defining feminine aspects of nature, Soper claims that “[a]s woman, then, nature is all things that women are, her sexuality everything it has been said to be: tender and nurturing, alluring and gratifying, irresistibly but dangerously compelling, formidably cold and voraciously hot.” (105). The presence of a connection or sense of unity in Ward’s literary works suggests that the eco-feminist perspective holds an important place in both novels. In this respect, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* both demonstrate how women are connected to nature on both an emotional and a material level, how powerful this connection actually is, and how it may sometimes even have a healing impact, as in the case of Leonie in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*.

CHAPTER III: THE ECO-SPIRITUALITY IN JASMYN WARD'S *SALVAGE THE BONES* AND *SING, UNBURIED, SING*

The second concept that will be discussed through Ward's *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, is eco-spirituality. Limiting the evaluation of the relationship between humans and non-human entities solely to a material perspective and accepting it as such will result in a narrow conception of nature. Ned Hettinger, a critic who studies eco-spirituality, asserts that "[r]eligion is an incredibly powerful force in human life and our spiritual attitudes toward the earth, its teeming life forms and human presence, has had and will have powerful effects on the human-nature relation" (83). So the spiritual essence of nature is as important as the material essence. The novels by Ward also offer helpful examples of the deep relationship between humans and nature and how this relationship develops to spiritual dimensions. Callicott emphasizes that the things found in nature actually have a certain value as follows:

the typical traditional American Indian attitude was to regard all features of the environment as inspired. These entities possessed a consciousness, reason, and volition, no less intense and complete than a human being's. The Earth itself, the sky, the winds, rocks, streams, trees, insects, birds and all other animals therefore had personalities and were thus as fully persons as other human beings. (243)

Ward's *Salvage the Bones* allows readers to observe the influence of non-humans on humans. Throughout the novel, the characters make it clear that Hurricane Katrina is on its way to rural Mississippi. Dad knows that nature will damage them, and this is what he knows when he says "[m]akes my bones hurt," and "I can feel them coming" (10). As the story progresses, it becomes clear that the dog China's difficulties in giving birth to her puppies are similar to those experienced by humans. In other words, the difficulties that a mother has while giving birth to her child, as well as the attempts that the infant performs to enter the world, are revealed to be similar to those experienced by the non-human. This resemblance is emphasized by Esch to the readers as that "[s]he is her mother's daughter" and "[s]he is a fighter" (15). The efforts of both mother and baby, whether human or non-human, are critical in this example of China. Tosić also explains in her *Ecocriticism—Interdisciplinary Study of Literature and Environment* that, nature (where) has an effect on the living things (is) that inhabit it (47). Of course in Ward's novel, both China and the baby (Junior) can be referred to as *is* and as *this*

spiritual interaction can occur between *is* and *where*, it is also possible to see it between two separate *iss* (China-Junior).

Until a certain point, Ward conceals from the reader the reason why Skeetah, one of the main characters, is that much concerned with China's offsprings. However, later in the book, it is revealed that Skeetah initially cared about China's puppies for financial reasons. And Ward focuses on this through Skeetah's speech as "I'm saving them puppies. China's strong and old enough to where the parvo won't kill her. He yanked. They're money" (50). In other words, the socio-centric point of view, which is described under the second wave in ecocriticism and can also be considered as anthropocentrism, comes into focus in this part. Socio-centric perspective is the way of looking at and understanding things from the point of view of a social circle instead of from one's own point of view. Skeetah appears to be protecting China's offsprings with financial concerns. Although this appears to be the case in the first few pages of the book, the following paragraphs reveal that this is not necessarily the case; rather, Skeetah and these puppies share a mutual spiritual connection. Skeetah clearly shows that the puppies are far from simply a source of income for him but instead, they are a part of his identity, and his integrity. Skeetah will go to any degree to ensure their well-being and safety. Thus this situation shows a spiritual connection between these two beings from an environmental aspect. Actually, the struggle for survival of Skeetah's and China's offsprings is rather identical. Moreover, Skeetah, who comes from a poor family and lives in a poor neighborhood, finds it difficult to make life bearable. For them, obtaining food is a difficult thing. China is unable to provide food for her puppies as well. These puppies, who are unable to eat properly, grow sick and struggle for their lives. A roughly equivalent struggle for survival can be observed in this context. This region, Bois Sauvage, provides difficult conditions for those who lived here. More-than-human nature is portrayed as debilitated in *Salvage the Bones*, which is based on Ward's birthplace of DeLisle, Mississippi. The story reminds the debilitating impacts of new and old ecological destruction on the human inhabitants of Bois Sauvage (Bares 4). In reaction to Skeetah's affinity with China, China takes on a protective role for Skeetah. When Skeetah, Esch, and their friends plan to steal in the area where whites live, which is far more fertile and prosperous than where they dwell, they are caught in action. China, as a new mother who is sensitive to her puppies, never hesitates to save

Skeetah from another dog set after them by the people, who yell and run after them. In fact, China defends and rescues Skeetah when the dog attacks him. Thus, these entities build a mutually constructive relationship with each other.

Particularly, the spiritual connection between humans and non-humans is developed as one of the central themes in Ward's novel *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. The first part of the book is narrated by the 13-year-old Jojo. Together with his grandfather, Pop, Jojo is slaughtering a goat. Mam, Jojo's grandma, is diagnosed with cancer and is currently undergoing chemotherapy. Kayla, who is Jojo's little sister, is three years old. Kayla and Jojo have only had a few limited communication with their other grandfather, known as Big Josep. Because Big Joseph's family is white, in contrast to Leonie's family, and this is a situation that Joseph, who is racist, is unable to tolerate. As a result of this, Jojo's father Michael, and his father Joseph do not get along very well with one another. At the beginning of the book, Michael is being held in the notorious Parchman prison that is located in the area. Michael's reason for being in prison is cooking crystal meth. Jojo's mother is also a cocaine addict. Not only Leonie but also her collaborator Misty is a drug abuser. Another character in the book who was convicted in Parchman at the time is Jojo's grandfather, Pop. The relationships in the novel and the framework of the novel start with the harsh conditions of the region and thus become intertwined and more complex. Ward does not present a particularly balanced picture of how this African American family interacts with their external environment. The part of the narrative that is told from Jojo's point of view starts with Jojo's connection to nature and various kinds of animals. During their time together, Jojo helps his grandfather by turning the goat inside out. And this moment is stated as: "I pull. The goat is inside out. Slime and smell everywhere, something musty and sharp, like a man who ain't took a bath in some days" (Ward 8). Additionally, this causes Jojo's inside to out, that is his vomiting. Another situation that is similar to this one is when Jojo saw goats mating in the past. Having witnessed these animals involved in sexual activity, the relationship between his mother and father immediately comes to his mind. At certain points, the connection between man and nature is more apparent than at other times. This relational ambiguity that Jojo perceives also demonstrates that humans and non-humans have certain patterns in common that are identical to each other. Jojo, himself, refers to the similarities that exist between humans and animals as follows "[b]ut it was impossible

to not hear the animals, because I looked at them and understood, instantly, and it was like looking at a sentence and understanding the words, all of it coming to me at once” (14). Jojo, in these words, has made a strong point about the relationship between humans and animals. In the same way, when Jojo gets hurt in a small accident while walking on the road, he asks animals for help instead of people. He reveals his experience as follows “I was walking with my head tilted up, listening for the growl of tires, so I didn’t see the jagged lid of the can rising from the earth, didn’t see it when I put my foot on it, stepped down in the instinct of walking. It sank deep. I screamed and dropped, holding my leg, and I knew the animals understood me then, too: Let me go, great tooth! Spare me!” (15). Following this accident, Pop goes to Jojo’s help. Jojo remembers this accident for the quality of the care Pop gives to him. He relates that “Pop came to my side and touched me on the leg like he does our horse when he’s checking the shoe” (15). Once more, Ward demonstrates the connection and interdependence of living things in the ecosystem through Pop’s action. Therefore, the complexity of the animal-nature interaction as well as the nature-human relationship is highlighted in the first episode by Jojo, who will just turn 13.

Jojo is a curious boy, so he starts to ask about Stag, his grandfather Pop’s brother. Pop and Jojo are always telling each other stories about the past. Pop’s brother Stag, who has the same father, ends up in the most famous prison in the area when he is 15 years old. This is because Stag is fighting someone who is white. Even though Pop and Stag had nothing to do with this fight, they are put in jail because they are black. Richie, a twelve-year-old boy Pop met at Parchman, is even smaller than them. He is referred to as the youngest in the jail as follows:

Richie, he was called. Real name was Richard, and he wasn’t nothing but twelve years old. He was in for three years for stealing food: salted meat. Lot of folks was in there for stealing food because everybody was poor and starving, and even though White people couldn’t get your work for free, they did everything they could to avoid hiring you and paying you for it (18).

While Pop is telling this story, Jojo’s younger sister Kayla wakes up, after which Pop’s story is cut short. This gloomy tale that Pop related illustrates how difficult and terrible life can be there. The relationship between African Americans and nature is complicated, and nature is frequently used against them as a form of torture or as a place of injustice throughout this country’s history (Cohl 7). By telling his grandson this, Pop is emphasizing the difficulties of life in that piece of the region. Pop later

continues his story by stating that Richie is now 12 years old and that the reason he is at Parchman is that he is stealing food, just like the majority of the other people who have been there. After Richie and Pop develop a friendship, Richie says to Pop that he has nine younger siblings and that their lack of finance forced him to steal food. Nature's influence on humans has been brought to light, much like racial inequality. The rural areas of Mississippi are notorious for their harsh environmental features. The setting of Bois Sauvage, which is centered on Ward's homeland of DeLisle, Mississippi, presents nature in a crippled state and imagines the debilitating consequences that environmental degradation has had in the past and continues to have on the human population of the area (Bares 4).

A phone call comes in as Jojo and his family are enjoying his birthday at the close of the first section of the book. The family expects that this call is from Michael, which is. Michael is calling to say he will soon be released from jail, and he has asked Leonie to come and get him when he is released. In this part of the novel, Michael is compared to a non-human creature, specifically a bird that has been set free and is getting ready to go back to its home. This analogy is revealed as follows: "Michael is an animal on the other end of the telephone behind a fortress of concrete and bars, his voice traveling over miles of wire and listing, sun-bleached power poles. I know what he is saying, like the birds I hear honking and flying south in the winter, like any other animal. I'm coming home" (23). The second half of the book is narrated from Leonie, Jojo's mother, point of view. When Leonie goes to pick up Michael from Parchman, she intends to bring her children along with her. Michael will be waiting for her there. That's why they argue with Pop. In the meantime, Leonie is suffering the pain of her period and compares it to the suffering of an animal as that "[m]y stomach turned like an animal in its burrow, again and again, seeking comfort and warmth before sleep" (29). After that, Leonie travels back in time to her childhood and recalls the talk she had with her mother, Mam, when she had her period for the first time.

Mam helps women in childbirth and protects them by making "gris-gris bags"⁸ before they get sick. This gris-gris bag is a little bag-like thing that contains a natural

⁸ The gris-gris bag is a small pouch made of an animal tooth, a piece of stone, and a naturally occurring feather that is said to ward against evil or bring good luck to the owner.

feather, a tooth of an animal, and a rock. Because Mam is highly aware of the healing power of the natural world, she gives this bag of protection to the patients. That's why the connection that Mam has with the natural world is carefully maintained by her. She believes that people are significantly influenced by the natural world around them. According to her, a part of the natural world in which they reside has a significant influence on the degree to which it protects them everywhere they go. Thus, she transfers the healing power of nature and her close bond with humanity to Leonie. Mam recalls her earlier experiences in healing as that

[w]hen I was twelve, the midwife Marie-Therese came to the house to deliver my youngest sister. She was sitting a moment in the kitchen, directing me to boil water and unpacking her herbs, when she start pointing and asking me what I though teach of the bundles of dried plants did. And I looked at them, and knew, so I told her: This one for helping the afterbirth come, this one for slowing the bleeding, this one for helping the pain, this one for bringing the milk down (30)

When trying to heal her patients, Mam uses medicinal plants she collects from nature. Another key element illustrating the interaction between nature and humans is the existence of a power that can affect both humans and non-humans. Mam thus conveys to Leonie the message of "hear what the world has to say" as emphasized by Powell. The natural world of Mississippi functions as a character on its own in Ward's novels, and at times the natural world exposes significant information on the inner voice and emotional experience of the novel's protagonist (9). Leonie informs Mam that she will take the children with her to prison. Even though Mam is aware that this is inappropriate, she is unable to respond due to her illness. Because Mam is exhausted and knows she is going to die soon. When Leonie is high on drugs, she has a recurring vision of Given, her older brother, who was killed by Michael's cousin. Following Given's passing, his mother, Mam, makes it a tradition to annually plant a tree in his memory. And thus Mam's profound connection to nature is once again conveyed to the reader through trees by saying "[i]f I live long enough, going to be a forest here, she said, a whispering forest. Talking about the wind and pollen and beetle rot" (37). The "whispering" indicates that Mam is able to maintain Given in the present through her relationship with nature (Cohl 14).

The book's third section is again told from Jojo's point of view. Jojo travels with his mother, sister Kayla, and Misty to Parchman. During his travel, Jojo sees the gris-gris bag along with the other items. Furthermore, he discovers a note inside this bag.

And “Keep this close” is written on the note. Jojo then remembers Pop’s story and considers what Pop told him about the spirits that exist among living things. Jojo focuses on this existence while repeating Pop’s words: “[s]aid there’s spirit in everything. In the trees, in the moon, in the sun, in the animals. Said the sun is most important, gave it a name: Aba. But you need all of them, all of that spirit in everything, to have balance. So the crops will grow, the animals breed and get fat for food” (Ward 51). Through the use of the gris-gris bag, Mam and Pop try to explain to Jojo the spiritual state of the natural world in which they are located as well as how it functions. Since the things in this bag are pieces of nature, not human, and in reality, the fact that Mam and Pop offer these natural things to Jojo, rather than accompanying him themselves, is a sign that nature is with them and has a specific meaning to either lead or protect Jojo. Thus, this bag actually symbolizes the peaceful coexistence of humans and non-humans.

As an umbrella term, eco-spirituality has a direct link with Leonie’s and especially Mam’s close relationship with nature. Valerie Lincoln states that eco-spirituality is the spiritual connection between humans and ecosystems and it involves a relational understanding of man to the environment, from internal to external, and from soul to soil (1). In *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, Ward shows the need for “soul to soil” through Mam and even sometimes through Leonie. The narrative perspective shifts once more to Jojo’s window during the fifth section of the book. Kayla has not yet made a complete recovery. Jojo tells her a story about a rabbit, which makes her fall asleep while he recalls what Pop told to him about other animals as follows “Pop always told me you can trust an animal to do exactly what it’s born to do: to root in mud or canter through a field or fly. That no matter how domesticated an animal is, Pop says, the wild nature in it will come through. Kayla is her most animal self, a worm-ridden cat in my arms” (Ward 74). Ecocriticism, like critical animal studies, seeks to reframe humans’ relationships with other animals (Garrard 203). Thus, Pop’s words about Jojo’s sister Kayla that “Kayla is her most animal self”, show the connection between humans and animals, as well as how similar and united humans and animals are. Kayla is once again in Jojo’s care during this time, as Leonie and Misty continue taking drugs in the house where they stopped for the night on their journey. After putting Kayla to sleep, Jojo tries to go to sleep himself, but he keeps thinking about a dog that he wanted to adopt but

Pop would not let him when he was younger. Although Pop has always been wonderful with dogs, he has struggled with them owing to the terrible conditions that he was required to work in when imprisoned at Parchman. As they finally get to Parchman later that morning, Leonie is the first person Michael embraces when they arrive. And they start to kiss each other. Kayla asks Jojo to look at the birds while the two are kissing. However, Jojo claims that he did not observe any birds. Right at that moment, Jojo remembers the story of Richie, who worked with Pop at Parchman and went through all challenging circumstances there. The birds, according to Kayla, have flown away. However, Jojo has not yet seen any birds. This is where they go, Parchman, where their grandfather Pop once stayed with Richie. Now Pop's grandchildren are in the same place. In simple terms, this is something that demonstrates how the events of the past are connected to those of the present. And it is at this very time that young Kayla comes to understand this. Jojo sees Richie's ghost, who follows them on their way back to home. Kayla also sees his ghost, which she thinks is a bird at the beginning. Richie follows them as the family of Pop, the man who treated him like a father while he was in Parchman. Richie is confused about how he died in Parchman and other things happened there. Richie, then, becomes the third narrator in later sections of the novel. In this episode, Richie talks about how close Pop, or as Richie called him, River, was with dogs back in the past. Richie reveals Pop's affinity with animals as that " . . . River had a way with animals" (Ward 91). Richie asks Jojo a lot of questions on the way back, mostly about Pop. Richie does not know how he passed away and desires to learn. So, he questions Jojo, who does not have any idea about it as Pop did not tell him all details. Richie decides to follow Jojo when Jojo arrives at Parchman in an attempt to discover things about himself.

Today when Jojo came to Parchman, I woke to the whispering of the white snake, which had dug a nest down into the earth with me so he could speak to me in my ear. So he could curl about my head in the dark and whisper, If you would rise, I can take you across the waters of this world to another. This place binds you. This place blinds you. Keep the scale, even if you cannot fly. Go south, to River, to the face of the waters. He will show you. Go south. (124)

Richie is imprisoned by the nature of time that exists in the universe, and as a result, he is always switching back and forth between the past and the present. In the meantime, it is a white snake that awakens him from his sleep and reminds him that he needs to leave. Richie goes on his way saying that "I will follow, I say. I hope he can hear me. I say: I'm coming home" (124).

When they are back home Mom is on her death bed and Pop tells Leonie to keep her eyes on Mom because Mam is on her way to passing away at that moment. The language employed while revealing Mom's death is also suggestive in terms of the spiritual connection that exists between human beings and their natural environment. Leonie's narration of Mam's passing away highlights her amalgamation with nature.

Her knuckles bear all the scars: slipped knives, broken dishes, pounds of laundry. I wonder if I pull her hand to my nose and sniff, if I can smell all the offerings she done placed on her altar over the years, done used to heal: strings of peppers, potatoes, yams, cattail, spider lily, Spanish needle, sweet bedstraw, and wild okra. All the green of the earth in her hands. But when I sniff, her palms sandpaper-dry, I smell threshed hay bleached by the winter sun. Dead (139).

After returning home, Jojo is delighted to see Pop for the first time. Richie, who came with them from Parchman, also gets hopeful when he sees Pop. And immediately tries to talk to Pop. But Pop doesn't hear him. Richie later asks Jojo, but Jojo says he doesn't know why. Pop can not hear Richie. Pop asks Jojo if he has seen the gris-gris bag he sent with them. And then Pop says that he can only be with them and protect them with the gris-gris bag. Because, according to Pop, the gris-gris bag is a piece of nature. In fact, it is not possible to say that it is a part of Pop and Mam physically. The point that Pop emphasizes here is that there is a piece of nature with them. A human being is also a part of nature, and his/her inner union with nature is implied in an equivalent way in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Ward likewise reveals this similarity or unity through Michael's speech as that "I thought about humans. Because humans is animals" (146). The analogy that "people is animals" is probably one of the most powerful points made throughout the book. In her essay on ecocriticism, Payne develops a similar discussion when he asserts that "[e]cocritical readings of texts can function to remind us that we are, in fact, animals of this particular planet" (229). Thus, humans are not significantly distinct from other organisms in the natural world. They share many similarities.

In the next part, Richie, knowing that he is not heard by Pop, asks Jojo to ask how he (Richie) died. Richie states that learning this is the only way for him to leave. Jojo responds positively to Richie that he will ask Pop. Later, when Pop and Jojo go out, Richie insists again, but Jojo does not care for him much. Then Richie starts singing. When he starts to sing, he sees different people, water, and trees. And he sees that all of them sing in harmony and whole. But this unity is lost in a short time. Richie later sees

Leonie walking to the grave of her brother Given. And Richie notices Leonie, who is unhappy and crying at Given's grave. When Leonie left, she carries stones from the graveyard with her and returns home in tears. Richie begins to hear that singing again as follows "I know that singing. I have heard it from the golden place across the waters. A great mouth opens in me and wails; I am an empty stomach" (159). This song actually illustrates what Ward has emphasizes with the title *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. It demonstrates that the song that Richie heard can be interpreted to represent all human and non-human beings, both alive and dead individuals, and most likely the interconnection between all, as well as the primary idea behind how it is possible for these beings to be whole. Later in the book, when Richie finds out why and how he died, he starts to scream loudly. Richie's screams can only be heard by the animals around him, and the animals also start to shout, bark and scream together with Richie as follows "[t]he animals are quieting in grunts and snorts and yips. Thank you, they say. Thank you thank you thank you, they sing" (166). So, all beings present there, human and non-human, begin to sing together in harmony. The interdependence of all living things is once again underscored by the chorus of living beings from Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*.

By the end of the book, it becomes evident that Jojo is not the only one who sees Richie. Kayla notices him too. And another powerful analogy appears again when Kayla first sees Richie. Kayla compares Richie to a blackbird.

The boy, the black bird," she sobs.
I kneel next to the sofa, pat her hot little back.
"What boy, Michaela?"
"The black bird. The Black boy."
She stands, runs to the arm of the sofa farthest from me, straddles, and slides off.
"He flies! (169).

In the final section of the novel, Jojo is able to understand what the animals and plants are saying. In addition, Jojo sees ghosts other than Richie's spirit. Kayla also has the ability to see ghosts react to it as follows.

Kayla tugs my arm and I lift her up. Pop turns. I follow him as he looks for raccoon and possum and coyote, bends branch after branch as he leads us back to the house. Kayla hums over my shoulder, says "Shhh" like I am the baby and she is the big brother, says "Shhh" like she remembers the sound of the water in Leonie's womb, the sound of all water, and now she sings it. Home, they say. Home (183).

The link that Kayla has with the spirits demonstrates for the very last time the coexistence of two distinct realms and, moreover, the unity that exists between them. In the end, when we look at *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, Jojo and his family have a lot of unity with nature due to the location of their residence, Mississippi. Nature has sometimes created a protective, and sometimes relaxing effect on them. And thus Ward uses the gris-gris bag as the symbol of the interconnection between man and nature. In a similar way, when Kayla became ill, her mother once again turned to treat her in natural ways. The environment provides Jojo's father with the opportunity to deepen his connection with his son. However, in her book, Ward does not only show us the ghosts of humans but also the ghosts of other animals. The spirit of a snake appears to Richie in the novel after he has passed away, and it is the snake that communicates with him. Soper describes this spiritual harmony between humans and animals as follows "[a]nimals mediate our relations to the world and each other in an immense variety of ways" (82). As a result, Ward demonstrates an example of how the interaction between living beings can be established. In addition, the snake informs Richie that he has things to see (Ward 89). And once more, Kayla's initial "Blackbird" reaction to Richie's ghost is one of the instances in which human and non-human elements come together to form a unified whole. Thanks to the communication and relationship between these species, which are generally two different beings, it is demonstrated that they are deeply capable of affecting one another and that this effect may be seen in many dimensions, as seen in Ward's *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. Thus it will be a mistake to think that nature is solely something that humans influence and manage. Everything else in the natural world is interconnected and essential to the whole. And every being has its own effect. Hettinger emphasizes, similarly, the interdependency of all forces of nature as that

[t]he ecospiritality suggested here involves a dramatically altered way of understanding and relating to this world. this earth is our home and our creator. It continues to provide for us the sustenance of our existence. It ties us to other forms of life and individuals by bonds of kinship: all of us are offspring of the same earth parent. The mountains, the seas, the endless prairie, the grasslands, the wetlands, the deserts and rainforests are all infinitely precious, both manifesting and partially constituting a proper object of religious concern (94).

According to Hettinger, human beings accomplish unity with other forces and acquire a specific significance by uniting with them. In her two works, Ward also demonstrates the integration that exists amongst all beings and, in particular, how this unity is co-constructed on a spiritual basis. Thus Ward's novels, most notably *Sing*,

Unburied, Sing, focus on the wholeness that exists between beings and reflect this connection to the reader in a variety of different ways.



CHAPTER IV: BIOPHILIC TENDENCY IN JASMYN WARD'S *SALVAGE THE BONES*

Biophilia is the third and last theme that will be discussed in Ward's novel *Salvage the Bones*. The novel puts an emphasis on the significance of humans' close affinity with the natural world and its inhabitants. When defining "biophilia" Fromm, Willson, as well as Barbiero, center their attention on people's interest in the natural world. Even while providing this explanation, Barbiero goes a step further by stating that "[b]iophilia is our emotional bond with life" (6). As Barbiero underlined, in Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, it is possible to witness this emotional relationship between humans and non-humans in a variety of contexts. Because the attitudes of the book's protagonists such as Esch, Skeetah, and China towards one another strengthen this issue. In the novel, even though Esch, the only female character in the family, is still a child, the image of motherhood has begun to take on greater significance for her. However, she seeks to perform this motherhood not on humans, but rather on non-humans, by demonstrating her love for the dog's (China) puppies. And though Esch and China seem to be two different species, the things they do are the same. So they are both mutually constructive. When Esch cares for puppies, she experiences the same emotions as if she were caring for her own puppies. Skeetah is more interested in China's puppies than China in the following episode. In the region where they reside, pit bulls are prized. Because those puppies are worth a lot of money for Skeetah. Thus, Skeetah is thinking of selling these valuable dogs and making money from them. As a result, he tries to pay special attention to the offspring. And also because he will be rewarded when the time comes. However, there is another person here who volunteers to help the puppies for no cost. It is Esch. Esch also takes care of the puppies. And, while doing so, she attempts to pay attention as if she were a human mother caring for her child. The statement made by Esch is as follows:

All eight of her titties are so swollen with milk they look like human breasts. I breathe in air and swallow past the rock in my throat. The rock melts and burns. I run outside and crouch down and brace myself on my knees and throw up all over the red dirt, my hair falling forward like a black cloud. I can feel Skeetah watching me. When he touches my back with the puppy-free hand, I know this is how he touches China (Ward 24)

Here, Esch views puppies as closely related to her own breed and physically resembling humans; this animal, which once lived in the wilderness and was isolated from humans, but was later domesticated and coexisted with humans, is not seen as dissimilar to humans, but rather as demonstrating how strong the bond between two distinct species is. In several sections of the novel, Ward focuses on Skeetah's close connection with China. Esch defines this intimacy as that "[w]hen he touches my back with the puppy-free hand, I know this is how he touches China (24). Again, following Esch's definition of Skeetah's touching her back, Esch knows that it is the same way he touches China which indicates the relationship between Skeetah and China in a constructive way. Lloyd places an additional emphasis on this interconnection as that:

[i]n Ward's novel, a poor African American family reside in a Mississippi woodland clearing called "The Pit." As Katrina approaches, the characters struggle to survive. Intimately connected to the natural world around them and the pit bulls that the protagonist's brother keeps for fighting, Ward's southerners are deeply connected to other forms of life in the South even while their own are rendered precarious (246).

Lloyd focuses on both the relationship between Esch and China and also between Skeetah and China. He states that, in some ways, black living, and animal life are mutually beneficial, particularly in terms of broader cultural conceptions (254). Lloyd emphasizes the relationship between Esch and China as "Esch and China together, make each other up, reflecting and mirroring one another's throw-away existence" (254). The term "mirroring" is relevant, in fact, to Esch's need for a role model to identify with. China, a dog, turns out to be her role model. Esch sees her reflection in China as a mirror. It is through China that Esch discovers her female self, and her pregnancy and learns how to act, as well as what to expect during the birthing process. It is China, once again, who demonstrates how to experience motherhood prior to Esch's giving birth to her baby. As the story progresses, Skeetah's sensitive relationship with China is reexamined and reconstructed. Esch notices her brother Skeetah, who is almost crying while, standing in the doorway, which she finds out to be one of China's puppies who has become ill. And he is concerned that this illness will be passed on to other puppies. Skeetah's sensitivity to the non-human once again reveals the deep connection that exists between humans and non-humans.

China, as an animal, has several characteristics in common with Skeetah and Esch. By focusing on ecocriticism, Buell and his colleagues claim in their article

“*Literature and Environment*” that ecocriticism and critical animal studies share a common goal: the desire to redefine humans' connections with other animals (18). It is, of course, unavoidable that these two species in the ecosystem will share a common goal or set of goals. This is due to the fact that both of these species inhabit the same ecosystem, which means that the challenges they face may be similar to one another. As a matter of fact, it is typical for certain aspects to be comparable or shared across two different entities, even though they are visibly distinct. Skeetah and Esch's predisposition towards China can also be examined in terms of *biophilia*, which can be characterized as a deep appreciation for life and everything that it possesses. This depends on the inherent need to interact with nature for the lifelike process to function properly. The biophilic tendency is beneficial to both species and can be thought of as a link between them. Because they are not completely different things in the ecosystem, but rather they have and share some characteristics. As a result, the mutual influence and mutual dependency of these species are acceptable.

Jana Krcmářová reveals that the human mind represents the external world through the use of a node connection structure that is people use symbols to show how they feel and what they are thinking about the things in the external world. He goes on to claim that there are nodes, concepts like “dog” “flight” and “blood”, as well as specific processing labels for emotions (6). The dog China and her fight with the other dog, Kilo, as well as the language used by Ward during this fight, reflect the basic concerns of *Salvage the Bones*. The dog fight is depicted, in the novel, as that “[t]he fight is quick, messy. The dogs meet in the middle and tumble around the side of the pond bed, kicking up dirt and golden grass and sticks and blood (Ward 129). The environment has a direct impact on the beings that inhabit it. So, it has the power to affect humans in the same way. Those who live in nature or are close to nature can be affected by it in different ways, both positive and negative. While Hurricane Katrina, which is slowly approaching in *Salvage the Bones*, can be considered as a negative example, Esch's affinity with China can be seen as a positive example. Humankind has always been interested in the environment in which they live and has a natural tendency. According to Krcmářová, this tendency is actually beneficial. She states that since people in traditional communities use their environment directly, such biophilic tendencies are useful, and also in traditional civilizations, discoveries tend to be

associated with identification with other beings and the perception and appreciation of the relationships within the eco-sphere (7). Moreover, in Ward's *Salvage the Bones*, the characters live within nature and have direct contact with it. So, their interaction with the environment provides significant clues in terms of biophilia for this research.

In Ward's novel *Salvage the Bones*, there is also a range of different human or non-human mothers and characters who exhibit maternal tendencies. These are China, Esch, Medea, and Katrina. China is the first character to emerge as a mother figure in the book, and she appears at the beginning of the book. And, in particular, the concept of motherhood in China's motherhood is discussed almost from the beginning to the end of the novel. Ward refers to China and her connection with nature in several different ways, each of which is unique. In addition to China, the protagonist of the novel, Esch, a fourteen years old girl, serves as another mother figure. Regardless of their ontologies as human and non-human, both China and Esch unite in motherhood. Also, the affinity between this animal and Esch can be regarded as a biophilic tendency which is defined earlier as an "innate predisposition to concentrate on life and lifelike processes" (Wilson 1). That's why China's affinity with Esch as a living thing in nature demonstrates the close bond that exists between these two beings. This affinity is the reflection of the human that needs to maintain his connection with the natural world. And this tendency can be seen throughout history, too. Extensive and intricate gardens were found in ancient Egyptian, Persian, and Chinese villages, indicating that people went to a great extent to sustain contact with nature (Ulrich 73).

Another mother image is Medea, a woman from Greek mythology who is also referred to as a mother figure. Esch, who lost her mother when she was still a child, is introduced to Medea in the book that she reads. Reading the legend of Medea and Jason, Esch develops an affinity with Medea. Because she believes that she has been betrayed by the man she loves and she wishes to seek revenge on him. Esch herself is going through a similar process of betrayal, too. She is also abandoned by Manny, the man she had been in a relationship with and the father of her child. Manny no longer wants her. Esch develops her role models even further by associating Medea with China. Since there is no one around to guide and assist her until a certain point in the book, Esch attempts to fill this void by making use of the natural environment around her. As discussed in previous sections, Hurricane Katrina serves as another mother figure for

Esch. The relationship that exists between humans and non-humans eventually deepens and becomes more apparent. Though they are all distinct individuals, what these four mother figures have in common is significant. For example, as mentioned in certain parts of the previous sections, the similarity of the birth processes of both Esch and China is one of these examples. An additional similarity is that both Medea and Esch, who are mothers, are betrayed by their lovers who are closest to them. Furthermore, one of the most distinguishing characteristics shared by these four mother figures is a strong sense of “revenge”. She claims her desire for revenging on Manny, after being rejected by him as follows: “I know that whatever Manny is saying is showing the meanness in him, that he is Jason betraying Medea and asking for the hand of the daughter of the king of Corinth in marriage after Medea has killed her brother for him, betrayed her father” (Ward 136). The second one is that China never gives up in her battle with Kilo, which reveals her hatred for him by as told by the narrator as follows “China spins, takes away part of Kilo’s throat (138). Furthermore, roughly in the middle of the novel, China’s attack on her puppies, as revealed as follows, can be considered as another evidence of violence: “China snaps forward, closes her jaw around the puppy’s neck as she does when she carries him, but there is no gentleness in it. She is all white eyes. She is chewing” (103). Furthermore, Katrina, who is a mother figure both in terms of her name and the outcomes it causes, is what can be evaluated in terms of motherhood. Since the growth of the non-human Katrina is similar to that of a human. As a result of human-caused environmental destruction, nature reveals its harmful impact on humans in a variety of ways. Hurricanes are most likely an essential answer among these. The things Katrina brings with her, who is violent, furious, and uncertain of what to do, depict a mother figure once more. That is why nature is not independent of the things it includes; on the contrary, they have a strong impact on each other.

China’s bleeding mouth works as a particularly effective reminder of the similarities between the ecological system and mankind. At this point, China’s bleeding mouth might be visualized as the pollution of the world caused by humans and the damage to the world that has resulted as a direct consequence of this pollution. In addition, Esch emphasizes her desire to communicate with China as follows “China is bloody-mouthed and bright-eyed as Medea. If she could speak, this is what I would ask her: Is this what motherhood is?” (103). Esch establishes a connection between the

concept of motherhood and China. Esch hopes to develop a maternal relationship with China by having conversations with her, gaining an understanding of her, and, most importantly, gaining knowledge from her. And, in fact, this time she does it not implicitly, but explicitly and openly. If China had a tongue and could speak, the question Esch would ask her would be “What is motherhood?” Instead of learning about motherhood from mankind, Esch prefers to learn about it from China, which is a part of the natural world. This desire is an essential component of the mutual relationship that exists between humans and non-humans. In the following pages, Esch perceives water in the toilet as a baby storm, based on Katrina, who has not been seen clearly. And she has become so intertwined with nature that she can no longer distinguish herself from the things she sees around her. This parallel is defined in the novel as follows: “I wipe myself, flush the toilet, watch the water spin in a spiral, a baby storm, as it sucks the clip down and down and away” (116).

Later in the novel, after the dog fight, Esch notices Skeetah standing near China and realizes that he has a stronger bond with China. And in fact, China has a great influence on Esch for she helps to be understood by other men. Esch going self-confident when she sees Skeetah care for China and protects her as a mother. The following quotation shows how Esch is in need of a men’s support and how she appreciates Skeetah doing this for China: “For some reason I see Skeetah when I blink, Skeetah kneeling next to China, always kneeling, always stroking and loving and knowing her. Skeetah’s face when he stood across from Rico, when he told China, Make them know. I am on him like China” (160). So, China is the main character who demonstrates the merits of motherhood to the male population around Esch. In this regard, the phrase addressed to China “make them know” becomes a very important source at the motivation for Esch too, as she is “like China”. Esch, who conceals her pregnancy throughout the majority of the book, is maybe eager for others to see something for the first time. Esch is encouraged by China’s sense of motherhood through which she makes herself understood by humans even though she is non-human. Thus, Esch comes to believe that she can also be welcomed if she keeps up with her natural strength.

As the story progresses, Esch's belly begins to grow larger, and she also begins to vomit repeatedly. Meanwhile, Katrina, who has been appearing in a quiet manner so far,

begins to manifest herself much more vividly. Just like in Esch's belly, Katrina begins to grow and take shape as the book progresses. While Esch's vomiting, another mother figure, has no negative impact on the environment, Katrina on the other hand, who is also considered as a mother figure, is going to vomit her waters on the Mississippi region (where the hurricane makes landfall and destroys the whole region), which will most likely be much more destructive. Katrina, on the other hand, will vomit up the devastation and damage that has been done to the ecosystem. This destruction is actually a hostile action against humanity. It is the natural response of mother nature to humans, which is being more affected by human activity. For individuals who live in Bois Sauvage, the concept of "environmental justice" which is discussed in the second-wave ecocriticism, is particularly relevant. Jasmyn Ward, in her book *Salvage the Bones*, actually focused on the Batiste family and discussed social issues through environmental degradation. As previously stated in this research, poorer communities have less impact on the environment, whereas, they are the ones who will be most adversely affected by climate change. The rich, on the other hand, reside in higher and more secure places in *Salvage the Bones*. The impoverished, like Esch and her family, continue to reside in lower-income and poorer-quality neighborhoods of Bois Sauvage. *Salvage the Bones* depicts human-nature relationships as the sources of mutual tension and redress, disrupting romanticized representations of the socially constructed family and hierarchies in which humans are viewed as controllers or protectors of the ecological system (Bares 31). In the second wave of ecocriticism, Buell clearly focuses on the issue. He states that, just as preservationist ecocriticism was in the first wave, the most distinguishing activist edge of the second wave is environmental justice, or the unequal distribution of environmental benefits and hazards between whites and non-whites, wealthy and poor (96). Clark also analyzes the influence of environmental degradation on white and non-whites as follows:

Esch's family home is located in a woodland clearing; the nearest white family is outside of the woods at the top of a hill. The difference between the two locations is stark: the black family is literally lost in the woods, trapped in the lowlands that are susceptible, and will succumb to, flood damage, whilst the white family evokes the American fantasy of the "city upon a hill." The Batiste family home is in a state of disrepair, their mother is long dead, creating a notable absence in the family, and the land surrounding is full of broken-down machinery that has been left to rust (346)

When combined with the social conditions that are strongly established in the southern Mississippi terrain, Bois Sauvage becomes a symbol of both the natural and

cultural challenges that the citizens of the area are forced to endure (344). In support of Clark's statement, in the novel Daddy has been attempting to prepare for the storm for several days, but his attempts have been blocked in some way. Even though the children want to do something and are attempting to control things, in the tenth chapter, which is just two days before Katrina, but it is too late. Some things have now got out of their control. Katrina is starting to get increasingly stronger, and the effects are beginning to appear. When Randall, Esch, Skeetah, and Junior's older brother, returns home one day, he notices China in the house and asks his brother Skeetah why he has come to live there. Skeetah tells that he had to bring her in because of the incoming storm. Randall tells Skeetah that he should keep China in the shed rather than at home and that he does not want her to be at home with them. Skeetah, on the other hand, decided to keep China at home. He believes that China should be at home with them as well by saying that "[e]verything deserve to live" (Ward 167). Randall goes to his father's room and warns him of the situation. Dogs are not allowed to remain inside according to Dad too. Skeetah once again shows the close relationship that exists between humans and nonhumans and he declares that if China is not allowed to enter the house, he will also not be allowed to remain at home. The argument goes as follows:

"I'm bringing her inside for the storm." Skeetah doesn't look up.
"Fuck no," Randall says.
"I ain't leaving them in the shed."
"Why not?"
"It ain't strong enough is why not."
"Ain't nothing wrong with it."
"It's too flimsy for them."
"This is a house, Skeetah. For humans. Not for dogs." (166)

Meanwhile, Daddy informs the children that Katrina has been upgraded to the fifth category. He reluctantly says that China can stay in the bedroom but not everywhere in the house. Randall is upset because he refuses to remain in the same room with China, but Skeetah argues that China, as a component of nature, must also survive "Everything deserves a chance, Esch" he says (168). Skeetah's protective attitude towards China and her puppies stayed unchanged throughout the novel. As a result, he attempts to do something to help them. He cares for China and her children for whom he owns a deep affinity rather than his family members humans. Skeetah's protective attitude towards them has not changed, even under the most difficult circumstances in which Katrina seemed to have revealed herself more clearly. In terms

of the human-nature relationship, Skeetah's biophilic tendencies are significant indications. Krmáová claims in her article *E.O. Wilson's concept of biophilia and the environmental movement in the USA* that humans are not only born with a capacity to exploit nature, yet with a tendency to defend their environment (13). And in *Salvage the Bones*, Ward clearly shows this tendency through Skeetah's concern for non-humans.

In the last part of *Salvage the Bones*, on the twelfth day, Katrina is gone. It left destruction behind. And Ward also states Katrina's final reaction and leaving as "The hurricane laughed" (187). Skeetah has lost China. Although he makes room for her in the ceiling he saves his family but lost another part of his family, China. He feels responsible for this. The loss of China, who has been a sister, friend, mother, goddess, and perhaps even lover for Skeetah from the beginning of the novel, affects Skeetah deeply. Although the Batiste family survives, their home and living environments are destroyed by Katrina. This, once again, demonstrates the devastating consequences of the destruction of the environment. So, this shows that man's internal environment is connected to the external environment closely. By underscoring our interconnectedness in a physical world that has rendered us "post-human" and "post-nature" ecocriticism has become a constant issue in the humanities and it has also expanded our worldwide awareness of ecological responsibility and environmental justice (Marland 860). Through the events taking place in *Salvage the Bones*, Ward demonstrates an understanding of environmental responsibility through the experiences of the Batiste family. When all goes well and the sun shines, Esch and her family will be at home with their neighbors, that is Big Henry and his mother's house. Daddy questions Esch about Skeetah's claims during the hurricane. So, whether or not Esch is expecting a baby. Esch agrees with a nod. Daddy, who is defined as a character that is usually rough is expected to be problematic if he learns about Esch's condition before Katrina. He displays, however, a non-judgmental attitude after Katrina, by even telling Esch that they must go to the hospital for the baby's safety.

Although Katrina swallowed and destroyed something, she actually built something else for another mother figure, Esch, as exemplified by her father's understanding of her situation. Rosemarie Tong also states that when it comes to biological production, spiritual ecofeminists frequently make comparisons between the function of women and the role of a mythical "Mother Earth" in giving existence and

constructing everything that is available (282). The mutual construction between nature and man can be seen repeatedly in the example of Esch and her father Daddy. These two things are not mutually exclusive. They have different connotations that can have a positive or negative impact on each other. Humans are damaging nature at an increasing rate, and nature is responding in a variety of ways. Katrina provides a good example of nature's response to man. Although Katrina takes many things from Esch, destroys her home, and destroys the area she is living in, Esch becomes aware of her mother nature and the relationship of this motherhood with her environment during this difficult period. And, even though Katrina has stolen a lot from her, Esch knows she must rebuild things. Esch's emotional reaction to the storm demonstrates that the deterioration of the human body and the weakening of nature more than man are strongly linked and appear to be unavoidable (Bares 35).

Salvage the Bones creates a strong relationship between humans and, more importantly, between humans and their surroundings. The emergence of these new forms of mutual dependency is manifested in a variety of ways. Ward develops the theme of interconnection in the ecosystem by having Esch perceive Big Henry in the image of a huge tree as follows "I wish I could tell Big Henry this: I wish you were there when the water came, you with your big hands, your legs like tree trunks sunk in the earth" (Ward 199). Imagining Big Henry in the image of a tree, a natural entity, symbolizes her reliance on nature as well as her confidence in Big Henry as a source of care and love. This indicates, at the same time, the urge to explore new types of affiliation between humans and non-humans (Bares 35). Nonetheless, it is on the twelfth day that some of the most significant comments about Katrina are done. Esch, among them, reveals a holistic perspective while describing the devastation caused by Hurricane Katrina as follows:

I will tie the glass and stone with string, hang the shards above my bed, so that they will flash in the dark and tell the story of Katrina, the mother that swept into the Gulf and slaughtered. Her chariot was a storm so great and black the Greeks would say it was harnessed to dragons. She was the murderous mother who cut us to the bone but left us alive, left us naked and bewildered as wrinkled newborn babies, as blind puppies, as sun-starved newly hatched baby snakes. She left us a dark Gulf and salt-burned land. She left us to learn to crawl. She left us to salvage. Katrina is the mother we will remember until the next mother with large, merciless hands, committed to blood, comes (Ward 199)

In this part, Katrina changes into a mother figure once again. At the beginning of the book, Big Henry turns into a tree, which is an example of a character flaw that goes

in the opposite direction. This appears to blur the distinctions between human and more-than-human nature, as humans are converted into creatures and plants, among other things. (Bares 36).

Skeetah does never give up on his hope that China will come back and does not leave the location where he has lost her. Hope and despair coexist in this part of the novel. Esch, who is a mother now, begins to replace the former mother, China. Esch believes that China now knows that Esch is also a mother, and also that China will now call her sister while thinking as that “[s]he will know that I am a mother (Ward 202). Esch knows that even if China does not come back, they became sisters in the process of becoming a mother. As a result, *Salvage the Bones* demonstrates how it is possible to talk about a mutual understanding between the human and non-human forces of nature as well as how closely people can be connected to nature and its components.

CONCLUSION

Most clearly in recent times, human activities have had a greater impact on the natural world. This effect is particularly destructive and can have a wide range of negative consequences on the natural world. As a direct consequence of this influence, the value that certain groups place on the natural world is growing in a parallel way. Thus in recent years, literary studies have become increasingly associated with the terms “environmental studies” and “ecocriticism” as a means of expressing this priority towards nature, at least among certain groups. And in this study, the effect of ecocriticism, along with its other sub-terms such as ecofeminism, eco-spirituality, and biophilia, have been analyzed and applied to Jesmyn Ward’s novels, *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing*.

Firstly, this research has investigated the concept of ecofeminism with regard to the manner in which the characters interact with the non-human. The novels *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* by Ward explore the intimate connections between female characters and non-human entities, highlighting the inherent disadvantages faced by these female characters within this framework. Secondly, the term eco-spirituality has been discussed, and Ward’s books have been evaluated from a spiritual perspective as well in the study. The novels written by Ward have provided different examples of the deep connection that exists between humans and the natural world, as well as the ways in which this connection affects one another on a spiritual level. When viewed from this perspective, it has been clear that the characters in *Salvage the Bones* have had relationships with other living beings who are not human. In Ward’s second book, which is titled *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, it has been also clear to understand how this connection has been established. It has become quite apparent how spiritual harmony has developed among the beings when the relationships between the book’s characters and non-human beings were studied. As a result, it has been analyzed that Ward’s novels, particularly *Sing, Unburied, Sing*, have concentrated on the unity that exists between beings and represented this affiliation in spiritual ways to the reader.

Biophilia, which is defined as the emotional bond of man to nature, is also another important term for the present study. Examined on the basis of *Salvage the Bones*, this

term has been seen to show the reader's connection to human nature. Because in this book, it has been seen that the characters have built a bond with non-human things and taken this bond to different levels. So it has been determined that it has caused an emotional construction between them. Hence, how this point of view intersects in *Salvage the Bones* and to what extent a tendency exists between the characters and the outside world has been studied from the perspective of biophilia. Thus, it has been realized that the biophilic tendency has been brought to the center of this novel and has had a significant role in this respect. Furthermore, nature and its influence on humans have been examined through the main characters' interactions with nature in *Salvage the Bones* and the healing power of nature in *Sing, Unburied, Sing*. As a consequence, through Ward's novels, it has been concluded that engaging with nature has had a healing effect on disadvantaged people and Ward reflects the difficulties of lower-class colored people living in a dilapidated countryside. Therefore, through the lens of ecocriticism and its subterms, Ward's novels *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* bring attention to themes of poverty, drug addiction, misogyny, and natural disasters. By analyzing these works under the framework of ecocriticism, it becomes evident that the novels explore the significant and interconnected relationship between nature and humanity. Thus, the examination of *Salvage the Bones* and *Sing, Unburied, Sing* within the context of ecocriticism and its subtopics demonstrate their alignment with these themes and emphasizes the importance of the nature-human relationship.

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