



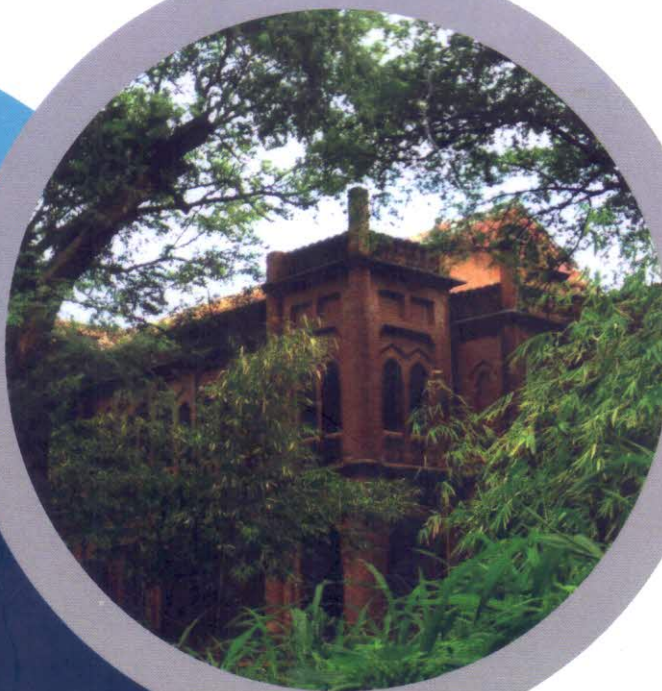
ISSN 1725 2278 876X

# American College Journal of English Language and Literature (ACJELL) (A Peer-reviewed International Journal)

No: 6

ISSN: 1725 2278 876X

2017



ACJELL



Since 1881

Research Department of English  
**The American College**  
Madurai, Tamil Nadu, India

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The American College Journal of English Language and Literature is Published Annually.

**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

ISSN: 1725 2278 876X

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***Publisher***

**RESEARCH DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH**

The American College

Madurai 625 002, Tamil Nadu, India

***Designed and printed at***

BODHI INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF

RESEARCH IN HUMANITIES, ARTS AND SCIENCE

An Online, Peer-reviewed, Refereed and Quarterly Journal with Impact Factor  
[www.bodhijournals.com](http://www.bodhijournals.com)

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## ECOLOGICAL SELF: A DEEP ECOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE IN JUDITH WRIGHT'S POETRY

P.V.Christi Shanthi

*There is not a fragment in all nature, for every relative  
fragment of one thing is a full harmonious unit in itself.*

--John Muir

### Introduction

Ecological self-realization produces natural joy and celebration of life. Self-realization in this sense means expansion and deepening our sense of self, beyond the narrow sense of self to identification with all living beings. This requires an enlarged perceptive of the biosphere and community. It calls for realizing the sacred interconnection of human beings and cosmos. Bill Devall views:

Ecological self is not forced or static ideology but rather the search for an opening to nature .. in authentic ways. If a person can sincerely say after careful self-evaluation and prayer that "this Earth is part of my body," ... "If this place is destroyed then something in me is destroyed," then that person has an intense feeling of belonging to the place. (108)

Judith Wright an Australian poet was ruled by the principle of self-realization: "Nature in the broadest sense is a self-realizing, internally interconnected cosmos" (qtd. in Devall 120). Wright was an experienced environmental activist, and an outstanding poet. For Wright, the self was a part of a wider connection and for her conservation was self-defense. When she defended the Great Barrier Reef or protested against deforestation, she considered nature as a part of herself: "'Self realization" says Naess "in its absolute maximum is ... the mature experience of oneness in diversity"' (qtd. in Devall 116).

In the poem 'Rock pool' Wright rejects human supremacy and she identifies herself with the sea animals which she views in the rock pool.—"the scuttle, the crouch" (419) and being "eaten by sea worms" (419). Deep rock pools provide shelter from waves, allowing frail organisms to live on an otherwise exposed rocky shore.

I hang on the rock pool's edge, its wild embroideries:  
Admire it, pore on it, this, the devouring and mating,  
ridges of coloured tracery, occupants, all the living,  
the stretching of toothed claws to food, the breeding  
on the ocean's edge....(JW CP 419)

Rock pools provide a life-line for sea creatures and an opportunity to watch them without having to get your feet wet. They are found at all levels of the rocky shore in the areas between the high and low tide marks. Coping with all this, and with roaring waves, in addition to avoiding predators is no easy task. Yet rock pools can be very bio-diverse, teeming with molluscs, shrimps and crabs, fish and anemones.

Wright compares the teaming sea animals to human beings and she feels human are also a species who are in no way superior to the teaming sea animals as they also live together, compete, struggle and ultimately meet with their end. Like a true eco critic, she is able to see human beings as a part of the ecosystem. She does not consider human as distinct from the rest of nature both in spirit and body.

Wright looks down on the microcosm and watches the change, growth, decay and death, and the waves which wash over it all: "I watch the claws in the rock pool, the scuttle, the crouch green humps, and the biggest barnacled, eaten by sea worms" (JW CP 419). 'Barnacles' are relatives of snails, instead of one shell; theirs is made of five parts which they attach to the rocks with very strong glue. Inside the shell, the animal stays head-down and closes a 'door' at the top during the day. At night, this door opens and a number of 'feet' emerge. These feet are covered with hairs that trap passing plankton and small fish.

Similarly in the poem, 'Alive,' Wright looks into a microscope and wonders at the life-cycle of the microorganism in the water. She is able to identify herself with the micro-organism and she says:

Locked in the focused stare  
of the lens, my sight  
flinches: a tiny kick.  
The life in me replies  
Signaling back