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Sacralizing the Secular: Preserving Space in Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron"

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M. A. Seton Hall University, May 2020

A Thesis
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts
In

The Department of English
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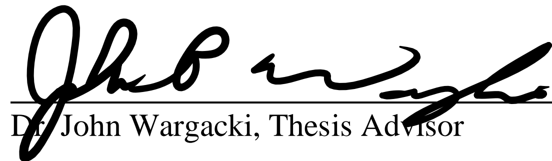

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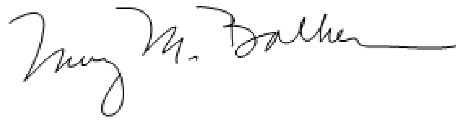

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Abstract

The tides have changed. Mountains have shifted. But, Sarah Orne Jewett's zealous love for country remains unaffected. She is the sweet fragrance of peonies and roses infusing the American literary canon. Sacralizing the Secular: Preserving Space in Sarah Orne Jewett's "A White Heron" explores Jewett's invention of a form suitable to the nature of her experience of country life allowed her to depict the instinctive and organic symbiotic relationship between man, woman, child, and nature in her short story, "A White Heron": a benchmark of eco-criticism. This Earth-centered approach is informed by Cheryll Glotfelty, who set out to create the field of literature and environment, in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology, and The Ecological Thought* by Timothy Morton, philosopher and eco-critic. This paper pursues an eco-critical approach, which demands that we examine ourselves and the world around us, and evaluate the way we represent, intermingle with, and perceive the natural world. Jewett posits Sylvia in "A White Heron" to preserve sacred space regardless of a religious prescription through moments of stillness, meditation, and contemplation; Sylvia, the curious, observant and shy little maid, embodies "the ecological thought," and like a disciple of Saint Francis of Assisi, has great regard for space and nature that is inherent to her character. Sylvia is more connected than ever with the natural world; the "Wood" has filled her spirit with aw, wonder and purpose. And by means of this short story, Jewett "determined to teach the world" that we must sacralize the secular, preserve space, and be like Sylvia if we are to live in communion with the natural world.

Key words: Sarah Orne Jewett, American literary regionalism, ecocriticism

The tides have changed. Mountains have shifted. But Sarah Orne Jewett's zealous love for country remains unaffected. She is the sweet fragrance of peonies and roses infusing the American literary canon. Henry James, a key transitional figure between literary realism and modernism, who is remembered for his "cultivation, an aesthetic sensibility that no inherited title, no accumulated wealth, no diligent study can ever quiet afford us" (Rowe 3), praised Jewett's "beautiful little quantum of achievement," which is simply enhanced by an awareness of the persistent and seemingly insoluble troubles she encountered in her maturity as an artist, a subject largely neglected (Eakin 510). To put it another way, Jewett's invention of a form suitable to the nature of her experience of country life allowed her to depict the instinctive and organic symbiotic relationship between man, woman, child, and nature. It was alongside "the loneliness of silent, forgotten place" and "the fireplace of the deserted house that had once been the parsonage of the North Parish" that Jewett penned "A White Heron," a tale united by charming pastoral sceneries – reclaimed and imagined as an invention of divine inspiration and a testimonial of the affiliation between her and nature (Matthiessen 10). She does the work of a shepherd by adopting and offering a revelatory stance that delivers hope in times of confusion, solace in times of sorrow, and support for managing inventible challenges and change for her readers. She offers a simple, powerful contemplation of practical spirituality, the mindset and heart-space which allows for the celebration of the mystic in nature. It is in the wonderful collective order of the universe through which Jewett contemplates the mysteries of divine light touching her spirit.

She "determined to teach the world that country people were not awkward, ignorant creatures those boarders seemed to think. I wished the world to know their grand, simple pleasures; and so far as I had a mission when I first began to write, I think it was that" (1). Thus,

in 1886, Jewett writes “A White Heron” as a vignette of rural life in contrast to the industrious identity of the Northeast, eliciting a social commentary about the environment and its fragility, and our ability to transcend wordily desires: a benchmark of eco-criticism. She is one of the “American writers we dearly love but forget to consider, a writer perceived as so naturally American that she might almost be a part of the landscape-and so taken for granted” (Silverthorne 1).

Jewett is described as “vivacious and interesting, selecting words with quick discrimination which shows her appreciation of the use and power of language” and having “flashes of wit and humor, too” which “illumine what she says, and the tone of her mind is both helpful and suggestive” (Boston Sunday Herold). Her writing, which draws attention to the natural world, is the symbolic book for spiritual insight. Jewett disseminates a large body of knowledge about her surroundings graciously influenced by her father, Dr. Theodore H. Jewett. He “rescued [her] from the school building,” because she suffered from rheumatism arthritis, “to take her traveling so she could learn all there was to know of the countryside, his patients, his best-loved books, and ultimately, his values and beliefs” (Roman 33).

Eco-critical theory addresses the connection of nature to what is human, the occupation of space, the evoking of space itself as a sameness, and the renouncing of dominion over the natural world. A modern ecological reading of “A White Heron” demands that we examine ourselves and the world around us, and evaluate the way we represent, intermingle with, and perceive the natural world: “the ecological thought can be highly unpleasant. But once you have started to think it, you can’t unthink it. We have started to think it. In the future, we will all be thinking the ecological thought. It’s irresistible, like true love” (Morton 135). The curious, observant, and shy Sylvia, the youngest character and one of three in “A White Heron,” enlarges

our view of who we are and where we are; she challenges our sense of what is literal and what is symbolic, as well as what counts as existent and what counts as nonexistent and transient. She embodies "the ecological thought" even before its invention (Morton 97). The little maid, like a disciple of Saint Francis of Assisi, has great regard for space and nature that is inherent to her character; this innately connects her to the landscape through a series of actions in a prescribed order which births the ecological thought (Morton 97). As such, Jewett posits Sylvia in "A White Heron" as preserving sacred space, regardless of a religious prescription, through moments of stillness, meditation, and contemplation, observing, "Sylvia [feeling] as if she too could go flying away among the clouds. Westward, the woodlands and farms reached miles and miles into the distance; here and there were church steeples, and white villages, truly it was a vast and awesome world!" (Jewett 13).

Spirituality of the "Wood"

Sylvia practices in the spirituality of the Wood. A double-entendre, the spirituality of the Wood – not "Word" – describes her receiving of faith through nature, its presence and touch. It is not necessarily the Word she lives by, but by the Wood that permeates an orderly universe. Sylvia understands her placement within her "surrounding society in the pursuit of justice and peace"; she is perched on Earth to venerate and maintain appropriate relations with all of creatures: human and non-human (Baker 244-245). Native Christian theology is the intersection between Native theory and practice and Christian theology and practice (Charleston 1). Sylvia becomes the conduit between two worlds. The story, which is a passionate exploration of the ongoing search for a way to move from "the parts" of everyday life in order to imply a larger "whole," invokes the sublime: a spirit found in creation, not necessarily rooted in any one

religious tradition or idea of God. Spirituality is fluid. However, this nature-centered approach supports a “world-view…given shape by a spatial paradigm,” and in conversation with the Native Christian theologians, Sylvia, too, “is influenced so heavily by [her] environment” (Baker 235). She acclaims the goodness in the natural world and focuses on finding the truth in nature.

By featuring a move away from romance into transcendence, “A White Heron” “is as much about opening our minds as it is about knowing something or other in particular” (Morton 15). Ecological thought, along with the ecological world, is not always positive; consequently, it opposes Romanticism’s ardent attitude of focusing on the beauty of the natural world and the emotional side of human nature. The new way of evoking the natural world, for Sylvia, becomes one which is organic, uncorrupted by society and institutions, but in oneness with space, and consequently, with spirit:

> The companions followed the shady wood-road, the cow taking slow steps and the child very fast ones. The cow stopped long at the brook to drink, as if the pasture were not half a swamp, and Sylvia stood still and waited, letting her bare feet cool themselves in the shoal water, while the great twilight moths struck softly against her. She waded on through the brook as the cow moved away, and listened to the thrushes with a heart that beat fast with pleasure. There was a stirring in the great boughs overhead. They were full of little birds and beasts that seemed to be wide awake, and going about their world, or else saying good-night to each other in sleepy twitters. Sylvia herself felt sleepy as she walked along. However, it was not much farther to the house, and the air was soft and sweet. She was not often in the woods so late as this, and it made her feel as if she were part of the gray shadows and the moving leaves. (Jewett 6)

A more fluid approach to the spirit emulates the features of Native Christianity, which contests idealism by accepting new religious experiences, stories, and visions. Native Americans found it possible to "accept" Christianity without actually relinquishing their own beliefs as they were uninterested in the finer points of traditional doctrine. Native Christianity, by its very nature, is a means of higher spiritual truth and self-renewal, professing a connection with the cosmos and space without a rejection of God. The image of God, for Sylvia, takes on a much softer presence in the parts and particles of the world, more akin to John 4:24: "God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth" (New American Bible). A spirit influences Sylvia to spirit and truth, and her image is created within the image of the spirit that permeates space:

> The Native Christianity contribution to an understanding of cosmic harmony adds to a Christian theory of space by locating God's harmonization of the cosmos within creation. This harmony not only affects peoples' lives in the future, but also restores *shalom* to all creation in every place. Christians are then called to carry out this reconciliation, as a means of cosmic harmony, but as response to God's reconciliation through Christ. (Baker)

"Ecological" Fluidity

Neither nature nor writing is stagnant. Neither exists in a vacuum. "A White Heron" is not a piece of writing that is environmental, as in "*eviro*– …anthropocentric and dualistic, implying that we humans are at the center" (Glotfelty xx). Environmental language "frequently urges us to get hot under the collar" (Morton 24). Rather, this is a story which is "*eco*–," as in the implying of "interdependent communities, integrated systems, and strong connections among constituent parts" (Glotfelty xx). This Earth-centered approach, developed by Cheryll Glotfelty,

who set out to create the field of literature and environment in *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology,* starts at the most fundamental level: language. Language is fluid.

Jewett's writing "appears as an 'untrampled snowfield'…simply inviting critical exploration (Glotfelty xxxi). The smooth and uniform surface of "A White Heron" awaits the impression of modern ecological concepts to awaken our sensibilities by "mak[ing] us question reality" and "refram[ing] our world, our problems, and ourselves [as] part of the ecological project" through Sylvia, the little maid who sees nature for what it is: truth (Morton 8-9). This is human writing transpiring in nature. It is Jewett trickling into the wild and the wild informing Jewett, and subsequently informing Sylvia. It is Sylvia's encounter with the natural world. The truth, in the grander scheme of things, is evidence of ecology, which propels the short story beyond its original, and probably intended, function. It is no longer solely a fictional story; "A White Heron" is wonderfully intricate. Part of its virtuosity is the way in which Jewett seems to fuse a number of established genres and styles of writing between a single set of covers. In its embrace of folklore, realism, fairy-tale, descriptive and narrative writing, and most notably, environmental or the "undervalued" nature writing, a "flourishing form of environmental literature in America," the story turns out to be Jewett's compilation of evidence about nature being neither poetic nor exotic (Glotfelty xxxi).

The story is more than simply a "fairy-tale forest [which] the reader enters, where the creatures act the parts of people who commune with each other," as Margaret Roman in *Sarah Orne Jewett: Reconstructing Gender* suggests (197). Though Roman says that "the world of 'A White Heron' is not a people world," which is accurate, suggesting that the landscape is a "fairy-tale" implies that our imaginations are deceived into believing that the natural world is fabricated

(197). The "fairy-tale" depiction of the natural world creates perfection, when in actuality we are relentlessly restoring and maintaining the natural world. Sylvia's purpose is to restore and maintain this space. It lessens our understanding of our impact on the environment; we, too, carry the huntsman's jack-knife. This is not to say that Roman's point of view is not valid, but in the realm of ecology, which "seeks to understand the vital connections between plants and animals and the world around them, it does not work (ESA).

"A fairy-tale forest" implies a dramatization; we cannot dramatize nature. It suggests the mythical; ecology is not a myth. It suggests imagination; ecology is not imaginative. It suggests a fantastical magical setting harboring mystical creatures and objects; ecology has neither. It suggests a misleading; ecology is about truth, the facts. Instead, what does work is if we move sideways with the "fairy-tale forest" to include a conversation about the ecosystem of the woodlands where plants, animals and other organism, as well as weather and landscape work together to form a bubble of life:

> There was hardly a night the summer through when the old cow could be found waiting at the pasture bars; on the contrary, it was her greatest pleasure to hide herself away among the huckleberry bushes, and though she wore a loud bell she had made the discovery that if one stood perfectly still it would not ring. So Sylvia had to hunt for her until she found her, and call Co'! Co'! with never an answering Mood, until her childish patience was spent. If the creature had not given good milk and plenty of it, the case would have seemed very different to her owners. Besides, Sylvia had all the time there was, and very little use to make of it. Sometimes in pleasant weather it was a consolation to look upon the cow's pranks as an intelligent attempt to play hide and seek,

> and as the child had no playmates she lent herself to this amusement with a good deal of zest. (Jewett 5)

We can challenge the notion of "fairy-tale" by trusting realism instead of the imaginative. Jewett's language is fluid enough to do so. At the end of the day, "A White Heron" offers a profound life lesson, as a fairy-tale would, without being glossed over in the symbolic. Imagination turns into reality, and through Sylvia's journey we experience ecological enlightenment. It is a way, especially in this current age of industry and technological advancement, that we reconnect with the most basic fundamentals of life.

It is within the realism of "A White Heron" that we can imagine it as a work of nature writing. The main reason is that Jewett documents the truth of nature without romanticization or dramatization, which then challenges the conventions of the American Romantic tradition, the mode for which Jewett is most celebrated. American Romanticism considers the world as a means, imagines a world which exists solely for us, provides no concrete indication or knowledge of nature, and participates in the anthropocentric thinking that Glotfelty suggests. As a lens, we can certainly look at the story as such. I am in no way rejecting this mode. But what I am doing is engaging with fluidity to offer new insight; if the environment in which we and Jewett find ourselves is best pigeon-holed as fluid, in the sense that we are subject to persistent, if not continuous, change, then why not employ that same ideology to enhance our understanding of "A White Heron"? Like the ever-changing tide of Romanticism, Realism, and Modernism, we are being hit with a wave of thinking, a new paradigm: ecological literacy, the broadly applicable framework of consciousness and concern for the natural world and its concomitant problems, as well as the knowledge, skills, and inspirations to work toward solutions of existing troubles and the preemption of new ones. Thus, Romanticism diminishes the possibility of perceiving "A

White Heron" as an artistic expression of the absolute source of truth known as the universe, away from traditional religious interference, and more aligned with the emergent ecological consciousness. It also impedes on Jewett's celebration of the picturesque life of common folk and the sublimity of the natural world by transitioning into a transcendence of conventional human limitations. "A White Heron" rejects immanence, a conviction that the divine embodies or is manifested in the material word, by centering on a state of being which overcomes the limitations of physical existence, and, by some means, has also become liberated of it.

Jewett strategically celebrates idealism, centering on nature and challenging materialism by electing to have Sylvia encounter the sublime in the wilderness of New England. This nature-centric approach re-establishes our sense of place and heighten our awareness of the human place, absent from the center. Thus, the story offers us a practice to appreciate Jewett's incorporation of personal observations of and philosophical reflections upon nature, rather than just her reliance on the healing power of imagination. As F.O. Matthiessen writes:

> I had played under the great pines when I was a child, and I had spent many a long afternoon under them since. There never will be such trees for me any more in the world. I knew where the flowers grew under them, and where the ferns were greenest, and it was as much home to me as my own house. They grew on the side of a hill, and the sun always shone through the top of the trees as it went down, while below it was all in shadow. (10)

"A White Heron" is Jewett's record of the "self" expanding out into the world, absorbing more and more experience, then contracting back into the self, learning that she can contain and embrace the wild range of experience that she keeps encountering on her journey through the world. Jewett begins to expand the boundaries of the self to include, first of all, Sylvia, then the

entire world, and ultimately the cosmos. Her elegance, exactness, and truthfulness draw readers into her perfectly balanced ecosystem, a fictionalized South Berwick, Maine.

In contracting back into the "self," Jewett acknowledges that she, too, can contain and embrace the wild ranges of experience she encountered as a child. Therefore, when Jewett engages in self-contemplation, she comes to understand that she is not separate from all parts of the universe, but is instead one with them. Sylvia is a manifestation of her search for the truth. There is an uncanniness, a sensation well-defined by a fundamental splintering of perception, between Jewett, who believes she is "always nine years old," and her character, Sylvia, an eight-year-old little maid. This is borne out by Margaret Roman, who observes that "as an adult, Jewett's frequent, unabashed references to herself as a child are well known" (35). Instead of perceiving her childish behavior as an escape from womanhood, as scholars would contend, her childish behavior is the expression of "the time and space" that "measures…the force of the soul"; this concept, described by Ralph Waldo Emerson, in "The Over-Soul," posits Jewett's soul as looking "steadily forwards, creating a world before her, leaving worlds behind her. She has no dates, no rites, nor persons, nor specialties, nor men. The soul knows only the soul; the web of events is the flowing robe in which she is clothed" (5-6). This Emersonian approach allows us to try to describe the indescribable inner workings of Jewett's soul, which innately connects her to the natural world, thereby creating one

It is Jewett's perpetual youth, and that of the Wood, that affords us the prospect to consider this practice of realism as a way to illustrate Sylvia's most intimate and practical spirituality, grace, and her unwillingness to comprise her defense of the sacred. The space between Sylvia and Jewett is fluid; there are zero degrees of separation between them. Therefore, a subtle shift happens; we begin to wade into the waters of creative nonfiction, which thrusts

Jewett into the same category as Emerson, who also describes the solitude of going out into nature and leaving behind all preoccupying activities and society.

Jewett's private life can both complement and complicate "A White Heron," driving it – like Sylvia driving Mistress Moolly home – into a rebellion against clichéd tradition. Jewett's less conventional religious beliefs opts to find the divine in all things, away from an intermediary, such as a Church. Jewett often "complained of the boredom and stupidity of certain sermons, and as her mind began to wonder, she would look across the aisle to occupy her time by making faces at her friends, or she would let her thoughts travel to imaginary hillsides and other company" (Donovan 1). Instead, this practice takes Jewett from her Bible to a systematic approach to interpretation within her demonstration of love for the environment and its parts and particles in "A White Heron":

> There was the huge tree asleep yet in the paling moonlight, and small and silly Sylvia began with utmost bravery to mount to the top of it, with tingling, eager blood coursing the channels of her whole frame, with her bare feet and fingers, that pinched and held like bird's claws to the monstrous ladder reaching up, up, almost to the sky itself. First she must mount the white oak tree that grew alongside, where she was almost lost among the dark branches and the green leaves heavy and wet with due; a bird fluttered off its nest, and a red squirrel ran to and fro and scolded pettishly at the harmless housebreaker. Sylvia felt her way easily. She had often climbed there, and knew that higher still ones of the oak's upper branches chafed against the pine trunk, just where its lower boughs were set close together. There, when she made the dangerous pass from one tree to the other, the great enterprise would really begin. (Jewett 12)

She considered Earth as her place of worship, nature her scripture, and all truth her creed, and she was "determined to teach the world" about a life of compassion and service to creation (Heller 1). The charism of the spirit offers Jewett, and in turn, Sylvia, a boundless source of joy, love, energy, and abundance, which they appropriate into the spirituality of the Wood, a message of ecological wisdom.

The "Eco" Approach

To be decentered is to be centered. The decentering of the human – or collective humanity – welcomes us to imagine the environment as a matter of perception; as Glofelty notes, "all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it" (xix), while also detailing the:

> troubling awareness that we have reached the age of environmental limits, a time when the consequence of human actions is damaging the planet's basic life support systems. We are there. Either we change our ways or we face globe catastrophe, destroying much beauty and exterminating countless fellow species in our headlong race to apocalypse. (Glotfelty xx)

In order to theorize an artistic representation of the environment, such as that in "A White Heron," as a site for opening ideas of nature to new possibilities, we take Glotfelty's "connected[ness]" and turn to *The Ecological Thought* by Timothy Morton, a philosopher and eco-critic. His work is a testament to the implications of a strange awareness – the understanding of our interdependence with other beings – which he believes decenters long-held assumptions about the distancing between humanity and nature. "The ecological thought," when contrasted with "A White Heron," expands Sylvia's responsibility to preserve the sacredness of nature and

to include the way in which she enters into contemplative dialogue with herself, thus obtaining and imparting ecological wisdom (2). That is, the ecological thought:

> … is a virus that infects all other areas of thinking…. ecology isn't just about global warming, recycling, and solar power – and also not just to do with everyday relationships between humans and nonhumans. It has to do with love, loss, despair, and compassion. It has to do with depression and psychosis. It has to do with capitalism and with what might exist after capitalism. It has to do with amazement, open-mindedness, and wonder. It has to do with doubt, confusion, and skepticism. It has to do with concepts of space and time. It has to do with delight, beauty, ugliness, disgust, irony, and pain. It has to do with consciousness and awareness. It has to do with ideology and critique. It has to do with reading and writing. It has to do with race, class, and gender. It has to do with sexuality. It has to do with ideas of self and the weird paradoxes of subjectivity. It has to do with society. It has to do with coexistence. (Morton 2)

Sylvia resigns herself to a new means of perceiving reality; she begins within herself in order to have a lingering, sympathetic look at the real natural world, uninterrupted by personal or cultural predispositions, past experiences or present anxieties. Ecological thought is the moment of recognition. The troubling awareness comes from perspective, from place. While we need to stand outside the place to see it for what it is, the idea of the place is that we are all in it together: "give us nowhere to stand, and we shall care for the Earth" (Morton 24). Sylvia, at first, is unable to understand why she feels that "she never had been alive at all before she came to live at the farm" (Jewett 5). But she does recall the "noisy town" and the bombardment of unnatural rhythms of daily life, which force her to stray "occasionally on her account into the woodlands," the advent of her ecological thought (Jewett 6-7).

If Glotfelty describes ecocriticism critically as having "one foot in literature and the other on land," then "A White Heron," along with its protagonist, is a paradigm of "cross fertilization," the derivative of the effects the environmental crisis has on literature and pop culture in 19th century America (xix). The ecological crisis, emerging in the midst of Jewett's renaissance thinking and innovation, "is the product of an emerging, entirely novel, democratic culture. The issue is whether a democratic world can survive its own implications. Presumably we cannot unless we rethink our axioms" (White 3). The structure of space in "A White Heron" challenges the Western mechanics of natural world domination, as well as understanding the nature of nature:

> One way of doing this is to devise a taxonomy, ranging from the inanimate to the animate word, then to arrange the living forms from the simplest and crudest to the most highly developed, conscious, and sensitive. This arrange was often also called the ladder of nature. The teleology of nature, ideas of design, the great chain of being, and, in modern times, theories of evolution have all ben attempts to organize and understand the nature of nature and the pace of the human being in it. (Glacken 104)

As such, Jewett, attuned into the amassed strains of Industrialism, returns to a vastly different world, restoring her pastoral spirit, while exposing industry as an anxiety which threatens existence and understanding, and places "Christians within creation and illustrates their responsibility in maintaining their relationships with God, others and creation in every place within God's Kingdom (Baker 239).

If we were to conceptualize such an ecological project, then "A White Heron" must be regarded as a piece of ecological art as it illuminates the relationship between non-human and human and takes a fluid perspective on life, death, and rebirth; non-humans and humans

compose one melody, celebrating their relationship to the Earth. As a piece of ecological art, the story depicts nature as a "healthy, real thing" as Jewett fashions her narrative "from materials [which simply exist] in the world" (Morton 10-11). This is not a limitation of local color's construction of the region, but rather a celebration of the ascetics that make regionalist literature admirable. The locale makes objects appear natural; the farm, birds, and sea stories become environmental sculptures, which embody the aesthetics of the sublime as these forces demonstrate the power of spirit, rather, than just embody the aesthetics of the beautiful.

The "Metaphoric Map"

Sylvia is in possession of a map that neither exists nor is tangible. This map paints the landscape, such as "sacred mountain[s], locations for vision quests, places were particular dances occur, [and] originating points of humanity" (Baker 236). Phrased differently, if we were to ask Sylvia to describe the ecological thought process, that Morton coins, she would depict a map of locations. This notion honors space as sacred, and ecology is about location, and more largely, about space, as eco-critics believe. Sylvia rejects the opportunity to break the spatial illusion; instead of existing on opposite planes, Sylvia and nature share space:

> The companions followed the shady wood-road, the cow taking slow steps and the child very fast ones. The cow stopped long at the brook to drink, as if the pasture were not half a swamp, and Sylvia stood still and waited, letting her bare feet cool themselves in the shoal water, while the great twilight moths struck softly against her. She waded on through the brook as the cow moved away, and listened to the thrushes with a heart that beat fast with pleasure. (Jewett 6)

Thus, if Sylvia were to envision ecological thought, she would place the most discernable dots leading to instances of interconnectedness on a “metaphoric map” (Baker 236) Though the concept of the “metaphoric map” is rooted in Native Christian Theology, its fluidity can offer us a new way in which to approach the little maid’s love for nature by means of “the mesh” (Morton 30). The mesh “consists of infinite connections and infinite differences. “Few would argue that a single evolutionary change [does not occur in] a minute. Scale is infinite in both directions: infinite in size and infinite in detail. And each being in the mesh interacts with others. The mesh isn’t static” (Morton 30). In simpler terms, the mesh is a series of threads connecting all living and non-living things (Morton 28). This is the contents of the metaphorical map; it stresses Sylvia’s relationship and interconnectedness with the elements of the space she is sharing. The “metaphoric map” makes both the concept of sacred space and mesh tangible.

Each dot is a map marker. Each map marker leads Sylvia to wonder, awe, and gratitude. Each individual map marker is Sylvia’s testimony of knowing the land, and the land knowing Sylvia. Each map marker is a place of revelation, and, in turn, the place as a revelation. Consequently, supporting that sacredness does not solely depend on human occupancy, but on the stories, that describe revelation which enable Sylvia to express a sense of sacredness there. She, sitting in contrast to the rest of the country, is sacralizing the secular.

The “metaphoric map” is comprised of four main map markers: the industrial town, the return to the woodlands, the receiving of the jack-knife, and the pine tree. By joining the dots – the various places – Sylvia’s world opens up to reestablish her ties, and ours, to the nonhuman and to the rediscovery of the playfulness and joy that brighten the dark “loop” we navigate (Dark Ecology). Ecological thought is not simply a matter of what Sylvia is thinking, but a matter of how she thinks (Morton 4). These four map markers give us insight into Sylvia’s thought

process. Thus, once Sylvia starts to think the ecological thought, she is open to new means of imagining how we live together (Morton 4). It is the means by which Sylvia conceives a world in perfect ecological balance; she invents wonder through the interconnectedness of the very particular to the very large in unison with the universe. Truth, for Sylvia, is preserved within the confines of the universe, which are endless.

Sylvia's series of quasi-ritualistic moves gets her to the point of "preserve[ing] this [cosmic] harmony"; "inherited rituals truly restore creation to what God intends" (Baker 240). By extension, and to Sylvia's benefit, the mesh also "mean[s] a complex situation or series of events in which a person is entangled; a concatenation of constraining or restricting forces or circumstances; a snare (Morton 28). The map anticipates restoration as it ends with the little maid sitting suspended between boughs, awaiting the arrival of the elusive white heron. Sylvia surpasses the periphery of "bigger than what we can conceive." Specifically, she is capable of envisioning a world of perfect ecological balance, from the "point of view of space" (Morton 20-24). Like a shepherd, Sylvia adopts and offers a revelatory stance that conveys hope in times of confusion, solace in times of sorrow, and support for handling inventible challenges and change for her readers. She offers a simple, powerful contemplation of the interconnectedness of nature. This mindset and heart-space allows for the celebration of nature. It is in the wonderful collective order of the universe through which Sylvia contemplates the mysteries of divine light of nature touching her spirit:

> Dear loyalty, that suffered a sharp pang as the guest went away disappointed later in the day, that could have served and followed him and loved him as a dog loves! Many a night Sylvia heard the echo of his whistle haunting the pasture path as she came home with the loitering cow. She forgot even her sorrow at the sharp report of his gun and the sign of

> the thrushes and sparrows dropping silent to the ground, their songs hushed and their pretty feathers stained and wet with blood. Were the birds better friend than their hunter might have been, – who can tell? Whatever treasures were lost to her, woodlands and summer-time, remember! Bring your gifts and graces and tell your secrets to this lonely country child! (Jewett 14-15)

Map Marker: The "Noisy Town"

The "noisy town" is the originating point of humanity for Sylvia; it begins in the "crowded manufacturing town," endures the machinery of industry, and produces the point of recognition for the "little maid" (Jewett 6). In her "decision to care for all sentient beings is an admission of the evil that is our big picture gaze. This is the soil in which dark ecology grows. Tree hugging begins to sound sinister, not innocent. Yet, we have to go through this darkness. It's the only way to grow up" (Morton 96-97). It is the threshold that we and Sylvia do not want to acknowledge is already there. The industrial town is analogous to the getting to the bottom of the wickedness of the problems we are creating, which conflicts with who we are and the world we live in:

> This new mechanistic view objectified or desacralized nature, turning nature as a living organism or sacred place into a machine – as Carolyn Merchant put it, 'composed of interchangeable atomized parts that can be repaired or replaced from outside.' Because nature was now viewed as a system of dead, inert particles moved by external rather than inherent forces, the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature. Thus, nature became a machine to be analyzed`, controlled, and governed by

> humans, while humans saw themselves charged to know, conquer, and govern nature so that it might serve them. (Cho 623-624)

The system of industry is a well-oiled piece of machinery rather than a living organism or sacred space. The industrial town sheds its nature-esque coil; it is abstract and ambiguous.

In fact, Jewett does not spend much time either constructing or defining this noisy little town; its likeness is only mentioned twice – or three times if we account for the "houseful of children" from which Sylvia is uprooted (Jewett 6). This absence of language seems to contradict the wilds of Jewett's imagination as she is celebrated for the "pungent odor of the pines" she captures in her people and places (Heller 1). But from this absence something much more important arises: fragmentation. However, it is within fragmentation that revelation occurs.

The industrial town is the in-between place, a place of interactions that reveals the fledging nations' ecological war. The industrial town serves as the space where industry encounters nature, and even melancholier, where nature seems to be the one threatening the space. Hence, there is a need to want to eradicate nature from the space. There is a doubleness to this fragmentation. First, there is the fragmentation of the townsfolk, or the collective society; in other words, their displacement from nature and their inability to see nature for what it is helps maintain their dominion over the space. Second, there is a fragmentation on the biological level; nature is split into different fragments, but instead of growing independently into a new organism, such as a tree or flower, it regenerates as a piece of machinery. The latter fragmentation is what has happened to the industrial town. Perhaps this is the allegorizing of the degradation of the entire environment and ecological system or the polluting and paralyzing of our imaginations to completely envision a world beyond the point of no return. Nothing awakens here, hence the lack of imagination and life, including Sylvia's ability to grow, in the noisy town:

> The good woman suspected that Sylvia-loitered occasionally on her own account: there never was such a child for straying out-of-doors since the world was made!
> Everybody said that it was a good change for a little maid who tried to grow for eight years in a crowded manufacturing town, but, as for Sylvia herself, it seemed as if she had never been alive at all before she came to live at the farm. She thought often with wistful compassion of a wretched geranium that belonged to a town neighbor. (Jewett 6)

It is within this fragmentation that we are exposed to the wickedness we are creating, which are the likes of the "wretched geranium that belonged to a town neighbor," and "great red-faced boy who used to chase and frighten" Sylvia (6-7). In either case, both occurrences are a poignant reminder of the "tragic melancholy and negativity, concerning the coexisting inextricable with a host of entities that surround and penetrate us" (Morton). These are the only two things Sylvia remembers and recounts, but they seem to have the most profound effect on her.

The decaying flower is part of "a system of dead, inert particles moved by external rather than inherent forces" from which "the mechanical framework itself could legitimate the manipulation of nature (Cho 624). In turn, the wretched geranium is the result of the appropriation of nature – analyzed, controlled, governed by humans (Cho 623-624). The geranium is subjected to the urbanization of the small town, which brought challenges such as pollution, inadequate sanitation, and lack of drinking water; the germanium embodies the mechanical structure that uses power to apply force and control movement to perform an intended action: raping nature for profit. In the allegorizing of the wretched geranium, Jewett seems to anticipate the values of the early 20th century American psyche, which merits the impression that the "wilderness had come to seem a thing of the past," and most emphatically, that "the natural world become a less immediate presence [as] images of the pristine

landscape…. lost their power" (Marx 8). The geranium, much like the elusive white heron, becomes decentered and ambiguous; in fact, etymology actually associates geranium with "crane" as the seed pods of the plant resemble a crane's bill. So, its ambiguity resides in the fact that we can project Sylvia into the margins of the wretched germanium. She, too, is struggling to prosper in a space which is inhospitable, a place which is fragmented. Sylvia, for a brief moment, reflects on the plant with "wistful compassion," longing for it, too, to flourish as she has on her grandmother's farm (Jewett 6). Sylvia ceases for the moment to grapple with the space in her mind to acknowledge and praise the wretched geranium's existence in the midst of the tarnishing and desacralizing of nature.

However, if we talk about the fluidity of Jewett's language, etymology becomes the point of interconnectedness between the plant and the white heron; it becomes the way in which we can contextualize Jewett's understanding of the plight of the white heron, or the snowy white egret: at the beginning of this century the little snow, loveliest of all American herons, was on the way out. Its exquisite plumes, called 'aigrettes' by the trade, were worth $32 an once, twice their weight in gold. Every heronry was ferreted out and destroyed (Heller 1). Since we have placed Sylvia within a plant, then she can also be placed within the bird. Thus, when the "great red-faced boy," as the well-oiled machine, chases Sylvia, he is preying on her. He waits for the slightest vulnerability in order to pounce, but Sylvia always "hurr[ies] along the path to escape from the shadow of the trees" (Jewett 7). The little boy is the product of his environment. Though she is endangered to an extent, like the white heron or snowy egret, she is protected by means of space.

Sylvia's well-being – her pastoral spirit – is fragmented by this space, which is why she turns to nature to connect with her body, intuition, thought, compassion and empathy, and other

passions (Cho 623). What nature does, that the industrial town does not, is provide Sylvia with the means of experiencing a depth, richness, and sense of meaning that allows her escape. Sylvia does not necessarily make "sacred space," rather the space is already sacred.

Map Marker: The Migration Back to the Woodlands

For Sylvia, nature is the extension of her mental and emotional states as well as her spiritual tradition; nature is the realm that is not only working for her but also with her as nature imbues Sylvia with energy that she then perpetuates outward. Nature cultivates creativity, support, and inner peace. Nature keeps the mystic grounded and a grounded person, such as Sylvia, mystical. The mystical is knitted within Sylvia's composition: *sylvan and Sylvanus* are the Latin and Greek words for wood or forest, or woodland deity. Nature honors contemplative thoughts; it is in this realm that Sylvia can reflect on who she wishes to become, and if she loses this foundation, she loses her identity, the core of her being as nature's protector. Thus, Sylvia must migrate back to the woodlands. Mrs. Tilley returns to the farm with the little maid in tow, and when "they reached the door of the lonely house and stopped to unlock it, and the cat came to purr loudly, and rub against them, a deserted pussy, indeed, but fat with young robins, Sylvia whispered that this was a beautiful place to live in, and she never should wish to go home" (Jewett 6). This return is a celebration; the etymology of the word "celebrate" suggests "to return to" or "to frequent." Like Walt Whiteman's Romantic impulse, this celebration is of the self. Instead of invoking a muse to allow Jewett to sing the song of ecological war, rage, and distant journeys, she conjures the spirit of a little girl before she dissolves into the temptations of contradiction and fragmentation. Sylvia returns to the land, mimicking the natural migration

paths of animals, particularly birds. Sylvia is a bird. She is part and particle of the crawling creatures, pollinating plants and mighty oak trees. As Mrs. Tilly observes,

> There ain't a foot o' ground she don't know her way over, and the wild creatures counts her on o' themselves. Squer'ls she'll tame to come an' feed right out o' her hands, and all sorts o' birds. Last winter she got the jaybirds to bangeing here, and I bleeive she'd 'a' scanted herself of her own meals to have plenty to throw out amongst 'em, if I hadn't kep' watch. (Jewett 8-9)

Behind the personification of nature and Sylvia's "mystical experiences with nature lie an initiative sense of interconnectedness and interdependence, of being fully part of the natural web of life" (Vivers 1). Sylvia shares in the same moral attitude towards caring for the natural world as Saint Francis of Assisi, whose "exposure to nature during his contemplative retreats obviously enhanced his love for nature" (Vivers 1). Her ecological consciousness is her initiative bond with nature, and her conversion to space as sameness; this is the Franciscan element underpinning Sylvia's piety toward the natural world around her as she engages with the questions of ultimate meaning, while also broadening the conversation about human intellect to include finding spirit in nature, seeing the way things are:

> All praise be yours, my Lord, through all that you have made, and first lord Brother Sun, who brings the day; and light you give to use through him. How beautiful is he, how radiant in all his splendor! Of you, Most High, he bears the likeness. All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Moon and Stars; In the heavens you have made them bright precious and fair. All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brothers Wind and Air, and fair and stormy, all the weather's moods, by which you cherish all that you have made. All praise be yours, my Lord, through Brother Fire, through whom you brighten up the night.

> How beautiful is he, how merry! Full of power and strength. All praise be yours, my Lord, through Sister Earth, our Mother, who feeds us in her sovereignty and produces various fruits with flowers and herbs. (Assisi 1)

Just as Saint Francis of Assisi sought to bring Christianity to its most basic roots, Sylvia, too, is bringing us back to the most basic roots. There is a soundness to Saint Francis; we need Sylvia as much as we need Saint Francis. In the same likeness, Sylvia is finding and communing with the spirit in the gentle breezes, dense woodlands, and the other creations of nature. Sylvia does not turn away from creatures; she becomes one with them, and in doing so, ultimately resists dominion over them. Sylvia focuses on the various brother and sister creatures the Spirit of Creation has made; she praises the spirit for their beauty and preciousness and for the way these creatures reflect the spirits own goodness. It is fitting, therefore, that Sylvia embraces these creatures as her brothers and sisters. It is with great joy and reverence that she warmly accepts these creatures by praising the spirit with them and through them. Space gives her the agency to praise the spirit.

Because Sylvia respects the connections in nature, she is in a state of angst because "the young man stood his gun beside the door, and dropped a lumpy game-bag beside it" (Jewett 2). The tranquility of the wilderness is interrupted when "a boy's whistle, determined, and somewhat aggressive" catches Sylvia's ear and ruffles her feathers (Jewett 2). Alarmed, she dashes to the nearest discreet spot among the bushes, but "the enemy discovered her, and called out in a very cheerful and persuasive tone" (Jewett 2). Jewett paints the huntsman in Sylvia's mind as the enemy, but of what? At first his whistle emulates that of the little red-haired boy; however, Sylvia is spooked like a bird in the presence of a man who is "making a collection of birds" (Jewett 3). He forcefully intrudes on the New England wilderness to change its harmony,

since “the romantic period corresponded with advances in taxidermy” (Pascoe 38). The ornithologist sees the woodlands as a pristine place to conquer. First, he must conquer Sylvia, and “when she meets the cultured young man, she imagines transcendence with him” (Church 1). Then and only then can he conquer the lucrative white heron he is after. The huntsman is impotent in penetrating the ecological thought wave for, as Morton says:

> In the West, we think of ecology as earthbound. Not only earthbound: we want ecology to be about location, location, location. In particular, location must be local: it must feel like home, we must recognize it and think it in terms of the here and now, not the there and then (Morton 27).

However, Morton writes in relation to the Tibetans, who believe that captivation of a place only impedes a truly ecological view and see the entire universe as an extension of enlightenment. The ornithologist suffers from tunnel vision: “I can’t think of anything I should like so much as to find that heron’s nest” (Jewett 4). He is overcome by location and the opportunity to dominate it. His enlightenment stretches as far as seeing the bird fly in Sylvia’s direction.

The more the young sportsman analyzes his beloved birds, the more ambiguous they become for him. The white heron is no longer “a queer tall white bird with soft feathers and long thin legs” as he describes to the little girl (Jewett 4). The ambiguity he creates encumbers his facility – fragments him – to confront the idea that interconnectedness makes the world go around as “ecological thought permits no distance” (Morton 40). The huntsman views the white heron as a commodity that he can only obtain with help from Sylvia, who, on the other hand, sees the white heron as a sacred piece of the universe – as “mesh” (Morton 28). Life forms constitute mesh; mesh blurs the boundaries at all levels between the living and the nonliving, organisms and the environment (Morton 276). Likewise, Sylvia’s illumination in the here and

now is her recognition that her “heart gave a wild beat” at the huntsman’s mention of the bird (Jewett 4). She had, at one point, been in the presence of the bird “where it stood in some bright green swamp grass, away over at the other side of the woods,” and knew that its serenity was its migration away from predators. Jewett composes the thought that Sylvia “could not understand why he killed the very birds he seemed to like so much” as both she and the huntsman explore the woodlands the following day in search of the revered relic of nature (Jewett 4). It strikes her as odd.

Map Marker: The Jack-knife

Judith Pascoe, author of *The Hummingbird Cabinet*, regurgitates English ornithologist William Swainson’s recommendation “that the bird collector set out early in the morning, equipped with fowling pieces, powder and shot, arsenical soap, pen knives, both sharp- and blunt-pointed scissors…” to which the huntsman follows (37). He gifts Sylvia “a jack-knife, which she thought as great a treasure as if she were a desert-islander” (Jewett 4). This transaction spoils nature’s femininity. When toyed with, the jack-knife springs open and stands erect; it is a phallus in Sylvia’s hand waiting to infiltrate Mother Nature as “the woman’s heart, asleep in the child, was vaguely thrilled by a dream of love” (Jewett 4). The jack-knife “is the privileged signifier of that mark where the share of logos is wedded to the advent of desire,” as developed by Jacque Lacan, who devoted himself to structural linguistics (Lacan 653). It sparks the onset of Sylvia’s desire for adventure as the pair continues to navigate the landscape in search of the white heron by “parting the branches [and] speaking to each other rarely and in whispers” (Jewett 5). However, it leads her to fragmentation. In this moment, she is estranged from space.

Possession of the jack-knife makes "her gray eyes dark with excitement" as they penetrate the woodlands (Jewett 5).

In addition, the huntsman offers "ten dollars to anybody who could show it to me" – it being the white heron – to which "Mrs. Tilley gave amazed attention" (Jewett 4). Morton makes a compelling argument that "the logic of capital has made sure that the environment certainly isn't what we have been calling Nature any more," which illuminates why the huntsman degrades the white heron (102). The huntsman views nature as an object, something that can be bought and sold. Subsequently, it is capitalism that propels Sylvia into "thought, that night" for the "many wished-for treasures the ten dollars, so lightly spoken of, would buy" (Jewett 4). In the face of the tempting proposition, the little girl is powerless; it gives her nowhere to stand, and yet she focuses her attention on "the toad, [but] not divining" it (Jewett 4). Sylvia has a mystical connection to the natural world; both see and the natural world desire to stay concealed much like the toad. According to Roman, "Sylvia is part of the natural, Edenic conversation. No other human being in this story has the capacity" (198). She interprets the natural world around her as virginal, and the monetary enticement as threatening nature's honor. The huntsman's persistence eventually leads to the little girl's inability to consent and reveal "the longed-for white heron" because "the sound of her own unquestioned voice would have terrified her – it was hard enough to answer yes or no when there was need of that" (Jewett 5). The young sportsman directs Sylvia "half a mile from home" to the enlightenment that thwarts his conquest, untying the knot that the natural world created.

Map Marker: The Pine Tree, Connecting with the Spirituality of the Wood

Sylvia encounters a familiar friend that “has no center and no edge (Morton 33). It is her beloved pine-tree. She goes to comment ecologically by observing that the pine is “the last of its generation” (Jewett 5). In a habitual state of reproduction, nature is boundless, since “whether it was left for a boundary mark, or for what reason, no one could say” (Jewett 5). Nature creeps from the particular to the large; for Sylvia, it buds from her neighbor’s withered flower to the cosmic formation of the pine tree, and everywhere in between. “The woodchoppers who had felled its mates were dead and gone long ago” and were unsuccessful in creating an edge (Jewett 5). Mother Nature fills the emptiness with other children, “a whole forest of sturdy tress, pines and oaks and maples” (Jewett 5). Coupled with Jewett’s personification of nature and Sylvia’s quip about the age of the tree, commenting on “the stately head of this old pine,” a hierarchy is created within the woodlands (Jewett 5). The little girl touches “the great rough trunk” of the pine-tree, which exposes its masculinity. This particular tree survived the selection process of the woodchoppers, which makes it the woodland’s oldest staple. The pine-tree divulges his dominance, and Sylvia notes that he “made a landmark for sea and shore miles and miles away” (Jewett 5). The little girl is captivated by “those dark boughs that the wind always stirred” and grows progressively excited and vows to climb “it at break of day” to uncover the rest of his secrets (Jewett 5). Like the huntsman, the pine-tree provides Sylvia with the curiosity that is “too great for the childish heart to bear,” and yet, unlike the huntsman, the tree is able to provide her with security – security that nature will always be at the forefront of change (Jewett 5).

With the intention to “make known the secret” through the “spirit of adventure,” Sylvia dissolves the interests of the huntsman (Jewett 5). He is unable to forge beyond “the dark branches and the green leaves heavy and wet with dew” (Jewett 6). The allegorical attitude distinction between the huntsman and the little girl in conjunction with the environment proves

Morton's point that "we can appreciate the fragility of our world from the point of view of space" (24). The huntsman is representative of the populace who believes that nature's sole responsibility is to provide goods via conquest, whereas Sylvia is representative of the populace who believes that nature's sole responsibility is to provide a spiritual connection. Given his obvious profession, the huntsman believes that he can manipulate nature into disclosing her secrets by trumpeting his dominance with gun in hand; his ego is perceived as being larger than nature. The little girl, on the other hand, notices her humility in the face of nature as "she [creeps] along the swaying oak limb at last, and [takes] the daring step across into the old pine-tree" (Jewett 6). When entering into the universe of nature, Sylvia accepts how frail she is:

> The way was harder than she thought; she must reach far and hold fast, the sharp dry twigs caught and held her and scratched her like angry talons, the pitch made her thin little fingers clumsy and stiff as she went round and round the tree's great stem, higher and higher upward. (Jewett 6)

The wounds she endures climbing the pine-tree, which in itself acts like an extension of Mother Nature's arm, exposes the little girl. Michael Atkinsons in "The Necessary Extravagance of Sarah Orne Jewett: Voices of Authority in 'A White Heron,'" comments on this relationship by emphasizing that "Sylvia's courage summons a response from the tree, a deep and intimate bond of trust in which nature rises to the needs of the girl without her asking, actively caring for the child" (73). Her little scratch here and there is what connects her to nature; she feels nature right under her fingertips. Sylvia allows herself the opportunity to be completely one with nature: mind and body. She is reminded of her purpose, or "her project" as she says, which is to defend the solemnity of the white heron from the huntsman, "not because God commended us to, nor because of some authoritarian 'truthiness,' but because of reason" (Morton 23). The reason, for

the little girl, is that nature is the truest form of being – it exists just to exist, not to change. Although this may be true, it is important to highlight that there is no note of Sylvia disconnecting from the jack-knife. The change in emphasis from the tree to the jack-knife addresses the ephemerality of the moment. Here she is claiming to have a spiritual experience with nature, and yet she forgets that she may be in possession of the knife. Like Sylvia, we always have the knife in our hand since we have a murderous relationship with nature even though we have the desire to protect it. This is what the Lacanian symbolic, a series of three orders developed by Jacque Lacan, is all about; it is the system of unconscious and conscious manifesting in an endless web, which develops man's psyche (Lacan 643).

Jewett describes Sylvia's face as "a pale star" as she reaches the top-most bough of the pine-tree (6). The little girl's spirit connects to the four elements: earth, air, fire and water. Sylvia encounters "the last thorny bough" – the earth; she observes "two hawks…[and] how…they looked in the air" – the air; she basks "with the dawning sun" – the fire; and she spots "the sea" – the water. The elements align to create a divine moment, a moment in which the mighty pine-tree gives her a place to stand to discern Mother Nature's secrets without the huntsman's company (Jewett 6). As "a white spot of him like a single floating feather comes up from the dead hemlock and grows larger, and rises," the little girl becomes enlightened (Jewett 6).

The huntsman dared not rise early, "and remembering his day's pleasure hurried to dress himself" (Jewett 7). He stands erect in the door at the thought that "she has at least seen the white heron," so he can lay claim to what he thinks rightfully belongs to him (Jewett 7). The huntsman is aroused by the great chance he has at using his gun. However, as alluring as he and his promise "to make them rich with money," Sylvia has been given the greatest pleasure of all, which is seeing nature at its most unspoiled: "the murmur of the pine's green branches is in her

ears, she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together" (Jewett 7). The huntsman is inept at competing with an entity larger than he. At Sylvia's slightest articulation of the heron's secret and life, she surrenders at the hands of melancholy and mourning for "environmentalism is a work of mourning for a mother we never had" (Morton 94-95). She renders the gun useless. She saves the heron, and preserves space.

Ecological Consciousness and Wisdom

The ecological consciousness and wisdom for Sylvia is her patience and humility in the knowledge that the natural world provides awe and wonder in unexpected places; it opens her mind. While she technically never lost her sense of awe and wonder for the world around her, she does become fragmented by the thrill of the hunt caused by the huntsman; human nature is full of contradiction. However, by means of a spiritual moment Sylvia reclaims and preserves her identity, her sense of space, and her connectedness with the natural world:

> The birds sang louder and louder. At last the sun came up bewilderingly bright. Sylvia could see the white sails of ships out at sea, and the clouds that were purple and rose-colored and yellow at first began to fade away. where was the white heron's nest in the sea of green branches, and was this wonderful sight and pageant of the world the only reward for having climbed to such a giddy height? Now look down, Sylvia, where the green marsh is set among the shining birches and dark hemlocks; there where you saw the white heron once you will see him again; look, look! a white spot of him like a single floating feather comes up from the dead hemlock and grows larger, and rises, and comes close at last, and goes by the land-mark pine with steady sweep of wing and outstretched

> slender neck and crested head. And wait! wait! do not move a foot or finger, little girl, do not send an arrow of light and consciousness from your two eager eyes, for the heron has perched on a pine bough not far beyond yours, and cries back to his mate on the nest and plumes his feathers for the new day. (Jewett 13)

In this moment, Sylvia is one with the Wood, and thus open to the possibilities of ecological awakening. By allowing herself to "green," as in to truly understand that she is like the white heron, free of all limitations, and accordingly, associated with the all-encompassing universe, her spirit is rejuvenated. As she notices "the white sails of the ships out at sea" (Jewett 13), Sylvia transcends the horizons, and most importantly, space to contemplate the world beyond the woodlands; Sylvia, if she were to leave the confines of her woods and possibly imagine a world of perfect ecological balance, she would then imagine Green Island, a place of total intimacy with the natural world, in Jewett's *The Country of the Pointed Firs.* Sylvia's woodlands are her Green Island. But the body of water, as the gateway to ecological consciousness and wisdom, becomes the space through which we can contemplate the ecological thought as this mediation "indeed, consist[s] in the ramifications of the 'truly wonderful fact' of the mesh" (Morton 29). Sylvia is more connected than ever with the natural world; the Wood has filled her spirit with awe, wonder, and purpose. By means of "A White Heron," Jewett "determined to teach the world" to sacralize the secular, preserve space, and be like Sylvia if we are to live in communion with the natural world.

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