



# ECO-POETICS OF SURVIVAL: LANDSCAPE AND LIFE PRESERVATION IN THE ENIGMA OF ARRIVAL AND A FLIGHT OF PIGEONS

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## ABSTRACT

*Eco-criticism has surfaced as significant literary and cultural discourse that explores the relationship between literature and nature. It emphasises the inter-connectedness between the human life and natural world. Eco-poetics is a subset of eco-criticism which explores the aesthetic, linguistic, imaginative strategies and ethical representation of nature in literary texts. In other words, eco-poetics is a creative manifestation of its critical principles. It focuses on how language, imagery, metaphor, rhythm and narrative structures evoke ecological consciousness. This paper “Eco-Poetics of Survival: Landscape and Life Preservation in The Enigma of Arrival and A Flight of Pigeons” explores how landscape works as an active, life-preserving force and not merely as a passive backdrop in the selected works of V.S Naipaul and Ruskin Bond. The findings indicate that both the authors challenge anthropocentric attitudes by exemplifying nature as an active participant in human survival and identity formation. The study highlights the continuing relevance of eco-poetics in contemporary environmental discourse and underscores the importance of literary imagination in fostering ecological awareness, ethical responsibility and sustainable coexistence between humanity and the natural world.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Eco-poetics, Eco-criticism, Landscape and Survival, Postcolonial Ecology, Anthropocene, Ecological Consciousness*

## INTRODUCTION

In recent decades, environmental degradation, climate change, deforestation, pollution and ecological imbalance have emerged as urgent global concerns. It compels scholars all over the world and across disciplines to reconsider the relationship of humans with the natural world. Literature has played a significant role as a reflection of social, cultural and philosophical realities in illustrating environmental anxieties and ecological awareness. This growing ecological awareness has led to the development of eco-criticism. It challenges anthropocentric perspective and highlights the inter-dependency of humanity and nature. Within this critical framework, eco-poetics has also gained prominence as an approach that investigates the aesthetic and ethical representation of nature in literary texts. It aims to comprehend how literary works create ecological awareness and cultivate ethical relationships between humans and their environment.

The present paper examines the role of landscape as a life-preserving and transformative significantly in cultural background, narrative style and thematic concerns. V.S Naipaul and Ruskin Bond, both display a profound engagement with nature and environmental spaces. Their works reveal that landscape is not merely a decorative background but an active participant the influences human emotions, memory, identity and survival. The paper specifically focuses on V.S Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival* (1988) and Ruskin Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* (2007) in order to understand how natural habitats function as sources of refuge, endurance and continuity during moments of uncertainty and crisis.

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, Naipaul portrays the English countryside as a deeply reflective and symbolic landscape. The rural environment becomes a space through which the narrator confronts displacement, loneliness, decay and existential anxiety. The changing seasons, abandoned houses, gardens and pathways represent the gradual movement of life and time. Nature in the novel is closely connected with silence, observation and self-discovery. Though the landscape generally reflects impermanence and decline, it simultaneously offers emotional stability and psychological recovery to the narrator. Naipaul personifies the environment as a sustaining force that enables survival amidst alienation and personal fragmentation by painting vivid descriptions of the natural world.

Similarly, Ruskin Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons* represents landscape as a protective and life-preserving space during the turbulent period of the Revolt of 1857. The novel presents forests, roads, villages and unfamiliar terrains not merely as historical settings but as spaces that shield vulnerable individuals from violence and destruction. The movement of characters across landscapes reflects their struggle for safety, survival and belonging. Bond has emphasised simplicity, co-

existence and compassion through his depictions. Nature becomes a silent companion that supports human perseverance during political and social conflict. The author represents the intimate relationship between human survival and environmental space through this eco-poetic representation.

Both the authors challenge anthropocentric assumptions through their novels by accentuating the inter-dependence between humanity and ecology and reveal how natural spaces contribute to cultural continuity, emotional healing and existential preservation. While Naipaul's eco-poetics is reflective and philosophical, Bond's approach is humane and historically grounded but despite these differences, both authors underscore that human survival is inseparable from the natural world.

The present study employs eco-critical and postcolonial theoretical perspectives to analyse the portrayal of landscape and ecological awareness in the selected works. Through comparative textual analysis, the paper attempts to showcase that the eco-poetics of Naipaul and Bond provides important insights into contemporary environmental discourse by portraying nature as a sustaining and life preserving force.

### Eco-Criticism, Eco-Poetics and Survival

Eco-criticism emerged as an important field of literary and cultural studies during the late 20<sup>th</sup> century in response to increasing environmental crisis and the growing realisation that human civilisation is deeply connected with ecological systems. It studies how nature is represented in literature and how literary narratives shape human attitudes towards ecology, sustainability and environmental ethics. The term eco-criticism gained academic recognition through the works of Cheryll Glotfelty. He described eco-criticism as the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment. It emphasises ecological inter-connected and the ethical responsibility of humanity towards the environment. The works of Lawrence Buell expanded eco-critical theory by arguing that literature possesses the capacity to reshape the natural world as a living entity rather than a passive object. Eco-criticism thus becomes a mode of environmental awareness and ethical reflection.

Eco-poetics develops from eco-critical thought but focuses more specifically on the aesthetic and imaginative representation of nature in literary works. It investigates how language, imagery, symbolism and narrative technique evoke ecological consciousness and creates emotional connections between human beings and the environment. It attempts to capture the rhythms, movements and complexities of ecological existence through literary expression. In eco-poetics, natural elements like forests, rivers, mountains, seasons and weather conditions become expressive forces that reflect human experiences of fear, loss, memory, hope and renewal. Eco-poetics combine aesthetic beauty with environment ethics.

In the selected novels of V.S Naipaul and Ruskin Bond, eco-poetic elements are visible in the detailed portrayal of landscapes. The natural world functions as a medium through which emotional states, cultural tensions and identity crisis are communicated. The landscapes in these works are not decorative descriptions but meaningful ecological presences that influence the movement of narratives and the consciousness of the characters.

The concept of survival takes a central stage in eco-critical discourse. As human existence is fundamentally dependent on ecological stability and environmental support, literature often portrays survival not merely in physical terms but also as emotional, cultural and psychological endurance. Natural spaces such as forests, riverside, villages, hills and rural landscapes frequently become places of refuge where individuals seek protection, healing and continuity during periods of uncertainty and crisis.

The selected novels illustrate that landscapes function as life preserving force. In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the English countryside becomes a mirror that enables inner healing and emotional stability for the narrator. The rhythms of nature and the continuity of the landscape offer a sense of permanence amidst displacement of belonging and crisis of identity. Similarly, in *A Flight of Pigeons*, environmental spaces provide shelter and protection during the violence in the Revolt of 1857. Forests, roads and rural terrains become crucial spaces through which survival becomes possible.

Thus, through their depiction of landscapes as sustaining and transformative spaces, V.S Naipaul and Ruskin Bond highlight the enduring relationship between humanity and the natural world.

### **Landscape and Existential Survival in *The Enigma of Arrival***

In *The Enigma of Arrival*, the English countryside becomes a reflective and meditative space through which the narrator contemplates his existence, identity and relationship with the world around him. The isolated rural landscape of Wiltshire provides an atmosphere of solitude and withdrawal from the hustle and bustle of city life. It allows the narrator to observe both, nature and himself with unusual intensity. The countryside offers slowness and stillness and creates conditions necessary for contemplation and introspection.

The narrator develops an intimate relationship with his surroundings while walking through the pathways, gardens and old estates. The natural world becomes a silent companion that absorbs the loneliness and uncertainty. The novel presents solitude as a productive state that encourages self-awareness and philosophical reflection. Through careful observation of ordinary details like trees, animals, weather and changing light, the narrator begins to understand the fragile and transient nature of human life. Naipaul's narrative is structured around acts of observation. The narrator

continuously watches people, houses, roads and changing of seasons within countryside. These observations are the attempts to interpret existence itself. The rural environment in English countryside, thus becomes a mirror reflecting inner consciousness.

A notable aspect of eco-poetic vision in V.S Naipaul's novel *The Enigma of Arrival* is his representation of nature through the interconnected ideas of decay and continuity. The landscape is continuously changing, buildings collapse, gardens become neglected, trees age and seasons pass immediately but the decay in the novel is not presented solely as destruction, it rather becomes a part of larger ecological cycle that includes renewal, transformation and continuity.

The constant change of seasons holds an important place in the narrative structure. The transition from summer to winter and from decay to regeneration, reflects the rotational movement of nature. Like landscapes, human beings are subject to time, ageing and mortality. Naipaul repeatedly connects the deterioration of physical spaces with the vulnerability of human existence. The desolated estate, disappearing workers and changing rural economy symbolise the inevitable process of historical and personal decline. At the same time, the nature continues beyond individual human lives. Trees grow again, seasons return and the landscape preserves traces of the past even though the human presence disappears. This continuity of nature creates a contrast between ecological permanence and human fragility. The narrator gradually recognises that human existence forms only a small part of a much larger natural process. Such recognition produces humility and ecological awareness. Through this ecological vision, Naipaul suggests that survival depends upon accepting change and impermanence rather than resisting them. The landscape teaches the narrator to understand existence through continuity.

The theme of displacement is central to *The Enigma of Arrival*. As a postcolonial migrant living in England, the narrator experiences cultural alienation and uncertainty regarding identity and belonging. He occupies a position between worlds, disconnected both from his Caribbean origins and from the English society in which he resides. This sense of estrangement shapes his perception of the landscape and influences his relationship with the surrounding environment.

Initially, the English countryside appears unfamiliar and distant. The narrator observes it as an outsider attempting to understand and inherited cultural world associated with colonial power and historical privilege. However, his repeated engagement with the landscape over time creates a gradual sense of ecological belonging. Nature becomes more accepting and stable than social structures, marked by exclusion and hierarchy. The countryside offers emotional shelter without demanding cultural assimilation.

The developing relationship with the environment allows the narrator to recover a sense of continuity

within himself. The landscape provides relief from psychological fragmentation and existential uncertainty. Walking through gardens and natural spaces becomes an act of emotional healing through which the narrator reconnects with memory, observation and inner calm. Ecological belonging in the novel is therefore based on attentiveness and coexistence with the natural world rather than ownership and nationality.

Naipaul also shows how landscapes preserve histories of migration, labour and social transformation. The changing countryside reflects broader postcolonial realities in which traditional structures decline and identities remain unstable. But despite these historical disruptions, the natural continues to provide a space for reflection and survival. Thus, the novel connects ecological consciousness with postcolonial experience and demonstrates how nature can become a source of emotional recovery for displaced individuals.

Naipaul's eco-poetic style is characterised by descriptive precision, meditative narration and sensory attention to landscape. The narrative moves slowly and it focuses on details that are often overlooked in conventional storytelling. Gardens, fields, trees, pathways and abandoned houses are described with remarkable clarity and patience. These descriptions create an atmosphere in which readers become highly conscious of ecological space and natural rhythms.

Silence and stillness play an important role in the novel's narrative technique. Conversations are limited, dramatic action is minimal and much of the text unfolds through quiet observation. This silence allows nature to emerge as an active presence within the narrative. The stillness of the countryside encourages contemplation and deepens the narrator's awareness of ecological processes. Naipaul depicts nature through subtle details and gradual changes rather than presenting it as a spectacular or romanticised.

The novel's language reflects ecological consciousness through its emphasis on slowness, continuity and attention. The descriptive passages invite readers to experience the environment carefully and respectfully. Natural imagery frequently carries symbolic significance, representing emotional states, mortality and transformation. The changing landscape becomes intertwined with the narrator's inner life, creating a close relationship between external environment and psychological experience.

Through this eco-poetic narrative style, Naipaul transforms the landscape into a living and meaningful force within the novel. Nature becomes a medium of philosophical reflection and existential understanding. The narrative ultimately suggests that survival is not achieved through dominance over nature but through attentiveness, coexistence and recognition of humanity's place within broader ecological cycles.

### **Landscape and Life Preservation in *A Flight of Pigeons***

In *A Flight of Pigeons*, landscape assumes a significant role within the violent historical context of the Revolt of 1857. The novel portrays a period marked by fear, instability, displacement and political uncertainty where human survival depends not only upon social relationships but also upon the surrounding environment. Unlike conventional historical narratives that emphasise warfare and political events alone, Bond's narrative pays careful attention to the physical spaces through which characters move in search of safety and protection. Roads, villages, forests and rural settlements become active elements within the narrative, shaping the experiences and destinies of the characters.

The revolt transforms familiar spaces into dangerous and uncertain territories. Cities and military centres become associated with violence and destruction. They compel individuals to escape into less controlled ecological spaces. In this atmosphere of conflict, the natural environment acquires protective significance. The movement of Ruth Labadoor and her mother through unfamiliar rural regions highlights how survival becomes closely connected with the ability to navigate landscapes beyond urban structures of power and violence.

Roads in the novel symbolise both, danger and possibility. They function as transitional spaces through which characters flee persecution and seek refuge. Similarly, forests and isolated rural terrains provide concealment and temporary security from political chaos. Villages emerge as spaces of human interaction and cultural coexistence where acts of kindness and protection become possible despite communal tensions and conflict. The landscape therefore participates actively in preserving life during historical crisis.

Bond's treatment of landscape during the revolt also emphasises the contrast between destructive human violence and the continuity of the natural world. Political conflict disrupts social order but nature continues to exist beyond human hostility. This ecological continuity creates a subtle sense of stability amidst historical instability. The environment silently sustains life even while human civilisation experiences fragmentation and fear.

One of the central eco-poetic dimensions of the novel lies in its portrayal of nature as a refuge and shelter. The landscapes through which the characters travel become essential to their physical survival. Unlike urban or military spaces, associated with surveillance and violence, ecological spaces provide protection, mobility and escape. Nature in the novel is not merely scenic but deeply functional in sustaining life during periods of crisis.

The journeys undertaken by the characters demonstrate how movement through ecological spaces becomes a strategy of survival. Rural pathways, wooded regions and village surroundings allow individuals to evade immediate threats and continue their search for safety. The natural environment offers concealment from

violence and creates opportunities for recovery and rest. Shelter is therefore not limited to physical structures such as homes or buildings, instead, the broader landscape itself becomes protective.

Bond's representation of refuge is deeply humane and ecological. Nature does not discriminate on the basis of religion, race or political identity. During a period characterised by suspicion and conflict, the landscape remains impartial and nurturing. This portrayal reinforces the eco-critical idea that human beings are fundamentally dependent upon ecological systems for survival, regardless of social or political divisions.

The movement through landscapes also reflects emotional transformation. Fear and uncertainty gradually give way to trust, endurance and resilience as characters encounter moments of kindness and safety within rural spaces. Nature becomes associated not only with physical preservation but also with psychological reassurance. The calmness of villages, open fields and natural surroundings contrasts sharply with the violence of colonial conflict and helps restore emotional balance.

Thus, Bond portrays ecological spaces as life-sustaining environments that preserve both body and spirit. The novel suggests that in moments of historical violence, nature remains one of the few stable forces capable of supporting human survival.

An important thematic aspect of *A Flight of Pigeons* is the relationship between human compassion and ecological harmony. Bond presents the natural world as closely connected with values such as simplicity, kindness and coexistence. The rural environment in the novel is not depicted as isolated from human society rather, it forms part of a shared ecological and emotional world where relations are shaped by mutual dependence and understanding.

The character of Javed Khan reflects this complexity. Although situated within political violence of the revolt, his interactions with Ruth and her family reveal moments of humanity and emotional vulnerability. These moments are frequently situated within domestic or rural spaces connected with nature and simplicity. Bond suggests that ecological environments encourage emotional openness and reduce the artificial divisions created by political conflict and colonial structures.

The villages and rural communities in the novel embody forms of coexistence that contrast with the brutality of warfare. Daily life in these spaces remains connected with natural rhythms, agricultural practices and communal interaction. Such environments preserve human values even during periods of instability. Nature becomes indirectly associated with compassion because ecological living encourages patience, balance and emotional resilience.

Bond also portrays simplicity as an important aspect of survival. Characters adapt to changing circumstances by accepting modest forms of existence connected with the natural environment. Survival does not depend upon

material power or technological control but upon cooperation, adaptability and harmony with surrounding ecological spaces. The eco-poetic perspective challenges modern notions of domination and progress by emphasising the sustaining power of ordinary rural life.

Emotional resilience in the novel emerges through this close relationship between humans and their environment. Natural spaces provide calmness and continuity that help individuals endure suffering and uncertainty. Bond therefore presents ecological harmony not simply as environmental balance but as a moral and emotional condition necessary for human survival.

Bond's eco-poetic style is characterised by simplicity, sensory richness and emotional intimacy with nature. His descriptions of landscapes are gentle yet vivid. They create a strong awareness of environmental presence throughout the novel. Natural imagery appears not as decorative detail but as an essential component of the narrative atmosphere and emotional structure.

The novel contains numerous sensory descriptions of roads, trees, villages, fields, sunsets and seasonal conditions. These descriptions create immediacy and realism while simultaneously establishing emotional tone. The natural environment often reflects the psychological condition of the characters. Quiet evenings, open landscapes and changing weather patterns intensify feelings of uncertainty, hope and reflection.

Bond's narrative language remains restrained and subtle. Rather than romanticising nature excessively, he depicts ecological spaces with clarity and simplicity. This stylistic approach strengthens the realism of the novel and reinforces the intimate connection between ordinary human life and the environment. Nature is displayed as familiar, accessible and deeply integrated into everyday existence.

An important eco-poetic feature of the novel is the portrayal of nature as a silent witness to history. The Revolt of 1857 brings violence, displacement and death, yet the natural world continues to observe these events without direct participation. Forest, fields and rural landscapes silently preserve memories of human suffering and survival. Nature becomes a repository of historical experiences, enduring beyond temporary political conflicts.

The idea of the landscape as witness, creates a broader philosophical perspective within the novel. Human violence appears temporary when contrasted with the continuity of the natural world. Ecological spaces survive historical upheavals and continue to nurture life despite destruction and conflict. Bond's eco-poetics therefore emphasises persistence and perpetuation.

### **Lesson from The Enigma of Arrival and A Flight of Pigeons**

The eco-poetic visions presented in *The Enigma of Arrival* and *A Flight of Pigeons* after substantial insights into the relationship between humanity and the natural world. Both novels emerge from different historical and cultural contexts. They collectively emphasise that human existence cannot be separated from ecological realities. One of the most important lessons conveyed through these works is the recognition of human dependence on nature, not merely for material survival but also for emotional balance, psychological stability and ethical understanding.

In modern industrial society, nature is often viewed as a resource to be controlled, consumed or exploited for economic development. Such an attitude has contributed to environmental destruction, ecological imbalance and the growing alienation of human beings from the natural world. Both the novels challenge this mentality by presenting landscapes as living spaces that shape human consciousness and sustain human life. Their works encourage readers to reconsider the modern assumption that humanity exists independently from ecological systems. Instead, they suggest that the environment forms an essential foundation of human identity, memory and survival.

V.S. Naipaul's *The Enigma of Arrival*, particularly demonstrates how modern individuals suffering from displacement, fragmentation and emotional uncertainty seek stability within the rhythms of nature. The countryside in *The Enigma of Arrival* becomes a space where the narrator gradually develops patience, attentiveness and self-awareness through close observation of ecological processes. The novel suggests that human beings achieve deeper understanding when they recognise their place within the larger continuity of the natural world. Nature teaches acceptance of change, impermanence and mortality, realities that modern civilisation frequently attempts to deny. Through this perspective, Naipaul implies that ecological awareness can restore emotional equilibrium in an increasingly fragmented world.

Ruskin Bond's *A Flight of Pigeons*, on the other hand, highlights the role of environmental spaces in sustaining human life during periods of violence and instability. The natural world in the novel quietly supports endurance and survival without discrimination or hostility. Bond's representation of rural landscapes reveals how ecological environments foster simplicity, cooperation and compassion even amidst historical conflict. His narrative suggests that coexistence with nature encourages coexistence among human beings as well. The calmness and continuity of the natural environment stand in contrast to the destructiveness of political violence and human greed.

Another important lesson derived from these novels is the necessity of ecological balance. Both Naipaul and Bond portray landscapes as delicate yet enduring systems that can nurture human life only when approached with respect and sensitivity. Their works

implicitly criticise forms of modernity that disrupt natural harmony through excessive ambition, exploitation and domination. The novels advocate a more balanced relationship between humans and the environment, one based on coexistence rather than control.

These texts also demonstrate that ecological consciousness is closely connected with ethical responsibility. Human beings are not isolated entities but participants within a larger network of life. The suffering of the environment ultimately leads to the suffering of humanity itself. By emphasising interconnectedness, Naipaul and Bond encourage readers to develop humility towards nature and awareness of ecological vulnerability.

Thus, eco-poetics in *The Enigma of Arrival* and *A Flight of Pigeons* remain highly relevant in the contemporary world marked by climate crisis and environmental degradation. Their works remind readers that survival depends not upon mastery over nature but upon harmony, restraint and mutual coexistence with the ecological world.

## CONCLUSION

The comparative study of *The Enigma of Arrival* and *A Flight of Pigeons* demonstrates that landscape in both novels functions as an active and meaningful force deeply connected with human existence, endurance and continuity. Rather than presenting nature merely as a scenic background or decorative element, both writers transform ecological spaces into sites of emotional negotiation, historical memory and existential understanding. Through their eco-poetic representations of landscapes, Naipaul and Bond reveal that survival is inseparable from humanity's relationship with the natural world.

Although the two novels emerge from distinct literary and historical contexts, they converse in their recognition of the environment as a sustaining presence during moments of uncertainty and vulnerability. In Naipaul's work, the English countryside becomes a meditative space where the narrator confronts questions of displacement, identity and mortality. The gradual observation of ecological processes allows him to move beyond feelings of alienation and fragmentation toward a deeper awareness of continuity and belonging. The landscape does not provide permanent resolution to existential however, it offers a form of quiet stability through which the narrator learns to accept change, impermanence and the cyclical movement of life. Nature in the novel thus becomes associated with introspection, patience and philosophical understanding.

In contrast, Bond situates his narratives within the political violence of the Revolt of 1857, where landscape assumes a more immediate role in preserving human life. Roads, forests, villages and rural spaces become protective environments that enable movement,

shelter and survival amidst social chaos and fear. Bond portrays nature as a silent yet compassionate presence that continues to sustain life even during periods of conflict and destruction. The ecological spaces in the novel encourage human connection, emotional resilience and acts of kindness that transcend divisions created by politics and violence. Through this representation, Bond emphasises the restorative and humane dimensions of coexistence between humanity and the environment.

The comparative analysis also reveals significant differences in the eco-poetic visions of the two writers. Naipaul's approach is contemplative, inward-looking and philosophical. It focuses on solitude and existential reflection. On the other hand, Bond's treatment of landscape is more historical, communal and emotionally direct. But despite these differences, both authors challenge anthropocentric assumptions by presenting nature not as an object to be dominated but as an active participant in human life. Their narratives emphasise ecological interconnectedness and suggest that human beings achieve survival and emotional balance only through respectful coexistence with their surroundings.

Another important contribution of these novels lies in their ability to connect ecological awareness with broader human concerns such as migration, violence, memory and identity. Both texts demonstrate that environmental spaces are deeply intertwined with cultural and psychological experiences. Landscapes preserve traces of history, absorb human suffering and offer possibilities of renewal even in times of disruption.

Through their eco-poetic narratives, Naipaul and Bond encourage readers to recognise the ethical significance of the natural world and the necessity of maintaining ecological balance.

From an eco-critical perspective, this study contributes to the understanding of how postcolonial literature engages with environmental consciousness beyond conventional political or historical readings. The selected novels reveal that ecological spaces are not marginal elements within narrative structures but central forces shaping human perception and survival. By foregrounding the relationship between landscape and life-preservation, the study expands eco-critical discussions concerning the emotional, philosophical and ethical dimensions of nature in literature.

In the contemporary age of environmental crisis, climate instability and increasing alienation from the natural world, the eco-poetic visions of Naipaul and Bond remain profoundly relevant. Their works remind readers that human survival ultimately depends upon ecological sensitivity, coexistence and recognition of humanity's fragile place within the larger rhythms of nature. Through their literary engagement with landscape, both novels offer not only artistic representations of the environment but also enduring reflections on the fundamental interconnectedness between human life and the natural world

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