

## Scenario of Deconstruction and Reconstruction

in Eric Liu's *Terrene: The Hidden Valley*

By

Omnia Hamdy Ahmed Ahmed Shehata

المستخلص:

تبحث هذه الدراسة في جوانب الواقع المرير والطوباوية لرواية إريك لو تيرين: الوادي الخفي من خلال منظور بيئي، باستخدام مفاهيم التفكيك وإعادة البناء. تتناول الدراسة بالإضافة إلى ذلك المجال الاقتصادي، وتعزيز تفكيك النظام الاقتصادي الرأسمالي وإعادة بناء نظام مناهض للرأسمالية والمادية. علاوة على ذلك، تستكشف الدراسة العلاقة النفعية بين البشر والطبيعة، وتجادل ضدها وتفضل إعادة بناء علاقة متناغمة ومترابطة بدلاً من ذلك. يفكك البحث المجتمع الحديث الذي يهيمن عليه الذكور ويدعو إلى إعادة بناء عالم يحرر المرأة والطبيعة من اضطهاد الذكور. من أجل بناء عالم يشبه عدن من خلال مزج المنظورات البيئية والاقتصادية والجنسانية، يفحص هذا البحث التلميحات التوراتية والتناس في الرواية. تضيف نتائج هذه الدراسة إلى فهم أعمق لرواية تيرين: الوادي الخفي وإمكانية إلهامه لإعادة النظر في الهياكل الاجتماعية والعلاقات بين الطبيعة والبشرية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفكيك، إعادة البناء، النقد البيئي، الواقع المرير، الطوباوية.

### Abstract:

This study examines the dystopian and utopian aspects of Eric Liu's novel *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* through an ecocritical perspective, using the concepts of deconstruction and reconstruction. The study additionally addresses the economic sphere, promoting the deconstruction of the capitalist economic system and the reconstruction of an anti-capitalist and anti-materialist system. Furthermore, the study explores the utilitarian relationship between humans and nature, arguing against it and favouring reconstructing a harmonious, interdependent relationship instead. The research deconstructs the male-dominated modern

society and advocates for the reconstruction of a world that frees women and nature from male oppression. In order to construct an Eden-like world by blending ecological, economic, and gender perspectives, this research examines biblical allusions and the novel's intertextuality. The findings of this study add to a deeper comprehension of *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* and its potential to inspire a reconsideration of social structures and human-nature relationships.

**Keywords:** Deconstruction, Reconstruction, Ecocriticism, Dystopia, Utopia.

This study investigates Eric Liu's use of both concepts of deconstruction and reconstruction through an ecocritical lens in his novel *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* to represent a world-building process of an eco-utopian world that contrasts with modern world dystopia. The Earth's environmental issues have become the subject of increasing attention and concern in recent years. The deteriorating state of the environment, depletion of natural resources, and the consequences of climate change have caused many people to envision a bleak future in which life on Earth is impossible. Nonetheless, attempts have also been made to imagine an eco-friendly and sustainable future, frequently shown as a utopian paradise. When deconstructing contemporary dystopia, it becomes evident that a transition to an eco-utopia is required to guarantee a sustainable future. This change requires reassessing one's perspective and challenging implicit presumptions about how the world functions.

Ecocriticism is a literary and cultural theory that examines the role of the environment in art and literature. Ecocriticism emerged from the late twentieth-century's increased awareness of its imprudent treatment of the natural world. In recent decades, place and environment have joined gender, age, and race as essential categories in the study of literary works. Ecocriticism helps understand the relationship between nature and culture and challenges its readers to environmental actions. The term "ecocriticism" was coined by William Ruckert in 1978. Cheryll Glotfelty reintroduced the term and urged its use to refer to a field known as "the study of nature writing". Cheryll Glotfelty, in her essay "What is Ecocriticism", defines it as,

simply defined, ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, and Marxist criticism brings an awareness of modes of production and economic class to its reading of texts, ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. (n.p.)

Glotfelty points out in this essay that all ecological discourse is based on the idea that human culture is connected to help the physical world, influencing and being influenced by it. She also believes that the world faces a global crisis due to how ethical systems function rather than ecosystems.

Eric Liu's *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* is a science fiction novel that challenges readers to consider whether their reading is within the realms of possibility. The importance of science fiction stems from

being "a genre to serve as a reflection of reality. Art, especially literature, has a unique ability to show an individual what he or she cannot see, even if it is right in front of his or her nose...Science fiction and fantasy authors draw inspiration from the reality that surrounds them" (Baratta 3). It also helps readers to think about the present and the future of the world in which they live.

Utopia and dystopia are two major science fiction themes. The word utopia is derived from the Greek word *eutopia*, "good place", and *outopia*, "no place". The utopia and its derivation, the dystopia, are literary genres that are fundamentally opposed. Utopian literature depicts a setting with numerous features that readers believe to be characteristics they would like to apply. Dystopian literature, the opposite, represents a setting with numerous qualities that readers frequently perceive to be characteristics they would prefer to avoid. Many novels combine both as a metaphor for humankind's various paths, eventually leading to one of two possible futures.

*Terrene: The Hidden Valley* is a climate-fiction novel published in 2011. It is a non-linear narrative told from a third-person omniscient perspective. It is about a fourteen-year-old girl named Flora. She lives in the isolated rural valley of Terrene, where technology is planted rather than manufactured. She lives with her mother and grandmother. Flora is curious about the world outside Terrene and what happened to her father, who left Terrene many years ago. She wishes to get beyond the mountains that protect her village. Flora's blackouts provide a glimpse into knowledge long gone and future possibilities. She treks to the Institute, an old sanctuary hidden in the surrounding mountains where researchers preserve Terrene's secrets to unravel these mysteries.

A parallel plot approach is used in the novel to link two worlds. These two worlds are connected through the dreams of the protagonist, Flora Karachi. She is thrown into an advanced world where she takes on the role of Jane Ingram, an American scientist fighting global climate change. Therefore, the novel can be classified as a "Ustopia", combining eco-utopian and dystopian climate fiction. Ustopia is a term coined by Margaret Atwood. Atwood defines this hybrid genre as "a world I made up by combining utopia and dystopia – the imagined perfect society and its opposite – because, in my view, each contains a latent version of the other. In addition to being, almost always, a mapped location, Ustopia is also a state of mind, as is every place in literature of whatever kind" (Atwood n.p.).

As a science-fiction eco-utopian novel, *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* is ideal for applying an ecocritical reading. Ecologically oriented science fiction utopia is a fertile ground for ecocriticism because it deals directly with the interrelationship of humans with their surroundings through a world-building process. World-building can give insight into human interactions with various subjects and environments.

Technological developments, overgrowth of the human population, and resource and energy increases are the primary drivers of the environmental crisis. Eric Liu builds a utopia in contrast to the modern world. It lacks the causes of environmental crises. *Terrene* is a world created using computer programs. An eco-utopia in which humans and the environment coexist. It is similar to the lost Eden, but this Edenic environment is constructed using technology to highlight the positive side of technology. A parallel universe, created

and existing as a computer simulation, depicts the best interaction between people and nature.

Terrene, where Flora Karachi lives, is created by scientists seeking a solution to climate change. They create a realm completely concealed from the rest of the world. A self-sustaining biosphere could preserve human existence indefinitely, even if the rest of civilisation collapsed. Terrene is a valley in Bhutan. It is located high in the mountains, isolated from the rest of civilisation. A small valley encircled by a ring of mountains. Terrene is first built in the real world and then transferred into a computer simulation. Flora Karachi, the protagonist, is created by replicating Dr Jane Ingram's consciousness and transferring it to a computer simulation.

Terrene's human population is thirty thousand, which does not increase beyond this number. Therefore, any baby born after this number is born brain-dead. The Institute, the place that governs Terrene, restricts new births after a year of dead infants' births. "A whole year of babies being born brain dead without explanation... People trust in the Institute... After all, their decree limiting new births has prevented a recurrence of the tragedy" (Liu 27). The scientists behind the Terrene project decide to limit the growth of the human population in the simulation of Terrene to establish the ideal society possible.

We should be able to handle at least 30,000 minds, so the colony will have room to grow. What happens when we go past 30,000 people? Asked Jane. Do we stop having Children... we'll make sure to keep the population well below that number, Ashton said... Of course, there would be no

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problem producing more children, but the computer wouldn't be able to support any more brains. Simulating a brain requires much more computing power... babies born without brains. (Liu 371)

Human population growth has the most significant influence on the environment of any factor. Human overpopulation is the primary cause of the extinction of many wildlife species, the destruction and taming of wildlands and natural rivers, and the production of pollutants, such as carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases. In *Man Swarm: How Overpopulation is Killing the Wild World*, Dave Foreman mentions that biologists and environmentalists refer to the extinction that is now occurring as the Sixth Mass Extinction. Today's Sixth Mass Extinction is the result of a single species: Homo sapiens. Never before has a single type of creature grown into such a massive swarm, sweeping over the globe and scalping forests, grasslands, deserts, and other wildlands. Never has one type of life devoured so much of all different kinds of life and the resources they require to survive. Moreover, never have so few become so many in such a short time. One million Homo sapiens are living now for every Homo sapiens alive fifty thousand years ago. People have swamped the Earth with themselves. (13-14)

Another characteristic of an ideal society apparent in Terrene is the absence of technology as humans know it. Terrene does not rely on fossil fuels as an energy source. Instead, the secluded nation of Terrene solely relies on plants in their life. All of their technology is grown rather than made.

She could imagine how their nation would be built. There were some streams that carried the ice melt from the ring of mountains into the valley's edge. They would build a reservoir and a series of aqueducts to carry the water into the valley. Then they would erect their residences around their cropland in order to reduce the need for transportation, for their small, secluded nation would need to live without fossil fuels. (Liu 289)

Fossil fuels are dead plants and animals that decompose over millions of years. When fossil fuels are burnt, gases such as carbon dioxide are released into the atmosphere, where they accumulate over time and trap heat. The higher the concentration of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, the hotter the Earth becomes. Scientists know that fossil fuels cause climate change since the Earth's higher average temperatures began at the same time people began using them. The solution to climate change is to minimise, if not eliminate, the usage of fossil fuels. Since solving the climate change problem is the genesis of the Terrene project, finding alternative energy sources is the way to create an ideal world.

Terrene: The Hidden Valley crashes current society's economic beliefs to achieve the ideal society. It may be regarded as creative destruction in which long-standing practices are dismantled to create a place for innovation. The current capitalist economy is centred on growth, which fosters mass consumerism. Companies use planned obsolescence to force their customers to buy more products. As a result, the environment is being exploited in an unsustainable way. Consumption is essential to capitalism, resulting in the depletion of



scarce resources, pollution, and the degradation of natural ecosystems, all contributing to declining biodiversity. Negative externalities are also ignored by capitalism. As a result, many firms and enterprises are ready to harm the environment in order to profit. It is less expensive for firms to disregard their hazardous emissions levels or pollution contributions than to invest in environmentally beneficial technologies.

As previously stated, solving the environmental crisis is the reason behind the building of Terrene. In order to address this problem and develop the ideal society in which people live in harmony with nature, society must undergo a cultural transformation. A revolt against the capitalist system is needed—an innovative solution, a novel system that has never been developed. Eric Liu presents this solution as a moneyless economic system, specifically a post-monetary economy. A system that will allow humanity to thrive in the absence of money and profit competition, a system that contributes to the creation of a world in which people innovate, and creativity thrives within the boundaries of the planet.

The economic system of Terrene can be classified as "An open economy". Colin R Turner defines "An open economy" as,

[T]he application of an open, distributed model to the traditionally closed-loop economic system. In other words, rather than every individual seeking only to benefit themselves, a common understanding exists that enables everyone to benefit everyone, including themselves... an Open Economy is not really just an economy. It's a whole

systems approach to running an optimum, compassionate human society that serves everyone equally. (23)

Even though Turner refers to his book *Into the Open Economy* as a book of solutions, he briefly highlights some of the present world's problems that an open economy system attempts to solve. Those problems are constant economic growth that consumes the Earth's limited resources, population increase, permanent loss of natural habitat to support industry and agriculture at the expense of biodiversity, significant income and social inequality, unemployment and the deterioration of the labour market as a result of automation and artificial intelligence systems, irresponsible behaviour, waste and inefficiency driven by profit prioritisation, waste of resources due to inefficient production processes and the disconnection between individuals and communities (7). These are the problems that Eric Liu tries to

solve by creating the ideal world of Terrene.

An open economic system is about shifting priorities toward what is more important for human and their environment. It shifts human habits to be more inclusive, to engage more with their communities, to reconnect with nature and offer help to one another unconditionally. Turner mentions that anything that divides or constrains people and does not exist in the physical realm is an artificial social construct and has to be removed. These artificial limits restrict normal moral behaviour and create inefficiency, inequality, and animosity. Borders, money, social class, laws, and religion are artificial limits (31). Liu creates the open economy world of terrene by removing these artificial limits.

In seeking to abolish the artificial limits, Liu creates a non-monetary society. In Terrene's moneyless society, the basic human needs are fulfilled through agriculture. "The basis of our civilisation is agriculture. Without agriculture, we would not have food, and without first fulfilling this basic need, we cannot aspire towards anything else" (Liu 180-181). Agriculture in Terrene is a way of life for Terrene's people, not a mean of mass production or consumption. Terrene's system is similar to a gift economy in which items are valued for their purpose and beauty, products are exchanged to fulfil the needs and work is done not for money or personal gain. Instead of monetary gain, gift economies rely on subjective advantages such as a sense of duty, community, honour, or respect. For example, Flora exchanged a rooftop space from her neighbours for extra shifts in the fields for several months to display her work of art as a contribution to the blooming. This annual ceremony is held in Terrene to celebrate nature and the peaceful relationship of Terrene's inhabitants with the Earth: "She had traded heavily to borrow rooftop space from some of her neighbours, working extra shifts in the fields for months" (Liu 4).

Terrene's open system world is anti-materialist and anti-consumerist, in contrast to materialist-capitalist cultures that rely on mass consumption and production. For most consumers in a capitalist society, one of the primary goals of consumption is to achieve happiness; therefore, materialism, the concept that the purchase and ownership of material items is the ultimate source of happiness and life fulfilment, is appealing. However, on the other hand, happiness does not originate from material possessions in anti-materialist

societies like Terrene. When basic human needs are fulfilled without the constraint of the monetary system, People are free to work or do what they want without having to worry about money. There is an opportunity to concentrate on creativity while preserving the environment. Liu depicts a society that values anti-materialism over materialism, a world in which possessing a brand-new object is weird and unacceptable. Flora feels embarrassed wearing a shirt that her mother coloured since it seems like a brand-new shirt, given that it is normal for an adult to own only one shirt. As the garment is worn, patches of colour are sewed to fix it, resulting in a multi-colored weaving that balances colour and place:

The square was filled with people in their most colorful grab. It was typical for someone to keep one shirt for their whole adult life. As the shirt got worn, patches of color would be sewn on to repair it, creating a multi-colored tapestry, balancing color and placement. Flora glanced down at her plain indigo shirt. Her mother had dyed it to hide the graffiti, but now it looked brand new, and being labeled a shopper wasn't much better than being labeled a freak. (Liu 31)

While the word "shopper" in capitalist and materialist culture connotes a prosperous and happy individual who can afford to acquire material items, the word "shopper" in anti-materialist Terrene society connotes a selfish individual who over consumes and exploits resources.

Personifying plants is one of the animism qualities that Liu employs to bridge the gap between humans and nature in his utopian world. It emphasises that the relationship between humans and non-humans

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in terrene is built on mutual respect and concern. Animistic cultures, such as those of many indigenous groups, believe that nature is alive and that there is a communal space for humans and non-humans to interact. Animism refers to,

A belief in numerous personalised, supernatural beings endowed with reason, intelligence and/or volition, that inhabit both objects and living beings and govern their existences. More simply, it is the belief that "everything is conscious" or that "everything has a soul." The term has been further extended to refer to a belief that the natural world is a community of living personas, only some of whom are human. (McIntosh n.p.)

The devotion and personification of the environment would motivate people in animistic societies to do all in their power to protect and not damage plants and animals who, in many ways, had a right to life equal to that of humans. As individuals, plants are considered intelligent, relational, perceptive, and communicative entities. Living in a world dominated by the plant kingdom, the existence of plant persons is critical for issues of interspecies ethics. In *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*, Mathew Hall mentions that,

This acknowledgement of plants as persons is based on and in turn strengthens the recognition of plants as kin. Indeed, personhood is expressed and galvanised within specific kinship relationships between individual plants and humans. These specific, local kinship relationships are accompanied by obligations of responsibility, solidarity, and care. Therefore,

they are one of the most important aspects of inclusive human-plant relationships. (100)

Hall also emphasises how acknowledging plant personhood is not anthropomorphic. This perspective is not concerned with portraying human-like features that do not exist. Instead, it considers plants as living beings with their own perspective and the ability to communicate in their own way. Personhood occurs due to an emphasis on connection and the awareness of shared will and purpose in natural beings. (105-106)

Other examples of plant personhood can be found in the language used throughout the novel. The author employs language from the novel's beginning that gives the reader the impression that nature will be prominent and significant throughout the narrative. His personification of nature-objects expresses the belief that nature has a soul of its own:

"a bowl of lush greenery sleeping silently...the tapestry wove itself across grassy fields... a solitary camellia shivered in the morning breeze...a single photon bounced off its wrapped petals, shocking it awake. Millions more followed, bombarding the pink flower with a shower of light...the rest of the petals followed as the camellia stretched its pink blooms out towards the sky." (Liu 2)

Liu's statements give the impression that plants have their own spirit and volition. For example, he describes the plants as "sleeping", "wove itself", "shivered", "awake", and following each other. His statements also indicate the plants' ability to communicate with one another. It is not just a metaphorical language; plants communicate inside

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themselves and with each other in real life. *Brilliant Green: The Surprising History and Science of Plant Intelligence*, a book written by plant neurobiologist Stefano Mancuso and journalist Alessandra Viola, offers a compelling and exciting argument for plant sensibility and intelligence, as well as plant rights. Mancuso asserts that a world in which plants can communicate is not a fantasy; this world exists; it is planet Earth. (81-98)

He argues that plants, like humans, have all five senses plus fifteen others. Plants use these senses to gather information about their surroundings and to orient themselves in the world. In addition, plants can measure hundreds of different parameters and analyse massive amounts of data. Communicating a message is as essential to a plant as it is to an animal. For the plant to survive, information from the roots and leaves must be transferred quickly. Despite the fact that plants lack nerves, they employ electrical, hydraulic, and chemical signals to transport information from one part of their body to another. Internal communication pathways in plants are radically different from those in animals or humans. (Mancuso 81-98)

Plants have distributed intelligence, as opposed to humans and animals, who have a method of carrying signals inside their bodies that the brain must first process. Plants can communicate from the crown to the roots and from one root or leaf to another. Because there is no central processing centre, such as the brain, information in a plant does not always have to follow the same path; instead, it can be conveyed swiftly and effectively just where it is required. Plants can also communicate with one another by contacting their roots and aerial portions or by positioning themselves in specific ways

relative to their neighbours. This happens when competing plants try to escape shade by taking various positions relative to each other in the race to capture light. Mancuso also argues that plants recognise their kin. (Mancuso 81–98)

A plant defends its land by directing a significant portion of its energy into its underground part. It occupies the land like a military army and takes control of it against its neighbours by generating many roots. However, this is not always the case: if surrounding plants are members of the same clan and hence relatives, there is no need to compete, and the roots can be maintained to a minimum for the advantage of the aerial part. He argues that plants communicate with animals. Because plants cannot travel from where they were born, they rely on others to receive and deliver messages and small objects like pollen and seeds. As a result, they have developed a sort of postal system. They occasionally utilise air as a letter carrier, sometimes water, but most of the time, they employ animals, especially for sensitive tasks like defence or reproduction. (Mancuso 81–98)

Plants play a vital role in the lives of Terrene's inhabitants. They are not only the food source but also clothing, shoes, and even classrooms. At the Institute, scholars use genetic engineering to create and produce new plants for food and other purposes. "We design plants in a completely different way... I will show you children how we design completely new plants for food and other purposes" (Liu 181). The department of agriculture, led by Master Devindry, is in charge of developing new plants that can survive diseases and live longer than regular plants, which die in weeks, compared to their new plants, which can live for six months. Plants



have various uses, such as shoes and clothing made of plants. "Flora's shoes started squeezing her feet, reminding her to give them more sun. She shifted her feet into the sun, giving the mesh grass a chance to catch up to her most recent growth sprout" (Liu 5). This depicts the interaction and communication between humans and plants in the novel. Terrene plants communicate not just with one another but also with humans. Classrooms are another example of how plants are used in Terrene.

As Mendel Tesserect stood up, Flora felt the tree root shudder beneath her, almost as if it was sad to have him leave. Mendel walked towards the trunk in the centre of the classroom along the aisle left by the roots as they snaked in and out of the ground to form rows of benches and desks for the students. Flora yearned to gaze beyond the giant umbrella which envelope them, its hundreds of branches stretching several meters overhead and then dropping all the way down to the floor. Layers of golden-green leaves rustled above her, blocking her view of the sky and the fields outside... Mendel reached the willow's ten foot wide trunk and began to write on a large section that had been flattened and polished smooth over the years... The stalk he wrote with temporarily stained the tree's bark with indigo juices which Mendel expertly squeezed out of the plant's body. (Liu 21)

This passage demonstrates how Liu extensively describes nature in the novel; it is more than simply a background that is acted upon; it is a significant character in the narrative and Terrene's world. In the narrative, the interaction between people and plants is not

instrumental. It is a connection of care and respect that does not lead to exploitation. Instead, it leads to a harmonious cohabitation of humans and nature. This relationship of care and respect is observed in how people deal with plants. When it is time for the students to leave the classroom, they thank the tree and show respect and care, and the plants respond by opening a door for them to exit.

"Thank you Prostatia for your hospitality," Mrs. Gardner said as she placed her hand gently on one of the branches, searching for the sensory leaves. "Thank you Prostatia," Flora repeated with the other students. The branches near Mrs. Gardner's hand began to curl, peeling away from her touch like the drawing of a curtain. Slowly, an opening in the canopy formed, first a sliver of light, and then a full door. (Liu 23)

In *Plants as Persons: A Philosophical Botany*, Mathew Hall defines suitable ways of engaging with other beings as those that create connectedness and allow individuals, species, and ecosystems to develop and flourish. Unlike instrumental interactions that do not meet ecological appropriateness standards. Because they eliminate constraints on human behaviours, purely instrumental interactions are one of the primary sources of environmentally destructive behaviour. The instrumental relationships with plant life are inappropriate since they contribute significantly to the current man-made environmental crisis. (159)

As depicted by Liu in this novel, Terrene's world is distinct from the modern world. It is a nature-centred, not a human-centred world. A world in which every natural being is equal and significant. With Liu's replacement of an instrumental relationship between humans

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and nature with one of care and respect, he helps to raise readers' understanding of environmental issues. He also helps readers alter their mindset to a more eco-centric vision of the world.

It is not a coincidence that the protagonist of the novel's first part is named "Flora." Liu wisely chooses this name to symbolise the relationship between humans and nature, particularly plants in Terrene's world. Flora means "flower" in Latin, and Flora is the goddess of flowers, plants, and fertility in Roman mythology. Flora, with her adventurous personality, represents the wilderness in nature. She represents the virginity, wildness, and uncontrollability of nature.

Liu deconstructs the idea of man's dominance over nature and women. Women and nature in the novel are not passive objects controlled by men. The absence of a father figure represents the lack of male authority over women and nature. Hence, nature and women in the novel are represented in a state that is not dominated and exploited by men. Flora's father has left Terrene and never returned, unlike her mother, who chose to stay and raise Flora. Flora and her mother represent the power of women in Terrene. The mother is not only a brilliant scholar but also an excellent mother to her daughter, who acts as both a father and a mother. She has raised Flora to be a strong young woman who is wild, passionate, and uncontrollable.

Women, nature, and children are subjects to male dominance and oppression in patriarchal societies. They are also regarded as inferiors and relegated to the margins of history. It is challenging to make significant progress toward social and environmental justice when a

worldview pits humanity against nature, male against female, adult against a child. The exploitation of the biophysical world is inextricably linked to and reinforces the oppression of women, children, and nature. By deconstructing these beliefs, Liu creates a harmonious world in which those inferior groups hold power, giving readers a glimpse of a world free of modern-day problems. He also presents readers with an ecofeminist perspective since the modern world's problem is not that it is a man-centred world, but a male-centred one, and an ecofeminist point of view is necessary to tackle this problem.

In *Close to Home: Women Reconnect Ecology, Health and Development Worldwide*, Vandana Shiva explains that the ecofeminist perspective clarifies the idea that women should stand up against male destruction of the feminine and nature, which are both regarded as one, and take action to restore everything to its natural position and conserve nature since this is the only way to ensure the Earth's survival. Shiva states, "From the perspective of women, environmental issues are quite directly, and clearly, issues of survival... [Therefore] a feminist response that is ecological must necessarily reactivate a conscious awareness of, and dialogue with, nature, lifting it out of its patriarchal definition as something passive and inert- a definition that has also been extended to women" (2-4). In order to bring back harmony to the world, Liu creates a world that is women-centred and nature-centred instead of male-centred.

In a male-centred patriarchal society, the father is a necessary component of the family structure. The nuclear family is idealised frequently due to the father's supposed superiority in discipline,

protection, leadership, and his role as breadwinner, while the mother is viewed primarily in nurturing and supportive roles. In contrast to Terrene, Flora's mother plays the role of protection, leadership, and breadwinner in addition to her role as nurturer and supporter to her daughter. Considering that nature and women are connected, women are the most affected by the environmental disaster produced by the capitalist patriarchal system, and with the collapse of this system in the novel, Liu grants power to women and nature.

Flora is a symbol of nature in Terrene's universe, and she is not portrayed as an ideal feminine character. She has imperfections, but she is proud of who she is. Unlike feminine characters in romantic literature, which are idealised in the same way that nature is idealised. Her shortcomings give her the power to be the person she wants. She is a fourteen-year-old girl who has several mishaps due to her blackouts, suffers from the absence of her father, and does not have many friends, but she turns out to be a bright student who works her way up to be a scholar at the Institute.

As a symbol of nature, Flora represents not just nature in terrene but also nature in the modern world. During her blackouts, Flora has a window through which she lives the life of Dr Jane Ingram, a scientist who fights global warming and climate change in the modern world. Flora's relationship with this modern world allows her to glimpse the state of nature in a world that is different from her own, which gives her contradictory emotions. These thoughts and emotions do not belong to Flora, but they urge her to take action to help Dr Jane's world. Flora, as a symbol of mother earth, chooses to sacrifice herself to save Dr Jane's world when the time comes. These emotions not

only impact Flora, but also inspire the reader to take environmental action to conserve the ecosystem. As Keith Oatly states in *Narrative Impact: Social and Cognitive Foundations*,

Emotion is to fiction as truth is to science. We would no sooner read a novel that did not move us, than an empirical article that did not offer a validly drawn conclusion. Fictional narrative has its impact primarily through the emotions. When an emotion occurs, we experience it as striking. Sometimes a novel can affect a person's whole identity. (39)

Flora's contradictory emotions, while urging her to do the right thing for Dr Jane's world, also make her feel alienated in her world. She believes that no one understands her situation or the feelings she is experiencing. As a result, she is dealing with her memories and sadness alone. Furthermore, she is troubled by her father's absence and her limited memories of him. One of her few recollections of her father is when he tells her about a world that exists beyond Terrene. A memory that motivates Flora to discover more about her world and the other world:

Her father knelt down beside her and looked her straight in the eye. "I'll tell you a secret," he whispered, "something that the Institute doesn't want anyone else to know." Flora looked up into his face. She still couldn't make out his features, but she could see every detail of his deep, green-flecked eyes. "There is something beyond these mountains, Flora. And beyond that there's even more. There's always more to be found, Flora, if we can only imagine it." (Liu 16)

In her quest to discover why her father left Terrene, Flora discovers that she has a link with the other world, a place plagued by troubles she is unfamiliar with. Her link to this world is not just via her blackouts and Dr Jane's dreams but also through a literal connection: the glass globe. Flora and her father have buried this globe, but when she becomes mature enough to embark on her own life path, she digs it out and recovers it as she retrieves authority over her own life. The glass globe is not only Flora's last gift from her father but also something unique that connects her to Dr Jane's world. Flora keeps this glass globe as a reminder of her mission to save the other world.

In the course of creating an ecotopia, Liu constructs an Eden-like world. In this part of the novel, Liu utilises biblical allusion to the garden of Eden as it is the ultimate ecotopia and wilderness where humans and nature live in harmony. Paul Morris explains in *A Walk in the Garden: Images of Eden* that "the text of the Garden of Eden and the traditions of its interpretation have provided the rarely disputed basis from which our explanations of the nature and status of humankind have been derived. Our primary relationships—between man and woman, humanity and deity, and humanity and nature—have been defined by our understanding of this biblical text. Our conceptions of perfection and our experiences of imperfection have been delineated, understood and explicated in terms of the Genesis story" (21).

The Garden of Eden is a harmonious environment people have lost and dreamed of for a long time. Terrene's structure is similar to that of Eden. In Genesis chapter two, the natural environment of the Garden of Eden is serene and in harmony with the ecological system.

"The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed. And out of the ground the LORD God made every tree grow that is pleasant to the sight and good for food" (Gen. 2.8 – 2.9). Likewise, in *Terrene: The Hidden Valley*, scientists aim to create a harmonious world similar to Eden:

We can create a self-sufficient and self-contained community where scientific progress is focused on the technology we need to truly understand our world, live peacefully with it, and even modify it. Perhaps in hundreds or thousands of years, we can become masters of terra-forming and revert the Earth back into our Eden, a temperate paradise, able to support the human population into infinity. (Liu 261-262)

Terrene, with its vegetation, lush greenery, and trees, resembles the garden of Eden, where humans live in harmony with non-humans. Terrene is also divided into four corners: Easton Res, Weston Res, southton Res and northton Res, representing the four corners of Eden. In Genesis 2, when God created Eden, he created four rivers that divided Eden. "Now a river went out of Eden to water the garden, and from there it parted and became four river heads" (2.10). The aqueducts that bring water from the mountains around terrene to the valley also resemble the four rivers of Eden.

As illustrated in The book of Genesis chapter two, God places Adam in The Garden of Eden, Eve is made from Adam's rib, and both are warned not to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil:

And the LORD God formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man



became a living being. The LORD God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and there He put the man whom He had formed... Then the LORD God took the man and put him in the garden of Eden to tend and keep it. And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; "but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die". And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. (2.8-2.21)

The story of man's fall from Eden is depicted in Genesis chapter three, and how the serpent tempts Eve, who convinces Adam to eat the fruit, and God exiles them from Eden due to their disobedience:

Now the serpent was more cunning than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said to the woman, "Has God indeed said, 'You shall not eat of every tree of the garden'?" And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; "but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'" Then the serpent said to the woman, "You will not surely die. "For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil." So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she

took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate... Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; In toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. (3.1- 3.17)

In Liu's version of Eden in *Terrene*, Adam, symbolised by Flora's father, is the only one expelled from Eden. However, Eden is still inhabited by Eve, whom Flora represents. *Terrene*, like Eden, contains two metaphorical trees: the tree of knowledge of good and evil and the tree of life, which provides eternal life. The Institute, which preserves all of *Terrene's* knowledge, represents the tree of knowledge, and In the novel's ending, the port represents the tree of life, which grants Flora immortal life.

Flora's memory of her father when he informs her that there is a world outside *Terrene* represents the serpent who seduces Eve. Her conversation with her father resembles Eve's encounter with the serpent. "But Mom said there's nothing outside of *Terrene*... I'll tell you a secret, he whispered, something that the Institute doesn't want anyone else to know... There is something beyond these mountains, Flora. And beyond that there's even more. There's always more to be found, Flora, if we can only imagine it" (Liu 16). This memory tempts Flora to seek the glass globe, the fruit of knowledge, which makes Flora's dreams more intense and connects her with the world of Dr Jane. Since it is the fruit of good and evil, It gives Flora knowledge of another world, but this knowledge comes with troubles she is unaware of, which take Flora's peace of mind in her

Edenic world. She becomes eager to learn more and find answers about her and Dr Jane's worlds. "it was time to find the answers, but there was only one place where the knowledge of Terrene was kept, one place where the secrets of centuries were held: the Institute" (Liu 18). As a result of the acquisition of fruit of knowledge of good and evil, Flora loses her Edenic innocence.

In this Eden-like world of Terrene, although Flora loses her Edenic innocence by acquiring the knowledge of good and evil, she chooses good above evil. As the only way to save Dr Jane's world from an environmental crisis is to deliver the port key to the port, Flora chooses to sacrifice herself in order to accomplish this mission:

What would she find at the port? What would she do with the Portkey when she got there? Flora had to admit that she had no idea. But she had to believe that there was a way to save the world and to bring back the amazing, wondrous world that haunted her dreams...when she reached the port, the Barren lands would become habitable once more...She trudged towards it, but the storm grew stronger...She had never felt such cold in her life, her limbs losing all sensation as she willed herself forward. Minutes passed, perhaps hours, but the domed building remained as far as ever. Exhausted, she collapsed into a bed of snow as her eyelids pulled a blanket of darkness over her eyes. (Liu 348-350)

This quotation shows that Flora's good deeds in helping nature in Dr Jane's world give her a chance for redemption. With this redemption, Flora achieves the tree of life, which God reserves for the righteous.

Flora felt calm, peaceful. The pain was gone. Was she dead? She opened her eyes. Two blurred shapes hung over her like swaying branches. Slowly, the familiar face of Dr. Jane Ingram took form. Was she dreaming again?...I know you must be confused. I can't say I understand everything myself, but I do know this. You've given us a tremendous gift, and for that, we are forever in your debt...Flora stood up slowly, her wounds healed but her mind just coming to grips with her new reality. With Ashton on one side and Jane on the other, she stepped out into the beginning of a new world.

(Liu 383–384)

As the most influential story in Western thought, Liu uses the Garden of Eden narrative to encourage readers to take environmental action. *Terrene: The Hidden Valley* is an example of how the Edenic narrative is used to make environmental concerns while ignoring its inherent paradoxes, inconsistencies, and limitations.

In conclusion, the solution to today's environmental issue lies in the interdependence of humanity and nature. *In Terrene: The Hidden Valley*, Liu creates a utopic world considered creative destruction. This world deconstructs the current society's economic beliefs and creates another one that allows humanity and nature to thrive. People and plants of this world are linked and equal components of nature. Liu's narrative also transforms plants from passive objects to actors and rebuilds the relationship between the spiritual dimensions of humanity and nature. As a result, *Terrene* is a nature-centred world where all natural beings are equal and significant. The novel also replaces the instrumental relationship between humans and nature

with care and respect, raising readers' understanding of environmental issues and altering their mindset.

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