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## A SHARK'S RAMPAGE REVEALING DARK SIDE OF NATURE IN GENS'S FILM *UNDER PARIS*: AN ECOGOTHIC ANALYSIS

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**Ayesha Shabbir**

(M.Phil. Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad)

Email: [2024-mphil-el-018@tuf.edu.pk](mailto:2024-mphil-el-018@tuf.edu.pk)

**Hina Kiran**

(MPhil Scholar, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad)

Email: [hinakiran.SA@tuf.edu.pk](mailto:hinakiran.SA@tuf.edu.pk)

**Muqaddas Saif\***

Lecturer, Department of English Language and Literature, The University of Faisalabad  
(Corresponding Author)

Email: [muqaddassaif.ENG@tuf.edu.pk](mailto:muqaddassaif.ENG@tuf.edu.pk)

### *Abstract*

*This research aims to explore nature's wrath when it is suppressed and exploited by human anthropocentric behaviour, examining the themes of environmental issues and eco-horror in the movie Under Paris directed by Xavier Gens by focusing on the fact that nature is not a passive victim. By using Ecogothic lens, this article argues that the movie Under Paris critiques anthropocentric views where humans are considered the supreme and central creature of the universe, warning human race to stop exploiting nature in the name of modernism because nature's retribution can be destructive. The idea of Dark Ecology introduced by Morton is employed in this study to explore film Under Paris alongside the concepts given by Noël Carroll and Linda Williams. Qualitative research method and close reading of script has been used to conduct the research, focusing also on visuals and scenes of the movie. The study aims to examine the factors contributing to nature's exploitation as well as the disastrous consequences of this negligence. By conducting research on Under Paris, this study contributes to the contemporary debates about causes and consequences of ecological balance disruption, urging the global community to take serious actions to co-operate with nature and create a world where humans and nature can live in solidarity.*

**Key words:** Horror, Nature, Anthropocentric, Environmental crisis, Shark, Humans, Ecological balance, Ecogothic, Under Paris, Destruction

### **1. Introduction**

Xavier Gene's *Under Paris* 2024 presents the romantic and joyous spot of Paris as a horrifying space leading to deaths of hundreds of people due to the presence of an adaptive shark, Lilith. In this wonderful thriller movie, Seine which was one of the most favourite spots of tourists and lovers drastically transforms into a hunting ground where the predator is a monstrous mako shark and the victims are humans. Xavier Gens has also highlighted some main factors that led to this dangerous evolution of sharks, one of which is the aquatic pollution caused by humans in the oceans. When humans attack and exploit the natural habitat of animals just out of irresponsibility, the aquatic life has the capacity to take dangerous and bloody revenge against humans as shown in *Under Paris*. Lilith represents the fury of nature which has been increasing massively in the recent decades as humans and the higher authorities including businessmen, landlords and politicians are trying their very best to destroy the natural habitats of animals in the name of urbanization and tourism. When people throw plastics and other garbage material into rivers and



oceans, it affects the lives and health of aquatic animals in the worst ways possible. This research aims to explore and scrutinize the vengeful and dark side of nature which can be awakened as a result of heinous human acts. *Under Paris* is a powerful illustration of an Eco-gothic narrative where the genre of horror has been used to present the relation between the natural world and humans and to portray how human activities are affecting and destroying nature. The movie gives a strong message to its audience that nature can turn violent and aggressive if its boundaries are not respected and the revenge of nature will be horrifying if the human race continues to ignore its warnings. Estok emphasizes in his idea that this Eco-phobia is a major factor leading to an Eco-gothic atmosphere because when humans try to exploit and dominate nature out of fear, nature will become monstrous and uncontrollable. The dark side of nature will unlock which will produce a terrifying environment as can be seen in the movie *Under Paris* (Estok, 2018). River Seine becomes a place of terror indulging into bloodbath during a swimming competition.

The dark and monstrous side of nature in the form of a shark has been portrayed and proper horror elements including close angles, cinematography, dark night visuals and massive killing scenes have been used, making this film a powerful illustration of Eco-gothic criticism. When the discovery of this dangerous shark is revealed to the city officials, they don't consider it a serious matter. Instead of taking careful, responsible and efficient measures to avoid any catastrophe, the Mayor shows her desperation to hide the truth from the world due to the upcoming World Triathlon Championship scheduled to happen near Seine. This denial and inefficiency on the part of officials symbolizes the priorities of authorities where they may risk the lives of animals as well as humans just to save their reputation and economic stabilization. The priority is clearly the economic gain and becoming the focus of global appreciation, not the assurance of public safety. The film shows the dark side of nature as the concept given by Timothy Morton validates it in his work *Dark Ecology: For a Logic of Future Coexistence*. Morton calls this process "dark ecology," acknowledging the monstrous, uncanny and strange side of nature. Morton urges that humans need to understand the intimate relationship they have with non-human beings because the reality goes beyond the simple concepts of love of beloved motherland. (Morton, 2016)

The non co-operation of authorities and responsible institutions in the face of evident threats of natural disaster is also the central focus of the movie. When Sophia Assalas who is the protagonist of the movie and has encountered the destruction including her husband's death caused by Lilith in the past incident tries to warn Mayor and his officials to understand the danger, they ignore her without giving much consideration. The scientific evidence provided by Sophia was met with denial and disregard because the Mayor was more concerned about the future athlete championship in Paris. She apparently didn't consider Lilith a threat at all which also describes the entire human race's denial to understand and acknowledge the fact that they are exploiting nature way too much which can cause a strong, furious and vengeful reaction by nature. This disbelief and non co-operation with nature is not restricted to one city, the behaviour is common among most countries and cities around the globe, making the Earth a hard place to live. This tendency of societies to ignore the ecological threats, living in their delusions of supremacy has the capacity to escalate terror. Scholars Smith & Hughes explain in their work *Ecogothic* certain tensions that may arrive when nature refuses to follow human orders and desires and when nature becomes completely alien and reveals itself as something other (Smith & Hughes, 2013).



However, this research will explore deeply and thoroughly Xavier Gens's *Under Paris* by using Ecogothic framework, suggesting that the movie shows the horrifying and dark side of nature not to undervalue nature but to point out the factors that lead to this kind of drastic situations. This aspect of nature is not inherent but is a reaction against human exploitation and destruction of nature. The paper will also scrutinize the role of authorities, governments and institutions to control this exploitation of the natural world and to value the habitat of animals. The behaviour of denial and ignorance shown by city officials in the movie further escalated the dangerous situation. If they would have acted responsibly, the massive killing of people could be prevented. These factors lead to the transformation of a peaceful state to a dreadful and gothic space. Scholar Garrard explains in his work *Eco-criticism* the phenomenon of "nature's revenge" where nature becomes a vengeful power, striking back against human abuses (Garrard, 2012).

### **Research Gap**

The movie *Under Paris 2024* by Xavier Gens has not been analyzed and researched before due to its recent release. The unique theoretical framework that has been used in this research by combining the concepts of Morton, Carroll and Williams is innovative and has not been used yet. However, this research aims to fill this gap by exploring the deep, thoughtful themes of the movie *Under Paris* with a focus on environmental issues.

#### **1.1 Research Questions**

1. In what ways the anthropocentric behavior of humans may lead nature towards disaster?
2. How does the film *Under Paris* address the Ecogothic concerns ?
3. What strategies can be adopted to maintain ecological balance and prevent natural catastrophes?

- **1.2 Research Significance**

This research has its significance in film studies as it describes the way films are used to convey important warning to common people and authorities. Xavier Gens's *Under Paris* affirms in a strong stance that human's manipulation of nature and official's irresponsible behaviour can cause natural catastrophes to happen and this research is the first attempt to investigate and examine this message of *Under Paris* deeply. Ecogothic theory has been employed in the study to demonstrate the complex and unbalanced relation between men and nature. These cinematic representations of social and global issues regarding environmental crises are important to understand because in today's area of Digitalization, people get influenced by screens in a profound way. This research is an attempt to highlight and appreciate the powerful messages given by good and impactful movies.

#### **1.3 Delimitation**

This study will only focus on a single film which is Xavier Gens's *Under Paris*, premiered in 2024. So, the textual and thematic analysis of a single cinematic work will be conducted. The theoretical approach will also be limited to one main theory, the Ecogothic literary framework with a special focus on concepts given by Morton, Carroll and Williams.

### **2. Literature Review**

This research will explore deeply Xavier Gens's Netflix movie *Under Paris* (2024) by using Ecogothic framework, arguing that the movie shows the dark side of nature and also demonstrates the consequences of human anthropocentric attitude towards nature. The literary paradigm of Eco-criticism and particularly Ecogothic has been evolving since decades and in recent years, this



theory has gained significant prominence. This section of literature review explores the scholarly works that have been conducted on Ecology, environmental crisis and the literary field of Ecogothic which is the main focus of study.

Siby (2025) in his work *Reimagining the Gothic: Ecological Horror and Climate Change in Contemporary Literature* explains that the genre of gothic which is mainly related to horror, death and destruction has gained popularity in recent decades due to growing ecological anxieties. In the Ecogothic genre, there becomes a fusion of classic gothic elements and environmental issues and this genre is used to portray uncertainties and dread which can come if ideals of Anthropocene are continued to be implemented in societies. Ecogothic, according to researchers, also reflects the fear in the hearts and minds of men regarding nature due to which nature is often shown as monstrous, horrifying and threatening. After analyzing the important contemporary works of writers including Margaret Atwood, Jeanette Winterson, Susan Howe, and Amitav Ghosh, Siby emphasizes that Ecogothic represents and captures the crisis and terror of environmental degradation by employing strong cinematography of horror movies.

Kaell (2025) in his article *Ecological Gothic: Spirit and Power in a Public Garden* examines that the genre of Ecogothic is a powerful platform and literary paradigm to analyze and understand the processes of climate change and global ecological issues. This research uses the example of places which have strong history and culture including Elizabethan Gardens in North Carolina which has a history of racism, colonization and climate issues to study together three different fields, gothic literature, religious studies and multi-species studies. Kaell suggests that ecological gothic has strong distinctive elements including horror, haunting, destroyed and decaying infrastructure and nature as a violent force, all of which are the real world anxieties of today's society. This research highlights that change is not only physical but by climate change, the historical landscape and their people suffer emotional, spiritual and cultural damage. The study also suggests that Ecogothic theory paves ways for the researchers to conduct interdisciplinary research between Ecogothic, identity and power theories because all these concepts are interlinked.

Novitz (2025) in the study *From Eco-Thriller to Eco-Horror: Eleanor Catton's Birnam Wood as an Antipodean inversion of Bram Stoker's Dracula* explores that Gothic genre is quite suitable to address environmental issues, considering its classic and traditional concern regarding breaking natural boundaries. In old gothic works like Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the writer showed that wilderness and terrifying nature could be cured by modernization, urbanization and modern science (Stokers, 1897). On the contrary, contemporary works like Catton's *Birnam Woods* states that this modernization and technological advancement is the real threat to nature and ecological balance (Catton, 2023). This recent novel not only sees industries as destruction of nature but also moves the genre from thriller to horror because technology and industrialization enhances violence and conflicts. This is a major shift in focus of Ecogothic fiction where human activities are considered responsible for a disrupted system of ecology rather than nature.

Smith (2025) in his recently published research *Centuries of a Heavy Conscience: American Ecogothic in Cormac McCarthy's The Orchard Keeper and Stephen Graham Jones' The Only Good Indians* observes that genre of Gothic has specifically evolved from presenting fears and tensions in the past to including environmental concerns in its narrative, leading it from Gothic to Ecogothic dimension. This new genre not only projects societal fears but also explains the



systematic harm that humans are causing to the natural world without considering that this will harm them in the future. The consequences of this irresponsible and anthropocentric approach have begun to appear in the form of global warming and aquatic life destruction and the outcomes in the coming tomorrow can be dreadful if the situation is not controlled collectively with efficiency. Smith links Ecogothic with American literature according to which Ecogothic is not merely related to colonial mourning and racial issues but it also shows a strong sense of remorse which humans feel after destroying and exploiting nature. The *Orchard Keeper* by Cormac McCarthy and *The Only Good Indians* by Stephen Graham Jones are the novels which show monsters related to Ecogothic themes such as the Wampus Cat and the Elk Head, demonstrating the psychological and emotional consequences of harming nature.

King (2025) in his study *The Dark Forest and the Lonely Village: Reimagining Centre and Margin in French Border Series, from Zone blanche (2017–2019) to La Forêt (2017)* examines that the focus of French television screen has changed from cities to remote villages. According to King, this shift is significant because in past years, cities like Paris were mostly shown, portraying the urbanization of the country. In recent years, the focus of the screen is on the isolated remote villages which are surrounded in darkness, showing the rural region of the country. Michael Got used the term “forest-set border series” for these villages and their portrayal. *Zone Blanche (2017–2019)* and *La Forêt (2017)* are some of the most prominent series of this sort where villages are shown to be located in the margins and periphery of the state. This illustration raises an important question whether the villages are going to get the central light in the real world too as they are taking in TV shows.

Bigelow (2025) in his research *Colonial and Environmental Violence in Nordic Horror Cinema* examines that the early films of Finland are deeply related to the themes of wilderness, emptiness, colonial mourning, horror and haunting landscapes like the famous movie *The Curses of the Witch (1927)*. In this movie, the setting is pure, beautiful and arctic and a young couple come here in the pursuit of a comfortable and happy life. With the passage of time, the story reveals that behind this silence is a haunting past of colonization and brutality when Indigenous Sami people were attacked and murdered by foreign settlers. Now, a Sami witch who despises settlers curses this land because people of the Sami tribe were killed here. Through this thoughtful story tied with history, this movie emphasizes on the idea that nature is never an isolated space, it carries history with it along the pains its people suffered. This curse of witch affects people through illness, violence and even death, emphasizing the contemporary Ecogothic concept that when humans use their power against nature, nature will not sit back passively. It will respond in a furious and vengeful way which humans would not be able to control.

### **3. Methodology**

This study uses a Qualitative research approach, particularly close reading method to analyze the critical message given in the movie *Under Paris*. The movie was watched carefully focusing on dialogues, themes, close-ups, lighting and cinematography of the movie. The horrifying elements present in the film like monstrous sharks and killing scenes of various characters have been the primary focus. All the characters, scenes and conversations pointing to the environmental concerns have been studied and examined closely. Theories related to Ecogothic have been studied including concepts given by Morton, Carroll and Williams. Various researches from google



scholar and other online platforms have been studied to give a comprehensive and evident overview of Eco-horror in *Under Paris*.

### **3.1 Theoretical framework:**

Xavier Gens's *Under Paris* (2024) examines the modern threat to humans and societies due to nature's expected response against human abuse. A giant and monstrous shark is shown in the river of Seine named Lilith who turns Paris from the city of lights and lovers to city of ruins and devastation. This research conducts an Ecogothic analysis of the movie *Under Paris*, focusing on the horror elements used in the movie, environmental degradation themes shown in the story and the relation between horror elements and ecology. In the Ecogothic genre, nature mostly transforms into a violent, monstrous and deadly force mainly due to man-made problems including pollution, climate change and exploitation of animal habitats. The primary focus of the story is the well-known fact that when humans use, exploit, harm and destroy nature, nature's response will come and the response will be brutal. This idea is backed by theorists like Morton, Noël Carroll and Linda Williams.

In Eco-horror fiction, the monsters in the form of nature do not symbolize the inherent danger of animals or the natural world. They symbolize the anger and frustration of nature due to the ecological imbalance caused deliberately by humans. Monstrous shark Lilith does not represent merely an ordinary predator but she signifies a damaged environment and destroyed ecosystem. Morton in his famous work *Dark Ecology* demonstrates the idea that nature is not always kind and balanced, it can turn violent and aggressive at any time leading to the destruction of human lives. He says that:

*“By heightening the dilemma of a body and a material world haunted by mind(s), we care for the ecosystem, which in sum is interconnectedness. The ecological thought, the thinking of interconnectedness, has a dark side embodied not in a hippie aesthetic of life over death, or a sadistic sentimental Bambification of sentient beings, but in a "goth" assertion of the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to stay with a dying world: dark ecology”.* (Morton, 2016)

Carroll (1990) in his famous work *The Philosophy of Horror* explains the situations like we see in *Under Paris*. According to him, these monsters are both impure and threatening just like Lilith becomes a deadly threat for human lives in the movie. Lilith is not only threatening but considering the concept of Carroll, she is impure too. When Lilith becomes impure after breaking all cultural and natural boundaries, it becomes more dangerous. During the beginning of the film, scientist Sofia thought she knew mako sharks and she could control it but the real threat comes when they discover that due to major evolution changes, Lilith has become a brand-new species. The mystery of an unknown creature you know nothing about is something that scares the humans in the worst ways. Carroll explains it saying that the real disturbance comes when you don't comprehend what belongs where. He states in his book:

*“It is crucial that two evaluative components come into play: that the monster is regarded as threatening and impure. If the monster were only evaluated as potentially threatening, the emotion would be fear; if only potentially impure, the emotion would be disgust. Art horror requires evaluation both in terms of threat and disgust”.* (Carroll, 1990)



Carroll also explains in his book the psychological impact of monsters on human minds and hearts. According to him, monsters do not affect us only physically, they disrupt our emotional and intelligent quotient. They even control and influence the way we see and understand the world around us. Carroll calls this process “Cognitive threatening”. In the movie *Under Paris*, it is clear that the presence of Lilith in River Seine affects people psychologically. It burdens the human soul as shown in the character of Sophia who carries inside her trauma of witnessing the death of her friends and husbands by Lilith. Carroll also points out that monsters are "cognitively threatening."

*“They are un-natural relative to a culture’s conceptual scheme of nature. They do not fit the scheme; they violate it. Thus, monsters are not only physically threatening; they are cognitively threatening. They are threats to common knowledge.<sup>40</sup> Undoubtedly, it is in virtue of this cognitive threat that not only are horrific monsters referred to as impossible, but also that they tend to render those who encounter them insane, mad, deranged, and so on.” (Carroll, 1990)*

The concept of “body genres” given by Linda Williams in 1991 has also been used in the research to thoroughly investigate the Ecogothic dimension of the movie *Under Paris*. In his work *Film Bodies*, Williams explains that the gothic genre aims to create certain feelings inside its viewers like fear, sorrow and shock. Specific visuals and scenes are added to the movie to spark discomfort in the audience so that they can feel the real danger. In the movie *Under Paris*, scenes of mass killing, people’s screaming, dark waters and bloody river have been added to trigger feelings of shock, horror, discomfort, anxiety and disgust in the audience, urging them to understand the real threats of nature’s power which can retaliate against human abuse and exploitation. The concept of “excess” in horror and gothic elements that are used in films has also been given by Williams according to which movies go beyond normal visuals and show extremely terrifying things on screen to have audience reaction. In this movie, massive death scenes, screaming voices, blasts, extreme flood and dismemberment are shown to the audience to add an ample amount of horrifying elements in the movie.

*“Violence, and emotion are fundamental elements of the sensational effects of these films. My hope, therefore, is that by thinking comparatively about all sensational film body genres we might be able to get beyond the mere fact of sensation to explore its system and structure as well as its effect on the bodies of spectators”. (Williams, 1991)*

By focusing on the concept of dark ecology given by Morton and adding the concept of Carroll and Williams for support, this research aims to explore the main causes of nature’s vengeful response and how we can avoid becoming the next prey of its fury. The main thing that needs to be changed is human’s irresponsible behaviors and the selfish, money-oriented attitude of leaders across the globe. The factors need to be addressed and acknowledged which can then lead to the betterment of the ecosystem.

#### **4. Analysis and Discussion**

##### **4.1 An EcoGothic Unveiling of Xavier Gens’s Under Paris**

Xavier Gens’s *Under Paris* (2024) takes its audience deeply into the real world issues of environmental crisis that the planet Earth is facing today by showing them a cinematic representation in the form of the Seine river and its transformation from a lavish city to a place of dread. The movie starts with the theory given by Darwin, known as Darwinism, which believes that the species who survive are those who are adaptable to change.



*“It is not the strongest of the species that survives, nor the most intelligent, it is the one that is most adaptable to change” (Scene 0.17-0.23)*

The movie shows the current scenario of the rapidly advancing world where human intelligence is continuously challenged by nature’s horrifying capacity to adapt to change. *Under Paris* can be seen as the suitable example of Ecogothic narrative where horror elements like dark, lethal scenes, massive killings have been used and the lethal side of nature has been exposed. If humans reject the right of existence of other non-human entities, this globe will become a difficult place to breathe as shown in the movie. The movie has used the monstrous adaptive mako shark named Lilith to warn the human race of the dangers that may come if the real society keeps acting like the society of fictional Paris in the movie. The human anthropocentric behaviour has been shown in the movie as the major factor of destruction and imbalance in the world.

*“We are on the seventh continent, a vortex of trash covering three million square kilometers, four to six times the size of France. Nearly a million birds and 100,000 marine mammals die every year of ingesting plastic”. (Scene 1.09-1.26)*

The revenge of animals when they are hurt has the capacity to turn familiar beloved places to unknown terrifying zones just like the river Seine in the movie was full of life in the start but when Lilith acted in fury, everything turned into disaster. The water turned into the red blood of humans who came to the Seine river for a swimming competition. This narrative stands firmly with the concept art-horror given by Carroll and the idea of body genres given by Williams.

#### **4.2 Transformation of River Seine from a tourist place to the realm of dread**

In most Ecogothic stories, there can be seen a rejection of human-centered approach. This genre shows the transformation of familiar and peaceful landscapes into terrifying and haunting places when nature takes revenge and shows its real power rooted in history. In the movie *Under Paris*, the writer chooses the most famous setting of city Paris to show the complex dimension of human-nature relationship. The River Seine is although seen as a symbol of love and culture but it gets polluted and deeply impure when a shark who usually lives in seawater comes into this river and turns it into a graveyard of hundreds of people. In the story, there are two main lovers of animals who want to protect this shark including Mika and Sophia. Mika is a young environmental activist and Sophia is a scientist. Sophia knows the danger that this shark can impose as she lost her husband and crew members due to Lilith. That's why, she tries her very best to persuade the Mayor of the city and other officials to get out of their denial phase but they did ignore her. Mika on the contrary has deep sentiments attached with animals. She goes to the Seine river to meet Lilith believing that she is just a harmless innocent shark but Lilith kills her brutally. This incident aligns with the idea of Dark Ecology given by Morton. During the meetings of Sophia and Mika, they talked about the location of Lilith which was difficult to accept for Sophia at first as can be seen in her dialogues;

*“Lilith’s been here for three days. In the heart of Paris”, “No, it’s impossible. It’s fresh water.”*  
*(Scene: 17.34-17.38)*

This abnormal adaptation of Lilith has its foundation in Carroll’s work as he said that it is a violation of natural order which is not only physically threatening but cognitively threatening. (Carroll, 1990) After the arrival of Lilith, the entire city starts to feel horrific specifically around the Seine river. During this entire attempt to control Lilith through armed force, it also becomes



clear that there are hidden catacombs inside the river which becomes a place of residence for Lilith. They describe these hidden places as: “the city’s water reservoirs. It’s like an underground lake... We found a condemned entrance under the Canal St-Martin.” This hidden and underground lake inside the river further adds to the gothic element of the story. This underground place and dark waters of Seine becomes a place of horror, mystery and danger where people come to see something dangerous that is behind the veil, as described by Williams that these gothic spaces create tension and anxiety in the audience. The character of Mika tried very hard in the movie to protect sharks and marine animals but at the end, she became their prey. In a video message, she shared her concerns about responsibility of humans towards aquatic lives:

*“My name is Mika. I am 20 years old, and with the Save Our Seas collective, we believe that animals and humans are equal. Yet, 100 million sharks are killed every year. Why? To make soup or anti-aging cream? Stop the Genocide”. (Scene 45.35-45.52)*

When Adil and his team notices something unusual in the river, this anxiety of an unknown dread starts. This fear starts to penetrate in people’s hearts even before Lilith was discovered. The movie uses these underground dark gothic places to reflect what is happening in society apparently and what is actually beneath the surface. As Sophia in the start realized that this city of light is one of the main factors of aquatic pollution, sending its garbage into oceans which affects aquatic life.

#### **4.3 "Make This Little Fish Disappear!": Political Denial leading to uncontrollable destruction**

In films and stories related to the Ecogothic genre, the focus is also placed on the arrogance and proud behaviour of humans with which they think that no non-human entity has the capacity to harm them and also the irresponsible behaviour of authorities, system operators and politicians who value nothing but money and fame. Instead of prioritizing the safety of their people and environment, they are always more concerned about showoff, money, power and domination. The character of the Mayor of the beautiful city Paris has been shown in this movie to reflect and uncover those selfish people who can be dangerous for societal welfare. This mayor is a woman and she is so full of herself because she has a seat where she can sit to make orders. The correct sense of responsibility is not present in her character. She tries to hide the presence of sharks in the river just to maintain her reputation and the peaceful image of Paris but this denial on the part of a single politician cost people their precious lives. This Mayor was also not ready to inform the higher authorities about the presence of Shark in the city just because she was afraid they would make her accountable. This lady is just obsessed about conducting World Triathlon Championships in Paris which will likely give her promotion and the apparent image of Paris will be glorified. Human anthropocentric attitude have been clearly portrayed in the movie.

*“They regulate our oceans. We must protect them. Overfishing and pollution have deprived sharks of their food source, forcing them into new territories. Just like Lilith. She is lost in the Seine.” (Scene 45.53-46.07)*

When Sophia and Adil meet her to tell about the dangerous possibility of Lilith’s vengeful actions, the mayor was certainly not concerned about the safety of any aquatic life or even human life. She started explaining the reputation and achievements of Paris and how much money has been spent on it for its development. Her expressions, tone and dialogues convey the message very clearly



that Paris is too big to take these little threats seriously though these were not little threats at all. In her delusion, pride and arrogance she also claimed that this was her Paris. She orders the team to make the little fish disappear, emphasizing her selfish and empty personality. When Sophia tries to reject her ideas, she simply throws her out of the meeting room. The activists who don't have any power are shown in the film trying and encountering the real danger to save people as well as animals but the irony is that those people who are responsible for this duty and who have the power just sit in their room, giving orders and indulging in self praise. Mika has a soft corner for the sharks and she considers it greatly that the safety of animals is the only guarantee of safe and protected human future.

*"We are the last ones who can make a difference. It starts with saving this shark. Saving her is standing up to those ruining our planet. Saving her is screaming out that this world belongs to us. Saving her is saving our future". (Scene 46.09-46.31)*

The Mayor never goes to visit river Seine to see the danger herself or to see Lilith but her confidence about this "little fish" sounds ridiculous. Carroll's concept of monsters who have impure intentions can be best suitable for this Mayor and her officials who risk the life of thousands of people just to not spoil their image. The protection of people is not her duty according to the Mayor and she takes too much pride about the financial success and apparent beauty of Paris. She doesn't take nature's warning seriously during the entire movie and in the end she sees the outcome of her ignorant behaviour with her very own eyes. Although the authorities tried to cover up the problem, somehow in this digital world, people come to know about the presence of sharks in the Seine. This situation corresponds with the idea of Body genre given by Williams in 1991. According to him, the presence of dreadful unseen mystery creates the feeling of fear and frustration in people's minds and hearts as can be seen in the movie scenes where people becomes so frightened on sensing the movement of shark that they start pushing each other, causing the chaos and deaths of many people who could be saved but in panic they were thrown into the water by their own human fellows. The denial and arrogance of the Mayor in face of nature's warning is not just another fictional story but a reality in which humans are living today. Mayor tells Sophia and Adil that:

*"1.7 billion! That is how much has already been spent by the State to assure this event's success... I don't know what you want me to say. Figure it out! Make this little fish disappear!"*  
(Scene 49:10-49:28)

In this scenario, the system becomes a bigger monster than animals as it fails to empathize with their own fellow human beings. To gain economic and political favors, they get ready to sacrifice their own cities and the lives of their own people. This behaviour of denial and non co-operation is nothing but a process of self-destruction.

#### **4.4. Lilith's adaption and her portrayal in *Under Paris* as a symbol of nature's fury**

Carroll explained in 1990 that in "art-horror", the monster is both impure and threatening and people should perceive them both. Lilith is a perfect illustration of this concept whose presence is threatening and who has adapted in an ample way within a short period of time. From the beginning to the end of the movie, this mako shark is always violent, killing humans with full anger and fury. In the beginning scenes, she kills Sophia's research team including her husband. In the middle of the movie, she kills Mika who was just a young girl who was trying to protect Lilith. In the



following scenes, she kills friends of Adil in the police and in the ending scene, Lilith turns the river Seine into a graveyard of hundreds of people. The blue water of the river turns into a red colour of blood but Lilith never dies in the story. Many attempts were taken to kill her or to control her but all in vain. This shows that nature's power is beyond human imaginations and control. Lilith's adaptation and her breaking away from all natural and normal boundaries makes her more dangerous and violent. Williams states this idea with a term "impure". So, Lilith becomes impure when she evolves and adapts, getting rid of all cultural boundaries which makes everything possible for her. She was able to survive in fresh water although naturally she is a saltwater predator. When Sophia investigates Lilith, she discovers that Lilith has not only learned to survive in freshwater but she can also reproduce through the process of parthenogenesis.

*"These organs allow the shark to adapt to the salinity of the water... she adapted to fresh water... And you see this protrusion on the side here? That shows she adapted to fresh water... They'll feed in the Seine, mature, and then return to the ocean. Paris is one of the rare cities that can support this kind of ecosystem... She hasn't reached sexual maturity, but she's already pregnant? I don't understand... Lilith is reproducing by parthenogenesis... She doesn't need a male to get pregnant. Adil, I made a mistake. These aren't makos. They've adapted. Lilith is the first of a brand-new species. And if we do nothing, they'll continue to reproduce. And they won't stop. Ever"* (Scene 1:5:5-1:6:52)

This evolving trait of Lilith which is parthenogenesis transforms Lilith from mako to a brand new species who can reproduce through asexual reproduction phenomenon, making this shark a cognitive threat as articulated by Carroll in 1990. After these major evolutions, she becomes an unknown creature, a strange 'Other' whose information is not under control of humans and scientists. This sense of unseen danger challenges the notion that humans are a dominating creature and everything is under their control, it is certainly not. This lethal and dark evolution is not natural but the main catalysts behind these changes are human activities which pollute and harm the ecological balance. When Mika tries to touch the shark to show her affection believing that she would not harm her, she says with confirmation: "sharks would never attack without good reason". Sophia, who experienced trauma in the past due to destructive fury of shark, tries to get Mika out of Lilith's reach, she says to Mika: "Mika, get out of there! She's gonna attack! Get out of the water! (Scene 57:52-57:55). Mika was killed by the shark due to her idealistic notions about innocence of animals. This movie doesn't romanticize the notion of nature and its relation with humans, it just shows the vengeful, furious, horrifying aspect of nature and the factors contributing to nature's aggression.

*Mika: "Sophia, look at this. I was right. Trust me! ... Wake the hell up. They won't hurt anyone."*

*Sophia: "Mika, get out of there! She's gonna attack! Get out of the water! Lilith had a baby! We've invaded her nest!"* (Scene 57:33-57:40)

#### **4.5 "We're All Gonna Die!": Brutal triumph of dark ecology in *Under Paris***

Ecogothic narratives use horror elements to show people the real results of harming nature. In the movie *Under Paris*, intense scenes like the killing of Mika and massive killing of people inside the river have been shown to the audience so that they can feel the horror of such gothic scenarios which are likely to emerge in the real world if not controlled. Williams calls this process of making audiences feel terror and shock as "body genres". The brutal killings of people at the hands of



Lilith and her offspring are really disturbing which make people witness the fear firsthand so that they may take preventive measures to save nature and ecological balance. The sounds used in the film, the screaming of people while running to save their lives when they are trapped inside the river and all they can see is death in front of their eyes enhance the gothic element of the movie which successfully make it an Eco gothic cinematic representation.

During the World Triathlon Championships event, the terror grows deeper and deeper until it leaves nothing behind but destruction and ruins. Mayor refuses to cancel the events and swimmer athletes from all over the world come to Paris to swim and enjoy the event in River Seine but this day of joy and happiness turns into a nightmare for people and Lilith with hundreds of his offspring attack the swimmers and kill them. There was music running in the background and everyone was smiling until Lilith appeared and the lovely songs were changed into desperate screams of humans to save their lives. This gives an important warning that denial of natural threats due to arrogance and selfish gains can cause destruction beyond measures. The celebration turns into a massacre and the bomb police was trying to blast in catacombs to kill sharks activated the bombs previously present under water due to historic World war 2. The violence of sharks was multiplied by the continual blasting of bombs one after another which destroyed the beautiful infrastructure of Paris of which the Mayor was so proud of.

*“This is it, My fellow citizens. Some dreamed about it, many have talked about it, I have done it.*

*Paris is now a city of leisure, well being and togetherness”. (Scene 1:17:41-1:18:06)*

The ending of the movie shows the entire destruction of Paris which is bombed and flooded. Only Sophia and Adil are shown as survivors but they are still in the water surrounded by terrifying sharks. Sharks are calmly swimming in the flood which shows that at the end they are only ones in the city who are alive and unharmed. If we see this situation through Carroll’s lens, the entire city has become a monstrous place where sharks have gained control and domination over humans, replacing the familiar world to a terrifying new reality. This ending also highlights the idea of dark ecology given by Morton who believes that nature is not always a harmless, kind and friendly entity. Sometimes, it can become violent and harsh, turning the lives of humans into living hell.

## **5. Conclusion**

The film Under Paris is a powerful representation of the dark side of nature when it is suppressed and exploited by humans. The consequences can be terrifying as stated in Eco gothic theory and shown in the movie Under Paris. One monstrous shark Lilith in the movie was able to turn a place of peace to a symbol of horror, the Seine river of Paris. Lilith does not merely represent the adaptive nature of animals and how scary they are but it symbolizes the retaliation of nature against pollution caused by humans. This carelessness of humans towards the ecosystem and other creatures other than them results in disruption of ecological balance which is surely going to cause serious problems. By using concepts of Morton, Carroll and Williams, this research argues that Under Paris movie uses horror elements to demonstrate the environmental crisis the world is going through today. The movie gives a clear message that if humans and particularly authorities like the Mayor in the movie refuse to co-operate with nature and live in denial rather than addressing the real issue, the results can be deadly. Hence, it is not safe for humans to live in this world if other ecosystems like animals, oceans and plants are not saved here. If humans refuse to respect



and value nature, they may awaken the destructive and lethal side of it which can lead to utter devastation.

### **Recommendations**

This research has conducted analysis of *Under Paris* by using the Ecogothic framework, further studies can be conducted by focusing on audience reception analysis or by investigating the real world situations related to the movie. A comparative analysis can also be conducted with other movies of different genres.

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