

Ecocriticism: A Bridge between Literature and Society

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Abstract - There have always been two purposes for literature. There are many who appreciate it just as art, while others see in it a reflection of modern culture. These two ideas are the bedrock upon which all great fiction is constructed. Classicists, neoclassicists, romanticists, Marxists, modernists, postmodernists, deconstructivists, post colonialists, feminists, and so on have all weighed in on various literary value debates throughout history. However, environmental concern as shown in literature was mostly ignored for a long period in literary studies. Ecocritics do more than merely read a work; they apply a critical eye to it, looking for evidence of nature and literature's mutual influence in order to emphasize these themes. In this way, they connect the world of literature to the real world. There is widespread agreement that literature serves as a mirror for culture. Indeed, literature is a reflection of culture, both positively and negatively. Literature has a redemptive purpose by reflecting societal flaws in an effort to help people see where they've gone wrong and make right. In addition, it displays the qualities and ideals of the society for individuals to aspire to. Literature, being a representation of human behavior, often depicts how people in a culture think and talk and behave. The objective of literature is to educate, instruct, and amuse via tales depicting human life and activity through characters who, through their words, actions, and reactions, express particular themes.

Keywords - Literature, Democratic Principle, French Revolution, Reflection, Metaphor

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INTRODUCTION

Since there are now ecological concerns, the environment has become a popular subject of discussion. Human activities have long resulted in the gradual depletion of Earth's natural resources, which has been a hot topic in recent years. For a long period, this critical issue was ignored by literary criticism. Ecocriticism was initially used by William Rueckert in his 1978 critical prose work, "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," to indicate "the application of ecological notions to the study of literature since ecology has the greatest importance to the present and future of the globe." Referenced in (Rickett 107). In the last years of the twentieth century, professors Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm established the field of ecocriticism. Put out a collection of critical writings on the environment under the title The Ecocriticism Reader. Glotfelty sounded the trumpet for this movement and performed sterling work in ensuring the term's place in contemporary lexicon. Educating people about environmental issues by scientific or technological means alone is insufficient. Without a doubt, ecocriticism accomplishes this goal of elevating readers' awareness. It's not only about fixing the environment, contrary to popular belief. However, an ecocritic is not the same as an environmentalist; rather, ecocriticism investigates the links between humanity and the

natural world. Readers will gain eco-awareness as they learn to live in harmony with the natural world. Ecocriticism may be seen as a kind of introspection that helps us figure out who we are, what we believe in, and how we ought to treat our environment and the other living things around us.

ECOCRITICISM

It is generally agreed that William Rueckert coined the phrase "Ecocriticism." In 1978, he used it in an article titled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" to zero in on how ecocriticism the study of literature through an ecological lens could be useful. Ecocriticism: A Reader (The) In the mid-1980s, the Western Literary Association led the charge in defining ecocriticism as a distinct literary subgenre (WLA). There was a book published in 1996 named The Ecocritical Reader by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm. The Environmental Imagination, by Lawrence Buell, was released the very same year. While discussing the birth of ecocriticism, Glotfelty makes a distinction between the "eco" and "enviro" prefixes. Her proposed term, "enviro," places people at the center of the universe and everything else around them. Eco, on the other hand, suggests autonomy. It

promotes seeing the world's natural and cultural systems as inextricably linked.

Ecocriticism and its' Embryonic Concepts

The environmental movement is a reaction against technological progress. In the latter part of the twentieth century, in response to growing concerns that environmental degradation posed an existential danger to all human life, an environmentalist movement emerged. A broad range of fictional and nonfictional works on humans' shifting relationship with the natural world have developed since the 1960s, when the first modern environmentalist movement began in response to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* (1962). Different academic fields generate several hypotheses and formulations. Sister fields to Environmental Studies include Environmental Anthropology, Environmental History, and Environmental Philosophy. It's common knowledge that the environment suffered as a result of the rapid industrialization in the last decade of the 20th century. Nature refers to the condition of the world and its processes when they are let to evolve naturally, without human interference. Contrary to the artificial, nature is always the winner. Similarly Land that has never been developed is considered to be "wilderness." There is a long history of people being estranged from the natural world. Since industrial capitalism emerged in Western Europe and extended via colonialism, ecocritics have given greater attention to its Christian and post-Christian Western cultural foundations. Ecocriticism has done significant philosophical and historical work in analyzing this man-nature dualism tradition.

Descartes's methodical isolation of humans from the natural world is a hallmark of the Enlightenment age. As a result of contemporary society and human actions, the natural world is deteriorating rapidly. Howarth puts it this way: "the assumption that civilization will always overcome nature has long steered Western growth, driving the wars, invasions... that have filled the globe and taxed it carrying capacity" (77). As a result of modernization, people are adopting a more Western way of life and way of thinking. Humans are seen as the pinnacle of creation in the eyes of the West. The Bible supports this idea, stating that man is the most logical of all creatures and hence ought to have authority over others. In his opinion, White is correct in saying, "Both our current science and our present technology are so tintured with orthodox Christian arrogance toward nature... we must reassess our nature and destiny" (14). Since the 1990s, there has been a growing field of study known as "literature and environment studies." The initial wave of this study tended to connect environment with nature, placing an emphasis on literary representations of nature in genres including poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. The second wave has paid more attention to urban literature, focusing particularly on the discovery of natural disaster sites inside urban areas and the exposure of eco-injustice crimes

committed against the most vulnerable members of society.

Concerns for the natural world and the means by which writers and thinkers portray the grim truth of our rapidly deteriorating environment are at the heart of the third wave of ecocriticism. It's a stage for laying out not only the ways in which humans have oppressed nature, but also the ways in which nature has been exploited to oppress, and the potential future outcomes of this. Ecocriticism mostly triumphed in the academic world by defeating the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE). The ASLE takes an interdisciplinary approach, bringing together fields as diverse as literary and cultural theory, philosophy, sociology, psychology, and ecology. In the middle of the twentieth century, it rose to popularity as a critical method. The word "Ecocriticism" was first used in the late 1970s, as Buell points out accurately. (13). Given its multidisciplinary nature, its scope is vast, and it places a premium on environmentally responsible progress. One of the most compelling ethical questions raised by ecocriticism is the plight of animals. In this regard, Sumathy's opinion that "Literature plays a very vital part in generating awareness about the environment" is spot on. Ecocriticism, like postcolonial theory, gives a platform to the "nonhuman other," or "other than human," perspective (1). To comprehend the cultural trends that have led to the current global ecological disaster, ecocritics analyze the history of notions like "nature," as Kerridge puts it in his definition of ecocriticism. .

As a socio-political framework, these varied perspectives, such as Feminism and Marxism, have an impact on how ecocritical texts are viewed. Ecocriticism is a cultural representation of nature and human interaction with nature in a given era. For example, in the seventeenth century, people saw nature as a goddess worthy of adoration, but nowadays, people see nature solely as a resource to be exploited. That devastation, as Guha puts it, "owed itself to the fact that contemporary man had desacralized nature regarding it as a source of raw material to be exploited" . Because of its common ground with Feminism and Marxism, Ecocriticism seeks to strengthen ties between environmental concerns and social justice problems at a time when a more socially and ecologically conscious way of living is urgently required. According to Glotfelty, "ecocriticism" refers to "the study of the link between literature and the physical environment." Like feminist critique, which looks at language and literature through the lens of gender, and Marxist criticism, which reads texts with an eye on production methods and social stratification, ecocriticism centers its analysis on the planet Earth.

Humanity's interdependence on other species and on the inanimate environment is the subject of this field of study. Degradation of natural resources is another area of research within environmental

science. Using the standards of ecocriticism theory, we may examine humanity's changing interaction with the natural world. Scholars believe that the civil rights movement, feminism, and, more recently, environmental activism were the three most significant discourses of the 20th century. All these groups, despite their variations, appear to be working toward the same goal: the complete denial of traditional hierarchical and patriarchal structures of property and dominance. According to Kerridge, "Anthropocentrism is the putting of mankind at the heart of everything, so that all forms of life will be considered simply as resources to be devoured by humans" (532). This indicates that humans, who see themselves as superior to other animals, are the primary focus, since humans make extensive use of animal species for their own ends. Humans put themselves at the center, believing that everything around them—including the non-human world—exists to serve their needs. As a result, humanity now stands in a position of dominance over nature, while nature takes a back seat. Ecofeminism, the intersection of ecocriticism and feminism, is another fundamental idea in the field. Feminism, ecology, animal rights, anti-racism, and anti-colonialism are all subsets of ecofeminism. Plum wood states, "Ecological feminism is primarily a reaction to a series of important challenges brought up by the two big social currents of the latter half of the century—feminist and the environmental movement," which helps to situate the current state of ecological feminism (10). Ecofeminism, a school of structuralist anthropology, cites the premise that women are subservient to males as a central insight. The same beliefs that sanction violence against women also justify destroying the natural world. It developed in response to androcentric dualism, the cultural and social ideal that men are superior to women.

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LITERATURE AND SOCIETY

The common knowledge is that literature reflects culture. What occurs in a society is mirrored in literary works in one way or another. When taken at face value, literature is the practice of creating written works such as poems, plays, short tales, novels, and other works of fiction. Imaginative works may be included, but factual ones are possible as well. A society consists of individuals who maintain constant and unbroken ties to one another. It's also a community of individuals who share similar beliefs and values. It has been noticed that human civilization is defined by the patterns of connection between people who share common cultural traits. Looking back through time, from the Paleolithic to the Information Age, it is clear that diverse cultures have undergone a variety of transformations in their fundamental character. There has never been a time when the population's way of life, religious practices, cultural norms, and so on were all the same. We see that cultures have not remained rigid with respect to their standards and values across time, as shown by the fact that they are reflected in various literary forms. Kalidas, the greatest poet to emerge from India, is

understandably nervous about the public's mood, but he ultimately convinces them to see things his way, offering them a bridge between the ancient and the modern. The poet reveals his lack of confidence in the reception of *Malavikamitam*, his debut play. Therefore, he argues that the blockade must have his judgment, guided by the knowledge of his neighbors, in the first scene of the play: "Every old poem is not good because it is old; nor is every new poem to be blamed because it is new; sound critics, after critical examination, choose one or the other."

Individuals and communities from all over the world have spoken their own unique languages to achieve their goals. As a whole, literature and society may sometimes be accused of a lot of things. A literary work is prohibited because it is seen as reflecting the values and conventions of an opposing group. The instances of Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Tashima Nasrin's *Lazza* bear witness to such claims. Literature has an effect on society whether it be immediate or indirect. It seems certain that Miss Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin" was a major factor in the literary and cultural backlash against slavery in early 20th-century America. In a roundabout way, Dickens's works helped foster a desire to control and eradicate societal ills and a desire to implement required changes. The works of Sarat Chandra have done much to challenge the traditional attitudes of our culture about women. However, it is certain that if we care about literature, we will be profoundly affected by its effect. Life's stories are the stuff from which literature is crafted. Inevitably, the realist painter exaggerates life's quirks and worse details. In contrast, a complete understanding of life necessitates familiarity with its fewer savory aspects as well. Literature is therefore a product of social interaction. It's a reflection of our culture in many ways. But whether the author is progressive or reactionary in his viewpoint determines the quality and type of the reflection.

The Rape of the Lock is an Example of Relationship between the Two

Poems like "The Rape of the Lock" reveal the deeper connections between literature and culture. Alexander Pope, in this poem, asserts himself as the voice of his day. This poem captures the era's fake vibe and the girlish side of femininity in all its frivolity. The jealousies, treacheries, and intrigues of the social life of the eighteenth-century nobility are all shown here in all its ugliness, emptiness, meanness, and vanity. The aristocratic women of the day are portrayed in the poem as slothful and late-rising, with a penchant for household pets. At twelve, Belinda wakes up but soon drifts off to sleep again. At the poem's outset, we are also introduced to the shallowness of the women who like golden carriages and pretend to enjoy the game of ombre. Likewise, the first canto hints at their desire to wed peers and dukes or men bearing other high titles:

Then gay ideas crowd the vacant brain,
While peers and dukes, and all their sweeping
train....



An Image of Alexander Pope

The poem highlights the "various vanities" of the women of the day, including their coquetry, art, and artifice. These women have mastered the art of the interesting eye roll and blush from an early age. Like a series of toy stores that shifted from one gallant to the next, their hearts were always full with exciting new toys.

Inter-Relation of Individual Personality and National Interests

To read literature is to take in anything with both a personal and a national flavor and interest. The evolution of literature over the ages is a fascinating study in contrasts. It's a history of writing by many different authors, yes, but it's also a history of a massive body of literature that, taken as a whole, should be seen as the output of the collective genius of the people. Our literature reflects the whole spectrum of human experience that has contributed, for better or worse, to the fabric of American society. In the same way that standard English history is the English nation's biography, English literature is the English nation's autobiography. While studying the development of English literature, we get firsthand knowledge of each generation's outlook on life, as well as the topics that captivated and amused them, the emotions that moved them deeply, the moral and aesthetic principles by which they were guided, and so much more. That's why literature reveals the progressive intellect and the people's soul.

Reflection Theory

The key focus for sociologists studying literature has always been the way in which literature can be used to

learn more about society. Previous research on literature's influence on the formation of social action has been rather scant. Reflection theory is the name given to the former method, which holds that literature may be "read" to glean insights on social behavior and values. Various critics have argued that literature reflects the "economics, family connections, climate and landscapes, attitudes, morality, races, social classes, political events, wars, and religion" of the civilization that created it. A reflection viewpoint is a common one in journalistic social commentary, and most readers will be at least somewhat acquainted with it. Reflection, however, is a metaphor rather than a philosophy. Reflection is based on the evident and fundamental premise that the social environment of a cultural effort impacts the cultural work. However, this allegory of introspection is flawed. By default, in a reflective stance, you think that literature adheres to a straightforward mimetic theory in which it just documents the social environment without posing any questions to the reader. To be more precise, literature is a linguistic construction; the experience it offers is symbolic and mediating rather than direct. It is thus imperative that studies arguing for literary proof of social patterns specify how and why some social patterns are absorbed into literature while others are not.

CONCLUSION

Therefore, the narrative depicts how man's anthropocentric perspective is dispelled via immersion in the natural world. It teaches us how to treat Mother Nature with respect and how the horrors committed in the name of civilization's advancement are, in reality, destroying our ability to live in harmony with the natural world. Thus, the study of English literature, for instance, will lead us out into the broad subject of English history, which includes the history of English politics and society, manners and customs, culture and learning, and philosophy and religion. Taine writes that the features of an era, like the attributes that mix in a person, are not only juxtaposed but are instead interconnected and mutually reinforcing. Therefore, we must make it our mission to connect the dots between literature from any period and the other major facets of national life at that time. Understanding the writer's own era's defining features is, thus, crucial. An author is not an island, but rather a by-product of the time in which he or she lives and works. The effects of his age are all over his outlook on life. Thus, literature is only a reflection of reality, a replication, and inevitably a social record. Literature.

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