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Shakespeare's *The Tempest* : An Eco critical Interpretation

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ABSTRACT

Eco criticism emerges in the field of literary criticism in the face of the environmental degradation and ecological crisis. Eco criticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment, it takes an earth centered approach to literary studies .Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares one fundamental premise the human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Eco criticism takes as its subject the interconnection between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artefacts of language and literature. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* has to offer, as it also speaks the issue of morality, primogeniture and even carrier some interesting Eco-critical reading. The play explores the relationship between man and nature further probes the destruction of the original social when the ecological balance is broken. This paper analyse Shakespeare's *The Tempest* by an ecocritical interpretation.

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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare, the Bard of Avon, "was not for an age but for all time"! He was a single creative genius, who in his plays, encompassed so much of variety, profundity, and abundance of life that his plays have today been canonized as "humanistic scriptures, the tested residue of pragmatic wisdom, a general collection of quotable texts and usable examples." Reprinted and re-edited time and again, commented upon exhaustively, and translated into languages, his plays occupied more space on the library shelves than the book of any of other single author. There is nothing mysterious or romantic about Shakespeare's life. The source of our knowledge about his early life is the Startford Register, the earliest register preserved in the church of Holy Trinity of Stratford-upon-Avon. He was the son of John Shakespeare, a tanner and Glover at Stratford, and Mary Arden, a woman of

higher social standing. However, he did not study in a University and may not be regarded as a scholar as one would call Milton or Jonson a scholar. Yet his plays reveal his familiarity with Latin and French and knowledge of other languages, ancient and modern history, philosophical speculation, continental fiction, earlier English poets such as Chaucer and Gower, and contemporary writers.

His genius is so versatile and so concretely versed in many trades that member of every profession-a lawyer, a sailor, a botanist etc. He died on April 23,1616 at the age of fifty four. Before his death he had written 37 plays, and 154 sonnets. His thirty seven plays have often been conveniently classified as comedies, tragedies, histories, roman plays and the romances. It is true that Shakespeare has been made into something he was not in his own lifetime, a cultural institution and an emblem, whose quality and artistry are not in doubt. So he

will no doubt survive radical and systematic counter-interpretation just as he has survived institutional appropriation from victorian times to the present.

ECO CRITICISM

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. It takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. Ecocritics and theorists ask questions like the following: How is nature represented in this sonnet? What role does the physical setting play in the plot of this novel? Despite the broad scope of inquiry and disparate levels of sophistication, all ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture, specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land. Ecocriticism can be further characterized by distinguishing it from other critical approaches. Literary theory, in general, examines the relations between writers, text, and the world. In most literary theory "the world" is synonymous with society-the society sphere. Ecocriticism expands the notion of "the world" to include the entire ecosphere. If we agree with Barry Commoner's first law of ecology, "Everything is connected to everything else," we must conclude that literature does not float above the material world in some aesthetic ether, but, rather plays a part in an immensely complex global system, on which energy, matter, and ideas interact.

The term Ecocriticism was possibly first coined in 1978 by William Rueckert in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experimental in Ecocriticism". By ecocriticism Rueckert's meant "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature." Rueckert's definition, concerned specifically with the science of ecology, is thus more restrictive than the one proposed in this anthology, which includes all possible relations between literature and physical world.

Shakespeare's The Tempest: An Ecocritical perspective

The Tempest believed to be the last play of Shakespeare and believed to have been written in 1610-1611. It is set on a remote island, where the

Prospero, right Duke of Milan, plots to restore his daughter Miranda to her rightful place using illusion and skilful manipulation. He conjures up a storm, the eponymous tempest, to lure his usurping brother Antonio and the complicit King Alonso of Naples to the island. There, his machinations bring about the revelation of Antonio's lowly nature, the redemption of the king, and the marriage of Miranda to Alonso's son Ferdinand.

The Tempest explores the relationship between man and nature and further probes the destruction of the original social relationship when the ecological balance is broken. It makes an attempt to assess the identity, position and function of the characters in both positive and negative dimensions with respect to their interconnectedness with ecological phenomena. The Tempest, as the name reveals, is very close to nature, hence both Man-Nature confrontation and cooperation are experienced.

The title of the play refers not merely to the brief storm in the first scene but also greater tempest which is dealt with throughout the play. The opening scene create a storm that overtunes societal convention and an ecocritical perception. Although Prospero and his art cause the storm, he cannot completely control or dominate nature. All physical manifestations of power and supernatural phenomena occur through Ariel. Prospero did not dominate nature to control it instead, he freed nature from nature. Prospero's power is not supreme or absolute because it is necessarily entwined with, and therefore reliant upon nature. *The Tempest* attempts to impose order upon chaos by ascribing meaning to natural phenomena. Those travellers with good intentions are aided by fate; those with poor intentions or past sin are hurt by it. Immediately after tempest, Prospero tells of their own arrival to the island.

Twelve years since, Miranda, twelve year since, Thy father was the Duke of Milan, and A Prince of power. (Act I, Scene II.P.55)
The shipwreck extends these overturned and chaotic paradigms to the island, allowing the audience to experience a new way of seeing society and nature. It states the affinity between Tempest and Ecology.

CONCLUSION

It concludes that in *The Tempest* Shakespeare has foretold us the truth that man is only an indispensable part of the nature of being depended and depending the significance of approaching *The Tempest* from the vision of ecocriticism lies in its interrogating Man and Nature relationship and revitalizing ecological consciousness in an individual.

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