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# Research Chronicler

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A detailed still-life composition featuring a quill pen as the central element. The quill is positioned diagonally, with its tip resting on a scroll of aged parchment. The scroll is tied with a red ribbon and a wax seal. In the background, a lit candle in a brass holder provides a warm, ambient light. In the foreground, a glass inkwell with a quill inside and a red wax seal are visible. The entire scene is set on a dark wooden surface.

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**Ted Hughes' Crow's First Lesson: An Eco-critical Study****Mr. Suresh D. Sutar***Asst. Professor, Dept of English, Dr. Tatyasheb Natu College, Margtamhane. (M.S.) India***Abstract**

Literature being a reflection of life has been always authentic in its presentation and representation of life. And it is same everywhere in the world irrespective of the region and religion of the person or place. However, change being the principle of life has become the rule and regulation of literature too. In the course of time both the man and his creation has undergone a sea change. The principle of equilibrium has been entered in every walk of life. And it has been witnessed in literature too being it an imaginative reconstruction of life. The eco-critical approach to literature is a fine example of establishing the ethics of equality in life everywhere in the universe. It is a mission undertaken by sensitive human souls to stop the evolution of man where he is on the verge of becoming a beast which is more dangerous than animal or man.

**Key Words:** Eco-criticism, Ted Hughes, Crow's First Lesson.**Eco-Critical Theory:**

Eco-criticism was a term coined in the late 1970s by combining "criticism" with a shortened form of "ecology". The term is defined as:

"Eco-criticism is the cultural writings which explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment conducted with an acute awareness of the devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities." (01)

Being Eco-criticism a recent modern term emerged in literature due to the destructive role of human being of ransacking the whole for its own selfish gains irrespective of the lives around and their equal right for survival; it has become a leading theory in literary criticism.

"Eco-criticism is a new subfield of literary and cultural enquiry that emerged in the

1980s and 1990s, devoted to the investigation of relations between literature and the natural world and to the rediscovery and reinterpretation of 'natural writings' in the light of recent ecological concerns." (02)

Literature serves life by all means. So, there is and has to be an interdependency between the base of literature that is life and the reflection of life that is literature. Human being is the most rational being on the earth. But whether it is conscious of the relationship between literature and the biological and physical environment around it is a big question one has to answer constructively. Having adverse effect of Western anthropocentric civilization on the whole life of the universe, we the human being has thought ourselves superior to nature. We have felt it free and righteous to exploit natural resources and animal species for our own selfish gains. For our own self-

centered benefit, we have thoughtlessly learned from the Bible the principle:

“God gave man “dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth” (03)

Alteration being the basic belief of life, eco-centric culture took the place of anthropocentric civilization. In other words, oriental philosophy of life where the natural world is a sacred living took the place of Western line of thinking where human being is dominant over all the species in the universe. The Indian poet in English Dilip Chitre has uttered the eastern values in his poem *The Failing of a Bunyan Tree* where the poet-speaker utters:

“Trees are holy and sacred my grandmother used to say  
Felling them is a crime but he massacred them all  
The sheoga, the oudumber, the neem were all cut down” (04)

The significance of ‘love’ has been underlined by a good number of men of letters in the literature all over the world. The younger Romantic poet Lord Byron has thrown a significant light on the necessity of gaining love as the ultimate goal of glorious youth:

“There chiefly I sought thee, there only I found thee;  
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround thee;  
When it sparkled o’er ought that was bright in my story;  
I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.” (05)

The movement called deep ecology underlined the fact that all living things and their earthly environment have equal

significance, worth and ethical and political rights. Man and nature are not binaries. They are communally interconnected and mutually constitutive. All this has brought the significant principle of equality in the field of life, art and literature. The concept of green reading emerged on the canvas of literature which analyzed the implications of a text from environmental point of view. Our original unity with nature giving concreteness and values to a natural world became quite important in such reading. It underlined deeply and almost honestly the need of an environmental and ecological consciousness. This new concept of life made a severe note of selfish ransacking of nature from newly established industrial plants established by human being. It also considered how far a writer’s race, ethnicity, social class and gender cause for a difference in his attitude towards the environment.

Ted Hughes is one of the twentieth century’s greatest English poets. He started writing poetry when he was fifteen years old. From 1955 to 1956; he worked as a rose gardener, night-watchman, zoo attendant, and schoolteacher. These earlier obligatory services on the part of him might have been caused for his unique and constructive approach to nature and its inhabitants which has found crystal clear expression in his poetry. Thus, his poetry has the hawk, the crow, the fox, and the owl as protagonists, metaphors, myths and symbols. They stand for the beastly behavior of man. His poems convey the state of human being behaving in the guise of hunting animal and birds and destroying the very roots of life. This may be the basic reason for applying the eco-critical

theory to many of his poems for everywhere he has brought into limelight the horrible and destructive actions of the so-called rational animal called man.

Ted Hughes was thoroughly influenced by Darwin's theory of evolution. He was also greatly feared by it for it had an adverse effect on the life all over the world. Being a rational and supreme animal in the world and the so-called self centered leader of all the species in life in the world, man used the principle 'survival is the fittest' for his own selfish gains only. He got a universal permit and license to destroy almost all the species around him just for his own satisfaction.

During the period of 41 years, Ted Hughes wrote about ninety books and won numerous prizes and fellowships. In 1984, he was appointed as England's poet laureate. Like Robert Frost in America, Hughes has been rightly entitled after a nature poet. As a keen countryman he gave more than enough justice to his primary passion that he was born with and remained loyal to it in his whole life from its beginning to its end.

The poem '*Crow's First Lesson*' is quite unique and special for the consistent attempts on the part of God in teaching the language of love to the bird called crow. He tries to preach the bird how to speak the language of mercy, pity, peace and love. He tries to teach the bird the significant principle of love. But the bird instead of uttering the tongue of love omits abominable and hate worthy things that he had swallowed for its own existence. It does not utter any meaningful sound of love but omits the hateful things such as a shark, a blue fly, a tsetse, a mosquito. It means that

the bird knows only just to swallow and omit whatever has been eaten and not to utter any language of love as such. Instead of speaking the language of love it omits the things that it had swallowed for its sustained existence. It may be because; the bird has survived on the principle of brutal and merciless killing. While eating the creatures on the earth either dead at the hands of man or alive the bird does not think of their life. On the contrary, it gives due importance to his own survival than to the lives around it. It has thoroughly neglected the quality of love and principle of equality. It is quite strange that God tries to transform such a slaughterer from top to bottom. Having this pious mission, and being it for His own creatures God does not give up His attempts of preaching holy qualities to the bird. Therefore He makes His sincere attempts for thrice and not for only once. However, every time, God receives more bitter experience than the previous one being the receiver a brutal and vicious slaughterer. In the end, the crow omits woman's vulva which falls on man's neck & tightens both of them. This very scene bitterly surprises and makes our creator quite dismal and depressing. In the end, God gives up his attempts of preaching the bird the qualities of mercy, pity, peace and love and thereby to save His rational animal. He sees down that man & woman are struggling on the grass for bodily satisfaction. It is utterly disliked by God. He tries to separate both of them. But here too He fails in His action. Thus, in the end, God curses the bird, the man and the woman and leaves the scene shading tears which is a significant happening ever happened in literature all over the world. It is because the

victorious Creator has accepted His defeat and left the whole thing to the destiny of His own creation. Hardly, any one has found such kind of helplessness on the part of our creator.

In short, the imagery of crow conveys that even the all pervasive, omnipotent God has thoroughly failed to induce love into his self-created world which is full of malice and malevolence. The principle of love is basic to all worlds irrespective of their form and feelings. However, the bird produces a world of sharks, blue flies, mosquitoes and lust. All these things are the symbols of hate and abhorrence. Like Adam in *The Paradise Lost* the bird crow goes against the warning and preaching of the God. Rather it hides each and everything from its own creator that Adam had done in the paradise before his fall:

“Crow gaped, and the white shark  
crashed into the sea  
And went rolling downwards,  
discovering its own depth  
‘No, no’, said God, ‘Say Love, Now  
try it. Love’  
Crow gaped, and blue fly, a tsetse, a  
mosquito  
Zoomed out and down  
To their sundry flesh-spots.” (06)

In the whole universe a crow is regarded as a very smart, brawny and brutal survivor. It

is from the bird again that we learn how do things work. We can also understand the consequences of events from the very cry of the bird crow. In this poem, the poet has tried to establish a kind of similarity between the crow and Man. To some region, religion and people crow is the precursor of death. It is a dreadful and in a way venomous creature in the world. Here, the poet has tried to form both the similarity and contrast between both the bird and the beast called man.

The whole poem has underlined the fact that how human weakness and inclination towards sin are realistically and drastically responsible for the ruin of the whole human race. No doubt, crow's actions are brutal and unpleasant. However they are somehow more honorable than the actions of human being. The bird crow is quite unable in differentiating between good and bad. However, man has been given the rational reason to separate the evil from the good. It is because we are supposed to be the more intelligent species among all the species in the world. Still we are ahead in the destruction of the heavenly life created by God for His creation. To sum up, reasonless animals and birds can be forgiven more than their so called rational leader.

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