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A Case of Eco-Critical Interpretation of Seascapes as a Memorable Story in Lord of the Flies in the Novel by William Golding

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Abstract

The novel, Lord of the Flies, was written in 1954 and it was not the only one that earned Golding a Nobel Prize. It deals with the issue of human nature, society, and morality and is discussed by the story of a bunch of British boys who are trapped on an island and become savages. It was won in 1983 when Nobel prize in literature was conferred on William Golding because of his novels which, with the straightforwardness of a realistic narrative art and the variety and universality of a myth, and enlighten us on the human condition in the world of today. It complicates the bond between humanity and nature, in this paper, we will examine explicit and implicit links between man and nature as depicted in the novel. Using the prism of eco-criticism, the paper assesses the environmental awareness as presented in the personalities of the boys who are washed ashore to the island. The study has serious implications because it opens up a new avenue of analyzing literary works within ecological standpoints thereby extending the literary analysis. In this paper, the lord of flies by William Golding is explained in terms of the theoretical framework of blue ecology which holds a prediction of oceans, shoreline, watery spaces and human water relations ethics. The waterscapes of the island used by Golding have had a significantly less eco focus. It claims that the sea, lagoon, beaches, tides and storms comprise an active blue ecological system; it is the one which mediates power, fear, survival, and moral crisis and imaginative transformation among the boys. The paper unveils the role of water as a non-living ecological power that impacts human behaviour, culture and the expression of the failure of moral order.

Keywords: Eco-Criticism, Nature, Water, Blue Ecology, Eco Consciousness, Human Behaviour.

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Introduction

Eco-criticism examines the connection between literature and space. It examines how human beings with their actions lead to their destruction by disrupting the balance between them. Ecocriticism has got an association to ecology because the theory in literary studies was proposed because man and his environment are interdependent and interrelated in many aspects. Everything in the universe is reliant on another. An example is man and nature which relies on each other to protect themselves and survive [6]. Ecocriticism is a term that was coined by William Ruekert. He causes man to understand the significance of factors pertaining to the ecosystem, which are connected to his theory.

Seascapes as a memorable story in Lord of the Flies

In the novel, Lord of the Flies, William Golding makes them believe that the boys who are 6 to 12 years old are stranded on an abandoned island after the plane crashes (Golding, 1954). The island is with no adult humans on it and in its very natural form. The boys begin to live there, however, after some time issues start to emerge. And there starts the competition between them in choosing the head and they fear a beast somewhere on the island. They agree to kindle fire to attract the attention of the passing ships but Jack, who envies the influence of Ralph, thinks that the boys should hunt pigs other than keeping fire. They also begin to contaminate and devastate nature which is pure up to that moment. The more they stay on the island, the more barbaric they are going to be. Gradually their dormant and latent evils start to emerge. They are blood-thirsty of each other.

They extinguish the fire that they are burning without caring about its significance, since the ships will be passing by the island at that moment without any notice. At this point they are throwing a pig hunt. All re-enactment of the pig hunts in a frenzy until Simon, still bloody, sweaty, falls down into the middle of the mad boys. He attempts to inform them of the beast but the boys stab him with spears until he dies. The sea sweeps his body off. It's all downhill from here. Jack and his friends assault Piggy and Ralph and steal the glasses of Piggy and in the process; Roger pushes another boulder down a cliff and kills Piggy. Ralph runs away with him, and Jack and his crew are behind.

A naval officer arrives there and saves them all at the time. In this exploration, it is brought out how nature and man influence each other. How man influences nature and the way nature influences him back. The ecological consciousness that has been discussed in the novel is presented through the storyline by William Golding. The environment problem is the permanent worry of the countries. Securing the protection of the environment and keeping safe is the everyday worry of most people. The problem is the primary topic of work of many authors. But yet the problem of its protection appears to remain unsolved. It has become one of the work concerns of William Golding in The Lord of the Flies [1]. In the novel, the characters are marooned on a tropical island. They do not have as favourable weather as possible. It is wet and humid, and punctuated by storms and torrential rains, such as is the case with a tropical island.

Violence against Nature and Moral decay

The law of the environment prescribed itself to them. It has been employed as an instrument of practicing violent and savagery. According to Golding, human nature, without being bound by the restrictions of the society, attracts people out of the line of sensible order into savagery. The primary aim of the contemporary study is to attempt to capture the topics of environment, which are depicted in the entire novel. Some of the reasons why Golding wrote the novel and how he depicted the negative effects of interactions of the characters on the isolated and hostile island have been determined using new criticism.

Our environment is dynamic, and with the change in the environment, the necessity to grow more and more conscious of the environmental issues that are altering the environment is also on the increase. This change in temperature is as a result of human activities that have dumped vast quantities of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases (methane, nitrous oxide and fluorinated gases) into the atmosphere. According to this quote by Valérie Masson-Delmotte, a top scientist of the University of Paris-Sac lay, it is evident that the climate of the earth is changing and the impact of human beings on the climate system has been harmful and thus needs elimination.

The novel begins with a bunch of boys marooned on a deserted island. The initial two characters that we meet are Ralph and Piggy. They also concede that they are on a deserted island, and resolve to begin exploring the island where they may come across other survivors. This is 4 an island realizes Ralph. At least I think it's an island. That's a reef out in the sea"(2). He is happy to be in some kind of tropical paradise. He discovers a lagoon on the beach that is parted by a wall of naturally banked sand with the lagoon of the island. It forms an "incredible pool"(8). When Ralph saw this, he dived, surface, and swam with his eyes open under water; the edge of the pool was sandy, and rose like a hill-side. He rolled over, with his nose in his hand, and a golden light jumped and broke right over his face"(8).

The Island as an Ecological space

The Island is so delightful, quiet and idyllic, and at first so beautiful that even a young schoolboy is sensitively aware of its poetical verisimilitude. According to Ralph, the chief, it is the imagined but never fully achieved place that is jumping into actual life (11). Desolated, fruitful, it is the seat of the common and the supernatural. Ralph is happily aware of the nest belonging to the sea birds like icing on a pink cake (24). Simon is another main character who sees the buds on evergreen bushes as candles (30) with spiritual meaning. The novel develops the sensibility, which appreciates nature and it becomes acquainted with an unknown and scary natural world.

The island remembers the Garden of Eden how fertile and wealthy it was. When describing the island, Golding employs words like palm trees, cocoanuts with green shadows of the palm, coolness and shade, tropical weed and coral, a coral reef, the lagoon which overstate the abundance of the island and serve to emphasize the experience of the boys as they meet the nature and the chances of success in settlement and survival in the environment full of some act of God (8). To them it is "Treasure Island"(35) since it satisfies all their biological needs "There's pigs; there's food; and bathing-water in that little stream up there--and everything"(35).

The abundance of the island can be related to the abundance of the food that the boys can have. Far there are acres of fruit, where the laziest might get a spongy meal with little trouble (61). The boys witness certain aspects of nature as they walk on the island. they hear the call of the radiant fantastic birds [4]. Butterflies move and dance round one another in the hot air. The flowers and fruit grew on the same tree and everywhere was the smell of ripeness and the buzzing of a million bees at pasture (61). The descriptions of nature by Golding are not designed to represent lifeless images of the natural world, or the landscape, but to reveal a living landscape- a landscape full of vibrant ecology.

The relationship of the boys to external nature is built with the help of everyday reminiscence of human reliance on the natural world, as well as the possibility to appreciate the beauty of nature that is not expected. They are aware of their natural environment and also of how they are connected to the environment in which they are. A sort of glamour had been diffused on them and on the scene and they were aware of the glamour and made happy by it"(23). This growing consciousness can be encapsulated by Freedman who writes: The psychological concept of sensibility gives way to the epistemological concept of cognition; the aesthetic problem of objectifying internal perception in art gives way to the existential problem of identity (Golding 201)

Anthropocentrism and domination of Nature

In Lord of the flies, Golding delves into the wide range that man reacts to the surrounding environment [5]. Golding pushes his boys into the mysterious island, putting them on it, and he lets them explore the land where earth, air, fire and, water create and define the meanings of existence. Malin Irving in her article the elements of William Golding notes that Golding identifies the four characters in his novel with the four elements of Golding, fire, earth, air and water. They have to go back to the components to which they belong in the first place.

“Piggy and fire? Jack and earth? Simon and air? Ralph and water? Golding understands that even such primitive life is a mystery. There is no doubt, but he relates personality and element.... The four boys continuously touch the elements, either consciously or unconsciously. They fight each other since they are attached to other things (in various combinations). And they torment themselves in their will to be ruled (or rule) by only one thing. (Golding 38)

Moreover, the key characters of the novel are typically marked with some imagery. With the conch, Ralph coordinates the building of shelters and fire signal. He has silent authority and leadership that the boys greatly admire. Jack, with his sharpened stick, is the part of the hunter who follows the pigs and supplies meat. He is the head of the savages with his strident and threatening manner. Piggy and his glasses symbolize science and intelligence. He is a brilliant boy giving the best ideas with his sight and sense. This lone wandering by Simon is taken to introduce a lot of insight into the novel. He is sociable and generous, but sometimes, withdrawn and lonely. He is out in the jungle alone at night and even mounts the mountain to challenge the beast. He is mentally strong, yet physically weak, full of insight and human susceptibility.

The action of the boys is the result of their responses, their interactions with each other, and their interactions with their new surroundings. In abandoning culture, they abandon their humanity, and get reinitiated into nature, on its own conditions. Their perceptions are naked and cultureless, merged with the perceptions of the surrounding creatures, so that, being a part of the natural world to which they belong, they cannot be separated. During his initial experience of the new setting, Ralph strips himself and throws himself into the water. By disrobing him, Ralph shows that he wishes to sink his old self in water and to assume another identity, which is more appropriate to the new setting. Once the boys stop believing in law and order, they start to act differently. When hunting pigs, the behavior of the process is ritualized and frenzied, shouting, Kill the pig. Cut her throat. Spill her blood"(76). They become hysterical, and begin

to lose their identities. It is at this point that the novel moves in the direction of a tragic conclusion. The battle between the boys turns evil, and the glasses belonging to Piggy are stolen, leaving him blind. Sam and Eric are taken captive, whereas Piggy is killed when the boys head to recover the glasses. Because this is done in the expense of their lives as well as the lives of other people, the dichotomies between culture and nature are further strengthened. Golding appears to have serious reservations regarding the fact that it is possible to sustain awareness of the self meaningfully in nature.

The boys enlarge the rays of the sun with the glasses of Piggy and ignite a fire, which is necessary to cook food hygienically. Creation of fire is considered one of the cultural constructions created by man as a way of discovering and cognizing nature. Amal Geldeh in her article, William Golding Symbolism in Lord of the Flies, writes that the signal fire may also be considered as a way of connecting the boys to the civilized world [3]. The fact that the fire is not extinguished implies not only that the boys are willing to go back to the society, but also that they are not giving up on their intellectual capacity.

Out of civilization, the rules, and the frameworks, the boys attempt to adapt to their new environment. They strive to keep order and achieve survival means. They elect Ralph as a leader. His duty is the fundamental system of the duties of any leader: to nourish his subjects, to house them, to assure them of no evil, and to labor to their increased safety. The boys continually gauge the success of Ralph as a leader based on his capacity to accomplish these activities. In addition, Piggy recognizes the conch shell that turns into the insignia of parliamentary order on the island, and transforms it into a purely natural object into a means of civilization.

They attempt to recreate civilization in the wilderness, as they know that in civilization, they are their greatest security. Civilization is a safeguard; the wilderness is not. The conditions on the island have distorted the concept of safety against danger. No natural enemies of this little piece of land, but there is danger, and the idea of adventure that the boys have makes danger exist in the wilderness. So, the creature comes into existence as a result of dreams and glimpses, a sense of living on a distant island. It is unbelievable that the argument about the presence of the beast, in which the predator-prey relationship is involved, is recruited to the side of reason by Piggy. (83) The story about the birth of boy about the beastie, the snake-thing, ever so big (35) is a miracle. Despite the fact that Ralph does not admit that a beast exists, the boys are trying to make their abstract and frightening fear tangible. However, this dichotomy proves to be an illusion. Fancy that the beast could be hunted and killed (143).

Another critical point of consideration in the dichotomy between man and nature is the silence of nature. Man considers nature as naturally silent. His faith in reason and intellect disconnects nature out of his mind. By the ultimate means whereby nature is lastly put to silence.

Christoper Manes writes

Our particular idiom, a pastiche of medieval hermeneutics and Renaissance humanism, with its faith in reason, intellect and progress, has created an immense realm of silences, a world of ‘not saids’ called nature, obscured in global claims of eternal truths about human difference, rationality, and transcendence. (Golding 17)

Nature as an agent and resilience

In Lord of the Flies, the island is a dynamic whole with an agency. At first, it seems Edenic full of fertility and inviting. However, the coming of the boys destroys this ecological balance. These are sounds, silences, tempests and different landscapes, this island speaks and creates emotional and psychological landscapes of those who live on it. The illusion is concentrated in the mountain when the boys confuse the dead parachutist with the monster. What was previously environmentally neutral turns into something terrifying, and it is the indication of the increasing failure of the boys to differentiate between the world of nature and the world of imagined fear.

The island is a liminal blue ecology, which symbolizes the thin line between civilization that is striving to survive. Here assemblies, shelters, systems of order temporarily crop up within this space. Nevertheless, the beach, which used to symbolize safety and order, does not provide safety as the social structure of boys becomes worse. The receding ocean and the wearing away of the coast are the reflections of the social disintegration and the loss of moral restraint.

The lagoon is initially an innocent and free place where the boys swim, explore, and have an uninhibited play. Its peace is in contrast to the growing violence that appears on the mainland, highlighting the thin border line that exists between peace and disorder. The tribe of Jack, which takes advantage of the natural features of the island including its elevation, boundaries, and rock structures makes it a tool of conquest to the environment. The tragic demise of the Piggy, and the destruction of the conch, symbolizes the concomitant destruction of natural ethics and human morality.

Fire is a technological image and an ecological power source. It is a symbol of hope and progress but then the symbol turns into an epitome of destruction and fear. When the moral order is breaking down, fire becomes not a means of survival, but a destroying power of destruction. The ecosystems on the island are destroyed by the last conflagration, which represents the almost complete destruction of the ecology. It is not a forest creature, but a manifestation of a human mind that represents the real beast Golding is referring to. The fact that the boys cannot understand how systems within an ecosystem rely on each other causes them to mythologize the environment as an enemy. This microcosmic island by Golding therefore reveals the disastrous effects of valuing nature as a passive resource and no longer as a partner.

Conclusion

Golding's Lord of the Flies can be seen as an environmental story in disguise of a psychological and political story [2]. With the help of an ecocritical approach, the island turns out to be the location where the environmental processes and human psychology meet, which creates landscapes of fear and alienation. The way the boys descend to savagery is the same as the natural world they lost their relationship with. The lush trees, blue sea and Rocky Mountains reflect and enhance the inner confusion of the characters. Ecological ignorance and anthropocentric arrogance are condemned by Golding: the island fails due to the failure of humanity. At the end of the story, it concludes that human beings break their harmony with nature, fear replaces reason, violence is unavoidable, and the ecosystems are deprived of morality and ecological collapse.

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