

## Poetry and Ecopoetry: The Expression of Connection of Man with Nature

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### Abstract

Ecopoetry is poetry with strong ecological message. It is the expression of the connection of man with nature. It is a poem about environment and environmental issues. It is a poem about non-human natural world. It is a poem about the desire for creating or demanding change. Nevertheless, critics are trying to connect its roots in the Romantic era or even before, it is relatively a new term. It is far much different from nature poem of the Romantics. It is a poem which focuses more on feeling and realising than mere enjoying and elapsing. It has come to light after poets have tried to sensitize people against the extinction of trees and plants. The Romantic Poets composed pomes on nature and her beauty, but it was not in the same sense in which critics are looking at the ecopoetry of today. In the present paper, the researcher has tried to analyse the expression of the connection of man with nature. It is an attempt to express the sympathy of man for nature and her natural entities.

**Keywords:** ecopoetry, daffodils, Romantic, trees, connection

Ecopoetry is neither more nor less than any kind of poetry. It is poetry by all means requiring the complete poetic imagination and creativity of the poet. It is as much poetry as the first man wandering in the woods must have felt the urge to express his imagination through a verse. But it did not have a name, then. It was known as a nature poem, an environmental poem or the like. The term 'ecopoetry' has received its acclaimed nomenclature only in the fall of the twentieth century. In as late as 1980, Robert Bly suggested that 'Poets have long imagined something like an ecological world view.' Poets have more than often tried to connect and reconnect the human soul with that of nature. The first such accredited poet, whose record is marked in history, was William Wordsworth, who began recollecting the spontaneous overflow of his powerful feelings and emotions in tranquility. Keats, Shelley and Byron backed him up and the entire Romantic Generation, with all their imagination and creativity, landed into the

ecological system of the mother nature and her natural affiliations. They tried to express the connection of man with nature. Their successor poets kept this tradition on and today we have a good number of poems expressing the connection of the feelings and emotions of man with that of nature. In the modern times, the poets escaped from the mere beauty of the surroundings and began feeling the grief hidden behind the silent trees. The non-human creatures received human association and poets empathizing with the trees expressed the human sufferings through them. Trees, flowers, plants, garden became a medium to express human suffering. In other words, the human suffering was felt through the suffering of the non-human existence and this connection was presented in the medium of the verse. Let's analyze some of such examples of the expressions of the connection of man with nature under the following headings.

**Daffodils:** Daffodils are perennial trumpet like flowers of amaryllis family. They are native to northern Europe and are grown in temperate climate around the world. Many poets have composed poems on Daffodils expressing their feelings and emotions but their imagination is quite different from one another. Wordsworth's 'Daffodils' emerged fluttering and dancing in the breeze, ten thousand at a glance, tossing their heads as if in a spright dance. He says,

*I wandered lonely as a cloud  
That floats on high o'er vales and hills,  
When all at once I saw a crowd,  
A host, of golden daffodils;  
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,  
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.*

*Continuous as the stars that shine  
And twinkle on the Milky Way,  
They stretched in never-ending line  
Along the margin of a bay:  
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,  
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.*

*[Daffodils]*

A glimpse of the daffodils is an everlasting and permanent joy for him. They bring him joy when he lies alone on his couch. The memory of the beauty of the daffodils is a lifetime partner in his solitude. He writes:

*The waves beside them danced; but they  
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:  
A poet could not but be gay,  
In such a jocund company:  
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought  
What wealth the show to me had brought:*

*For oft, when on my couch I lie  
In vacant or in pensive mood,  
They flash upon that inward eye  
Which is the bliss of solitude?  
And then my heart with pleasure fills,  
And dances with the daffodils.*

*[Daffodils]*

But the 'daffodils' of Robert Herrick strikes him with the idea of mortality and shortness of life. He doesn't feel happy to see the daffodils like Wordsworth. He feels sad to see its shortness of life. Herrick was a 17<sup>th</sup> century English lyric poet. He was sad to see the daffodils because they fade fast and do not last for long. He says,

*Fair Daffodils, we weep to see  
You haste away so soon;  
As yet the early-rising sun  
Has not attain'd his noon.*

*[To Daffodils]*

He requests the daffodils to stay for some more time so that he could also accompany it.

*Stay, stay,  
Until the hasting day  
Has run  
But to the even-song;  
And, having pray'd together, we  
Will go with you along.  
We have short time to stay, as you,  
We have as short a spring;  
As quick a growth to meet decay,  
As you, or anything.  
We die  
As your hours do, and dry  
Away,  
Like to the summer's rain;  
Or as the pearls of morning's dew,  
Ne'er to be found again.*

*[To Daffodils]*

The same daffodils look like 'the horns of yellow' to Edward Dorn, who asks the daffodils about the whereabouts of the place where he could be able to find a love. Dorn was an American poet and teacher by profession. He had seen poverty from close and spent his childhood under the Great Depression. So, for him the daffodils represent a rash

fortune which is swift and a love which is nowhere to be found. Dorn writes in his poem 'Daffodil Song':

*The horns of yellow  
On this plain resound  
And the twist on the air  
Of their brilliance  
Say where  
Say where I will find  
A love  
Or an arabesque  
Of such rash fortune*

*[Daffodil Song]*

In the same line of daffodils, Alicia Ostriker runs for a shelter into the daffodils. She finds solace in the company of the daffodils where there is no fear of war nor of its aftermath. Alicia Ostriker is a contemporary poet. She was born in 1937 in America. She is a Jewish feminist poet. Aged about 85 years as of now, she is called 'America's most fiercely honest poet'. About daffodils she says that watching the daffodils is a kind of defense mechanism for her to bear the agony of war and its brutality. Like an escapist she escapes from the cruelty of war to the beauty of daffodils. She escapes from the realities of war to that of the virtuality of daffodils. She says,

*The day the war against Iraq begins  
I'm photographing the yellow daffodils  
With their outstretched arms and ruffled cups  
Blowing in the wind of Jesus Green*

*Edging the lush grassy moving river  
Along with the swans and ducks  
Under a soft March Cambridge sky  
Embellishing the earth like a hand*

*[Daffodils]*

She finds some solace while looking on the daffodils. It is a kind of alternative for her. She cannot stop the war but can alternatively watch the daffodils dancing which even if do not dance appear like dancing. She further tells:

*What explains poetry is that life is hard  
But better than the alternatives,  
The no and the nothing. Look at this light  
And color, a splash of brilliant yellow*

*[Daffodils]*

She suggests that it is our duty to defend war. It destroys not only the target but also the destroyer. The humans and their feelings die out together in a war. Concluding her poem 'Daffodils' Ostriker writes:

*Don't you think  
It is our business to defend it  
Even the day our masters start a war?  
To defend the day we see the daffodils?*

*[Daffodils]*

**Trees:** Poets have tried to establish the connection of human feelings and emotions with trees. In poem after poems poets have settled the ecological system of nature with that of the nature of man. In her poem entitled 'Trees' Florence Grossman tries to attribute human emotions to trees. She writes how a tree begged her one winter night for her permission to stay with her in her house to save from the cold and how in the spring it went away vacating her house:

*One night in winter  
After the tree had begged for many nights  
To come in  
I gave permission.  
It was not an easy arrangement  
The problem of blankets  
A place to sleep  
The branches curious to touch everything.*

*Eventually it could compose itself  
By the fire.  
I would read aloud.  
It would listen and nod.  
I am sorry it is spring.  
Sap is dripping on the rug.  
The branches are feeling their way toward the door.*

*[Tree]*

Florence Grossman was an American poet, teacher, wife and mother. She composed poetry expressing human emotions and feelings. She was born in 1927 in USA and died in 2016. Her notable works include *Getting from Here to There* (1982), *Listening to the Bells* (1991) and *Surveying* (2010).

Expressing the human connections with nature and human feelings for the natural world, Alfred Joyce Kilmer subtly says that there is no poem as lovely as a tree. According to him, poems are created by fools because God is the only one who creates the trees. He says,

*I think that I shall never see  
A poem lovely as a tree.*

*A tree whose hungry mouth is prest  
Against the earth's sweet flowing breast;*

*A tree that looks at God all day,  
And lifts her leafy arms to pray;*

*A tree that may in Summer wear  
A nest of robins in her hair;*

*Upon whose bosom snow has lain;  
Who intimately lives with rain.*

*Poems are made by fools like me,  
But only God can make a tree.*

[Trees]

In the same line of trees, Virginia Poet Laureate Leigh Buckner Hanes (1893-1967) in his poem 'Trees in a Winter Storm' tries sympathizing to feel the wintry agony of trees. He feels the cold in the winter storm and realizes that humans can hide themselves to protect from the cold waves of the winter storm but the trees have no place to go. They stand throughout the winter and face the torture of the wintry storm like a poor man who has no shelter or help in the chilly winter. It seems to him as if the trees have learnt to pass the winter away by facing its ferocity. He says,

*There is no better place I know  
To think of trees in wind and snow  
Than here, where embers fall and glow...  
Trees bewildered now in snow:*

*An oak that flaunts a leaf that's dead,  
Waving it bravely overhead  
As if it were a living thing.  
A twisted pine that tries to sing  
When blasts have taken by surprise.  
A willow tree grown windy wise,  
Pretending she would like to go  
With all the vandal drifts that blow.*

*And there is one so human-like  
A shudder when the great gales strike:*

*A tulip tree that grips a cup,*

*Believing Spring will fill it up.*

*There is no better place I know  
To think of trees in wind and snow.*

*[Trees in a Winter Storm]*

Concluding the expression of the connection of the human feelings and emotions with the nature we have Gieve Patel, who beautifully depicts the human torture of trees in his celebrated poem 'On Killing a Tree'. Gieve Patel is a famous Indian poet and playwright. He ironically conveys a powerful message to the audience about the need of conserving trees through this poem. He sarcastically transmits that 'trees should not be cut down'. He claims that trees are living entities like humans and other living creatures. The author has mentioned numerous practical techniques to entirely kill or destroy a tree, throughout the poem. One might wonder how he intends to prevent a tree from being destroyed. But, sure, he is genuinely attempting to prevent tree-extinction by raising awareness of the value of trees in our lives through the effective use of irony in the poem. He says,

*It takes much time to kill a tree,  
Not a simple jab of the knife  
Will do it. It has grown  
Slowly consuming the earth,  
Rising out of it, feeding  
Upon its crust, absorbing  
Years of sunlight, air, water,  
And out of its leperous hide  
Sprouting leaves.*

*So hack and chop  
But this alone won't do it.  
Not so much pain will do it.  
The bleeding bark will heal  
And from close to the ground  
Will rise curled green twigs,  
Miniature boughs  
Which if unchecked will expand again?  
To former size.  
No,  
The root is to be pulled out –  
Out of the anchoring earth;  
It is to be roped, tied,  
And pulled out – snapped out  
Or pulled out entirely,*

*Out from the earth-cave,  
And the strength of the tree exposed  
The source, white and wet,  
The most sensitive, hidden  
For years inside the earth.*

*Then the matter  
Of scorching and choking  
In sun and air,  
Browning, hardening,  
Twisting, withering,  
And then it is done.*

[*On Killing a Tree*]

Ecopoetry is the voice and need of the contemporary time. The contemporary time is a serious time. People do not have time to read and enjoy poetry. Everybody is busy in his Smartphone and internet. There is very little time to escape from the web-series and find pleasure in the lap of nature. So, it is quite necessary for the poets to arouse the interest and feelings of people towards the extinction of trees and loss of natural entities. Ecopoetry is the very essence of the present time. Poets need to arouse the sympathy of people towards nature while researchers need to encourage them to do the same.

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