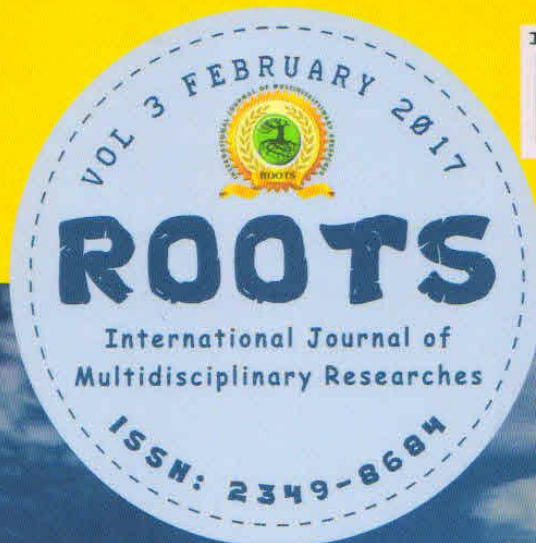


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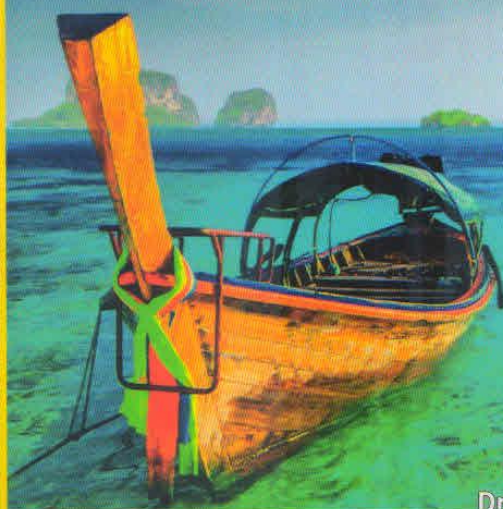
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ECOCRITICAL AND ECOSPIRITUAL CONCERNS IN MARY OLIVER'S SELECT POEMS

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Literature and Art have always given prime reverence for Nature. Nature is a recurring subject especially in poetry. Nature and poetry are always interlinked. American poetry is no exceptional in this sense. For many American poets, Nature becomes their all time favourite subject. While the classic poets like Wordsworth have romanticised Nature, poets of today not only paint the beauty of nature in their poetry but also create an intense awareness about the preciousness of Nature and the human need to protect it in the face of this modern world. For these poets, Nature is not just a wondrous element that enraptures mankind. It is also an embodiment of divinity that teaches moral values and a symbol of purity that resuscitates the soul.

According to the ecocritic Cheryl Glotfelty Nature writing in America "boasts a rich past, a vibrant present, and a promising future..." (Glotfelty xxiii). Some of the American writers whose works carry ecological awareness include Willa Cather, Robinson Jeffers, W. S. Merwin, Adrienne Rich, Wallace Stegner, Gary Snyder, and Mary Oliver.

Mary Oliver is one of the most celebrated among Nature poets in contemporary American literature. The visionary intensity with which she produces nature poetry never fails to stun the readers. This Ohio born writer has also spend some years of her life in England which indicates that her poems, carry varied landscapes, changing seasons and breath-taking images. She is a poet who seeks her 'self' and finds meaning of life in her encounters with nature.

Mary Oliver's contributions to literature mainly contain poetry and she has published numerous volumes of poetry since 1963. Other than poetry, she has also tried her hands on non-fiction books and other collections that include *A Poetry Handbook* (1999), *Rules for the Dance: A Handbook for Writing and Reading Metrical Verse* (1998), *Long Life: Essays and Other Writings* (2004) and *Upstream: Selected Essays* (2016).

Over the past two decades she has published atleast more than one book of poetry every year. Some of her

famous works in the last ten years include *Red Bird* (2006), *Our World* (2007), *Red Bird* (2009), *Swan: Poems and Prose* (2009), *Thousand Mornings* (2012), *On a Day* (2014), *Horses* (2014) and *Felicity* (2015). Her poem *Thousand Mornings* has received the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 2012. She has also received awards and honors to her credit including the National Award for Poetry in 1992 and the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1984.

Mary Oliver's poetry reveals the poet's sincere awareness of the interconnectedness of human and the natural world and the inevitability of the role of Nature in human life. Her poetry reveals the poet's deep affinity with it. She is well aware of the sense of observations of nature and the human world. Many of her poems show her reuniting the self with nature, appreciating the everyday life, experiencing moments seeking the mysterious beauty of Nature. John Elder, "The ecology of her poem reveals her emotions and ideas as fully integrated with the natural world. She is also compared with confessional poets like Sylvia Plath and the Beatniks for her love of nature and introspections.

Being a nature poet, many of her poems have been examined in the lens of Ecocriticism. The term Ecocriticism was coined by the essay "Literature and Ecology: An Inquiry into the History of Ecocriticism" published in 1979. Ecocriticism deals with the relationship between human and the natural world and how that relationship is reflected in literature. The words of Cheryl Glotfelty, "Ecocriticism is a centered approach to literary studies" also adds, "as a critical stance, it is also a critical stance. It is a critical stance and the other on land; as a critical stance, it negotiates between the human and the natural world." (Glotfelty xix).