

Loss of Nature in Kate Grenville's *The Secret River*

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Literature is a global term comprises wider life style and experience of a human. Literary theory, down the ages, is a strait sense of the systematic study of literary art and the different methods of analyzing it. Postcolonialism is dealing with the literature of the colonial landscape and about their freedom. Ecocriticism deals with the concept of change in environment. It also deals with the ideology of the past which has been restructured to the present situation. The main goal of postcolonial literature is to express the colonizer's way and how they control the people and undermine their power upon their own land. This process made a lot of changes in nature. Consequently, human beings make nature as their dwelling source. At some point of the postcolonial period, humans who play the anthropocentric role destroy nature. Nature supports man since man supports nature. Man destroys nature for greed and for his day by day cause. Due to the fact when man misplaced the honor toward nature it happens that the nature is destroyed.

Ecocriticism investigates the relationship between humans and the natural world in literature. According to Cheryll Glotfelty "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment" (Barry 239). It is also said to be the study of nature and cultural artifacts of human world. William Rueckert was the first person to use the term "ecocriticism" (Barry 240) in *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism*, an essay published in 1978. Ecocriticism is distinct from different critical approaches. Literary theory normally examines the relations among writers, texts, and the world. The present-day environmental issues are in large part of our own making a by - product of culture. Ecocriticism explores the link between the human life and the environment. Ecocriticism is considered to be a "matter of relationship between culture and nature" (Barry 243). The critic Thomas K. Dean says that ecocriticism is a response to the desires for humanistic knowledge of our relationships with the natural world in an age of environmental destruction.

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Postcolonial Ecocriticism (Poco Eco criticism) is one of the most emerging fields within postcolonial studies. It maintains the features of post colonialism directing towards the environmental dimensions of literary works. Postcolonial Ecocriticism covers an excellent variety of texts, which includes fiction, poetry and drama, from India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, the Caribbean, and the postcolonial diaspora. The postcolonial ecocritics focus upon the histories of the settlement and conservation, ecological disasters and the effect of the environment through culture. Huggan and Tiffin in his essay "Postcolonial Ecocriticism" define that this criticism is used for uniting aesthetics and advocacy. It deals with the questions of beauty and artistic taste. The primary version of Postcolonial Ecocriticism came out in 2010. The same year saw the publication of Pablo Mukherjee's *Postcolonial Environments*, Laura Wright's *Wilderness into Civilized Shapes*, and Bonnie Roos and Alex Hunt's *Postcolonial Green*; while in 2011 Rob Nixon's *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Byron Caminero-Santangelo and Garth Myers' *Environment at the Margins*, and Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley's *Postcolonial Ecologies* are published and thus this theory emerged as a vast one in literature. In *Postcolonial Ecocriticism: Literature, Animals, Environment*, Huggan and Tiffin says that "In pre-invasion Australia, the nature of the environment had dictated nomadism as the only way of life for both people and animals, but native North American groups needed to be only partially nomadic" (Huggan and Tiffin 09). Nomadism is a term used to define people or tribes who do not have a permanent place to stay and migrate from place to place for food and shelter.

Kate Grenville is one of the best known novelist and writer of non-fiction and short stories in Australia. She was born on 14 October 1950 in Sydney, Australia. Grenville begins her working life as an editor of documentary films. In her late 20s she moved to UK, where she lived and worked as an editor for several years. Grenville's *The Secret River* is a novel which has won many prizes, including the Commonwealth Prize for Literature and the Christina Stead Prize. It was also shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize and the Miles Franklin Award. From the time of publication *The Secret River* has become an international best-seller and it was translated into many languages all over the world. *The Secret River* was a historical novel which sets the background of the early 19th century Australia. It was dedicated to the aboriginal people of Australia: past, present and future. The story line of the novel revolves around the banks of the river Thames in London and the Hawkesbury River, fifty miles beyond Sydney in Australia. The novel reflects the life of William Thornhill who was born into the family of extreme poverty. He married Sal, daughter of a local waterman.

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William the first settler in New South Wales and he encounters an aborigine at the very first night of his stay. The man is dark with a spade in his hand. He was very angry towards the settlers and he shouts at them. William does not know their language but he was very much confident not to give up his self-confidence to the black man. Here the racial difference begins. "The first step towards a postcolonial perspective is to reclaim one's own past" (Barry 186). This is shown through William where he remembers his past life of London as a convict. Grenville also describes the place of William's settlement as there was no door in the house, it has a wall made with sticks and mud. William and the other settlers should live a natural life where the land is a prison surrounded by ocean. At night William could feel the darkness of the land and the nature which surrounds them. Grenville describes this as "he could feel the night, huge and damp, flowing in and bringing with it the sounds of its own life: tickings and creakings, small private rustlings, and beyond that the sougning of the forest, mile after mile" (Grenville 03). It is clear that the author had given a picture of the nature of New South Wales. The land was surrounded with forest for miles. This according to Barry is known as the area of Wilderness. It is sure that the land is covered with pure nature. The wilderness is affected by the increase in population and culture. This inhabited land is polluted by the European settlers and the forests are cut off for their own convenient use. Thus according to Barry the nature and culture are in co-existence where the first area of wilderness is turned into scenic sublime, this was because of the human inhabitation. This change of landscape is due to the cultural change and thus due to over population people started to clear the forest for their settlement.

After three years in Australia, William leaves from Mr. King's transport and he found Thomas Blackwood, who is from London. He has a solid boat which he uses to transport goods from Sydney to the settlement. William works for Blackwood. On the first trip along the Hawkesbury River, William was amazed to see the natural beauty of the river. The area is surrounded by river and human life at the edge; he also found large number of oysters. Thus William amazed the view of Hawkesbury. He secretly named one of the area as Thornhill's point. This is a dream of William that he wanted to own that place and he desired to build a house for his family. This great expectation brings a clash between the aborigines and the settlers. The settlers cleared the land they chased all the aborigines away from the place and they settle in the place by destroying nature. "One of the central tasks of postcolonial ecocriticism is to contest western ideologies of development" (Huggan and Tiffin 19). Thus these ideas of development bring a conflict between the settlers and the native people and thus the nature is totally destroyed due to the development of human culture. Along the settlement in Hawkesbury there was a settler named

Smasher Sullivan, he is a hard hearted man who behaves violently towards the aborigines. William and Blackwood drove their boat near Smashers clan and Blackwood gave the telescope to view Smashers clan. Smasher acted towards the black people violently he kiss the aborigines who enters his field. William saw a hut and some corn patches which looks as a brilliant green patch. "There was a tree stood silver in death, and from one of its branches a long sack hung on the end of a rope" (Grenville 104). At the first sight William could not recognize what was hanging on the tree. "Thornhill thought it was a scarecrow put there for the birds, then that it was a beast hung up for butchering. A catspaw of wind sent the boat tinkling across the water towards the bank. He felt the eyepiece slimy with his sweat. The burden hanging there was not a scarecrow or a hog, but the body of a black man" (Grenville 104). Thus Smasher kills the black people who enter into his clan for stealing. Blackwood advices William by telling that nothing in this world is free, he said one must learn how to give a little and take a little. Thus William understood the land is populated and the white men should understand how to live along with the aborigines, but the clash begins which forcefully made the white people to chase the aborigines away from their land. These violent activities of the settlers bring the conflict between the aborigines. Thus they killed people and destroy nature. They cleared the forest and started to build houses and made their own field for cultivation. Thus William and his son Dick they cleared all the natural plants of Australia and they cleared the forest for more than hundred acres. William cleared all the yam plants and they started to plant corns. This was seen by two black aborigines and they forcefully attacked the settlers with the spear. This brings a conflict between the aborigines and the settlers. Thus the land was occupied by the settlers. The aborigines are chased into the forest from their place of settlement.

According to Postcolonial Ecocriticism, Huggan and Tiffin, emphasizes "postcolonised communities' sense of their own cultural identities and entitlements, which often represent the ontological basis for their territorial claims to belong" (Huggan and Tiffin 20). This claim of culture of the settlers brings a conflict. The Europeans thus force their culture upon the aborigines and thus they changed the nature of the country. They started to destroy all the nature of the country. The people changed their attitude towards the native people. This change was due to the fact that they wanted a permanent place to live. These Europeans thinks that they are superior to the black and they forcefully apply their culture towards the Australian people. Thus the land was changed from the past. People change according to the changes from the culture. They also destroy nature and culture. The aboriginal culture and traditions were lost and due to the impact the nature of the land was ruined. The wild nature of the land was totally transformed and thus

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there was a drastic loss of nature in the country. Thus through this novel Grenville pictures the nature and the culture of the people and how the cultural changes of the alien people changed the landscape and finally the real beauty of nature was lost.

Works Cited

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