

Name:

Professor:

Course:

Date:

End-of-Semester Essay Response

That Odd Old Man is Dead a Year, a poem by Emily Dickson employs a somber tone in eulogizing a dead old man. The narrator, who appears close to the deceased commemorates the first year since the death of the old man by recalling his presence and demeanor. The poem has two critical concepts, which are ecopoetics and ecocriticism. According to Bate, Ecopoetics involves the use of poetic language to reflect upon what it means to dwell on this earth (1). In the poem, the narrator presents a compelling case of the old man's existence in life and the fulfillment it brought upon him. This is achieved through diction, and profound use of figurative language devices, such as imagery. Notably describing aspects of nature is a common technique employed in Ecopoetics. For instance, the evening in which the old man passed on is defined as being "bright and stiff" (Johnson Line 3), perhaps relaying an unexpected death that occurred in a calm and serene evening.

Furthermore, the old man's birth, which is also a critical ecological process, is described as being "fluent of blood" (Johnson Line 9). These words may be symbolic by implying how "full of life" the man was as a toddler and youth. As such, the author contrasts the two stages of the man's life, which are his birth and youth that were full of blood, and his death, which occurred on a bright and stiff evening. Notably, a critical aspect of Ecopoetics is the use of sensuous words to bring about consciousness on several natural issues. In the case of Dickson's poem, the natural issue highlighted is death. Being an ecological phenomenon, death is inevitable among living creatures. However, the poem, through its diction and sensuousness of words, paints an image of the implications of death among humans.

The second concept is ecocriticism. According to Morton, ecocriticism goes beyond the use of sensual words to describe the ecology to also explaining people's relationships with each other (3). Thus, the ecology goes beyond the nonliving elements to aspects of humanity, such as ideas, space, race, sexuality, gender, beauty, and even awareness and consciousness. This notion is well conveyed in the poem. The author utilizes imagery to portray sentiments such as sadness and despair for the loss of the old man. Furthermore, they relay his appearance as characterized by his "stated hat" (Johnson Line 2), and "his wrinkled" body (Johnson Line 8). Also, the narrator describes their level of intimacy with the old man, which, according to Morton, is a critical aspect of ecocriticism (5). For instance, the narrator employs flashback to relay how they miss seeing the old man come home as well as spending time with them under the light provided by the latter's "Antiquated Wick" (Johnson Line 5). Morton also argues that ecocriticism implies that humans need each other and that coexistence is critical to the ecology (3). This argument is

cemented in the poem, which shows the impact of losing companionship, as is the case of the old man's death on the narrator. In a sense of despair and profound sorrow, the narrator utters the words "Oh Life" (Johnson Line 9), which illustrates the emotional and mental implications of losing such a valuable coexistent relationship.

Through this course, I have garnered the necessary skills and intellect to analyze literary works to establish not only their superficial connotation but also their intended meaning. I have, for instance, learned to analyze and interpret the contextual basis in works of literature by reviewing the setting in terms of time, place, and relevance to establish their implied meaning. Furthermore, I have learned to identify the themes of such works by reviewing the use of diction and literary devices within works of literature. In Dickson's poem, for instance, this course has facilitated the identification of how the author uses vivid imagery, symbolism, flashback, and other literary devices to relay a theme of sadness, death, and sorrow as well as contribute to the concepts of ecocriticism and ecopoetics.

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Works Cited

Bate, Jonathan. *The Song of the Earth*. Picador, 2000.

Johnson, Thomas. *The complete poems of Emily Dickinson*. Little, Brown and Company, 1890.

Morton, Timothy. *The Ecological Thought*. Harvard University Press, 2012.

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