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**RESURRECTED SUBVERSIVE ECOLOGY:  
AN ECOCRITICAL STUDY OF ANDREW MARVELL'S  
"THE MOWER, AGAINST GARDENS"**

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**Abstract:** Ecocriticism has come as a great boon for the study of literature. Literature is nothing but human life. It is the experience of the human beings. In many cases, it acts like a mirror that reflects life. It not only delights, but also instructs. The magic of poetry brings in the delight as well as instruction. Ecocriticism clearly brings out the reality and realisation. This paper studies Andrew Marvell's "The Mower, against Gardens" and tries to bring out the ecological wisdom present in the poem.

**Keywords:** Andrew Marvell, environment, garden, ecology, nature, understanding of nature

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**Introduction:** Ecocritical analysis of literary works has given a new perspective altogether. "Ecocriticism gives human beings a better understanding of nature" (Frederick 135). As a result of an over use and exploitation of natural resources, scientists started to support ecology. In the same breath, a great support emerged for the nonhuman beings in the form of ecocriticism. Andrew Marvell's poems received a strong second look when critics understood the value of nature.

Human beings always want to rule over all others. Especially nature is at the centre of their attraction. A science subject like Horticulture has helped them remake nature as per their wishes. As everyone knows, Horticulture is the branch of agriculture that deals with the art, science, technology, and business of plant cultivation. It includes the cultivation of fruits, vegetables, nuts, seeds, herbs, sprouts, mushrooms, algae, flowers, seaweeds and non-food crops such as grass and ornamental trees and plants. Unlike Ecology, the main motive of this branch is business.

Ecologists always support the pristine beauty of the landscape to be preserved. In the late 1960s, Paul Shepard wrote the introduction to *Subversive Science*, in this, he talks about the impending ecological crisis. In the 1970s, Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring* presents a clear-cut idea of the world which is dependent on pesticides. This book predicts a miserable future for the whole natural world because of overuse of pesticides. No animal remains because of the wrong decision made by the human beings.

Andrew Marvell was born (on March 31, 1621), and grew up in the Yorkshire town of Hull, England, where his father, Rev. Andrew Marvell, was a lecturer at Holy Trinity Church and master of the Charterhouse. He spent most of the 1650s working as a tutor, first for Mary Fairfax, daughter of a retired Cromwellian general, then for one of Oliver Cromwell's wards. Marvell was appointed Milton's Latin secretary, a post Marvell held until his election to Parliament in 1660. Marvell's poems were published in 1681 after his death in 1678. He is always acknowledged as "the strongest personality" (Grierson xxxvii) during his period.

Although Andrew Marvell was rejected in the beginning, now he is considered as one of the greatest poets of the seventeenth century. "In the nineteenth century Marvell was admired for his delight in nature and his skill in natural description, and with good reason" (Dalglish 171). In many of his poems he pleads for nature. One such beautiful poem is, "The Mower, Against Gardens".

In "The Mower, Against Gardens", Marvell finds out the root cause of all evils, the human beings who destroyed nature. He points the finger at "Luxurious man" (MAG l.1). The person who has a lot of money indulges in creating his own environment. Horticulturists help him in creating ornamental plants and trees. For this Luxurious man, the primary concern is to make everything attractive. Whatever he produces, it should look good. Unfortunately, many have fallen in this trap and they look not for quality but for beauty. Because of this, even fruits and vegetable eaten by human beings also receive coloured coating. Andrew Marvell pleads for a "plain and pure" (MAG l.4) nature.

These people in fact "seduce" (MAG l.2) this biosphere with their wicked behaviour. They enclose nature "within the gardens square" (MAG l.5) and consider the world as "luscious" (MAG l.7) and squeeze juice out of it to the maximum. Andrew Marvell writes "The pink grew then as double as his mind; / The nutriment did change the kind" (MAG ll.9,10). Thus colour is given preference over nourishment. They induce "strange perfumes" in roses and they only "taint" those flowers. Peter Barry says, "For the ecocritic, nature really exists, out there beyond ourselves, not needing to be ironised as a concept by enclosure within inverted commas, but actually present as an entity which affects, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it" (213). Without understanding the strength of nature, the human beings mistreat and taint nature. William Rueckert says, "The problem now, as most ecologists agree, is to find ways of keeping the human community from destroying the natural community, and with it the human community. This is what ecologists like to call the self-destructive or suicidal motive..." (Glotfelty 107).

The nature has the ability to beautify itself. The poet emphatically says, "And flowers themselves were taught to paint" (MAG l.12). By nature, nature has beauty. There are many examples for that. No words can express the beauty of

tulip and other flowers. Another beautiful flower referred to by the poet is the marvel of Peru (the four o'clock flower or *Mirabilis jalapa*). It is the most commonly grown ornamental species of *Mirabilis*, and is available in a range of colours. "Mirabilis" in Latin means wonderful.

The tulip, white, did for complexion seek,  
 And learned to interline its cheek:  
 Its onion root they then so high did hold,  
 That one was for a meadow sold.  
 Another world was searched, through oceans new,  
 To find the *Marvel of Peru*.

(MAG ll.13-18)

Nature has the ability to produce excellent coloured flowers. So, there is no need for human beings to interpolate it with their greedy mind. This is clear because, human beings want to sell their produce, for that they are ready to do anything, including colouring nature. In anarchic oikos "Nature, on the other hand, was more tangibly useful. With investment, it paid off considerable returns" (Selvamony 5). Thus plants in nature become just commodities. This is the case of all the non-human beings. Commodification has set in and this truth is brought out in clear hues by a yesteryear poet.

Human beings should allow the rare things in nature. Contrary to the truth, they believe that they are the rulers of the earth and disrupt the existing balance.

And yet these rarities might be allowed  
 To man, that sovereign thing and proud,  
 Had he not dealt between the bark and tree,  
 Forbidden mixtures there to see.

(MAG ll.19-22)

Human beings' voracious appetite to commodify nature has made everything uncertain.

No plant now knew the stock from which it came;  
 He grafts upon the wild the tame:  
 That th' uncertain and adulterate fruit  
 Might put the palate in dispute.

(MAG ll.23-25)

Thus the main aim is taste and for that, the human beings are willing to adulterate.

His green seraglio has its eunuchs too,  
 Lest any tyrant him outdo.  
 And in the cherry he does nature vex,  
 To procreate without a sex.

(MAG ll.27-30)

Rabindranath Tagore, in *Fruit Gathering*, poem XVIII, “No it is not”, writes, “No it is not yours to open buds into blossoms” (Tagore l.1). Here Tagore also warns the unnatural way the human beings intervene in nature. By unnatural means they are ready to produce anything because their eyes are fixed on money. “In short, the new oikos was anarchic in spirit but economic in practice. It was rather a market with a shift from the political hierarchy to an economic negotiation. It was reason that controlled the negotiations of the market oikos” (Selvamony 5).

Another factor rejected by human beings is wild nature of nature. Wilderness is the basis for nature. “Where willing nature does to all dispense / A wild and fragrant innocence”(MAG l.33,34). The wildness should be accepted a part of nature. As Gary Snyder states, “Wildness can be said to be the essential nature of nature” (Coupe 127), wildness is vital for nature. Wild plants and wild animals are not useful for the business minded human being. Thus they reject these and choose domesticated ones and those especially, reworked by the horticulturists. It is true that “gods themselves...do dwell” (MAG l.40) in an unadulterated nature. Nature is always immaculate. It wears the ornament of health permeating purity that senses as an able counter to an otherwise polluted environment.

**Conclusion** : Critics like Dean Baldwin feel that “garden” is a metonym (Sengupta) for all of nature. Based on such an understanding one can extend the idea to Mower as an exception to all other human beings who abuse nature while attempting to improve it. Paul Shepard “concluded by noting that the ecological crisis could not be ameliorated by technical and scientifically engineered quick-fixes, but rather by invoking ‘an element of humility which is foreign to our thought, which moves us to silent wonder and glad affirmation’” (Kroll). Thus the biosphere is not in need of technical and scientifically engineered quick-fixes. The ecological crisis that has emerged is just postponed or ameliorated by these gimmicks. What is needed is resurrected radical ecology, which has the power to compel the human beings to live in peace and amity with nature, without unnecessarily meddling with nature, in all its pristine beauty.

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