

MAN AND THE ARTIST OF FATE:
A STUDY OF THE MAN-NATURE RELATIONSHIP
IN THE NATURAL WORLD

by

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B. A., Harding College, 1974

A MASTER'S REPORT

submitted in partial fulfillment of the

requirements for the degree


MASTER OF ARTS

Department of English

KANSAS STATE UNIVERSITY
Manhattan, Kansas

1976

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1976
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INTRODUCTION

The study of nature is an integral part of the world's literary heritage. From the Greeks to the twentieth century, artists have been absorbed in a quest to understand, to predict, and to interpret the forces that control the universe. And an integral part of their study is the attempt to comprehend the relationship of man and nature. Carl Jung has said that "people who know nothing about nature are of course neurotic, for they are not adapted to reality." Although exaggerated, Jung's statement is valid; for where else but in the natural world can one find the reality of good and evil and of survival and death exposed to the scrutiny of any observer.

The intent of this collection is to present nature's multifaceted personality and to explore her relationship with man. In this study certain questions are vital--questions artists have doubtless always been concerned with. Is nature basically antagonistic, or is she indifferent? Does nature determine man's fate? And, are there terms for coexistence? Each of the following stories deals with at least one of these questions, but none attempt to provide definitive answers. Instead, there is an attempt to provide objective observations of nature and man, and their respective roles in the universal drama.

"A Whisper on the Wind," the first selection, deals with a man's interference with the balance in the wilderness and the consequences of his action. The protagonist is an old man who finds himself in conflict with the natural world and who suffers

constantly with the fear of losing the struggle. He has killed an eagle, and he knows that Nature, as protector of the wilderness, will take her revenge; he just does not know how or when.

Nature is the superior figure in the story, both antagonist and avenger. She manifests herself in many forms: in the role of the eagle, in the wind, and in the snowstorm. She represents to the old man a judge who holds his life in a delicate balance. But equally important is her role as hunter; it is as a hunter that she seeks her revenge, calculating the intricate details and sequence of events to insure her success. Nature as hunter, then, reduces the old man to nothing more than a prey; and he must face his role as the hunted in light of what he has done.

Another significant comparison of roles can be drawn between man and eagle. At one time both the old man and the eagle are hunters; but both suffer role reversals and become themselves prey to a superior being. (Only Nature remains superior as hunter.) Thus the man and the eagle are brothers in their fate. The old man many times equates himself with the eagle. He even longs to be like the eagle, free and strong; but he forgets that the eagle he longs to be like is dead. The roles of the man and the eagle, then, are more than parallel; there is a fusion of man and bird, and in the end both face an inevitable destiny.

"A Whisper on the Wind" makes significant use of light-dark symbolism. Daylight, sunshine, and fire are equated with life in the mind of the old man; and he can sleep only in the daylight hours. Night, darkness, and ashes represent death; and at night