



ECOLOGICAL APOCALYPSE IN THE THREE POEMS: WE THINK WE ARE LESS FOOLISH, CROSSING A CITY HIGHWAY, AND EPITHALAMIA

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Abstract

This thesis is the analysis of the three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish*, *Crossing A City Highway*, and *Epithalamia*. It explores the issue of ecological apocalypse which is done by people toward the nature. It is also intended to know the contribution of poetic elements: imagery, irony, and speaker in revealing the issue of ecological apocalypse. This analysis is related to the concept of eco-criticism by Garrard, McKusic, Barry, and Buell that is supported by the text-based and context-based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows about ecological apocalypse is a result of human intervention. They exploit and pollute the nature continuously just for their own advantages without concern about the sustainability of nature.

Key words: *apocalypse, human, nature, anthropocentrism, exploitation, pollution.*

A. INTRODUCTION

Human and nature are two things that cannot be separated. Human is a part of nature. All living things depend on nature including humans themselves. Nature supplies them with food, air, water, and soil to fulfil their needs. They take a lot of benefits from nature. Therefore, humans need to take responsibility for preserving nature to make life runs well.

Ironically, human is the culprit behind the majority of ecological damage. They assume that they are the centre of universe. They assume that all natural resources are for human beings. They can do anything to the environment for their own benefit even if they have to hurt the nature. For instance, to fulfil their economic purpose, human destroy the nature by the act of exploitation and pollution. This perspective is known as an anthropocentrism perspective, that human presupposition that their needs is in higher priority as human being claimed that they are more superior to those of nonhumans (Barry, 2005). This

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issue is reflected in poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish* by Marge Piercy, *Crossing a City Highway* by Yusef Komunyakaa, and *Epithalamia* by Joan Kane.

These three poems reflect the issue of ecological apocalypse. Ecological apocalypse refers to the act of destroying the nature that is conducted by people and cause several damages to the environment and cause an imbalance of nature. The natural ecosystems and biodiversity are being severely degraded. Forests, land, sea and other natural ecosystems are threatened and collapse. Water, land, and air are getting increasingly pollution.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is descriptive research. According to Herbert and Elena Shohamy (1989), descriptive research is a way which is used to describe the result of research without manipulation. The research will gather the data which is related to the issue of ecological ruination in the poems *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (2010) by Marge Piercy, *Crossing a City Highway* (2016) by Yusef Komunyakaa, and *Epithalamia* (2016) by Joan Kane. The data will be sorted and analyzed based on the concept of eco-criticism.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter analyzes the three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (later will be mention as WTWALF), *Crossing a City Highway* (CACH), and *Epithalamia* (E), reflects the issue of ecological apocalypse. The analysis uses poetic elements such as imagery, irony, and speaker. In this analysis, ecological apocalypse refers to human activities that destroy the environment. Human activities such as illegal logging, pollution, and illegal hunting destroyed the nature itself. These activities are done without considering the limits of nature to preserve and restore what nature remains for the health of environment. This issue can be seen in two terms. The first is the forms of ecological apocalypse, and the second is the anthropocentrism as the cause of ecological apocalypse.

1. The Forms of Ecological Apocalypse

Ecological apocalypse is caused by human activities. Human daily activities caused several damages to the environment. There are several forms of ecological apocalypse. According to Garrard (2004), there are three forms of ecological apocalypse, which are climate changes, the depletion of natural resources, and natural imbalances. These three forms of ecological apocalypse are stated in three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish*, *Crossing a City Highway*, and *Epithalamia*.

1.1. Climate Change

According to Garrard (2019), climate change is any significant long term change in the expected patterns of average weather of a region or the whole earth over a significant period of time. This issue exists in epithalamia poem. It can be seen through imagery below:

/ Everything in exchange,
rain in a frozen season.
Our roof, roofs strung with hot wire. /

(E: Stanza 3)

From that imagery, we can read that climate change has occurred. There is a change in season exchange cycle. It can be seen in line 2 // rain in a frozen season. // it indicates that the nature is no longer running as properly. The weather is erratic. This is known as a climate change.

Climate change is caused by the depletion of the ozone layer. The depletion of the ozone layer is caused by humans' activities such as polluting the air, greenhouse construction, and land clearing. Therefore, the heat that received by the earth from the sun no longer filtered by the earth and the heat is directly reflected back into the sky by greenhouses, this case also known as global warming. As a result, the ozone layer is damaged and depleted and caused extreme weather or weather changes. The explanation above is related to Garrard's concept of ecological apocalypse (2004). He states that, one of the forms of ecological apocalypse is climate change..

1.2. The Depletion of Natural Resources.

Another forms of ecological apocalypse is the depletion of natural resources (Garrard, 2004). The depletion of natural resources occurs when resources are consumed at a faster rate than that of replacement. Natural resources are those resources that are in existence either it can be renewable or non-renewable (DesJardins, 2012). This issue can be seen in the quotation below:

/ In general, we lack respect
even for each other let alone
cats and dogs we execute a million
at a time in so called shelters. /

(WTWALF: Stanza 2)

The quotation above indicates that human exploit the animals by executes them. Consequently, the animal (cats and dogs) severely degraded. It is in accordance with Garrard (2004) statement of the extinction of living beings as one of the formss of the depletion of natural resources.

Furthermore, in this quotation also contains an irony which is from the words // cats and dogs we execute a million at a time in so called shelters//, indicates that human making animal's shelter. However, in this case human

pretend to protect the animal as if they love it. In fact, they never love the animal, yet, they execute them for their own interest.

1.3. Natural Imbalances.

According to McKusick (2000), natural imbalance is one of the forms of ecological apocalypse. Natural imbalance will affect the survival of living things on earth. It can be seen in the quotation below:

/ Butane, propane
and lungful of diesel.
I did not stand a chance. /

(E: Stanza 1)

From the imagery above, in line 1 // Butane, propane, and lungful of diesel //, it shows that every chemicals in human activities cause pollutions. As a result, there is no fresh air because the air has been contaminated by pollution. In the words // lungful of diesel.// these words can be interpreted as the use of excessive technology or misuse of technology. The word "diesel" refers to all human activities that using diesel to help their works such as in the operation of the entire industry and motor vehicle. As a result, it damages the natural balance.

Furthermore, in line 3 // I did not stand a chance.// indicates that excessive use of chemicals and technologies in human daily life threatening the natural health and survival of living things in it. This explanation is related to the concept of apocalypse by McKusic (2000). He states that massive use of technology damage the natural balance.

2. Anthropocentrism as the Cause of Ecological Apocalypse.

According to Buell (2005), describes that anthropocentrism is human presupposition that their needs is in higher priority than other non-human being. They claimed that they are more superior to those of nonhumans. It can be seen in the quotation below:

/ All things are full of gods" is attributed to Thales, an early
Greek philosopher who was the first to predict eclipses.
Perhaps if we could just believe this,
we'd respect the earth more.
We would not frack or poison her
soil and air or set her water on fire. /

(WTWALF: Stanza 1)

The quotation above shows that human have no respect to the earth. On line 1 //all things are full of gods//, according to O'Grady (2018), states that in natural philosophy founded by Thales, this quote is not defined in the mythological idea that the natural control is a God. On the contrary, in his theory, Thales identifies that the water as something divine. Thales believes that all objects or living things came from water. In other words, water is a source of life.

Ironically, on line 3 // Perhaps if we could just believe this, we'd respect the earth more. // indicates that human have no respect to the nature. In the common perception of humans, they assumed that they are the centre of life (the centre of the universe), they believe that humans are more super power than others non-human being and also assume that the earth was created to fulfil their needs.

Therefore, they can do anything against nature to fulfil their desire though a cruel way. On line 5 // We would not Frack or poison her soil and air or set her water on fire.//, this sentence indicates that human contaminates the nature, they pollute the water, soil, and air without thinking about the impact of pollution. The word of //poison// in this quote refers to the pollution, the word //her// refers to nature, and the word of //fire// is a symbol of destruction. This analysis is related to the Garrard (2004) concept of apocalypse which explains that this act caused by human's thought that they are more superior to other non-human being.

Another example of anthropocentrism can be seen in the imagery below:

/ She knows he will follow her scent
left in the poisoned grass & buzz
of chainsaws, if he can unweave
a circle of traps around the subdivision.

For a breathy moment, she stops
on the world's edge, & then quick as that
masters the stars & again slips the noose
& darts straight between sedans & SUVs. /

From the imagery above, it shows how human do not have awareness about the nature. From the sentence /For a breathy moment, she stops on the world's edge, & then quick as that masters the stars & again slips the noose & darts straight between sedans & SUVs./, this sentence indicates that humans' expansion damages the natural habitat of animals. They set up industrial factories and infrastructure expansions to fulfil their needs. As a result, the animals lost their natural habitat. Industrial factories play an important role in having possibility of global environmental change (Blake, 2000).

The next example of anthropocentrism as stated below:

/ Always with poison
breath, bill, responsibility:
a man with rote hands. /

(E: Stanza 2)

From the imagery above, it can be seen that human is only concerned with their ego without thinking the impact of his actions. Because of his selfish, human beings do anything against nature to fulfil their needs and desires, even though with cruel way, it can be seen on line 1 // Always with poison breath, bill,

responsibility: // this phrase indicates that human always cause damage and never responsible for their actions. This is evident in the sentence // a man with rote hands.//, it indicates that all of the damage done to nature is a result of human intervention.

The analysis above is related to the Garrard's (2004) concept of apocalypse. Garrard (2004), states that environmental apocalypse happens because of humans' irresponsibility toward the nature by just polluting without concerning the sustainability of nature.

Another example of anthropocentrism can be seen in the quotation below:

/ If it were Monday instead of Sunday
the outcome may be different,
but she's now in Central Park
searching for a Seneca village /

(CACH: Stanza 6)

From the quotation above, shows that human exploit the animal in a canning way. They said that they love animals. They protect the animal by making a reservation area. Ironically, they actually exploit the animal for their economic purpose. They change the natural habitat and the characteristic of animals. As a result, there is no wilderness exist. For instance, they exploit the animal to become circus animals and they only protect the animals that have a high cost. It can be concluded that, all humans do just for money oriented. This analysis is accordance with Buell (2005) explanation that human controlled the nature to fulfil their advantages.

Another example of anthropocentrism as the quotation below:

/ We would not poison bees
so agribusiess could make more
money. We'd shut down nuclear
radiation plants before they shut us down. /

(WTWALF: Stanza 3)

In this stanza in line 3 // We'd shut down nuclear radiation plants before they shut us down //. This imagery shows that, nuclear radiation is very dangerous for all life; it could even have an impact on mortality. Nuclear radiation is commonly used for several things; one of them is the nuclear power plants to fulfil human needs.

However, nuclear waste is usually dumped into the sea or buried. As a result it can contaminate water and soil. Water that contaminated by nuclear radiation would threaten marine life such as coral reefs, plankton and small fish. As a result, the marine ecosystem will be damaged and will even cause the extinction of marine life. Furthermore, nuclear waste that buried in the ground, it

also leads to pollution of soil. Soil that contaminated by nuclear waste will be marginal and will have a negative impact on the growth of plants.

However, human still use the nuclear radiation plants for their advantages. All businesses and activities that humans do just for money oriented. Nuclear power plants are made for economic interests. Through this technology, the company will reap the benefits more than other power plants without thinking about the impact of it. The explanation above is related to the concept of ecological apocalypse by McKusic (2000). He states that, the massive use of technology will damage the natural balance.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The three poems; *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (2010) by Marge Piercy, *Crossing a City Highway* (2016) by Yusef Komunyakaa, and *Epithalamia* (2016) by Joan Kane, reflects the issue of ecological apocalypse. These three poems show about several damages in nature which are climate changes, the depletion of natural resources, and natural imbalances.

In ecological apocalypse, humans do not have awareness to the nature. In their common perspective (anthropocentrism-perspective) they thought that human is a centre of universe. Therefore, they can do anything to the nature and other creatures to fulfil their needs. They doing illegal logging, illegal hunting, and polluting the earth. As a result, the nature cannot maintain its sustainability and disrupt all life even humans themselves.

Even tough, the speakers of each poem have awareness toward the nature. The speakers criticise the acts of human that exploits and pollutes the nature continuously for their own advantages without regards about the effects of it. The tone of the speakers in the three poems are anger, the speaker shows about all the destructions of nature are the results of human intervention. The aim of the speakers in these three poems is to increase human's awareness about the importance of preserving the nature.

Furthermore, there are three poetic elements such as imagery, irony, and speaker that help the researcher to explore the issue of ecological apocalypse. The poetic element of imagery is found to be the most effective and helpful to analyse the poems, because the poems are clearly describe about the ecological apocalypse. Nevertheless, the poetic elements of irony and speaker also contribute in analysing the poems to explore the issue of ecological apocalypse.

From the whole explanation above it can be concluded that, human and nature are two interrelated things. In other words, there should be a mutual relationship between human and nature. Therefore, nature has provided and provides a source of life for humans. Therefore, humans should take care of and preserve the nature to make life runs well.

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