

Eco Conscious reading in P.K. Page's Poem the 'Adolescence'

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ABSTRACT

Eco criticism takes as its subject the interconnections between nature and culture specifically the cultural artifacts of language and literature. As a critical stance it has one foot in literature and the other on land; as a theoretical discourse, it negotiates between human and non human. Patricia Kathleen Page was born in Swange Dorset, England on 23 November 1916. In the poem Adolescence she dwells on the freshness of the relationship between the two young lovers, in terms of pastoral images that unite man and nature as well. The poem is as much a vivid description of adolescent passion, as a celebration of the pastoral appeal of the Canadian Landscape. The Harmonious blending of psychological insight and poetic imagination characterizes her poetry. She believes that the world of Nature is the only solace and consolation for the disappointed lovers.

Keywords

Eco criticism; Pastoral Images;
Psychological Insight

A combined critical approach to literature and environment studies is commonly called 'ecocriticism or environmental criticism'. Under the prevailing severe ecological crisis, ecocriticism has become a burring topic. Ecocriticism focuses on nature writing. Nature and literature have always shared a close relationship as evidenced in the works of poets and other writers down the ages in almost all cultures of the world. Today the intimate relationship between the natural and social world is being analyzed and emphasized in all departments of knowledge and development. The literary critic tries to study how this close relationship between nature and society has been textualized by the writers in their works. In this context two terms have become very important today – ecology and ecocriticism.

The term 'ecocriticism' was first used by William Rueckert in his scholarly essay 'Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco criticism' which was published in the year 1978. This term was revived by Cheryl Glotfelty in 1989. Since then 'ecocriticism' has bloomed in usage. Glotfelty, in his introduction to the *Ecocriticism Reader* (1996), defined ecocriticism as "the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment". Nature and Environment have always fostered literature. Nature is an entity invested with visible beauty and meaning, that is reflected in literature in various forms such as poetry, fiction, drama and short stories. Though ecocriticism as a literary theory is of recent origin, the elements of it are found in the works of several writers in the earlier period. Romanticism, in this regard, is an embodiment of the rudiments of ecocriticism. The Romantic poets attempted to rediscover the mystery and wonder of the world, and tried to establish a meaningful relationship between literature and Nature. To them, Nature was the principal source of inspiration and spiritual enlightenment.

Patricia Kathleen Page was born in Swanage Dorset, England on 23rd November 1916. She was concerned

with alienated human situations and victims of circumstances. She cared for the agonies, devastation and predicaments of individuals. Apart from socio-political situations, the harmonious blending of psychological insight and poetic imagination characterizes her poetry. She believes that the world of Nature is the only solace and consolation for the disappointed lovers.

The present paper on P.K Page's poem "Adolescence" dwells on the freshness of the relationship between two young lovers, in terms of pastoral images that unite man and nature as well. The poem is as much a vivid description of adolescent passion, as a celebration of the pastoral appeal of the Canadian landscape. 'Everything is connected to everything else' says Barry Commoner. The notion of interconnectedness of all entities is to say that a human being is like any other species. Man co-exists with plants and animals on equal sphere within a system of close connections where the change in one system influences and affects another. The idea that man is a species and a sense of oneness with the universe should not make him passive.

*In love they wore
themselves in a green embrace*

*A silken rain fell through
the spring upon them*

*In the park she fed the
swans and he*

*Whittled nervously with his
strange hands.*

*And white was mixed with
all their colours*

*as if they drew it from the
flowering trees.(ADOL 1-6)*

It is a spring time in Canada. The lovers lying on the meadow wear themselves out in a “green embrace”, becoming one with nature. Drizzle of rain bushes past their youthful bodies like the silk the girl has put on. She feeds the swans in the park while her lover nervously helps her with his “strange hands”. In meeting all her needs, the boy realizes that his own hands have become “strange” in his own eyes. The whiteness of their bodies and clothes have a touch of the whiteness of the different flowers of the spring. Ecocriticism is a consciousness raising group that urges

us to think seriously about the relationship of humans to nature and how literature transmits values with profound ecological implications. The major concerns of Eco criticism are the interconnections between nature and culture, the relationship of the physical setting to the plot, the metaphors and descriptions of the land and its influence on the way they treat it, the differences, if any in the way men and women conceptualize land, the ascribing of ‘place’ as a critical category akin to race, class and gender. It expands the notion of the ‘world’ which originally designates social sphere to include the entire ecosphere. P.K Page has cleverly registered this idea in the poem.

*At night his two-
finger whistle brought her down*

*the waterfall stairs
to his shy smile*

*which, like an eddy,
turned her round and round*

*lazily and slowly so
her will*

*was nowhere – as in
dreams things are and aren't. (ADOL 7-11)*

The girl impulsively rushes down like a graceful waterfall in ready response to “his two-finger whistle” in the night. His shy smile while making love, turns her “round and round” like an eddy and her will gets utterly lost in the heady current of her passionate dreams. Though the methods and motives of Ecocriticism were latent within the academia under various names like pastoralism and regionalism, they were not very organized. Even cultural practices and the interconnections between ecology and nature began to be included within the purview of Eco criticism. Like feminism, Ecocriticism is fundamentally an ethical criticism and pedagogy, one that investigates and helps make possible the connections among self, society, nature and text. If feminist criticism examines language and literature from a gender perspective and Marxism from a proletariat angle, Ecocriticism takes an earth centered approach to literary studies. Here the lovers

are in communion with nature. Love is the common tool for the lovers to get united with Nature.

P.K Page has captured graphically the eco consciousness which can also be called as the beauty of the passion of young adolescents love. Now, ecocriticism is used not only to analyze biocentric literature or nature writing, but also all literature which is viewed in terms of place, setting and environment.

The biosphere and the ecosystems are places of ecological harmony. Though the creatures play different tunes, they create symphony in relation with each other. They interact with each other to form an integrated whole. Man alone has cut his umbilical cord with his life supporting systems and has struck a discordant note. He has severed his connections with it which was once his abode of peace and solace. Everything in the world should exist in dynamic equilibrium if life is to continue. Even cultural practices and the interconnections between ecology

and nature began to be included within the purview of Ecocriticism. Man is the crown of all creations but today, his life is worse due to lack of time and his mechanical way of living. To modern man action is better than inaction. In this click world man rushes like an insane in search of materialistic life devastating anything that comes across his way.

Earlier it was Nature's influence on man. But now it is vice versa- Man's devastating influence on nature. The need of the hour is action, not admiration. Eco criticism does not restrict itself to just natural or ecological works alone. It attempts to re-interpret and give a novel, poem, ecological perspective to even old, canonical texts. Writers with an eco-conscious bent of mind and heart pool together their ecological concerns and thereby try to create a mass awareness about man's destruction of nature.

Human aggression on nature jeopardizes the harmony and sustainability that are otherwise prevalent for ages. Once the so called educated, civilized and cultured man learned to live

and lead a loving natural life ,giving due respect to animate and inanimate things around him then the life on this globe will be a pleasant experience for ever. To live like this he must learn to love. If he, contrary to this universal concept, engages himself to twist and turn nature to his likes and dislikes then nature would prove its supremacy with unforeseen disasters. Modern environmental thinking emphasizes the fact that all human beings must appreciate and accept the interconnectedness of everything on the planet and each individual must develop a rapport with nature to maintain ecological balance to save the earth from extinction.

Environment conscious is a young movement. The movement understands and disseminates the crisis, threat and values it holds very close to human and environment. Environmental consciousness has become the need of the hour. Earlier, nature did not comprise of human beings but current studies have argued that human is the centre of the universe and the environment as an enclave. Environmental hazards advocate social concerns. Eco- critics bind themselves with the environment and are closely

associated with the issues oriented with ecology. Eco criticism in literature has emerged as a boon to create awareness through a very easily available and reachable media, literature. Though the works of the yesteryears have been written for their age, its theme is current and reflects so many aspects of modern life. Nature is only valued in terms of its usefulness, global warming, species extinction rates and global climatic modeling are the serious threats that need immediate action. Let us beware! If only mother earth started avenging herself... Eco justice by way of tsunamis, tornadoes, earthquakes, forest fires, etc., would become the order of our days. So let's befriend nature before it brings about our end. Let's make life on earth bliss once more for all our co-planeteers and not just maintenance of breath.

‘ The Greener the Earth, the Healthier the life.’

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