

ELIOT'S WASTELAND: A POEM OF ECO CRITICISM

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Abstract

Eco Criticism or Green Study is a rising field of scholarly investigation that considers that relationship that people have with earth and environment. The Wasteland is relevant to the realities of modern life. It brings to surface Eliot's environmental consciousness and provides vital insight into modernist anxieties regarding the changing relationship of the 20th century. Eliot searches for physical, psychological and artistic reconnection to nature in the poem.

Keywords: bio-diversity, pollution, environmental disaster, pollutants, smog, trash

The world today is at the brink of environmental crisis. Some of the critical issues of environmental dilemma are pollution global warming, over-population, natural resource depletion, waste disposal, loss of bio-diversity, deforestation, urban sprawl and overuse of plastic. All these need to be resolved else will not be fit to live. The poem Wasteland by T.S. Eliot, written in 1922, just after First World War, can be called an eco-poem. It describes the loss of values in human life and presents a world which is polluted, urbanized and fragmented. It is a kind of environmental warning about the fore coming environmental disaster. The Wasteland of 1922 is parallel to the waste land of today. Human values, rituals, nature's cycle - all are degenerated and need the sincere efforts of resurrection. Gabriel Macentire points out pollution and waste everywhere suggests a land that has been destroyed - barren, no sign of life is found and broken things are scattered everywhere. It is a kind of elegy, like Adonais, and this elegy mourns at dead culture. Eliot, had recognized destructive change in the relationship between human and non-human living things.

The title 'The Wasteland' of the poem itself suggests a land that has been destroyed, barren, with no sign of life. Broken things are scattered everywhere. Eliot himself proclaims in the end of the poem 'I have brought these fragments together'. The first part of the poem 'The Burial of the Dead' suggests the dead fertility gods. All the land is dead,

roots are dull and tubers are dry. Nature has lost its basic purpose of regeneration and is at the Verge of collapse. The son of man, the common man - the man of modernity can never understand that nothing can grow out of stony rubbish. Old civilization, with its values and conventions is dead and gone, leaving only a heap of broken images. It is a contradictory overlapping and confused world - a fragmented world - full of pollutants, smog, and trash - which spoil the natural scenery. This world has forgotten its roots i.e. old culture or literature and classic and they have been replaced by dancing, music and jazz.

Impact of urbanization and industrialization leads to population growth, crowds of people/tender bridge/unreal city - all are threat to humanity. Materialistic aspect of man is well reflected in the episode of Modern Societies. There sailors are drowned in the sea of greed and have replaced their eyes with pearls. All women here are lady of rocks or lady of situations. They are unable to see the hanged man, Jesus Christ. Every city here is unreal. The danger of urbanization and population growth is overpowering it. Science and Communism seen friendly to man, but are anti-religious. They do not take any account of his spiritual regeneration.

The scene leading the reader to the drawing room of the fashionable lady shows that organic life-giving nature has turned into inorganic lifeless object. The threat of deforestation and loss of bio-diversity have resulted into the departure of nymphs. Greek mythological nature spirits have disappeared because their habitats river and wood have either been contaminated or vanished completely. The drifting logs signify deforestation. The loss of bio- diversity is implicitly narrated in classical groups - cricket, dog, nightingales' gulls, cicada, hermit through, hut, cock, spider and swallow.

Effect of industrialization can be seen in phrases and clauses like - flushing in dull canal, gas house (turning the rural and natural into industrial and commercial), sum of horns, motor cars - disturbing the serenity of nature.

The IV and V sections, 'Death by Water' and 'what the thunder said' present modern society engulfed in absolute chaos and plagued by complications of industrialization. The description of dry and barren land signifies the destructive change in the relationship between human and non-human living things. By presenting destructive aspect of modernity Eliot emphasizes closeness with nature.

Eliot has presented isolated, sterile and thoughtless human beings in fragmented language and discontinuous images. Eliot has presented spiritual bankruptcy of modern man through this poem. It is a warning poem 'Hurry up please; it is time to modern man, lest it should be too late.

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