



INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF CREATIVE RESEARCH THOUGHTS (IJCRT)

An International Open Access, Peer-reviewed, Refereed Journal

A NEW PERSPECTIVE OF ECO-CRITICISM

HARISH D.L.

Assistant Professor, Govt. First Grade College
Tarikere, 577228

ABSTRACT

The term "criticism" in literary studies means and Eco-critics, to do something genuinely meaningful, must offer readers a broader, deeper, and more explicit explanation of how and what environmental literature communicates than the writers themselves. The eco-critical process of pulling things like ideas, texts and authors together and putting them in perspective is our awareness of whom and where we are. Our awareness, literally, where we stand in the world and why we are writing. Eco-criticism gives increased attention to literary representatives of nature and is sensitive to interdependencies that ground the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward natural relationships and views the individual as a member of ecosystem. An eco critical approach views human's relationship with nature by his interaction with nature because it supports the idea that nature, as a literary subject. Eco-critics study literature written throughout history and analyze its relationship to the environment; most scholarship has focused on American and British literature from the nineteenth and twentieth century's. The nineteenth century especially saw a number of developments in literature that eco-critics view as significant. American and British Romantic writers took a particular interest in nature as a subject. Victorian realists wrote about industrialization.

Keywords: The term criticism, Eco criticism, Environment, human relationship with nature.

Introduction:

The term "criticism" in literary studies means 'the scholarly study and interpretation of literature'. Eco-criticism is a new field in literary studies, the study of literature with a special attention to the significance of nature in literature. Eco-criticism is literary criticism that arises from and is oriented toward a concern with human and nonhuman interaction and interrelationship.

According to Patrick D. Murphy Eco-criticism is "the study of nature writing by way of any scholarly approach or conversely, the scrutiny of ecological implications and human-nature relationships in any literary text."

Scott Slavic defined; Eco-criticism is, like much contemporary criticism, a form of cultural critique, interdisciplinary in its tools, and its intentions.

Michael P. Cohen commented Eco-critics not only interpret the meaning of nature writing texts. They also use those texts as a context for analyzing the ideology and practices of our society in relationship to nature. Often, the result is a critique of how our culture devalues and degrades the natural world.

Eco-critics, to do something genuinely meaningful, must offer readers a broader, deeper, and more explicit explanation of how and what environmental literature communicates than the writers themselves, immersed in their particularized narratives, can offer. Crucial to the eco-critical process of pulling things like ideas, texts and authors together and putting them in perspective is our awareness of whom and where we are. Our awareness, literally, where we stand in the world and why we are writing.

William Rueckert defined that "The first person to use the term appears to have been in, whose purpose in doing so was to suggest that ecological terms and concepts can usefully be applied to the study of literature. This, however, is not the dominant meaning of the term. It tends to be interpreted more loosely as a general term for the study of the relationship between literature and the natural environment."

Eco-criticism is relatively a newly developed literary theory as well as criticism. It is understood by the elites of the field as one of the highlighting disciplines that have emerged on the scene of the field of criticism in the second half of the twentieth century.

Eco-criticism is combination of 'criticism' with 'eco', a shortened form of 'ecology' the science that investigates the interrelations of all forms of plant and animal life with each other and with their physical habitats. 'Eco-criticism' by alternative names, environmental criticism and green studies designates, the critical writings that explore the relations between literature and biological and physical environment, conducted with an accurate awareness of the devastation being wrought on the environment by human activities.

Eco-criticism as an academic discipline began in earnest in the 1990s, although its roots go back to the late 1970s. Because it is a new area of study, scholars are still engaged in defining the scope and aims of the subject. Cheryll Glotfelty, one of the pioneers in this field, has defined 'eco-criticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment', and Laurence Buell says that 'this study must be conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis.' David Mazel declares it is the analysis of literature as though nature mattered. This study, it is argued, cannot be performed without a keen understanding of the environmental crises of modern times and thus must inform personal and political actions, it is in a sense, a form of activism. Many critics also emphasize the interdisciplinary nature of the enquiry, which is informed by ecological science, politics, ethics, and women's studies.

William Rueckert coined the term "eco-criticism" in 1978 in his essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism." Interest in the study of nature writing and with reading literature with a focus on "green" issues grew through the 1980s, and by the early 1990s eco-criticism had emerged as a recognizable discipline within literature departments of American universities.

While eco-critics study literature written throughout history and analyze its relationship to the environment, most scholarship has focused on American and British literature from the nineteenth and twentieth century's. The nineteenth century especially saw a number of developments in literature that eco-critics view as significant. American and British Romantic writers took a particular interest in nature as a subject.

Victorian realists wrote about industrialization, which was changing the natural landscape; explorers and natural historians began to write about newly encountered places and wildlife; and pioneers and other travellers wrote of their experiences with an emphasis on setting. Probably the defining work of nature writing, and the ecologically oriented work that has been the subject of most literary analysis, is Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*. This classic of American literature is a poetic narrative describing the two months the author lived in a small cabin in the woods near Walden Pond, in Massachusetts. In his work, Thoreau observes all around him with a keen eye and a philosophical spirit, describing the ordinary but remarkable creatures and happenings he encounters in the natural world and discussing the meaning of living in harmony with nature and one's soul. Some critics have argued that the American tradition of

nature writing stems from Thoreau's masterpiece. Another landmark American nonfiction work about nature was Ralph Waldo Emerson's *Nature*. This essay is the writer's statement on the principles of the philosophy of Transcendentalism, which he describes as “a hypothesis to account for nature by other principles than those of carpentry and chemistry.” In this work, Emerson talks about the mystical unity of nature and urges his readers to enjoy a relationship with the environment.

Other American writers of the period whose work has been seen as important by eco-critics include William Cullen Bryant, James Kirke Paulding, James Fennimore Cooper, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Walt Whitman, and a number of minor writers who wrote stories about the Wild West. Some scholars have pointed out that much of the focus of eco-criticism has been nature writing by white men. They note that the response toward the landscape is far different in works by African-Americans like Frederick Douglass and others, Native Americans, and women. A related but distinct field of literary study, eco-feminist literary criticism, examines the representations of nature by women and reveals how they often overturn dominant male images and attitudes toward the environment.

In Britain, in the nineteenth century, the Romantic poets reacted strongly against the eighteenth-century emphasis on reason and sought new ways of expressing their thoughts and feelings. William Wordsworth, considered by many to be the spokesperson of the movement, celebrates the beauty and mystery of nature in some of his most famous lyrics, including “Michael”, which portrays a simple shepherd who is deeply attached to the natural world around him. Wordsworth's autobiographical poem “The Prelude” records the poet's evolving understanding of nature and “The Excursion” is a long philosophical reflection on the relationship of humanity and nature. The poetry of Samuel Taylor Coleridge, John Keats, Lord Byron, and Percy Shelley also includes emotional descriptions of the natural world and features some of the best-known nature verse in English. Shelley's “Ode to the West Wind,” to cite one example, has been called the most inspired lyrical poem describing nature in the English language.

The Romantic interest in nature is particularly significant to eco-critics because these poets were revolutionary in their politics, and the preservation of the natural world was one element of their radical thinking. A Romantic poet who used his understanding of nature to protest against the new capitalist machinery was John Clare, who, unlike the others, was himself a labourer and worked on the land. Later

nineteenth-century English writers of note include Thomas Hardy, in whose novels the sense of place always takes centre stage, and Matthew Arnold, whose love poem “Dover Beach” is said to offer one of the finest descriptions of place in English poetry.

Victorian essayists who wrote about nature include John Ruskin and Thomas Carlyle, both of whom lamented the destruction of the environment due to industrialization. As critics have pointed out, one of the reasons that eco-criticism continues to grow as a discipline is the continued global environmental crisis. Eco-criticism aims to show how the work of writers concerned about the environment can play some part in solving real and pressing ecological concerns.

In the Modern Age, nature had been treated in a rather passive manner. It was not in the old forms, features and fashions of the Romantics or the Victorians hence, was not the alternative to the cruel industrial culture. It was, rather, the vivid spectacle of life force in the separate individual supposed to be under the cover of consciousness, from the all pervasive impact of the mechanical forces. Thus, in the Modern Age generally love for nature was not for nature’s sake. It was in the writing of T. S. Eliot that the true modern sensibility manifested itself in both form and content. He could invest nature in his writing with freshness and life due to his hard-earned unified sensibility. He followed the primitive principle of loving the basic elements of nature. W. H. Auden was another important modern writer worth to be considered for his unique view on nature. He treated nature merely as a background to human activity. He used landscapes symbolically. Both his urban or natural landscapes were usually stark and bare. He especially liked mountainous regions. He wrote many of his poems like In Praise of Limestone, The Encased, and Look Stanger with nature in background. To some extent, W. B. Yeats also falls in this category of nature writing dominated by T. S. Eliot and W. H. Auden. Yeats’ The Second Coming, The Lake Isle of Innisfree, The Wild Swans at Coole, etc. stand testimony to his typical treatment to nature. He had used natural symbols more appropriately and liberally to convey his meaning and message.

Conclusion

To sum up, as a distinctive approach to the practice literary criticism, eco criticism gives increased attention to literary representatives of nature and is sensitive to interdependencies that ground the author, character or work in the natural system. This approach shifts critical focus from social relations toward

natural relationships and views the individual as a member of ecosystem. It values highly the 'literary sense of place' not as setting but as an essential expression of bonding with or alienation from a specific natural context. From the beginning the writers have shown interest towards nature, culture and landscape. An eco critical approach views human's relationship with nature by his interaction with nature because it supports the idea that nature, as a literary subject.

The above study shows that ecologically oriented literary appreciation or criticism is not new phenomenon but like the literature it analyses is a response to urgent issues of the day. As critics have pointed out one of the reasons that Eco-Criticism continues to grow as a discipline is the continued global environmental crisis. Eco-criticism aims to show how the work of writer concerned about the environment can play some part in solving real and pressing ecological concerns.

Reference:

1. Recent critiques of Eco-Criticism by Gifford, Terry New Formation No.64 spring 2008.
2. Nature in literary and culture studies conversations on Eco- Criticism by Cartin Gersdort Syivia mayar Todopi. 2006.
3. Eco-Criticism by Grey Garrard, Routiedge 2004.
4. An Eco-Critical approaches to Chaucer from present context by Simona Alias.

