

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

THESIS

*Submitted as Partial Fulfilment of the Requirement to Obtain the Strata One
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ABSTRAK

Wijaya, Eko. 2020. *Ecological Apocalypse in the Three Poems: We Think We Are Less Foolish, Crossing A City Highway, and Epithalamia*. Skripsi. Jurusan Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris. Fakultas Bahasa dan Seni. Universitas Negeri Padang.

Skripsi ini merupakan analisa dari tiga puisi: *We Think We Are Less Foolish, Crossing A City Highway, and Epithalamia*. Permasalahan yang diangkat dalam analisa ini adalah *ecological apocalypse* yang orang-orang lakukan terhadap alam. Tujuan untuk penganalisaan ini adalah untuk mengetahui sejauh mana kontribusi dari elemen puisi seperti *imagery, irony, dan speaker* dalam mengungkapkan isu tentang *ecological apocalypse*. Analisa ini berhubungan dengan konsep *ecocriticism* oleh Garrard, McKusic, Barry, dan Buell dan juga didukung oleh *text-based and context-based interpretation*. Hasil dari analisa ini memperlihatkan bahwa *ecological apocalypse* adalah hasil dari ulah campur tangan manusia. Manusia mengeksploitasi dan memberi polusi terhadap alam secara berkesenambungan untuk keuntungan mereka sendiri tanpa memikirkan keseimbangan dan kelestarian alam.

Kata kunci: *kiamat, manusia, alam, antroposentrisme, eksploitasi, polusi.*

ABSTRACT

Wijaya, Eko. 2020. *Ecological Apocalypse in the Three Poems: We Think We Are Less Foolish, Crossing A City Highway, and Epithalamia*. Thesis. English Department. Faculty of Languages and Arts. Universitas Negeri Padang.

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.*

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of Problem

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, mankind is the culprit behind the majority of ecological disaster. According to Anjasti (2013), the increasing of human needs force them to harm the nature. In the previous era, human needs were limited to primary and secondary needs. In primary needs, human needs were limited to daily needs for survival such as food, cloth, and shelter. In secondary needs, human needs were limited to desires and wants such as for entertainment, leisure, that become important when primary needs have been reasonably satisfied. However, in this era, human needs rise from primary and secondary needs to be consumptive and unlimited tertiary needs. They tend to ignore the sustainability of nature to fulfil their needs. As a result the harmony between humans and nature declined. In similar vein, Carson (2014), states that human also takes responsibility of all these destruction of nature. They exploit the nature continuously without considering its

sustainability of nature. This act causes the depletion of natural resources which has caused domino effects to food chain.

According to Barry (2002), everything that happens in nature is influenced by human intervention. The extinction of flora and fauna, global warming, extreme weather and other natural damage are all caused by human activities. For examples, poaching, illegal logging, accumulation of chemical waste, nuclear use and other human activities that hurting the nature cause a global crisis. According to Worster (1993), global crisis occurs not because of how ecosystems function but our ethical system function. In this era, human acts are out of control toward nature. This condition leads the apocalyptic situation on earth. In the theory of eco-criticism, the concept of ruination of the nature called apocalypse. According to Garrard (2004), apocalypse (the end of the world) is a result of nature taking revenge against human cultures. It means that nature and culture are two interrelated things. The condition of the nature is a reflection of human cultures, whether it's good or bad.

Nowadays, human 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. According to Buell (2005), anthropocentrism is human presupposition that their needs is in higher priority as human being claimed that they are more superior to those of nonhumans.

The ecology deteriorates concern about it has started to emerge. For example literary, there are many writers who talk about environment in their works. Such notable works are: *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (2010) by Marge Piercy, *Crossing a City Highway* (2016) by Yusef Komunyakaa, and *Epithalamia* (2016) by Joan Kane. These three poems show about human irresponsible act out upon the nature which leads to ecological apocalypse. Overall, the three poems talk about ecological damages as the manifestation of the concept apocalypse. These poems are rich by imagery that depicting the ecological ruination and environmental damage.

1.2. Synopsis.

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 about ecological apocalypse. In this analysis, 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, rivers and other natural ecosystems are threatened and collapse. Water, land, and air are getting increasingly pollution. This issue can be seen in two terms. The first is the forms of ecological apocalypse, and second is the anthropocentrism as the cause of ecological apocalypse.

The forms of ecological apocalypse, there are several forms of ecological apocalypse. According to Garrard (2004), there are three manifestations of ecological apocalypse, which are climate changes, the depletion of natural

resources, and natural imbalances. These three manifestations of ecological apocalypse are stated in three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish*, *Crossing a City Highway*, and *Epithalamia*.

The anthropocentrism as the cause of ecological apocalypse, ecological apocalypse caused by human activities. Human daily activities such as illegal logging, illegal hunting, polluting, and exploiting the earth caused several damages to the environment. As a result, the environment cannot maintain its sustainability of life. This issue happens because of human common ideology (anthropocentrism). It can be seen in three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish*, *Crossing a City Highway*, and *Epithalamia*.

In poem *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (2010) by Marge Piercy, shows about human do not have respect toward the nature. They pollute the air, water, and soil. They execute a million cats and dogs. In addition, they also exploit the nuclear energy for daily needs. This exploitation leads to a massive abuse of nuclear which has bad effects not only for environment but also for human beings.

In poem *Crossing a City Highway* (2016) by Yusef Komunyakaa, shows about human daily activities causes several damages to the environment. For instance, overuse of motorize vehicle, poisoned the grass and buzz of chainsaw, they doing illegal hunting, and make conservation area for the animal for their economic purpose.

In poem *Epithalamia* (2016) by Joan Kane, shows about human culture that harm the nature by pollute the air. There is no responsibility from their act

that harming the nature. The act of polluting the air from their activities causes weather change like rain in frozen season.

1.3. Formulation of the Problem

The analysis of this study is focused on ecological damages as the forms of the concept of apocalypse in 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. Based on the topic of this thesis as reflected in its title “*Ecological Apocalypse in the Three Poems: We Think We Are Less Foolish, Crossing A City Highway, and Epithalamia*”, the research question formulated as follows:

What are the manifestations of ecological apocalypse in the three poems?

1.4. Purpose of the Study

This study is aimed to find out how the three poems: *We Think We Are Less Foolish* (2010), *Crossing a City Highway* (2016), and *Epithalamia* (2016) expose the issue of ecological apocalypse.

1.5. A Brief Description of the Authors’ Biography

1. Marge Piercy

She was born March 31, 1936 in Detroit. When she was a child, they moved into a small house in a working-class neighbourhood in Detroit. She has a brother, fourteen years older than she is. Piercy is author of more than seventeen volumes of poems, among them *The Moon Is Always Female* (1980, considered a feminist classic) and *The Art of Blessing the Day* (1999). She had received

several awards such as, Carolyn Kizer Poetry Prize, 1986 & 1990, Golden Rose Bradley Award, New England Poetry Club, 1992, etc.

She grew older and became more independent. She left home at seventeen. At seventeen, after winning a scholarship to the University of Michigan which paid her tuition, she was the first person in her family to go to college. Her schooling finished with an M.A. from North-western where she had a fellowship.

2. Yusef Komunyakaa

Yusef Komunyakaa was born in Bogalusa, Louisiana. He earned a BA from the University of Colorado Springs on the GI Bill, an MA from Colorado State University, and an MFA from the University of California-Irvine.

He has published several books of poems, including *The Emperor of Water Clocks* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2015); *The Chameleon Couch* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2011); *Warhorses* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2008); *Taboo: The Wishbone Trilogy, Part 1* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006); *Pleasure Dome: New & Collected Poems, 1975-1999* (Wesleyan University Press, 2001); *Talking Dirty to the Gods* (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2000); *Thieves of Paradise* (Wesleyan University Press, 1998), which was a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award; *Neon Vernacular: New & Selected Poems 1977-1989* (Wesleyan University Press, 1994), for which he received the Pulitzer Prize and the Kingsley Tufts Poetry Award; and *Magic City* (Wesleyan University Press, 1992).

He is the recipient of the 2011 Wallace Stevens Award. His other honors include the Ruth Lilly Poetry Prize, the William Faulkner Prize from the Université de Rennes, the Thomas Forcade Award, the Hanes Poetry Prize, fellowships from the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, the Louisiana Arts Council, and the National Endowment for the Arts.

3. Joan Kane

Joan Kane was born 1977 in Anchorage Alaska. She graduated from Harvard College with a BA and earned an M.F.A from Columbia University. Kane is the author of *Milk Black Carbon* (2013), and *The Cormorant Hunter's Wife* (2009). She got received several awards in her career including, Rasmuson Foundation Individual Artist Award (2007), Donald Hall Prize in Poetry from AWP (2012), John Simon Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship (2018).

1.6.Previous Study

To the best of the researcher's knowledge, the undergraduate thesis about this study is still far between. However, there are some reviews which are highly contributes to this research. Matheson (2016) evaluates that the poem "Epithalamia" by Joan Kane explores the issue of human automatically as guilty of polluting the environment with rote hands. Still according to Matheson (2016), the poem "Crossing a City Highway" by Yusef Komunyakaa takes the reader into a Coyote's life, trying to find a place to survive in area under construction, he also assumes that Komunyakaa furthering ecopoetry's inquiry between human and nature.

Despite the similarities, in this analysis, there is the difference that can be seen in exposing the issue of ecological apocalypse. This analysis focus to expose the issue of ecological apocalypse in two ways: The first is the forms of ecological apocalypse and the second is the anthropocentrism as the cause of ecological apocalypse based on three poems. There are also several poetic elements such as irony, speaker, imagery, and symbol that help the researcher to analyse the poems.

1.7.Theoretical Framework

The aim of this analysis is to reveal the activities of people that caused the ecological apocalypse. The analysis of these three poems uses the *Eco-criticism* approach. According to Barry (2002), eco-critical theory officially arrived by referring to Karl Kober's (1974) article *Home at Grasmere* as the first to use ecological term in literary criticism. Barry also points to William Ruckert's (1978) essay, *Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Eco-criticism*, was the first to explicitly reference the term *Eco-criticism*. According to Glotfelty in Barry (2002), eco-criticism is simply defined as the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment. From the explanation above explains that literary works are also taking a part as a media to reveal about the phenomena that occur in nature.

According to Barry (2002), eco-criticism concern about the crucial matter of the relationship between culture and nature. Nature is an entity which affect us and which we can affect, perhaps fatally, if we mistreat it. This statement shows about the condition of the nature is a reflection of human culture, whether it's good or bad. In addition, Barry also said that for the first time in human history,

no true wilderness exists on this planet; global warming affects every region, and other anthropocentric problems, such as nuclear radiation and huge waste from human daily activities that cause environmental crisis.

According to Buel (1995), the concept of eco-criticism also concern to the issue of environmental crisis. It means that environmental crisis is a serious problem that faced by human and other creatures in the world.

According to Garrard (2004), eco-criticism explores the ways in which we imagine and portray the relationship between humans and the environment in all areas of cultural production. He also explains that there are several characteristic of eco-criticism such as romantic pastoral, wilderness, dwelling, and apocalypse.

1.7.1. The Characteristic of Eco-criticism by Garrard

A. Apocalypse

According to Garrard (2004), the concept of apocalypse refers to the end of the world as an inevitable catastrophe in religious beliefs. In secular apocalypse, the end of the world is a result of nature taking revenge against human cultures. It means that all disasters that exist on this earth, even the end of this world is the act of human beings who have never cared about the natural conditions and the survival of living things. This act involves a “social psychology” that inclines towards “paronia and violence”, extreme moral dualism and canonisation believers. In other word, human presupposition that their needs is in higher priority as human being claimed that they are more superior to those

of nonhumans. They thought that they can control everything and exploit other natural resources or other creatures. As a result the natural resources are depleted.

In environmental apocalypse, according to Garrard (2004), environmental apocalypse happens because of humans' irresponsibility toward the nature by just exploiting without concerning to the sustainability of nature. This circumstances lead to the human action sporadically destroyed the nature. This action eventually bring human to the conflict and competition to exploit the natural resources and directly they pollute the earth to fulfil their needs. The humans are in failure to understand the consequences of their action that will cause the environmental crisis even worst it will lead to the catastrophe.

According to McKusic (2000), environmental apocalypse is believed as a causal effect of human action toward the nature rather than Divine intervention. It means that the act of humans give a huge impact toward the environment. Furthermore, the massive use of technology may alter the climate and at the end it will damage the natural balance. Blake in McKusic (2000), argued that the large scale of industrial factories play an important role in having the possibility of global environmental change. It means that, the pollution from industrial activity is a serious problem due to the fact that the factory does not only pollute the earth but even worse in large scale when the huge waste of industrial factory contaminated the water, it will affect the survival of living things in the water even humans themselves.

B. Romantic Pastoral

According to Garrard (2004), romantic pastoral is never in serious danger of nature condition and has a rather poor biological diversity. The romantic pastoral mainly focuses on beauty of the nature, especially looking at the landscapes, which are mostly mountains, rivers, and sea. Based on explanation above, romantic pastoral insists that human is not the owner of the earth, human is a part of nature. Human should respect the nature. This type of Romantic pastoral is more useful to eco-critics, as it provides a solution as to how to treat the earth.

C. Wilderness

According to Garrard (2004), the concept of wilderness refers to nature that uncontaminated by civilization. It is organized to protect specific ecosystems and species. Wilderness is important for eco-criticism as it promises a renewed, authentic relation of humanity and the earth.

As wilderness has had no contact with civilization, the preservation of nature can be maintained properly. Something that happens in nature really happens naturally without human assistance. Since in fiction shows how the wilderness must be treated.

In other hand, wilderness is way of thinking environmentalist approach of eco-criticism, as it is concerned about nature, but the greatest concern is still maintaining a human culture. Conservationists are concerned about wilderness, and they do understand that humans cannot just destroy the nature, but human must preserve the nature, they also want some benefits for humans because human and nature are two interrelated things. Human must know the right agriculture

and forestry system, so humans do not only exploit the nature to fulfil their daily needs. This approach also means that wilderness does not stay the wilderness as it is defined above, as it will be touched by civilization to maintain the nature balance.

D. Dwelling

According to Garrard (2004), dwelling is a possibility of the earth in a relation with human of duty and responsibility. Dwelling is not a transient state. Rather, it implies the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry, and death, of ritual, life and work. This chapter will consider models of the “primitive” models supposed by some critics to be exemplary of an authentic dwelling on earth. This statement shows that human need responsible to the condition of the earth. The significance of dwelling to eco-criticism is clear in that respect that it is an exemplary way of handling the place we live. To be able to do that, however, we need to have respect for the place we live, we need to protect and love it.

1.7.2. Anthropocentrism and Ecocentrism

This analysis also investigates the concept of anthropocentrism and ecocentrism. Buell in his *The Future of Environmental Criticism* (2005) describes that anthropocentrism is human presupposition that their needs is in higher priority as human being claimed that they are more superior to those of nonhumans. While ecocentrism is the view that ecosphere interests have more importance than any individual species interests. In this analysis people control

the nature, they position themselves in superior position to fulfill their advantages without considering the sustainability of the nature.

1.7.3. Text Based Interpretation

This analysis is supported by text based interpretation. According to Guerin (2005), text-based interpretation focuses on the work itself. It shows that the meaning and ideas contains by the works is found in the text by examining the interrelationship of the elements. It is supported by poetic elements, such as irony, imagery, repetition and speaker as the elements uncover the unfriendly activities done by human being toward nature. Thus, the role of irony, imagery, and speaker become the main focus to reveal thus issue.

A. Irony

According to Kirsznner (2000), irony occurs when an incongruity exists between two levels of meanings or experiences. Irony is a literary device which reveals contradictory meanings. It means that the reader expects a certain situation, while the actual ending is in contrast.

B. Imagery

According *The Princeton Encyclopedia of Poetry and Poetics*, definition of “ imagery” is refers to images produced in the mind by language, whose words may refer either to experiences which could produce physical perceptions, were the reader actually to have those experiences or to the sense impressions themselves. Based on the quotation above, it can help the reader analyze the

literary work, especially a poem to explore the condition and situation that can be revealing in the poem.

C. Speaker

Speaker refers to the voice of the poem. In a poem, the speaker can be formed in many things. The speaker in poem can be formed as a person, an animal, thing or an abstraction. In addition, the speaker is not the same person with the poet or author.

1.8. Methodology:

1.8.1. Type of Research

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 apocalypse in 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. The data will be sorted and analyzed based on the concept of eco-criticism.

1.8.2. Object of the Research

The objects of this research are 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.

1.8.3. Technique of Data Collection

The data will be collected from 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 in following procedure:

- A. Reading 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.
- B. Sorting the data related to the issue of apocalypse in 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.
- C. Identifying the data which has been sorted based on the issue of ecological apocalypse.

1.8.4. Method and Technique of Data Analysis

Related to the collected data, the data will be analyzed based on the concept of eco-criticism by Garrard, Barry, Buel, and Dean.