RESEARCH ARTICLE

Exploring Nature in the Selected Poems of Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq: An Ecocritical Approach

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ABSTRACT

The main goal of this article is to look into the relationship between nature and man as it is portrayed in the poetry of Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq, two renowned poets from two distinct realms, namely St. Lucia and Bangladesh, respectively. Taking into consideration the rising level of environmental awareness, both poets have attempted to produce poetry that integrates man with nature. The poetry, particularly nature poetry, of these poets is explored in order to undertake study from an individual viewpoint, but there has yet to be a major examination into a comparative technique by adopting an ecocritical approach. In this study, the researchers attempt to uncover the nature of poetry disguised inside the chosen poems of the legendary poets by examining the creative and aesthetic characteristics of their works. This study examines the interaction between man and the environment via the lens of an ecocritical approach in a comparative manner. In this research, one poem by Kaiser Haq, “Poor Man Eating,” and one poem by Derek Walcott, “Map of the New World,” are examined from the perspective of environmental awareness. By concentrating on these poems and using an ecocritical perspective, this study attempts to demonstrate how the poet is sensitive to nature and how people are concerned about the environment.

KEYWORDS

Ecocriticism, nature, environmental consciousness Derek Walcott, Kaiser Haq

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1. Introduction

Poetry is a portrayal of profound observation of the poet’s deployment of human and natural resources to numerous proportions. Ecocriticism has developed into a pivotal ingredient in interpreting poetry, indeed subtly. Because poetry is the arena in which we attempt to rescue the environment (Bate, J. 2000). Actually, ecocriticism is a literary genre that focuses on human-nature interaction. Environmental concerns, environmental culture, and human attitudes toward nature are the subjects of ecocriticism. Ecology and environmental issues are examined in Ecocriticism. Nature, as a notion, has a profound effect on the way we see and interact with one another, as “humanity only survives in nature” (Bate, J., 1991). Individuals began to investigate what literature might tell us about our relationship to the environment and the problems it confronted in the late twentieth century. Ecocriticism brings together specialists from a wide array of professions to study literature in order to analyze our current environmental crisis and offer new ideas for resolving it. The publication of two major publications, both published in the mid-1990s, marked the formal beginning of ecocriticism: The Ecocriticism Reader, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and The Environmental Imagination, by Lawrence Buell. Ecocriticism motivates us to be more involved in the world as it revives nature writing, promotes ecological knowledge and philosophy in literature, and develops new “green” approaches for reading present literature by contributing to the contemporary environmental movement (Jeon, Deuk Ju, 2004).
2. Theoretical Framework

This article uses ecocriticism to examine the link between people and the environment in Derek Walcott’s "Map of the New World" and Kaiser Haq’s "Poor Man Eating." As a result, ecocriticism serves as the primary theoretical lens. Thus, the context and gradual evolution, including the continuous waves of ecocriticism, are significant.

2.1 Eco-criticism

Ecocriticism is based on the concept that the relationship between man and nature can be represented in literature in distinct aspects. William Rueckert (Barry, 2009) coined the term "Eco-criticism" to specify the treatment of nature, primarily ecology, in literature. Rueckert (1978) defines "eco-criticism as the application of ecology and ecological principles to the scholarly study of literary works" (72). However, eco-criticism officially began in the mid-1990s with the publication of The Ecocriticism Reader, edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, and Lawrence Buell’s The Environmental Imagination. Glotfelty’s definition in The Ecocriticism Reader is that eco-criticism is the “study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996, p. 18). As described by Lawrence Buell, “an eco-criticism is a term that combines literature with nature,” or “a study of the relationship between literature and the environment conducted in a spirit of commitment to environmentalist praxis” (Buell, 2001, p.20). Peter Barry (1995) writes, "For the eco-critic, nature is a real thing that affects us, and may affect us severely if we abuse it (Beginning Theory: 114)." In “The Ecocritical Heritage,” Ian Marshall argues that eco-criticism is broad and profound and that its literary criticism is inspired by ecological awareness. For Slovic (2000), eco-criticism is the study of expressly environmental writings or the examination of ecological implications and human-nature interactions in any literary [or other creative] work, including ones that seem ignorant of the nonhuman world (160). The modern definition of eco-criticism gives Camilo Gomides (2006) the study of art that raises moral problems about human connections with the environment and inspires viewers to live within a boundary that will last generations (16). Eco-criticism is an interdisciplinary field that looks at literature and the environment together, analyzing the environment and coming up with ideas for how to deal with the current environmental crisis.

Buell (2005) presents a description of waves that link and improve several aspects of eco-criticism, although he is implying that "palimpsest" would be a more appropriate metaphor than "wave" (17). Numerous academics have recognized different waves of eco-criticism, and we shall attempt to cover as much ground as possible in a short discussion of practically all of them. The First Wave (1980–present) is characterized by a concentration on nature writing, non-human nature, and wilderness, while the American and British ecofeminist movements are distinguished by “discursive” ecofeminism. The Second Wave (from the mid-1990s to the present) covers green cultural studies and local works of literature from throughout the globe. The Third Wave (2000–present) is concerned with eco-cosmopolitanism, post-nationalism, ecofeminism, eco masculinism, green queer theory, and animality, which include evolutionary eco-criticism, animal subjectivity, and agency, vegetarianism, nonhuman species justice, and post-humanism. The Fourth Wave refers to ongoing multiculturalism among American ecocritics as well as an interest in multicultural experiences and voices, material eco-criticism and its various offshoots (material ecofeminism, nonhuman agency, public health narratives), and applied eco-criticism (material culture, sustainability, energy, food, and so on).

Literature is not restricted to depicting human emotions and societal biases; it also depicts the impact of nature on human beings. Eco-critics are concerned with the delicate balance between man and the environment. They examine the relationship between physical and mental human growth and the environment, as well as the ways in which literature transmits both the blessings and crises of ecology. Eco-criticism is a term that refers to a synthesis of ecology and criticism. Ecology is the study of the cohesive interaction between humans and their environment. While criticism is the assessment of creative works, thus, eco-criticism is a theoretical domain in which literary works are evaluated critically for their use of environmental factors. Eco-criticism’s purpose is to illuminate how nature is depicted in literary works. Eco-critics believe that human writing should have a connection with nature or ecology. Human existence is inextricably linked to nature, and language is incapable of capturing this enduring relationship between man and the environment. Eco-criticism is the pursuit of a balance between humans and non-humans. In their works, many authors depict nature from a variety of perspectives. Nature is literally worshiped by William Wordsworth, the poet of nature. He thinks that nature is capable of curing any kind of suffering. According to him, if nature and its constituents were in excellent condition, human beings would always live a healthy and happy existence. He is a firm believer that nature changes the mind, as shown by his poems “Tintern Abbey” and “Ode: Intimations of Immortality.” By contrast, his co-author, S.T. Coleridge, shows nature in a different light. He said in his poem "Dejection: An Ode" that nature is shaped by the human imagination. If someone is depressed, no amount of natural beauty, such as rain, will lift their spirits. Eco-criticism focuses on how various writers depict nature and its parts in their writings. Eco-criticism informs fiction, which uses environmental elements to portray themes of extreme exploitation, colonialism, war, religion, culture, and metaphysics. Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author, demonstrates how colonialism destroys the environment and has a negative impact on indigenous people. He demonstrates how invaders razed woods to make way for English churches. On the other hand, Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq use nature and its elements to convey a variety of messages regarding environmental exploitation.
2.2 Literature review
In this article, the researchers try to figure out the selected poems of Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq by applying ecocriticism. Derek Walcott’s poetry mostly revolves around the representations of the sea (Hambuch, D. 2015) and other natural resources. Walcott’s poetry is replete with analogies for natural environments, conveying a certain “nature-centrism” and making allusions to environmental consequences (Hambuch, D. 2021). Walcott exhibits an ecological knowledge of the interconnectedness of culture, history, and the environment (St. John, D. E. 2019). Even Walcott’s poetry demonstrates how myths of edenic and natural origins are transformed and how biotic and cultural creolization histories intersect (Somerville, E. 2006). On the other hand, Haq’s poems are mainly focused on the features of transnationalism (Tahmina Ahmed, 2018) and urban issues. Haq’s “Buriganga Blues” might be used as a teaching tool for our students on environmental concerns (Alam, F. 2018). Haq is inspired by his country’s illustrious history and legendary culture and writes in the same manner, style, and language as the world’s great poetic voices (Islam, M. S. 2020).

This article is an attempt to increase environmental awareness via the use of chosen poems by great poets that depict natural magnificence and its effect on the species. The verse instills in us the fear that by abusing the environment, we are surely contributing to the earth’s destruction. Derek Walcott’s distinctive poetry provokes and indirectly educates us on the importance of environmental stewardship and the awful influence of the environment on the globe. His compositions, such as Map of the New World, Bleecker Street, Summer, The Sea Is History, After The Storm, Midsummer, and Tobago, are largely associated with atmosphere, reiterating the importance of the environment and our cordial relationship with it, as we as humans are profoundly reliant on it, and any abuse of the environment is a form of self-harm. Meanwhile, Kaiser Haq’s famed poems, such as Ode on the Lungi, Liking It, and Poor Man Eating, address environmental problems via natural imagery, emphasizing nature’s effect on human beings and inspiring us to care about the environment. The selection of Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq poems to examine environmental problems demonstrates the manner in which the interconnection of people and nature, in a broad sense, may be shown in order to finish the research in the light of ecocritical criticism. Because there aren’t many studies that look at these two great poets’ poems from an ecocritical point of view, this study will look for environmental issues that are related to humans and nature in their chosen poems.

3. The intersection between nature and environmental issues in Walcott and Haq’s poetry
Both Walcott and Haq, two of the most celebrated poets of the age, demonstrate a more in-depth grasp of aesthetic beauty throughout their work. While representing Odyssey’s journey, Walcott focuses his attention on the natural and magical beauty of the sea. On the other hand, Haq is concerned with the facts of the environment and the deterioration brought about by humankind’s actions. In this article, the researchers seek to investigate the viewpoints of two prominent poets by evaluating their selected poems, “Map of the New World” and “Poor Man Eating.”

3.1 Presentation of nature in Walcott’s poetry
Literature is about individuals, their feelings, and actions, and eco-criticism emphasizes the idea that nature and its elements can be the subject matter of literature. Human life is not aloof from nature; rather, human life is surrounded by nature. Derek Walcott is one of the poets who admires nature most. His poem “Map of the New World” is divided into various segments, and in each segment, he vigorously explores nature. In this poem, he commences the poem with an archipelago or series of islands. He depicts a ship sailing into a sea of rain. In the mist, the ship loses sight of the islands and the chance of landing. He indicates Odyssey’s ten-year returning journey, aged Helen, and Troy, an ashpit by the sea, and further refers to Homer’s singing the Odyssey on sea spray harp strings. Finally, the poem ends with a request from the speaker, who asks the ocean to take the seafaring poet from the beginning of the poem to the end of the poem using anvils, frigates, and horses.

It all starts with “Archipelagoes,” a vast body of water dotted with several islands. There follows the rain as a metaphor for relaxation or the showering of good fortune, as it is in its traditional meaning. Using the word “mist” as a barrier, Derek Walcott disrupts his poetic journey. A dismal atmosphere is created by mist, and this prevents individuals from reaching where they need to go. In the poet’s words,

“Slowly, the sail will lose sight of islands;
into a mist will go the belief in harbours
of an entire race.”

Furthermore, a detailed comparison of grey clouds to Helen’s hair demonstrates an incredible usage of natural components to accentuate Helen’s hair’s beauty. According to the poet,

“Helen’s hair, a grey cloud.”
Then comes the "drizzling sea," which indicates a sprinkling as it displays the ocean's natural environment—quiet and serene with the soft raindrops.

Derek Walcott makes an exaltation of comparison based on the usage of rain to concentrate a man's gaze, a seductive sight that leads to the reference of Odyssey:

"A man with clouded eyes picks up the rain.
and plucks the first line of the Odyssey."

By incorporating natural aspects throughout this poem, Walcott describes his literary journey. Nature is used to illustrate man's attempt, demonstrating the interdependence of man and nature. The poet spends a long time contemplating the beauty of the sea in order to have a deeper grasp of nature and to communicate his views. Because, as Albert Einstein [3] once said, "Look deep into nature, and then you will understand everything better." Nature is explored by the poet in his poem "Map of the New World," which includes the beauty of the sea as well as the expression of his views via the use of diverse natural components. The poem takes on the role of a representation of nature via the portrayal of the sea's ecosystem, which elicits feelings of both pessimism and optimism at the same time.

3.2 Human crisis and environmental issues in Kaiser Haq's poetry

Kaiser Haq, a Bangladeshi poet who participated in the liberation war of Bangladesh, writes about the post-war realities and sufferings of the people of Bangladesh with a great deal of passion and intensity. Natural elements are used in his poetry to depict human existence and its pain. His poem, "Poor Man Eating," is an ecocritical presentation of the idea that life on earth is lovely and happy if nature and her gifts are conserved and respected.

The poet's first natural element is the wild sun, which defies all methodical laws and governs over everything. It is unrestrained, non-submissive, and defies all established traditions. The poet now compares the sun's imperiousness to that of an eastern ruler.

As the poet says,

"The sun races to the zenith,
Imperious as an oriental autocrat".

Here, the sun is likened to an oriental autocrat who, by his own nature, devours the souls of his subjects. Kaiser Haq's painting depicts a tyrant who attempts to erode people's fundamental rights and a stubborn sun that burns people's skin with its fire-like heat. The poet's imagination is astounding in depicting the sun and its obstinate nature as a tyrant who rejects all conventions and conventional institutions and becomes arrogant. This situation persists as our sensitivity to the environment deteriorates. The environment then retaliates in its own unique way, just like the sun is likened to an autocrat who does what he wants without regard for the well-being of his people.

The poet returns to the idea of a denuded tree to paint a picture of an exploited and dry environment where nothing remains. The denuded tree represents the fragmented view of our surroundings, which reflects the reality of our exploited environment. This project indirectly alludes to "Tommy Hilfiger rags." As the poet demonstrates,

"The poor crouches
In imitation, Tommy Hilfiger rags
In the dwindling shade
Of a denuded tree".

As a result of our reckless actions, the environment becomes hostile, much like a depleted tree. The barren tree symbolizes the environment's brutality since it is incapable of providing shade to anybody. Even the poorest guy would struggle to find shade under it. This happens directly due to our own heinous acts against the ecosystem.

Eco-critique examines the simultaneous impacts of nature, both its benefits and curses, on human beings. Kaiser Haq illustrates the scourge of nature for which humans are accountable. Human beings are never harmed by nature. As Wordsworth [20] expresses it,

"Nature never did betray
The heart that loved her".
Human beings are responsible for deteriorating nature’s charm and beauty through their heinous activities. The environment’s voracious nature consumes humans and all forms of virtue. It suffocates people's consciences and renders them immobile.

“A bowl of fired earth-

It could be an Ouija board.

To conjure up goodies,

Courtesy of the weak of conscience”.

Kaiser Haq uses a range of natural elements to communicate his points of view to the audience, including the sun, barren trees, and the ground, among others. By highlighting our inability to keep the environment in good condition despite the fact that it continues to provide us with a variety of natural resources, Kaiser Haq’s poem “Poor Man Eating” demonstrates the critical nature of environmental issues and the urgency with which they must be addressed. Nature provides almost all of the components that people need, yet we pollute the environment in exchange. Our actions always have a negative impact on the environment, and the earth then demonstrates how harsh nature can be when it acts in its own manner. At the conclusion of his poetry, Kaiser Haq exudes faith, stating that all will be perfectly right one day. People’s pain will be alleviated, and the world will return to a more comfortable state to live in.

3.3 Views of Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq

Derek Walcott’s poem is primarily concerned with natural beauty, and through expressing that beauty, particularly that of the sea, he depicts the tale he wishes to tell. By portraying the ocean, he is really demonstrating the force of nature and integrating it with the voyage of Odyssey, and as a result, he gives additional allusions to Odyssey’s journey, such as the stormy sea, aged Helen, Troy, and so on. In this poem, the poet eloquently captures the interaction between man and the environment, as well as their interdependence. Because nature buries world history, and a poet’s observer mind unearths it, as is the case here with Derek Walcott. Kaiser Haq, on the other hand, uses his depiction of nature to bring the terrible reality to light. The natural world has always been friendly to mankind, but as a consequence of our evil deeds, the natural world deteriorates and exacts its retribution by exhibiting its might. Most of his attention is focused on the environmental catastrophe that has been brought about by humanity, in which the environment has become as ruthless as the sun, defying all laws and regulations. His descriptions of drought conditions and destroyed trees are a description of the effects of our horrendous act of devastation on the natural world. As human beings, we wreak havoc on the environment and play a role in environmental catastrophes. For the poet, the lesson is clear: we must treat nature with respect if we want our lives to be meaningful. If this is not the case, nothing will survive. Nature and man should live in harmony with one another. In spite of the fact that Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq are two quite different poets, their poetry is concerned with the beauty of nature and the importance of natural resources. They demonstrate the interconnectedness and interdependence of nature and man in their poems in an attractive way and humanize the environmental problems brought on by humans. Actually, poetry is a way for them to show how nature and humans are connected and interdependent.

4. Conclusion

The poem “Map of the New World” by Derek Walcott employs optical illusions to depict the magnificence of nature found in the ocean and to convey a story that is connected to the Odysseys’ journey. The author is enthralled with the natural beauty of the sea, and as a result, he focuses his attention on it throughout the poem, highlighting the interaction between man and the natural world. He emphasizes the interrelationship between mankind and the environment while also highlighting the coexistence of the ecosystem. While the poet’s poem is designed to highlight the beauty of the ocean rather than to illustrate the environmental crisis that is forcing nature to intensify it, this is not his intent. He believes that treating nature with respect would make the world a more pleasant place to live for everyone. Because of this motivation, the poet sets out to discover the ocean’s concealed beauty, which encompasses unpredictable weather, constantly shifting winds, as well as hot and chilly environments, to mention a few aspects of it. On the other hand, Kaiser Haq focuses on the sad truth of the current interaction between man and the environment in his poem “Poor Man Eating.” His position is unambiguous: whatever treatment nature receives, it will reap an equal reward. The poet illustrates the harsh harshness of nature by highlighting the sun, the earth, and the trees. The poet’s message highlights the need to keep a pollution-free environment since the environment would be terrible for the inhabitants of the planet’s surface. When the damage to the ecosystem reaches all reasonable limits, nature takes revenge by unleashing devastation on the planet via natural calamities. According to Kaiser Haq, peaceful cohabitation requires a respectful attitude toward the environment. Ironically, individuals take advantage of nature for financial gain, thinking that doing so would provide them with pleasure. The harm done to nature, on the other hand, renders that type of prosperity and delight useless since it torments the environment and breaks the delicate balance that exists between man and nature. As a consequence, this kind of endeavor will never be able to satisfy anybody or anything on the planet. Only responsible behavior has the potential to improve nature’s beauty and make it a more pleasant place to live. The research has limitations owing to the dearth of comprehensive literature on Derek Walcott and
Kaiser Haq and the difficulties of combining varied information regarding the ecocriticism of these two famous poets. Specifically, there is a paucity of scholarly publications that provide ecocritical viewpoints on the works of the two great poets. There may be deficiencies in the study’s results as a result of inadequate resources. In addition to facilitating future Bangladeshi and international academics with ecocritical views on poetry, this study will aid in the creation of research papers on Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq. However, it will also motivate others to pursue ecocriticism as a way of analyzing poetry and serve as a resource for anyone who wants to do research on Derek Walcott and Kaiser Haq.

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