

A Study of the Environment in the Post-Apocalyptic Novel *Malevil* by Robert Merle with an Ecocritical Approach

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Extended Abstract

Introduction

Advancements in technology, environmental disasters, erosion, pollution, drought, fossil fuels, global warming and depletion of natural resources have turned the environment into the serious crisis of the world today. *Malevil*, a post-apocalyptic novel by the 20th century French writer Robert Merle portrays the culmination of such ecological crises. In this interdisciplinary descriptive-analytical and comparative study, the natural environment and man-made environment and its destructive factors are investigated in the novel in order to answer this question: is an interdisciplinary approach to literature able to represent the horror-struck image of post-apocalyptic environment in order to save the environment?

Aim

In this research, the aim is to investigate the interaction between literature and the environment and its literary representation with focus on ecocriticism. The importance of ecosystem, the increasing problems and gradual destruction of the environment are more obvious than ever. So, such studies have literary value and can promote the culture of environmental protection.

Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Within the general framework of this research, the post-apocalyptic ecosystem depicted in *Malevil* is examined. The present study deals with the ecosystem and natural environment and man-made environment of *Malevil*. Moreover, it examines ecocriticism as a form of modern literary criticism.

The interdisciplinary approach of comparative literature by René Welk, theoretician of comparative literature, deals with the role and importance of literature in the interdisciplinary field and its relationship with other fields. Ecocriticism offers an interdisciplinary approach to study the intersections of literature and environment. This is because, to overcome these crises, individual fields of knowledge alone are insufficient to resolve these problems. Thus, the intersection of literature and

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environment as two separate sciences creates a whole unit called ecocriticism.

Discussion

In the current research, the natural and man-made environment (or artificial environment) in the novel before and after the explosion have been investigated. First, the novel's plot unfolds in a rural setting, as the village is portrayed as a symbol of an unpolluted natural environment, less impacted by industry and technology. Following the atomic explosion on Zero Day, the natural environment has been reduced to a pile of ashes and scorched earth. The four principal elements of nature, i.e. water, air, earth and fire, are extremely predominant throughout novel, which are narrated in both positive and negative point of view. Furthermore, trees and plants, animals and birds being salient in the survival of the environmental cycle, are emphasized frequently. Regarding the artificial environment, humans, as a member of the man-made environment, play a fundamental role in the survival and destruction of ecosystem. Basically, human actions can lead to the survival or premature destruction of the ecosystem. With regard to the man-made environment in *Malevil*, the ecosystem and human destiny are overshadowed by the aftermath of an atomic explosion.

Findings and Conclusion

Research findings indicate that the survival of human beings depends on the life of the natural environment and sustainable actions of human beings. Fortunately, the characters through hopeful efforts transform successfully the grayed Nature, destroyed by a mysterious explosion, into green Nature. To preserve the ecosystem, *Malevil* members emphasize cultural aspects and education. Nature affects the behavior, life and destiny of the residents of *Malevil*, and on the other hand, they also play an essential role in the life of the natural environment through their individual and social behaviors. The violence and generosity of nature is depicted in the unlimited imagination through novel, so that the audience can grasp the ecosystem as it deserves. In fact, after Zero Day, they learn from the destructive actions of the past and give a new meaning to the peaceful coexistence of man and nature. The protagonist, Emmanuel, along with other characters in the novel, begins to plan, hope, and take action to restore the scorched nature. Accordingly, they find out how the four elements, trees and animals contributed to their survival; An issue that they did not pay much attention to until that terrible day. It is noted that these God-given resources are not eternal and unlimited, and it is required for the future generation. The results show that the literary work represents the sufferings of the nature and environmental degradation; therefore, literature could play a role in protecting the nature and educating people. The correlation between literature and ecosystem is mutual and interactive. It invites readers to a constructive challenge to reflect on and protect the ecosystem. Therefore, it is necessary to consider ourselves responsible and try to preserve the earth as our home. To achieve this important goal, negligence can lead to the destruction of the ecosystem. Despite all his efforts and responsibilities to restore the ecosystem, Emmanuel neglects to treat his appendix,

symbolizing negligence towards nature. At the end, this negligence causes his death. It indicates that ecosystem belongs to all and is not a private property. Additionally, establishing a balance between human needs and life of nature, collective wisdom, suitable application of knowledge, collective responsibility, sustainable planning and independent of individual and ethnic exploitations can offer a solution to the crisis-ridden ecosystem.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, Ecosystem, Interdisciplinary study, Literary representation, *Malevil*

