



ECOCRITICISM IN ALEXANDRA KLEEMAN'S SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

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<p>Received: May 10th 2023 Accepted: June 6th 2023 Published: July 10th 2023</p>	<p>Today's world is significantly distinct from that of the past. With so much new technology and new ideas, it can be difficult to keep up with the changes. One thing that has remained constant, however, is the importance of understanding the environment and how our actions can affect it. Alexandra Kleeman's <i>Something New Under the Sun</i> (2021) projects the way how humanity interacts with nature, and how our actions and attitudes can have an effect on the environment. She examines the importance of understanding our impact on the environment and how we should strive to live in harmony with nature. Through her characters, Kleeman conveys the message that nature can be a source of both beauty and destruction if we allow it. Kleeman occasionally employs more hyperrealism, breaking out from the scene at hand and sending the reader elsewhere completely. The details of the supposed catastrophe are not Kleeman's objective in <i>Something New Under the Sun</i>. Though, she did envision some drastic measures that would be necessary to take. However, the main object in the novel appears to be how humanity reacts to terrifying, significant shifts, and how carelessness may outlive even the clearest signs of catastrophe</p>

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THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Over nearly a century, humanity has seen tremendous shifts. The start and the end of the second World War, the collapse of communism, and the resolution of the Cold War signalled the beginning of a bright new period of human history. Furthermore, technical advances like mobile phones and the Internet, as well as coloured televisions and digital discs, emerged. It was also the period of cultural acceptability.

Globalisation and the rise in worry regarding global warming were the definitions of the 2000s. In addition, the past ten years have seen a demographic increase, wars, environmental disasters, the 2008 recession, widespread fires, and the pandemic. Most individuals lost their jobs during the quarantine, which was the worst economic catastrophe since the Great Depression.

As a result, all these inspirations and new circumstances filtered into contemporary writing. In response to society's requirements for communication, The American author Alexandra Kleeman was born in 1986. In what we call the contemporary literary period, the term contemporaneous refers to being present, relating to, or existing in the now. Thus, whenever we refer to Contemporary literature, we mean literature published in the present, about the present. Any literature written after the Second World War and up to the present is considered Contemporary literature.

The social or ideological beliefs of the societies are what Contemporary literature reflects, as indicated through realistic characters which parallel ongoing developments. The researchers are on a journey to determine and understand the societal virtues and defects, an attempt to enlighten humanity about lessons to learn and concerns to address. And therefore, while considering contemporary writing, we cannot limit ourselves to a few subjects or settings. While society evolves, likewise do the structure and values of this literature.

SUMMARY OF THE NOVEL

Alexandra Kleeman wrote her novel *Something New Under the Sun* in the present tense, along with the narrator's point of view. The storytelling structure shifts, and at times, it fragments throughout the work.

Patrick Hamlin, a middle-aged East Coast author, was overjoyed when he learned that Hollywood filmmakers long to convert his novel *Elison Lane* into a movie. Ignoring his wife Alison's fears, Patrick chooses to leave for California to work on the film. Yet, almost immediately upon arrival, he discovers living in California unsettling and dislocating. Nothing is recognizable or seems quite genuine to him. As Patrick examines the film screenplay for the first moment,

he grows increasingly uneasy. The screenwriters have hardly kept the core of his story, and only the characters' names were familiar to him. To Patrick, the novel was more than just a story to tell. It was his personal experience. Following his father's passing, Patrick wanted to depict the ghostly experience of mourning someone whose spirit refuses to go.

Patrick is doubtful when he encounters Cassidy Carter, the actress whose cast as the female protagonist, the other production assistants had mentioned Cassidy. Patrick was unconvinced that she was the perfect fit for the role. The producers, Jay and Brenda, encourage Patrick to stay in touch with Cassidy. During filming days, they often assign him the responsibility of driving her to and from the filming location. Cassidy was moody and disrespectful, and Patrick struggled to accept her attitude.

He is also upset that his position as a writer is not appreciated sufficiently. Once he feels overwhelmed, he expresses his thoughts to Cassidy. Meanwhile, Alison hopes the retreat will help her since her sadness continually overtakes her because of the climate issue. Patrick is concerned about them from California, where he believes Earthbridge is a cult. A wildfire rages on the borders of Hollywood, yet neither of the actors pays attention to the danger it brings. Although he attempts to concentrate, Patrick is unable to convince himself that the fire is a life-threatening situation. He keeps consuming WAT-R, a synthetic water-like drink, to keep himself hydrated.

Patrick eventually develops suspicions about Jay and Brenda. He informs Cassidy that he believes they are up to something sinister. She decides to assist him in investigating the shady producers since she is equally dissatisfied with how Jay and Brenda manage the production. They finally realize that Jay and Brenda have no desire to make the film. There were only using it as a cover. Meanwhile, Patrick's perplexity grows. He could hardly keep his eyes open. Cassidy begins attending to him, concerned that he is maybe suffering from ROAD, or Random-Onset Acute Dementia, a WAT-R-induced sickness.

Alison can no longer concentrate on her work at Earthbridge after she learns about the wildfire. She attempts to convince Patrick to come back home. However, he is frightened that once he boards the plane, he may never return. Patrick and Cassidy escape a raging fire in Hollywood. They get to Joshua Tree, where Patrick's distress causes him to crawl for miles down the beach, hallucinating. Cassidy shortly started experiencing something identical. Meanwhile, the planet rapidly crumbles, preparing for rebirth.

ECOCRITICISM

Ecocriticism is among the latest recent reformist wave to dominate language and literature during recent decades. Our modern world is confronting ecological calamities, and the ecosystems are currently in jeopardy. Science and technology alone will not suffice to address the worldwide ecological issue. Humans are obliged to make a shift in their approach toward its surrounding. Throughout numerous years, literary critics neglected to give nature the recognition it deserved; therefore, ecologically oriented literature calls for a richer comprehension of the natural world in its broader context. Over the last thirty years, ecocriticism has emerged as a "global emergent ideology".

Scientists are continually struggling to figure out its scope and specificity. In his critical essay "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism," Rueckert created the term ecocriticism. The term 'eco' derives from the Greek core word 'Oikos,' which signifies 'home or earth,' whereas 'logy' derives from the Greek core word 'logos,' which signifies logical discourse. They are referring to the literary criticism of the home environment. Ecocriticism, according to Rueckert, incorporates ecology or ecological concepts into the study of literature.

That is, "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature because ecology has the greatest relevance to the present and future of the world" (1996, p 107).

In this context, the potential links between literature and nature are inquired in terms of inquired ecological images. Ecocriticism, then, tries to encounter a shared setting between humans and nonhumans to indicate how they can coexist in diverse manners because environmental matters have become a crucial part of our reality. This is one issue that ecocriticism addresses in its endeavour to find a better environmentally-conscious position in literary analyses

According to Lawrence Buell, ecocriticism is "an inquiry into the connection among literature and the environment pursued with a sense of dedication to environmentalist's practice". That is, ecocriticism is more than just nature research; it distinguishes itself from standard nature writing, starting by adopting an ecological perspective while committing to the natural surroundings and bridging the gap between the human and non-human worlds. According to Joseph Wood Krutch, Thoreau's writing has nothing to do with nature, wildlife, or birds; instead, it revolves around his relationship with all. Patrick D. Murphy defined ecocriticism as "criticism that develops from the concern with human and non-human interaction and interplay."

Ecocriticism is motivated by writers whose works glorify nature as a spiritual power and the wilderness as it is represented in America. The transcendentalists were a group of New England intellectuals, poets, essayists, novelists, and thinkers who founded the earliest literary wave in America to establish cultural independence from European influences. Nature influenced Emerson's first thoughtful literary tale 'Nature'. In it, he embraces a unique approach toward ecology identified as 'transcendentalism' the approach in which it claims the existence of a supreme divine permeates nature. Emerson argues that exploring wildlife is the greatest approach to grasping reality.

Fuller's work around 1843 is a Transcendental odyssey that explores the vast American wilderness. Its headquarters are located in the Great Lakes area. Fuller distinguishes here between the utilitarian objectives of the inhabitants and the metaphysical aesthetic goals of the travellers.

Nevertheless, Henry Thoreau is known as the founder of ecocriticism. *Walden* is an autobiographical description of Thoreau's journey living in the wilderness, isolated from his society outside his small village in a humble cabin. It's a famous narrative about yearning to cleanse oneself by reconnecting with nature. This work of literature had a significant influence on its readers' mindsets, encouraging them to convert from ego-consciousness to eco-consciousness.

The famous American poet Robert Frost used forests, lakes, moonlight, horses, and other natural elements. His poetry is straightforward on the surface. Yet, if we go far enough beneath the skin, we will discover that nature exposes the universal truth concerning human nature. His piece "Stopping by the Woods on a Snowy Evening" is about enduring natural splendour as well as the responsibility of ephemeral human life.

Ecocriticism is less advanced in the United Kingdom compared to the United States. Although American writers attempt to glorify mother nature, British ecocriticism works hard to raise awareness of the environmental concerns faced by governmental, industrial, commercial, and neocolonial powers.

According to Jonathan Bate's *The Song of the Earth*, colonialism and deforestation always have interacted. Throughout *His Romantic Ecology*, William Wordsworth's poetry is reevaluated in light of the English pastoral heritage. Bate analyzes poetry's politics as well as claims that Wordsworth was the first eco-critic.

Raymond William in his work depicts a stark contrast in both rural and urban society. As a result, he depicts rural living as a centre of modernity, a classic site of solitude. *The Green Studies Readers* by Coupe is a complete collection of critical books which tackle the interaction of the environment, community, and writing. As a result, a book is a credible tool and an incredible primer to Green Literature because it includes a wealth of research materials.

So that, the literature seeks to raise and answer questions about ecocriticism, for an instant, Cheryll Glotfelty writes in her essay "As environmental problems compound," speaking on behalf of the academics worldwide, "work, as usual, seems unconscionably frivolous. if we are not part of the solution, we are part of the problem" (1996).

Therefore, her question, "How then can we contribute to environmental restoration...from within our capacity as professors of literature" (1996) is of vital significance. But this contribution should be well concentrated on the literary as well as on the ecological concepts, not entitling one over the other. The task of ecocriticism, then, is to frame a notional basis for the study of interconnections between literature and the environment. Literature can be sensed as an aesthetically and culturally formed part of the environment, since it directly addresses the questions of human constructions, such as meaning, value, language, and imagination, which can, then, be related to the issue of an ecological consciousness that humans need to reach. Within this framework, ecocritics are mainly interested in how literature conveys specific values contributing to ecological review. They declare that the environmental crisis is a question that cannot be neglected in Literary studies.

ECOCRITICISM IN SOMETHING NEW UNDER THE SUN

Kleeman's novel looks at how humanity interacts with nature, and how our actions and attitudes can have an effect on the environment. She examines the importance of understanding our impact on the environment and how we should strive to live in harmony with nature. Through her characters, Kleeman conveys the message that nature can be a source of both beauty and destruction if we allow it.

Something New Under The Sun is an important example of eco-criticism in action. It sheds light on the potential of literature, exploring the complexities of our relationship with nature and how this relationship is dependable, for both parties rely on the existence of the other.

The majority of the novel is narrated from Patrick's point of view. Kleeman occasionally employs more hyperrealism, breaking out from the scene at hand and sending the reader elsewhere completely. During one moment, we stop at Cassidy's vacant house, which is a "half-living thing, multi-lunged as well as plushy arranged, drenched in electricity and suspended in a constant sighing". Kleeman even travels beyond geologic time in certain sequences, to a primaeval past and a future recovered by nature, when her protagonists are utterly forgotten.

Alexandra Kleeman attempts in her novel *Something New Under The Sun* to reflect the connection between human existence and nature through her protagonist's journey for what seems at first a dream to be later on viewed as the end of the world. A unique hybrid of; climate catastrophe, thriller, and movie industry satire. Utopian imagination to be faced by dystonia reality. Beautiful Los Angeles is living nightmares.

The idea of a future in California with swimming pools and a full-size trampoline on which Nora could hurl herself upward into the cloudless sky seemed more real to him the closer he came to the date of his flight: his daughter could go to school with the children of the Kardashians, his wife could restore her frayed nerves, become one of those women in vintage kimonos who wear their hair in a waist-length braid. (Kleeman 26)

On the edge of his 40s and three novels that nobody else on his coast ever asks about, writer Patrick Hamlin. He has travelled to Los Angeles in search of his one and only opportunity, a movie based on his book.

Kleeman created Patrick as the typical dreamer. Through him, she depicts mankind's desires, rationality, and morals. Throughout the course of the novel, something appears to be burning out on the horizon, at the edge of the sightline. The ground is on fire, slowly but steadily, with the weather reporter communicating its situation infrequently. The core of kleeman's novel involves several kinds of emergencies; ecological, psychological, and health. Which ignites Hollywood and its hollow promises.

From the very start, Patrick felt that nothing in this city seems real, the sense of detachment never left his core, and he realized that his dream of becoming part of this "world" perhaps it is just a dream. The film barely resembles his novel, and the director has disappeared "it was all a setup," he thinks.

I called the company that's supposed to do our effects, and only took one meeting with Jay last year; they have no contract. There's no one on board as editor". Patrick feels a sudden twist of worry in his guts. He had doubted the project, questioned its quality and their choices, but somehow he had never imagined that it wouldn't produce a film. Well, that would be a fraud, if they claim to be making a movie and have no intention of following through (Kleeman 252)

Exactly, what is an emergency? It is one of the concerns expressed; throughout the novel, we observe Patrick in continual wondering. Wildlife is slowly disappearing. The image of the natural view of green trees and bushes, fresh air, and cloudless blue skies becomes more and more part of historical memory

Somewhere beyond view, the brush is burning in the bright daylight, orange scraps of flame dulled by the sunlight. The sound of small life fleeing from the fire, scurrying toward more fire elsewhere. Terrible, definitely. But it's not really an emergency, he thinks, putting on his signal and shifting into the fast lane, if you can drive around it (Kleeman 104,105)

He could not shake the feeling of danger, and emergency, but it is all vague to him as if his fear is not real. The fire-consuming wildlife is not a real concerning topic to him as long as he can drive around it.

Kleeman's dystopian vision materializes gradually; meanwhile, protesters are bringing about traffic disruptions, and dry spells have curtailed the availability of water, while fires continue to rage unchecked.

Droughts had led to a void of water sources in Kleeman's alternative present Los Angeles. Presently, 85 per cent of California endured low rainfall in July, and scientists have labelled the West's acute severe drought an existential crisis. WAT-R is a corporate alternative for water that is available in a rainbow of flavours and sub-brands; WAT-R Extra, WAT-R Energy Surge, and WAT-R Wildly Wet. Is it an enhancement beyond water providing long as you don't mind that ice won't float in it or the thin blue film that forms at the surface?

Where you come from, WAT-R is just another bottled beverage product you can buy at the store. Here, it's all you get unless you have a lot of money and a lot of connection, she adds, with a note of sadness. Since you got here, every shower, every flush, every time you're thinking of it was all WAT-R. When they first switched over, you'd see the trucks two or three times a day delivering WAT-R in big jugs, and people were always talking about it. But now, if you pay for deluxe service, they put a tank in the basement and pump it into the plumbing once a week (Kleeman 87,88)

The details of the supposed catastrophe are Kleeman's objective in *Something New Under the Sun*. Though, she did envision some drastic measures that would be necessary to take. However, her main object in the novel appears to be how humanity reacts to terrifying, significant shifts, and how carelessness may outlive even the clearest signs of catastrophe.

Patrick is concerned about his unwary toward the risks and challenges everywhere around him. However, he has other pressing concerns: hectic work, commitments to fulfil, and a seemingly perpetual condition of dehydration that has him drinking plastic bottles of WAT-R. If he has time for anything at all, it is to explain why existential dread is not something he should be experiencing right now. "It's not an emergency if you can drive around it," he thought as he drives by a blaze on the freeway. Any intelligent animal would detect an emergency with furious instinct; it would be present wherever you turned and impossible to avoid.

Kleeman's concern is industrial corruption. Cassidy maintains on consuming real water since the synthetic version seems to have an unpleasant taste, along with the growing evidence that WAT-R could be harmful to one's health. Workers of WAT-R continue to advocate their goods: "Water has passed through the dinosaurs, and infected blood. "You would hardly tell if the water you consume had been in the lips of your most hated person," another adds. "The water is used, but our WAT-R has never been used."

This is really, really thoughtful, thanks, Patrick says, but she doesn't drink WAT-R. I should have told you in advance, so we wouldn't put you out. What do you mean, you don't drink? Dr Gene asks Cassidy, laughing. Are you living like a camel, off the water stored in back fat? I just haven't tried it, Cassidy says pertly. I drink the old fashion stuff (Kleeman 239,240)

The old water wasn't good for you anyway. If you what goes on in the found water, all the dirt and debris they try to filter out, the secondhand hormones and BPA, fish eggs and other filthy animal waste- life is a dirt business- you would beg me for some brand new water, made in a nice clean factory. (Kleeman 240)

Moreover, the concept of human-made water is the true horror in the novel. The suspicious regulation of advertising for such a type of product in a capitalist community, as well as the idea of heavily marketed options standing in for a systematic change, such as climate change, remaps access to resources all over the globe.

So says Cassidy, throwing her hair over her shoulder and giving Dr Gene a gamine look, if I get some hydrogen and some oxygen at home, I could make WAT-R. Not unless you want to lose your home in a fireball explosion! He responds, heartily. When the hydrogen-oxygen reaction occurs, it is explosive (Kleeman 244)

Kleeman's witty way gives readers clues through the dialogues of her characters on what could have been the reason for the continuous fires. Cassidy's resistance to conformity made her more aware of her surrounding, as she blames climate change on mankind's ignorance of how their industrial world is affecting the natural one.

Cassidy watches as Patrick's hydration increases even though his consumption of WAT-R is more than normal. She noticed that the more he had the worst his condition become, "nothing good could come out of water made in factures" she kept repeating to herself

She's talking to Patrick, but she doesn't know if he is really aware of what she's saying, so she's talking to herself. She says they need to find a scientist, a doctor, someone who can figure out how drinking WAT-R is causing people to lose touch with reality. They need the medical words, the scientific words. Nobody is going to believe Cassidy Carter if she gets on TMZ in a tube top and says all that. Nobody (kleeman263)

The climate is worsening. Rice growers in the San Joaquin Valley are trading their water as an expense measure due to low crop yields. Wildfires rage through the bush, burning houses and displacing tens of thousands of people and animals. Mile-high fire storms, known as "pyro cumulonimbus," form in the sky, and rain bolts of thunder down on the solar ground. As the climate, Patrick's condition only gets worst.

Cassidy Carter is driving him around in the van, why he can't seem to string three sentences together in a coherent order. (kleeman279)

Kleeman's writing is filled with vivid descriptions of the natural world, such as the "dark blue sky lit up with the grey cloud, yellow sand, and the burned trees." These descriptions highlight the distraction of nature and how it is all connected with men's power and greed. Kleeman's work is a refreshing reminder that humans are not separate from nature, but are part of it. It emphasizes that the distraction of one will lead to the other's downfall, and rather than attempting to control it, humans should learn to exist alongside it in harmony.

The employment of eco-criticism offers us a thoughtful and insightful exploration of this novel. It guides us through exploring how humans interact with their environment and the consequences of those interactions.

In the novel, Kleeman examines the effects of climate change and human-made disasters on living creatures, as well as the idea of the concept of nature and its importance to the human condition. She also looks at the implications of our reliance on technology and how it affects our relationship with the natural world. Through her writing, Kleeman paints a vivid picture of the devastating effects of human-made disasters, and the importance of respecting the environment and its inhabitants.

From the vantage point of view the desert sand, daylight flashes on and off a thousand times in succession, stonelike. The stars wheel overhead, a spatter of light rotating beyond reach and nearly beyond sight. For a while, there are automobiles and caravans, fierce rain that batter the roofs of untended homes, and clusters of sharp spines growing dense, leaving only a ribcage width for the coyote to guide its narrow body through. Nothing lasts until it lasts, and nothing is without its end (kleeman350)

In *something new Under the Sun*, Kleeman examines human progress and technology as well as the effects of human-driven corruption and pollution on the environment, and how this ultimately leads to its own downfall. The story begins with the introduction of the new human-made water supply, full of bright colours, comes in many flavours, and other unnatural elements, which ultimately cause people to become sick. As close as we get to the core of the story, it becomes clear that the pollution and corruption of the water are to blame for the people's illness and eventual death.

This is a clear reflection of the current state of the planet and how this is a reflection of the state of our own Earth, where pollution and the destruction of natural habitats are leading to the destruction of different species and the destruction of our environment. In another word, the actions of mankind have caused an imbalance in the environment. It continued highlighting the importance of environmental sustainability, as humans in the novel are unable to contain the fires that are destroying the environment. This serves as a warning for us to pay attention to the environment and to make sure that we do our part to protect it. By taking steps to reduce our carbon footprint and conserve our natural resources, we can ensure that the Earth remains healthy and balanced.

The story also alludes to the idea of "The Rebirth of the Earth", a motif that is used to show how humanity may be able to course-correct the damage that has been done and find a way to restore balance to the planet. This is an important reminder of the power of human intervention and how if we are able to recognize our own mistakes and take the necessary steps to fix them, the Earth may be able to heal itself. Overall, Kleeman's novel provides an important insight into the consequences of humanity's actions and the need for us

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