

# Eco critical images discussing feminism in Myth of Innocence

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## Abstract

The research paper identifies the Eco critical and feministic voices in Myth of Innocence. The paper discusses the concept of innocence in term of the notion of myth. It identifies and discusses the major theme of Louise Gluck's poetry as well. Rather than mixing up the Eco critical and feministic voices in the poem, the research paper tries to explore the respective tones separately. The study also discusses the how does the universe treat women with a patriarchal trait. The research paper discusses the relation the transformation of beauty of women and death of them. The study used the principles of feminism and eco criticism to analyze the poem. The meaning of nature according to eco criticism are also used to explore the poem.

**Keywords:** Feminism, Eco critical images, Myth, Childhood, Death, Beauty, Louise Gluck's poetry,

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Accepted 22 July 2021

Published 23 July 2021

DOI: 10.5281/zenodo.5123358



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## Introduction

Our world is always a dynamic place. It goes under who has the authority to make it a better and appropriate place to live in for all the humankind. Therefore, it is dynamic in placing the power under whom and who is collecting all the possibilities of making changes. Previously, the men are chosen themselves to be in the power position in most societies, because they believe that their masculinity could give them the right to be there physically and intellectually. So the women were behind the doors, waiting and caring of their children, just being in forcing to live that is not empty of peace and restrictions. They prevented from the education in order they created only to be at home and away from the dreaming taste then looking for proper husband and later death according to the traditions and customs of a society. 'The Myth of Innocence' states that "*Death, husband, god...everything sounds so simple, so conventional*" (Gluck, 1943). As a result of that, they see themselves no more than the life that they forced to live in, caring about their beauty and the whole world, as they both living a different world. On the other hand, the men enjoy the position of the authority and see themselves as the weapons of the earth future.

Until the women announce the readiness to raise their voices, and start voting as a beginning of their existence behind all of these prisons of their minds and liberation. The announcement for the liberation, equality and rights are the main concepts come with that movement. Even how the movement after that shows the main meaning of life and reflects their experiences in their writing too. Later, a verity of fields of criticism has been creating to display the societal issues to support the women's writings. Eco criticism has created recently to show the main relationship between the human and the nature and find the proper link that can really make them together in one direction. 'The Myth of Innocence' of Louise Gluck draws that accurate linkage between the nature and the human. Even it supports the main direction toward the woman issues and her interests. Louise Gluck is perfectly known as a feminist especially when she has written her collection 'Averno' which published in 2006.

Her poems of this collection have and some other collections represented the theme of death clearly. Her direction toward writing to write about this kind of theme emphasizes her views of death and life. She tends to concentrate on this issue which a lot of people seem afraid of it proficiently in her poem. Her way of mix it with aplenty of descriptions and language which perfectly address her cleverness in poetry. 'The Myth of Innocence' is a poem even from her collection 'Averno'. This poem perfectly depicts the nature as a mirror of the human soul and thoughts. Additionally, Gluck could represent the nature in her poetry throughout the idea of "Mirror" and even associates it successfully with Feminism queries. Finally, she could call "the Innocence" as "A Myth" in the title of her poem, but how that really linked with feminism queries. The main purpose of this research is to find the link between the feminism queries with the nature and how the myth can link them together.

## Literature Review

"Innocent" is defined as "a trait or characteristic of a person who is sinless and uncorrupted by evil, malice, or wrongdoing and as such, is not tainted with any unpleasant emotion." (Emelda, 2017). The concept of "innocence" is associated with the qualities of childhood. The development of id, ego and superego shapes the quality of innocence in human beings.

From Romantic Period, Blake is from the earliest and pioneer to presenting the concept of Innocence and Experience. As we all know the collection 'Songs of Innocence and of Experiences' (Blake, 1789) it is simply showing these two different states of human soul which are "Innocence" and "Experience" even showed with a beautiful paintings for entertain the children and adults too. This collection states the views of Blake about the innocence and



Experience, how the Experience is bitter and has less moralism which the Innocence in the first volume has. It creates the conflict with aggression. 'The Lamb' of Innocence volume stands against 'The Tiger' in Experience volume. Throughout this, in his poem 'The Lamb', Blake states "He is meek & he is mild, he became a little child" here Blake quietly shows the Innocence through the childhood and how he could connect it through the image of "Lamb".

The title, 'The Myth of Innocence' by Louise Gluck, the concept of "Innocence" is represented as a "Myth". It can be shown through her displaying by vanishing of the beauty from the girl's face which perhaps portends old age of her life. In addition, the "Death" that come to take the girl life which she sees even unnecessary to keep survival after losing her beauty which is the significant thing for a woman. *"Innocence is no longer simply an irrelevant historical curiosity in these readings, it is a central reference point in a wider mythology of childhood that helps uphold an unjust moral order in which both adults and children are subject to the oppressive politics of purity"* (Davis,2011). That is how the innocence is can be really as a significant field and all should give it the worth attention in term of beauty.

Moreover, the innocence is connecting with the woman beauty as it is mentioned in the poem of Gluck 'The Myth of Innocence'. As Gluck depicts in her first stanza that the girl's dress is "horrible" and her face is the "same" which gives an indication how that girl could kill herself based on that negative ideas about her appearance. As a result of that, the innocence is vanished in her and all of her thinking is her appearance. If we take it from the side of children and their innocence, they don't judge on themselves on the appearance or how they look like, their interests on how they live the life in which they find their happiness in it. Therefore, as per the article "The Importance of Inner Beauty in Edith Wharton's The Age of Innocence" that "...this novel showed us that outer beauty nothing last forever, it can disappear anytime by age and death" (Trisnawati, 2016). Accordingly, the beauty that mentioned is "outer beauty" which is finally leading to the girl's death based on the context of the poem.

### Research methodology

Feminist theory provides a context to identify the role of women in every society where patriarchy reigns. It tries to explain how female members of every society get oppressed by patriarchy economically, politically, socially, and psychologically; patriarchal ideology is the primary means by which women are oppressed. Eco feminism tries discuss the reason for associating women with the nature, the emotional, the material, and the particular and associating men with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational and the abstract. *"If women have been associated with nature, and each denigrated with reference to the other, it may seem worthwhile to attack the hierarchy by reversing the terms, exalting nature, irrationality, emotion and the human or non-human body as against culture, reason and the mind."* (Garrard, 2004). This paper uses the principles of feminism and ecofeminism theory to understand portrayal of women in the poem, The Myth of Innocence.

According to Gluck poem 'The Myth of Innocence' which is published in 1943, her description of the plight of a woman who is confronting her problem of beauty as a woman and how that leads to her death which she showing it in a naturalized image. Gluck could add a unique personification for the death as a "beautiful man" who is "embraced her" which a lot of people see the death as scared thing that will ends their life. Her including such myth of Persephone gives the poem more fictional tune which is quietly known as the goddess of agriculture, queen of underworld, and wife of Hades in the Greek religion. Because Gluck has added the beauty of the girl in the beginning of the poem that leads to focusing of the one query of Feminism which is the beauty, specifically "the outer beauty" and how it is not significant as the "inner beauty". But how she could describe it within a natural atmosphere is



the point. Gluck has selected some of natural words to give the process of describing the beauty more clear. Her using the nature as a “Mirror” and “helper” to make the facts that are related to the girl’s beauty more vital.

Mostly, that return to the poem’s structure of describing the themes of the poem. Beginning with the girl and her usual habit to stop in front the pool to see her beauty changes. Then, the water of the pool reflects her usual appearance so that gives her the feeling of being not alone among this nature. Perhaps that because the girl cannot find the place where she finds herself presence among the people, so that what leads her to considering the nature as her “relative”. Passing to the concept of death and how it is give her the feeling of may the love which she could not find it her real life. Then her repeated ideas of “husband”, “Death” and “stranger”. Her linking the simplicity with being a girl having all these nouns. Modest language and its poetic style of the poem is able to describe the sequence of mentioned events like a story.

Gluck’s use of ecological images are mostly followed by the event of the girl’s life, before her death, as “field”, “water of the pool”, “the sun”. The central themes on that Gluck concentrates in the poem are theme of love, theme of death, the theme of woman’s beauty, which are subjects always dwell with women in the male dominated society and thus the topics of feminism.

### **Result & Discussion**

Upon the human beings’ growing, the changes that come of it is more to be as the mixture of two stages which are created from a transformation of the childhood’s innocence as the basis to the experiences of the adulthood. The innocence of the childhood’s stage relays on a few years of human beings growing, but it become as the basis of his whole life, then his growing journey passes with the assurance of his existence on earth. So from this basis the poem ‘The Myth of Innocence’ of Louise Gluck represents how the stage of adulthood covers the innocence of woman and kills it. Moreover, it is not get sufficient by decays it, but even fades it away as the plow deforms the ground to prepare it for cultivation. Exactly what happens for the women faces when they get old, the beauty decays under the life factors, and prepares it for death? Accordingly, from Gluck’s eyes the innocence is represented as “Myth” which has no existence in real life which even takes the Beauty and the Youth away.

The nature in Gluck’s poem ‘The Myth of Innocence’ exhibits as the supporter in which it is chosen to displays the factors that will lead to reflect the right image of the girl’s beauty transformation and directs her to the death. The usage of the natural words seems as the engine projection of the changes in the girl beauty, for instance, the word “water” of the pool in the second stanza represented as the mirror that the girl depends on always to see her beauty progress. Even though, she knows that there is nothing change in her beauty, but sees as a habit she often used to do in the summer. In addition, the word “sun” that Gluck describes it as her uncle who was always spying to see what the girl does. He is curious as the sun when it throws its rays hardly to see what everyone does as the girl when directs her eyes to the water. What the girl always sees “the same person” nothing is added in her body and face beauty. So, this disappointment shows no progress, no change so it ends with death. Gluck tended to use the natural elements to represent the truth which are created by God instead of using the material elements which are created by the human. For instance, Gluck used “the water” instead of “the mirror” which does the same role of reflection for any object. The Girl in the poem seems represents the Gluck own idea which is shown in her relationship with the nature “*everything in nature is in some way her relative*” (Gluck, 1943), so she is not alone.

Furthermore, the nature is shown as the linkage between the human and his affairs. The death is taken as the central idea Gluck goes around till the end of the poem. She wants to



link the human himself with his issue which is the death which even announces his or her end of life. In the second stanza, Gluck states that the death as a replay for the girl prayer in the poem "Then death appears, like the answer to a prayer" (Gluck, L.12). That reveals that there is no alternative deed left for the girl to do in her life, so the death will be her own companion eternally. The pool water reveals the hidden link between the girl and her eternal companion which is the death. It inspires her to make her last prayer to farewell the life and turn to be not existed.

### Conclusion

The poem, Myth of Innocence used many Eco critical images to discuss the status of women in the patriarchal society. Louise Gluck uses death as the major theme in her poetry and she proves death as the true companion of women. The research paper excludes the explanation of the poem from the aspect of Greek mythology. The research by including the feministic aspect of the mythological reference can bring an absolute different perspective of the poem.

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### Cite this article:

**Author(s)**, HAFSA SAID JUMA ABDULLAH AL LOGHANI, DR. GEETHU ANNE MATHEW, (2021). "Eco critical images discussing feminism in Myth of Innocence", **Name of the Journal:** Commonwealth Journal of Academic Research, (CJAR.EU), P, 1- 7. DOI: <http://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.5123358>, Issue: 7, Vol.: 2, Article: 1, Month: July, Year: 2021. Retrieved from <https://www.cjar.eu/all-issues/>

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