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Mass Annihilation of the Wildlife in Chingiz Aitmatov's the Place of the Skull

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Abstract

The relationship between nature and humanity has been an essential theme in contemporary eco-fiction, especially in Chingiz Aitmatov's *The Place of the Skull* (1986). This study explores new ecological threats in the context of Aitmatov's novel from an ecocritical perspective. It examines the harmful consequences of industrialization on ecological and social values in the Central Asian landscape. The tension between environmental equilibrium and technological progress reflects the experiential desolation that arises from man's detachment from nature. The representation of the Moyun-Kum savannah and its inhabitants, mainly the she-wolf Akbara and her attempts to resist human encroachment, is a microcosm of the more significant ecological risks. The author not only condemns the abuse of the environment but also mirrors the spiritual emptiness accompanying contemporary civilization in a fast-paced world. Finally, the study maintains that the ecocritical perspective offers a valuable understanding of how eco-fiction can raise greater awareness of ecological danger which calls for a more harmonious coexistence between man and nature.

Keywords:

Eco-fiction,
Wildlife,
Ecological Threats,
Man's Encroachment,
Nature's Retaliation.



About the Journal

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1. Introduction

Chingiz Torekulovich Aitmatov (1928-2008) was a revolutionary Kyrgyz writer and diplomat who wrote in Russian and Kyrgyz about various issues. His writings address a wide range of issues affecting humanity, including corruption and abuse of power, oppression and inequality, sustainable livelihoods, and environmental degradation (Bashiri, 2008). *The Place of the Skull* (1986) is set in the Soviet Union during the Gorbachev era, known as a period of significant transformation, which implemented “glasnost” and “perestroika” (McCauley, 1990, p. 6). Through a number of his works, Aitmatov addresses sensitive societal themes such as Stalinist persecution and national minority struggles, which are frequently disregarded in contemporary literature, and most importantly, ecological threats. The corruptive influence of political idolization and the unreasoning devotion to authorities in the novel provides a compelling criticism which is a powerful representation “of a whole gamut of social ills, from narcotics abuse, alcoholism, and economic corruption to Soviet militarism and political hypocrisy” (Mozur, 1995, p. 131). Therefore, the writer’s insights into corruption and ecological degradation encourage readers to reflect on the struggles for sustainability and justice.

2. Method and Theory

This study applies the ecocritical approach to analyze Aitmatov’s *The Place of the Skull*. Ecocriticism as a literary theory, explores the relationship between literature and nature, emphasizing the interdependence of nature and culture. Its primary objective is to clarify how literary texts reflect, impact, and challenge our perceptions of ecological threats. In doing so, this approach provides a profound lens to uncover the representation of ecological damage in Aitmatov’s novel. Hence, close reading and textual analysis techniques are employed to identify relevant examples of man’s encroachment and disconnection from the natural world. The study employs an analytical method; therefore, critical excerpts are analyzed, particularly concerning the relationship between man and nature, ethical duties, and ecological threats. Attention is paid to how animals relate to their ecological surroundings, as part of an approach that aims to understand the broader ecological themes within the narrative. The method also considers the cultural context of the work under study, with an emphasis on the sociopolitical factors that shape the representation of such ecological threats. Accordingly, Joseph P. Mozur’s *Parables from the Past: the Prose Fiction of Chingiz Aitmatov* (1995) is particularly valuable. The study explores how technological and political power affects the imbalance of the ecosystem. Aitmatov’s stunning imagery and character interactions show the effects of unrestrained industrialization and political indifference. For example, the depiction of the landscape’s deterioration serves as a sobering reminder of humanity’s fragile relationship with nature. Through depicting a series of characters stuck between tradition and modernity, Aitmatov stresses the critical necessity for ecological awareness and moral accountability in the face of growing ecological crisis.

3. Literature Review

Although there are few prominent studies on Chingiz Aitmatov’s *The Place of the Skull*, they provide valuable insight into the nature of compositional elements like chronotope that affect the author’s view of the world. The most relevant example is Bahor Bahriddinovna Turaeva’s *Theoretical and Poetic Peculiarities of the Chronotope in the Novel “The Place of the Skull” by Chingiz Aitmatov* (2021). Turaeva (2021, p. 85) argues that the chronotope is directly associated with the human spiritual realm. It depicts the interaction between the universe and man in their social, cosmic, and spiritual dimensions.

Building on this foundation, Bahor Turaeva, in *The Expression of the Spirituality of the Human and Animal in the Novels by Chingiz Aitmatov on the Basis of Amebey Composition* (2021), explains that Aitmatov’s novels express spirituality and the connection between humans and animals. The spiritual themes in *The Place of the Skull* convey the interdependence of macrocosm and microcosm. Turaeva’s study depicts animals as victims of human ethical degradation and their liberation depends on the level of human consciousness (Turaeva, 2021, p. 363).

Iraj Bashiri’s *Chingiz Aitmatov: Life and Works* (2008) defines Aitmatov as a prominent writer who

uses myth and connects it to the Kyrgyz culture. In particular, *The Place of the Skull* (1989) examines humanity's downfall as a result of alcohol and drug misuse, as well as a disregard for "the primordial inner voice" that has always directed human beings. Bashiri's work takes the shape of a brief thematic analysis of Aitmatov's novel. It provides a feasible amount of information about his life (Bashiri, 2008, p. 5).

Furthermore, Richard Chapple's analysis, in *Chingiz Aitmatov's "The Place of the Skull": a Soviet Writer's Excursion into Theology* (1992), explores societal issues in the Soviet Union especially during the glasnost and the way Aitmatov's society dealt with spiritual and moral emptiness. Chapple does not use any specific literary theories, but he emphasizes the role of money as a source of corruption and exploitation (Chapple, 1992, p. 105). The study's thematic exploration suggests the human ability for moral transformation and enlightenment.

Given the critical perspectives offered by these researchers, my study argues that there is a significant gap in the comparative examination of these themes throughout Aitmatov's writings. Subsequently, this paper intends to address how the interplay of technological and political power affects ecological themes. This lack of critical engagement with the far-reaching consequences of these themes reinforces the need for a more thorough analysis, particularly in light of current ecological concerns.

4. Ecosystem Destruction by Man's Egoism

Aitmatov, as a realist writer, conveyed his observations about the consequences of man's egoism authentically. For him, being adaptable is the best evidence of a writer's genuine dedication to his work. His record of literary activity supports the conclusion that he was consistent, knowledgeable, and committed to his profession. The mission of his work "is to express the essence of the human spirit" (Mozur, 1982, p. 435). He agreed with Gorky's opinion that "rather than listening to the echo of his own soul", the writer must "become an echo of the soul of society".

His works mirror a thorough knowledge of Kyrgyzstan's tribal traditions, which are essential in conveying his message of devotion, loyalty, the loss of humanitarian (humane) values, and dignity. "Aitmatov's dialectics of love view man for what he is rather than for what he seems to be". What distinguishes his works is his artistic endeavor to reflect realism, as seen in *Jamila* and *Farewell, Gyulsary!*. It is worth adding that simplicity, historical accuracy, precision, and consideration for the demands of the time are among the many unique features of his writings (Bashiri, 2008, pp. 4-5,7).

The author's depiction of ecological risks is reflected in *The Place of the Skull*'s three main settings: the Moyun-Kum savannah, Aldash Lake, and the Issyk-Kul region. Each setting faces environmental dangers, representing the more significant ecological damage confronting Aitmatov's Kyrgyzstan. The Moyun-Kum valley was once the place of biodiversity and life; however, readers witness the shocking impacts of habitat annihilation and overhunting on the "saigak" antelope population. Man's egoistic activities almost lead to the extinction of this species. The destruction of Aldash Lake due to mining operations shows the devastation caused by human arrogance and the commercialization of vulnerable ecosystems. The permanent loss of old reeds and the displacement of native species serve as harsh reminders of the irreparable damage caused by human encroachment. In the Issyk-Kul region, the deterioration of pastures and soil erosion are worsened by overgrazing effects. Aitmatov calls for the necessity of sustainable land management approaches by emphasizing the gap between human activity and its effects on the natural environment through the character of Boston (Kalieva et al., 2024).

The writer clearly illustrates that industrial operations favor profit over the preservation of the natural world. He describes a setting with a man in a position of power, most likely leading a culling operation. The man's physical description, use of a microphone, and shouting all portray a sense of immediacy:

The man was sitting in the front.... He was wearing glass goggles... a microphone to his black lips into which he yelled at the top of his voice.... He must have been in command of the cull.... 'Shoot to the sides! Get the edges! Don't shoot into the thick, they'll trample

the carcasses... (POS, p. 27).

Although the panicked female wolf that runs with the antelopes is unable to understand his speech, the man's way of commanding implies an emphasis on quality and preservation of the antelope carcass, proving a utilitarian view of nature. The expression "Shoot to the side!...Get the edges!" indicates a tactical approach that prioritizes situational control over ethical considerations. The fear that trampling hooves will degrade the quality of the antelope carcasses reflects a disturbing dissociation from the life and death ramifications of his conduct, reducing wildlife to simple commodities in the name of resource management.

5. Man's Encroachment at the Expense of Nature

The portrayal of man/nature relationship reflects the words from Genesis: God said, "Let us make man in our image.... They will rule the fish of the sea, the birds of the sky, the livestock, the whole earth" (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017, Genesis 1: 26, p. 1). Man's dominance over nature was initially intended as a benevolent caretaking duty as all creation was pronounced "good". However, as Chapple (1992, p. 105) observes, in the novel, humanity violates this trust and exploits wildlife and the environment.

Aitmatov's use of symbolism aims to convey contemporary hardships faced by individuals in a rapidly changing world through characters like Bazarbay who symbolizes ethical decay and the consequences of addiction. The writer also draws on universal concerns about the disconnection between humanity and nature. Characters like Akbara and Tash-Chainar embody communal experiences of survival. The wilderness serves as a symbol of refuge and struggle, representing the dichotomy of nature as a source of nourishment and danger. As Abram Kofman (1865-1940) remarks, reality in Aitmatov's works contains three dimensions: present history, a fundamental archetypal humanistic principle, and an impression of internal wholeness (Kofman, 2019; Sametova, 2019).

Furthermore, the writer's vivid depiction of pollution, particularly the smoke rising from factories, symbolizes the psychological impacts of natural disruption as conveyed through the sense of alienation experienced by the main character. The wolves, once flourishing in their habitats, are now attempting to adapt to the changes humans have brought about. Therefore, as Mozur (1982, p. 435) explains, Aitmatov's art is "motivated by a Tolstoyan sense of duty to man and society". The novel's depicted pollution is the byproduct of an exploitative society that can be seen as a warning about the fragility of ecosystems and the necessity for a collective method of ecological development.

The narrative begins with the story of Akbara, a formidable she-wolf with a strong parental instinct, and her partner Taschaynar. They are trying "to raise three pups in the Moyun-Kum Savannah in Soviet Central Asia". They discover "that their only real enemy is man". The wolves define human beings as people who live for themselves but do not allow others to live. Due to this much hubris, they are referred to as "mangods" (POS, p. 9). Chapple (1992, p. 106) argues that Man lifts himself to God's level while God in the form of Christ descends out of love and compassion to become Man. Humanity's fall is viewed as both painful and presumptuous to the natural world, as the writer claims that every species has been given their own paradise; however, Man's actions have breached this natural order.

The violation begins with the massacre of an antelope herd by shooters using automatic weapons hovering overhead in helicopters. The mass killing occurs after a local meat packing business fails to fulfil its five-year plan quota, and the administrators are determined to do everything to save political face. The wolves make three failed attempts to establish a family. "The first litter of three" is killed in the slaughter and accompanying stampede, "the second litter of five" is destroyed by fire and man's violation of nature in the name of development and construction, and "the third litter of four" is seized with the intention of swapping the pups for a drink (Chapple, 1992, p. 106).

Humans' ability to access even remote locations endangers the balance of nature and causes enormous disturbance to the earth. The rhetorical question of how the species of this unique habitat could understand the consequences of human activities reveals an opposition between culture and

nature. It underlines that men's everyday actions carry substantial ethical weight, with the capacity to produce both good and evil:

The savannah was under attack...there were more and longer visits from men with more and more technology...who could penetrate any desert or semi-desert, including the Moyun-Kum.... How were creatures of the unique Moyun-Kum savannah to know that in the ordinary deeds of men lie hidden the sources of good and evil on this earth? (POS, p. 12).

The conversation between Avdiy and Petrukha draws attention to the complex relationship between culture and nature. Avdiy's findings show the plant's fairly typical look as it grows in the steppe, but it has profound cultural and mental ramifications for people who seek it out. This difference shows how particular creatures can be regarded differently depending on human values and uses, exhibiting nature's dual role as an asset and an instrument of inspiration. The thick, velvety clusters of flowers represent the rich biodiversity of the steppe ecosystem, while the appeal of the "anasha" reflects the human need to interact with nature as a source of joy and escape. Moreover, the setting—a wide, treeless landscape—serves as a reminder of the delicate equilibrium within ecosystems, where the effects of human engagement, for instance, the need for psychoactive experiences, may result in extraction. Avdiy's journey from Europe to Asia may represent historical methods of Western exploitation and degradation of non-Western territories. While the anasha is portrayed in terms of its natural beauty, it also shows a larger story of how indigenous plants are frequently romanticized by foreigners, depriving them of their cultural importance and converting them to mere goods. Avdiy's thoughts on the "anasha" reveal a dichotomy of admiration and abuse. His reflections bring visions of crowded Eastern bazaars, where the plant is more than just a plant; it carries a cultural significance associated with the traditions of the locals.

Grishan's conversation with Avdiy contains a critical ecological view on the commodification of nature and the human tendency to seek relief through drug consumption:

Everything can be bought and sold, including your God. At least I give people the chance to get high and experience what you can only offer as a promise, and that in the next world. Only the weed can give you that blissful feeling of being at peace with all the world, that freedom from all the constraints of time and space (POS, p. 112).

Grishan's assertion that everything can turn into materialism shows the danger of relying on momentary pleasures. Individuals choose escapism, neglecting their duty to preserve their environment to tackle broader ecological issues. This self-deception prevents people from recognizing the reality of ecological deterioration.

6. Nature's Retaliation for Man's Encroachment

As the events unfold, nature's retaliation becomes apparent through the struggles experienced by characters such as Bazarbay, a substance abuser and vulgarian, who stands in contrast to Boston, the foreman of a collective farm herd. Bazarbay's hardships can be interpreted as nature's response to humanity's exploitation. Aitmatov proposes that when characters disregard their connection to the natural world, they not only damage the environment but also invite personal suffering. After the abduction of the puppies, Boston, a keen observer of nature, notices a change in the attitude of the she-wolf and her partner. The wolves appear to seek their own demise. They aggressively attack man's world along with his possessions, leading man to retaliate against them since men can only see the external results of the wolves' aggressive deeds rather than their internal pain. The story of the wolves ends tragically when Akbara passionately endeavours "to take Boston's young son away to her lair" as revenge for her stolen pups.

Boston fires at the wolf to defend his beloved son, but he kills his son in the process. The mourning father then kills Bazarbay, whose transgression of the natural order caused the tragic event, before surrendering to the authorities. The novelist proposes that transgressions of the bounds and morals

of man's divinely granted authority result in misery for "both the lords and" their followers. As nature suffers, so does man. When Aitmatov attempts "to define the nature of life and" the world, he highlights theological aspects of creation. His point of "view is that men are fallen" animals who live on a fallen planet that they have wrecked. There is a troubling "preponderance of evil in the world" (Chapple, 1992, pp.106-107); therefore, the novel prompts readers to think that humans have yet to figure out a timeless riddle of why evil usually triumphs over good.

Nature's retaliation can be seen in Akbara and Tash-Chainar's "God-given qualities", which serve as a metaphor for maintaining the balance of nature. These two wolves are expert "saigak" hunters. They have ascended to leadership positions among the Moyun-Kum pack. They represent the nurturing features of nature which stand in opposition to the insecurities and worries of human character by possessing inherent abilities like prompt reflexes, strategic thinking, smart hunting techniques, and exceptional physical strength:

Akbara and Tash-Chainar who had already proved themselves tireless hunters of the saigak and taken their place among the leaders of the Moyun-Kum wolves. It was their good fortune...that both of them possessed those God-given qualities so essential for predators of the steppe and the semi-arid savannah... (POS, p. 11).

However, their interactions with humans illustrate the susceptibility of wildlife to man's encroachment. Akbara and Tash-Chainar first prosper in the Aldash reedlands, where they have their five cubs, representing the hope and longevity of their bloodline. Their promising condition is ultimately wrecked when industrial expansion encroaches on their environment, as shown in road building which destroys the reeds that give shelter and nutrition to wolves. The expression "For the sake of minerals, men are willing to disembowel the whole earth" (POS, pp. 198-199) is a scathing condemnation of man's preference for profit over protecting the planet by stressing the degree to which humanity will go to extract natural resources. As the fire consumes their home, the wolves have no option but to look for shelter in the water, expressing their despair and the turmoil generated by the fire. The imagery of being engulfed by flames shows their struggle to survive and confront persistent human encroachment. Their hunting techniques are critical to maintaining a healthy ecological system, stressing that all creatures play a part in preserving their natural environment, paralleling the cultural principles and teachings about living in peace with nature.

7. Wilderness, Wolf, and Ecosystem Balance

Akbara, the she-wolf, is a key figure that represents the protective essence of motherhood. Her fears and worries show her tendency to maintain a safe lair for the growth of her pups. Akbara's role as a mother emphasizes the connection between motherhood and nature. It implies that her instincts are vital for the continuation of life and also work as a reminder of the life and death struggles in nature. The she-wolf further represents the balance of nature, where motherly features coexist with the severe realities of existence. As Ashenova and Velitchenko (2021, p. 83) write, "Akbara and Tashchaynar demonstrate more morality and mercy than a person. Even the fact that Aitmatov names wolves is a manifestation of anthropomorphism, which is also part of the ecological discourse". Smith and Ferguson (2012) note that there is a goal to replace myths about wolves with accurate information. Future scientific investigations will look into how biological relationships between wolves affect their interactions with their surroundings and the misconceptions they evoke in humans about their societies. Wolves have become a vital part of the narrative.

Akbara's howling as a "pitiful wail" (POS, p. 233) carries her deep sorrow. This auditory imagery stimulates a visceral reaction. The dark atmosphere of the night setting intensifies the tension. The imagery of the she-wolf returning repeatedly to the place of her lost cubs indicates the futility of her attempt and her denial. She is a determined and ferocious mother, willing to confront all sorts of threats in order to ensure the safety of her cubs. Her profound grief and inability to accept the loss of her offspring are clear examples of the depth of her maternal bond.

Despite her loss, she retains a glimpse of hope that she might someday unite with them again as she searches for their scent and listens to their yelps. She thinks that her cubs are "in Boston's Koshara". Her anguish converts into a threatening force. She and Tash-Chainar are involved in killing sheep,

and this signifies not just a reaction to hunger but also an effort to suppress her emotional agony. This action is a coping mechanism because her behaviour is guided by instinct, not rational thought:

Her animal mind could reason no further than this.... the wolves rampaged and massacred sheep all through the district, to satisfy not only their hunger but also their irrepressible and implacable urge to deaden and stifle that nagging feeling of rancour against the world with a terrible surfeit of meat and blood (POS, p. 292).

Besides, the difference between Akbara's features and Boston's considered plan to destroy the wolves proves the dichotomy between human shrewdness and animal instinct. While Boston perceives the wolves as a danger to be defeated, Akbara represents the secure power of maternal love and the limits a parent will pass to defend their children. For Durward L. Allen, "Wildness needs wolves". He emphasizes the necessity of wolves for preserving healthy ecosystems. Today, more than ever, the survival of wildness and wolves is critical (Peterson, 2017, p. 257; Allen, 1979). To ensure the wolf population thrives globally, we must focus on the ecological balance and restoration of wildness.

8. Nature as an Active Character in the Ecosystem

The novel depicts nature as a vivid figure that greatly impacts the lives of its residents. The writer's mention of the black horizon and starry sky symbolizes the interdependence of the creatures. Life thrives even in silence in the novel's setting as nature gently guides and nurtures its inhabitants. The organisms' eagerness to appreciate the coolness demonstrates their inherent drive for survival—an inclination that frequently contrasts with the transitory and destructive concerns of human activities. Nature takes an active role in the blooming savannah, and each creature responds to her messages, exposing the complex patterns that govern their connections within this ecosystem. As the narrator states: "the dark horizon merged with the starry sky. The silence was full of life for all the denizens of the savannah; all of them except the snakes hurried to enjoy the cool, to live" (POS, p. 11). Qizi (2021, p. 207) argues that when people "stopped feeding themselves with labor", they started to sell "Mother Nature". Nature serves as a nurturing and daunting force that influences the lives of the characters, particularly the she-wolf and her family. As the narrator points out:

The grasses were high...up to the backs of the fully grown wolves. Still full of the heat absorbed from the sun ...the ... flowers on the hairy stalks were giving off a strong smell.... The moon picked out the shape of their dark silhouettes (POS, pp. 14, 192).

The speaker denotes a prosperous ecosystem that generously sustains several forms of life and explains how nature uses energy to provide survival support and offers sensory richness. The moon serves as an inconspicuous witness to what happens in the narrative. Its presence imparts a sense of attentiveness. It observes the wolves' struggle and pain and the larger fight between nature and humanity. The moonlight exposes the animals' misery. It acts as a reminder that their difficulties are visible and essential, even if humans ignore them.

Nature is eloquently depicted as an unpredictable character reacting to any existing turbulence in its surroundings. It is shown as a character heavily influenced by human intervention. As the narrator states: "Chaos broke out in the thickets around the lake. Birds flew above the water in dense clouds, their shrill cries deafening the steppe for miles around" (POS, p. 199). The imagery conveys a sense of a primitive response to the disturbance human beings bring. The expression "chaos broke out" personifies nature as having emotional reactions to events. This pandemonium represents a collective upheaval as the organisms respond to environmental dangers. The writer depicts nature not as a passive character but as an active player in the ongoing drama. The flocks of birds, with their loud cries, represent nature's intuitive communication. Their frenetic motions can be interpreted as an alert to other organisms which implies the importance of wildlife in conveying danger. This collective action shows that even the residents of the thickets have a common consciousness, leading to the notion that nature is interrelated and reactive.

The description of the birds' screams producing a deafening atmosphere contributes to the depiction of nature as an emotionally charged and urgent figure. Their loud soundtrack represents the

upheaval and mayhem that occur when an ecosystem is significantly disrupted. The writer reinforces the idea that the natural world conveys warning and distress by making sounds like characters expressing their anxiety and dread in the face of threats. Therefore, nature's chaotic response reflects human behaviors that harm the planet. However, the birds' and other wildlife's reactions demonstrate the fragility of ecosystems and the significant influence that external forces may have on natural life.

Aitmatov personifies nature as a character of dual qualities, it can work as a refuge and an arduous adversary. "Akbara and Tash-Chainar forced to seek a new home. This time their quest took them to the mountains, which instinct told the wolves were now the only place on earth where they could hope to survive" (POS, p. 199). In the novel, the mountains represent shelter and a return to a primitive form of living. This duality of nature reflects its intricacy and the characters' dependence on it for perseverance. It links wisdom as a teacher and direction as a defensive guardian for the wolves. The mountains are a symbol of hope for them.

Turaeva (2021, p. 361) notices that authors whose masterpieces focus on animals effectively express to the reader the aesthetic impact of wildness on humanity. Wild animals mirror the difficulties of the human experience, traits, and behaviors. Accordingly, nature serves not only as a setting but as an entity that contains the consequences of human actions. The novel repeatedly and vividly portrays the idea that the freedom of the animal kingdom, which has been exacerbated by its inability to constructively resist, is entirely in the hands of human consciousness.

The intellectual and creative power of Aitmatov's works stems from the dialectical unity of nature and humanity in the depths of thoughts and emotions. Nature, the Universe, and man are inextricably linked. Sages throughout history have presented these ideas in many ways, but Aitmatov renews them in his own unique style, reminding people of these unchanging truths. "The universe, nature and man" in his writings merge into a single, inseparable whole that is organically linked to one another. The novelist was able to revitalize timeless questions of existence, through the use of animalistic imagery (Turaeva, 2021, p.363).

Akbara and Tash-Chainar's relationship with nature shows a greater cultural conviction in the importance of innate instincts. Their leading roles prove how closely their identity is linked to the natural world. Aitmatov points out that different cultures draw their identities from their natural surroundings.

How wisely Nature ordered her affairs.... It's a good thing we brought our coats. 'What use are coats!' retorted Ernazar. In the old days people used to say a special prayer - the crossing prayer.... Nobody needs prayers like that nowadays, now they teach you at school that that's all backwardness and ignorance....Just because people are flying into space does that mean we have to forget our old incantations? (POS, p. 257).

The interaction between Boston and Ernazar shows environmental interdependence by depicting glaciers nurturing fertile valleys. Their conversation reflects the vulnerability of the ecosystems as manifested in rapid seasonal shifts. This reminds readers of the urgent effects of climate change on human life. Ernazar's recall of the "crossing prayer" proves a deep cultural reverence for nature, which contrasts strongly with contemporary attitudes that frequently neglect and consider ancient ecological wisdom as obsolete. The novel examines current society's inclination to favor modernization over ecological understanding.

9. Man's Egoistic Spirit as the Source of Ecosystem Devastation

Any changes in wildlife, notably regarding wolves, stem mainly from political choices rather than findings from science. As Peterson (2017, p. 256) asserts, millions of people worldwide have had the opportunity to see the natural habitats of wild wolves. Still, the ongoing "cycle of listing and delisting" is motivated by politics, resulting in enormous changes in both the ecosystem and society as a whole. Therefore, one of the characteristics of glasnost is the recognition of "internal social, political, and economic" factors behind problems. As these factors usually influence ecological degradation, this recognition also extends to environmental issues. In few literary texts are drugs described as so pervasive and devoid of a remedy. The condition of spiritual emptiness is

inextricably linked to “alcohol and the drug trade”, as well as the love of money (Chapple, 1992, p. 108; Banerjee 2018).

Grishan, the operation’s tsar, maintains that “money is not only the most important thing”, but the only thing, even for the church. Grishan has provided people with alternative gods, the deities of drugs and money, to fill their spiritual void. He states: “A humiliated and insulted humankind has been promised miracle after miracle.... Those were the promises; but the reality? Words, just words!” (*POS*, p. 113). His speech reflects Biblical passages that suggest that one “cannot serve both God and money” (Holman Bible Publishers, 2017, Matthew 6: 24, p. 860), implying the need for more sustainable spiritual ideals in life.

Grishan indicates that humans are unable to wait for heavenly promises to be fulfilled, and hence, they expect something in exchange. Humanity is also provided with “social and political” replacements. The organizer’s actions eventually undermine the integrity of party politics. Kadyrov, Zhumagulov and Maratov (2021) reiterate that despite the dominant materialistic ideology, Aitmatov believed in metaphysics and humanism, which, for him, result from an individual’s understanding of the consequences of political activities.

Humanity’s fall is portrayed as an ecological threat, and the solution to this fallen condition, typically reliant on faith, is presented in a more sophisticated context. Avdiy testifies that God exists for many individuals, including himself, yet there is no explicit lecture on the divine. This is explained by the writer’s concentration on the negative aspects of life and his wish to avoid the appearance of “a fundamentalist theological tract”. The author’s religious ideals, as revealed in the novel, are humanistic in nature and do not necessitate the powerful presence of a deity (Chapple, 1992, p. 109).

However, the centrality of a deity is repeatedly shown through contrast. Grishan, the drug lord, assumes the role of an earthly god and exemplifies the need for something elevated. He even chastises Avdiy, alleging that everything is just as it was before Golgotha. Humanity is precisely the same. Nothing about mankind has changed since then. People are still hoping “for someone to come and save us sinners” (*POS*, p. 109). Though his views are provocative, the truth is that modern man requires reform and some form of salvation. Yet, the nature of the salvation is more up to the person rather than the redeemer. Aitmatov asserts that personal renewal and “the revolution of the soul” (*POS*, p. 178) are essential features that must come from the individuals who comprise this fallen worldly condition. He focuses on the importance of repentance which necessitates the existence of a redeemer.

A sense of guilt for one’s actions and thoughts along with a shift in behavior, is a modern requirement within the novel’s structure that can be viewed as an ecological trend, remarkably if it leads to an apparent transformation in how a group of individuals act over time. A redeemer should not carry out the burden of suffering, as this would undermine the writer’s basically humanistic foundation. Avdiy Kallistratov, as the son of a Russian Orthodox deacon embodies the themes of dominion, creation, and fallen mankind. He is passionately committed to helping humanity and the grandeur of his Christian God over people like Grishan, and he embarks on a mission to save the drug dealers’ souls. While he claims the mission is to report on the drug trade for a local publication, the reality is that he is a preacher carrying the message of salvation (Chapple, 1992, pp. 110-111). For Avdiy, our actions reverberate within the connected ecosystems, confirming the notion that the actions of each of us can have serious consequences on society in general. His discussion with Grishan reflects the discrepancy between personal and collective freedom; he implies that true freedom means making decisions that do not cause any harm to the surroundings. Avdiy calls for a change toward more sustainable connections with the environment. Avdiy’s stance against the profit of the black market shows his appeal for moral consideration that values ecological sustainability. Grishan’s criticism exposes a cultural inclination to promote autonomy, often at the expense of environmental damage.

Aitmatov uses Urkunchiev to uncover a new threat and represent the voice of farmers dealing with the difficulties of agricultural life in a world shaped by political and social upheavals. He criticizes authorities for their lack of practical awareness of farming problems: “Look at it now! Nothing but

dust and dry earth, the blades of grass so sparse you could count them, and all because they run ten times more head of sheep on the land than it can sustain, and the animals rip it up with their hooves” (POS, p. 283).

Urkunchiev’s depiction of the area as “dust and dry earth” suggests an erosion of the soil needed for plant growth and the functioning of ecosystems. The country is overpopulated with sheep and this leads to excessive grazing, which can result in loss of plant diversity and harm the soil. However, effective management can enhance recovery and prevent exploitation. Urkunchiev’s frustration mirrors how unsustainable farming practices can cause damage to both land production and wildlife. As a result, it will create a dire situation for farmers who seek better land management and a deeper understanding of the effect of livestock on the soil.

The novel depicts the conflict between personal desires and state-imposed beliefs in a collectivist society. Kochkorbayev’s authoritative position points out the regime’s rigidity, claiming that “socialist forms of production are compulsory for all” (POS, p. 280). Boston’s character exemplifies the struggle against the collectivist ethos, whereas Kochkorbayev’s accusations demonstrate the shame associated with personal ambitions. The conversation over Ernazar’s tragic ending serves as an illustration of the dehumanizing impacts of such ideas, with Kochkorbayev’s cool detachment demonstrating how human misery is frequently minimized in the name of ideological perfection.

10. Conclusion

Chingiz Aitmatov’s *The Place of the Skull* thoroughly examines the complex relationship between man and nature, revealing the ramifications of industrialization and the crucial need for ecological consciousness. Industrialization has affected the sense of belonging that one could once find in nature. The writer condemns the exploitative propensities of contemporary civilization, stressing the spiritual void that comes from humanity’s egoistic actions and its disconnection from the natural world. This study has found out that Aitmatov’s novel transcends mere storytelling; it offers ethical duties regarding technological advancement.

The author emphasizes the importance of identifying the interrelation of all life forms. Therefore, he advocates for a harmonious coexistence between man and nature, urging individuals to reflect on their roles within each context. Nature appears as a vibrant figure, full of feeling and reacting to the surrounding events. It is an enormous force impacting the lives and fortunes of the living beings, particularly the wolves. It embodies peril, sanctuary, and indifference, and it bears witness to human deeds.

The lessons gained from Aitmatov’s work are still remarkably relevant today as ecological threats represent serious dangers to global ecosystems. As current civilization struggles with the consequences of its activities, Aitmatov’s demand for a return to ecological awareness and respect for ancient wisdom becomes increasingly urgent. Finally, by juxtaposing his ancient traditions with the modern realities of the twentieth century, he implies something significant. He suggests that education could solve humanity’s political, economic, social, environmental, and ideological problems. In particular, this would be possible if education could advance beyond rote learning. Furthermore, a valid communal apprehension, along with a genuine dedication, could unite humanity with nature.

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كۆمەلكوژى گيانلەبەرە كۆيۈپكەن لە رۆمانى تەختە سزا-ى چىنگىز ئايمەتۇف

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پوختە

پەيوەندى نيوان سروسىتى و مروفايەتى بوو تە ئامانجىكى سەرەكى لە رۆمانى ژىنگەيى ھاوچەرخ (ئىكۆ-فېكشن)، بەتايىبەتى لە رۆمانى تەختە سزا (۱۹۸۶) -ى چىنگىز ئايمەتۇف. ئەم لىكۆلېنەو ھەيە شىكارى بۇمەترسىيە نوپىيە سروسىتىيەكان لە چوارچىوۋە رۆمانى ئايمەتۇف دەكات لە روانگەي سروسىتى (ئىكۆ-كرىتىكى). تويژىنەكە كارىگەرە خراپەكانى پىشەسازى لەسەر سروسىتى و بەھا كۆمەلايەتەكان دەخاتەروو لە ئاسىيائى ناوہراست. كىشمەكىش و ملامانىي نيوان ھاوسەنگى ژىنگەيى و پىشكەوتنى تەكنۆلوژىا رەنگدانەو ھەي ئەو وپرانكارىيە ئەزمونىيەيە كە لە دابرايى مروف لە سروسىتەو ھەلەلەدەدات. ويناكردنى دەشتەكانى مۇيون-كوم و دانىشتوانەكەي، بەتايىبەتى گورگە مېنەكە "ئەكبەرا" و ھەولەكانى بۇ رېگىرىكردن لە دەستدرىژى مروف، وپنەيەكى بچووكە لە مەترسىيە گەورەكانى سەر ژىنگە. نووسەر نەك ھەر تەنپا رەخنە لە تىكدانى ژىنگە دەگرىت، بەلكو لىكەوتەكانى لەسەر رۇحىيەتى مروفى ھاوچەرخ لە جىھانىكى خىراگەشەسەندوو نىشانەدەدات. لە دەرتەنجامدا، تويژىنەو ھەكە پىداگىرى لە پىشكەشكردنى دىدگاي رەخنەي ژىنگەيى دەكات بۇ پەرەپىدانى ھۇشيارىيى زياتر لە رېگەي رۆمانى ژىنگەيىيەو. بۇيە تويژىنەو ھەكە پىشنىارى پىكەو ھەزىيانىكى ھاوئاھەنگەر لە نيوان مروف و سروسىتدا دەكات.

وشە سەرەكەكان: رۆمانى ژىنگەيى، سروسىتى كۆيى، ھەرەشە ژىنگەيىيەكان، دەستدرىژى مروف و تۆلەسەندەنەو سروسىتى.

الإبادة الجماعية للحياة البرية في رواية "كتلة الإعدام" لجنكيز أيتامتوف

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الملخص

تُعد العلاقة بين الإنسان والطبيعة من المواضيع الجوهرية في أدب البيئية المعاصر، ويتجلى ذلك بوضوح في رواية "كتلة الإعدام" (1986) للكاتب القرغيزي جنكيز أيتامتوف. تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الرواية من منظور النقد البيئي، من خلال استكشاف التهديدات البيئية الجديدة الناجمة عن الحداثة الصناعية، وتداعياتها على القيم البيئية والاجتماعية في فضاء آسيا الوسطى. يركز التحليل على التوتر القائم بين الحفاظ على التوازن الإيكولوجي وبين التقدم التكنولوجي، وما ينجم عنه من اضطراب بيئي ناتج عن اغتراب الإنسان عن الطبيعة. تُشكّل السافانا التي تدعى "موين-كوم" وسكانها، وعلى وجه الخصوص الذئبة "أكبره" ونضالها في وجه التعديلات البشرية، نموذجاً مصغراً يُجسد المخاطر البيئية الكبرى التي تهدد النظم الطبيعية. لا يقتصر طرح الرواية على إدانة استغلال البيئة فحسب، بل يعكس أيضاً حالة الفراغ الروحي الملازمة للحضارة المعاصرة في ظل تسارع وتيرة الحياة. تخلص الدراسة إلى أن توظيف المنظور البيئي في تحليل الرواية يسهم في تعميق الفهم لكيفية استخدام الخيال الأدبي كوسيلة فعالة لرفع الوعي بالمخاطر البيئية، والدعوة إلى بناء علاقة أكثر انسجاماً وتوازناً بين الإنسان والطبيعة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الرواية البيئية، الحياة البرية، التهديدات البيئية، تعديلات الإنسان، انتقام الطبيعة.