

Robert gray poetry analysis

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Society's focus on materialism and consumerism has led to the shift in our value system, which in result has led to the degradation and neglect of the environment. In his poems, Robert Gray forces us to consider and reflect upon our involvement on the issues presented- being our priority of material and superficial value which in result has implicated on the natural world, provoking its decline and also the degradation of Australian society itself. Furthermore, we have lost the values that make us intrinsically human in all forms, which has taken us to a state of moral depravity.

Australia's cultural identity has been lost due to urbanization and moral pollution. In Gray's 'North Coast Town' he challenges Australia's adoption of materialism, being an accepted factor as we move towards 'making California'. Gray comments on the changing appearance and nature of the town 'the place is becoming chrome'. The use of the word chrome suggests it as being simply a decorative finish, not worthy of holding great strength. It is becoming more modern and alike to American building styles, as the town now is reflecting qualities which would be regarded as American.

The town being an example for general Australian society, presents the idea that as we lose our cultural identity, our sense of responsibility for the natural world decreases. 'pass an abo, not attempting to hitch, outside' suggests the disturbing reality of Australian value. An aboriginal, being the epitome of Australian heritage, is only mentioned in the last line, as the poem is more focused on the changing state of the appearance of the town- this is ironic as humans are superficial.

It expresses the change of culture from its original state continuing from the motif of detachment. It leaves us thinking about the significance of the fact that the aboriginal is not attempting to hitch. It gives a sense of isolation and is a poignant detail which Gray uses to bring about thought on what we value as Australians. Humans generally have lost the ability to recognize what has value. Presented in Gray's didactic poem 'Flames and Dangling wire' is an aesthetic of decay, which has a prophetic tone.

A presentation of the wasteland of western civilization is represented by a city dump, which is a foretaste of the end of the world. The use of the word 'dump' suggests it as being society's burial ground, it is a collection of things that 'worked' being of past tense. It is a constant reminder that we throw away things we regard as valueless, which is ironic as we continue to destroy everything with value. Mentions of 'Chopin' and 'the raft of medusa' being references to the romantic era, emphasize past culture, being of a regretful tone.

These are used as a juxtaposition of society then and society now, being symbolic of the loss of core romantic values, of all the elements which we can be proud of as human beings, which are replaced on our pursuit of materialistic gain. 'Flames and Dangling wire' does not specifically have an Australian setting but it is an evaluation of universal denunciation. In 'North Coast Town' Gray criticizes the material world, that in result- nature is less valued. Images of desolation and closure introduce the negative tone of the poem.

Irony is used to show the foreign placement of unnatural entities within a natural place which highlights the towns detachment. For example, the beach is placed against the 'shell station' which is ironic as the beach is a place of cleansing, birth of nature, a home for sea-life where the station is a symbol of how we pollute the air we try to breathe as we continue to fuel our own destruction. Unless we take responsibility for the destruction we are causing, we cannot fix the damage done.

In North Coast Town, Gray gives us the impression that the man is isolated, separate from nature due to the spoliation of the coastline which he would of once enjoyed. As he goes to the lavatory, even such a man-made structure is vandalized, nothing we touch as humans can remain untainted. Even the 'floury' apple he eats is presented as being unappetizing, the motion of eating suggesting he ingests the corruption that we as humans grow around and within us which takes away life's true value.

The idea of damnation is presented consistently through 'Flames and Dangling Wire'. Through religious allusions and images of hell, Gray gives the impression that society is damned like the fallen angels of heaven- left to pick through what remains, for demons being souls, for society being the wasteland we used to call our environment. 'That demon with the long barge pole' The ferryman Charon, a classical legend- is an image of damnation, perhaps comparing modern society to being that of fateful punishment or even hell itself.

Gray uses connotations of death to express the significance of his concerns and also to evoke reflection. As mentioned, This poem does not have a

specific Australian setting but alike to the themes of North Coast Town, Gray stresses the importance of the value of the natural world. Gray, with having the role of not just an observer, with the ability to see these issues, but also being involved with social changes which he comments are dangerous, presses his concern for Australian society and its values which are diminishing on our pursuit of materialistic greed.