

The Nature of Humans and Their Environment

In the modern world, industrialization and societal progression meet preservation of health, life, and tradition, spurring conversation as to the nature of growth in a booming world. As humans struggle with consistent health complications, both within themselves and the living organisms in their environment, the problem regarding safe scientific progression becomes more pressing. "Silent Spring" by Rachel Carson speaks of the detrimental effects of pesticides and insecticides while commenting on the neglectful nature of the scientists producing these chemicals. Through the use of commentary on the nature of mankind, Rachel Carson demonstrates the harmful effects of pesticides and insecticides in modern industrial use, both on the environment and the advancement of human relations.

A dystopian world in which the rivers are without fish and the skies are without birds is not outside the realm of a foreseeable future. This barren scene will come as a result of careless scientific advancement, solely existing for the comfort and accessibility of mankind. In Rachel Carson's "Silent Spring", she writes, "Only within the moment of time represented by the present century has one species - man - acquired significant power to alter the nature of his world," (Carson 4). With the invention of insecticides and pesticides, such as DDT, it is not only the intrusive insects which are demolished, but also the health of the persons administering these chemicals and of those who consume the products. The main reason for the production and execution of these chemicals is the desire of men to simplify and alter their environment to be most convenient for themselves and their desires. There is not enough research put into these chemicals before they are administered throughout the food ate and standing buildings. This lack

of research results in not only an aid to the neglectful nature of man, but also the health of those surrounding him. Carson writes, “Why should we tolerate a diet of weak poisons, a home in insipid surroundings, a circle of acquaintances who are not quite our enemies, the noise of motors with just enough relief to prevent insanity? Who would want to live in a world which is just not quite fatal?” (Carson 12). Nature has the ability to persist; to overcome the odds of extinction and devastation and adjust. However, at the rate of production at which these chemicals are being made and distributed, nature and people themselves do not have enough recovery time to adapt and evolve. These unnatural creations are barring long term effects which have not yet been introduced to the natural world; it is not fatal, yet not quite livable.

This selfish nature, without regard to the natural order of the environment, results in the extinction of native yieldings. The introduction of different agricultural and aesthetic products into the United States has led to foreign insects and vegetation of which conflict with those already native. “Today we are concerned with a different kind of hazard that lurks in our environment - a hazard we ourselves have introduced into our world as our modern way of life has evolved,” (Carson 187). The introduction and debilitation of native species and the threat which is imposed on all living organisms which these species are treated with, can be attributed to the nature of man imposing on himself. The modern way of life has evolved to incorporate shortcuts and disregard to the wellbeing of other substances other than the human race. While Carson’s “Silent Spring” presents a scientific argument against the use of pesticides and insecticides, the attitude and actions of mankind are brought into a light that prompts self reflection. Carson writes, “[...] described in the modern vernacular as ‘pests’ [...] they are sold under several thousand different brand names,” (Carson 7). Mankind has put a label on that

which is not of convenience to him. The convenience to terminate these unwanted entities, while they are unaware that they are committing any wrong-doing, continues in the production of thousands of different chemicals which are designed to kill these organisms and prevent the destruction of what man is trying to produce or make prosper. The desire of complete domination is intrinsic to the nature of mankind, however, it must be depleted. Whether it be human-on-human contact or simply the want of superiority, the human race has put copious effort into their comfort without attempting to live with the given circumstances. Carson continues to write, “Thus the chemical war is never won, and all life is caught in its violent crossfire,” (Carson 8). The term ‘chemical war’, however, is misleading. In order for war to commence, there needs to be two contributing parties. Thus far, mankind is the only party that is armed.

The world is suffering; there is bountiful harm with an uneven amount of benefit. Nevertheless, in “*Silent Spring*”, Rachel Carson offers solutions to this destructive nature which has been adopted and abused. Carson says, “The road we have long been traveling is deceptively easy, a smooth superhighway on which we progress with great speed, but at its end lies disaster. The other fork of the road — the one less traveled by — offers our last, our only chance to reach a destination that assures the preservation of the earth,” (Carson 275). Whether the solution be an end to the production of harmful chemicals or the creation of a less destructive alternative, Carson recognizes that it is time to travel the road less ventured. Preservation is the only chance for the environment to return to its natural order, an order not dictated by outside forces. The general public needs the ability to fully comprehend the effects of the chemicals which they are constantly surrounded by. When transparency is present, change will follow quickly after.

Carson states, “When the public protests confronted with some obvious evidence of damaging results of pesticide applications, it is fed little tranquilizers pills of half truth,” (Carson 13). The preliminary step for change and elimination of these adverse properties is rebelling against these ‘half truth’s’ and demanding more out of the scientists producing these chemicals and answers from the government as to why their continuation is upheld.

Progression for the purpose of making mankind more comfortable is not the correct way to advance. The production of chemicals which exterminate other living organisms in hopes of promoting the illusion of untroubled living is in turn creating more problems than they were initially created to end. In Rachel Carson’s, “Silent Spring”, the use of pesticides and insecticides shine light on the destructive nature of man as they utilize these dibilitators while remaining ignorant to their lasting effects. As Carson states, the earth cannot sustain such trauma, and it is the responsibility of everyone to be well informed of what is being put into the rivers, into the air, and into their bodies. As the first chapter lays out, if the use of these chemicals is not put to a halt, the earth will transform into a state of utter despair. There will be no fish swimming, there will be no birds singing, there will be no leaves changing colors. The change which will promote the future of the world is long overdue and demands immediate action, beginning with a shift in the nature of mankind. While men are self-interested entities, it is time to take responsibility and not open fire on other living beings which have been proven to be nothing but natural. Aesthetics and equity are two states that cannot be forced to mesh, and with the implication of pesticidal and insecticidal chemicals, the clash affects usual order.

Works Cited

Carson, Rachel, 1907-1964. *Silent Spring*. Boston :Houghton Mifflin, 2002. Print.