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Symbiotic Relationship between Human and Non-human: A Deep Ecological Reading of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

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Abstract

This paper explores a symbiotic relationship between the human and non-human from a deep ecological perspective in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Drawing on the concept of deep ecology developed by Arne Naess, the paper examines how symbiotic relationship based on deep ecological principle contributes for every living creature or being echoing the theme of equal intrinsic worth of every living being. As seen in the novel, Dorothy's bond with Toto, her friendship with Tin Man, the Cowardly lion, and the Scarecrow show the symbiosis. Her attachment to the natural world seen in her association to Kansas prairie, Emerald City, grassland is a part of biospherical issue. Scarecrow's brainlessness proves to be wiser than academic credentialities. Tin Woodman's heartlessness demonstrates greater compassion. And the Lion's cowardliness hints at its bravery. The issue of complexity in simplicity is seen in the cyclone as a chaotic natural force that generates narrative order. Arne Naess's deep ecology gives an emphasis on the relationship between animals which can be seen in the harmonious relation between Toto (also called dog) and cowardly lion in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*. Similarly, the relation between the material environments Kansas Prairies, Emerald city, Poppy field exhibits material environment, and the objects hinting technologies like the silver shoes and the balloon show how life is happy for every creature. In the similar fashion, the weather phenomenon indicated by the cyclone as narrative engine shows benevolent nature of nature. There is mutual benefit in the symbiotic relation as envisioned by Arne Naess.

Keywords: deep ecology, human-nature bond, symbiosis

Introduction

L. F. Baum's *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, labeled as a landmark work of children's fiction, raises the issue of how far the imagination of children fiction author takes the child to convey a message that ecological world is to be maintained intact. Dorothy, a child, celebrates diversity respecting a fantasy landscape, namely Oz, where human-created rules merely work, suggesting a theme of transcendental philosophy. In this world, the wondrous and mysterious occurrences become normal, human-based hubris collapse, anthropocentrism lose its lock, and eco-centric vision guides the world. Diving into the world inhabited by speaking animals, magical objects, insects, winds, cyclones, witches, and living scarecrows, Baum's attempt to construct a world of fantasy is to invite children to think beyond realist mode of thinking to reach to the world of potential extension of magical world and creativity, and productivity. It implants ecological beliefs in the child's mindsets, functioning not mere zone to escape into but a pathway of maturity, growth and self-discovery. Dorothy's encounters with animals and strange creatures through Oz mirrors her psychological trajectory toward confidence and interconnection as seen in the companionship among the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Cowardly Lion. In this context, this study proposes to study a deep ecological perspective where the theoretical insights of Arne Naess and Timothy Luke are used to convey a message that all the living ecological selves in the world have same intrinsic worth.

Literature Review: Deep Ecology and *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

This section consists of a review of theoretical insights from deep ecology and the primary text under scrutiny to note the research gap. Deep ecology views all living beings with intrinsic worth, advocating an environmental philosophy and movement that theorizes the value of all life forms irrespective of their utility to humans. It challenges anthropocentrism and human superiority to valorize all life forms on an equal basis. The key philosopher behind such theorization is Arne Naess. According to him, deep ecology is based on the inherent value of living things, diversity in nature, vital needs, human non-interference, and egalitarian relationships. He worries how human greed and control over nature exceeds the human limit, resulting in a painful situation. Naess (2005) argues that "The well-being and flourishing of human and nonhuman life on Earth have value in themselves (synonyms: intrinsic value, inherent value). These values are independent of the usefulness of the nonhuman world for human purposes" (p. 36). For him, the richness and diversity of life-forms is to be respected. Naess (1995), in a similar way, argues that the maturity of the self develops through three stages:

The maturity of the self has been considered to develop through three stages: from ego to social self (comprising the ego), and from social self to a metaphysical self (comprising the social self). But in this conception of the maturity of the self, Nature is largely left out. Our immediate environment, our home (where we belong as children), and the identification with nonhuman living beings, are largely ignored. (p 226)

Naess's focus is on interconnected self that is realized after going through ego, social self, and metaphysical one to where one is matured in relation to nature: "Society

and human relationships are important, but our self is much richer in its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not only those we have with other humans and the human community” (p. 226). Society and human relationships are important from the level of human-nature symbiosis. This realization is important, “The meaning of life, and the joy we experience in living, is increased through increased self-realization; that is, through the fulfillment of potentials each of us has, but which are never exactly the same for any two living beings. Whatever the differences between beings, nevertheless, increased self-realization implies a broadening and deepening of the self” (p. 228). The deepening and broadening of the ‘self’ welcome symbiosis and diversity.

Naess (1995), similarly, discusses on deep ecology highlighting self-realization as an ecological approach to being in the world: “The doctrine that love for oneself is identical with “selfishness” and an alternative to love for others has pervaded theology, philosophy, and popular thought; the same doctrine has been rationalized in scientific language in Freud’s theory of narcissism” (p. 228). Here, Naess articulates how one can transcend the ‘self’ to enter into the inclusive world of being with other. He prefers being in nature rather than being in the world: “The richness of reality is becoming even richer through our specific human endowments; we are the first kind of living beings we know of which have the potentialities of living in community with all other living beings. It is our hope that all these potentialities will be realized—if not in the immediate future, then at least in the somewhat near future” (p. 239). These insights of inherent value and symbiosis, as envisioned by deep ecology, are crucial elements while interpreting a literary text. In this context, it is rational to see if the novel *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* raises the deep ecological motive.

Griswold (1987) analyzes how the entire world can be viewed as a home. While interpreting the world of Wizard as a homely environment, Griswold ponders whether it is real or a dream. He agrees that “Scholars have, in general, viewed *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a utopian dream” (p. 462). He also brings a realistic tone, metaphorically presenting Oz as America: “But what can’t be ignored is how much the land of Oz is a reflection of actual circumstances at the turn of the century. At that time, America must have appeared a kind of fairyland to foreigners and natives alike” (p. 463). Oz’s representation as America indicates modern people’s inclination towards America: “If *The Wizard of Oz* is genuinely a tale that belongs to the folk, then it is surprising that there has been no rigorous interpretation of the story in the same manner, for example, that Bruno Bettelheim and others have interpreted the classic fairy tale” (Griswold p. 466). *The Wizard of Oz* is a folk story.

Finally, Griswold presents the green world of Oz, the world of green as the parental figure: “Like a child on its own for the first time, Dorothy finds her own Green World is wonderful fun, but she must also face the threats of fearsome beasts and such things as attacking trees. The counterparts of the Green World are special homes associated with a parent figure” (p. 470). The green world is associated with home and parental figure.

Another critic, Ritter, G. (1997), reads how historical memory along with American politics play role in this fairy tale. Ritter argues, “This essay uses *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* as a window onto late nineteenth-century political culture

and issues of historical memory” (p. 173). It is taken as a window onto political and cultural aspect of historical memory where racial issues are prevalent: “Indeed, one previously neglected aspect of *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* is its racial metaphors. When compared to Baum's editorial writings from South Dakota at the time of the Wounded Knee massacre, the Winged Monkeys of the *Wizard of Oz* are seen to bear a striking resemblance to Baum's earlier portrayals of Native Americans” (p. 173). As the quote asserts that the winged monkeys of the *Wizard of Oz* are seen to bear a striking similarity to Baum's portrayals of Native Americans. He shared that the places and people of this tale are mentioned graphically by color. It is also a racial issue that the difference among them is expressed racially, between those who appear to be human (Dorothy), and those who do not (the Winged Monkeys and the Winkies).

In the same way, Tatar (2010) analyses the novel clarifying why fairy tales matter bringing the performative and the transformative issue of folktale to the fore. Tatar mentions “The transformative power of fairy tales can be approached from a variety of angles, and I want to propose first analyzing how they function as shape-shifters, morphing into new selves as they are retold and as they migrate into other media” (p. 56). For Tatar, the transformative magic is seen in spells, curses, and charms leading to metamorphoses and magical thinking: “Transformation is at the heart of magical practice” (p. 60). He mentions that the curses, magical spells, charms of fairy-tale fantasy show the power to change reality as the magical spells articulated. Similarly, Hansen (2002) mentions about the text as ‘teaching tool in economics’: “It has been argued that it was written as an al of Populist demands for a bimetallic monetary system in the late 19th century” (p. 254). He reads the novel as monetary allegory. He argues:

Once viewed through a Populist lens, the symbolism of the book appears incredibly obvious. The Scarecrow resents farmers, the Tin Woodman represents industrial workers, and the Cowardly Lion represents William Jennings Bryan.' Dorothy was told to follow a low brick road-the gold standard. People in the Emerald City were forced look at everything through green glasses-greenbacks. The silver shoes coinage of silver-really had the power to take Dorothy home. (p. 255)

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz belongs to a Populist movement and there is metaphorical representation, the Scarecrow hates farmers, the Tin Woodman stands for industrial workers, and the Cowardly Lion symbolizes William Jennings Bryan.' The above-mentioned readings represent fairy tale, historical memory, and nature as home. However, these readings do not necessarily incline towards deep ecological reading. Thus, this research gap is figured out in relation to characters and their perception of the world.

Method

The paper employs textual analysis as a research method to carry out the research. For this, it brings the relevant textual evidences from the primary text and integrate them with the deep ecological insights to claim the symbiotic relation between humans and human others. Within this method, the techniques of clustering

and grouping ideas to organize into a coherent whole has been done to justify the claim.

Human–Nature Symbiosis in *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*

Deep ecology is a philosophy based on environmental issue that advocates for the mutual flourishing where humans are embodied within the nature. The relation between humans and the natural world is based on mutual respect not in domination. Arne Naess extends the deep ecology to the point that it promotes the concept that all living beings, not exclusively humans alone — have inherent worth thereby challenging anthropocentrism. It replaces this by ecocentrism. While integrating these ideas to the novel, it is observed that humans are not rational rulers of the world but they are a part of a larger ecological whole. And in this larger world, humans coexist with other ecological selves including unknown (magical) beings, animals, landscapes, and all of them possess innate, inherent and intrinsic value.

Thus, from a deep ecology perspective, *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* brings an ecological community-based world where humans interact and share equal rights and responsibility. For example, the Scarecrow, Tin Woodman, and Cowardly Lion exhibit and challenge human-centered hierarchy to foster a world of mutual existence and it fosters mutual cooperation, interdependence, and a symbiotic relationship between all forms of life. The symbiotic relation is hinted at the very beginning part of the novel where Dorothy enjoys companionship with the dog (named as Toto) to the fullest: “It was Toto that made Dorothy laugh, and saved her from growing as gray as her other surroundings. Toto was not gray; he was a little black dog, with long, silky hair and small black eyes that twinkled merrily on either side of his funny, wee nose. Toto played all day long, and Dorothy” (p. 13). Toto, a dog, made Dorothy’s life more meaningful. Due to strong wind, the room also flew away along with Dorothy and Toto. The dog-Toto gave a harmonious companionship during the difficult journey to unknown place: “In spite of the swaying of the house and the wailing of the wood, Dorothy soon closed her eyes and fell fast asleep” (p. 16). The dog and human relation is further intensified as she is asleep in moving house due to the cyclone. The house is set in new strange place unknown to them: “The cyclone had set the house down, very gently for a cyclone in the midst of a country of marvelous beauty. There were lovely patches of green sward all about, with stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits” (p. 20). As the house is set in a good place, there were lovely patches of green world, stately trees bearing rich and luscious fruits. Along with this, the gorgeous flowers were on every hand, and birds with rare and brilliant manner sang and stay in the trees and bushes reminding us of symbiotic relation among different species. In this context, Sessions (1987) gives emphasis on the awareness of the “internal interrelatedness of ecosystems; ecological egalitarianism (all species have an equal right to live and blossom); the principles of diversity and symbiosis” (p. 112). It indicates the harmonious relationship among the living organisms.

The habitants of magical space where the Munchkins were the organic farmers echoing a harmonious relation with land: “Evidently the Munchkins were good farmers and able to raise large crops” (p. 35). The farmers were good enough to produce the large crops. Dorothy grew hungry and enjoyed the food: “She ate a

hearty breakfast, and watched a wee Munchkin baby, who played with Toto and pulled his tail and crowed and laughed in a way that greatly amused Dorothy. Toto was a fine curiosity to all the people, for they had never seen a dog before” (p. 35). Her respect to land and animals is a respect to the ecological message that every living being in the world has intrinsic worth.

Timothy Luke’s assertion of “human and nonhuman life on earth has intrinsic values” (p. 6) echoes Dorothy’s anticipation of dog and other creatures in the City of Emerald. Her relational self goes on being more matured and interconnected as indicated by Luke: “But the deep ecology sense of self requires a further maturity and growth, an identification which goes beyond humanity to include the nonhuman world” (p. 6) where Dorothy’s self goes on intermingling with the ecological selves: “When Dorothy awoke the sun was shining through the trees and Toto had long been out chasing birds and squirrels. She sat up and looked around her. There was the Scarecrow, still standing patiently in his corner, waiting for her” (p.53). The companionship among Dorothy, Toto (dog), and Scarecrow is based on reciprocity and symbiotic one guided by mutual respect. She is not even afraid of Lion. The lion mentions: “All the other animals in the forest naturally expect me to be brave, for the Lion is everywhere thought to be the King of Beasts. I learned that if I roared very loudly every living thing was frightened and got out of my way. Whenever I’ve met a man I’ve been awfully scared; but I just roared at him, and he has always run away as fast as he could go” (p. 68). The lion accepts its weakness and befriend them all. However, in his weakness lies the great strength. These diverse living beings show symbiotic relations as suggested by Arne Naess.

Arne Naess (2005) extends the definition of symbiosis as point where diversity can be celebrated: “From an ecological standpoint, complexity and symbiosis are conditions for maximizing diversity. So-called simple, lower, or primitive species of plants and animals contribute essentially to richness and diversity of life” (p. 5). Thus, Naess’s point to link diversity and symbiosis is his acknowledgement of inherent value of each being in the world. Scarecrow’s brainlessness proves to be wiser than academic credentials. Tin Woodman’s heartlessness demonstrates greater compassion. And the Lion’s cowardliness hints at its bravery. The issue of complexity in simplicity is seen in the cyclone as a chaotic natural force that generates narrative order. The scarecrow was told to be brainless but in the journey it solves many problems. Quoting Arne Naess, Devall, B. (1980) argues, “In deep ecology, the wholeness and integrity of person/planet together with the principle of what Arne Naess calls "biological equalitarianism" are the most important ideas” (p. 310). The biological equalitarianism is an environmental perspective that means to say that humans are fundamentally equal in their basic biological, cognitive, and moral capacities to other beings.

When Dorothy and her friends come to a ditch that is difficult to cross, scarecrow tells the Tin Woodman to cut it so that it fills up the ditch and looks like a bridge. Everyone, then, crossed the ditch safely. Similarly, Tin Woodman’s heartlessness demonstrates love and affection. For example, while walking in the forest with the friends, the Tin Woodman unknowingly kills a beetle. Then he weeps to the fullest, indicating how emotional it becomes due to the insect’s untimely and accidental death. This is also an indication of symbiosis seen in the eco-friendly

creatures. In the similar manner, the Cowardly lion shows bravery while defending Dorothy. For example, the Kalidahs, the dangerous beast-creatures, once chase Dorothy and her friends, in this critical situation, the Lion runs across the tree bridge with his friends. He does not abandon them but walk with them in danger.

Naess's slogan of "Maximize symbiosis" (p. 14) to enrich the diversity and interconnection between nature and humans is seen in the group work of the characters in the text. He further relates the symbiosis to the renouncing of egoist self to interconnected self through self-realization: "The choice of the formulation "Self-realization!" is in part motivated by the belief that maturity in human beings can be measured along a scale from selfishness to a broadening and deepening of the self, rather than measures of dutiful altruism" (p.15). For Naess, one should rise above the selfishness to a broader and deepening stage of self where the self and other are equal. This maximizing symbiosis is seen in Dorothy's act of befriending with everyone she meets. She has interconnected self that rises from egoist, to social and to metaphysical in Arnes's conceptual framework of deep ecology. Naess's focus on interconnected self: "Society and human relationships are important, but our self is much richer in its constitutive relationships. These relationships are not only those we have with other humans and the human community" (226) is good one based on symbiotic link.

Finally, Dorothy and dog stepped back to the house of their uncle and aunt: Aunt had just come out of the house to water the cabbages when she looked up and saw Dorothy running- toward her. "My darhng- child!" she cried, folding the little girl in her arms and covering her face with kisses; "where in the world did you come from? " "From the Land of Oz," said Dorothy, gravely. "And here is Toto. Too. And oh, Aunt Em! I'm so glad to be at home again!" (p.260). Dorothy is happy to be there with her dog hinting the human-dog companionship as she accepts the inherent worth of Toto (dog).

Conclusion

The paper concludes that a symbiotic relationship between the human and non-human fosters a home in nature. In this home, all the living beings live in harmony as critically discussed above focusing on *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* following the concept of deep ecology as envisioned primarily by Arne Naess. The symbiotic relationship based on deep ecological principle contributes for every living creature viewing them having equal intrinsic worth of every living being. Dorothy's stable bond with the dog (Toto), with Tin Man, the Cowardly lion, and the Scarecrow represents the symbiotic relation. She enjoys Kansas prairie, Emerald City, grassland as a part of biospherical issue which shows how she has implanted the deep ecological insights. Scarecrow's wiser guidance, Tin Woodman's greater compassion, Lion's bravery, though they first seem to be opposite, show how they have qualities beyond human expectation and knowledge. The cyclone despite being chaotic natural force generates narrative order. All the living beings possess inherent virtue as suggested by Arne Naess, though his ideas on deep ecology. Deep ecology gives emphasis on mutual relation between/among living beings offering situation of mutual benefit and symbiotic relation.

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