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Oiko-Poetics versus Andro-Poetics: An Account of the Deep-Ecological Perspective of Ice Age in Contrast to the Naturalistic Perspective of Exploration Age

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Abstract: This article provides an interpretation of the two worldviews of nature. The first one is the Euro-American orientation, which is naturalistic in its outlook towards the environment. This outlook provides the roots for Andro-Poetic epistemology; which is inclusive and exploitative in its ontology. The second one is the Native American orientation, which is bio-centric in its outlook on the environment. This outlook nourishes the ideology of deep ecology and provides the perspective of Oiko-Poetics; which has inclusive epistemology and a collective environmental ontology. Hence, this article reflects to provide a comparative analytical and critical approach to scrutinize the two selected fictions side by side. Which proves that the Native American Approach is inclusive towards the nature in comparison to the Euro-American approach which is exclusive towards the nature in its outlook.

Key Words: Oiko-Poetics, Deep Ecology, Biocentrism, Red Americans, Naturalism, Deterministic, Anthropocentrism, White Americans

Introduction

Fifteen hundred years ago, the world was caught into the tempest of freezing wind and icy storms. This age, as named by geographers, was the Ice Age. In that cold world, the water of the Bering Strait froze to solid, creating a connecting path between the present-day continents of Asia and America. According to [Robert Larson \(1966\)](#), from this frozen path, some people arrived upon the geographically isolated, enormous, land which was known as "Fusang" in ancient Chinese poetry. These were the hunter from Siberia who has crossed over into Alaska and Canada via a land bridge over the Bering Strait, settled into this land of 'Fusang'. Over the years these Asian-origin Americans are known as Native Americans and Indian Americans found themselves in perfect peace and harmony with the flora and fauna of the new soil. Hence, in this article, the Ice Age is

the representation of the Native Americans and this motif of ice will show the bio force; unlike the Exploration age Euro American where the motif of ice depicts Mortis force.

After the Fall of Constantinople in 1453, European powers started to look for new lands. This period between the fifteen and the seventeenth century is notably known as the age of exploration. Robert Larson states that in this very era a sea explorer, Christopher Columbus went to Spain and contacted the sovereigns of Spain, King Ferdinand II, and Isabella I. After an avaricious persuasion, Columbus finally made the king and queen of Spain bring around his ideas and got permission to travel to Cipango (Japan) and Cathy (China) via sailing around the globe. This vogue, however, led to the shores of the long-separated land of Fusang (America).

A striking characteristic of this 'New land' was its aboriginals, also known as the Native American or Indian Americans, who were

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living a harmonized and peaceful life within their environment. That is, they were not living 'in' nature but 'with' nature. These people should be regarded as the true ecological philosopher because of their horizontal sensibility. However, in popular American discourse, as narrated by Peter Berry (2010), the transcendentalists, Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-1882), Margaret Fuller (1810-1850), and Henry David Thoreau (1817-1862) are considered the flag bearer of Ecocriticism whose works celebrate the nature, the life force, and the wilderness as manifested in America. However, the other shade of this truth is that it is always the natives who were the source of inspiration for all of the American romantics and transcendentalists. Berry defines eco critics stating that such criticism "ranges in its belief from a deep ecological faith in the perfect, stable and self-organization of nature; to a view of nature as ever-changing as a process rather than a state."

According to Peter Berry's Definition, it is these native people who are the settlers of the land from and in the ice age and lived a life upon such ideal model, which Eco-critics calls 'biocentrism'. Hence, they are the true proponents of Eco-criticism. This stance puts the exploration age's notion of anthropocentrism or to be more precise 'white anthropocentrism in sharp contrast to that of Ice age notion of Native Americans biocentrism. Moreover, from this definition, it can be hypothesized that whoever considers Nature as a process, can be entitled as an eco-critic. As aforementioned, it is the culture of Native Americans to live with nature rather than living upon it and they take environmental relation as a two-way process of interaction rather than a unidirectional one. Hence, it is the Native Americans who are the flag bearer of deep ecological criticism. On the contrary, the Eurocentric approach is to explore, exploit, and extort the delicate balance of the natural milieu and resources. This approach paves the way for a naturalistic viewpoint that sees nature as a static and indifferent object rather than a continuous and sensitive subject.

To further endorse this concept two parallel short fictions, one from the American literary mainstream, and the other from the

Native folk collection is being utilized. These two fictional narratives mirror the imagery of ice and the imagery of exploration. Hence, the notion is further probed through the works of Jack London's *To Build a Fire* and Larned's *Sin-Ge-Bis Fools the North Wind*. These two short fiction in a comparative mode depicts the real concept of eco-poetics.

Deep Ecological Approach

Oiko-poetics is a term that originated from the Greek word "Oikos" which means household. Oiko-poetics is also known as eco-poetics in the context of deep ecology. In Greek tradition, Oikos represents the unification of the three constituting spirit of life; Man (anthro), Nature (eco), and Culture (poetics). This trilogy in a holistic manner represents the life force. A practical representation of this approach is the horizontal and harmonious circle of life of Red Americans. According to [Nirmal Selvamony \(2003\)](#), the poetics of the Oikos means a "habitat comprising the spirits, humans, and nature in particular. A typical Oikos could be regarded as a nexus in which the sacred, the humans, nature and the cultural phenomena stood in a relationship".

Oikos, in an integrated manner of life, is bestowed by freedom as well as responsibility. In such poetics both nature and man have their rights and commitments that stabilized the spirit of man and environ. Both live in kith and kin relationship; that is in horizontal as well as in vertical units they share similar privileges and live as a unified whole. The chief of the American Indian Tribe, Black Elk comments on Oikos "the two-legged and the four-legged lived like kith and kin". Also, in the text *Sin-Ge-Bis Fools the North Wind* the notion of kin and kith is palpable when the natural phenomena like north wind and south wind are not simply personified but endowed as active agents playing an active role in the ecology as illustrated in the text:

"In the time when only a few people live upon the earth, there dwelt in the north a tribe of fishermen. The best fish is to be found in the summer season, far up in the frozen places where no one could live in the winter at all. For the king of this land of Ice was a fierce old man called Kabib-on-okka,

meaning the North Wind ... Strong and fierce as he was, he was no match for Shawon-dasee, meaning the South Wind, whose home was in the pleasant land of sun-flower. "

Similarly, the living character Shingebis is also shown as shapeshifting and swiping its human attributes with nature, "It was true that Shinge-bis had certain magical powers and could change himself into a duck. That is why he came to be called the diver." Hence, the idea of personification is simply reversed here which helps in further deepening the bond of horizontality in the ecology.

Naturalistic Approach

According to the definition of ([Britannica 2017](#)), the naturalistic approach relates the scientific method to philosophy. It affirms that all entities, living and non-living, are natural irrespective of their inherent character. Hence, all knowledge of the world falls under the realm of scientific study. This kind of worldview was prevalent during the exploration age and it is still acceptable in the Eurocentric epistemology. Apparently, it seems that this view is very satisfactory but as we will see in the coming section that this leads to the deterministic approach which problematizes the scenario.

The naturalistic approach asserts that man does not possess freedom in environ. It is his environment that determines his fate and behavior. So, this view shapes the idea of determinism which says that the natural world is linked with different linking events. In this linkage, humans are never the first link rather it is the environment that comes first in the linking chain. Hence, it is the environment that determines the action of man. This deterministic view gives an excuse to the white man to cause harm to nature and the bio-force in the name of self-defense, progress, and exploration. Such view is harmful in its implication as it places man and nature in a vertical system of authority; unlike the Native Americans' view of horizontality and harmony. In the text *To Build a Fire*, it is evident that:

"There was no real bond between the dog and man. The one was the slave of the other. The dog made no effort to indicate its fears to the man. It was not concerned with the wellbeing of man. It was for its own sake that

it looked towards the fire. But the man whistled and spoke to it with the sound of the whip in his voice. So the dog started walking close to the man's heels and followed him along the trail".

This actually justifies that the ecology is amoral towards man. This indirectly implies that the man can also be amoral towards the environment. The event in London's fiction depicts it as follows:

"The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the story of the man, caught in a storm; who killed an animal and sheltered himself inside the dead body and thus was saved. He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm body until feeling returned to them. Then he could build another fire".

As evident from the text rebounded amorality is very aptly justified. Hence, this contextualizing points toward the shaping of the Empirical agenda of 'the white men of exploration' via the construction of a white-centered discourse. Consequently, this indicates a self-perpetual cycle of "justified exploitation"; an implication of which is Andro Poetics; as explained in the coming section.

The Epistemology of Andro-Poetics: Metaphor of Land in Both of the Fictions

Andro Poetics is a male-centered approach towards nature and the environment that rationalizes the manipulation of the resources for the sake of the betterment of males. There is a slight difference between Anthro Poetics and Andro Poetics, as the former one establishes a 'man' centered approach towards nature while the latter one establishes 'the male' centered approach toward nature. This epistemological variance indeed leads to huge ontological differences, which despite not being the point of emphasis here, has vast implications. However, the point of similarity here is that Andro Poetics, just like Anthro Poetics, normalizes the exploitation of nature and reinforces the naturalistic and deterministic essentialism of the amoral ecosystem. In London's *To Build a Fire* the very notion is contextualized when the exploring man remembers the advice of the old man on Sulphur Creek who was being a Native

American respects seasons and times, and warns the exploring man "not to travel in the country after fifty below zero". The man thought that after building the first fire, he had conquered Mother Nature. After this temporary success, the old native man was "rather womanish" to him. He thought if "a man" keeps his head he is "all right. A man who was a man could travel alone". This irrationality and overconfidence of the explorer man are in sharp contrast to the rationality of native Shingebis who is confident as well as rational while challenging the cold North Wind. As he enchanted;

"Kabibonokka! Ancient man
Come and scare me if you can.
Big and Blustery though you be.
You are mortal just like me."

In both cases, the representation and epistemology of land are very crucial. In London's case, nature is a piece of land that is at a man's mercy to be conquered via man's intellect. However, in case of Shingebis land is the vital and living force which protect and shields human. This idea is further elaborated in the coming section of Oiko poetics and illustrates how the ontology of Oiko poetics reshapes the worldview of humanity, hence, leading to stability without any devastation.

The Ontology of Oiko Poetics: Symbol of Ice

There is a famous quote by Einstein which says that look deep into nature and you will understand everything better. As stated earlier Oiko Poetics is a particular aspect of deep ecology that finds its practical implication in Red American culture. The epistemology, ontology, and histology of the Native Americans are rooted within the ecology as an instant is present in Shingebis where the fellow fishermen warn him about Kabibonokka but Shingebis knows he has been provided by the nature with enough resources to tackle the situation. Nature is his household and he is the household of nature, as he states:

"My fur coat is lent me by Bother Beaver
any my Mittens borrowed from Cousin
Muskrat will protect me in the daytime
and inside my wigwam is a pile of big logs.
Let Kabibonokka come in by my fire if he
dares...Shingebis sat in his wigwam by the

blazing fire and such a fire each blog was so big it would last for a moon. That was their way they counted time; instead of weeks or months, they would say 'a moon' - the length of the time from new moon to other".

Shingebis is well aware of the challenges as well as the blessings provided by the cold and ice. Just like London's old Creek man he knows how and when to move in cold and when to stay in by the fire. Shingebis knowledge of ice has come from the respect he has for ecology which leads to his triumph. In contrast to him London's explorer man, having Eurocentric as well as Andro centric mindsets, shows no concern and respect for ice as well as land. Eventually leading towards his desolation and decay. Hence, the Oiko Poetical Ontology also dismantles the concepts of Andro Poetics.

Appraisal of Native American Sensibility in *Shingebis Fools the North Wind*

[Murtaza and Bhatti \(2017\)](#) have stated that for Euro American nature is luxury and for Native American nature is existence. The predominately naturalistic view of White Americans is causing harm to the whole community. The frantic state of the explorer man in *To Build a Fire* endorses the notion as the text speaks: "The thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be increasing. They tried to keep this thought out of his mind and to forget it. They knew that such thoughts caused a feeling of fright in him and he was afraid of such feelings. But the thought returned and continued until he could picture his body totally frozen". In contrast, the calm and peace of Shingebis in *Shingebis Fools the North Wind* is visible as 'Shingebis was always laughing. They laughed when he caught a big fish, and he laughed when he caught none at all. Nothing could dampen his spirits". Hence, Red American discursive approach towards nature is enthusiastic and inclusive. This, also, is evident in the text: "they think that Kabibonokka is "a kind magician" and no one can resist him. It is my own opinion that he is a man just like myself. It is true that I cannot stand the cold as he does, but then, neither can he stand the heat as I do". This depicts a very inclusive world view of the natives.

In keeping with the ongoing notion, [Murtaza and Bhatti \(2016\)](#) have stated "literature is an imaginative alternative of real-life". The discourse and literature are the primary channels through which worldview is perceived and received in Mankind. However, the Euro-American discursive approach, in this regard, is not inclusive. It separates man from nature which is a damage not only to nature but also to mankind. Therefore, the installation of a counter-narrative helps additionally in having new perspectives as well as to undo the harms of a certain established narrative.

[Howard Zinn \(1996\)](#) has argued in this regard that it is a necessity to have a counterview of history besides establishing a mainstream narrative. He calls it "the different side of history". Euro-American history is exploitative and manipulative due to a preplanned system of dominance and hegemony. Hence, it is a must to have another view of the story in a comparative, analytical, and critical manner; and that is the very core of this article.

Critique of Euro American Sensibility in *To Build a Fire*

As mentioned earlier it is a must to give a comparative and counter-narrative to a certain worldview. The prior discussion has illustrated that Andro Poetics dominates the Eurocentric worldview of nature. In contrast to that Oiko Poetics is the established and lived view of the Native Americans. The two comparative short fictions of both Whites and Reds provide the embodiment of these beliefs. Both of the protagonists struggle with cold and ice yet the white one faces desolation and defeat while the red one faces health and conquest. The text *Shingebis Fools the North Wind* illustrates the events when Shingebis merrily calls Kabibonokka to come and sit with him in his wigwam: "Come on in Kabibonokka! Come in and warm yourself. It must be bitter cold outside". These mocking words infuriate the West Wind and he makes his way inside the shackle. His presence fills the wigwam with smog and fog. In a very interesting manner, this illustrates the oiko poetical ontology. He challenges Kabibonokka but:

"Pretended not to notice. Still singing, he rose to his feet and threw on another log. It was a fat log of piece and it burned so hard and gave out so much heat that he had to sit a little distance away. From the corner of his eye he watched Kabibonokka and what he saw made him laugh again. The perspiration was pouring from his forehead; the snow and icicles in his flowing hair quickly disappeared. Just as a snowman made by children melts in the warm sun of March, so the fierce old Northwind began to thaw. There could be no doubt of it, Kabibonokka the terrible was melting".

The oiko poetic view, as evident, incorporates living, nonliving, household as well as environmental consciousness. Shingebis was able to weaken Kabibonokka because he was aware of his ecological counterpart; his cheerfulness was rooted in the ontology of deep ecological consciousness through the epistemological knowledge of biocentrism. There was no rift and drift in this epistemology and ontology of nature. On the other hand, the white Americans were facing a gap between their ecological epistemology and ontology as the naturalistic view leads to the implication of Andro poetics which is succeeded by frostiness. In London's *To Build a Fire* the explorer man challenges the ice and frost but was unable to cope with the challenges of the frost and snow that were renounced to him. As the narration tells:

"All the time the dog runs with him at his heels. When he fell a second time, the dog curled its tail over its feet and set in front of him, facing him, curiously eager. The warmth and security of the animal angered him. He cursed it until it flattened its ears. This time the shaking because of the cold began more quickly. He was losing his battle with the frost. It was moving into his body from all sides. This thought drove him forward. But he ran no more than 100 feet when he fell headfirst".

On contrary, Shingebis challenged the North Wind and when was being challenged by the north wind he conquered it with the inclusive and incorporation of the bio force of the environment. The text sees this as:

"A great struggle took place. Over and over on the hard snow, they rolled, locked in one and other's arms. All night long they

wrestled; and the foxes crept out of their holes, sitting at a safe distance in a circle watching the wrestlers. The effort he put forth kept the blood warm in the body of Shingebis. He could feel the North Wind growing weaker and weaker, his icy breath was no longer a blast but only a feeble sigh".

Hence, through these side-by-side views of both fictions, it is seen that in the euro American representative discourse 'the explorer man' was "defeated". While in the Native American representative discourse the diver man was the conqueror. "Kabibonokka was conquered" yet the explorer man faced "his last moment of fear. He sat and thought about meeting death with dignity, however, the idea did not come to him in exactly this manner. His idea was that he had been acting like a fool. He had been running around like a chicken with head cut off". Indeed the deterministic world view of ecology leads to an awful end of man.

Conclusion

"Cheerfulness and courage can overcome even the North Wind". This idea is very essential as it dismantles the deterministic essentialism of the euro Americans. This

deterministic essentialism is very problematic, as proved earlier, it gives the space of exploitation and extortion leading to execrable consequences. This account is narrated in the white discourse as the dismay and decay of man: "never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in snow and make no fire. As the evening grew darker, its eager longing for the fire mastered it. With much lifting of its feet, it cried softly. Then it flattered its ears, expecting the man's curse. But the man remains silent. Later the dog howled loudly. And still, later it moves close to the man and caught the smell of death. This made the animal back away". Hitherto, the red discourse has asserted a deep sense of collectivity as compare to the dispersed sense of segregation of the white discourse. Through this substantial discussion it can be summed up that the Ice age ideology of Native Americans, particularly, the notion of Oiko Poetics is the redeeming notion of mankind. The exploratory Age and the exploratory discourse carry the ideology of naturalism, particularly Adro Poetics which only plays the blame game and leads to the dismay of mankind.

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