



ECOPSYCHOLOGY IN TERRY PRATCHETT'S *LORDS AND LADIES*

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Abstract: The paper interrogates the place of Ecopsychology in the greater narrative of econarratives and invests the theoretical framework in Terry Pratchett's *Lords and Ladies* (1992). It serves as an introduction to this lesser known discipline of Ecopsychology that has profound insights to share on the relationship of man and nature and shares perspectives with deep ecology, sustainable development, pantheism, animism, ecotherapy among others.

Ecopsychology is used as a framework to study Terry Pratchett's *Lords and Ladies* which will be examined for the intimacy with nature in the primal traditions of the witches, for the living and unliving in the nature and a healthy separation from the trappings of modern society, encouraging a self sufficient pastoral community life. *Lord and Ladies* is the fourth book of the witches series and the fourteenth book of *Discworld*.

Keywords- Ecopsychology, Environmental Sustainability, Nature, Pratchett, *Lords and Ladies*

Introduction

Ecopsychology in one of its many interpretations is the synthesis of Ecology and Psychology, placing one in the other context, healing the conflict of mind and nature. For some it is a revival of animism and panpsychism, the human intimacy with the non human around us. Carl Jung's

insight into the relationship suggests the increasing dependency of the collective consciousness on the culturally produced. (Fisher 4)

The concepts of sustainable living and environmental conservation are embedded in Ecopsychology where it offers an alternative to the guilt founded actions of environmental conservation to fulfilling enriching experiences.

Characteristics and Concepts

Among the most important characteristics of Ecopsychology is the desire for direct experience which is often attempted to be understood through Phenomenology where nature is the other.(Vakoch and Castrillon)

The first generation of Ecopsychologists has had a spiritual dimension to Ecopsychology and nowhere is it more evident than in the almost pantheistic union the experience is expected to invoke. Bermann in his *Wandering God: A Study in Nomadic Spirituality*(2000) ascribes the rupture or the human nature duality to the development of agricultural societies and industrialization which is different from the nomadic or hunter gatherer societies where the consciousness and the subject-object distinction is fluid. Thus the pagan religions and forest deities of a primal culture holds much fascination to the ecopsychologists.

The struggles of the human nature division are compounded in the modern urban societies where the interactions of the consciousness is limited to human made cultural products and the human to human interactions have been substituted by emails, phone calls, social media and media productions.

Kaise Puhakka in *his Intimacy, Otherness, and Alienation: The Intertwining of Nature and Consciousness*, establishes the term ‘hyper-reflexivity’ where the self ‘reflects upon itself and further reflects upon the reflecting self’ to create an ‘ever tightening mutual feedback loop’ which makes it progressively harder to establish a relation to the ‘genuine other’ (Vakoch and Castrillon 15)

Ecopsychology also suggests possibilities of a greater awareness and experience through the union with nature. Puhakka suggests two possible relationships of humans with nature; one, nature as the greater encompassing support to the community and the other a direct relationship. The possibility of an Other within ourselves yet unknown to us is made clear although it goes against the grain of most psychoanalytic theories which are often anthropocentric. This could very well be a depth of perception unknown to us, a doorway to greater interaction and awareness with the living and nonliving around us.

The awareness of the subjectivities of nature leads to a greater understanding of the harmony and relationships within nature, helping us out of our anthropocentric perspectives towards an expression of consciousness in nature. (Hebert 31).

Recently, *Ecopsychology: Science, Totems, and the Technological Species* (2012) and *Technological Nature: Adaptation and the Future of Human Life* (2011) from Peter Kahn has used Ecopsychology to approach human destruction of environment, sustainable lifestyles and the pervasiveness of technology in our daily lives which imbibes in Ecopsychology a dimension for environmental action and cultural education different from before.

Davis in his *Diamond in the Rough: An Exploration of Aliveness and Transformation in Wilderness*, believes that ecopsychology is a call for broadening our self identity to include “other

beings, the natural world, and the cosmos”, something that forces a change in our worldview and cultural practices to “re-embed our individual psyches into the natural world” (50)

Ecopsychology and Fantasy Fiction

When attempting to establish Ecopsychology as a framework to make enquiries into texts of fantasy fiction fundamental nature of the genre has to be defined. The expected tropes of Fantasy fiction is an imaginary world, often medieval or rustic with strange creatures and strange environments.

Ecopsychology is an obvious critique of Fantasy. Fantasy fiction has been for years characterized by an awareness of nature and the myriad creatures that inhabit it, together the Other in Fantasy.

It is often the witches’ empathy that drives the magic. Empathy is so often the word of choice for magic binding, a recent instance being of the Patrick Rothfuss title, *The Name of the Wind*. In most cases, mastery over an inanimate object is brought through a comprehensive understanding of the inanimate object which often the conscious mind cannot gather; to acknowledge coexistence, the individuality and spirit of the being, to call for it as Le Guin’s Sparrowhawk does or ask it to change as Pratchett’s witches do.

Pratchett’s works are often dominated by its satire, humour and subversion of familiar fantasy tropes. His true mastery lies in making the follies of the world obvious to the reader whereby his novels become an instrument for social scrutiny and yet goodness prevails in the end. These novels, significantly to this paper are always inclusive. Traditional perspectives are upended both in the reader perception and within Discworld itself. If the Nightwatch series is about social inclusion or a defiance of Speciesism, the nightwatch including dwarfs, trolls, golems, a werewolf,

the undead, gargoyles and a vampire, the Witches of Lancre believe in coexistence with the natural world, the living and the nonliving.

The Discworld novels often begin with a description of the Great A'Tuin and the four elephants on his back, together carrying the Discworld as they the Great Star Turtle swims across the ocean of the cosmos. A mytheme found in several cultures, the imagery never fails to impress the world as an *organic whole*.

Core to most works of fiction and to most tales, the image of familiar beings in an absurd, satirical element is a gesture inviting trust. The Pratchett Novel appears to be always looking at the background, often concerned with what is dissimilar or marginalized, much like in his Nightwatch Novel, *Snuff*(2011)where the intervention of Commander Vimes assures that the goblins are treated as citizens.

The same holds true for the environment in the Witches series. The Land of Lancre, its mountains, valleys, forests, grass and stone are described with a single minded attention.

The story of Pratchetts Lords and Ladies begins with, after his usual preamble of discworld, an introduction to “the stones”, and its description, “They’re about man-height, and barely thicker than a fat man.”, how the mind sees it and allusion to several other such formations.(13)

Such details are often spared to the other animals trees and geographical features.

Pratchett’s witches are elements of subversion and counterculture disguised to be part of a primal occult tradition. Granny Weatherwax, Nanny Ogg and Magrat, all at their best moments or when it matters are in open rebellion against tradition.

The essay, *Be a Witch, Be a Woman: Gendered Characterisation of Terry Pratchett's Witches* from Alice Nutall sees the Lancre's witch coven performing roles of the crone, the mother and the maiden (Rana 28). Magrat, dreamy and young is the Virgin. Nanny Ogg the Mother, celebrates female sexuality and family life and Esme Weatherwax, the most powerful stands in for the crone.

In their relationship with the environment around, all of them exhibit diverse roles. Magrat has her academic learning, knowledge of the herbs and scientific awareness. She tends to Diamanda and is described by Pratchett as "probably the only person in Lancre who worried about things being biodegradable." (199)

Nanny Ogg, often reminds the readers of the experiments with her sexuality in her youth through snatches of regaled stories. She is the matriarch of a great extended family which spills out to the community of Lancre, everyone of whom she treats like a mother would do, and evokes the Great Mother, Gaia motif with the expansiveness of her mind, temperament, physical appearance and family.

Granny Weatherwax, the Crone is the most powerful, conforming to the fairytale narrative of frightening witches draws her strength from the land around, from her awareness of the environment, a moral obligation to nature around as she finds the 'pebbles may be full of quiet interest.' (16), while being wary of the balance of the world. The narrative of fluid identities between humans and nature in Discworld is often brought out through Granny Weatherwax,

"But when it came to the trees and the rocks and the soil, Granny Weatherwax saw it as hers. She was sensitive to its moods." (180)

She is the equivalent of a female hermit, keeping to herself, living in isolation and watching over the land of Lancre. Her power of Borrowing, to “ride the minds of animals and birds, seeing through their eyes” is seen by Granny as the “part of the heart of witchcraft. To see through other eyes...”(82).

Pratchett often crafts the witch characters so that their characteristics and functions are largely similar, often exchanging characteristics between the land of Lancre and witches suggesting their intentions have always been the same.

While the lore of the witches in Discworld are built around gendered roles, of midwifery, healing and domestic services, the form of the narrative and the characters of the witches are always in open rebellion to such essentialism and judgment, embracing fluid identities.

Both the Elves and Magicians from the University stand opposed to these inclusive beliefs of the witches although for vastly disparate reasons. Elves, as Granny Weatherwax says, lack empathy.

They are creatures of instinct and pleasure who’d “smash up the world if they thought it would make a pretty noise”(310).The elves see everything and everyone around them as insignificant, with their gaze at other beings and objects signifying that they are “flawed”, “an animal” and of “no value”.(151)

Pratchett has often yoked imagination and empathy. Here the elves cannot create and in Snuff (2011), the goblin race gains acceptance in the Discworld through the harp composition of Tears of Mushroom, a goblin girl.

Both the wizards and the elves are guilty of what Puhakka termed Self reflexivity. The experience and knowledge of the witches are in contradiction with the culturally produced academic knowledge. Pratchett reminds the reader of where academics could've gone wrong, isolating itself to pure intellection than experience of the world.

They are unable to lend themselves to experiences and instead finding fulfillment in the self and culturally produced artifacts of knowledge. While Pratchett's form of writing takes away all of the malignance of the University of magic, it is still a place of detrimental monomania, where the wizards poison each other and are always at odds with one another, in ignorance of the spaces of interaction in the natural environments around.

The lack of environmental experience in turn make them exclude nature from their personal space. The Dean's protest at the prospect of travel is revealing as he complains that "the countryside is too unnatural" and he couldn't stand the many trees in it.(56)

At the invitation for the Lancre Royal Wedding, the Vice Chancellor of the Unseen University, Ridcully's attention is tugged towards hunting the indigenous fauna with "glacier lakes up there where the fish've never seen a rod"(54), and, "Thousands of head of deer. And elk. Wolves all over the place. Mountain lions too, I shouldn't wonder. I heard that Ice Eagles have been seen up there again, too."(55)

Pratchett is quick to reaffirm this master slave orientation with his characteristic wry humour mentioning Ridcully's contribution to rare species was keeping them rare (56).

The land in Pratchett's Discworld, often in the Witch's series, is thought of as a being with a memory and a consciousness. The metaphor begins with the Great A'Tuin swimming through the space carrying the four elephants who together hold the discworld.

The Pratchett Witch stories often involve a consciousness of the nonliving like the Unseen University in *Equal Rites* or the Land of Lancre in *Wyrd Sisters*. The raised stones of Lancre protect Lancre from Creatures of the other overlapping dimension.

Within Pratchett's Discworld, they are always ancient consciousnesses that can be interacted with if you care to be mindful enough. Pratchett's nonliving consciousnesses are not dissimilar to the animal consciousness Granny Weatherwax accompanies while burrowing. While forests, land and nature have been assigned individuality to a degree like Tolkien's Fanghorn or Lothlorien or metaphorically like the Ents, Bombadil, Goldberry or even the elves, Pratchett could be singular in exhibiting Animism and Panpsychism however considerate his greater structure and form of satire has been towards this venture.

The awareness of a shared ecosystem is neither lost on Pratchett or on Granny Weatherwax. The necessity of keeping the balance is central to her character.

As Granny Weatherwax says, there are those who take more than they need but there are also those who "put back love" and "have soil in their bones" without which mutual relationship, "Lancre'd just be a bit of ground with green bits on it."(345)

Among her powers as a witch Burrowing, or borrowing another consciousness or accompanying it is what Granny Weatherwax is accomplished at and her perspective on it, the balance of life and coexistence is the essence of Ecopsychology:

"You tended not to swat. You dug lightly. You fed the dog. You paid. You cared; not because it was kind or good, but because it was right. You left nothing but memories, you took nothing but experience."(83)

Conclusion

Patchett's narratives are focused on the details that have traditionally been overlooked even in the fantasy genre. While nature substitutes could be found aplenty among most fantasy fiction, Pratchett introduces nature and environment as something familiar which Ecopsychology is keen to appreciate. The traditions of animism in primal cultures, keeping the balance of the world, being aware of the land as an organic whole and the ecology we share with numerous living and nonliving are values that are shared by a text that is always aware of the ecology in its entirety.

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