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R.Lakshmi¹

Dr. Tamilmani K.T^{2*}

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¹Assistant Professor of English &Research Scholar (PhD) Part-Time,PG & Research Dept. of English,Nehru Memorial College (Autonomous),Affiliated to Bharathidasan University,Puthanampatti -621007 Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu

²Research Supervisor in English, Associate Professor & Head, PG & Research Dept. of English, Nehru Memorial College (Autonomous), Affiliated to Bharathidasan University, Puthanampatti -621007, Tiruchirappalli, Tamilnadu



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R.Lakshmi¹, Dr. Tamilmani K.T^{2*}

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*Corresponding Author

ABSTRACT

Fantasy is becoming vital for human survival as it serves as a vehicle to escape from reality in contemporary dog-eat-dog world. Apparently, fantasy authors create marvelous feeling through their depiction of magic, mythical creatures and by the creation of the extraordinary and the uncanny. Moreover, fantasy authors make efficacious use of nature to make the enchanting and alien appeal to the readers of the story. While folk and fairy tales depict forests as a threatening territory; fantasy novels depict them as a place for the protagonist's survival, self-realization and sacrifice. Hence, contemporary fantasy encompasses trees and forests which provide space for trial of protagonist's cognitive as well as physical metamorphosis. In The Calling, protagonist Maya and her companions are evacuated from their hometown due to artificially created wildfire and they seek refuge in wildwoods. While emerging from forests, they become stronger and wiser since wilderness is portrayed as a venue for growth, nourishment and transformation. In Harry Potter and Chamber of secrets, Harry and Ron sneak into the forbidden forest to ascertain the chamber monster. Eventually, they become enlightened when they come out of Forbidden forest. Hence, this research paper purports to study the role of enchanting nature in protagonist's evolution portrayed by Kelley Armstrong in The Calling and J.K. Rowling in Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets.

Keywords: Enchanting Nature, Fantasy, Human Survival, Metamorphosis, Nourishing Wilderness

Introduction

People are knackered by the demands of modern society far away from foliage and become too enticed by indoor delights. They intend to create pseudo identities in virtual world and chat with unknown online friends, play games. Most of the people live in urban areas and eventually they have fewer encounters with nature. Moreover, evolution of science and technology has altered the patterns of people's lives and produced both marvels and disasters which lead to utopian yearnings. As Florence Williams substantiates,

We do things we crave that make us tetchy, like check our phones 1,500 times a week ...while often neglecting to do the things that bring us joy. Yes, we're busy. We've got responsibilities. But beyond that, we're experiencing a mass generational amnesia enabled by urbanization and digital creep. (Williams, 11).

Consequently, people began to realize that the joy is greater when they are in natural settings than in being with their friends, family and doing their favourite activities. They are the happiest when they spend time in nature with their friends. Most often, people perceive nature as a force for good which shapes and restores them. Nature's formative role enables us for a meaningful construction of our life. In fact, Darwin, Tesla and Einstein wandered in gardens and grooves to promote their thinking.

Depiction of Nature in Literature

Nature has been amusing and it prevails as one of the prominent themes in poetry, drama and fiction. Literature across the globe depicts forests as a treasure trove in which the protagonists must undergo the process of trials, testing and survival during his quest. In Dante's Inferno, the hero got lost in the woodlands, in Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Young Goodman Brown", the protagonists discover the truth about his clan in the wildwoods. The forest becomes the place of eternal sereneness in American poet, Robert Frost's haunting poem "Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening".

Fantasy and Wilderness

Fantasy, as a genre, evolved as a dialectical opposition to realist fiction. Fredrick Jameson argues that fantasy novels offer opportunity for subversive imagination and assumes inevitability and disrupts reality. It has been enthralling, fun, adventurous, magical and it focuses on the future. Even though fantasy exists since the dawn of literature, it is made respectable by eminent writers like J.R.R., C.S. Lewis while Kelley Armstrong and J.K. Rowling further enriched it more adorable. Tolkien and Le Guin have evinced this potential in their works. George MacDonald, the pioneer of modern fantasy fiction, portrayed nature as mysterious and elusive, comforting as well as terrifying. Since "Fantasy fiction is the contemporary means through which writers can recapture the perilous forests of fairy stories and allow modern readers, often disconnected from nature, to experience the transformative dread of venture into the heart of the wildwoods"(Laszkiewicz, 47). Its unique potential inspires and creates ways to live our life without exasperating nature. While wilderness myth is described as an empty space, within colonial discourse, it is a place containing mysterious and impending otherness. Kelley Armstrong's The Calling and J.K. Rowling's Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets are the novels chosen for proving the enchanting power of nature.

Canadian Signature

"Canadian signature" is a phrase used by Atwood in her Survival. Signature is an individual mark and Atwood treats this wilderness as a sign of "distinctive national heritage". Geographically, wilderness is an uninhabited and uncultivated land, which in Canada includes expansive landscape and Arctic North. Canadian wilderness serves as a powerful metaphor of the country which searched for its self. Robert Kroetsch, Aritha Van Herk and Michael Ondaatje are concerned with Canadian wilderness and its invincibleness. Aritha Van Herk notes that impact of nature on the writers and impact of authors on nature is unavoidable. Correspondingly, Margaret Atwood explicitly comments on the use of forests, as it is "Not surprisingly in a country with such a high ratio of trees, lakes and rocks to people, images from nature are almost everywhere" (Survival 49). In 1970s, through The Journals of Susanna Moodie, Survival and Surfacing, Atwood represented "wilderness to Canadians as their own distinctive national space" (Howells, 21).

The depiction of Canadian wilderness by Kelley Armstrong in The Darkness Rising Trilogy appeals to the readers emotionally. In this trilogy, the protagonist and her companions are the subjects of Project Phoenix- an experiment organized by the cabals to bring out the extinct supernatural powers by genetic modification. In the first novel, The Gathering, all teens with budding supernatural powers gather together due to an artificial forest fire and in The Calling, the second novel, they ascertain that they are the kids with supernatural powers while they are left in wilderness. The final novel, The Rising portrays how they resolve to resist obeying the orders from the Cabals and finally, they had to go for an agreement with the Cabals in order to live with their parents peacefully.

Enchanting Wilderness in The Calling

Canada has always been associated with its vast and unexplored landscape with its innumerable lakes in its literary tradition. Moreover, for centuries, Canadian North is for men while most of the female writers have sent their woman protagonists into the wilderness for protection and rehabilitation. In The Calling, the protagonist Maya, along with her companions, were left in wilderness and they try to in order to liberate from the cabals. In this novel, fascinating wilderness plays its role as a character which grooms and prepares the protagonist for her transmogrification. While they reached the wilderness Maya exhilarates her friends by uttering, "I knew forest. It was my home more than any house ever could be. I'd survive this. We'd all survive it" (Calling, 38). Further, she observes, "The fog disappeared, as if kept at bay by the trees. Safe. I was in the forest, Daniel was beside me and I was safe".(Calling,41). For Maya, wilderness is a saviour rather than a threat. Moreover, the deep forests provide nourishment and protection to the fugitives. When they walk along the wildwoods they were exhausted as there was no food to eat and non availability of comfortable place to rest. Yet, they drank water from streams and sleep when they are completely drained. Hence, Maya feels, Mother Nature had, "The dried vegetation had collected. As I lay down, I could smell it, sharp and earthy, and the smell comforted me as much as the soft bedding. Kenji curled in front of me...but my head had barely touched the ground before I was gone (Calling, 69)". Eventually, Maya substitutes, "I ran into the forest. I planned to keep going, get in deep enough to relax and refocus and, yes, may be feel sorry for myself for a few minutes before I faced the others again." (Calling,) At last, Maya's friends perceive wilderness as threat in the beginning of the novel and later as in harmonious order. For her friends, "the forest- with its sun dappled groves majestic, soaring redwoods-was no less terrifying in daylight that it had been late night" (Calling, 79). Wilderness is portrayed both enchanting as well as a perilous realm.

Transmogrification

In terms of land mass and immensely unpopulated wilderness, Canada has extreme northern weather and wild animals have a crucial role to play. Correspondingly, Margaret Atwood explicates that stories about Canadian

animals are unique for its realism. The protagonist of the trilogy, Maya had symptoms of transmogrification and proceeds to transform into a Cougar ploddingly. While in The Gathering, the first novel of the trilogy, Maya had symptoms of transmogrification, such as dreams, visions and Cougar encounters in Vancouver Island, in The Calling, Maya realized that she will shape-shift soon. Earlier, her friend Rafe had elucidated on the indications of shape-shifting. Since, he and his sister Annie had identical symptoms, he could explicate on it. Even though Maya was afraid of shape-shifting into a cougar as she wants to achieve her dreams as a human, her adventure in wilderness has prepared her for her physical metamorphosis. Moreover, her encounters with cougars, her discussions with Rafe on shape-shifting also prepared her at a slow pace. Eventually, there, in the forest itself, Maya had transformed into a Cougar in her sleep. Hence, Maya's life in the uninhabited forest groomed her abilities and enabled her to transform placidly.

Though cougar is a beautiful, wild animal, it is potentially dangerous. When the fugitives encountered a Cougar, Maya, having qualities of a Cougar, instruct her friends, "Step one, maintain eye contact. Step two, stand up. Never crouch around a cat-it makes you look like a prey" (Calling, 117). But when they escape from their enemies they encountered another cougar. Since, Maya feels one with the cougar, she explicates, "I knew something is bothering her...something was bothering me too. A black pit of anxiety swirled in my gut....I knew it wasn't my own anxiety I was feeling" (Calling, 96). Similarly, though people are scared of wild animals, Kelley Armstrong's characters accustomed to them and were not terrified at the sight of it. For example, Corey and his friends noticed a Cougar, he says, "I get cougars are dangerous Maya, but this one doesn't look that big" (Calling, 96). Hence, the author instructs us that nature or wilderness doesn't mean to destroy us.

Preservation of Nature

Canadians love to preserve their vast landscape secure. Atwood voices against exploitation and destruction of forests. Similarly, Kelley Armstrong, through the character Antone, in The Calling explicates her views on preserving forests attractively. When Moreno, in his utter distress, as they were unable to capture the teens, crushed his beer can and threw into the forest, Antone walked into forest and picked the can put it in the trash. He states, "Earth Mother be angry,...Send big thundercloud" (Calling, 203). Here, the author's demands Canadians to be responsible in preservation of its treasures.

Nature in British Literature

In modern context, nature offers solace for human beings who have been toiling due to urbanization, industrial revolution, barrenness and lack of spirituality. In fact, man and nature are reduced to commodity status which led to the deterioration of human beings. Hence, nature provides remedies and man must obey environmental obligations. In one of the oldest English folklores, "IN MERRY ENGLAND in the time of old... there lived within the green glades of Sherwood Forest, near Nottingham Town, a famous outlaw whose name was Robin Hood"(qtd. by Quin) as illustrated by Howard Pyle. According to Romantics, nature is sublime and pure source of delight. In fact, it is said that systematic conservation of nature began only after Wordsworth's writings on Lake District. The "Highest Priest of Nature" Wordsworth's vivid depiction of mountains, lakes, rivers and trees shows his unfathomable love for nature.

Wilderness in Fantasy

Wilderness is enchanting, mysterious and teeming with life. The dark Mirkwood forests have been home for scary mammoth spiders and Ents- a place full of giant living trees in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings makes one's flesh creep. Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Book, the luscious forests have been inspired by Pench National Park in Madhya Pradesh. The word 'jungle' originated from Hindi word 'Jangal' meaning 'forest' itself derived from Sanskrit word 'jangala' meaning 'wilderness'. 'The Hundred Acre Wood', the iconic British forests in A.A.Milne's Winnie-the-Pooh is the home to Winnie-the-Pooh and its friends Tiger, Piglets, Rabbit and other animals. Milne depicts the forest as an epitome of childhood's innocence where children can be themselves. Hence, it was loved by children as well as adults.

Role of Nature in Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets

One of the famous contemporary British fantasy writers, J.K. Rowling, in her Harry Potter and Chamber of secrets has portrayed wilderness as friendly, villainous as well as a creator of horror and terror. As Harry leads a miserable life with the Dudleys, Dobby, a house-elf visited him and cautioned him not to reconvey to Hogwarts since his life there is endangered. The letters sent by Hermione and Ron were prevented by Dobby, the house-elf. Since there is no reply letter from Harry, Ron and his brothers visited him and took Harry away from Privet Drive and Harry spent his remaining holidays exuberantly at Ron's house. Upon reopening of the school, they reached Paltform No.9 ¾, Harry and Ron couldn't cross the magically invisible barrier while others crossed. Apparently, Harry and Ron chose to travel by the flying car and it led them to detention. One day, the staff and students of Hogwarts castle were horrified when two students were petrified by the monster in the chamber. As Hermione was lobotomized, Harry, Ron along with Professor Lockhart, dark arts teacher, entered into the

chamber of secrets, to meet Tom Riddle, a younger version of Voldemort who enchanted Ginny Weasely via diary. Ultimately, Harry stabbed Basilisk, a giant snake with a sword which emerged from sorting hat sent by Dumbledore. He also devastated the diary by striking the poisonous fang of Basilisk in the middle of the diary. Dobby was freed from the clutches of Lucius Malfoy by Harry who made him throw Harry's socks to Dobby.

Nature as a companion

In The Epic of Gilgamesh, forest is delineated as a place of trial and survival. As Gilgamesh ventured into the forest and he had to face the threats of wilderness during his adventure where he gains wisdom. Hence, the protagonists in folk and fairy tales emerge from the forests much wiser and stronger. Evidently, wilderness is illustrated as a place for progression and transformation. As nature features prominently in fantasy fiction, it reflects the characters' mood - significantly a happier one.

Britain has wild places but not vast wildwoods like Canada. British writers celebrated nature and depicted the close proximity between man and nature. According to Greek Mythology, phoenix is an immortal bird which regenerates from the ashes of its predecessor cyclically. In Harry Potter and Chamber of Secrets, Hermione was petrified and Ginny Weasely was abducted by the monster into the secret chamber. In order to save his friend, Harry and Ron proceed to the chamber. When Basilisk appeared to murder Harry, Professor Dumbledore's Fawkes and sorting hat arrive to aid Harry to kill the monster. Since giant snake's look is fatal, Phoenix pierced its eyes and blood was oozing out from the snake's eyes, Harry stabbed the Giant on its head but the Snake's poisonous fangs stung Harry's arms. Eventually, Phoenix sat on his hand and puts its tears on the wound and the chamber became visible sluggishly. Since Phoenix's tears can heal the wounds instantly Harry almost had a rebirth. Apart from providing life-giving essentials like water, air and so on for our survival, it saves our life through birds like Fawkes.

Nature as a Perilous Realm

Human beings have been fascinated by horror elements since ages. Fantasy has become viable means to cope with terror in their real lives. Rowling has added gothic elements in her Harry Potter novels. Forbidden forest was a thick black wood full of beasts and supernatural elements lurking abaft the trees amidst dense fog. Evidently, Professor Dumbledore forbids his pupils to visit the forest and it was an unknown territory to many. Since, Hermione was unavailable, both Harry and Ron resolved to follow the spiders deep into the forest to know about the monster. As they enter into the Forbidden Forest, Harry and Ron were terrified for being carried away by giant creatures. Harry was horror-struck because the gigantic spiders were of the, "size of carthorses, eight eyed, eight-legged, black, hairy, and gigantic. The massive specimen that was carrying Harry made its way down the steep slope...clicking their pincers excitedly at the sight of its load...the spiders released him (Secrets, 291). They left them in front of Aragog, the giant spider, a friend of Hagrid.

Ostensibly, Harry and Ron couldn't get anything more about the beast in the castle. Hence, they preferred to quit the forest. Yet, Aragog says, "My sons and daughters do not harm Hagrid, on my command. But I cannot deny them fresh meat, when it wanders so willingly into our midst" (Secrets, 295). Both Harry and Ron bewildered by the spider's statement and stood frozen since it is a life threatening one. But, incidentally, Mr. Weasely's car thundered amidst the forest and took them outside of the forest.

After returning from the forest, Harry and Ron carefully ruminated over Aragog's utterance and finally, they decided to visit petrified Hermione. After getting consent from Madam Pomfrey, Harry and Ron enter into the hospital chamber. While looking at Hermione, Harry noticed Hermione had a tore page from library book. Harry, with great effort, snatched it from her frozen hand and it reads:

Of the many fearsome beasts and monsters that roam our land, there is none more curious or more deadly than the Basilisk, known also the king of serpents...Its method of killing are most wondrous, far aside from its deadly and venomous fangs, the Basilisk has murderous stare, and all who are fixed with the beam of its eye shall suffer instant death (Secrets, 306).

Ultimately, Harry came to know, it was Basilisk, the giant snake, is the monster residing at Hogwarts. When Harry and Ron entered into the secret chamber, Basilisk, an "enormous serpent, bright, poisonous green, thick as an oak trunk, had raised itself high in the air, and its great blunt head was weaving drunkenly between the pillars"(Secrets, 296). Upon Tom riddle's order, the gigantic snake thrashed Harry Potter who flew to the other side of the chamber. He closed his eyes, as he knows, whoever looks into the gigantic snake's eyes, it would be fatal for them. When the snake stretches itself to kill him, he jabbed the sword which he drew from the sorting hat, on snake's head. Yet, one of its poisonous fangs punctured his hands and slowly, he lost his consciousness. Eventually, he was alive with the aid from Fawkes. Usually, Phoenix symbolizes rebirth and Harry's loyalty to Dumbledore enables him to survive Basilik's poison.

Whomping Willow

Willow tree is a large tree and it always bends to accommodate itself to withstand adverse weather and strong, cold winds. In The Bible, Psalm 137 describes, "There on the willow trees, we hung up our harps".(qtd. by

Shore) Here, it serves for both loss and hope of Jews who were held captivity in Babylon and they remember their homeland with affection. Willow trees symbolize adaptability and it is also a symbol of fertility and new life. Hecate, the Greek goddess used the tree for wands while Orpheus accustomed willow woods as a talisman against villainies when undertook journey into the underworld. In British literature, it has inspired many writers from Shakespeare's Desdemona's "willow song" in Othello to J.K. Rowling's whomping willow in Harry Potter series. Hence willow tree is has been a symbol of loss, hope, wisdom and power.

As Dobby prevented Harry and Ron from boarding Hogwarts train, Ron and Harry travel via flying Ford Anglia. The car dropped Harry and Ron on a whomping Willow, a relentless defender located at Hogwarts grounds. Being a unique tree, it tries to destroy the flying car and in the process, it injures itself slightly. Professor Sprout, Herbology teacher mended its damages. In Harry Potter novels, whomping willow holds secrets to its comers. It also stands as a guard to a secret passage to shrieking shack at Hogsmede. Moreover, it destroys anything unlucky while trying to cross its roots. It also serves as an obstacle to Harry at times since it has beaten him and Ron furiously while they were in Ford Anglia. But, the willow can be stilled when pressure applied to a specific knot at its roots. Obviously, Forests and animals played a crucial role in Harry's evolution.

Sustentation of nature

'Man ... cannot be happy and strong until he ... lives with nature in the present, above time.' (qtd by Adabpal). An awareness of importance of nature to maintain the health and integrity of the human beings' lives and, in contrast, the devastation wrought by humanity are exemplified in Lyrical Ballads by Wordsworth's 'Lines written in early spring'. Amidst the depiction of horrific scenes, Rowling portrays Hagrid, the gamekeeper at Hogwarts, as saviour of nature. For Hagrid, the forbidden forest is like his rear garden. He loved wild creatures and grew them without others knowledge. Earlier, Hagrid was nurturing a giant creature which he named as Aragog. It was believed that, it killed Mourning Myrtle, hence, it was sent to the forest. As a result, Hagrid was expelled from Hogwarts. The giant spider, Aragog, was gratified for Hagrid for protecting him and helped him to grow as family. It informs that Hagrid has found him a wife, and now his family has grown. He is thankful for him throughout his life. Hence, Rowling portrays Hagrid as preserver of nature. Undoubtedly, Nature is everything to writers and they would be nothing without it since it gives them exalting moments.

CONCLUSION

In this world, people don't experience nature to be creative, healthier makes us engage with the world afresh. As John Muir puts it, "tired, nerve-shaken, over-civilized people" (Williams,11). But, Aristotle believed that walking in open space offers clarity of thought. As Wordsworth's love and reverence for nature is revealed here, "Come forth into the light of things, let nature be your teacher". The protagonists in C.S. Lewis's The Magician's Nephew are transferred to the mysterious wildwoods. In Tolkien's fiction, an expedition through the formidable woods is a compulsory element of the protagonist's quest. In modern fantasy fiction forests and trees serve to transport the readers to the other realms. In Chronicles of Narnia, the children step into Narnia through a wardrobe because the wood that was used to make the wardrobe was made of a magical apple tree. It's seeds were brought from Aslan's realm. In fact, fantasy fiction directs the reader's concentration towards man's awareness and kinship with nature.

Kelley Armstrong's The Calling illustrates how wilderness fortifies Maya for her transmogrification, the sustenance and protection it provides the fugitives. They spend three days in the wildwoods where they realize that they are the genetically modified subjects of Project Phoenix. They gain strength and endurance during their adventure which led them to go for an agreement with the Cabals in the third novel of The Darkness Rising Trilogy, J.K. Rowling, in her Harry Potter and Chamber of secrets presents nature as both threatening and bulwarking souls. Harry and Ron's adventures in Forbidden Forest have been horrific, yet, often, Harry's encounters at the forest have some connection with his perpetrator Voldemort. Somehow he manages to overcome his life threatening encounters. Hence, Rowling fuels warring emotions both marvels and horrors. The author expresses, "Harry liked about his own appearance was a very thin scar on his forehead that was shaped like a bolt of lightning' (Philosopher's Stone, 20) which explores his connection with nature. Consequently, Both Kelley Armstrong and J.K.Rowling depict their protagonists passional and physical power that emerges when they venture out of the wilderness. For example, the fight between Saruman and the Ants in Tolkien's The Lord of the Rings is forewarning of what may happen in future if human beings forgets his duty to nature. He also cautions humans if they fail to perform their duty as stewards of nature, they will fall as victims of their own progress. Since, fantasy fiction preaches us to admire trees and forests, to admire and appreciate them and also have an apprehension towards them. Trees offer us fruits, shade, shelter and kindle our imagination. Apparently, our interaction with nature is diminishing and depauperate comprehension is alarming. Hence people must reconceive their kinship with nature or else they catalyze an irreparable detriment to our Mother Earth. Quintessentially, people feel restored, healthier and become more creative when they experience natural environment.

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