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‘Children of the Night’: An Ecofeminist Evaluation of the Scary

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Abstract:

Francoise d’Eaubonne in 1974 advocates the incorporation of voices against racism, classism and environmental destruction into the already existing feminism – the voice against male chauvinism – to create a new approach to criticize the interrelated oppressions against the weaker sex, the weaker race, the weaker class or the nature in the patriarchal society. Francoise d’Eaubonne thinks that the Western patriarchal society has always promoted certain binaries which reveal the spirit of domination and subjugation. Mind is superior to body; spirit is thought to be superior to matter; male is superior to female; and culture is superior to nature. On the basis of these binaries the four inter-locking pillars called sexism, racism, classism and environmental destruction are erected. In a binary relationship between culture and nature, culture has always asserted its supremacy over nature and presented this assertion as the acceptable paradigm. This conflict often involves the depiction of nature and her agents in a sinister way generating fear and affecting alienation. An analysis of the ‘fearful’ characters or agents of nature from some celebrated texts would reveal that the fear they generate is in fact their language of protest against multidimensional and coordinated oppressions of which the destruction of nature is an obvious part.

Keywords: Acteur; Actant; Ecofeminism; Zoomorphism; Vampire; Aryans; Wicca; Ogre

Shrek, the computer-animated fantasy film, was released by Dreamwork in 2001. Its overwhelming popularity occasioned the release of three more sequels to it in the following years. The key to its success can be ascribed to its defining the evil in an absorbing way to the extent of turning an ogre into a hero, loved by children all over the world and challenging the age-old paradigm wherein ogres are conceived to be slaughtered by suave, city-dwelling princes who would, with their bravery, win the heart of equally sophisticated and desirably fair-skinned princesses. The evil has ever been associated with questioning the tenets of religion or the conventions of the society which again are aspects that are occasioned, guided and tempered by religious dogmas and doctrines. The ‘good’, on one hand are that part of the social machinery for instructions which are made to collide with the evil and bring out the use of ‘goodness’. The contrast reveals ‘the good’ as a beautiful bird in a golden cage, both safe and infinitely restricted. The evil, on the other hand stands for freedom and the assertion of the self. Milton’s Satan or

Marlowe's Dr. Faustus with their obvious association with the evil, has lived without the territory of religion and has questioned many religious aspects including divine absolutism. Dr. Faustus does not 'live happily ever after' and cries at the end

“Ah, half the hour is past! 'twill be past anon.
Oh God,
If thou wilt not have mercy on my soul,
Yet for Christ's sake, whose blood has ransom'd me,
Impose some end to my incessant pain.
Let Faustus live in hell a thousand years,
A hundred thousand, and at last be sav'd!” (Act V, Scene III, Lines 98-103)

But his colourful, active and supposedly sin-hoarding phase of twenty four years in proximity to the Devil's accomplice is fraught with the spirit of exploration. Most importantly, it is in fact his independent phase of life.

Shrek, the ogre and his ogress-wife, Fiona, by the virtue of being conceived more than four hundred years after Doctor Faustus at a more lenient and rational time, do 'live happily ever after'. And in doing so they defy two important things of the prevalent paradigm of fairytales, namely the choice of form and the choice of fate, though 'form' does not stand exclusively outside the province of 'fate. At the end of Shrek 2 we find both Shrek and Fiona relinquish the opportunity of transformation which would have flawlessly conformed to the paradigm of traditional fairytales, and choose to remain an ogre and an ogress and return to their swamp in the forest. This film deviates from a standardized fairytale in the protagonists not belonging to 'culture' and belonging to 'nature'. Their complexion has been befittingly chosen to be green which is quite often related to monstrosity. In literatures, especially old and of the fairytale type, 'the evil' has rather paradigmatically been found to be in such an intrinsic relationship with nature that any encounter of 'the palace-dwellers' with nature is almost always foregrounded with a conflict between the good and the evil, facilitating mythmaking with overt or concealed didacticism. In a poster, "Educational Role of Supernatural Characters in Arthurian Romance" at John Wesley Powell Student Research Conference, April, 1996 Peter J. Yagecic and Dan Terkla in a different context hint at how the supernatural has been used in literature to restrict and teach:

Not only do they serve to educate the reader as to the author's intended moral, but the supernatural element tends to have a profound effect on the story's "normal" characters as well. In order for the hero of any given medieval romance tale to emerge victorious, he must find some kind of enlightenment along the way. More often than not, this revelation is made possible only through an encounter with a supernatural character (n.p.).

In a slightly different context, while explaining the usefulness of horror in retaining the conviction of people in religion H.Newman in his *Lectures on the Present Condition of Catholics*

in England observes that Catholicism must have “a cornucopia of mummery, blasphemy and licentiousness — of knives and ropes, and faggots; and fetters, and pulleys and racks, — if the Protestant tradition is to be kept alive in the hearts of the population” (141).

But the existence of the supernatural in literature is not a merely a placid one like that of some prudently constructed scary ploy to force people into obedience to religion or society in general, however seminal they might have been in doing so. The diabolical is an encoded version of challenges to values, once held absolutely sublime and confronted later on. With this shift in our attitude to those values the supernatural — creatures like ogres, demons, werewolves, vampires with all their monstrosities are most likely to appear much less monstrous entailing different interpretations altogether of their functions. In *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan refers to Greimas’s concept of ‘acteur’ and ‘actant’:

In fact, he distinguishes between ‘acteur’ and ‘actant’, but both are conceived of as accomplishing or submitting to an act and both can include not only human beings (i.e. ‘characters’) but also inanimate objects (e.g. a magic ring) and abstract concepts (e.g. destiny). The difference between the two is that *actants* are general categories underlying all narratives (and not only narratives) while *acteurs* are invested with specific qualities in different narratives. Thus, *acteurs* are numerous, whereas the number of *actants* is reduced to six in Greimas’s model (36-7).

These ‘actants’ are ‘senders’, ‘objects’, ‘receivers’, ‘helpers’, ‘subjects’ and ‘opponents’. Supernatural participants in stories of princes and princesses have invariably played ‘opponents’, seldom they have been ‘senders’ or ‘helpers’, but never ever ‘subjects’. That is why fairytales are mostly about giant-killings and epics too abound in such examples. Moreover, as ‘senders’ or ‘helpers’ they have ceased to be horrible. Rather they have been all so assuring for ‘subjects’. For example, Hidimba (‘the sender’ and ‘the helper’) and Ghatotkach (the object) of *The Mahabharata* are corroborative of an interesting racial amalgamation where Hidimba, the ogress, in spite of sharing nuptial bond with one of the Aryan protagonists (Bheem) and Ghatotkach, Hidimba’s son, having at last to take part in an otherwise Aryan feud and to die for another Aryan’s (Arjun) cause, have never come out of the forest and have remained mostly unheard of. The story of Hidimba and her son is evidently one of sacrifice. The hostile treatment to the epic giants or ogres, especially the way they have been depicted as playing the fiddler, contravening subtly or brutally the codes of living, the society of the ‘subject’ recommends for practice, may usher us into a discussion on racial discrimination, or on centre-periphery relationship, or on urban-sylvan interaction. In the ‘Adiparva’ of Kaliprasanna Singha’s Bengali translation of Vedavyas’s *The Mahabharata* one can find that the union of Hidimba and Bheem is rather soaked in pathos where racism gets the better of the seductive charms of Hidimba and it is only after a very logical solicitation from Hidimba that Yudhishtir allows her to be united with his brother under the non-negotiable clause that she would never fail to return Bheem to them before the darkness descends. Bheem too gives out the dilemma of an invading superior race with an

eagerness to proliferate contradicting the fear of contamination. Bheem says that he would stay with her until she is pregnant with his child (1: 285-86). This child, Ghatotkach afterwards was sacrificed for the heroes' cause.

But this attitude to nature, considering the forest dwellers to be an integral part of it, is not even condescending, but humiliating. The convergence of the urban and the sylvan was either for diversion through hunting which while causing destruction to the latter, would fill representatives of the former with the sense of superiority of culture over nature, or for punishment through exile which again would imply that some people are being deprived of amenities and sophistication they, supposedly, no longer deserved.

In *The Ramayana*, however, the implication of subjugation of nature to culture is integral to the central theme where the obvious adversaries in the epic, the rakshashas were not the sort of sentinels that Mother-Nature could rely on and therefore can be left out of the purview of this discussion. They were definitely urban and possibly more urban than Sri Rama and his relations. For our present purpose rather than the bellicosity that Rama and Ravana shared between themselves, it is their possessiveness over Sita that epitomizes an essentially urban contest over natural resources. The story of Sita's origin and the description of the termination of her life are suggestive of her autochthonous entity. One can interpret her as a code — the code for Mother-Nature who as a concept is always held high, but once stripped of her metaphorical reverence, is contested for and consequently, destroyed in the process.

Francoise d'Eaubonne, the French feminist in 1974 coined the term, 'ecofeminism' observing the binaries that are innate in the Western philosophy. Two ideas in every binary involve a relationship of domination and subjugation. Mind, spirit, male and culture are held superior to body, matter, female and nature respectively. This article seeks to deal with the nature-culture binary where man, while exerting himself through activities, unknowingly jeopardizes the equilibrium of nature. Now man's ruthless indifference to nature at times may get too difficult to be curved out of his interlocked and assorted patriarchal causticities of sexism, racism, classism, sectarianism and environmental destruction of which ecofeminism is a critique. Ecofeminism, with all its ramifications, interprets all oppressions as interconnected and emanating from the motive of exploiting nature and women. According to Theodore Roszak no political movement "has achieved the astonishing range of feminism...the movement has generously grown to embrace issues of race, poverty, sexual preference, child abuse, war, the Third World, religion, endangered cultures, endangered species, the global environment" (238). But as the article intends to focus primarily on nature's retaliation against culture, the rest of the dimensions would be cursorily alluded to on occasions merely as its coordinates. There will be an emphasis on the affinity that supernatural creatures like vampires, werewolves, ogres, giants etc. share with nature and that too as agents of nature in a struggle between nature and culture. Such creatures in classical literature who were evidently a literary version of indigenous peoples

or ‘the others’ were conceived to encode the fear of extinction which found expressions through scriptural caveats, meant to sustain in the society the spirit of difference and tenets regarding internal purity. Consequently sexism, racism, classism and, as an equivalent of keeping the indigenous people in leash, environmental destruction emerged in an impeccable correlation to be generally held virtues for many following centuries until time would formulate new perceptions with which the evil of days of yore would appear criticizing old tenets that now appeared as devices for oppression.

So Nature requires a defense mechanism of fear, of thwarting resilience to foil invasive and oppressive growth of culture. The monsters somehow are seminal in generating that fear.

In *The Mahabharata* itself the retaliation is hinted at. In ‘The Vanaparva’ there is an instance of an essentially Aryan god Agni’s incongruously frivolous desire for animal-flesh culminating in the destruction of Nature which generated a severe repercussion. It was Brahma’s prescription for Agni:

The Khandav Forest, a part of the territory of the giants, which was earlier gutted by the gods, giants’ enemies, is a home to a large variety of animals. You feed on their flesh and fat, be satiated and revived (Singha 1: 380).

An apparent demonstration of valour and power of archery of an Aryan hero was immediately rewarded by a fundamentally Aryan god. But the onslaught on the natural world begot his enemy from among the denizens of the forest who precariously outlived the conflagration. One of the creatures was Moy, a giant who was spared and, in return of this benevolence from the Aryan hero, asked to apply his skills in architecture to build a nonpareil palace for them. This giant having so dearly to pay with his servitude for his natural right surely brings the prospect of a discussion on racism interlocked with ‘classism’. But what Ashwasen, the serpent, another surviving inmate of the forest, did is what conforms to our present purpose. Ashwasen had lost his mother in the man-made forest-fire (Singha 1: 383-84). In ‘The Karnaparva’ he tried to avenge himself through finding a place in the quiver of Karna as an extra-ordinary arrow during a confrontation between Karna and Arjun which could be potentially decisive for the Armageddon at Kurukshetra had Sri Krishna not buried Arjun’s chariot partially to make the warrior’s crown be struck by that arrow (Singha 2: 1279-81). Thus Ashwasen seeking to avenge his mother’s death is fraught with dual significance. Firstly, on a fabulously didactic level, Ashwasen, bestowed with an all too human emotion about the primary human bondage between a mother and a son, glorifies blood-relationship and even in his vengeance imparts a lesson of filial duty. And secondly, on a level more abstract, it encodes the antagonism, innate in culture-nature relationship. In that episode snakes have been associated with the diabolical by being juxtaposed with other supernatural beings. But it implies a coming together of subdued races, presented as supernatural creatures, and even endangered species in a bid to protect the forest where they belonged and in doing so they showed themselves to be in a

homogenous and inseparable relationship with nature despite having to endure the wrath of a hero and a god from a superior race. :

Thus in his fit of destroying numerous Pishachas [revenants], Sarpas [snakes] and Rakshashas [ogres] omnipresent Basudev’s appearance became horrifying (Singha 1: 386).

Battle-hungry Yakshas, Rakshasha [ogres], Pannagas, Gandharbas, Asuras [giants] emerged shouting war-cries. Arjun severed with his sharp arrows the heads of those blood-thirsty, furious lots (Singha 1: 384).

There are occasions in *The Ramayana* too where confrontations between the incarnation of God and subhuman beings virtually are, for the ‘cultured’ hero, opportunities for exemplifying his superhuman prowess, an attribute absolutely necessary for assertion of their divinity or their apotheosis in the eye of their followers. It also prepares for the supernatural villains, occasions to die with ‘natural’ belligerence. Two such occasions are depicted in Book Three, Canto LXX where Lakshmana’s mutilating Ayomukhi, the giantess is followed by Rama and Lakshmana being assaulted by Kabandha. In Ralph T.G.Griffith’s translation of Valmiki’s *The Ramayana* the very description of Lakshmana’s treatment of Ayomukhi suggests an amalgamation of a version of sadistic misogyny which may have something to do with his sense of deprivation (let us remember that he repeats the same treatment as if compulsively for Shurpanakha), and bitterness against a creature who is a giantess by race and of a disparate social standing. Hence, in the eye of one from a superior race, Ayomukhi was the inappropriate owner of seductive charms:

“Behold thy treasure fond and fair:
Ayomukhi the name I bear.
In thickets of each lofty hill,
On islets of each brook and rill,
With me delighted shalt thou play,
And live for many a lengthened day.”
Enraged he heard the monster woo;
His ready sword he swiftly drew,
And the sharp steel that quelled his foes
Cut through her breast and ear and nose (1104).

Metaphorically enough, Ayomukhi reveals her natural treasure as a lover’s tribute to Lakshmana to allure him into a fusion of races and also a juxtaposition of nature and culture. But Lakshmana’s treatment of her manifests the disdain, irrevocably embedded in our perception of the civil as superior and as an antithesis to the ‘natural’.

In a different context in her article entitled ‘Evidences for Witchcraft in Anglo-Saxon England’, while commenting on a sermon on auguries by Aelfric, Jane Crawford hints at the presence of

fear and doubt in perception which conditioned general attitude to heathen women with exceptional knowledge of the natural world. It is obvious that this caustic attitude of religions like Christianity to what Crawford calls 'elemental heathenism' represented through women was not an uncommon characteristic of ancient cultures:

Aelfric, in a sermon on auguries, also mentions love philters among the practices of witches. As in certain passages of this sermon his use of the word *wicca* is demonstrably feminine, we can for the first time be sure that here the materials relate to women. The homilist explains the powers claimed by these women and details many of their traits. They are revealed as disciples of an elemental heathenism, teaching the worship of stones, trees and wells; they are possessed of occult knowledge which, though it may be true, is dangerous because it comes from the devil (111).

So there is no wonder that Kabandha who shares with Ayomukhi the same racial and environmental standing conveys, with his form resembling a tree-trunk, his affinity with the sylvan and his impulsive skepticism about the intention of Aryan intruders in the shapes of Rama and Lakshmana. His animosity is nature's retaliation, mythically encoded:

There stood before their wondering eyes
 A fiend broad-chested, huge of size.
 A vast misshapen trunk they saw
 In height surpassing nature's law.
 It stood before them dire and dread
 Without a neck, without a head (1105).

...

A monstrous shape without a head
 With mighty arms before him spread,
 They saw that hideous trunk appear
 That struck the trembling eye with fear.
 Then, stretching to their full extent
 His awful arms with fingers bent,
 Round Raghu's princely sons he cast
 Each grasping limb and held them fast (1106).

Zoomorphic gods and goddesses are found in the mythology of all ancient pagan cultures. Some of them generate mortal fear, some of them, the sense of the eerie, but all of them invariably command respect for nature. The Egyptian mythology teems with such zoomorphic deities of whom Sekhmet is by far the most diabolical, as one finds her in the Destruction myth:

The world and man having been created, the gods then proliferated.... Man had become too full of himself and was ignoring the gods and not making the proper offerings to them.... It was agreed that the goddess Sekhmet, a lion-headed goddess who represented the power of the sun at midday and hence was the personification of evil, being able to

kill man, would be sent down to earth. There she began an indiscriminate slaughter, delighting in the taste of blood (Cotterell 46).

The nature of 'vice' that causes the Egyptian pantheon to unleash Sekhmet as a curse on humanity, is significantly related to the well-being of nature, apart from moral considerations. After all, being indifferent to zoomorphic deities, however fierce they may appear is analogous to being careless of the ecosystem. The pantheon, therefore, recommends respect for Sobek who is incarnated in the terror of the Nile:

The crocodile god was represented either as the reptile itself or as a man with the head of a crocodile. Sobek was worshipped in the Faiyum and at the temple of Kom Ombo. Sobek was associated with the might of the Pharaoh, and in the form of Sobek-Re he was worshipped as a manifestation of the Solar Deity (Oakes 295).

Even Anubis, sinister-looking due to his connection with death, though deprived of large temples dedicated to him, is regarded indispensable for the progress of the soul:

Anubis, the Jackal-headed god, was a god of the dead and especially of embalming. He performed this service on the dead god Osiris. His Egyptian name was Inpu and also Wepwawet, which means 'Opener of the Ways', as he was believed to lead the souls of the dead into the west to the Hall of Judgement....Although a major god in the cult of the dead, Anubis had no large temple dedicated to him, unlike many of the other gods and goddesses (Cotterell 53).

In Greek mythology the goat-like god Pan is known for generating fear of a special type – 'panic', categorized after his name:

Pan is the Greek god of Shepherds and of flocks, for whose fertility he is responsible. Native to Arcadia, where he was born on Mount Lycaeus, he has a human torso and arms but legs, ears and horns of a goat....a late story tells how he invented the musical pipe of seven reeds....Generally he loves mountains, caves and lonely places; he was reputed to be the cause of sudden groundless fear, 'panic', especially that which may be felt in such remote surroundings... (Howatson 392).

Though a god, Pan's attribute of forbidding intruders with 'panic' is akin to that of Kabandha causing mortal fear and after all contributes to the protection of nature. But this fear-factor along with his presiding over fertility – an attribute, if unduly intensified, would come close to voluptuousness, somehow have caused him to be identified with Christian representation of the Devil. Even in one of the very popular poems by John Donne, 'Go and Catch a Falling Star' it is evident that the goat-god's association with the Devil is firmly rooted in popular Christian psyche. The pertinent line is "Or who cleft the devil's foot".

The usurpation of Paganism by Christianity subjected some animals to religious disdain. Certain creatures gradually incurred much abomination on themselves. In Chapter XVII of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* Abraham Van Helsing, the vampire-slayer, while delivering a longish speech to his party warning them against Dracula and his allies, specifies the power of the monster and stigmatizes certain animals:

... he can within his range, direct the elements, the storm, the fog, the thunder, he can command all the meaner things, the rat, and the owl, and the bat, the moth, and the fox, and the wolf ...(183).

A few pages later a blood curdling incident substantiates the theory of Van Helsing:

We all followed his movements with our eyes, for undoubtedly some nervousness was growing on us, and we saw a whole mass of phosphorescence, which twinkled like stars. We all instinctively drew back. The whole place was becoming alive with rats (194).

This part of Jonathan Harker's *Journal* firmly establishes an affinity of the Count with some animals of doubtful repute as does an earlier part of his journal where he quotes the Count as saying, referring to the howling of wolves, "Listen to them, the children of the night. What music they make!"(18). This very utterance of the Count explains his standing considerably as being on an antithetical ground to that of culture. However cruel he may be intended to appear, the contexts of the Industrial Revolution and merciless decimation of the wolf-population by explorers in Europe and America cast a different sort of light on the Count. With a bit of knowledge from the reader's side the Count can effectively counter his much publicized notoriety with an image of an environmental and animal-right activist who would adopt extreme measures for his cause. The advancement of culture has destroyed the balance of nature in more than one way. It has jeopardized both the temporal balance and the spatial balance through invading into the hours of darkness with light and activities and the domain of the wild with the longing to occupy and flourish, respectively. In *Dracula's* 'children of the night' both the 'mother' and her 'children' have suffered as civilization has encroached on their territory.

But vampires like *Dracula* uphold the spirit of protest in more than one sense. From Phillip David's *The Wheel Broken at the Cistern: The Divergence of Orthodox Christianity from Gnosticism* one can know what the sectarian struggle was like in the earliest centuries of Christianity:

It was sectarian animosity rather than ignorance that drove popular misconception, as numerous propagandistic screeds written to discredit the Gnostics and other early Christian groups came to be regarded as truth. Penned by the early Church Fathers—the men who first codified orthodoxy—books like Irenaeus's five-volume *Against Heresies* characterized Gnosticism as the refuge of perverts; of insane, depraved, life-hating freaks who held orgies, practiced promiscuity and homosexuality, aborted and devoured fetuses, and refused to bear children (David n.pag).

By discrediting the morals of Gnostics, early theologians convinced their followers that the Gnostics' teachings were absurd and misguided. Most of these features can be associated with vampire-characters. In *Dracula* in the chapter entitled 'Jonathan Harker's Journal Continued' the three succubae along with Dracula himself demonstrate some of the specifications of the Gnostics, pointed out by Irenaeus:

The other added, "He is young and strong. There are kisses for us all....Then the Count turned, after looking at my face attentively, and said in a soft whisper, "Yes, I too can love. You yourselves can tell it from the past. Is it not so? Well now I promise you that when I am done with him, you shall kiss him at your will..."

"Are we to have nothing tonight?" said one of them, with a low laugh, as she pointed to the bag which he had thrown upon the floor.... If my ears did not deceive me there was a gasp and low wail as of a half smothered child (31-2).

The Gnostic connection of vampires is confirmed as in the novel Abraham Van Helsing provides us with a rather inclusive list of nations and cultures believed to be the dominions of vampires:

For, let me tell you, he (Dracula) is known everywhere that men have been. In old Greece, in old Rome, he flourishes in Germany all over, in France, in India, even in Chermosese, and in China, so far from us in all ways, there even is he, and peoples for him at this day. He has followed the wake of the berserker Icelander, the devil-begotten Hun, the Slav, the Saxon, the Magyar (184).

This inclusiveness appears to be an echo of the idea of universality as once propounded by Manicheanism, a Gnostic sub sect. This unifying spirit of Manicheanism, as one finds it in Encyclopaedia Britannica, can be conjectured to have been encoded in the cross cultural, cross religious existence of vampires:

Mani sought to found a truly ecumenical and universal religion that would integrate into itself all the partial truths of previous revelations, especially those of Zoroaster, Buddha, and Jesus. However, beyond mere syncretism, it sought the proclamation of a truth that could be translated into diverse forms in accordance with the different cultures into which it spread. Thus, Manichaeism, depending on the context, resembles Iranian and Indian religions, Christianity, Buddhism, and Taoism (n.pag.).

The association of Vampirism with such inclusiveness of Gnosticism may serve as a prelude to our understanding of how albeit emanating a general ambience of horror, vampires, on a strong religious theoretical ground have striven to counter differentia like race or sex and, most importantly, protect the wild notwithstanding Christianity having treated a part of them with prejudice. Manichean ethics makes it very clear to all its followers that "they have to keep away completely from consuming meat and wine, from lying and hypocrisy, and from damaging nature by work.... Ill treatment of animals, damage of plants, pollution of water, all involve the "tormenting" of the light enclosed therein and are sacrilege" (Rudolph 340). In Bram Stoker's

Dracula the image of the vampire is a reminder of that of the Anti-Christ as a critique of Christian classification of the good and the evil. Again, the Count has been shown to wield power over nature. He can unleash a gale not only to draw a contrast with Christ abating a tempest. But he intends to take the war to the then throne of culture and power, London. He wants to baffle the Londoners with his power over the elements, his wildness and his Transylvanian wilderness. The approach of the ship, *Demeter*, is accompanied by “one of the greatest and suddenest storms on record” (69) invoked by Count Dracula to vex the city of London. Then Christ-lamb analogy is challenged by the Count Metamorphosing himself into “an immense dog” (70). The Count’s affinity with the ferocious wolf as reported by the zoo-keeper and recorded in Lucy Westenra’s Diary, is seemingly a pictorial counterpart of Christ caressing an innocent lamb:

“There was Bersicker (the wolf) a-tearing like a mad thing at the bars as if he wanted to get out. There wasn’t much people about the day, and close at hand was only one man That there man came over, and blessed but if he didn’t put in his hand and stroke the old wolf’s ears too” 112-113).

In the novel this attitude of the Count would criticize Quincey Morris’s comment, “the Count comes from a wolf country.... I propose that we add Winchester to our armament” (257).

In the chapter entitled, ‘Dr. Seward’s Phonograph Diary’ *Dracula* assumes a stature similar to that of Christ. He can initiate others into his doctrine. In Dr. Seward’s words “the Count had his own purposes when he gave her what Van Helsing called ‘the Vampire’s Baptism of blood” (256). And the reason behind his choosing Mina is the eternal ploy of invaders of invading wombs for a sustained impact. *Dracula* himself clarifies it by saying “Your girls that you all love are mine already. And through them you and others shall yet be mine....” (234). Interestingly enough, the Count chooses women to be his apostles for proliferation of his believers; he represents a race, distant from the major European races geographically and otherwise; and he intends to redeem infamous creatures and wilderness. The Count came to England with the purpose of introducing his tenets ratified through ‘the Vampire’s Baptism of blood” (256). He held Mina in his spell and wanted the ‘cultured’ Londoners to listen to his sermons they were alien to:

When she did speak, her words were enigmatical. “Something is going out. I can feel it pass me like a cold wind. I can hear, far off, confused sounds, as of men talking in strange tongues, fierce falling water, and the howling of wolves.” She stopped and a shudder ran through her, increasing in intensity for a few seconds, till at the end, she shook as though in a palsy (273).

While tracing the evolution of vampires Dr. Bob Curan observes that in ancient Celtic stories there are instances where the dead leave their tombs and attack the living (25). But the horror these ‘Celtic’ creatures might be expected to generate is, more or less a gross mortal fear and

definitely not the variety of fear that also involves a subtle and yet thorough overwhelming of one's entity. Such fear is generated by vampires like Count Dracula. The Celtic tradition merging with the East-European vampire tradition more prominently brings into consideration aspects like the inclusiveness of Gnosticism, chemistry of Protestantism with Catholicism, racism, and of course the difference between the industrialized Europe and the Europe with uncontaminated abundance of Nature. These dimensions have made vampires an emblem of protest at multiple levels as it appears conspicuously in the nineteenth century English Vampire Fiction.

In a rather modern and consequently convincing context this theme of scary embodiments of hostile forces of nature emerging to challenge 'culture' and its concomitant depravities has been suggested without the apparent mythical incongruity of shape-shifting or animals talking or miraculous and yet usual fruition of curses or prayers. This has been done through the depiction of two man-eating lions in J.H.Patterson's *Man-eaters of Tsavo* from his *Man-eaters of Tsavo and Other East African Adventures*. The cinematic potential of the book explains why the film *The Ghost and the Darkness*, based on the story, should be so successful. Although at certain points the film deviates from Patterson's story, the deviations have not compromised with the author's intention to implicitly horrify readers with the implication of danger lurking in every human act of manipulating nature. The book and the film, therefore, can be discussed complementarily. The film, without meddling with the semantics of the text, merely relieves its viewers of the onus of imagining the horror and at certain points rather complements the original story by making Samuel, the narrator in the film, speak with the perception of a native negro, facilitating reflections on the aspect of racism, an aspect almost inseparable from environmental destruction which in the story is presented through the proposition — building a railway-bridge over River Tsavo. In the Preface to his book Colonel Patterson makes the prospect of conflict between nature and culture evident:

The railway, which has modernized the aspect of the place and brought civilization in its train, was then only in process of construction, and the country through which it was being built was still in its primitive savage state, as indeed, away from the railway, it still is (Patterson n.pag).

Civilization thus invading savageness, in all probabilities, was not without the agenda of exploring possibilities of expanding British trade by dint of exploitation of natural resources of Africa. At this point the lions appear to thwart this 'invasion'. The Chapter VI, entitled 'The Reign of Terror' depicts how the lions force the bridge-builder's men into their camps:

Once they reached the vicinity of the camps, the roars completely ceased, and we knew that they were stalking for their prey. Shouts would then pass from camp to camp, "Khabardar, bhaieon, shaitan ata" ("Beware, brothers, the devil is coming"). (Patterson n.pag.).

This lion-devil analogy is presented in more concrete terms in Chapter VIII entitled 'The Death of the First Man-eater' implying firstly how myths are generally born out of fear, and secondly how the supernatural, presented supposedly in form of the lions, in disapproval of human enterprises that are detrimental to nature's sustenance, intervenes most frighteningly:

Seriously, however, my continued ill-luck was most exasperating; and the result was that the Indians were more than ever confirmed in their belief that the lions were really evil spirits, proof against mortal weapons (Patterson n.pag.).

At this point man-nature encounter in Patterson's book paradigmatically resembles the burning of the Khandava Forest that is delineated in *The Mahabharata*. Khandava too was sought to be protected by supernatural creatures. But they failed as have the lions. Mighty adversaries have ever been useful in constructing greater heroes through providing them with opportunities to eliminate threats to culture or civilization. Colonel Patterson was hailed by all in Chapter IX, entitled 'The Death of the Second Man-eater':

The news of the death of the second "devil" soon spread far and wide over the country, and natives actually travelled from up and down the line to have a look at my trophies and at the "devil-killer", as they called me (Patterson n.pag.).

Here the ending of the movie, *The Ghost and the Darkness*, may be considered as a complementary version for the book, pontificating a century later, at a time of growing consciousness regarding maintaining nature's equilibrium, the obvious backlash from nature for all exploitations that nature could be subjected to. Most befittingly, the concluding, almost choric and seemingly warning words come from Samuel, the Negro supervisor of the project:

Patterson did hold his son high. People came back. Patterson finished the bridge. People went their way. If you want to see the lions today, you must go to America. They are at the Field Museum in Chicago, Illinois. Even now you dare lock eyes with them, you will be afraid.

Samuel contains two entities – the entity of an ally to a European bridge-builder, contributing tortuously to the exploitation of nature, and that of a dweller in proximity of the wild who, as a denizen of the East African wilderness, is aware of nature's power and knows to respect it. So, interestingly enough, the tone of his narration is forked into those of casualness and solemnity, even of warning. While 'the completion of the bridge' part exudes a flavor of culture's triumph, the 'lion' part of his narration endows the two lions with a 'life in death' – a scary immortality, a devilish attribute that the exasperated Masai hunters had associated with them long before they were killed and stuffed. The movie poignantly ends with sustaining this horror with an implication of its possible resurgence through these words from Samuel and also through a fleeting glimpse of the same grassland with which it all began, suggestively encoding nature's horrors in the vast forbidding expanse of grassland, auburn and dense, swaying as if timelessly in complete assertion.

Thus a close look at the fearful characters or agents in these literary texts would reveal to the reader their nuanced significance. The obvious implication of them being as fearful as they have been portrayed is nature's resilience against the onslaught of culture. But this fierce resilience is fused with voices of protest against some of the other sorts of oppression as well. In texts like *Man-eaters of Tsavo* this stance of the evil as the sentinel of nature has evolved into a criticism of colonial greed and exploitation. In *The Ramayana* and *The Mahabharata* racial discrimination has accounted for the decimation of non-Aryan people, unfavorably depicted as ogres or giants or revenants. In these epics the reader can see wronged female characters, depicted as ogresses, implying with their sufferings, the addition of another dimension of oppression to racism and environmental destruction – sexism. The humiliation, sufferings and negligence they are induced to by honored epical characters, practically condemn the dire sexist attitude of male chauvinistic heroes. In *Dracula*, however, the protest is complex and wholesome. Dracula stands by the 'children of the night' and guards the Transylvanian wilderness; induces Londoners to the fear of invasion by a distant race; builds himself as a counter-cult to mainstream Christianity and challenges sectarianism; and constructs the new woman who would ally herself with him and be liberated from the meddling Victorian modesty and be initiating others into vampirism, sniggering at and breaking through all patriarchal recommendations regarding the purity of their sex, class, race, sect and the sublimation of English culture.

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