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**A Postcolonial Tale of Nature: The Postcolonial Eco-Poetics of
Jack London's *The Call of the Wild***

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Abstract

This paper is an attempt to map out the politics of postcolonial eco-poetics and its application to Jack London's novella, *The Call of the Wild* (1903). As an interdisciplinary field, postcolonial eco-poetics emerges from the intersection of postcolonial literary theory with an ecological approach to colonialism and anthropocentrism. Both theories put all forms of domination, oppression, hierarchy, and marginalisation into question to subvert any type of authority or hegemony over the "Other", whether human or non-human. The emerging theory grasps the deep implication of ecology in postcolonial politics. As a critical theory, it is a way of reading and rereading literary texts to create a critical discourse that radically decentres the centre, subverts binary oppositions, and gives hegemony to the marginalized nature. Consequently, postcolonial eco-poetical discourse emerges as a reaction against the anthropocentric essentialist discourse with its exclusionary and hegemonic politics. Anthropocentrism is one of the central modes of oppressive representation that believes in human beings as the only and the fixed centre of the cosmos. Postcolonial eco-poetics, thus, establishes an ecological approach that challenges colonial

oppression and injustice and meanwhile struggles against environmental and animal abuse .The paper, thus, delineates four paradigms that characterise postcolonial eco-poetics: the mimic, the dialogic, the carnivalesque, and the nomadic. These four paradigms are fully discussed as constituents of the literary theory of postcolonial eco-poetics. This paper reads Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* (1903) as a manifestation of these paradigms. It, thus, suggests that the theoretical perspective of postcolonial eco-poetics promises to offer a new interpretative scope for rereading literary texts.

Keywords: Postcolonial eco-poetics, Jack London's *The Call of the Wild*, The Mimic, The Dialogic, The Carnivalesque, The Nomadic.

1. Introduction

For quite a long time, the literary theories of postcolonialism and eco-poetics have been at odds. The postcolonial literary theory has ignored ecological issues for many reasons. Most importantly, postcolonialism focuses on both political and social issues and meanwhile draws little attention to environment and wilderness. Moreover, the postcolonial focus is anthropocentric as it draws attention to the colonised man in the process of identity formation. The ecological inattention in the postcolonial literary theory leads some critics to delve into the rationale behind such elimination of environment and wilderness from the arena of postcolonial studies.

Rob Nixon sums up four main dichotomies between the dominant concerns of postcolonialists and ecocritics. According to Nixon, the four themes that postcolonial theorists have tended to foreground are hybridity, displacement, cosmopolitanism, and reimagining the marginalised past. Contrapuntally, ecocritics, have given priority to discourses of purity and virgin wilderness, the literature of space, national canons, and the pursuit of timeless, solitary moments of communion with nature (253). However, other critics investigate the possibility of finding a meeting point between these two theories. For Simon Estok, despite the many explanations for the slow integration of postcolonialism and ecocriticism, “there are many reasons why they should work in concert” (222). Moreover, Elizabeth DeLoughrey and George Handley argue for postcolonial ecologies that outline “a broader, more complex genealogy for thinking through our ecocritical futures and a turn to a more nuanced discourse about the

representation of alterity, a theorisation of difference” that both postcolonialists and environmental activists have long considered in terms of representations of nature, human and otherwise (9).

The proposed critical framework of postcolonial eco-poetics is an attempt to map out the crucial points of intersection that convey an understanding of literary representation of the environment through postcolonial paradigms. According to DeLoughrey and Handley, postcolonial ecocriticism is primarily conceived as a postcolonial response to the problematic meta-narrative of earlier ecocriticism. Moreover, it does not merely widen the lens to include the previously “overlooked geographical regions, historical experiences, cultural perspectives and concepts of race, class and gender”. Rather, DeLoughrey and Handley continue to assert, “Postcolonial ecocritics question the very notion of what constitutes ecological crises,” and the politics and power structures behind them (137). Therefore, there is a consensus among scholars and critics that there is a necessity to read eco-poetics through the lens of postcolonialism and *vice versa*.

Jack London has gained a worldwide reception and fame with the publication of his *The Call of the Wild* (1903). London’s *The Call of the Wild* is one of the classics that have enriched American literature with “a spellbinding animal story’, ‘a brilliant dramatisation of the laws of nature’. It was, indisputably, the best study ever of the ‘bestly manners of civilised men and the civilised manners of beasts’” (Kershaw 24, 26). The novel shows “what happens to men and beasts when they are thrust into ‘the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild’” (Lundquist 78). However, London’s fiction has yet to undergo re-evaluation concerning the ramifications of postcolonial eco-poetics.

This paper is an attempt to illuminate the main argument concerning the politics of post-colonial eco-poetic theory that London, whether intentionally or not, has adopted in his novel. Thus, the paper has two interwoven aims. First, it seeks to map out the politics of postcolonial eco-poetics. Second, it attempts to provide a deeper critical appreciation of London's *The Call of the Wild* in the light of the cultural theory of postcolonial eco-poetics.

2. Postcolonial Eco-poetic Theory

The emergence of eco-criticism since the 1990s has highlighted the issue of the human relation to nature in literary texts. Since then, there have been few studies that attempted to show the intersection between the ramifications of the postcolonial literary theory and eco-poetics. The critical viewpoint of postcolonial theory is adopted to show how it intersects with eco-criticism in maintaining that the binaries of the world justify various oppressions in western and anthropocentric culture. The domination of the coloniser over the colonised has the same affinities to that of man over the natural and physical world. Both types of domination are derived from the same essentialist logic with their exclusionary politics. Essentialism, Eurocentrism, and anthropocentrism distinguish non-European people and the natural world with its non-human inhabitants as the inferior other. In postcolonial theory, colonial essentialism refers to the categorisation of a group in terms of “one or several defining features exclusive to all members” of a specific group, category, or classes of objects whereas in cultural studies, it is the “assumption that individuals share an essential cultural identity” (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 77).

In the eco-critical theory, anthropocentric essentialism “demanded the repression of the animal and animalistic in all its latent and recrudescing forms” (Huggan and Tiffin 134). To subvert the colonial essentialist discourse, post-colonialism foregrounds “politics of opposition and struggle, and problematises the key relationship between centre and periphery” (Mishra and Hodge 399). In the same vein, eco-criticism subverts essentialist discourse of anthropocentrism by “breaking up closed world views and exclusionary truth-claims in favour of plural perspectives, multiple meanings, and dynamic interrelationships” between human and non-human subjects (Zapf 4). It is concerned “not only with the attitude to nature expressed by the author of the text, but also with its pattern of interrelatedness, both between the human and the nonhuman, and between the different parts of the non-human world” (Gifford 5). Eco-critical studies, thus, must always adapt and localise postcolonial theories to explore how they can be applied to ecological contexts. Postcolonial theories cannot remain stable and closed but are subject to endless reinterpretation and re-application. Ecological and environmental writings negotiate with “postcolonial concerns,” which validate the adaptation and appropriation of this theory and discourse to a new locality and context and redefine what postcolonialism can mean in ecological contexts. Hence, the paper delineates four paradigms that characterise postcolonial eco-poetics: the mimic, the dialogic, the carnivalesque, and the nomadic. These four paradigms will be fully discussed as constituents of the literary theory of postcolonial eco-poetics.

3. The Four Postcolonial Eco-poetic Paradigms

3.1. *The Mimic*

The first paradigm of postcolonial eco-poetics is the subversive intent of dismantling the boundaries and binaries through mimicry. In a word, postcolonial eco-poetics denounces

any tendency of hierarchal domination in which the first part of the binary system (whether culture, human, centre, master, or subject) tends to take privilege over the second (respectively, nature, non-human, periphery, slave, or object). The second part “is always framed within multiple discourses of unequal power” (O’Brien 35). Bhabha’s concept of mimicry is an issue that can be reapplied to ecological situations. By appropriating Bhabha’s theory of mimicry to eco-poetics, humans must secure their anthropocentric authority through denying and discriminating the animal “other”. However, mimicry provides the transformation of such discrimination and oppression. It also reveals the necessity of displacing the domination (Bhabha, *The Location* 159). Performing mimicry is not to erase the anthropocentric authority but to demonstrate the power with something different from its original presence (*The Location* 159). The strategy of mimicry helps the humans rationalise their discrimination toward the non-human identities and power. By defining animals with discriminatory identities, man can still situate in the position that regulates and escapes from the name of hegemonic oppressor.

Mimicry can be read in a postcolonial eco-poetic context. Postcolonial eco-poetic mimicry aims to define the animal “other” as “a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite.” It displays the differences between the human and the non-human through the operation of rejection (Bhabha, *The Location* 112). The non-human subject is encouraged by the anthropocentric discourse to ‘mimic’ man and to adopt his habits, assumptions, and values. This results in a ‘blurred copy’ of man that is quite threatening. Mimicry, according to Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, “is never very far from mockery, since it can appear to parody whatever it mimics” (*Key Concepts* 139). Mimicry, thus, is the mocking imitation, which on the surface appears like assimilation,

but underneath contains a threatening element of difference and rejection. The non-human subject does not want to be completely like man. Although appearing to replicate the original, mimicry replaces it with a parodic double that disrupts the anthropocentric sense of security and righteousness as an authority entitled to control the non-human animals. Mimicry dismisses humans as worthy of complete emulation and thus partially evades their dominance and control. This appropriated theory of postcolonial mimicry pertains directly to London's novella, *The Call of the Wild*.

In *The Call of the Wild*, the canine protagonist, Buck, employs this subversive strategy of mimicry in his attempt to “nobly cross the boundary between civilisation and the wilderness” (Kaplan 264). In essence, the plot develops around Buck, the hero dog, who continuously resists the call of the wild primitive instincts inside him to dissolve his connection to humanity. Eventually, he gives in to the call and returns after a series of events. One day, a gardener kidnapped Buck, selling him to an anonymous dog trader who took him to the north as a sled dog. The bad weather, the terrible Husky dogs, the fights, his dead friend, and many things made Buck sense and witness the imbalance of unequal and uneven power structures. These structures entail that Buck must seek some kind of gaming, manoeuvring, and displacement in his relationship with humans and other animals, dogs or wolves. By so doing, Buck manages to subvert the hierarchical power structure of anthropocentric discourse and to master his surroundings.

London skilfully interweaves the plot to show that “the ‘primitive’ as a site of either regeneration or degeneration can reflect critically upon the meaning of the civilised, which its boundary is meant to protect” (Kaplan 264). Moreover, the

subversion of the boundaries through mimicry and the displacement of hegemony and power forces continue from the very outset till the end of the novel. London delineates the displacement of the hierarchical power structures in many situations in the novel. London subverts the traditional power hierarchy of storytelling tradition. Traditionally, man was at the centre of traditional narrative and animals were only represented from an anthropocentric point of view since they cannot represent themselves. But, London, in this novel substitutes the canine and wolf characters for human ones in a manner that the animal characters can represent themselves and their voices can be heard. Moreover, throughout the novel, Buck faced a series of difficult challenges in his attempt to undermine power hierarchies in nature and culture as he “had been suddenly jerked from the heart of civilisation and flung into the heart of things primordial” (*The Call* 7). The contention, thus, is that London reverses the hierarchy of power structures as well as that of the narrative itself through the depiction of a dog as a mythical hero and through the reversal of the anthropocentric “civilising mission” into the mysterious call of the primitive wilderness.

3.2. *The Dialogic*

The second interrelated principle of Postcolonial eco-poetics is the dialogic paradigm developed and introduced by Mikhail Bakhtin. The dialogic paradigm seeks to unmask and unsettle dominant discourses in colonial and anthropocentric discourses. Bakhtin’s affiliation and appropriation to postcolonialism and eco-poetics have been recently acknowledged by scholars and critics. Bakhtin is cited to lend prestige and weight to the theoretical sphere of postcolonial eco-poetics as he “emphasises a space of enunciation where the

negotiation of discursive doubleness [...] engenders a new speech act” (Bhabha, “Cultures in Between” 58). In the same vein, Bakhtin’s theories can be re-interpreted from an eco-critical point of view. Bakhtin’s theories “might be seen as the literary equivalent of ecology, the science of relationships. The ideal form to represent reality, according to Bakhtin, is a dialogical form, one in which multiple voices or points of view interact” (McDowell 372). The postcolonial eco-poetic theory extends the implications of Mikhail Bakhtin's discussions of dialogic linguistics and polyglossic narrative to a kind of postcolonial ecological understanding of dialogics. Bakhtin's notion is that wherever there is a human voice (authoritative and colonial), there is evidence of the existence of the “Other,” voice (the oppressed human or non-human) because each side is a result of interactions with each other. This means that both the authoritative colonial and the oppressed voices are all polyglots of the more-than-human world.

By adopting Bakhtin’s theories, postcolonial eco-poetics postulates that the many voices within a literary text achieve some kind of “interplay of social voices and a variety of relationships among them” (McDowell 372). These voices may be human or non-human with no one claiming authority over the other. Furthermore, drawing on Bakhtin’s theories, this new dialogic paradigm unsettles the anthropocentric “authoritative monologic voice” and foregrounds the voices of “characters and elements of the landscape that have been marginalized” (McDowell 374). Bakhtin presents the dialogic paradigm as an intersection of many voices (human or non-human), creating a dialogue among the self and self, the self and other, and the self and context. Bakhtin’s theory of the dialogic paradigm is an expression of the presence of the other(s). Through this paradigm, both postcolonialism and eco-criticism overlap “in a dance of

cultural, economic, and ecological interdependence” that “calls for a multiplicity of voices to address the problems that our world faces today” (Roos and Hunt 3).

Anne Herrmann posits the dialogic as a process of self-constitution that, while it arises from a reciprocal process, a dialogue, departs from the familiar hierarchised colonial anthropocentric model of constructing the human self/subject as defined in opposition to an objectified non-human "other." The un-hierarchised dialogic paradigm names the discursive relation between the human and the non-human. The anthropocentric subject, according to this paradigm, constitutes itself without the annihilation or assimilation of the non-human other. According to Herrmann, this dialogic paradigm “posits itself as a struggle between the two subjects' respective discourses” (6). The dialogic paradigm allows an escape from the hierarchised binary oppositions that define any essentialist discourse of otherness.

The dialogic paradigm of postcolonial eco-poetics stands for respect and concern for the peripheral non-human ‘others’ who are silenced by the privileged anthropocentric subject. A more non-authoritative combination of discourses incorporating these voices is brought in to take the place of the hierarchical authoritative anthropocentrism. Michael McDowell establishes some parallels between Bakhtin’s literary theories and the precepts of ecology. He says that Bakhtin’s idea of the dialogic form to represent reality is an ideal starting point for an ecological analysis of landscape writing in which “all entities in the great web of nature deserves recognition and a voice” (372).

The Call of the Wild is dialogic in a sense that all voices, human and non-human, within the text are involved in a power struggle that helps to move the text towards a more explicit dialogism. There are three main dialogic encounters in the novel creating a dialogue among man and animal, animal and animal, nature, and culture. In all these encounters, Buck, the dog, is involved as a subversive force and as a voice representing and speaking for the marginalised and oppressed subjects whether they are animals or humans. Buck has gained respect and acceptance as having soul and spirit from which people can learn and develop their own self-worth. He is considered as a narrative dialogic voice that humans must understand and respect. Buck's character reveals how this canine animal struggles to undermine and challenge not only the anthropocentric hegemonic discourse but also any other authoritative discourse among his wild community.

In the man-animal dialogic encounter, Buck's voice constitutes an opposing wild animal tradition to counter and resist the dominant civilised human tradition. Because Buck led a happy and quiet life in the civilised landscape of California, his voice has never been heard as a menace to men. However, his voice starts to be heard to challenge and deny the materialistic and greedy traits of people such as the gardener Manuel, the man in a red sweater, Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. Manuel exploits Buck's trust and kidnaps him for the sake of some coins. The others, out of foolishness, treat Buck and the other dogs harshly. From that time one, Buck's voice manifests a potential for challenging human injustice. He has been beaten and kicked and forced to pull sleds through wilderness. Buck's resistance of the orders of his human masters, Francois and Perrault, can be read as a struggle against the authoritative demands of the humans. Buck's voice refuses to

passively accept his masters' orders, even when they are accompanied using the club, the tool of oppression. His rebellious voice enforces Francois and Perrault to give in and accept Buck as the lead dog. These anthropocentric attitudes towards Buck have never silenced him:

‘Nevaire such a dog as dat Buck!’ he cried. ‘No, nevaire! Heem worth one t’ousan’ dollair, by Gar! Eh? Wot you say, Perrault?’ And Perrault nodded. He was ahead of the record then, and gaining day by day. (*The Call* 21)

It is obvious that the human characters, to some extent, no longer, dominate the canine character, Buck, because the human univocal oppressive voice cannot withstand the attack of the canine heterogeneous discourse.

The other aspect of this encounter is characterised by a sense of understanding and respect between man and animal. The characters of Judge Miller and John Thornton and their connections to Buck suggest that the barriers between man and animal can diminish. The canine voice and the human one intermingle amazingly in a way that neither of which can claim superiority or mastery over the other. At the end of the novella, Buck's voice becomes a forked tongue that speaks for both the slave and the master. He is a wild slave brought to civilisation: “a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire” (*The Call* 34). Meanwhile, he claims the voice of the master as he avenges his master's death. On seeing the Yeehats, the indigenous people of the Northland, celebrating and dancing over the camp's wreckage, he is sure that they murdered John Thornton. Overwhelmed by rage and grief, Buck defies the law of club and fang, attacking the Yeehats, killing some of them, and causing the others to flee: “He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he

had killed in the face of the law of club and fang” (*The Call* 48). Buck’s voice, thus, becomes that of the master overturning the anthropocentric authoritative discourse by which he was enslaved. This marks the ambivalence of Buck’s voice that oscillates between that of the “inferior” slave in anthropocentric discourse and that of a “wild” master who can subvert the authoritative discourse and embrace his wild tendencies. By joining the pack of the wolves, Buck dismantles the power relations in both nature and culture.

In the wilderness, another type of dialogic encounter occurs among Buck and Spitz, his canine rival. Spitz plays the role of the master, “the dominant primordial beast.” He shows himself as the all-mighty power holder among the dogs. In so doing, he attempts to spread his reign on the camp where other dogs are considered slaves and inferior to him. Buck, in turn, plays the role of the rebel who leads the revolt against Spitz. He cunningly destabilises Spitz’s hegemony among the other dogs by defending the weaker animals in disputes. In so doing, his voice strategically knocks down the hegemonic discourse even before the final confrontation with Spitz. The Buck-Spitz confrontation seems to be more suggestive of the dialogism of voices upon which all hierarchies are dismantled and subverted. In this clash, the barriers between the high and the low and between the ruler and the ruled begin to collapse. By the end of this confrontation, Buck, the “masterful dog,” filled with “pride” manages to subvert the stable and established hierarchy of the canine pack. Therefore, overthrowing the authority of Spitz indicates that the power could be switched and substituted.

The third dialogic encounter is between nature and culture. The canine Buck is torn between “the call” of the wild nature and that of the civilised society. Although the two calls stand in stark

contrast to each other, this contrast does not go unchallenged throughout the story. Buck's civilised life at Judge Miller's house is leisurely, calm, and unchallenging, while in the wilderness, the mysterious voice of the wild is savage, frenetic, and demanding. Paradoxically, these two calls seem to have underlying social codes, hierarchies, and even laws. The wild pack that the civilised Buck joins is not anarchic; the position of lead dog is coveted and given to the most powerful dog. The lead dog takes responsibility for group decisions and has a distinctive style of leadership; the main factor in the rivalry between the "civilised" Buck and the "wild" Spitz is that Buck sides with the less popular, marginal, suppressed voices of the dogs instead of the stronger ones. Buck, then, advocates the civilising mission of speaking for the subaltern rights in the pack. It is a civilising anti-anthropocentric position adopted by a wild canine animal that is strikingly like that of the judge Miller, the icon of civilisation. This means that the boundaries between the wild and the civilised are blurred and subverted. In other words, the civilised call of culture inside Buck leads him to speak for nature. Buck manages to attain the wild call of "nature" through the civilised codes that he has acquired in the Judge Miller's house. Buck, thus, in all dialogical encounters, creates for himself a "character zone" or "speech zone" which can be eco-critically interpreted as "an understanding of the values associated with the characters and elements and for a sense of how characters and elements of the landscape influence each other" (McDowell 374). Postcolonial eco-poetics, thus, tries to theorise an integrated framework for the critique of both human domination and the domination of nature. The colonial anthropocentric concept of nature establishes "conceptual structures of oppression," through which the non-humans are seen as the opposite side from rationality. By examining and dismantling this authoritative anthropocentric concept,

postcolonial eco-poetics attempts to achieve a culture which is more “democratic and ecological” (Plumwood 1).

3.3. *The Carnavalesque*

A theory of postcolonial eco-poetics begins with this larger, more inclusive reading of Bakhtin's dialogic, or many-voiced discourse. In a sense, Bakhtin's belief that polyglossic narrative is a kind of "carnival" of interactions could be said in a postcolonial eco-poetical reading to be a "menagerie" of narrative, or more accurately, an ecosystem of narrative. This interactive postcolonial ecological understanding of narrative lends itself to the third paradigm of postcolonial eco-poetics, namely, the carnivalesque paradigm. This carnivalesque nexus works to disintegrate the borders between the self and other; the subject and object cannot be disentangled.

From a postcolonial eco-critical point of view, Bakhtin's paradigm of the carnivalesque can be interpreted as the voice of the non-human, as the vehicle of self-expression for the usually suppressed and regulated species. According to Bakhtin, the carnival involves a temporary suspension of all hierarchies coupled with joyous, uninhibited celebration of the breaking of social norms, mocking authority and parodying official ideas and standards. Robert Stam states that in carnival, “all that is marginalised and excluded – the mad, the scandalous, and the aleatory – takes over the centre in a liberating explosion of otherness” (86). As the power structures break down during carnival, new forms of communication and interaction emerge among humans and non-humans who could not usually unite as a community. Distinct individual voices are heard and interacted together, creating an opportunity for renewal.

In *The Call of the Wild*, London employs this Bakhtinian paradigm to show the comedy of survival. He figures Buck as a kind of the carnival king who parodies the human pursuit of power. London's novel exemplifies a sense of de-hierarchising the anthropocentric ideology where dogs and wolves are seen on the same plane of existence as humans and not in separate worlds. Through the carnivalesque paradigm, the division between the civilised world of the humans and the uncivilised worlds of animals is blurred in a way that authority at the end is granted to the canine animal over all other types of conventional authorities. Jack London prepares his readers for the carnivalesque paradigm by dressing the canine hero, Buck, in an aristocratic dress of a king whose protection of the Judge Miller's family is merely ceremonial. This is an early indication of parodying the anthropocentric authority. However, this subversion of hierarchy does not last for long as Manuel, the gardener, overthrows Buck's authority by captivating him and introducing him to the anthropocentric law of club and fang that firmly establishes the human hegemony over the canine animals. Therefore, Buck, acting as the carnival king, represents the centre of the power and gradually becomes the target during the carnival.

The climax of the carnival ultimately rises in the Northland where Buck is driven to work as a sledge dog. In the Northland, Buck starts to fulfil his carnivalesque mission to tease at the authority of both man and other savage dogs. He involves himself in various carnivalesque scenarios in the North. His encounters with both human and non-human characters bring forth the dissatisfaction towards any form of authority or hegemony which neglects the lives of the weak and shows the arrogance towards the oppressed. Buck's underlying intention becomes to turn over

human and non-human authority and to break down their established hierarchy.

The first carnivalesque scenario in the North is initiated when Buck observes the wolfish canine creatures, trampling the weak she-dog, Curly, to death. The killing of Curly is performed as a carnival festival in which the wolfish creatures circle the weak Curly, knocking her off her feet and joining in the carnage. The main actor in this carnival is Spitz who appears to be laughing: Spitz's laughter at the Curly's death enhances the sense of Spitz's dictatorship and cruelty. Curly's death enhances Buck's desire to destabilise the non-human hierarchy and to defend the oppressed. Buck's sense of rivalry with Spitz initiates the second carnivalesque scenario.

The second carnivalesque scenario emerges out of the first one as Buck joins the sled dog team with other huskies, Spitz, Solleks, Dave, and the brothers Billee and Joe. Buck must abide by the hierarchy of the sled-dog team. The hierarchy represents the power relation among the canines. Buck desires to subvert such hierarchy that symbolises the colonial mentality of dictatorship, exploitation, inequality, and cruelty towards the weak, the silenced, and the oppressed other. Buck's initial acceptance to be subdued to the mastery of Spitz in the sled dog team can be regarded in terms of Spivak's "strategic essentialism," for it is "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Spivak 214). Thus, the construction of Buck's identity grounds itself in his strategic encounter with Spitz's hegemonic discourse. The first move made by Buck to subvert the hegemony of Spitz is to side himself with the weaker dogs who are silenced by the cruelty of the dominant beast master, Spitz. This is clear when Buck defends Pike against Spitz's authority. The carnivalesque image is well-drawn by London:

As they circled about, snarling, ears laid back, keenly watchful for the advantage, the scene came to Buck with a sense of familiarity. He seemed to remember it all--the white woods, and earth, and moonlight, and the thrill of battle. Over the whiteness and silence brooded a ghostly calm. There was not the faintest whisper of air--nothing moved, not a leaf quivered, the visible breaths of the dogs rising slowly and lingering in the frosty air. They had made short work of the snowshoe rabbit, these dogs that were ill-tamed wolves; and they were now drawn up in an expectant circle. They, too, were silent, their eyes only gleaming and their breaths drifting slowly upward. To Buck it was nothing new or strange, this scene of old time. It was as though it had always been, the wonted way of things. (*The Call* 18)

This final showdown is depicted in a carnivalesque manner as Buck succeeds in ousting Spitz; and once the other dogs sense the tragic end of Spitz, they attack and kill him. For the first time in the novel, the voice of the weak and the silenced is heard.

As the action proceeds, the third carnivalesque scenario is depicted. This time it is a human-nonhuman encounter for man's sake. Buck is torn between the inner call of the wild and the "civilised" society. His ideal master, Thornton, is killed by the Indians. By killing Thornton, the Indians claim authority over Thornton's property including all his dogs and money. This results in the first direct showdown between Buck and the human Yeehats. The carnivalesque scenario starts with Buck noticing the Yeehats dancing over the camp's wreckage. Buck, out of revenge, decides to oust the anthropocentric hegemony represented by the Yeehats. Buck manages to subdue the humans to his own authority. The Yeehats start making myths around the Ghost Dog who established "the imagined community", in Benedict

Anderson's words. In this eco-imaginary community, man no longer has authority over non-humans. In such a community, there is a sense of belonging produced between Buck and the wilderness. Equipped with ecological romantic discourse, the native people, the Yeehats, mythologise Buck as a mythical Ghost Dog who terrorises the inhabitants of the valley. The romantic idealisation and mythmaking are characteristics that represent the superstitious nature of the native people who are away from being civilised. Laden with deeper ecological concern, the end of the novel eradicates any anthropocentric authority in wilderness and depicts a picture of human-free nature.

The Yeehats' mythmaking and storytelling create a carnivalistic sense of camouflage in which the non-human jester (Buck) putting on the legendary mask of the Evil Spirit to mock the anthropocentric hierarchy. The function of this mythical mask is to deny the conformity of voices, discourses, identities in the ecological context. This carnivalistic mask is "connected with the joy of change and reincarnation" of Buck from a mere slave dog to a heavenly Evil Spirit, "with gay relativity and with the merry negation of uniformity and similarity" to any other human or non-human creature (Bakhtin, *Rabelais* 40). The carnivalistic mask of Buck is connected to his own spiritual transition and metamorphoses and indicates a violation of natural boundaries that exist between humans and non-humans. As a characteristic of the most ancient rituals and spectacles, the mythmaking of Buck's identity contains the playful element of life; it shows how Buck, the non-human creature overcomes both life and death and masters not only civilised and primitive humans but the non-human species as well. Buck's identity has been developed and shaped on both biological and cultural spheres in a way that troubles all the boundaries and limits. The major purpose of this carnivalesque

scenario is to displace, dismantle, and subvert the dichotomy of the hegemonic anthropocentric superior and the inferior ecological other.

3.4. *The Nomadic*

The image of the nomad serves as the fourth postcolonial eco-poetic paradigm. This paradigm provides a concrete focus and reflection on postcolonial and ecological issues such as identity, hybridity, hegemony, domination, oppression, marginalization, agency, strategic relocation, migration, and ambivalence. Moreover, this paradigm shows the blurring of the boundaries between the anthropocentric centre and the non-human margins. This is indicated through the portrayal of non-human nomadic characters that change their positions by moving from the centre to the margins. The anthropocentric centre is not as strong and hegemonic as it presents itself to be. Exploring the relevance of postcolonial theory to nomadism, Edward Said introduces his theory of the exile and the nomad according to which he negotiates the space between binary oppositions emerging from hegemonic essentialist discourses. Said identifies "the nomadic" or "the exilic" figure who exerts "a conscious effort" to enter the discourse of the anthropocentric hegemonic centre, "to mix with it, transform it, to make it acknowledge marginalised or suppressed or forgotten histories" (*Culture and Imperialism* 216). Accordingly, the human and the non-human are involved in one another, none is single and pure. All of them "are, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and un-monolithic" (xxv); To express the nomadic identity of the postcolonial subject, Said sees the nomad as a subject who does not belong to any category. The main task of the nomadic figure is to represent the underrepresented and to make "articulate representations to his or

her public despite all sorts of barriers” (Said, *Representations* 12). Said contends that the nomadic figure attempts to break down boundaries encountered in his liminal situation. The nomads do not side with any group or category they represent; they only stand for the cause and speak against prejudice and injustice that are cultivated by anthropocentric hegemony. Said sees the nomad as a subject who looks for the interest of the underrepresented classed in both culture and nature.

Crossing over the boundaries and borders is a common characteristic of Said's nomadic figure who simply does not belong to any category or who stands outside classifications. Moreover, Said suggests that the nomadic figure lives in exile with instable and changing identity that transcends classifications. The nomadic identity, therefore, is not constant but moving from one position to another. The nomad, thus, is a more appropriate paradigm for postcolonial eco-poetic subject. The nomad, in the postcolonial eco-poetic context, is a free-roaming subject, moving fluidly between different locales, occupying different positions. Illuminating Said's theory of exile or nomad, Myriam Chancy argues that the condition of the nomad or the exile is that of “consistent, continual displacement; it is the radical uprooting of all that one is and stands for, in a communal context, without the loss of the knowledge of those roots. It is, in fact, this knowledge that renders the experience of exile so cruelly painful, for what one has lost is carried in this forced nomadism from one geographical space to another” (Chancy 1-2). Chancy, like Said, prioritises "crossing boundaries of self and other", "continual displacement", "forced nomadism", "loss" and "geographical space". In short, Said creates a third space for the exilic nomad between the previous place and the more recent one, almost not leaving the former and almost not arriving to the latter. This concept of both

and neither encapsulates Said's notion of the nomad as a hybrid liminal figure.

Regarding this issue of nomadic identity, Rosi Braidotti (1994) points out that the image of the nomad stresses the constant evolution of the conditions and subjectivities. According to Braidotti (1994), the nomadic figure “renders an image of the subject in terms of a non-unitary and multi-layered vision, as a dynamic and changing entity” (5). Braidotti also draws attention to the idea that we must think of nomadism in terms of power relations. She emphasises that nomadic subjectivity is “the effect of the constant flows of in-between interconnections” and “a socially mediated process of entitlements to and negotiations with power relations” (18). Therefore, the nomadic figure can be imagined as to be more inclusive of other forms of non-human lives. As a figuration, Braidotti notes, the nomad does not stand for “homelessness” or “compulsive displacement” but rather the kind of subject “who has relinquished all idea, desire, or nostalgia for fixity” (22). Contrary to the anthropocentric utilisation of differences, the concept of nomad emphasises that human identity is not stable but changing and transcending the classifications; therefore, subjectivities are not constant but nomadic that move from one position to another, thus, connecting them all. Nomadic subjectivity requires the blurring of the boundaries and acquiring the understanding that humans are not part of the center or margin but that they are part of the both. It stresses that an identity is not a stable entity which occupies a single social space but the one which embraces multiple spaces. This creates “a non-unitary vision of a subject” who actively yearns for and constructs itself in a complex and internally contradictory webs of social relations” (Braidotti 10).

In the same vein, Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the nomad can be manipulated to augment the discussions about the possibility of a postcolonial eco-poetic theory. Their idea of the nomad rejects the stability and unity which authoritative anthropocentric narratives claim to achieve, and instead values the mobility and autonomy of non-human nomads. The non-human nomads' resistance has as "its object a very special space, smooth space, which it composes, occupies and propagates" (Deleuze 33). The nomadic space is not simply a given of the natural world but is a space with different modes of construction or composition. It is organised like a rhizome and tends to become something other. It reflects and privileges the postcolonial notion of difference and multiplicity. What this concept of nomadism emphasises is not only understanding of multiple belongings but also the apprehension that the identity is always in the form of change that is "becoming".

In resisting the anthropocentric organisational structure, the rhizome "ceaselessly established connections between semiotic chains, organisations of power, and circumstances relative to the arts, sciences, and social struggles" (Deleuze and Guattari 7). In the postcolonial eco-poetic context, Deleuze and Guattari's non-human nomads seek the kind of autonomy that enables them to think beyond the authoritative anthropocentric status quo. In short, Deleuze and Guattari seek to make radical change through a liberation desire so non-human subjects may overcome repressive anthropocentric forces to become "desiring nomads" in a process of "becoming" (Best and Kellner 76-77). The concept of "becoming," central to the postcolonial eco-poetic theory, favours processes, dynamic interaction, and fluid boundaries. It is related to a constant process of transformation which uses thought as a

weapon to break away from habitual thoughts, realising the rhizomatous nature of reality.

Another postcolonial eco-poetic characteristic of nomadism is the “deterritorialised poetics” that attempts to “recover through imagination an ancestral homeland threatened by the reciprocal forces of modernity and colonial oppression” (Auge 269). The postcolonial eco-poetic theory emphasises the language of “deterritorialisation” preferring metaphors of movement because the language of home or domestication suggests the confinement and oppression of the authoritative anthropocentric home or camp. By the extensive use of metaphors of mobility, postcolonial eco-poetics reinforces the idea of the deterritorialised space of non-human nomadism that opens an opportunity of escape or exit from the anthropocentric domestication or locatedness which, in turn, suggests confinement, enclosure, or stasis. The process of deterritorialisation is always followed by the process of re-territorialisation through the imposition of new structures and hierarchies. The nomadic subject can develop a space in which it refuses to let the world slip away but tries to live despite terrible events in life. The nomadic subject is determined to travel to its past repeatedly and endlessly to recover its eclipsed identity.

The nomadic paradigm – with broad range of terms offered by Said, Braidotti, and Deleuze and Guattari – provides a comprehensive framework to analyse London’s *The Call of the Wild* from the perspective of postcolonial eco-poetics. The novella accomplishes the postcolonial eco-poetic nomadic paradigm *par excellence* by analysing the nomadic subjectivity of the canine animal, Buck, as he changes his own subjectivity and material position. This act of change and experiencing multiple belongings involve the change from civilisation to the wilderness. The novella begins with an epigraph of a poem:

Old longings nomadic leap,
Chafing at custom's chain;
Again from its brumal sleep
Wakens the ferine strain. (*The Call* 1)

This epigraph foretells the “nomadic subjectivity” of Buck. It describes the call of the wild as a kind of awakening. The ancient “nomadic” longings to mobility, movement, and freedom are dormant or sleeping. But, on hearing the call of the ancestral past, they spring to life violently. These nomadic longings entail that the canine nomad will undergo a process of endlessly becoming, rhizomatous development, and deterritorialisation and re-territorialisation in the nomadic space of wilderness.

As a result of over-exploitation of the canine animals, the civilised humans torment the dogs and drag them forcefully to the Northland to serve as sled-dogs in their search for gold. The exilic experience of Buck stirs up his wild nature and ancestral past. Through this type of forced nomadism, Buck recovers his primitive instincts and returns to nature step by step, completing the process of becoming. Under the threat of whips and clubs, Buck must move away from civilisation and to repeatedly re-position himself in the wilderness. He begins to resist and adapts himself to the hostile environment. Under the anthropocentric control of Francois, Buck pulls the sledge for the first time. Gradually, Buck develops a sense of both physical and spiritual deterritorialisation. Buck, as a nomadic subject, distributes himself in a smooth space; he occupies, inhabits, and holds that space. The smooth space that Buck occupies is the wilderness of the Northland. He typically orientates himself in this nomadic space by leading the sled team and experiencing hostile life conditions in the wilderness.

Buck is an exile who has turned nomad. He has made his conscious choice of inhabiting the wilderness and experiencing life there as an imperative need to turn the wild into space of critical resistance to hegemonic identities of all kinds. Therefore, he seeks to overthrow his rival dog, Spitz, and to assert his mastery as the lead dog on Francois and Perrault's team. At the end of the story, Buck's resistance to hegemonic identities is not just limited to the canine world; it extends to include the human one, as well. By attacking the Yeehats, Buck overturns man's hegemony over dog. He gains nomadic space in which he reterritorialises himself and roams nature freely as the leader of a wild wolf pack and as a mythical God in the eyes of the Yeehats.

Buck represents Deleuze and Guattari's notion of "becoming". His character depicts the unlimited possibility for a canine animal to cross the border of anthropocentric control. Buck's "dynamic world of becoming," according to Best and Kellner, is "comprised of desiring 'intensities' and non-totalisable multiplicities" (79). In short, Buck's sense of "becoming" is about liberation from the anthropocentric notion of a unified and rational subject to "become" a new type of wolfish subjectivity and body with mysterious primordial forces and desires. Buck's "becoming-a-wolf" is not imitation or evolution. It is not related to biological reproduction or evolution but to "involution," in which heterogeneous traits are involved to form an "alliance." In other terms, Buck's becoming is not a genealogical tree, but a rhizomatous interaction which produces a new kind of existence that is between dog, wolf, and man. Involution means "to form a block that runs its own line 'between' the terms in play and beneath assignable relations" (Deleuze and Guattari 239). To illustrate this point further, Buck's character, through becoming-a-wolf, finds a course of escape from the anthropocentric control

and domination. Buck, through becoming-a-wolf, never refers to a mythology or archetypes but corresponds solely to new levels, zones of liberated intensities. An important aspect of Buck's "becoming" is that the change does not happen overnight or once for all. The process is gradual, and it requires conscious effort to maintain this on-going project of forming alliances with different beings.

4. Recapitulation

Postcolonial eco-poetics questions and challenges the anthropocentric essentialist discourse to radically decentre the anthropic centre, to subvert the human/non-human dualism, and to give a voice to the marginalised nature. In so doing, the emerged theory establishes an ecological approach that challenges human oppression and injustice and meanwhile struggles against environmental and animal abuse. Four paradigms have been delineated to prove the possibility of having shared interests and issues that can be tackled by both theories. A re-reading of Jack London's *The Call of the Wild* in the light of these paradigms has provided new critical perspectives for appreciating this novella.

The mimic paradigm of postcolonial eco-poetics provides strategies for denouncing and dismantling the anthropocentric politics of opposition and difference and problematising the relationship between the anthropic centre and the animalistic periphery. Bhabha's theories of mimicry and hybridity have enriched the discussion of this paradigm by providing a process to concurrently succumb to and challenge assimilation and anthropocentric authoritative power structures. In *The Call of the Wild*, Buck, the canine

animal, resists polarisation or categorisation by hegemonic figures of both human and animal worlds. He can command some measure of agency or self-determination. The dialogic paradigm postulates that the interplay and the interrelations of voices can give voice to the elements of the landscape that have been marginalised. Through many dialogic encounters, Buck has proved himself to have a narrative dialogic voice that human and non-human subjects must understand and to respect. His voice represents and speaks for all marginalised and oppressed subjects whether they are humans or animals. The carnivalesque paradigm interrogates the non-human subject positions within the dominant hegemonic frames imposed by both man and animal. In *The Call of the Wild*, London brings together heterogeneous collections of characters from all orders of beings – humanity, the animal world, and mythology to mingle in festival-like gatherings in which hegemonic identities are ousted and dethroned. The nomadic paradigm suggests a way of escaping from both anthropic and animalistic boundaries and restrictions to liberate primordial desire energies. In *The Call of the Wild*, Buck undergoes a nomadic process of answering the call of the wild to cope with terrible events in life.

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حكاية ما بعد استعمارية عن الطبيعة: الأدب البيئي ما بعد الاستعماري في رواية جاك لندن القصيرة المعنونة بـ: "نداء البرية"

إعداد

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الملخص العربي:

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تطبيق نظريات الأدب البيئي لما بعد الاستعمار على رواية جاك لندن القصيرة المعنونة بـ: "نداء البرية" (١٩٠٣). وقد نشأت تلك النظرية الأدبية البيئية لما بعد الاستعمار من رحم نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار وتقاطعها مع النقد البيئي المناهض للاستعمار والقائم على مركزية الإنسان. تضع كلتا النظريتان كل أشكال الهيمنة والاضطهاد والهرمية والتهميش موضع شك لهدم أي نوع من السلطة أو الهيمنة على "الآخر"، سواء كان هذا الآخر إنساناً أو حيواناً. لذا فإن هذه النظرية تهتم بالآثار العميقة على البيئة الناتجة من سياسات ما بعد الاستعمار؛ فهي كنظرية نقدية، تقوم على قراءة النصوص الأدبية وإعادة قراءتها في محاولة لإنشاء خطاب نقدي يعمل على ازاحة المركزية، وهدم الثنائيات، ويمنح الهيمنة للآخر المهمش. بالتالي، يظهر الخطاب الأدبي البيئي لما بعد الاستعمار بوصفه رد فعل على الخطاب الأصولي الإنساني بسياساته القائمة على الإقصاء والهيمنة. فالخطاب المرتكز على الإنسان يعتبر أحد الأنماط الأساسية للتمثيل القمعي الذي يؤمن بالإنسان على أنه المركز الوحيد الثابت للكون. وهكذا، فإن الأدب البيئي لما بعد الاستعمار وضع منهجاً إيكولوجياً يتحدى كل أشكال الاضطهاد والظلم الاستعماري، وفي الوقت نفسه يحارب الإساءة البيئية والحيوانية من قبل البشر. لذلك، رسم البحث أربعة أطر نظرية تحدد

ملاح النظرية الأدبية البيئية لما بعد الاستعمار وهي: المحاكاة الساخرة، والحوارية، والكرنفالية، والترحالية؛ تلك الأطر الأربعة تناولها البحث بالتحليل كأسس للنظرية الأدبية البيئية لما بعد الاستعمار. وفي ضوء تلك الأطر، تناول البحث رواية "نداء البرية" للكاتب جاك لندن بالتحليل والتطبيق؛ لذا فإن هذا البحثي يسعى إلى إثبات أن المنظور النقدي لنظرية الأدب البيئي لما بعد الاستعمار قادر على تقديم مجال تفسيري جديد لإعادة قراءة النصوص الأدبية في ضوء النظرية البيئية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأدب البيئي لما بعد الاستعمار، رواية "نداء البرية"، المحاكاة الساخرة، الحوارية، الكرنفالية، الترحال.