



SYMBIOTIC METAPHORS:

MUTUALISM AND CO-EXISTENCE IN JOHANNE SPYRI'S *HEIDI*

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ABSTRACT

Reflections on the state of the environment and how some wish it to be are mirrored in the literary productions of some writers. The focus of this work is to analyze such a text as *Heidi* by Johanne Spyri which offers alternatives of survival which are mutualism and co-existence. Studies on *Heidi* have focused on other theories like psychoanalysis, however, none has looked at the text from an ecocritical perspective with mutualism and co-existence in mind. This work looks at the concept of mutualism and co-existence as metaphors from ecology. These metaphors are further sub-divided into other tropes which offer a better alternative way of life which are neither parasitic nor predatory, but positive symbioses. Using *Heidi* as the primary text, this purely qualitative study uses ecocritical tropes as an approach in tackling the relationship between humans and non-human aspects of the environment. The tropes used in this case are dwelling-, a geographical place and sense of belonging: animals, mutualism and co-existence with other humans; wilderness: the role of nature as a healer; and positive growth towards the good and the morally sound. The work recognizes that mutualism and co-existence in reality are underplayed in our world today and recommends a complete change-over of attitude towards the best possible way of living for both humans and non-humans within our environment.

Key words: Ecocriticism, Mutualism, Symbiotic Metaphor, Co-existence, Heidi

INTRODUCTION

It has become increasingly necessary to advocate a much more sustainable way of life which will, in effect, accommodate all forms of living and non-living things (human and non-human). This will create the sort of accommodative, balanced and supportive environment that will sustain all life forms.

Creative writers, being at the forefront of such innovative ways of living, advocate alternative means of living such as Mutualism and Co-existence. Mutualism, according to Begon, Townsend and Harper, "...is simply one association in which organisms of different species interact to their mutual benefit. It usually involves the direct exchange of goods or services and typically results in the acquisition of novel capabilities by at least one partner".² Clearly, mutualism is that kind of association which is such that the symbionts benefit from one another. Mutualism is one of the much preferred ways of living which takes into account the rights of other species.

Co-existence as defined by the Cambridge English Dictionary "is the fact of living or existing together at the same time or in the same place".³ This form of living together in a harmonious way, is a broader form of mutualism encompassing more than two different species.

Eco-literature can be considered as a field that views a work of art from a scientific lens and from a literature view point. Ecocriticism is considered a young evolving literary theory which was first defined by William Rueckert in 1980. In defining ecocriticism, he first defines the "eco" in ecocriticism as "the

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² Begon, Michael, et al. *Ecology: from Individuals Ecosystems*. 4th ed. (Blackwell Publishing, 2016), ix.

³ Cambridge Dictionary, "Coexistence", 16th October 2019, <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/English/coexistence>

application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature”⁴. Ecocriticism studies the relationship between man and nature. Cohen’s explanation of ecocriticism also states that; “Ecocriticism focuses on literary (and artistic) expression of human experience primarily in a natural and consequently in a culturally shaped world: the joys of abundance, sorrows of deprivation, hopes for harmonious existence, and fears of loss and disaster.”⁵

Gregg Garrard explains ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship of the human and the non-human, throughout human cultural history and entailing critical analysis of the term human”⁶ Writers writing under themes of nature as mentioned by Rueckert, Cohen and Gregg, place their writings under ecocriticism and Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* is one of such works. The novel narrates the story of a seemingly innocent little girl who symbolizes the human journey; a journey which is the process of learning too and in the end realizing that one ought to be at peace with nature. This symbolic representation is reiterated by Kate Soper who observed that “the child is ‘nature’ constructed both as innocence and as wise beyond a human experience. Childhood is both the ‘place’ from which we set out on the road to maturity (and seemingly inevitable alienation from nature), and that to which we aspire to return in a post-alienated second coming and reconciliation... Heidi exudes a sort of natural strength and wisdom which promotes mutualism and co-existence such that it even comes to be viewed as... the stages of a relative preculturality and ‘noble savagery’: tamed, guileless, and free from corruption”.⁷

The naivety attached to the innocence of Heidi is not inhibited by any cultural nuances and she gets to the truth or task on hand straight away. This research attempts to explore the novel from an ecocritical point focusing on mutualism and co-existence. The work is divided into dwelling: geographical place and sense of belonging, animals, mutualism and co-existence with other humans and, wilderness: the role of nature as a healer, and positive growth towards the good and the morally sound.

Literature Review

Ecology is a subsection of biology. Ecology is a multidisciplinary science that deals with the environment and its problems and its history states that literature sources point to Aristotle as the first ecologist or perhaps his student, Theophrastus. “In the 4th century B.C, Theophrastus describes the interrelationships between animals and their environment” (Ecology: the study of the ecosystem)⁸

Begon et al., define ecology as “the scientific study of the distribution and abundance of organisms and the interactions that determine the distribution and abundance”.⁹ Ecology encompasses the study of organisms and their environment. Likens also explains ecology as “the study of relationships among ecological entities, e.g. individual organisms, populations and systems, and their environment”.¹⁰

As a field of science, ecology is a broad area. The levels of ecology include organism, population, community, and ecosystem. One level of ecology is organismal ecology and it is “the study of organisms’ behavior, physiology, morphology etc. in response to environmental challenges”.¹¹

Another level of ecology is population ecology. In the article “Ecology: The study of the ecosystem”, population ecology is defined as “the study of factors that affect and change the size and generate the composition of populations of organisms.” The third level of ecology is community ecology. It studies interactions between different species. “Community ecologists’ interest themselves with the study of interactions among various species”.¹²

⁴ Michael P. Cohen. ‘Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism Under Critique’. *Environmental History*. Vol 9, Issue 1, (2004): 9 – 36, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3985943>

⁵ Cohen, ‘Blues in the Green: Ecocriticism Under Critique’.

⁶ Garrard, Greg. *Ecocriticism*. 2nd ed. (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5

⁷ Kate Soper. *What is Nature?* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998)

⁸ Hughes, J. Donald. ‘Ecology in ancient Greece’. *Inquiry*. 18, no. 2 (1975): 115-125.

⁹ Begon, *Ecology*, ix

¹⁰ Likens, Gene E. ‘Long Term Studies in Ecology: Approaches and Alternatives’. Vol. 500. Verlag New York Inc.: Springer, 1989

¹¹ “Lumen Learning” (Boundless Biology), online document

¹² “Lumen Learning”

The last level of ecology is ecosystem. In the article “Ecology and Ecosystem”, ecosystem is explained as “the study of the entire ecosystem, including the responses and changes in the community”¹³. A subfield of ecology is symbiosis. According to De Bary, “symbiosis is the phenomenon whereby two or more organisms with distinct genealogical, evolutionary histories live in close association with one another.”¹⁴ It is an interaction between two different species in which both benefit or only one benefits. In other words, the species live together by forming a relationship. This relationship could be between animals and other animals, or animals with plants, or animals with micro-organisms. According to Begon et al., “symbiosis is a term that has been coined to describe the close physical associations between species in which a ‘symbiont’ occupies a habitat provided by a host”.¹⁵ In simple terms, organisms partner with other organisms to help improve them or to improve just themselves. There are three types of partnerships or interactions and these are commensalism, parasitism and mutualism.

Commensalism deals with the relationship between two species where by one species benefits and the other neither benefits nor suffers. Commensalism occurs “when one organism takes benefits by interacting with another organism by which the host is not affected”¹⁶

Another type of symbiotic association is parasitism and thus: “In a parasitic relationship, one organism benefits whereas the other organism (host) loses. The host is usually harmed and runs the risk of being infected.”¹⁷

The last type of symbiotic association is mutualism and it is also defined by Herre et al. 1999 as “simply one in which organisms of different species interact to their mutual benefit.”¹⁸ This relationship or association is considered as a win-win situation. It involves the exchange of services and both species benefit therefore people like Margulis argue that evolution is driven by mutualistic cooperation among organisms. According to Margulis and Dorion Sagan, “Life did not take over the globe by combat, but by networking”.¹⁹

Since ecocriticism deals with the relationship between literature and the environment, it is seen as the study of literature and the environment from the interdisciplinary point of view where all sciences come together to screen environmental problems and find solutions to them. Glotfelty also refers to ecocriticism as “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment”.²⁰ She further explains that ecocriticism is just like feminism or Marxism but ecocriticism’s approach to literary studies is earth centered. Ecocriticism explores the relationship between humans and the environment. Rueckert also states that, “ecocriticism is the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature.”²¹

Lawrence Buell identifies four (4) waves of ecocriticism. The first wave focuses on nature taking into consideration the writing and poetry. The first wave also focuses on the wilderness. In simple terms, the first wave aims at the protection and care of the earth. This is echoed by Howarth who makes us aware that the first wave considers “the effects of culture upon nature, with a view towards celebrating nature, berating its despoilers, reversing their harm (comes) through political action”.²²

¹³ Bergon, *Ecology*, 381.

¹⁴ Bergon, *Ecology*, 382.

¹⁵ Bergon, *Ecology*, xix.

¹⁶ Gontier N. Symbiosis of in: Kliman, R.M (ed.), *Encyclopedia of Evolutionary Biology*. Vol 4 (Oxford: Academic Press, 2016) 272 – 281

¹⁷ Martin, BRADFORD D., and E. R. N. E. S. T. Schwab. "Symbiosis: "Living together" in chaos." *Studies in the History of Biology* 4, no. 4 (2012): 7-25.

¹⁸ Herre EA, Knowlton N, Mueller UG, Rehner SA. The evolution of mutualisms: exploring the paths between conflict and cooperation. *Trends Ecol Evol*. 1999;14:49–53. doi: 10.1016/S0169-5347(98)01529-8.

¹⁹ Martin, BRADFORD D., and E. R. N. E. S. T. Schwab.

²⁰ Glotfelty, Cheryll, and Harold Fromm, editors. “*The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*.” (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 1996), xix

²¹ Oppermann, Serpil Tunç. "Ecocriticism: Natural world in the literary viewfinder." *Hacettepe Üniversitesi Edebiyat Fakültesi Dergisi* 16, no. 2 (1999).

²² Buell, Lawrence. “The future of environmental criticism: Environmental crisis and literary imagination.” Vol. 52. John Wiley & Sons, 2009.

The second wave considers both human and non-human nature and not just nature writing like the first wave. The third wave that was proposed builds on the second (2nd) wave. It examines “environmentality” as opposed to “nature writing”. Eco-critics of the third wave claim eco-criticism to be a multidisciplinary field and propose topics such as ecofeminism, ecomarxism, animal studies among others. Scott Slovic proposed the fourth and final wave. The fourth wave aims towards a human-nature co-extensiveness.

Ecology and ecocriticism both consider the co-habitation of species and the environment. Humans form part of the animal species, and they are highest on the chain, hence their association with nature is very important. The association involves the way humans treat their environment i.e. whether they treat nature positively (helping the environment) or negatively (destroying the nature). This common ground between ecology and ecocriticism, seeks to create awareness of nature among humans.

A thesis submitted by Hale Frederick views the novel from the religious perspective entitled “The gospel of reconciliation and healing in the Alps: Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* Reconsidered.” He analyzes the novel from a Christian point of view.²³

Another research on the novel is done by Rini Christina. She looks at the novel from a sociological approach entitled “The Definition of Family in Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi*: A Sociological Approach.” She focuses on the family and the society in the novel.²⁴

In a different work, Denkova Jovanka, studies the novel under the title “The Theme of Death in Literature for Children and Youth”, in which he talks about the death of Heidi’s parents. He also talks about the death of the doctor’s wife and daughter.²⁵ Dowker Ann, in 2004 discusses the novel in addition to other novels from the view of “The treatment of disability in 19th and early 20th century English literature”. She discusses the healing effect of nature contributing to the health of Clara.²⁶

Cieraad Irene writes about the novel in an article under the topic; “Bringing Nostalgia Home: Switzerland and The Swiss Chalet”. In the article, she discusses the novel centering on the homesickness of Heidi and how she feels at home on the mountain.²⁷

Iwashita Chieko writes about the novel from an “animation induced tourism” perspective. The paper entitled “Animation-Induced Tourism: A Case of Heidi, a Girl of the Alps-Induced Tourism” illustrates how the animated television series of the novel has an enduring appeal for Japanese tourist to Switzerland.²⁸

Tedesco Laureen reviewed a critical work titled “Take Up Thy Bed & Walk: Death, Disability, and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls”, by Lois Keith. In it Keith, discusses the image of disabled characters in children’s novels arguing that the stories teach the readers that:

“(1)there is nothing good about being disabled; (2) disabled people have to learn the same qualities of submissive behavior that women have always had to learn: patience, cheerfulness and making the best of things; (3) impairment can be punishment for bad behavior, for evil thoughts or for not being a good enough person; (4) although disabled people should be pitied rather than punished, they can never be accepted; and (5) the impairment is curable. If you want enough, if you love yourself enough (but not more than you love others), if you believe in God enough, you will be cured.”(6)²⁹

Among the selected books which Keith uses for his work is *Heidi*, in which she talks about the miraculous healing of Clara.

²³ Hale, Fredetrick. “The Gospel of Reconciliation and Healing in the Alps: Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* Reconsidered.” *Koers*, vol. 71, (2006):519-534.

²⁴ Rini, Christiana. “The Definition of Family in Johanna Spyri’s *Heidi* (1880): A Sociological Approach.” (2010).

²⁵ Jovanka, Denkova. “The Theme of Death in Literature for Children and Youth.” (2017).

²⁶ Dowker, Ann. “The Treatment of Disability in 19th And Early 20th Century Children’s Literature.” *Disability Studies Quarterly*, vol. 24, no. 1 (2004).

²⁷ Cieraad, Irene. “Bringing Nostalgia Home: Switzerland and the Swiss Chalet, Architecture and Culture.” vol. 6, no. 2, (2018):265-288, DOI: 10.1080/20507828.2018.1477672.

²⁸ Iwashita, Chieko. “Animation-Induced Tourism: A Case of “Heidi, a Girl of the Alps”-Induced Tourism.” *The international conference on impact of movies and television on tourism*. (2009), 14-31

²⁹ Laureen, Tedesco. “Take Up Thy Bed & Walk: Death, Disability, and Cure in Classic Fiction for Girls (Review).” *The Lion and the Unicorn*, vol. 26, no. 3, (John Hopkins University Press, 2002):395-398.

Tia Iesha Lalani, in her thesis “Just Breathing Isn’t Living: Disability and Constructions of Normalcy in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature”, also talks about how early children’s literature “functions as a point of origin for the constructions of social attitudes and behaviors surrounding gender and moral normativity, as well as conceptions of disability”.³⁰

Annie Pfeifer also writes on the novel under the trope “Between Hysteria And ‘Heimweh’: Heidi’s Homesickness.”. She talks about the homesickness of Heidi caused by her departure from the alps. She treats “Heidi’s ‘Heimweh’ as a psychosomatic illness poised between feminized hysteria and masculine homesickness, between temporal longing and physical displacement.”³¹

Susan Stan writes a bibliographic study of *Heidi* under the topic “Heidi In English: A Bibliographic Study”.³² Tanya Kiemainer mentions Heidi slightly in “Textual Bodies in Young Adult Literature. She looks at Heidi” as children’s literature.³³

Synopsis of the Novel

Heidi, a Swiss orphan, who is catered for by Dete her aunt is sent to her grandfather at an early age because Dete wants to work in Frankfurt. Heidi becomes very happy and enjoys the company of her grandfather in the Alps and roams about freely in the mountain air with goats and Peter, the goatherd. The only other friends that Heidi has are grandmother, Peter’s blind grandmother and Peter’s mother.

Dete comes back for Heidi and takes the poor girl to Frankfurt through deception. Heidi becomes a companion for a young physically challenged girl named Clara, whose mother had passed on. Even though Heidi is much liked by Clara Sesemann and Mr. Sesemann, the housekeeper Ms. Rottenmeier, finds her a backward, irritable, precarious girl who cannot even learn her alphabets.

Heidi is later helped by Grandmamma, Clara’s grandmother and Heidi learns to read. The friendship between Clara and Heidi continues to flourish, meanwhile Heidi grows more and more homesick and finally sleepwalks! Heidi is finally sent back to the Alps through the diagnosis of a doctor where she immediately recovers. She brings light, joy and laughter to all in her innocence and is even able to unknowingly reconcile her grandfather to God. She reads to Grandmother and is also able to go to school.

The doctor, then later Clara and grandmamma, pay visits to Heidi and the doctor is rejuvenated after the death of his wife and child. Clara is also able to walk. There is much rejoicing and reconciliation in the end of the work, when Grandfather moves back to the village of Dorfli every winter when Heidi must attend school and even Peter then finds it easier in classroom.

Approaches/Tropes

Trope is any rhetorical or figurative device. Tropes present in ecocriticism include: The Earth, Dwelling, Animals, Wilderness, Apocalypse Space, and Pollution. For the purposes of this work, the following tropes are used; dwelling: a geographical place and sense of belonging, animals; mutualism and co-existence with other humans; wilderness: the role of nature as a healer, and positive growth towards the good and the morally sound.

Dwelling: Geographical Place and Sense of Belonging

Dwelling as a trope focuses on “farming known as georgic” ... the modern georgic, the ecological Indian, and animism.

Dwelling refers to a place of residence. Garrard’s definition of dwelling states that:

³⁰ Lalani, Tia Iesha. “Just Breathing Isn’t Living”: Disability and Constructions of Normalcy in Nineteenth-Century Children’s Literature.” (2015).

³¹ Pfeifer, Annie. “Between Hysteria and ‘Heimweh’: Heidi’s Homesickness.” *German Life and Letters*. Vol. 72, no. 1,(John Wiley and Sons Ltd, 2019):52-63.

³² Stan, Susan. “Heidi in English: A Bibliographic Study.” *New Review of Children’s Literature and Librarianship*. Vol. 16, no. 1, (2010):1-23, DOI: 10.1080/13614541.2010.495568

³³ Kiemainer, Tanya. “Textual Bodies in Young Adult Literature.” 2015.

dwelling' is not a transient state; rather, it implies the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual, life and work.³⁴ Garrard looks back to Christianity, and quotes Jeanne Kay as saying that, "Nature is God's tool of reward and punishment; its beneficence depends on human morality" ...³⁵ Kay proposes that "the Bible is neither anthropocentric nor ecocentric, but theocentric in a way and to a degree difficult for the modern reader to fully accept."³⁶

Shifting from old tradition to new, Garrard cites Berry who does not consider "the primacy of science, even sociological science, in favour of a resolute emphasis on the affections".³⁷ Berry, within a Christian georgic tradition seeks "a practical harmony inspired by both the long term demands of a 'beloved country' and a sense of sacred duty called 'stewardship' in the abstract, but repeatedly promoted figuratively as a marriage of man and place, and culture and nature".³⁸ Garrard quoted Berry pointing out that: "A human community, too, must collect leaves and stories and turn them to account. It must build soil, and build that memory itself ... that will be its culture. These two kinds of accumulation, of local soil and local culture, are inter-related Garrard cites John Berger's pig earth as a socialist georgic that focuses more on rustic lifestyles, harshness and a position in the capitalist world system."³⁹ Garrard, discusses what he terms 'ecological Indian' as a representation of primitive people living in 'harmony with nature'. He writes that, this "assumption of indigenous environmental virtue is a fundamental belief for deep ecologists and many ecocritics".⁴⁰ Dwelling depicts an image of specific habitation other than "broader questions of living and co-existing, and the continuance of culture and its relations to the world around".⁴¹

In this paper, dwelling focuses on the modern georgic in which Berry, a proponent "has explicitly situated himself within a Christian georgic tradition, seeking a 'practical harmony' inspired by both the long-term demands of a 'beloved country' and a sense of sacred duty called 'stewardship' in abstract, but repeatedly promoted figuratively as a 'marriage' of man and place, culture and nature. Berry then argues that... To be well used, creatures and places must be used sympathetically, just as they must be known sympathetically to be well known"⁴²

The claims of Berry as stated above, are presented in *Heidi* when there appears to be such a marriage between nature and human lives such that there is harmony. This is seen in the life of Grandfather and Heidi on the mountain and it reflected in these words:

"Grandfather's hut stood on a cliff where every ray of sun could rest upon it. It also had a full view of the valley below. It was a beautiful place... Heidi was out of her mind with delight at being among her old friends again... Little Swan! Little Bear! Do you remember me? Hello, Peter!... Everything was as it should be. It was with a happy heart that Heidi lay down that night. Her sleep was sounder than it had been in months. Grandfather got up at least ten times during the night and climbed the ladder to see if Heidi was all right. But Heidi didn't stir. She didn't have to worry about that burning in her heart. She had heard the wind in the fir trees. She was at home again on the mountain."⁴⁵

Obviously, Grandfather's house is on the mountainside where there is peace, joy and harmony. Heidi is also friendly with Peter the goatherd and grandfather's goats such that there is friendship and tolerance and accommodation of the animals to the extent that they are named and treated well. Grandfather milks the goats and it is a source of food for him and Heidi and later Clara; thus, they benefit from the goats. Nevertheless, Grandfather also makes sure they are well fed and have a clean shed to live in thus creating an enabling environment for both the humans and the animals to have a dwelling with a sense of belonging. Grandfather and Heidi's lives are so linked to the environment and to each other that Heidi becomes

³⁴ Garrard, *Dwelling: Sense of Planet*, (2014):117

³⁵ Garrard, *Dwelling: Sense of Planet*, (2014)

³⁶ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 118

³⁷ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 123

³⁸ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 123

³⁹ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 124

⁴⁰ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 129

⁴¹ Garrard, *Dwelling*, 130

⁴² Berry, W. *What are the People for?* (San Francisco: North Point Press, 1990)

homesick when she is in Frankfurt. Her first time of being in Frankfurt is described thus, “She jumped out of bed, got dressed, and ran to the window, Heidi was eager to see the sky and country outside, but the curtains were too heavy for her to push aside... She couldn’t see what she wanted... she felt like a caged bird”⁴³

Heidi being used to open spaces could not bear the claustrophobic effect of the house in Frankfurt, so she seeks a way out. “The first thing Heidi did was to seek out Sebastian and have him open a window.” Then she is disappointed and says, “But where can I go to look out over the whole valley?” She goes out to try and see from a tower what she wants to see and when she could not, she finally says, “It’s not at all what I thought.”⁴⁴

Again, when she has been in Frankfurt for a week, she, “spent time picturing the mountain. The leaves would soon be turning green and the yellow flowers would be shining in the sun and all the time Heidi was so homesick that she could hardly stand it.”⁴⁵

Then Heidi finds a substitute for the mountain. It was symbolic of her sense of dwelling and place of belonging. This appears in the lines: “Heidi... let out a cry... she just stared at it. Then the tears began to fall. At last she burst into sobs. Grandmamma looked at the picture carefully. It was a green pasture filled with young animals. Some were grazing while others nibbled at the shrubs. In the middle was a shepherd looking at his happy flock.”⁴⁶

Heidi is comforted a little and because she is to be given the book that is the substitute as reward for learning to read and Heidi quickly learns to read. “The picture is actually that of the prodigal son before he leaves his father’s house with his share of his father’s riches.”⁴⁷ This is also symbolic of the current state of Heidi as a transplanted young plant unable to grow and develop in an unfamiliar soil.

Finally, Heidi finds an out-let in sleep-walking! She dreams every night about her beloved dwelling and even reinforces her dream with action unknowingly. This is present in the answer she gives when questioned by the Doctor:

“Yes. I dream every night, and always about the same things. I think I am back with my grandfather. I hear the wind in the fir trees outside and I see the stars shining so brightly I quickly open the door and run out. It’s all so beautiful! But when I wake up, I am still in Frankfurt.”⁴⁸

This young girl is finally sent home because of her psychological state and there she “... was out of her mind with delight at being among her old friends again. Everything was as it should be. It was with a happy heart that Heidi lay down that night. Her sleep was sounder than it had been for months... Heidi didn’t stir. She didn’t have to worry about that burning in her heart. She had heard the wind in the fir trees. She was at home again on the mountain.”⁴⁹

Thus, Heidi is cured of her psychological trauma when she is reunited with dwelling, where her sense of belonging is reaffirmed.

Positive Growth Towards the Good and the Morally Sound:

Perfection through education with the help of God finally comes for Grandfather and Heidi. Heidi with the naivety and innocence of childhood can place her finger on the exact spot of truth. Heidi confirms that education with the help of God brings perfection as she and Grandfather are one day climbing up their mountain. She confirms that God sees to all joy and progress in their lives at any point of time. She declares:

“Our lives are happier now than they have ever been before... when I was in Frankfurt, I prayed to come home right away. But if God had let me come at once, then everything would have been different. I would only have had a little bread for Grandmother and I wouldn’t be able to read. God has made it all so much better than I ever could have imagined... oh, how glad I am that God did not let me have my way from the start... I will pray to thank God for what he has done

⁴³ *Heidi: Retold from the Original Johanna Spyri.* (Sterling: Abridged ed., 2007):42

⁴⁴ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 53- 55

⁴⁵ Heidi: Retold, 66

⁴⁶ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 108 - 109

⁴⁷ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 77

⁴⁸ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 88

⁴⁹ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 103-104

for me. And when he doesn't do what I ask, I shall think to myself, God has a better plan for me"⁵⁰

*Heidi goes on to caution her grandfather about the perils of forgetting God and the consequences. Like an arrow true to its mark, Heidi leads her aged grandfather back to God through the story of the prodigal son that Grandmamma first read to her. At the end of the story Heidi says: "Isn't that a beautiful tale, Grandfather?... You are right, Heidi, it is a beautiful tale... but the old man looked so serious that Heidi grew silent herself. Early the next morning the old man stood in front of his hut looking at all the beauty. "Come along Heidi! The sun is up! Put on your best dress. We are going to church today! The two were quite a sight in church. They slipped in after the music had begun."*⁵¹*At the end Grandfather concludes that "... I am happier today than I deserve. Happier than I thought possible. It is good to be at peace with God and my friends. God was good when he sent you to my hut."*⁵²

*The winds of positive change even blew in the lives of grandmother, Peter and his mother. The health of Grandmother improved with a new feather sent as a present from Grandmamma. The children (Peter and Heidi) become her eyes in her blind and physically challenged state and she says, "You have lightened my heart; dear child."*⁵³

Finally, the doctor comes back to stay in Dorfli with Heidi and Grandfather.

*"And for the little girl who was brought to the mountain all those years ago, she vowed never to leave its splendour. For Heidi had all the happiness she needed right there on the mountain. Grandfather had given her more than a home when he took her in. He had given her a life filled with love, warmth, and care. It was now her pleasure to share these things with others. For as she knew deep down in her heart, everything always works out in the end",*⁵⁴

Thus, end the happy tale of the eponymous titled novel *Heidi*.

Animals

Animals form part of the species that inhabit the earth. Animals in literature are sometimes used as representations of humans and also, they are used to show how humans relate with animals in real life as in *Heidi*. Garrard asserts that the study of animals and humans in the humanities is "split between philosophical consideration of animal rights and cultural analysis of the representation of animals".⁵⁵ He cites Singer's analogy of animals to women, "as falling on the wrong side of a supposedly insuperable line".⁵⁶ He provides a less radical stance than Mary Midgley, who affirms that: Overlooking somebody's race is entirely sensible. Overlooking their species is a supercilious insult. It is no privilege, but a misfortune, for a gorilla or a chimpanzee to be removed from its forest and its relatives and brought up alone among humans to be given what those humans regard as an education.⁵⁷

Garrard makes known the difference between animal liberationists and environmentalists. According to Garrard, animal liberationists "draw the line of moral consideration at the boundary of sentience or feeling, whereas environmentalists, according to Curry lay less emphasis on individual organisms and place more emphasis on moral consideration of inanimate things..."⁵⁸ Garrard compares and contrasts animal and human in terms of metonymy and metaphor.

⁵⁰ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 106-107

⁵¹ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 109

⁵² Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 111

⁵³ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 105

⁵⁴ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 144

⁵⁵ Fitzgerald, Gerard, Nic Fitzgerald, and Carl Davidson. 'Public attitudes towards invasive animals and their impacts'. Canberra, Australia: Invasive Animals Co-operative Research Centre, 2007.:148-149

⁵⁶ Gerard, Public attitudes, 148-149

⁵⁷ Gerard, Public attitudes, 147.

⁵⁸ Curry P. "Ecological Feminism". (London: Routledge, 2006), 149.

According to Willis, the distinctive peculiarity of animals is that, being at once close to man and strange to him, both akin to him and unalterably not-man, they are able to alternate, as objects of human thoughts, between the contiguity of the metonymic mode and the distanced, analogical mode of metaphor.⁵⁹

Heidi, like any other child, likes animals. The animals in the story of *Heidi* serve three purposes—as a source of food, as pets and as a means of transport.

As a source of food: In *Heidi* animals provide food in the form of cheese and milk as characterized by the food taken by Heidi and Peter when they go out with the goats. The food provided by the goats of grandfather is so important that it serves as healing for Clara. This appears in the following lines: “While the girls played, Grandfather did his part to make sure the visitor was well cared for. Since it was the finest they had, he gave her only little Swan’s milk to drink. He made sure she got plenty of food and fresh air, and he worked with her legs...”⁶⁰

The importance of goat milk is also emphasized by Staughton in the following lines: “The health benefits of goat milk include its ability to aid in weight loss, reduce inflammation, optimize digestion, improve the bioavailability of nutrients, strengthen bones, boost heart health, strengthen immunity, increase metabolism, prevent toxins from accumulating in the body and benefit overall health.”⁶¹

As pets: In real life, some animals are kept as pets or companions and they are shown much love and affection. Heidi and Clara show affection to the kittens and protect them when Miss. Rottenmeier asks for the kittens to be thrown out. This appears in the lines:

“...Heidi heard a loud meow. The little girl stopped and looked about the small area. Seeing Heidi so interested, the old man pointed her toward a basket. ‘Oh, the sweet things, the Darling kittens!’ She kept on saying. ‘Would you Like to have one?’ asked the old man, ‘To keep?’ ‘Yes, of course. More than one if you like. In fact, you can take them all if you want.’ Heidi smiled, thinking of the joy the kittens would bring Clara. ‘Can I take two today and get the rest later?’ ‘Of course,’ the man laughed. ‘I will even bring them to you!’ Heidi pointed out where she lived. Then the young girl spent a minute or more picking the two kittens that would go with her. She put them in her pockets and scampered down the rest of the steps to the boy waiting on the street. Heidi walked into the room and listened to Ms. Rottenmeier scold her. When she had finished, she asked Heidi what she had to say for herself. ‘Meow,’ came the answer. The old lady jumped up in anger. ‘Adelheid, what did you say?’ ‘I didn’t say’ began Heidi. ‘Meow, meow!’ Sebastian had a hard time holding in his laughter and almost dropped the dishes. Ms. Rottenmeier stomped to Heidi to see what had made the noise. ‘Kittens!’ she shrieked. ‘Sebastian! Tinette!’ I will see to it, answered Sebastian with a smile.” “I will put them where the lady is not likely to go.”⁶² And so Heidi and Clara went to sleep that night knowing that the kittens were safe and warm in a comfortable bed.

The passage above shows the co-existent nature of Heidi and the mutual benefits derived from her coming from her Swiss alps to live with Clara as companion in Frankfurt, Germany. Her free flow nature makes her think of Clara first and even though done clumsily, she brings joy to the physically challenged Clara by gifting her with kittens.

Heidi is also kind to the animals her grandfather owns and becomes very much attached to these named goats (brown bear and white swan). She even becomes attached to the rest of the goats Peter takes care of. She even bribes Peter with cheese for him to stop beating greenfinch (another goat) when it was naughty. Peter, on the other hand, does not show affection to the animals even though he is a shepherd. He tries to strike one as a form of discipline. Heidi protests such act and even offers Peter an incentive to deter him from any act of that sort. The following exchange takes place between them concerning Greenfinch: “...She needs it, Peter growled and lifted his stick again. Heidi quickly put herself between the boy and the goat. “You have no right to touch her. It will hurt her. Leave her alone!”⁶³

⁵⁹ Willis, R. *Man and Beast*. London: Hart-Davis, MacGibbon, (1974), 174

⁶⁰ Heidi: Retold from the Original Johanna Spyri. (Sterling: Abridged ed., 2007), 103.

⁶¹ Staughton John. “9 Surprising Goat Milk Health Benefits”.(2019). www.organicfacts.net/health-benefits/animal-product/goat-milk.html

⁶² Spyri, Heidi: Retold. 55-59.

⁶³ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 24 - 25

Fraulein Rottenmeier, like Peter, does not portray a kind attitude towards animals. Her unkind attitude is exhibited when she asks Sebastian to throw out the kittens. But there is joy in being close to these animals and Heidi and Clara derived that happiness.

As transport: The means of transportation at Dorfli and Frankfurt are carriages. A carriage is made up of a wagon and a horse; as the horse moves, it pulls along the wagon and anything else on it. A carriage transported Heidi from Frankfurt to the station. At Mayenfield's station, she is transported by a carriage to Dorfli. Grandmamma also travels to Heidi's home on horseback.

Mutualism and Coexistence with other Humans

In a mutualistic relationship, two species benefit. These species may or may not necessarily be from the same category. A type of such relationship is the relationship between sea anemones and clownfish. The clownfish cleans algae from the sea anemones and in return the sea anemones protect the fish from predators.

As humans, we commune with one another to prolong existence. In other words, no man succeeds or can live on his or her own without the involvement of other humans. The involvement of others may not necessarily be long-term. John Donne's quote "No man is an island, entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main"⁶⁴ affirms communal living. Such co-existential relationship can be said to exist among the characters in *Heidi* as in "...when the weather finally grew cold and grandfather told Heidi to stay home, Peter felt the same unhappiness as the young girl ..." ⁶⁵From the above extract, one will realize Peter and Heidi's benefit from this relationship is their friendship and the company they keep each other.

"This could be so wonderful for Heidi! She could live in a fancy place and have someone to play with."⁶⁶ "Clara had grown much more cheerful since Heidi had moved in.... he planned to keep Heidi around. She had a pleasant personality and was a wonderful friend for his Clara..."⁶⁷

The above extracts from the novel show the beneficial relationship between Heidi and Clara. Heidi keeps Clara company, as she (Clara), is the only child in the house of Sesemann and in return Heidi also gets a "fancy place to live", a friend to play with, and an education alongside.

Both the Doctor and Grandmamma benefit from their relationship with Heidi. She brings happiness to them and in return Heidi gains another father figure from the Doctor and also she is taught about God by Grandmamma.

Heidi also says this to Peter to encourage him read to grandmother. This is also another form of mutualistic benefit which exists in the text, Peter could improve his reading while grandmother listened to be soothed. She says "she needs to hear them every day, Peter. They make her feel so much better. That is a gift that you can give her..."⁶⁸

Heidi ensures she helps Peter with his studies, especially his ability to read, in order for Grandmother to enjoy hymns in the absence of Heidi. This can be said to be mutualistic, in the sense that Grandmother gets to enjoy the pleasure of listening to hymns and in return, Peter gains the ability to read.

In the spirit of harmonious living, Grandfather provides Clara with the best milk available and also makes sure she gets plenty food and fresh air while he works with her legs in the hope of her taking a step one day.⁶⁹

A type of mutualistic relationship is facultative mutualism. Species in a facultative mutualistic relationship coexist but do not depend on each other. Heidi's relationship with Fraulein Rottenmeier can be a facultative mutualistic relationship. They only coexist as Heidi is Clara's companion and Fraulein Rottenmeier are the housekeepers in the Sesemann house.

⁶⁴Donne John Meditation xvii

⁶⁵ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 26

⁶⁶ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 40

⁶⁷ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 74

⁶⁸ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 112

⁶⁹ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 130

The Wilderness: The Role of Nature as a Healer

Nature is a broad concept with many definitions. Nature, for this purpose, can be referred to as a place with very little human activities such as the wilderness. “The idea of wilderness, signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization, is the most potent construction available to New World environmentalism.”⁷⁰ It has less human activity due to its nature. Due to less human activity, the wilderness can inhabit various species which are not human.

Wilderness, from an ecocriticism perspective examines the former’s representation in literature and others. The representation of the wilderness is divided into two main tropes; old and new world wilderness. The old-world views wilderness as an isolation void of civilization, in other words, a place of exile. The new world views the wilderness as a place of sanctuary and not a fearful isolation meant for people who do wrong but from a positive point of view. It is viewed as a safe haven for the various animals and few humans who find solace there.

The soothing tranquility of nature has a positive therapeutic effect on those who enjoy it as stated by Selhub in the following words: “Research from all over the world is showing that people who live closer to green space have fewer health complaints and live longer and that the green space itself is a stress buffer, helping people cope better with life’s adversity. Other studies have found that invisible chemicals (called phytoncides) in some trees can reduce stress hormones, lower anxiety, and improve blood pressure and immunity...being outdoors provides you with the benefits of getting natural sunlight, giving you much needed vitamin D and natural stabilization of melatonin levels...”⁷¹ Selhub here implies that nature is the best companion for humans after hectic activities for rejuvenation and revitalization.

Heidi’s first encounter on the mountains resulted in her having a place to call home and being a healthy-looking child to which Aunt Dete attests. The child had grown well and healthy. Same can be said of Clara’s first encounter with nature on the mountains. Clara, at Frankfurt, is described as having a pale thin face. Clara’s communion with nature on the mountain results in her looking well and having a good appetite as compared to her home in Frankfurt; this is evident in the observation t below made by Grandmamma after Clara’s few days on the mountains: “...your cheeks have grown and rosy! Can that be you?”⁷²

One major happening that contrasts these two living places is the “healing and therapeutic effect” on the mountains. Natural environment, more specifically the mountains, provide some characters in the novel with healing both physically and psychologically. This appears in the lines: “...There is only one cure for this, she must be sent back to her mountain. The girl must leave here tomorrow.”⁷³ “...If you send her back at once, she may get better in the mountain air. But if you wait, she may not get better at all.”⁷⁴

The above excerpts provide proof of the healing effect of nature. The doctor suggests to Herr Sesemann that Heidi must be sent back as the sickness she has does not need “modern medicine” but rather her healing will come from her natural environment which is the alps back at Dorfli. Clara’s stay on the mountains proves to be good as she is able to walk. This healing, grandfather attributes to “God’s good sun and mountain air,”⁷⁵

The doctor is not left out of the healing and therapeutic effect of the mountains. His visit to the mountains gained him friends, freedom and fresh air which is not easily accessible in Frankfurt. He concurs to how life on the mountains is good for the body and soul as he himself is able to enjoy life again after the death of his wife and daughter which he could not do in Frankfurt. The doctor, “... enjoyed the closeness

⁷⁰ Garrard, 66

⁷¹ Eva Selhub, M.D. “A Doctor Explains how to Take Advantage of the Healing Powers of Nature”.n.d Mindbodygreen.com,<https://www.mindbodygreen.com/0-30024-a-doctor-explains-how-to-take-advantage-of-the-healing-powers-of-nature.html>

⁷² Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 137

⁷³ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 90

⁷⁴ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 91

⁷⁵ Spyri, Heidi: Retold,138

of good friends and fresh air and freedom of the mountain. Getting away from the city helped him forget his troubles and enjoy life again.”⁷⁶

Then he says this to himself when he leaves the mountain after his holiday: “it is good to be up there... good for the body and the soul. A man might learn how to be happy again here.”⁷⁷ “Life had certainly changed on the mountain, and soon things would be changing even more.”⁷⁸

“Heidi had all the happiness she needed on the mountain and grandfather had given her more than a home when he took her in. He had given her a life filled with love, warmth and care. It was now her pleasure to share these things with others. For everything worked out in the end.”⁷⁹

Heidi’s life on the mountain is a joyous and happy one. Grandfather provides Heidi with love and affection contrary to what the people of Dorfli initially thought. They perceived grandfather to be cold and uncaring but he proved to be the opposite and very kind to Heidi. Although she gains a new family at Frankfurt, all the happiness she needs is provided by the mountains; her grandfather’s love and warmth, her friendship with Peter and the goats and the pleasurable sight of seeing the grandmother happy.

CONCLUSION

The experiences of the characters in the novel, on the mountains is nothing but abundance of joy and happiness, healing, new friends and family.

New Family and Friends

Heidi gains a new family both at Dorfli and Frankfurt. The new family she gets at Dorfli includes Grandfather, Grandmother, Peter and Brigitta. Those she acquires at Frankfurt also includes Clara, the Doctor, Grandmother. In the light of gaining new friends, grandfather becomes close with grandmother and repairs her house for her to prevent the cold from getting to her. His relationship with the people of Dorfli improves as he can attend service without feeling like he is being hated. Again, Grandfather’s relationship with the people of Dorfli is repaired. He moves from the mountain to Dorfli to settle there and he changes his stance on Heidi’s education and allows her to attend school at Dorfli. The doctor gains a new family by opting to share responsibilities of Heidi with grandfather. He also develops a close friendship with grandfather. The doctor gets a daughter figure in his life after he loses his daughter and wife. Lastly, the Sesemann family form a cordial relationship with Peter’s family and grandfather.

Nature

Nature proved to be an essential existence in the novel. Nature provided some of the characters with healing that modern medicine could not. Nature provides healing to Clara, as she is able to walk again without support of a wheelchair or anything else. Again, Heidi receives healing from her ailment when she returns to the mountains. The doctor also receives psychological healing during his stay on the mountains. He describes the natural environment, more specifically the mountains as peaceful and also a place where the body and soul can receive healing.

Grandfather’s initial purpose of moving up the mountain is to stay away from both the people of Dorfli and God, but this spun around, and he gains more than what he loses. Lastly, as animals form part of nature, they are to be treated with kindness, love and affection as Heidi and Clara portray.

Joy and Happiness

Heidi brings joy not only to her grandfather but also grandmother, Brigitta and Peter. She brings “light” to the blind old woman’s eyes. Grandmother’s world is brightened due to Heidi’s existence in her life. Again, Heidi brings grandmamma and Clara joy and happiness. Grandfather reunites joyfully with the people of Dorfli and he moves to live amongst them. Heidi intends to share the joy she has with others. This work analyzes the novel *Heidi* from an eco-critical point. Ecocriticism looks at the relationship between man and the environment. The environment includes human, animals, nature and other organisms. Such kind of relationship is emphasized on using the mutualistic association- a type of symbiosis. In answering first part

⁷⁶ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 118

⁷⁷ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 119

⁷⁸ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 112

⁷⁹ Spyri, Heidi: Retold, 114

of the question, symbiotic metaphor can be said to refer to comparison of long-term association of humans and the environment outside the scientific and fiction world. Ecocriticism is an interesting literature theory that reveals the relationship we as a people must have towards the environment through emulation of fiction. Further studies should be conducted on this theory to enhance our knowledge about the benefits the natural world offers and how appreciative man must be towards nature. It also brings to light the positive and negative ways people treat the environment through the scope of literature.

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