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"Ego-trips" versus Ecological Selves: A Deep Ecological Approach to Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale*

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Abstract

This study examines Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* (2008) through Arne Naess's deep ecological philosophy, focusing on its critique of anthropocentrism and advocacy for biocentric egalitarianism. The novel explores the fictional Aatsika people's profound relationship with the ocean and its creatures, offering a counter-narrative to exploitative environmental practices. By contrasting late capitalist ideologies with a deep ecological worldview, Hogan emphasizes all life forms' interconnectedness and intrinsic value while underscoring the consequences of humanity's disconnection from nature. Through the journeys of its central characters, the narrative advocates for Self-realization, relational ethics, and ecological harmony, reflecting the core principles of deep ecology. This analysis positions the novel as a significant contribution to ecocritical literature, highlighting its relevance in addressing contemporary environmental crises. By challenging anthropocentric paradigms, Hogan's work offers a transformative vision for ethical human-nature relationships, providing insights into the urgent need for sustainable and holistic approaches to ecological and cultural renewal.

Keywords: Arne Naess, anthropocentrism, deep ecology, ecocriticism, environmental ethics, Linda Hogan

"Ego Yolculuklarından" Ekolojik Benliğe: Linda Hogan'ın *People of the Whale* Romanına Derin Ekoloji Felsefesinden Bakmak

Öz

Bu çalışma, Linda Hogan'ın *People of the Whale* (2008) adlı romanını Arne Naess'in derin ekoloji felsefesi ekseninde ele alarak, insanmerkezci yaklaşımlara yönelttiği eleştiriyi ve tüm yaşam biçimlerine eşit değer atfeden biyomerkezci bir etik anlayışı öne çıkarır. Kurgusal Aatsika halkının okyanus ve deniz canlılarıyla kurduğu derin bağ üzerinden Hogan, doğaya yönelik sömürücü yaklaşımlara karşı güçlü bir karşı anlatı sunar. Roman, geç kapitalist ideolojileri derin ekolojik bir bakış açısıyla karşılaştırarak, tüm canlı varlıkların içkin değerine ve doğadaki karşılıklı bağlılığa vurgu yapar; insanın doğadan kopuşunun yol açtığı yıkımı görünür kılar. Ana karakterlerin içsel yolculukları, öz farkındalık, ilişkisel etik ve ekolojik dengeye dayalı bir varoluş biçimini ifade eder; bu yönüyle roman, derin ekolojinin temel ilkelerini edebi düzlemde yansıtır. Çalışma, eseri çevreci edebiyat eleştirisinin çağdaş çevre krizlerine yanıt veren önemli örneklerinden biri olarak

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konumlandırır. Hogan'ın insanmerkezci paradigmaları sorgulayan anlatısı, insan ve doğa arasındaki ilişkiye dair dönüştürücü, etik temelli bir bakış açısı sunar ve sürdürülebilir, bütüncül bir ekolojik ve kültürel yeniden yapılanmanın gerekliliğine dikkat çeker.

Anahtar sözcükler: Arne Naess, antroposentrizm, derin ekoloji, çevreci edebiyat eleştirisi, çevre etiği, Linda Hogan

INTRODUCTION

Linda Hogan, a Native American author and poet of Chickasaw descent, an experienced ethno-scientist and gray whale ethologist, has passionately sought to deconstruct the nature/culture dichotomy in Western thought, both in her fiction and non-fiction, replacing it with an ecocentric, non-anthropomorphic being in the world that is seamlessly intertwined with the non-human nature. Encountering Hogan's works, both fiction and nonfiction, we, as readers, are introduced to her philosophies in relation to nature, which understand the earth as a vital living organism in which we live. Hogan's holistic conception of the earth knows no hierarchies between species, neither between living and non-living entities such as waters, land, air, rocks, and stones. In her 1995 publication *Dwellings*, Hogan advocates for a non-anthropocentric viewpoint, advocating for our assumption of a role as stewards and caretakers of the non-human natural world, irrespective of the benefits and interests it may yield. In her book's preface, Hogan mourns the divergence from previous agreements between humanity and non-human nature, stating, "we have strayed from the treaties we once had with the land and with the animals" (1995a, p. 11). This sentiment is also echoed in her novel *Solar Storms*, where she, too, bewails the rupture of pacts between humans and nature (1995b, p. 16).

In 1973, Norwegian philosopher Arne Naess introduced the term "ecosophy" as a conceptual counterpart to ecological wisdom (often termed *eco-wisdom* or *wisdom of place*). Ecosophy, in Naess's usage, refers to a deep understanding of the interconnectedness and interdependence of all living and non-living entities in the natural world. Naess's objective was to use ecosophy and the construct of deep ecology to move beyond utilitarian approaches to conservation and to reconcile divisions between humanity, nature, and the spiritual and physical domains (Naess, 1986; Naess, 1989). Arne Naess, like Hogan, draws no distinction between humans and the non-human world; nor does he separate any other components of nature. He conceptualizes the world as an interconnected network of phenomena, rather than as a collection of isolated objects. This ecological insight underpins Naess's deep ecology, which comprises a framework of eight principles derived from his own philosophical reasoning, what he calls *ecosophy*.

This study offers a thorough analysis of Linda Hogan's novel *People of the Whale* (2008) through the framework of Naessian ecological philosophy. It also elucidates connections between the novel's themes and the most pressing environmental challenges of the contemporary world, as discussed in the concluding remarks. The study is structured into four main sections. First, it presents a comprehensive overview of various approaches to environmental ethics. Second, it delves into deep ecology and ecosophy as radical paradigms for understanding human–nature relationships. Third, it examines the socio-cultural backdrop of the Makah people—historically known as "whale

people," fictionalized in the novel as the Aatsika. Finally, it explores the relevance of deep ecology to *People of the Whale*. This critical interrogation of the novel from a deep ecological perspective unveils two divergent modalities of existence: one characterized by an anthropocentric worldview and the other by a biocentric perspective—encapsulated in the dichotomy "ego-trips" versus "ecological selves" as intimated by the title of this article.

1. APPROACHES TO ENVIRONMENTAL ETHICS

Environmental ethics introduces a range of innovative perspectives that challenge and enrich conventional ethical frameworks. It prompts consideration of anthropocentrism, which prioritizes humans in ethical discourse, while also exploring newer paradigms such as biocentrism (life-centered approach) and ecocentrism (ecosystem-centered approach). Additionally, it encompasses concepts like deep ecology, social ecology, ecofeminism, Indigenous perspectives, technocentrism, animal rights, and the rights of nature. Collectively, these perspectives contribute to a more comprehensive ethical understanding in the context of environmental issues. It is useful to consider three primary approaches when examining our relationship with nature: anthropocentric, biocentric, and ecocentric perspectives.

Anthropocentrism places human beings at the forefront, prioritizing human interests whenever they conflict with those of non-human entities. This approach confines ethical considerations to a human-centered framework, contextualizing all other entities—animals, plants, and even entire ecosystems—by their utility or value to humans. Anthropocentrism frequently underpins exploitative attitudes and actions toward the environment by regarding it merely as a resource for human benefit.

Biocentrism, alternatively referred to as life-centered ethics, is a moral standpoint that confers inherent value upon all living organisms, independent of their usefulness to human purposes. The biocentric approach centers on interactions between humans and non-human entities. It advocates shifting away from a human-centric mindset, emphasizing a more equitable perspective. According to this view, the relationship between humans and nature embodies a part–whole dynamic wherein each constituent has equal value despite its distinct characteristics. Biocentric approaches—exemplified by Peter Singer's animal ethics in *Animal Liberation* (2015) and by Arne Naess's deep ecology—can be traced back to Aldo Leopold's concept of the land ethic, which he articulated in *A Sand County Almanac* (1970). Leopold posited that nature possesses a form of consciousness that transcends mere human rationality, thereby justifying its intrinsic value (1970, pp. 201–210).

Ecocentrism, as an ethical perspective, holds that ecosystems and their components—both living and non-living—have intrinsic moral worth. This concept is rooted in the belief that Earth's ecosystems form intricate, interconnected webs that function as unified entities. Aldo Leopold, often credited with articulating the ecocentric worldview, advocated a land ethic that sees humans as integral members of the biotic community and promotes actions aimed at conserving the "integrity, stability, and beauty" of this community (Leopold, 1970, p. 224). From an ecocentric perspective, biocentrism may appear somewhat myopic, focusing on individual moral transgressions or human psychology. Ecocentrists argue that environmental predicaments are not only ethical issues but also

political ones, owing to the transformative relationship between nature and human societies. This approach often aligns with social ecology and ecofeminism, calling for the dismantling of entrenched patriarchal and hierarchical structures as part of the solution. Both ecocentrism and deep ecology critique anthropocentrism and demand that moral consideration be expanded to ecosystems and the planet as a whole, asserting the intrinsic value of nature irrespective of its instrumental utility to humans. They differ in scope and emphasis, however, with deep ecology calling for more profound societal and philosophical changes

2. BASIC TENETS OF THE DEEP ECOLOGY MOVEMENT AND ARNE NAESS'S ENVIRONMENTAL PHILOSOPHY

> Now it is the time to share with all life on our maltreated Earth through the deepening identification with life forms and the greater units, the ecosystems, and Gaia, the fabulous, old planet of ours. (Naess, 1995b, p. 235).

Arne Naess conceptualized deep ecology in contrast to what he termed shallow ecology. Shallow ecology is marked by an anthropocentric viewpoint: it values nature only in the context of human needs and disregards the inherent rights of all living beings to thrive. Deep ecology, by contrast, recognizes the intrinsic value of all human and non-human beings and acknowledges that nature has rights that exceed mere human utility. The difference between deep and shallow ecology becomes evident in approaches to conservation versus preservation. Conservation, akin to shallow ecology, involves the managed use and protection of natural resources for future human needs. Preservation, aligned with deep ecology principles, prioritizes safeguarding natural resources from human interference and maintaining them in their original state (Naess, 2005).

Naess and George Sessions first drafted the deep ecology platform in 1984 during a camping trip in the Utah desert, and the principles were formally published the following year in *Deep Ecology: Living as If Nature Mattered* (Naess & Sessions, 1985). Andrew McLaughlin (1993) later characterized these principles as the "heart of deep ecology" (p. 173), underscoring their centrality within the movement. Collectively, the platform articulates a profound reorientation in environmental thought, extending the concept of environment beyond the sphere of living organisms to encompass the Earth in its entirety as a shared habitat. In essence, the platform principles set forth a normative framework that calls for a fundamental transformation in how humans perceive and inhabit the natural world. In summary, the platform principles are as follows:

- Intrinsic Value: The well-being and flourishing of human and non-human life on Earth have value in themselves (i.e. intrinsic or inherent value), independent of their usefulness to humans. Richness and diversity of life forms contribute to the realization of these values and are values in themselves.
- Vital Needs: Humans have no right to reduce this richness and diversity except to satisfy vital needs.
- Population: The flourishing of human life and cultures is compatible with a substantial decrease in human population. The flourishing of non-human life *requires* such a decrease.

- Human Interference: Present human interference with the non-human world is excessive, and the situation is rapidly worsening. Policies must therefore be changed, affecting basic economic, technological, and ideological structures. The resulting state of affairs will be profoundly different from the present.
- Quality of Life: The ideological change must involve appreciating life quality (dwelling in situations of inherent value) rather than adhering to an ever-increasing standard of living. There will be a profound awareness of the difference between *big* and *great*.
- Obligation to Act: Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation to try to implement the necessary changes (Naess, 2005, pp. 37-42).

At its core, deep ecology is founded on the belief that all living beings—human or otherwise—possess intrinsic value and have the right to thrive. This philosophy asserts that every organism is entitled to exist and reproduce freely, regardless of its utility to humanity. Notably, this perspective extends beyond individual creatures to entire ecosystems ("non-human cultures" such as watersheds, landscapes, and biotic communities), all of which are understood to have significant intrinsic worth (Naess, 1995a, p. 68).

A key principle of deep ecology emphasizes the interconnectedness of all living entities. Biodiversity and the interdependence of nature's elements are crucial, and there is no hierarchy in the web of life—each component relies on the others. Deep ecology thus promotes recognition and appreciation of life's diversity and richness, noting that ecosystems maintain themselves through biodiversity and mutual interdependence (Naess, 1995a, p. 69).

Another principle examines how the intrinsic worth of living beings is often overlooked and asserts that this worth should only be compromised to meet vital needs. Naess allows some flexibility in interpreting "vital needs," acknowledging that individuals must discern which needs are truly essential. For example, one person might define vital needs narrowly (basic food and shelter), while another might consider many daily activities "essential." It is important to reflect on the intentions behind any action that diminishes a being's value. One might hunt for sustenance, for instance, whereas another might hunt solely for recreation. Deep ecology maintains that no one has the right to undermine another being's ability to survive except out of genuine necessity. If such rights are violated without necessity, those actions are ethically indefensible (Naess, 1995a, p. 69).

Furthermore, deep ecologists identify human interference as a principal cause of environmental degradation. While all species modify their environment to some extent (beavers building dams, birds building nests, etc.), human interference has far exceeded sustainable levels. Ecosystems have innate capacities for self-regulation, and excessive human disruption tends to cause more harm than good (Naess, 1995a, p. 69). Deep ecology, therefore, advocates greatly reducing human impact and allowing natural processes to maintain ecological balance.

Integral to the deep ecology platform is the call for change—new policies and profound transformations in society's fundamental structures. Deep ecologists argue that basic economic, technological, and ideological frameworks must be revised. Such changes will not be instantaneous; they require sustained effort and a shift in mindset over time (Naess, 1995a, pp. 69–70). Ultimately,

the goal is a society that values quality of life and harmony with nature over material consumption and endless economic growth. In line with these changes, deep ecology emphasizes living more simply and prioritizes quality of life over material wealth. It encourages voluntary simplicity: intentionally reducing one's material needs to find greater fulfillment and happiness with less. By seeking deeper well-being rather than a higher standard of living, individuals can reduce their ecological footprint and experience a more contented life (Naess, 1995a, p. 70).

Implementing deep ecology's principles requires both personal and collective action. While the platform includes an explicit obligation for supporters to work toward necessary changes, its deeper value lies in raising awareness and shifting perceptions. As Naess observed, "The frontier of the environmental crisis is long and varied, and there is a place for everyone" (1995a, p. 70). In other words, addressing our environmental challenges will require contributions from people in all walks of life.

Deep ecology ultimately calls for a new global paradigm that values the Earth's intrinsic worth. Focusing only on narrow environmental issues can overlook broader social and ethical contexts; rather, deep ecology urges personal growth and a universal acceptance of its principles to address not only environmental degradation, but also related social, political, and economic issues. In essence, it seeks to enhance global well-being comprehensively. This eco-manifesto advocates eliminating the traditional separation between human and non-human life forms, aiming to integrate all beings into a single ethical community and improve the well-being of the entire Earth household. Humanity must establish non-utilitarian frameworks that recognize the fundamental interconnectedness of the human and the non-human realms. Embracing Arne Naess's vision of long-term, biocentric "deep" thinking is essential, especially in contrast to short-sighted anthropocentrism.

Naess introduced the term *ecosophy* as a more appropriate label for his philosophy than "deep ecology," arguing that without a solid theoretical foundation, "deep ecology" could be misinterpreted. Ecosophy provides that foundation. Central to Naess's ecosophy is the pursuit of Self-realization (with a capital "S"), a holistic understanding of the self that includes all forms of life on the planet. Naess succinctly captures the spirit of ecosophy in the maxim: "Maximize long-range universal Self-realization," or more informally, "Live and let live," a principle he applies to all living beings (1995a, p. 80). To prevent misunderstanding, he sometimes uses the term "universal symbiosis" to convey the idea of living in mutually beneficial relationship with all life.

Philosopher David Rothenberg (1989), in his introduction to Naess's *Ecology, Community and Lifestyle*, further explicates the concept of Self-realization in ecosophy. Rothenberg (1989, p. 9) notes three key characteristics: Self-realization is not self-centered or egotistical; it requires expanding one's consciousness to acknowledge one's interconnectedness with nature; and it is an ongoing, never fully attainable process (much like the asymptotic approach to Nirvana in Buddhism) rather than a fixed state. This ever-evolving process of Self-realization provides direction and meaning, guiding individuals toward an expansive sense of Self that includes the rest of nature.

Naessian ecosophy underscores a profound intimacy with the non-human world, encapsulated by the adage, "No one is saved until we are all saved." Here, "the word 'one' refers to

each and every element of the ecosphere contributing to its existence, such as bears, mountains, rivers, and even the microscopic lives in the soil" (Devall & Sessions, 1985, p. 222). In contrast to a constrained, egoistic self, this expansive Self (with a capital "S") incorporates all forms of life on Earth (and potentially beyond), each with its own identity. As John Grim explains, "The individual self, with a lower case 's,' is set within the capital 'S,' the larger Self of relatedness to all beings. Such thinking is also prevalent in deep ecology when searching for the cosmological perspective of relatedness to the larger whole" (2010, pp. 39–40). In summary, Self-realization addresses fundamental questions of human identity, the potential for personal evolution, and the goals to strive for within the broader context of existence (Fox, 1995, pp. 106, 230).

Environmental philosopher Bill Devall (1988) made significant contributions to deep ecology discourse, notably in his work *Simple in Means, Rich in Ends*, which explores the practical application of deep ecological principles. Devall (1988) provides valuable insights into the concept of the ecological self, offering deep ecologists' perspectives on humanity's role in the environment. The ecological self, in this view, is characterized by maturity, awareness, sensitivity, and a profound care for nature. Importantly, developing an ecological self does not mean distancing oneself from nature; on the contrary, seeing nature as "other" is what permits unrestrained exploitation. Without a sense of identification with nature, feelings of accountability vanish. Deep ecology stresses that individuals must recognize their interconnectedness with the environment. Devall, drawing on Frances Vaughn, describes the healthy self as "an open living system in an intricate web of mutually conditioned relationships" (1988, p. 41). Recognizing our interdependence with nature fosters an awareness of our duties as caretakers of the Earth. As Devall further asserts, "as we reach our ecological self, we will joyfully defend and interact with that with which we identify; and instead of imposing environmental ethics on people, we will naturally respect, love, honor, and protect that which is of our self" (1988, p. 43). In other words, understanding the non-human world as an integral part of our very identity encourages natural stewardship and environmental preservation, while also enriching our own sense of well-being.

In her seminal work *When Species Meet* (2008), Donna Haraway echoes deep ecological ideas by urging recognition of animals as fellow agents with whom humans cohabit. She contends that "we are in a knot of species co-shaping one another in layers of reciprocating complexity all the way down" (2008, p. 42), emphasizing the entangled, co-evolutionary relationships among species. Ultimately, as Haraway famously states, "to be one is always to become with many" (2008, p. 4). From a deep ecology standpoint, Haraway's insight significantly extends the notion of the self: our very being is constituted by our relationships with myriad other lives. Embracing this view helps cultivate an ecocentric self that dismantles the artificial ontological divide between human and non-human realms, recognizing the intrinsic value of all beings. Such a conceptual framework contributes to a profound process of Self-realization in an ecological sense, guiding individuals toward an expansive Self that includes the "many" with whom we become.

3. "THE SEA IS MY LAND": THE AQUATIC WORLD OF THE MAKAH

A phrase reportedly common among Makah elders during the treaty era was, "the water is our land." This expression encapsulates the Makah people's perspective on their resources and their inherent connection to their homeland (Collins, 2012, p. 23). Indeed, many Indigenous coastal communities ascribed significant agency to cetaceans, viewing whales as benefactors that provided sustenance and bolstered community prosperity through the trade of whale-derived goods. For these cultures, whaling carried significance far beyond the act itself or the commodities it produced. This wider understanding has led scholars to refer to Indigenous whaling communities—such as the Iñupiat, Ngarrindjeri, Kāi Tahu, and the Makah tribe—as "whale people" (Reid, 2019, p. 148). In his comprehensive study of the Makah, historian Joshua Reid (2019) explains a worldview in which spirituality is intrinsically linked to responsible stewardship (p. 148). He notes, "The spiritual beliefs and practices that guided Makah life and whaling were starkly different from those of the colonial system. From the Makah perspective of a 'sacred ecology,' they saw themselves as relatives of the non-human actors in their environment and recognized a 'responsibility to maintain balanced relationships with the non-human people of the region'" (Reid, 2019, p. 153). The participation of Makah women—often whalers' wives—was integral to ceremonial preparations for the hunt; they maintained solitary, calm conduct during hunts, believing their behavior could influence the whales' response (van Ginkel, 2004, p. 60). In many Indigenous societies, whaling was a unifying practice for families, with specific gender roles managing various aspects of the hunt, such as welcoming the whale's body ashore and ensuring its equitable distribution. Many Indigenous cultures perceive whales as sentient beings with agency, often describing whales as willingly offering themselves to the hunters. Archaeological evidence from Ozette (a Makah village near Cape Flattery) demonstrates a whaling tradition spanning over 2,000 years, underscoring whales' importance in Indigenous creation narratives (Cote, 2010, pp. 16, 26–27).

The arrival of colonial powers in the Pacific Northwest dramatically transformed the social, cultural, and economic structures of the Makahs and other Indigenous whaling peoples (Riley, 1968, p. 65; van Ginkel, 2004, p. 62). In the latter half of the nineteenth century, the Makahs faced formidable challenges that eroded their prosperity and independence. The increasing presence of non-Indigenous whalers and sealers in local waters severely depleted marine species that had sustained Makah subsistence and commerce and that had been integral to their spiritual and social cohesion for centuries. As non-Native whalers overexploited Pacific stocks, governments imposed conservation measures that often favored non-Indigenous and large-scale commercial operations over Indigenous groups and small-scale practices. By the early twentieth century, Makah sea hunters found themselves legally excluded from fisheries that had become depleted anyway. Deprived of the resources and economic base provided by their maritime harvests, the Makahs were increasingly subjected to processes of assimilation and suffered deepening poverty. Consequently, the community experienced a host of social problems, including widespread unemployment, alcoholism, drug abuse, and domestic violence.

Under the Treaty of Neah Bay in 1855, the Makah tribe ceded thousands of acres of land to the United States but explicitly retained the right to continue their traditional whaling practices (Renker

& Gunther, 1990, p. 427; van Ginkel, 2004, p. 62). Article IV of this treaty protects the tribe's whaling and sealing rights at their usual stations, making the Makah the only Native American nation in the U.S. with an explicitly guaranteed whaling right in a treaty (Stevens, 2017, p. 102). The Makah voluntarily ceased whaling in the 1920s due to a severe decline in gray whale populations caused by extensive commercial whaling by non-Indigenous operations (Stevens, 2017, p. 103). After gray whales were removed from the U.S. Endangered Species List in 1993, the Makah sought to reinstate their whaling rights (van Ginkel, 2004, p. 64). It is well-documented that the Makah tribe, in concert with 14 commercial fishing groups and 19 other tribes, actively lobbied for the gray whale's delisting, primarily to facilitate a revival of whaling (van Ginkel, 2004, p. 64).

During the 1996 International Whaling Commission meeting, seven Makah elders—direct descendants of traditional whaling chiefs and signatories of the 1855 treaty—formally voiced their opposition to resuming whale hunting. They pointed out that their community had not eaten whale meat since the early 1900s and argued that the renewed interest in whaling was driven mainly by financial motives rather than tradition, spirituality, or subsistence needs (Miller, 2000; Gaard, 2001; van Ginkel, 2004; Roberts, 2010). Hogan, writing as an advocate for Indigenous ecological ethics, contends that while respecting Native treaty rights is essential, the Makah community would be better served by adhering to cultural values far older than the relatively recent (2,000-year) tradition of whale hunting. These ancient values include revering elderly women as tribal leaders, emphasizing the interconnectedness of the people and the whales, and preserving ecological balance—beliefs that form the true foundation of the culture and its reverence for life. Hogan also underscores "the unremembered story of the whales who do not belong to human beings" (1996, para. 32). This distinction is significant: Hogan differentiates between the power-politics framing of the Makah's legal petition for whaling (i.e. Native American rights versus Euro-American authority, set against historical and contemporary environmental conditions) and the deeper ethical question of whaling itself, which involves relationships among Indigenous people, non-human animals, and the environment. Hogan argues,

> [W]hile our treaties must still hold, in these days there are new considerations. At the time our treaties were created, we did not foresee the loss of species, large-scale toxicity, the thinning of waters, the deforestation of continents ... As Indians, we have the necessity, the requirement, really, to speak out for both the old people and the old ways. What most tribes shared in common has been the respect for life. In the traditional and historic past, we recognized the sovereignty of other species, animal and plant. We held treaties with the animals, treaties shaped by mutual respect and knowledge of the complex workings of the world, and these were laws the legal system can't come close to. That is what gave us our past. That is what the Europeans who arrived here did not have. (Hogan, 1996, para.29, 36)

"They have not beckoned with the spirit of the whale," observes Alberta Thompson, a 73-year-old Makah elder who attended the IWC meeting in Scotland and opposed the whaling revival (qtd. in Hogan, 1996, para. 34). Hogan, too, asserts that hunting whales carries significant repercussions—not only because of potential conflicts between hunters and whales, but also because of the historically important relationship between humans and these magnificent creatures. She voices

concern that improper or commodified whale hunts could disrupt ecological balance (an idea increasingly supported by scientific research) and laments that pro-whaling leaders seem oblivious to the real consequences of their actions (Hogan, 1996, para. 35). In 1996, Makah elders Alberta Thompson and Dotti Chamblin not only signed a formal statement opposing the renewal of Makah whaling but also traveled to the IWC meeting in Scotland to express their concerns. They criticized their tribal council for inadequate consultation and lack of consensus on this critical issue. From a deep ecological standpoint, the stance taken by Brenda Peterson (1996), Linda Hogan (1996), and these Makah elders reflects a profound commitment to recognizing the intrinsic value of all life forms while opposing anthropocentric exploitation. These individuals underscore the need for cultural practices to adapt to contemporary ecological realities, especially given the drastic decline in whale populations. Their position embodies the principle of biocentric egalitarianism, advocating harmonious coexistence with non-human nature. Furthermore, it criticizes the commodification of cultural traditions, insisting that genuine ecological wisdom prioritizes balance and respect over economic or narrowly defined cultural interests.

4. "I SPEAK ON BEHALF OF THE WHALE": A DEEP ECOLOGICAL APPROACH TO *PEOPLE OF THE WHALE*

> He would watch [the whale], its great shining side, the eye with its old intelligence, the gentleness of it in the body covered with barnacle life and sea creatures. It was loved by his people. It was a planet. (Hogan, 2008, p. 267).

The central characters in *People of the Whale* are Thomas Just and his wife Ruth Small, who have been lifelong companions since childhood. Both have auspicious, almost mythic beginnings that mark them as children of the ocean: Ruth was born with vestigial gills that had to be surgically removed, establishing from birth her profound connection to the sea, whereas Thomas's birth coincided with the sudden appearance of a giant octopus in a cave near their village. The local villagers revered this octopus as a sacred being and brought it offerings, seeing it as an omen linked to the newborn. Recognizing her infant son's bond with the creature, Thomas's mother carried him each evening to the cave's entrance, as if dedicating him to the octopus's guardianship.

Ruth and Thomas lead simple, idyllic lives in their coastal village until young adulthood, when Thomas enlists in the U.S. military and is deployed to Vietnam. This decision causes their paths to diverge for many years. While Thomas is overseas, Ruth remains in their community, giving birth to their son Marco and raising him as a single mother, instilling in him the values and cultural heritage of their people. In stark contrast, Thomas's exposure to the brutal realities of war—and to atrocities committed by all sides in Vietnam—shatters his former self, leaving him a fractured individual. During his long absence, Thomas even settles in a Vietnamese village, where he is embraced by the local community and starts a new family. Tragically, his Vietnamese wife later dies after wandering into a minefield. Following this loss, Thomas is eventually found by American forces and repatriated to the United States. Upon reading in a newspaper about his own tribe's plans to revive whale hunting, Thomas clings to the hope that participating in this endeavor will heal his

wretched soul and restore him to the man he used to be: "the man who used to swim with and watch the whales, [t]heir great shining side, the eye with the old intelligence, the gentleness of it in the body covered with barnacle life and sea creatures. … It was a planet. … a planet in its universe of water" (Hogan, 2008, p. 222).

People of the Whale is fundamentally a story about the clash between a deep ecological worldview and late-capitalist, anthropocentric ideologies. Linda Hogan's ecosophy, grounded in Native American knowledge and spirituality, aligns closely with the traditional Indigenous worldview depicted in the novel—a perspective that shares many affinities with deep ecology. Hogan suggests that such pre-modern Indigenous worldviews are essential to humanity's spiritual and psychological growth (Hogan, 1995a, p. 51). In the novel, the Aatsika community of Dark River is split between those who have never relinquished a biocentric understanding of human–non-human relations and those who seek to exploit nature for economic gain. The fictional Aatsika are debating the revival of traditional whale hunting: some see it as a path to cultural renewal for a community in distress, while others vehemently oppose it because of the drastic decline in whale populations. Proponents argue that whaling could help remedy the social and cultural malaise afflicting the tribe. However, prominent figures—such as Ruth Small (a fisherwoman), her mother Aurora, her son Marco, a restaurant-owner named Linda, and respected tribal elders living across the bay in "whitewashed houses" made of whale bone—firmly oppose the hunt (Hogan, 2008, p. 139). They maintain that even the revival of a cultural tradition cannot justify killing whales, whom the Aatsika regard as kin. This belief reflects deeply rooted symbiotic relationships and a recognition of the interconnectedness of all species.

The Aatsika's existence is deeply rooted in their relationship with the ocean and its diverse inhabitants, including plankton, octopuses, shells, crabs, seals, salmon, and whales, among others. This connection transcends mere affection for nature; it encompasses a profound cultural identity and sense of self. For the Aatsika, animals are not only symbolic representations of ecological balance; they are sentient beings and spiritual partners whose presence warrants acknowledgment and protection. Within this aquatic realm, the inhabitants exist within the sea, and the sea becomes an integral part of their being:

> We live on the ocean. The ocean is a great being. The tribe has songs about the ocean, songs to the ocean. To the North, there is an old rubbing beach where the whales used to come out of water and flop awkwardly about" and the tribal people would watch the whales rub their backs into sand and stone to scratch and remove the barnacles that lived on their skin. The whales looked joyful and happily clumsy when they did this. They were sights to behold and were watched with awe and laughter. The whales have always been loved and watched, their spumes of breath blowing above water, their bodies turning, rising. (Hogan, 2008, pp. 12-13).

Aatsika people's kinship with the ocean and its creatures penetrates deeply into the essence of who they are. The inhabitants are ocean people who have "songs about the ocean and songs for the ocean" (Hogan, 2008, p. 9); It is a place where "people's eyes move horizontally" to "watch the long wide sea" (Hogan, 2008, p. 9); The ocean people "hear the low rumble of the whale" (Hogan, 2008, p. 283); They are "accustomed to the smell of fish boats" (Hogan, 2008, p. 155), people "converse

with whales" (Hogan, 2008, p. 10). The traditional people remember "the taste of whale meat" (p. 89) and carry "touchstone whales in pockets" (Hogan, 2008, p. 283) to strengthen the ties with their land. They are people who make houses of whale bones. They are known as the "people of the whale" (Hogan, 2008, p. 43).

In the novel's prologue, the narrator presents an aqueous origin story in which Hogan's fictional Aatsika people once shared a profound spiritual kinship with whales. Their engagement with the ocean and its denizens epitomizes ecological consciousness and an intimate interconnectedness with non-human nature. The Aatsika perceive themselves as indivisible from the ocean and its inhabitants, analogous to the symbiotic relationship between a whale and the barnacles that cling to its skin. They are of the whale, with the whale, immersed in the whale, and vice versa:

> They had come from the caves out in the ocean, come out on the strands of seaweed, some carried, with their stories in their arms and on their backs or carried on the fins of the water animals, and the story of the whale, their ancestor, was one of these All their stories clung like barnacles to the great whale. They worshipped the whales . . . The whales were their lives, their comfort. The swordfish, their friends, sometimes wounded a whale and it would come to the shore to die, or arrive already dead. It was an offering to the hungry people by their mother sea and friend, the swordfish. (Hogan, 2008, p. 38).

In generations past, the Aatsika practiced a form of whaling imbued with deep reverence and reciprocity. Thomas's grandfather, Witka (Ruth's father-in-law and the leader of the last traditional whale hunt on their reservation), exemplified this ethos. He "[would speak with the whales, [entreat]them," asking—arms outstretched—"if one … would offer itself" to feed the hungry people on land. "He beckoned and pleaded" when the people were starving; at other times, he simply watched the majestic creatures "passing by" in great numbers, spouting, breaching, or peering from the water, "their shining sides covered with barnacles" (Hogan, 2008, p. 18). When Witka spotted a whale, he and his wife Mary "pleaded and spoke. *Look how we are suffering. Take pity on us. Our people are small. We are hungry*" (Hogan, 2008, p. 20, italics original). Witka, who could hold his breath and stay underwater for extraordinary lengths of time, possessed unparalleled knowledge of the ocean; he knew how to discern the optimal moment to bring a whale home. To determine that time, he would immerse himself in the sea until he was sure the moment was right. During the hunt, the whalers' wives held special ceremonies on land to ensure the hunt adhered to tradition: "The whole village would enter the sea and stay silent. The town stopped living. No one labored. No one bought and sold. No one laughed or kissed. It was the unspoken rule" (Hogan, 2008, p. 19). In one ritual, Witka sang:

> "Oh brother, sister whale," … "Grandmother whale, Grandfather whale. If you come here to land we have beautiful leaves and trees. We have warm places. We have babies to feed and we'll let your eyes gaze upon them. We will let your soul become a child again. We will pray it back into a body. It will enter our bodies. You will be part human. We'll be part whale. Within our bodies, you will dance in warm rooms, create light, make love. We will be strong in thought for you. We will welcome you. We will treat you well. Then one day I will join you." His wife sang with him. (Hogan, 2008, p. 21).

The Aatsika forebears' rejection of the narrow human ego—and of any hierarchy separating humans from other life forms—amounts to an extension of self to an ecological Self. In Naess's terms, it is Self-realization: a realization of the Self that rejects anthropocentrism and recognizes the flourishing of all nature as an enlargement of one's own self. For these forebears, whale hunting was embedded in an elaborate web of culture and belief. In earlier days, a whale hunt was a momentous event requiring extensive preparation—undertaken only out of genuine need and always accompanied by love and respect for the whale.

In today's Dark River, however, that harmonious world has been gravely disrupted. The once-thriving fishing villages lie abandoned, the sawmill decays, the forests have been logged bare (Hogan, 2008, p. 12). Ravaged by poverty, drug abuse, alcoholism, and domestic violence, the result of forced assimilation and displacement, the Aatsika have experienced rapid cultural and social disintegration. Ruth Just, a humble fisherwoman who embodies the ecological self in the novel, mourns the loss of her people's cultural and spiritual heritage. She laments how starkly different the Aatsika have become within a few short generations (Hogan, 2008, p. 77). Meanwhile, the U.S.-mandated tribal council has been deliberating whether reintroducing whaling might rejuvenate the Aatsika's cultural identity. Yet the Aatsika have not hunted a whale since the 1920s, and the social framework that once supported whaling has long since eroded. Moreover, the global overhunting of whales by American and European industries drastically reduced whale populations in the interim. In a gesture of profound ecological wisdom, the Aatsika voluntarily abstained from whaling for decades out of respect for the whales' right to continue living. This conscientious choice epitomizes a worldview that challenges the separation of humans from their environment and advocates a mutually beneficial relationship with nature, in line with the deep ecological tenet of "the equal right to live and thrive" (Naess, 1973, p. 96). Consistent with deep ecology, the Aatsika's ancestors cherished whales for their intrinsic worth, independent of human use. Likewise, their decision to cease whaling reflects a deep ecological principle: humanity should not diminish the abundance and diversity of life forms except to meet essential needs. This perspective is now carried forward by Ruth, her mother Aurora, her son Marco, her friend Wilma, her granddaughter Delphine, and the tribal elders living across the water in whale-bone houses.

Despite the Aatsika's long tradition of a non-anthropocentric environmental ethic—one in which no absolute divide exists between animal and human, or nature and culture—this ethic is ruptured when a faction of business-minded tribal leaders secretly decides to resume whaling. Ostensibly they claim it is for "cultural revival," but behind the scenes their true motive is profit: they plan to sell whale meat to Japanese commercial interests. In response, Ruth allies with the traditional elders, a group of tribal women, and even outside animal rights activists, environmentalists, and journalists to halt the whale hunt. Ruth's *ecosophy*—like Hogan's own—categorically rejects invoking "culture" as an excuse to violate the rights of non-human nature to live and thrive. Indeed, Linda Hogan's ecosophical stance is embodied in Ruth, in the elder Witka, in Marco, in the village elders, and eventually in Thomas Just. All of them come to value the whales' right to life even above human legal or cultural claims.

Ruth's ecological consciousness consistently affirms the intrinsic value and sacred quality of nature. She regards the ocean as a holistic teacher and healer. She approaches the ocean's lessons for survival with humility and a responsible spirit. Her daily life is deeply entwined with nature, and her relationship with the ocean is intuitive and profound—though never perceived as "supernatural" in the Western, dualistic sense. Ruth exhibits a nuanced understanding of the sea, equal to that of her fellow fishermen. She recognizes the ocean's inherent unpredictability, the towering scale of its waves, and the latent danger of near-collisions. She knows, for instance, that distant seismic events can suddenly alter local currents (Hogan, 2008, p. 71). She understands the complex, unseen dynamics beneath the surface—hidden currents and undertows that can carry the unwary far from shore (Hogan, 2008, p. 133). Her sharpened senses even allow her to detect sounds underwater, enabling her to sense schools of fish and the presence of whales before they break the surface (Hogan, 2008, p. 27). Ever mindful of nature's limits, Ruth fishes during salmon season only what she needs: sometimes throwing a few fish back, keeping just enough to eat, to sell, and for Aurora to smoke (Hogan, 2008, pp. 29, 193). In short, Ruth respects the richness and diversity of life, and she hunts solely to fulfill vital needs.

Ruth's relationship with the ocean and its myriad inhabitants exemplifies ecological interdependence and spiritual reverence. She is deeply attuned to the ocean's rhythms and caprices; rather than resisting these forces, she endeavors to learn from them, allowing intuition to guide her life in harmony with the ocean's teachings. This approach reflects her recognition of the intrinsic value of non-human nature in all its diversity. Locals often refer to her as "the woman of water, of whales," and indeed, Ruth embodies an unwavering love and respect for the majestic marine creatures. Watching whales rise and return to the depths evokes in her a profound spiritual connection—she perceives a divine presence in their graceful movements, even remarking that through them she is aware of "at least one God" (Hogan, 2008, p. 55). By elevating whales to a quasi-divine status, Ruth expresses a spiritual reverence that underscores the whales' importance in her community's cultural identity and mythology. This spiritual bond simultaneously preserves ancestral beliefs and fosters an ecological consciousness that acknowledges the intricate interconnectedness of all living beings. It also establishes a moral framework for engaging with the natural world, one that demands respect, reverence, and responsibility toward both the whales and their environment.

The depth of Ruth's connection to nature is vividly illustrated in her own observations of the whales: "The whales Ruth loved to watch. When she is far out, she still sees them rise and turn, opening the water like new stones, new planets, breathing, their eyes wiser, older than her own" (Hogan, 2008, p. 215). In the ancient gaze of the whale, Ruth perceives the brevity of human life contrasted against the enduring essence of the natural world. This gaze serves as a reminder of the past and a catalyst for her sense of responsibility toward the future. It instils in her humility and mindfulness, prompting her to recognize her place in the broader continuum of life. The whale's silent, ancient presence "narrates" the complex stories of the ocean's depths—the rhythms of the tides and the interconnectedness of all beings. That silent narrative stands in stark contrast to the self-centered "ego-trips" of human existence, urging a more attentive, intuitive engagement with

the world around her. This spiritual dimension of Ruth's worldview emphasizes that nature must not be seen merely as a resource to exploit, but as an essential partner in our shared journey. In essence, Ruth has realized a deep ecological sense of self—one that values the interconnectedness of everything in the world and calls for humility, responsibility, and active care. To honor the whale's gaze, in her view, is to honor the Earth itself, ensuring that the planet's intrinsic wisdom is preserved for future generations.

Ruth's deep ecological ethics sometimes put her at odds with conventional viewpoints on rights. As Barnhill and Gottlieb (2010) explain, when a deep ecologist advocates "biocentric" ethics, she opposes perspectives that emphasize individual (especially human) rights over ecological wholes. For deep ecologists, the ecosystem or "life as a whole" is the primary unit of value, not each human or animal considered in isolation. Consequently, despite her cultural affiliation and respect for her own people's traditions, Ruth (much like Hogan herself) aligns even with non-Indigenous activists to defend the ocean and the whales. She views the whales and her human community as equal members of one organic community, and she prioritizes the integrity and diversity of the biotic community over any purported cultural or legal "right" her tribe has to resume whaling. As Barnhill and Gottlieb (2010) put it, for a deep ecologist, "how we treat nature is a moral question, not one simply of efficiency or property rights" (p. 6). In Ruth's eyes, then, the proposed whaling is fundamentally an ethical issue, not one of cultural entitlement or treaty rights. It is, above all, a moral reckoning with a sentient world, the ocean and its creatures.

In *People of the Whale*, Hogan portrays the sea not as inert matter but as an animate, thinking presence— "the mind of water is listening, the mind of the water is thinking" (Hogan, 2008, p. 71). In this worldview, truth is not found within "this room of bad choices" (the confines of human politics and greed), but beyond it, in a reciprocal, more-than-human consciousness that demands humility and restraint. By characterizing the sea as "listening" and "thinking," the novel (through Ruth's perspective) underscores a reciprocal relationship between human and non-human realms. This is not a relationship of one-sided domination, but a partnership in which individual actions and intentions carry profound consequences. Such a perspective demands accountability and mindfulness, urging humans to act as stewards of the environment rather than as exploiters. Ruth's personification of the sea as a sentient entity that listens and responds is consistent with many Indigenous worldviews, which treat natural elements—oceans, mountains, forests—as living beings with inherent value and even consciousness. Ruth's assertions reflect a worldview in which nature is not conceptualized as a "resource" for human use, but as a partner in a delicate web of interconnection. To communicate with the sea, in Ruth's mind, is to honor its essence, acknowledge its power, and commit to a relationship based on mutual respect. This philosophy stands as a counterpoint to modern paradigms of consumerism and conquest, promoting a return to practices that prioritize sustainability and equilibrium. It repositions humanity as a caretaker rather than a conqueror of nature.

Furthermore, Ruth's physical condition at birth—the gills with which she entered the world—serves as a powerful metaphor for her capacity to transcend typical human limitations and immerse herself fully in the natural world. Her literal, bodily link to the aquatic realm reinforces the notion

that humans are an integral part of nature. As a bridge between terrestrial and marine worlds, Ruth is a liminal figure. This duality within her allows Ruth to embody the deep ecological principle of the unity of humanity and non-human nature. In her very being, she symbolizes the porous boundary between people and the sea, suggesting that the division is more imagined than real.

Thomas Witka's journey in the novel provides a complementary—and in many ways, more harrowing—exploration of these themes. His narrative is a poignant exemplar of the complex challenges faced by contemporary Indigenous communities as they confront social and economic pressures that strain their relationship with nature. Even before Thomas's birth, the Aatsika community was beset by widespread deforestation and the overexploitation of whale populations, leading to severe unemployment in the Dark River region. These hardships compelled Thomas and his childhood friend, Dwight, to face a future with few economic prospects at home. Consequently, as young men, Thomas and Dwight enlisted in the U.S. military and were sent to fight in the Vietnam War.

While serving in Vietnam and Cambodia, Thomas was ordered to carry out acts of ecological and human destruction—at one point, instructed to set fire to the rice paddies of the Indigenous Muong people. When the region's intense humidity thwarted the fires, Thomas's unit was commanded to poison the fields with chemicals. This traumatic experience planted the seeds of moral crisis in Thomas. It catalyzed a process of reconciliation within him, forcing Thomas to navigate a painful internal conflict between the Aatsika values of respect for life that he was raised with and the violent, transgressive actions demanded by the war (Hogan, 2008, pp. 222-223).

Traumatized by the war's violence and by his own complicity in these transgressions, Thomas returns home a broken man. He initially seeks solace and redemption in the idea of reviving the whale hunt. Unbeknownst to him, however, he is being drawn into a cynical venture. Clandestine dealings with Japanese businessmen set the stage for Thomas to participate—alongside Dwight, also a Vietnam veteran—in a brutal and bloody whale hunt driven by greed. During this hunt, tragedy strikes: Dwight fatally shoots Thomas's son, Marco. Marco had accompanied them but refused to kill a whale, moved by his own ecological consciousness and deep affinity for the natural world. "It's young. It's not the right one to hunt. It just wants to see us. We are its relatives," Marco pleads moments before he is killed (Hogan, 2008, p. 85). The senseless slaughter of both a whale and his own son is a turning point for Thomas. Witnessing Dwight's act, Thomas realizes with horror that "they are like the men at war" (Hogan, 2008, p. 81)—in other words, he recognizes that the violence and moral bankruptcy he thought he left on the battlefields have found their echo in the whale hunt.

Profoundly affected by the death of Marco and the whale, Thomas retreats to his grandfather's old house by the sea. In his grief and guilt, he even erects a physical barrier to block his view of the ocean. As the narrative describes, "He knows what's happening, that the ocean is mourning after so much had been taken from it, after Marco and the death of the whale" (Hogan, 2008, p. 113). Thomas confesses, "a lock has been turned inside me" (Hogan, 2008, p. 196). In the wake of these events, Hogan makes it clear that salvation for Thomas can come only through Self-realization in the deep ecological sense. He must, like his grandfather once did, *become* the ocean—listen to its rhythms, respect all life, and rediscover his place in the greater web of being.

In time, Thomas begins to learn how to truly listen to the water. He practices discerning what is needed among the swaying kelp and schooling silver fish around him. He hears the sound of all life in the water. He hears the rumble of a whale approaching him; it comes to him, looks at him with its wise, ancient eye, and in that gaze, Thomas understands everything. He realizes, in that moment, the profound smallness of a human being—not in physical size, but in significance. Humans, he now sees, are "just empty vessels" whose world and even soul can be washed away "as easily as a sandcastle is washed into the sea," and that too many people have been "searching for ... just riches" (Hogan, 2008, pp. 71, 75, 56). These realizations mark Thomas's shedding of his former ego-driven self. As Ruth later observes, Thomas now "sheds a skin" (Hogan, 2008, p. 244). He has violated "laws beneath the laws of men and countries, something deeper—the earth and the sea" and thus "has to care again. He has to be water again, rock, earth with its new spring of flowers and its beautiful, complex mosses" (Hogan, 2008, p. 223). Through suffering and remorse, Thomas is essentially reborn into an ecological Self.

Now, as a renewed member of the non-human realm of the ocean, Thomas develops a profound interconnectedness with its myriad life forms. He adopts practices reminiscent of his grandfather's: he trains himself to hold his breath and remain submerged in the sea for long periods. He even publicly proclaims to his people: "We are going to be good people. We are going to be better people. The ocean indicates that we shall not kill the whales until a future time when it may be appropriate. They are our mothers. They are our grandmothers. It is our responsibility to care for them" (Hogan, 2008, p. 236). With his augmented aquatic intelligence and intuition, Thomas grasps, per the philosophy of Arne Naess, that "My relation to this place is part of myself; if this place is destroyed, something in me is destroyed" (Naess, 1995b, p. 231). Naess (1995b) contends that, unlike in Western philosophy's often narrow notion of self, the self in an ecocentric view extends far beyond one's body to include the surrounding environment. In Thomas's case, his consciousness expands to encompass the non-human world, allowing him to perceive the intricate interrelations among all entities in nature. He observes, "The sea breathes, and it is the exhalation of a conquered world. It is being breathed away, and the spirit of the place is breathed back in; they are part of it all now, and it is part of them" (Hogan, 2008, p. 237). Arne Naess would identify Thomas's awakening as the development of ecological consciousness—precisely the kind of awareness deep ecology advocates as a guide for humane behavior. This holistic perspective emphasizes altruism, totality, and organic wholeness while rejecting anthropocentric dominance.

In the concluding chapters of the novel, Thomas paddles a cedar canoe out onto the ocean with the other village men—an act rich in symbolism. This is the same old canoe their ancestors used to "bring in the large fish of any kind" (Hogan, 2008, p. 238). As they embark, Thomas calls out, "Ho, we go to strengthen ourselves, not to kill a whale." He knows full well that his people "want to thrive and watch the life grow back, and also how much they want what the conquerors have... good cars, better boots, and then they want... longer journeys where they imagine the ocean and recall the constellations that guided their ancestors" (Hogan, 2008, p. 238). In this poignant moment, Thomas senses that "[t]hey are trying to be The People" again (Hogan, 2008, p. 238)—that is, they strive to reclaim the identity of who they once were: a people dwelling in situations of inherent value rather

than chasing an ever-higher material standard of living. In echo of Naess's deep ecology platform, Thomas's vision for his community distinguishes between greatness and bigness, or quality and quantity, urging a return to a life of quality (in harmony with nature) over the shallow pursuit of material bigness.

The narrative presents a stark philosophical clash between anthropocentric and biocentric worldviews. This conflict is epitomized by the antagonism between Dwight and Thomas. Dwight cynically exploits cultural rhetoric to justify reviving whaling for personal gain, embodying the human-centered mindset that sees nature as a means to an end. Thomas, in contrast, has come to represent the ecocentric approach, valuing life in all forms. The culmination of their conflict—when Dwight murders Thomas—is a tragic manifestation of the destructive consequences inherent in human-centered, exploitative thinking. Dwight's lethal act is not only a personal crime but also a symbol of the broader ecological devastation that occurs when human greed overrides ecological balance and spiritual reverence for the natural world. Through a deep ecology lens, Thomas's death serves as a searing commentary on contemporary systems that prioritize profit and power at the expense of ecological and spiritual harmony. His sacrifice becomes emblematic of the deep ecology principles of interconnectedness and the intrinsic value of all living beings.

Ultimately, *People of the Whale* transcends the particulars of individual and community strife to contribute to a broader discourse on humanity's ethical obligation to live in harmony with the natural environment. Through Thomas's tragic demise, Hogan advocates a heightened awareness of our interconnectedness within the ecological and spiritual tapestry of life, urging readers to reflect on their own roles in this intricate web. In the final pages, even after death, Thomas's presence is felt. We are told that "[his people] know what he said about the kind of people they were becoming. Cedar will be brought, feathers, even flowers in the canoes" (Hogan, 2008, p. 239). The community honors his words and memory with traditional offerings, signaling a return to reverence.

Thomas's posthumous communication with Ruth—his voice that comes to her after his death—goes beyond a poetic flourish; it is a profound ecological and spiritual statement. It illustrates that life and death form a continuous, interconnected cycle in Hogan's vision, where relationships persist beyond physical boundaries. This continuity embodies deep ecology's assertion of the interdependence of all beings, highlighting how each existence (even in death) contributes to a larger ecological and spiritual equilibrium. By depicting Thomas's voice as arising from his reintegration with the sea and the natural world, Hogan crafts a powerful metaphor for the transformative potential of achieving ecological harmony. Thomas's disembodied communication serves both as a narrative resolution and a philosophical reflection on the enduring connections between humanity, the non-human natural world, and the spiritual realm. It invites us to recognize that life is neither isolated nor finite, but rather a collective journey within the greater web of existence.

5. CONCLUDING REMARKS AND RELEVANCE OF THE STUDY IN CONTEMPORARY CONTEXT

Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* (2008) intricately explores the intersection of Indigenous cosmologies, environmental ethics, and deep ecological philosophy, presenting a profound critique

of anthropocentrism and the commodification of nature. The novel examines the complex relationships between humanity, non-human nature, and cultural practices, highlighting the consequences of severing these connections in pursuit of modern economic and political goals. Through the lens of Arne Naess's deep ecology, Hogan offers a vision of spiritual and ecological harmony rooted in biocentric egalitarianism and the intrinsic value of all life forms.

The narrative juxtaposes two opposing worldviews: an anthropocentric, exploitative perspective embodied by characters such as Dwight, and a biocentric, interdependent approach represented by figures like Ruth and Thomas. Ruth's deep spiritual and ecological connection with the ocean and its inhabitants exemplifies a worldview that respects the sacredness of nature while rejecting its commodification. Her ethos aligns with deep ecology's principles, emphasizing the interconnectedness of all beings and the necessity of humility and stewardship in humanity's interactions with the natural world.

Thomas's journey reflects a transformative path from complicity in ecological harm to a profound realization of humanity's place within the broader web of life. His paddling symbolizes reconciliation, atonement, and a return to traditional ecological knowledge that values coexistence over dominance. Through his actions, Hogan underscores the potential for individuals and communities to rediscover their ecological selves and reject ego-driven pursuits in favor of collective well-being.

By invoking the traditions of the fictional Aatsika people and their historical ties to the ocean and its creatures, Hogan situates the narrative within a broader discourse on Indigenous ecological wisdom. The novel critiques the disruption of these traditions by colonial and capitalist forces while celebrating their enduring relevance in addressing contemporary environmental crises. The interplay between cultural renewal and ecological preservation in the story highlights the need for integrated approaches that honor both human and non-human rights.

Ultimately, *People of the Whale* serves as a compelling call for a paradigm shift from exploitation to reverence, advocating for the preservation of natural and cultural ecosystems. Hogan's work resonates as both a cautionary tale and an inspirational guide, emphasizing the importance of restoring balance and fostering sustainable relationships between humanity and the natural world. Through its rich narrative and philosophical depth, the novel challenges readers to embrace an ethics of care and responsibility, ensuring a future that honors the interdependence of all life forms. Ultimately, *People of the Whale* is a literary embodiment of deep ecology's philosophy, advocating for a shift from anthropocentric dominance to ecological harmony. Hogan's narrative serves as both a critique of humanity's disconnection from the non-human world and a hopeful vision for reclaiming balance through humility, respect, and spiritual renewal. By intertwining ecological, cultural, and spiritual themes, the novel provides a powerful call to action for both individual and collective transformation, positioning itself as a seminal work in ecocritical literature.

The world is currently confronted with unprecedented environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, deforestation, and ocean pollution. These crises stem from anthropocentric attitudes that prioritize human desires at the expense of ecosystem well-being. This study critiques these anthropocentric practices while proposing pathways for envisioning a

sustainable and ethical future. Linda Hogan questions the notion of human exceptionalism and advocates for a biocentric ethic, which aligns with the urgent need to reassess humanity's role within the global ecosystem. As environmental movements increasingly tackle issues of equity, justice, and inclusivity, the principles of deep ecology provide a valuable framework for integrating ethical considerations into ecological action. Hogan's work illustrates how literature can offer moral and philosophical guidance for addressing environmental degradation in ways that respect all forms of life. The novel's focus on ecological consciousness and self-realization encourages readers to broaden their ethical perspectives, fostering a sense of responsibility that extends beyond human-centered priorities. This study connects Linda Hogan's *People of the Whale* with contemporary ecological and cultural challenges, offering insights that are both timely and transformative. By examining the novel through the lens of deep ecology, the research underscores the significance of rejecting anthropocentric paradigms, embracing relational and biocentric ethics. In an era where the future poses numerous risks for humanity, Hogan's work serves as a reminder that solutions to modern anthropocentric challenges must be grounded in respect, reciprocity, and relationality—principles that remain relevant today as they have for centuries. This study not only enhances academic discourse but also provides a roadmap for both individual and collective action in pursuit of a sustainable and equitable future.

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Edebiyatta Deyişbilim

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Günce Yayınları

Berna Akyüz Sizgen

POSTMODERNİZM KAVŞAĞINDA

Selim İleri Romancılığı

Günce Yayınları

FEMİNİST EDEBİYAT KURAMI BAĞLAMINDA

GÜLTEN AKIN ŞİİRİ

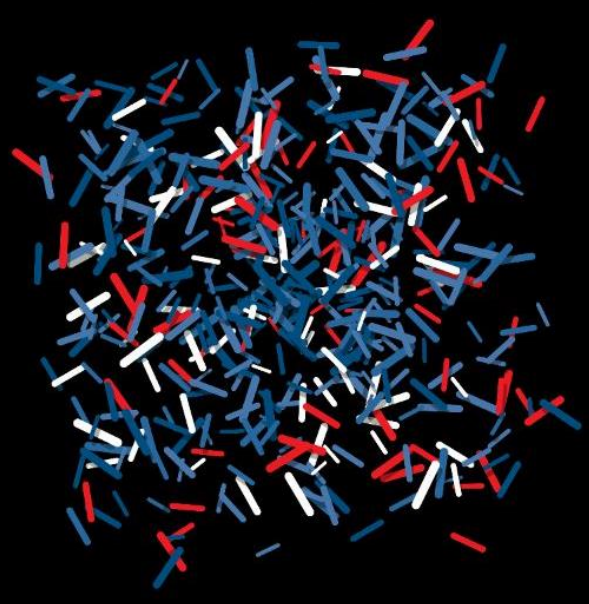
GÖKAY DURMUŞ

Günce Yayınları

FRANSIZCA VE TÜRKÇENİN SÖZDİZİMİ

KARŞITSAL VE DAĞILIMSAL BİR ÇÖZÜMLEME

Dr. Yusuf Topaloğlu



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