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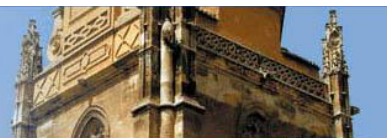
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ABSTRACT

Eco-consciousness deals with the concern of human beings towards nature. Nature protects humans in all aspects unless they harm them. This act of selflessness is referred to as “altruism” in literature. Altruism is the literary term describing humanity or kindness. The kind behaviour of nature is characterised as a non-profitable aid to humans. There won't be any expectations, yet kindness will be expressed in a natural way. According to ethology, altruistic behaviour can be found in humans and animals. It is merely distinguished as a kinship between the two different groups. The novel *Whale Boy* deals with the behavioural attitudes of a whale and a boy. Nicola Davies, an English zoologist and author, described the kind behaviour of a wild creature towards humans. The novel centers on Michael Fontaine, a young boy who wants to go whale-watching and fishing in the deep ocean off the coast of his island. Nicola Davis focuses on marine wildlife and the issue of whaling and conservation. This article relates to the relationship between Michael and the whale. Thus, through the act of altruism, the article attempts to reflect the kinship between whales and humans.

Keywords: Altruism, Whale, Ocean, Ecology, Kinship, Literature, Ecocriticism.

INTRODUCTION

Ecology deals with the conscious behaviour of mankind and nature. It is an integrated development of both species where the kinship has to coincide with the vertical and horizontal lines. It deals with the concerns of human beings and nature. Human love for nature is obtained through the conservatory act of environmental preservation. The psychological behaviour of people is generally well-depicted, with people less consider over particular things in terms of their needs and desires. However, nature's benevolent compassion for the human species is something that comes naturally and is omnipotent. This act of selfless behaviour is categorized in literature as altruism. Altruism is defined as “a theory of conduct that sees the good of others as the end of moral activity.” (Encyclopedia Britannica) There were no expectations for this act, which was constrained by pure love and expressed in a natural way. In the 19th century, Auguste Comte introduced the concept of “altruism” from the French word *altruisme*, which is derived from the Latin word *alter*, meaning “other.” When compared to nature, the behaviour of altruism reacts in a way that is destructive or non-beneficial to itself, but that benefits others. Altruistic behaviour in human beings can be found rarely and it is quite evident in the environment. Most of the time, people just harm the environment for their own benefits. Natural disasters are created by human beings by exploiting nature, yet the natural world offers humanity life without any expectations. This non-profitable aid of nature to humans is regarded as an altruistic act.

The Boy and the Whale

Nicola Davies is a zoologist and writer from England. She is a well-known author among English children because she has written more than 50 books for children, including fiction, nonfiction, and poetry. Nicola was the original presenter of the BBC children's wildlife programme *The Really Wild Show*. She spends most of her time researching the biology of sperm and humpback whales. *Whale Boy* is one of the best novels about wildlife conservation. In this book, she clearly expresses her love of the environment and animals. A young boy named Michael Fontaine is the primary character, who lives with his Gran in the small village of Liberty on the tropical island of Rose Town. Michael wanted to buy a boat of his own to sail deep into the sea to watch whales and dolphins. To earn money, he works in restaurants and shops, and he also waits for the day when he can buy a boat for his dream vacation. Spargo, a wealthy Englishman, approached Michael and offered to give him a boat in

exchange for a job finding whales and dolphins. The young boy had some fears, but he accepted the offer because his dream of having a boat and seeing whales in the deep ocean had come true.

Michael had a restless night because he was thinking about the boat and sailing over a vast ocean in search of whales. Before leaving the town for his job, his father had taught him about the secrets of the water, and he recalled those memories. "Most of the times the whales wandered the wide oceans, but sometimes they swarmed in waters close to land. But it's just an old story. Nothin' will work to find whales now; they were hunted out around the island long ago." (Davies) Michael had this thought constantly because he had not spotted any whales on the island. Despite this, he is absolutely convinced that his father had informed that the whales had left. But he had believed in his thoughts, "if the sea was so big, could whales still be hidden somewhere," (Davies) he finds himself extremely fascinated by how these large wild creatures appear and how they respond to people. Michael was extremely thrilled about his new endeavour and filled with excitement and curiosity. Every human will experience anxiety while seeing wild animals, especially whales. Sharks are particularly frightful because of their enormous size and they are threat to humans. Michael experienced the same anxiety and excitement at the possibility of seeing this large creature in close quarters.

On a fine day, Michael started his expedition. He carried a diary to record the date, time, and location of any dolphin or whale sightings, as per Spargo's advice. Michael boarded the boat from the shore and began to row out into the ocean with much excitement. He returns home in the evening as the sun starts to set in the west. On the way back, he finds a breathtaking sight,

a school of dolphins surrounded fifty metres from his bow. The low light on the calm water caught the vapour of their spouts... They swam closer, and he saw the spots freckling their skins, confirming that they were spotted dolphins. He speeded up in the hop that they might bow-ride, but they were heading out to sea, ready for a night's hunting in deep waters, and they disappeared like a dream... It was the first time since his dad left that Michael had been so close to dolphins. (Davies).

Michael was surprised that the dolphins didn't bother him. They played in the water for a while before heading back. He was pleased by his encounter with the wild creatures and returned home with the hope of sighting the whale the next day.

Michael entered the second day with high expectations and confidence, remembering his father's words. "There's a place where the water runs deep enough to lose the highest mountain. That's where the whales come. So many you can walk on their backs" (Davies). He travels far out into the sea on a hot sunny day. There was no breeze to cool his skin. Like a toy on a glass table, the boat Louisa May floated on the water surface. In order to cool himself off, he poured some seawater on him, "Pppffffwwrraa!" (Davies) he trembled in fear at the sound and slipped into the boat's bottom. He hears much closer as the sound gets louder and shorter. He feared and leaned forward over the gunwhale, there he witnessed a black-shaped creature much bigger than a dolphin, almost five metres from the boat. "A whale! Its dark head and blowhole! That's what he had seen." (Davies) The moment the wild marine creature came into view right in front of Michael's eyes, he was thrilled and overjoyed. He was confident that the whale's head was larger than his boat, but it is very hard to estimate the size of the creature. Michael was helpless to do anything but watch the whale's movements from where he was stuck. The whale circled the boat without taking any action. After following the whale for an hour or more, Michael suddenly lost sight of it as it swam off in the opposite direction from Louisa May. He was depressed and longed to see the whale again. Michael looked around the entire sea for any signs of whales, but he found nothing.

Altruism & Kinship

The affection of humans for nature is highlighted in this novel. Michael, a young boy, longs to see a whale, and he fulfils his wish by sailing deep into the sea. Since ancient times, people have had an interconnected relationship with nature. If man coexists with nature, both the environment and all other forms of life on earth are protected. "In the early days, man had no power over nature," (Fromm) they believe that nature is superior to humans, and they live in harmony with nature without harming them. Thus, the kinship between man and nature develops, and nature is protected in every way. Nature gives every possible thing to humans for their survival. Michael's love of nature can be traced back to the early days of kinship. He desired to survive with nature because he loved the ocean and its large creatures.

Michael was searching for the whale in the vast ocean, but all he could see or hear was blue water. Suddenly, he felt someone gently touching the underside of the boat. When he saw the whale was just beneath his boat, he was completely frozen. The whole boat was completely under its control. "It could lift the boat out of water, or tip her over and smash her to bits." (Davies) However, the whale did nothing but hold the boat motionless. He didn't feel frightened, so he slowly bent over to look at the whale that was so close to him. "It was the whale's eye. Michael looked right into it, and the whale looked back." (Davies) He leaned forward and gently touched the whale's skin,

which was so smooth and cool. The whale sensed Michael's touch but didn't move. After a while, the whale silently left the boat and went deep into the blue waters. He felt something new and he rejoiced as he touched the whale for the very first time and he looked directly into its eyes. It was a dream come true moment for him. Michael felt that it was a dream and he dazed as it happens to him. This proves the love that nature has for every earthly life. When people love nature, it expresses their pure love for them. Although the wild animals are massive in size and power, they do not attack people unless we disturb them. In order to have a healthy life, humanity must coexist peacefully with the environment. The ecosystem is designed in such a way that there should be a balance between humans and the natural world. Natural boundaries and the presence of wildlife define wilderness. The wilderness is the place comprised of pure nature and there won't be any human inhabitation. If people inhabit the wilderness, the wild creatures will harm them for their own survival. Here in this novel, the ocean is considered to be the wilderness, and when Michael goes into it, the wild marine creatures have a distinct perspective on humans because they have witnessed them for the first time. If humans harm them, they respond by a harmful attack to protect themselves. Michael, who enjoys nature, was very patient in this situation. He does nothing after seeing the whale, ensuring that the behaviour is not cruel.

The whale senses Michael's touch but does nothing to him, which is an example of altruistic behaviour. The whale simply held his boat until it felt the touch, then swam away without hurting him. This is a selfless act of the whale towards humans. The whale simply enjoyed Michael's company, as though it had found a friend. As the days passed, Michael became very particular about the whales' presence in the ocean. He refrained from sharing this information with Spargo since he suspected him of indulging in illegal behaviour when it came to the whales. He went to sea with the note of searching whale, and he enjoyed the whales' presence there. He will occasionally fail to locate any whales. One day, when he was in the water, a whale touched the boat's underside and lifted Louisa May with it. Michael's heart was racing at full speed, but the whale did nothing and fell silent. When the whale started to move, "it hit the propeller with its head and the whole boat suddenly jolted, tipping Michael into the water." (Davies) Michael rushed to enter the boat after realising the danger, but before he made a single stroke, "the whale was between him and the Louisa May." (Davies) For the very first time, Michael was frightened to be there in the ocean with whales. Wild creatures are vulnerable only when they are harmed by humans. According to Benton's naturalistic position, "accepting that humans are part of the order of nature, and that they share with animals needs such as health, physical security, nutrition and shelter." (Pepper) The concept of kinship is something very important for the environment to be a balanced one. Humans should accept nature as a part of their lives because nature is helping them in every possible way.

Michael was in a grave danger when he fell into the ocean since he had nothing to hold for support because the boat was out of his reach. But nature was kind enough to support him. There was a huge head that moved forward, slowly and smoothly to help Michael. It was surprising that such a massive wild creature was rescuing the young boy. This act of altruism is very new to humans as they experience a pure form of love from nature without any expectations. "Michael reached out his hands to ward it off, and his palms slipped over its skin. It was the smoothest thing he had ever touched, like curved wet glass, but springy and warm rather than hard and cold." (Davies) When Michael touched the whale for the first time, it was extremely cold. He took his hand back and was stunned and surprised when it felt really hot now. However, the whale came closer to him and gently nudged him forward. "Michael's hands slid apart and the whale moved into his arms like an embrace." (Davies) This kind act of whale emphasizes the concept of altruism. It is a way of selflessness in behaviour, where there are no expectations from the opponent. According to Romulo Romeu Nobrega Alves, "Humans share the world with a bewildering variety of other animals, and have always made attempts to understand them." (Alves) The love of nature helps humans to understand the wildlife. When humans and the ecosystem conflict, only nature will remain. During ancient times, humans relied on nature for their survival. There will be kinship between humans and animals. When the culture shifts, humans become independent and use their power to control nature. They consider nature as a materialistic source, and they harm nature in every aspect. The consequence will be a conflict between humans and nature, which will result in nature taking control of humanity, posing a serious threat to human survival on earth. Humans should not hurt nature; rather, they should be a part of it.

"Whales aren't a threat to humans but humans are threat to whales." (Whales and Humans) The only creature with characteristics similar to humans is the whale. Whales can be seen stroking and caressing one another as if they were human couples. Thus, it is clear that people and whales have a deep connection. Michael could feel the strength and power of the massive mountainous body. He was awestruck by the whale's kindness and control. He wasn't afraid; instead, he was amazed and confused.

The whale had got the information that it wanted. It tipped its head backwards, and now Michael was resting on the front of its upward pointing nose, precariously supported just above the surface. . . Carrying Michael like a wet rag doll, the whale turned through the water towards the Louisa May, balancing him carefully so he didn't slip. He

didn't see the boat behind him, only felt the gentlebuffet of his head against its gunwale as the whale shoved him against the side with perfect precision. Instantly, Michael reached out, grabbed the edge of the boat and scrambled aboard, kicking against the slippery step of the whale's skin. He fell into the bottom of the boat. (Davies)

What Michael goes through is like a dream. He had not been physically hurt and was back in the boat. He was interested in seeing where the whale was, but all he could see was a circle of flat water. The whale submerged deep into the ocean. It is obvious from this that the whale was curious to find out who was in the boat because it was an entirely unfamiliar object in the sea. To find out who he was, it purposefully tipped him out of the boat. It returned him to the boat securely after determining that he was human and posed no threat to his life. This was pure selfless behaviour. There was no profit in helping Michael, but the whale helped him without expecting anything in return.

CONCLUSION

Whales are special creatures found in the ocean. It is to be saved and protected to balance the ecosystem. There are whales which are harmful to humans, they are commonly called as killer whales. These whales are found in the areas where human population take over the control of the uninhabited ocean. They are harmful to humans only because of their risk in survival. They are huge in size, but they are not harmful to humans unless they are disturbed by them. "A whale may attack a boat or other potential threat if it has experienced abuse in the past or becomes frightened due to loud noises or unfamiliar reactions caused by a ship or group of people." (Are Whales Friendly to Humans?) Whales only attack humans when they believe they constitute a threat to their lives or when they have previously been attacked by whalers or other large ships. Whales are rarely aggressive, but because of their enormous size, people are often scared to approach them. Dolphins play and bond with people at exhibitions, which shows how close they are to humans. Whales are friendly with humans since they are connected to dolphins in the same family. Thus, this novel explores the close relationship between humans and whales. The kinship between Michael and the whale seems to be a beautiful sight, even in imagination. The whale loves Michael's company and is happy to have him around when they are in the ocean together. Like a child, it plays with him. It disappears into the ocean, leaving Michael to look for it. "But the moment he stopped searching, the whale appeared right beside the boat, as if it had been waiting for him to keep still!" (Davies). The whale swam horizontally under the boat before turning around and gazing Michael in the eye. He was very fond of that whale; he knew that "a wild animal would never come when it was called, like a dog, but the whale was now so special to him." (Davies) He gave it the name "Freedom" and he enjoyed spending time in the ocean with the whale.

According to Nirmal Selvamony, "the Kith and Kin relationship states that nature and humans are in a vertical and horizontal relationship, indicating that they are in an equal relationship." (Selvamony) The fact that both humans and wildlife have to be in the same bond means that they should be in a position where every living being is treated as the same. If nature is in a horizontal position and humans are in a vertical position, the ecosystem will be in balance at the place where they meet. Selvamony in his *Tinai*, stated that "he two-legged and four-legged lived like kith and kin," (Selvamony) which is quite evident during the ancient days when people lived along with nature in the forest. In this novel, we can portray the life of Michael and the whale, where the two-legged and (the four-legged here comes with fins as a wild sea creature) sea mammals are living in a kith and kin relationship. The whale had no knowledge of the world above the ocean surface, just as a human had no knowledge of the deep-dark ocean. It is important to the ecology that humans observe nature in their own environment.

Man cannot create nature, but he does have the ability to save and protect it. There is only one idea that every environmentalist stresses in their arguments: that humans should coexist with nature. The co-existence is the only way to preserve the environment for the future generations. Here Michael lives in land and whale in water, "he wanted to break that connection with the surface; to meet the whale in its own world." (Davies) Michael lives with nature, and he desires to be in nature in their own surroundings, making it apparent that they can coexist. Thus, this article describes the relationship that evolved between Michael and the whale through the act of altruism. By saving Michael's life in the ocean, the whale explores selfless behaviour. Thus, the article reflects the kinship between whales and people, and the importance of coexistence for future generations is highlighted through ecology.

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