

Environmental Justice: Canine's Ecocritical Reflection in W. Bruce Cameron's 'A Dog Way Home'

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Abstract

W. Bruce Cameron's 'A Dog Way Home' highlights Bella's struggle and the narration that conveys the ecocritical presence regarding the dogs. The novel involves consequences to explore the tragic experiences due to the human world's material progress. The wilderness, landscape anthropocene nature, animal disrespect, racism, political agenda, and government policies. The novel emphasizes Lucas and Bella's understanding and yearning for their support without care of pain and indefinite journey. The book engages the environmental troubles that Bella has faced to reach Denver City. The story provides the deconstruction of the animal world in the extreme interference of humans in animals' habitats. Humans' senseless overuse of power and animals' innocent nature are opposites that present effectively with different incidents in the fiction.

Therefore, the ecocritical theory examines environmental concerns in the novel to awaken society to the emerging crisis. The interdependencies of natural resources and elements in the interest of needs or desires. Environmental justice is not just a demand of ecocriticism but the necessity of health and future security of worldwide all lives. Canine and humans are friends but the novel discusses the dilemma of breed in the book. The transformation of time and landscape is developed through the narration on rethinking environmental problems. The urban culture and social policies are made to displace animals forcefully to avoid the mess of animals they don't want to see. Bella and Lucas's kinship have narrated in testifying ways through different incidents to make its path. The canine and human have preserved a very special and unique bond of emotional and psychological touch but the present canine person narration changes the perspective of hardship, compassion, determination, belief, and thought. The research paper demonstrates the ecocritical reviews of Bella's 400-mile journey that passes through harsh, unfamiliar, full of challenges and fights with weather, animals, and humans. It explores how the incredible bond between Bella and Lucas, changes the decision to to navigate the friend in the unfamiliar or unknown world. It deals with unique encounters and deep emotional connections between humans and non-human animals. Unconditional love and faith ultimately get the reward of success but they have to go through tough and dangerous jerks.

Keywords: Anthropocene, ecocriticism, Environmental studies, wilderness, landscape, canine literature

Introduction

Ecocriticism concentrates on the grave and harmful effects, its underlying reasons, and solutions that correlate the relationship between human and non-human animals. Animal symbolism serves through the first-person narration of Bella's communicative narration that focuses on the loyalty of compassionate bonds in friendships. The mother cat, big kitten, and attack of wolves express human emotions like greed and fear. The social attitudes turn the life of Bella from good to worse condition.

The term 'Ecocriticism' was first coined by William Rueckert in his work "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" in 1978. He has defined ecocriticism as "the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm adits in the book "The Ecocritical Reader (1996)" that "ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment."(xvii) Ecocriticism studies how human attitudes and actions affect natural premises. It examines the way that nature is represented in literature. Ecocriticism is a new term introduced in literature in the late 20th century. It has a multidisciplinary touch that includes animal studies, geology, and social studies.

In the novel, Bella is the protagonist who narrates the story from its perspective. The prime theme of the novel is to elaborate on the sensible relationship between Bella and Lucas. The environmental interactions of canines and different species, like cats, cougars, etc across the diverse landscapes, building materials, and forests.

“Thing is terrified. Watch it don’t bite you. The depression in the earth where we had been born...the sensation on my tongue was new and strange, but the warmth and nurture were what I craved, and I fed gratefully. After a few moments, her kittens join me.” (7) Denver city’s pitbull regulations do not allow the breed to dwell in the surrounding area. The strict law limits the dog breed’s rights and shows animal discrimination. The text deals with the sensibility that Mother Cat looks after Bella in the absence of its mother. Humans lost humanity in the modern world but other animals than humans preserve animals. ‘The depression’ shares the output of human extra negotiation of natural elements of mankind that limitless misuse of natural property with the help of technology.

‘The memory of the terror of the day’ these words captures the irritation and anxiety of the mother and canine siblings taken away by the animal control team. The family of Bella deconstructs and the loneliness grows emotional tension—animal displacement due to the entry into the natural habitat of animals. In the words of Lisa Kunze (2023), the deconstruction of nature is a counterpart of human subjects. The forceful indulgence of humans is a ruthless destroyer of nature. It examines the contribution of humans in the savage destruction due to the harmful work culture that automatically affects nature deeply.

Animal rescue is a pretty tight community; we all talk to each other Twenty cats hit the system....the kittens milled in confusion, and the male cats fled to the back of the den. (12) It describes how humans’ appearance creates problems for animals. The human presence frightens the animals because animals don’t tolerate the fear after the consequences of human captivity of animals. It explores the interdependent links that cause crises in the environment and humans in natural phenomena. The mother cat tries hard to hide every animal in the last layer of building material.

“It’s unethical. We have a vetting process- one of the reasons why we get so few returns is that our placement protocols are so stringent.”...I could sense the man’s anxiety rising, it was on his skin the way Mother Cat tensed when she knew humans were approaching the hole.” (20) Breed-specific legislation is depicted in the text to draw attention to certain dog bans in the urban landscape. The text critiques the despair of dog discrimination in the supportive law of Denver. It shapes the narration to highlight the prejudices in policy that illustrate specific restrictions. “The silence’ of Bella is supposed to be a sign of grief. The frustration of being homeless is driven by the worse condition of all animals. The text develops the views and arguments that relate to manmade laws that badly affect emotional and psychological states. The legal team of the city approaches the place of animal rescue to check out the dog, especially the pit bull breed. The Anthropocene thinking constructs the human benefits and ignores the loss of animals and nature. The degradation of the environment due to the dangerous actions of humans.

I was on the worst leash imaginable, stiff, and unyielding. I twisted against it. “No Bella.’ the hat-man told me. Bella! Mom cried again, her voice filled with anguish and despair. (110) The text resolves the farewell of Bella to another city. Bella is unaware of the truth of displacement. Lucas’s mother feels sad and her voice shows her deep emotional attachment to Bella. The rules of Denver forcefully demand Ray’s family to send Bella outside the city immediately. The toxic environment in the new city shows the vulnerability and materialistic world’s real face that proposes the challenges and obstacles in front of Bella. The text embodies the ecocritical points through the emotional violence of canines that damage the interconnection between humans and animals. According to Shunqing Cao (2020), Anthropocene discussions appeal to how human agency spreads machines harmful effects in the form of sound, gas, deforestation, starvation, and extinction of rare species seen in every corner of the earth. Similar to human-made laws in the name of protection and injustice of the pitbull breed. Humans have supposed animals to be subject to use and service. The control over nature tendency has made many changes in the environment forcefully. The isolation of Bella has distorted its mind. The modern world made policies to save and save lives for themselves. Human imposes their decision on non-human animals with an undiscussed side of animal consideration. It shows that the moral degradation of society puts the animals in danger.

“Several times I woke at the sound or smell of small animals, but they did not approach me and none of them were familiar to my nose. I took a more direct course and attempted to climb over the rocks and other obstacles that blocked my way.” (155) The struggle is associated with many traps and a series of unimagined threats in the journey. Bella notices that Lucas is absent at the new place and then approaches him individually. Ups and downs are described here to emphasize the importance of the dynamic nature of time and place. The text suggests that as Lucas, Bella steps out unusually. The narration leads to the intersecting bond between Bella and other animal communities that save or

attack it. The fight for survival has had its role and is protected by Big Kitten. "I wanted to keep going, keep making progress towards Lucas." This line has a deep meaning in elaborating on Bella's genuine emotions to meet Lucas early in any condition.

Mountains, rocks, rivers steep areas, hills, and villages are some of the natural dwelling places of animals, which do not attract Bella's mind. The special and unique relationship never breaks easily even in a bad patch. "I could smell her, smell the terror and anxious despair." (159) Here, the discussion of the special sense of dogs to smell extremely high and low energies and decode the right meaning from it. The transition of Bella's life into the rural landscape creates different complex experiences that have to face. The strong determination has directed Bella to reach the city where Lucas lives. Bella has used to with environmental degradation and capitalism influence the common living organisms lives in danger. Accepting the risk and dealing with courage boosts the confidence of Bells. The city's system denies the animal's natural right to live happily. The peril of breed discrimination falls on Bella's unresolved pain, trauma, and suffering. The canines are loyal and honest creatures so the masters or friendships have played a vital role in their lives.

Dutch looked at us wildly, as if he had forgotten anything but the hunt Dutch turned and started walking away from us. He was being a bad dog! We'll not animal cruelty, but close to it. (221) The issue of identity crisis deals with, the discrimination in Bella's rapidly changing dwelling places. The anthropomorphism evolves the human greed to control animals and other things as per their demand but they forget nature's harm. The human laws transform the life of Bella to suffer in the alien city without permission. Human dominating attitude has driven animals to change their place, relationships, and habits. The text resonates with the ecological interconnectedness in Bella's and human interventions that the Dutch represent. Human characters are selfish and demonstrate how they behave to achieve the main purpose without thinking at once. It shows how human deeds are constructed in Bella's experiences. The novel reflects the disruption of Bella's life from domestic culture to the wild or rustic zone. The unconditional compassionate connection between Bella and Lucas motivates it to move. Animal cruelty is for survival and protection-oriented behavior. In the words of Jayasree Bhargavan's (2018) review of Bella's character in the novel, she notices the power and courage in new terrain with an adventurous encounter with a pack of coyotes on the journey. She appreciates the toiling hard efforts of Bella to reach the unpredictable destination.

My instinct was to run, but I was too hungry to do more to escape to a puddle of darkness at the edge of a paved parking lot...my fear came from the sure knowledge that the man in white was one of those who would keep me from Lucas. Angry men hurt dogs. I could feel I was my panic. (252) The two different sections of perspectives in human and non-human animals, Bella. Hunger is discussed here as a physical need of Bella but she is robbed of chicken from the humans. The scene has multiple thoughts that may differ from one another as demand of extreme necessity. Nature gives everyone its share and freedom but humans are the supreme controllers and grab every entity to prosper their wealth. The interpretation of Bella suggests the complexities in its life. Ecocriticism indicates the vulnerable state of Bella due to human decisions. Sandip K. Mishra (2016) points out how ecocritical importance favors the side of environmental vision to justify marginalizing subjects. The paper advocates the huge threats of human careless money-oriented culture and policies destroying the future of nature. He includes how ecological disbalance causes incurable damage to the environment. It leads to destruction and crises related to Mother Nature. All organisms have equal rights to live happily but human atrocities against natural elements create problems.

Conclusion:

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by how its animals are treated". The paper reflects the canine protagonist's suffering due to hard regulations in the city. The consequences reshape the life of Bella from urban to rural landscapes that give the world the need to transform our attitude negligence towards ecological care of flora and fauna. The protocols and rules suddenly change the life of Bella. During the unpredictable journey, Bella describes the pain that undergoes struggles and sorrows. I try to reveal the animal's challenges in the modern time to awaken human consciousness through these narrations. Society ultimately gets harmed if the animals are lost in the human-centric development. Animals are a vital part of nature to get proper attention and care. The paper tries to raise the voice of the marginalized animal community. It resolves the environmental consciousness in society to take appropriate care when making rules and regulations. Ecocriticism also plays an important role in public awareness of problems regarding animals and others.

Therefore, ethics and values are preserved through ecocritical contributions to literature. Canines are part of nature so sustainable development needs to care for every species genuinely. The paper addresses the harmful impact

of manmade rules on Bella to survive in life. The paper inspires social responsibility and contributes to the future that depends on today's actions.

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