

Domestication and Interconnectivity in Henry Lawson's that there Dog O' Mine

A. Praveen Samuel

Research Scholar,

Department of English

Scott Christian College,

Nagercoil .

Abstract

Henry Lawson, an Australian writer is renowned for his works pertaining to the depiction of life in the Australian bush. His straightforward use of accented dialogues is his style of writing. This paper concentrates on the themes of trust, interconnection, friendship, perseverance and struggle, found in the story. Domestication is a process through which humans make nonhumans as slaves. Dogs are not an exception to it. The origin of the domestic dog (*Canis lupus familiaris*) began with the domestication of the Grey Wolf (*Canis lupus*) several tens of thousands of years ago. All species possess equal rights and justice, no matter their size or origin. Humans should not rule over nature. There has to be harmony with everything and everyone. It asks for an eco-centric environment where everything is treated equally. The struggle of Macquarie and Tally are equally important as the author highlights the hardships that an individual has to endure during survival. This leads to a change of mind in the attendants of the hospital to consider Tally thereby resulting in a socially realistic perspective. Loyalty of Tally is also significant throughout the story. The theme of connectivity is analysed elaborately in this research paper.

Keywords: Struggle, Endurance, Interconnectivity, Social Realism, and Parody

I. INTRODUCTION

Australian literature refers to the body of literary works written in Australia or by Australians. It includes works of fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and drama produced since the country's colonization in 1788. Early Australian literature often reflected the life and experiences of the British settlers who settled

in Australia during the late 18th and 19th centuries. These works primarily focus on the themes of exploration, hardship, and survival in a new and unfamiliar environment. During the 20th century, Australian literature explored various themes and styles. The country's unique landscape and culture became a prominent idea of many works in Australian literature. The Australian writers focus on themes such as identity crisis, belonging, and social inequality. Some of Australia's most famous literary figures include Banjo Paterson, Henry Lawson, Miles Franklin, Patrick White, and Tim Winton. Contemporary Australian authors such as Peter Carey, Christos Tsiolkas, and Richard Flanagan continue to exceed the boundaries of Australian literature and explore new themes and styles. Australian literature is an important part of the country's cultural heritage, and its authors are recognized and celebrated nationally and internationally.

Henry Lawson is an Australian writer and poet regarded as one of the country's most important literary figures. He was born on June 17, 1867, in Grenfell, New South Wales, and grew up in poverty in various rural towns throughout Australia. Lawson began his writing career at a young age, and his works were heavily influenced by his experiences of growing up in a struggling family. He is best known for his short stories and poems, which often deal with the themes of hardship, poverty, and the struggles of everyday life in the Australian bush. The short story, "That there Dog O' mine" deals with a friendly and emotional relationship between humans and dogs. Lawson strongly expresses his love for dogs, which is reflected in most of his works.

Domestication and Interconnectivity

"That there Dog O' Mine" deals with only two characters - a man and a dog. Macquarie and his dog Tally are good companions; both are beaten up brutally by a strange gang. Macquarie somehow manages to go to the nearby hospital with Tally, whose leg is seriously injured and broken. Only Macquarie is permitted to go inside the hospital and Tally is not allowed inside the hospital for treatment because it is an animal. Macquarie is so stubborn in making the doctors let Tally in and treat him. When they refuse to treat Tally, Macquarie leaves the hospital without getting treated because of the Doctors' attitude of not letting Tally in. Macquarie decides to leave the hospital, and he faints as soon as he does. After half an hour, he opens his eyes, and he feels better and happy as he notices Tally getting treated by the doctors in the yard.

The domestication of animals refers to the process by which humans selectively breed and raise certain species of animals for their purposes, such as food, transportation, or companionship. This process began thousands of years ago and has played a crucial role in the development of human civilization. The

first of the animals to be domesticated were likely dogs, used for hunting and as guards. Other early domesticated animals include sheep, goats, cows, pigs, and horses. Over time, humans developed techniques for breeding and caring for these animals, which allowed for the development of agriculture and human settlements. The domestication of animals has significantly impacted human societies, including providing a reliable source of food, increasing agricultural productivity, and enabling long-distance transportation. However, it has also led to ethical concerns related to the treatment of animals, as well as environmental concerns related to the impact of animal agriculture on the planet. Today, domesticated animals are found in nearly every part of the world and continue to play important roles in human societies. Dogs were domesticated for their behavior. Dogs were probably the first to be domesticated, followed by goats, sheep, and chickens, which took place around 10,000 years ago. Later, larger animals like oxen or horses were domesticated for use in transportation and for ploughing. At the beginning of domestication, animals were domesticated for specific purposes. For example, dogs were domesticated to assist people in hunting, and hundreds of domestic dog species exist. Today, while many of them are still excellent hunters, most are pets. Here the case is different. Tally (the dog) is not treated as a slave; rather, it is treated as a friendly companion. Macquarie loved Tally very much, and so he cared for him. For Pramod K. Nayar, “Ecocriticism is a critical mode that looks at the representation of nature and landscape in cultural texts, paying particular attention to attitudes towards ‘nature’ and the rhetoric employed when speaking about it” (330). The story represents nature and its connection with human beings. Literary researchers evaluate texts that highlight environmental issues and look at the various ways literature approaches the subject of nature as part of the multidisciplinary field of ecocriticism. Peter Barry also defines Ecocriticism as, “the study of relationship between nature and literature” (201).

The moment when Macquarie denied treatment when Tally’s treatment was denied, showed his love for Tally. Tally says, “No. If you won’t take my dog in you don’t take me. He’s got a broken leg and wants fixing up just—just as much as—as I do. If I’m good enough to come in, he’s good enough—and—and better” (23). Nowadays, people think their dog is more than just a pet, a great faithful companion. Tally explains, “This here old dog has follered me for—for ten years; through floods and droughts, through fair times and—and hard—mostly hard; and kept me from going mad when I had no mate nor money on the lonely track” (22).

Harold Fromm and Cheryl Glotfelty in their book, *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* explains the first law of ecology thus: “. . . the first Law of Ecology: ‘Everything is connected to everything else.’ This is Commoner’s phrasing, but the law is common to all ecologists and all ecological visions. This

need to see even the smallest, most remote part in relation to a very large whole is the central intellectual action required by ecology and of an ecological vision” (108). It is evident that man is connected with nature in all aspects. In this short story, it is evident from the connection between Macquarie and Tally. The connectivity is seen in several cases in the story. One such incident is Macquarie taking Tally along with him to the hospital. He could have been concerned over himself, but he took his wounded dog along with him inspite of his disability. This shows the unbreakable connection between man and nature, resulting in interconnectivity. As man is associated with nature in all aspects, his connection with dogs is highlighted as special. Humans and dogs have a deep and complex interconnectivity that has evolved over thousands of years. Dogs were the first domesticated animal; since then, they have become an integral part of human societies worldwide. The connection between man and ecology is explained as deep ecology by Greg Garrard in his book, *Ecocriticism*, in the following manner: “Deep ecology is concerned with encouraging an egalitarian attitude on the part of humans not only toward all members of the ecosphere, but even toward all identifiable entities or forms in the ecosphere. Thus, this attitude is intended to extend, for example, to such entities (or forms) as rivers, landscapes, and even species and social systems considered in their own right” (24). The interconnectivity between humans and dogs is based on several factors, including emotional bonds, socialization, and co-evolution.

Emotional bonds are one of the most significant factors in the interconnectivity between humans and dogs. Dogs have been bred to be highly social and responsive to human emotions, and they have an innate ability to read human body language and facial expressions. This has allowed them to become highly attuned to their human companions and form deep emotional bonds with them. Meg Daley Olmert explains the reason behind the emotional bond between humans and dogs thus: “The chemistry flowing between the species was so strong it turned wolf into dog and humans into herders and breeders” (140).

Socialization is another important factor in the interconnectivity between humans and dogs. Dogs are highly social animals and are naturally inclined to live in groups. Humans have allowed dogs to form social connections and relationships outside of their own species. This has led to dogs being integrated into human social structures, such as families and communities. In certain societies animals and humans are treated as separate categories which leads to exploitation of animals. Helen Tiffin and Graham Haggan explain the way in which animals are excluded from humans in society as, “Ironically, it is precisely through such appeals to nature that other animals and the environment are often excluded from the privileged ranks of the human, rendering them available for exploitation” (6).

Co-evolution is also an important factor in the interconnectivity between humans and dogs. Pramod K. Nayar observes, “the human as co-evolving, sharing ecosystems, life processes, genetic material, with animals and other life forms” (*Posthumanism* 19). Humans and dogs have evolved together over thousands of years, with humans shaping the evolution of dogs through selective breeding. This has resulted in dogs better suited to living with humans and performing specific tasks such as hunting, guarding, and herding.

The interconnectivity between humans and dogs is based on emotional bonds, socialization, and co-evolution. This relationship has allowed dogs to become an integral part of human society and provided humans with companionship, protection, and assistance.

II. CONCLUSION

Thus, “That there Dog O' Mine”, portrays human and animal relationships in the Australian outback. The relationship between the narrator and his dog serves as a lens through which the themes of domestication and interconnection are examined. The novel also draws attention to the significant function of animals in the daily lives of those who reside and work in this region.

III. REFERENCES

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