



ECOLOGICAL STEWARDSHIP IN THOMAS CORAGHESSAN BOYLE'S *WHEN THE KILLING'S DONE*

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Abstract

Climate Change becomes a pressing issue in the current scenario. It affects the entire universe in all aspects including socio – economic, political, cultural, and environment. Global Warming is the greatest cause of species extinctions. Humanity is in the critical situation to be aware of the implications of climate change on species and conserve the entire ecosystem from the environment entanglements. In recent days, literature also provides valuable contributions for the welfare of the planet. One such contribution is Thomas Coraghessan Boyle's When the Killing's Done. The environmental novel deals with the national park service' controversial process of eradicating invasive species in the channel islands of California. The paper explicitly focuses on ecological stewardship in defending native species from the invasive species described in Thomas Coraghessan Boyle's When the Killing's Done. Two ecocentric ethical principles are used to explain the idea of eradicating these invasive species.

Key words: Climate Change, Ecology, Endangered Species, Invasive species, Stewardship.

Natural catastrophes, evolutionary reasons, or human involvement can all lead to the extinction of a species. Many invasive species would be able to migrate from their native habitats to non-native ecosystems for habitat, energy, physical space, water, or food as a result of rising average temperatures and changes in rain and snow patterns caused by climate change. And also extinction occurs due to human activities such as travel and transportation, the invasive species have spread. For example, ships may bring aquatic species into the sea or ocean or any form of water bodies in their ballast water.

Invasive species flourish in the new ecosystem, because there are no predators to kill them. This sometimes leads to the disappearance of indigenous species. Invasive species alter or degrade the ecosystem, especially the food

chain or food web, creating negative effects on both native and human beings living there. Invasive species impacts include habitat loss, reduced accessibility, and main natural resource value. The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change highlights that 1.5°C average temperature rise may put 20-30% of species at risk of extinction. Therefore, in order to maintain sustainable ecosystems, this situation should be taken into account. Eliminating invasive species from the native environment is important.

Literature addresses these environmental issues in various genres. In modern fiction, the portrayal of humans and animals has shifted dramatically over the last few decades. There are numerous novels based on the significance and conservation of species such as Yan Martel's *The Life of Pi*, Barbara Gowdy's *The White Bone*, Amita Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*, Angela Carter's *Nights at*

the Circus, Laline Paull's *The Bees* and so forth. Thomas Coraghessan Boyle is one of the most well-known writers in the field of environmental literature.

Thomas Coraghessan Boyle is a novelist and short story writer from the United States. He has written numerous novels and short stories. He received many literary awards including the PEN/Faulkner Award, the PEN/Malamud Prize, the PEN/West Literary Prize, the Commonwealth Gold Medal for Literature, National Academy of Arts and Letters Award for prose excellence. He has won Henry Thoreau Prize for his Literary excellence in nature writing. He likes writing about the environmental issues of his native California Channel Islands.

T. C. Boyle's *When the Killing's Done* deals with the environmental abuse within the national park in California. The story is set in the Channel Islands, especially in Santa Cruz and Anacapa. The story's environmental descriptions were based on the historical incident that occurred between 2001 and 2002 in the National Park Service. On Anacapa Island, the National Park Service poisoned non-native black rats, and in 2006, they worked with a wildlife conservation group to eradicate feral pigs from Santa Cruz Island. Feral pigs consume the native birds of the Channel Islands. They compete with indigenous fauna for food supplies such as acorns. Brucellosis is a bacterial illness spread by wild pigs which damages livestock and causes fever in people. Feral pigs/wild swine have infected spinach fields and surface water in California by spreading dangerous E.Coli germs. And these Wild swine were hunted and killed in October and November 2006.

When the Killing's Done is a story about two kinds of environmental crusaders. It tells Alma Boyd Takesue's story, her rival Dave Lajoy, and their supremacy over the world of nature. The novel discusses how the natural life cycle on Earth - Predation, death, survival, and rebirth gets corrupted and how it has been altered for better or worse by mankind.

The novel deals with two controversial ideas of characters with complexity and uncertainty. Dr. Alma Boyd Takesue, a National Park Service biologist of mixed

American and Japanese descent, leads a National Park Service initiative aimed at removing various species introduced to the Channel Islands near Santa Barbara in order to conserve the environment and allow indigenous species to survive. Furthermore, Alma has a strong emotional attachment to the islands because they saved her grandmother from drowning at sea after she was shipwrecked in 1946. Dave LaJoy, president of the FPA (For Animal Protection), who is a successful businessman, is her rival. But he has a point:

"He believes in something, the simplest clearest primary moral principle: thou shalt not kill (44)." And his activism demonizes the initiative of the National Park Service, accusing Alma of trying to "manipulate nature and make a theme park out of the islands." Naturally, it refuses to obey either Alma or Dave's dictates as their battles escalate over rats, feral pigs and rattlesnakes. For David, killing animals like that of crossing an absolute moral line - "no matter how loose-jointed he might get," he reminds himself, "that's what he has to remember: save the animals (42)."

Alma's views on non-native species and their extinction are close to that of the Land Ethics of Aldo Leopold, whereas the animal values of Dave LaJoy mimic the Animal Liberation of Peter Singer. As Leopold argues that Alma wants to eradicate the non-native species of feral pigs and rats from the islands in order to preserve the current environment, its dignity, stability, and beauty.

Alma is the most compelling character as she acknowledges the cruelty of killing animals, but she does so for the sake of the survival of others. Throughout her venture, she feels justified in her desire to restore the natural peace that once existed on Anacapa and Santa Cruz. In the entire story, Alma seeks to conserve the natural environment of the island, while Dave LaJoy tries to protect the invasive species. Boyle reiterates nature's reaction to these actions that each part of the planet is supposed to work in peace, so when it is disrupted by human beings, the world reacts.

Dave LaJoy, an animal rights activist, is opposed to rat eradication and confronts Takesue at one point by asking, "And who exactly was it appointed you god, lady?" (64). LaJoy asks questions like, What is natural? What is anthropogenic? Why should we care? and tries to spoil Alma's plan of killing the invasive rats. During rat eradication, LaJoy sails to Anacapa Island with other two activists to disseminate vitamin K, an antidote to the poison used to kill the rats. They also engage in pig eradication on Santa Cruz Island after dealing with the rat issue. LaJoy and his team are attempting to stop the extermination of pigs, but their efforts are gone downhill. Boyle gives a vivid description of contemporary conservation biology and human-environmental relations.

LaJoy questions, "Those rats have been there for a hundred and fifty years!...What's your baseline? A hundred years ago? A thousand? Ten thousand?" (63) and makes an essential argument at the core of conservation biology and explores that many archaeologists, anthropologists, historians, ecologists, and other researchers are attempting to comprehend the environment. Like LaJoy, many of the critics ask restoration ecologists the same issues regarding the baselines and targets that should be used for ecosystem restoration and management.

Boyle makes the readers believe that the islands were largely free of human influence prior to the rapid alteration of the 19th and 20th centuries, when commercial ranching operations and other groups introduced numerous animal and plant species and dramatically altered island ecosystems through LaJoy's questions on baselines for ecological restoration and conservation. Anthropogenic activities of human beings created a pathway for the non-native species to enter into the channel Islands for their habitation and such dire situation deplete the ecosystem of the Island. Therefore, the humanity has to encounter such environmental issues and with ecological stewardship man has to find solution to preserve the environment.

"Environmental stewardship can be defined as a set of values that individuals, communities, and cultures draw upon to form their relationships and interactions with the environment and its resources"(qtd. Science Direct). In

order to preserve the species both the characters Alma and Dave indulge in the conservation activities. But the controversy lies when her conservation process and attitude restricted to her bio- region alone without considering other living organisms lives.

Certain principles should be practiced when invasive species are destroyed or eradicated. It is possible to analyze the removal of invasive species through the prism of the two moral principles of Aldo Leopold's *The Land Ethic* and Liberation Theory of Peter Singer. Aldo Leopold's environmental non-fiction, *A Sand County Almanac* discusses the fact that land ethic literally broadens the borders of the society, including soils, water, plants and animals or, collectively, land. Leopold argues that there is an intrinsic value of land in itself. The land ethic of Leopold shows the interest in the world of both sentient and non-sentient species. Leopold's land ethic explains, "A thing is right when it tends to preserve the integrity, stability, and beauty of the biotic community. It is wrong when it tends otherwise" (224 -225). According to Leopold's land ethic, it is permissible to kill invasive animals as long as it enhances the biotic community's "integrity, stability and beauty."

Peter Singer's *Animal Liberation* is concerned with the improvement of sentient animals. He believes that justice is really about the equal consideration of native and non-native species interests. Basically, the philosophy of Singer is based on the concept of consequentialism, or the notion that its consequences are deciding the meaning of an action. In fact, Singer believes that animal abuse should be taken seriously when considering the effects of an intervention. He argues that even if one agrees that it is necessary to kill unwanted animals, one still has to consider the rights of those animals and prevent the large amounts of suffering caused by current control methods. Singer highlights the importance of Animal rights in his own words, "The interest of all animals should received equal respect and concern (22)".

Mark Sagoff in his article *Animal Liberation and Environmental Ethics: Bad Marriage, Quick Divorce* illustrated the fundamental difference between Environmentalist and Animal Liberationists

Environmentalists cannot be Animal Liberation. Animal Liberationists cannot be Environmentalists. The Environmentalist would sacrifice the lives of individual creatures to preserve the authenticity, integrity and complexity of ecological systems. The Liberationist – if the reduction of animal misery is taken seriously as a goal – must be willing, in the principle, to sacrifice the authenticity, integrity and complexity of ecosystem to protect the rights, or the guard the lives, of animals. (Sagoff, 304)

As Aldo Leopold suggests, the introduction of native species should be taken seriously and defended against non-native species. While, non-native species should be given equal priority and should be covered because they migrate solely for their basic needs from their natives. Modification of the life cycle due to climate change plays a crucial role in their migration. Indirectly, anthropocentric human mindset leads to such a nightmare case, making us move away from their natural surroundings. Therefore, the egocentric behavior of human beings is the reason for all these environmental problems and failures of biodiversity in the ecosystem.

The Regional Wildlife Federation is working to address the issue of invasive species. They have given some important suggestions to safe guard both native and non-native species are as follows:

1. Establish and enforce federal policies limiting the introduction of potentially harmful plant and animal products.
2. Promoting new legislation to handle ballast water in ocean-going ships, that damage aquatic species.

3. Promoting adequate support for the regeneration of native species in the great lakes and other significant habitats.

In one of his interviews, T.C.Boyle addresses his notion of disliking animal killing. In his novel *When the Killing's Done*, Boyle left the question of killing animals in the readers' hands to determine where the opinions of both Alma and Dave on killing invasive species contradict.

Hence, as Deep Ecological Theory suggests, human life is just one of many equal components of a global ecosystem. All living organisms must be treated as equal and given due consideration and freedom, as indicated by the First Law of Ecology by Barry Commoner', "Everything else is related." It is necessary to realize that every organism is unique and has its own intrinsic value. Humane people are considerate of animals. Through trapping them, invasive species can be removed, and creating suitable habitat for those species that fulfill their basic needs. Buddha has said, "All beings tremble before violence. All fear death, all love life. See Yourself in others. Then whom can you hurt? What harm can you do?". Therefore, it is humanity's ecological stewardship to safeguard both the native and non – native species through various conservational strategies without spoiling the essence of nature.

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