

Eco literature

Serfdom on fauna – Alice Walker

AM I BLUE

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ABSTRACT

Alice Walker is an American writer and activist. The poverty and racism that she experienced in her childhood left its mark on her writing. When she was in college Walker became interested in the civil rights movement of the 1960s. She was inspired by Martin Luther King, she continued the activism, and involved with voter registration drives, campaigns for welfare rights, and children's programmes. Alice Walker's "Am I Blue" tells the story of a friendly horse called 'Blue', and the way he is used by people. Walker expresses her feelings about the two horses Blue and Brown. Blue looks like Brown and they joined mutually. One day Brown was pregnant and she feels happy. Brown taken to some other place by their owner, so Blue feels very lonely after Brown gone. The author extends the analogy to slavery that is practiced by human beings and the short story ends with the observation that animals are not images for us to treat as slaves, they are beings by their own right.

Eco criticism or literature is the study of literature and the environmental form and an interdisciplinary point of view, where literature scholars analyze texts that illustrate environmental concerns and examine the various ways of literature treats the subjects of nature.

Alice Walker (Feb. 9, 1944) is an American writer, short story writer, poet, and activist. She wrote the novel *The Color Purple* (1982), for which she won the National Book Award for hard cover fiction, and the Pulitzer Prize for fiction. She also wrote the novels *Meridian* (1976) and *The Third Life of Grange Copeland* (1970), among other works. An avowed feminist, Walker coined the term "**womanist**" to mean "**A black feminist of colour**" in 1983.

For about three years my companion and I rented a small house in the country which stood on the edge of a large meadow that appeared to run from the end of our deck straight into the mountains. The mountains, however, were quite far away, and between us and them there was, in fact, a town. It was one of the many pleasant aspects of the house that you never really were aware of this.

It was a house of many windows, low, wide, nearly floor to ceiling in the living room, which faced the meadow, and it was from one of these that I first saw our closest neighbour, a large white horse, cropping grass, flipping its mane, and ambling about – not over the entire meadow, which stretched well out of sight of the house, but over the five or so fenced-in acres that were next to the twenty-odd that we had rented. I soon learned that the horse, whose name was Blue, belonged to a man who lived in another town, but was boarded by our neighbours next door. Occasionally, one of the children, usually a stocky teenager, but sometimes a much younger girl or boy, could be seen riding Blue. They would appear in the meadow, climb up on his back, ride furiously for ten or fifteen minutes. Then get off, slap Blue on the flanks, and not be seen again for a month or more.

There were many apple trees in our yard, and one by the fence that Blue could almost reach. We were soon in the habit of feeding him apples, which he relished, especially because by the middle of summer the meadow grasses – so green and succulent since January – had dried out from lack of rain, and Blue stumbled about munching the stalks half-heartedly. Sometimes he would stand very still just by the apple tree, and when one of us came out he would whinny, snort loudly, or stamp the ground. This meant, of course: I want an apple.

It was quite wonderful to pick a few apples, or collect those that had fallen to the ground overnight, and patiently hold them, one by one up to his large, toothy mouth. I remained as thrilled as a child by this flexible dark lips, huge, cube-like teeth that crunched the apples, core and all, with such finality, and his high, broad-breasted enormity; beside which, I felt small indeed. When I was a child, I used to ride horses, and was especially friendly with one named Nan until the day I was riding and my brother deliberately spooked her and I was thrown, head first, against the trunk of a tree. When I came to, I was in bed and my mother was bending worriedly over me; we silently agreed that perhaps horseback riding was not the safest sport for me. Since then I have walked, and prefer walking to horseback riding – but I had forgotten the depth of feeling one could see in horses' eyes.

I was therefore unprepared for the expression in Blue's. Blue was lonely. Blue was horribly lonely and bored. I was not shocked that this should be the case; five acres to tramp by yourself, endlessly, even in the most beautiful of meadows – and his was – cannot provide many interesting, events, and once rainy season turned to dry that was about it. No, I was shocked that I had forgotten that human animals as a nonhuman animals can communicate quite well; if we are brought up around animals as children we take this for granted. By the time we are adults we no longer remember. However, the animals have not changed. They are in fact completed creations (at least they seem to be, so much more than we) who are not likely to change; it is their nature to express themselves. What else are they going to express? And they do. And, generally speaking, they are ignored.

After giving Blue the apples, I would wander back to the house, aware that he was observing me. Were more apples not forthcoming then? Was that to be his sole entertainment for the day? My partner's small son had decided he wanted to learn how to piece a quilt; we worked in silence on our respective squares as I thought. . .

Black women have to take care of white children and they are called Mammies. After the children grow they are forced to stop all communication with the Mammies.

And about the Indians, considered to be "like animals" by the "settlers" (a very benign euphemism for what they actually were), who did not understand their descriptions as a compliment.

And about the thousands of American men who marry Japanese, Korean, Filipino, and other non-English-speaking women and of how happy they report they are, "blissfully," until their brides learn to speak English, at which point the marriages tend to fall apart, What then did the men see, when they looked into the eyes of the women they married, before they could speak English? Apparently only their own reflections.

I thought of society's impatience with the young. "Why are they playing music so loud?" Perhaps the children have listened to much of the music of oppressed people their parents danced to before they were born, with its passionate but soft cries for acceptance and love, and they have wondered why their parents failed to hear.

I do not know how long Blue had inhabited his five beautiful, boring acres before we moved into our house; a year after we had arrived – and had also travelled to other valleys, other cities – he was still there.

But then, in our second year at the house, something happened in Blue's life. One morning, looking out the window at the fog that lay like a ribbon over the meadow, I saw another horse, a brown one, at the other end of Blue's field. Blue appeared to be afraid of it, and for several days made no attempt to go near. We went away for a week. When we returned, Blue had decided to make friends and the two horses ambled or galloped along together, and Blue did not come nearly as often to the fence underneath the apple tree.

When he did, bringing his new friend with him, there was a different look in his eyes. A look of independence, of self possession, and inalienable horseness. His friend eventually became pregnant. For months there was, it seemed to me, a mutual feeling between me and the horses of justice, of peace. I fed apples to them both. The look in Blue's eyes was one of unabashed "this is itness."

It did not, however, last forever. One day after visiting the city, I went out to give Blue some apples. He stood waiting, or so I thought, though not beneath the tree. When I shook the tree and jumped back from the shower of apples, he made no move. I carried some over to him. He managed to half-crunch one. The rest he drops down to the ground. I dreaded looking into his eyes – because I had of course noticed that Brown, his partner, had gone – but I did look. If I had been born into slavery, and my partner had been sold or killed, my eyes would have looked like that. The children next door explained that Blue’s partner had been “put with him” (the same expression that people used, I had noticed, when speaking of an ancestor during slavery that had been impregnated by the owner) so that they could mate and she conceive. Since that was accomplished, she had been taken back by her owner, who lived somewhere else.

Will she be back? I asked.

They didn’t know.

Blue was like a crazed person. Blue was, to me, a crazed person. He galloped furiously, as if he were being ridden, around and around his beautiful five acres. He whinnied until he couldn’t. He tore at the ground with his hooves. He butted himself against his single shade tree. He look always toward the road down which his partner had gone. And then, occasionally, when he came up for apples, or I took apples to him, he looked at me. It was a look so piercing, so full of grief, a look so human, I almost laughed (I felt too sad to cry) to think there are people who do not know that animals suffer. People like me who have forgotten, and daily forget, all that animals try to tell us.

“Everything you do to us will happen to you; we are your teachers, as you are ours. We are one lesson” is essentially it, I think. There are those who never once have even considered animals’ rights: those who have been taught that animals actually want to be used and abused by us, as small children “love” to be frightened, or women “love” to be mutilated and raped . . . They are the great-grandchildren of those who honestly thought, because someone taught them this: “Women can’t think,” and “niggers can’t faint.” But most disturbing of all, in Blue’s large brown eyes was a new look, more painful than the look of despair: the look of disgust with human beings, with life; the look of hatred. And it was odd what the look of hatred did. It gave him, for the first time, the look of a beast. And what that meant was that he had put up a barrier within to protect himself from further violence; all the apples in the world wouldn’t change that fact.

And so Blue remained, a beautiful part of our landscape, very peaceful to look at from the window, white against the grass. Once a friend came to visit and said, looking out on the soothing view: “And it would have to be a white horse; the very image of freedom.” And I thought, yes, the animals are forced to become for us merely “images” of what they once so beautifully expressed. And we are used to drinking

milk from containers showing “contented” cows, whose real lives we want to hear nothing about, eating eggs and drumsticks from “happy” hens, and munching hamburgers advertised by bulls of integrity who seemed to command their fate.

As we talked of freedom and justice one day for all, we sat down to steaks. I am eating misery, I thought, as I took the first bite and spit it out.

Even it continues still now humans treat the animals as slave but gaining products from them.

SOURCE:

https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alice_walker

<https://www.google.com/amp/s/genius.com/amp/Alice-walker-am-i-blue-annotated>

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