



An Ecocritical Reading of Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* (1963)

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Abstract: Using the Ecocritical theory as a framework, this study highlights the subtle Ecocritical issues in Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*, and aims at pointing out how Mowat draws heavily on humanizing wolves and joins the recent Ecocritical concerns over the ways in which humans should understand and deal with them.

Keywords: Farley Mowat, *Never Cry Wolf*, Anthropomorphism, The Wolf, Ecocriticism, Animal Rights' Movement

1. Introduction

The emergence of Ecocritical theories in the last forty years has developed a new conception of animals and a new relationship to the environment. Many of these theories argue that animals "have the moral right to respectful treatment, which then generates a general moral duty on our part not to treat them as mere means to other ends" [3]. In addition, those theories emphasize the fact that it is not all right "to systematically exploit and kill nonhuman animals simply because of their species" [33] and "to kill another creature is in some sense an act of violence against oneself" [4]. Erik Fredriksson (2013) explains the main concerns of ecocriticism. He writes:

Ecocriticism begins to see human and non-human nature as interconnected and part of a whole. The distinction between human and animal is questioned and animal stories are examined to illuminate how we think about animals. The idea is also to promote empathy towards animals by highlighting kinship and to break up patterns of anthropocentric thinking. [13]

Since "the wolf's conception has been altered significantly in modern times as a result of the emergence of Ecocriticism," [8] the purpose of this paper is to approach Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* from an Ecocritical perspective, and to show how Mowat draws heavily on humanizing wolves and joins the recent Ecocritical concerns over the ways in which humans should understand and deal with them. Using the Ecocritical theory as a frame work, this study highlights the

subtle and complex Ecocritical issues in Mowat's work, and aims at pointing out how *Never Cry Wolf* embodies five Ecocritical elements: (1) interest in nature and animals, (2) the interconnectedness of human, nature and animals, (3) defending animals' rights. The paper expounds on two additional elements showing how Mowat uses different techniques to (4) humanize the wolves, and how in his process of anthropomorphizing those wolves he (5) dehumanizes humans.

2. Ecocriticism and the Wolf's Perception

According to Martin A. Nie (2001), the wolf is "one of those animals that raises contradictory feelings in any given culture ... [and] continues to symbolize larger cultural values, beliefs, and fears" [26]. For example, in European culture until very recently, man projects on the wolf the worst qualities he despises. As Claudia D. Johnson (2000) puts it:

So-called science and imperfect observation as well as folklore perpetuated the view of the wolf as an aggressive and fearless devourer of sheep, cows, defenseless men, women, and, especially, children and a grave robber who craved the flesh of dead humans. In Europe, this resulted in the wholesale slaughter of wolves. [15]

Many modern and contemporary naturalists have been working hard to change the social perceptions of the wolf. Unlike the predominant conceptions of the wolves as "a savage powerful killer ... one of the most feared and hated

animals known to man," (40) the wolf has recently been perceived as a having a personality and a character of its own. As Sharon Levy (2010) puts it,

Once upon a time, folklore shaped our thinking about wolves. It is only in the past two decades that biologists have started to build a clearer picture of wolf ecology. Instead of seeing rogue man-eaters and savage packs, we now understand that wolves have evolved to live in extended family groups that include a breeding pair typically two strong, experienced individuals along with several generations of their offspring. [18]

Because of this new humanistic attitude towards wolves, many fictional writings have been produced to reflect our changing attitudes towards this animal.¹ Many of those writers believe that "changing the stories we tell ourselves and others about wolves, their relationships with us, and their relationships with the world may help us discover clues about turning adversaries into allies for a more sustainable future" [19]. For example, some Canadian writers depict the wolf as "an accomplished wilderness hunter and independent spirit, hailing the animal as a vibrant and vital symbol of an unspoiled and primitive continent. ... [Its] society [i]s moral, honourable, and benign" [14]. An example of a Canadian fictional work that attempts at *changing popular attitudes towards* the wolf is Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), which "was not kindly received by some human animals" (v).

3. Elements of Ecocriticism in Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf*

Farley Mowat is considered as "the inventor or certainly one of the very early proponents of what they now call deep ecology" [4]. As an environmentalist, who has given years of his life to explore the Canadian wilderness, Mowat has a profound ecological feeling for nature. In addition to his knowledge of the natural world, Mowat has an environmental ethic suggested by his conversation with Donald Cameron (2010): "Everything outrages me that outrages nature," he said, "and most of what modern man does outrages nature" [4]. Some of Mowat's Ecocritical views are obvious in *Never Cry Wolf*. As Peter Coates (1999) has rightly said, "The wolf's status as an upright and valuable member of the ecological community was popularized at this time by Farley Mowat *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), a fictional account of a biologist's wolf studies in the Canadian far north, and, more recently, the Disney film of that name" [5].

Never Cry Wolf is based upon the realistic story of Mowat's actual experiences during two years spent as a natural scientist studying a family of wolves in northern Canada during the mid nineteen fifties. Mowat's life becomes entangled with that of this wolf family. He creates an intimate portrait of their life, illuminating the complex social nature of the wolf that was mistakenly perceived by many as

a brutal animal. As Mowat immersed himself in living with the wolves, a new Ecocritical conception and images of wolves opened to him: "I would have been to spend all my time afield, living the life of a pseudo-wolf to the fullest. However, I do not have the freedom of the wolves" (146).

In line with many Ecocritical fictional writings, *Never Cry Wolf* presents the readers with the gradual change of viewing the wolf from the sly vicious animal to a loving humanized one. As Mowat once stated, "inescapably, the realization was being born in upon my preconditioned mind that the centuries-old and universally accepted human concept of wolf character was a palpable lie" (51). Moreover, typical of many Ecocritical works, *Never Cry Wolf* has many Ecocritical elements out of which one can identify at least five: interest in nature and animals, the interconnectedness of human, nature and animals, defending animals' rights, humanizing wolves, and finally animalizing humans.

3.1. Interest in Nature and Animals

Readers of *Never Cry Wolf* can easily recognize Mowat's great interest in nature and animals. For example, "since the age of 14, Mowat had taken a trip with scientific expeditions to the barren north, where he was strongly influenced by the wildlife, the people and the land" [28]. Mowat's interest in nature motivates him to address the fundamental issues that endanger nature and the environment. As John David Towler (1989) said, "as is the case with many Environmentalists, Farley Mowat addresses global concerns within the texts of his books. He has been in attendance at environmental meetings addressing topics such as acid rain and pollution" [32].

In addition to his interest in nature, Mowat has a profound love of animals. The roots of Mowat's naturalist inclination towards animals probably go back to his childhood when, at the age of five, he kept two live catfish during the night in his grandmother's toilet basin. This childhood's experience with the three catfish creates in Mowat "a lasting affinity for the lesser beasts of the animal kingdom. In a word, the affair of the catfish marked the beginning of my career, first as a naturalist, and later as a biologist" (3).

The early catfish incident inculcates in Mowat a passionate love for animals. He expressed affection for animals; spoke about them as individuals and friends. During an interview with John David Towler (1989) Mowat explains why he feels this way towards animals: "The animal world, the animate world is conditional. You have to meet certain conditions to achieve acceptance there. I learned how to do that ... I'm not a misanthrope; I like people as much as I like any of the other animals but individually and selectively. With the other animals, I tend to like them generically, I tend to trust them generically to be what they appear to be. With human beings, one never knows" [33]. Mowat knows that because of our anthropocentric behaviour, we have lost the ideal world of animals. At the end of *Never Cry Wolf*, for example, Mowat lamented "the lost world which once was ours before we chose the alien role; a world which I had glimpsed and almost entered ... only to be excluded, at the end, by my own

¹ For example, Twyman Towery, *The Wisdom of Wolves: Nature's Way to Organizational Success*, and Clarissa Pinkola Estes, *Women Who run With the Wolves: Myths and Stories of the Wild Woman Archetype*.

self" (163).

According to Mowat, animals are more trusted than humans who are always dangerous to themselves and to animals. He believes that animals do not have the means to protect their rights, so, he has to be their voice. One of those animals that "has become his own problem" is the wolf (10). Mowat is "a wolf enthusiast" (16), and wolves "were understandably very much on my mind ... I became even more wolf-conscious" (27). Mowat believes that wolves "have at least equal claim, to be allowed to survive and function according to their structures, their laws--which are the natural laws--with us. The claims are equal, we have no superior claims" [32].

3.2. *The Interconnectedness of Human, Nature and Animals*

Mowat not only expresses his interest in nature and animals, but also, he views himself as part of the entire ecological system. He believes in this system of interdependence among all living beings. Mowat's idea of interdependence is similar to that of J. Claude Evans (2005), who defines it as, "the belief that the human species, along with all other species, are integral elements in a system of interdependence such that the survival of each living thing, as well as its chances of faring well or poorly, is determined not only by the physical conditions of its environment but also by its relations to other living things" [11].

Mowat's "biocentric outlook on nature" – where the relationship between man, nature and animal worlds are seen as interdependent – is quite evident in *Never Cry Wolf*. In this nonfiction work, Mowat shows how wolves and their environment are not only much complex and dynamic but also interdependent, mutually reactive and interrelated. Typical of many Ecocritical writers, Mowat is a firm believer in the interconnectedness of all creatures: "When we found ourselves in the territory of a new wolf family ... we were never lonely ... for the caribou were always with us. Together with their attendant flock of herring gulls and ravens, they imparted a sense of animation to what might otherwise have seemed a stark enough landscape" (126). Mowat believes that there had always been wolves and deer in the Arctic and that they had lived in harmony until the arrival of man. Mowat believes in a world where everything lives in harmony with each other: "This country belonged to the deer, the wolves, the birds and the smaller beasts. We two were no more than casual and insignificant intruders. Man had never dominated the Barrens. Even the Eskimos whose territory it had once been, had lived in harmony with it" (126).

This sense of oneness between man, nature and animals is best exemplified both in the Eskimos' life and in the character of Ootek in *Never Cry Wolf*. Mowat portrays the Eskimos as having more compassion for all living things. Nature teaches them to love the whole species. The Eskimos treat human beings, the land, animals and plants with equal respect. That is why they think of the wolf in a way different from people in other cultures today. Unlike many cultural

groups, the Eskimos think of the wolves as having a fundamental role. Not only do the wolves share the land on which the Eskimos live; but also they are "part of the semi-religious folklore of the inland Eskimos" (84). Claudia D Johnson (2000) writes about the wolf's special place in the mind and hearts of some Native American tribes such as the Intuits or Eskimos. She writes:

The wolf continued to be admired and cherished in Native American culture at a time when wolves were feared and hated by whites. Each tribe had a slightly different view of the wolf, but all seemed to regard the wolf as representative of all the variety and complexity, the strength and the weakness, of nature itself ... Some tribes, like the Ojibwas, focused on the wolf's family structure and faithfulness. Others, like the Oneidas, especially admired the wolf's endurance and courage. The Navajos believed that the wolf had magical powers. To the Intuits, the relationship between the predator wolf and its prey illustrated the oneness of all nature. [15]

Unlike white men in *Never Cry Wolf*, the Eskimos are open-minded about the wolf, and they do not kill wolves just for sport or fun. Mowat "had now spent enough time with Eskimos to appreciate the obliquity of their minds" (151). The Eskimos have lived with wolves. They respect the wolf as a creature with which they have many things in common. According to the Eskimos, "the wolves in their area are familiar individuals, and ... [they] held the wolves in such high regard that they would not have thought of killing them or doing them an injury" (63). Moreover, unlike white men, the Eskimos have a strong cultural relationship with wolves which they idealize as the spirits of nature and which greatly regard as the ultimate social animals. Many members of these tribes feel that wolves are their brothers and they should be treated and valued as such. For example, and in Ootek's own words, "it was perfectly possible for a woman to nurse a pup to healthy adulthood, and this sometimes happened in Eskimo camps when a husky bitch died" (100). Because of that relationship, members of these tribes strongly oppose the wolf hunt. In a letter addressed to the Wisconsin DNR, the tribes regarded the hunt as "ecologically unsound, culturally inappropriate, violative of [tribal] rights, and potentially unsustainable" [34]. They called wolves "tribally protected species," [34] avowing a right to protect all the wolves.

Moreover, in *Never Cry Wolf* Mowat has shown the good model of Man's relationship to nature and animal in the character of Ootek, who "had many singular attributes as a naturalist, not the least of which was his apparent ability to understand wolf language" (88). As a matter of fact, Ootek is considered as an excellent example of how humans connected to animals in the environment. Ootek "considered himself to be magically related to all wolves" (99) and "was, after all, spiritually almost a wolf himself" (100). As someone who is closely connected to the wolf, "Ootek in particular, could hear and understand [the wolf] so well that [he] could quite literally converse with wolves" (90).

Ootek's ability to communicate with the wolves has been tested in many situations. For example, when Mowat hears

the wolves' howls, he is afraid. But when Ootek hears these sounds, he interprets them as the male wolf, George, is calling his wife to tell her that hunting is bad and that he will be home late. On another occasion, while setting with Mowat, Ootek turned toward mountain range five miles away and cupped his hands to his ears, "Listen, the wolves are talking!" (89). Ootek explains that as the wolves tell the humans if there is going to be good caribou hunting or not. "Caribou are coming; the wolf says so!" (89).

Ootek's close connection to nature makes him very wise and knowledgeable in terms of wolf's habits and behaviour. To Mowat, "Ootek had a great deal to add to [his] knowledge of wolves' food habits" (82). For example, it is Ootek who informed Mowat how the wolves and caribou are connected and explains how wolves benefit the deer population: "it was when we came to a discussion of the role played by caribou in the life of the wolf that Ootek really opened my eyes" (84). Ootek told Mowat that "the caribou and the wolf are one; for the caribou feeds the wolf, but it is the wolf who keeps the caribou strong" (85). Moreover, Ootek informs Mowat that the wolves benefit humans by hunting only the sick caribou. According to Ootek the wolves are eating "the sick and the weak and the small caribou, so that the land will be left for the fat and the good ones" (85). Because of wolves, elk are stronger and vegetation has improved for birds: "The wolf serves a vital role in maintaining the long-term well-being of its prey species is not a threat to human beings, is responsible for only minor losses of domestic stock, and for the most part will not even live in proximity to human settlements or agricultural enterprises" (vii-viii).

3.3. Defending Animals' Rights

Mowat's strong belief in the interrelationship between Man, Nature and Animals prompts him to endorse an ecological activism to protect animals and defend their rights. In many of his works, besides captivating descriptions of nature and life in the wild, Mowat proves himself a great animal advocate who is greatly immersed in ecological activism. Mowat is against all practices and policies which ignore "the rights of those who live at the mercy of an urbanized and technological society--drawing no distinction between human and non-human" [18]. He has been involved in animal rights activism for several years. Mowat has always been "a crusader and a backer of causes" [32]. In one of his interviews, Mowat once said, "I had fought enough causes, crusaded enough and deserved a little amusement" [32]. He has been such "an outspoken activist that U.S. customs officials barred him from crossing the border in 1985, noting that Mr. Mowat was on a list of "subversive" foreign nationals" [28].

According to Elinor Langer (1977), "Mowat is not essentially a political writer, but his naturalist's anger at what he has been taking place has led him to write at least two books in which he attempts to relate biological and ecological conditions to political and economic ones" [17]. *A Whale for the Killing* (1972) is one of these books in which Mowat explains how his life "changed forever" when he

watches a group of whales swim to their slaughter--an event that eventually drives him into environmental activism. According to Towler (1989), Mowat "does not write about Canada. He writes about whales, wolves, Intuits, owls, boats and gorillas, which, with few exceptions, are only Canadian by virtue of their geographical location at the time at which Mowat writes about them" [32].

Mowat's writings, such as *Never Cry Wolf* (1963), and *A Whale for the Killing* (1972), "explore the relations between literature and the biological and physical environment, conducted with acute awareness of devastation being wrought on that environment by human activities" [1]. In an interview with the Toronto Star, Mowat says, "I thought these books would change the way people think about the natural world and the course of human destiny. But we're still killing whales. We're still killing wolves. We're still contaminating the air and the land and the water around us" [26].

Typical of many Ecocritical advocates, Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* is a celebration of the wolf world, the world of what he calls "the others." Like many Ecocritics, he is preoccupied with the wolf world which is for him more humane than the human world because the wolf world is guided by instinct and not by human greediness and corruption. *Never Cry Wolf* is a manifestation of the murderous behaviour of human beings towards the natural world and an expression of the savagery that he finds blended into human nature. As John David Towler (1989) has rightly said, "just as Farley Mowat has embraced the world of animals, he has turned his back on the world of human beings. Mowat has said on numerous occasions that the human race is doomed to self destruction. Over the years he has leaned further away from civilization and more towards the world of animals from whence he watches the rest of humanity with a jaundiced eye" [32].

3.4. Humanizing Wolves

According to many Ecocritical writers, anthropomorphism, "the belief that animals are essentially like humans," is useful in viewing life from animals' perspective [6]. Through anthropomorphism, humans can experience "feelings" related to animals, which make them grow motivated to help animals and lessen their suffering. According to Marc Bekoff (2007), when humans intentionally anthropomorphize animals, they exchange roles with them and that allow them to see the world from the animals' perspectives. As he puts it, "anthropomorphism can be useful for getting closer to and embracing intimately the animals who we study ... Anthropomorphism allows other animals' behaviour and emotions to be accessible to us ... Anthropomorphism can help make accessible to us the behaviour, thoughts and feelings of the animal with whom we are sharing a particular experience" [2]. By assigning human motives and emotions to animals, humans can understand animals' true behaviour; and increase their chance to properly help animals to live well with them. Nicholas Epley (2007) and others, emphasize the fact that anthropomorphizing objects may increase "feelings of predictability and control by making the objects appear more human and therefore more knowable" [9]. In

other words, they argue that the more "human" we perceive an animal to be; the more probable we know it and the more likely we develop empathy with an animal, and become more compassionate and more understanding to its right to live.

In *Never Cry Wolf*, one of the literary techniques that Mowat employs in order to convince people of the wolves' rights in life is anthropomorphism. Like many animal advocates, Mowat intentionally anthropomorphizes the wolves in order to change the bad image of the wolf that has been lurking in human minds for many centuries. As Neil S Forkey (2012) puts it, "in an effort to rehabilitate the image of the animal, Mowat used *Never Cry Wolf* to introduce readers to George and Angeline, and other anthropomorphized characters whose animal qualities he selectively highlighted" [12]. In almost all of his fictional writings, Mowat's animals "whether wild or pet, they are portrayed with their unique personified features" [17]. In doing this, Mowat is totally incomparable in anthropomorphizing wolves which have been depicted as complete human beings. As Alec Lucas (1976) has rightly said, "Although our literature contains many wolf stories, there are none like Mowat's either in science or in fiction ... Mowat is more a 'participant' than other nature writers ... He more readily humanizes and authenticates his work as field naturalist and makes it vividly experiential" [20].

In *Never Cry Wolf*, when Mowat has the chance to live with the wolves; he humanizes them by attributing human characteristics to them: "the wolves have the same general outlook toward pups that Eskimos have toward children--which is to say that actual paternity does not count for much, and there are no orphans as we use them" (99). Although he has been sent by the Canadian Government to investigate the savage behaviour of the wolves, Mowat has been so moved by the intelligence of these wolves that he ends humanizing them: "As I grew more completely attuned to their daily round of family life I found it increasingly difficult to maintain an impersonal attitude toward the wolves. No matter how hard I tried to regard them with scientific objectivity, I could not resist the impact of their individual impersonalities" (61). Mowat's anthropomorphism is a more reaction to the senseless killing of wolves premeditated by the Canadian government than a mere desire to attribute human qualities to them. He alludes to the fact that some people in the Canadian government think that wolves lack emotions and that people should be allowed to treat them however they choose: "The war against wolves is kept at white heat by Provincial and Federal Governments" (154).

In *Never Cry Wolf*, Mowat humanizes the wolves and shows them having "individual impersonalities" by the following techniques: giving them names; acknowledging their social life; assigning them emotions; Imitating them; and finally animalizing humans.

3.4.1. Giving Names to the Wolves

Mowat believes that to make wolves more humanlike is to give them human names. With names, the wolves will make their ways into people's hearts. For example, Mowat names

the male wolf, George, who has been described as a responsible father and the leader of the family. George is the one who makes decision for the pack. Humanized more than humans, "George has presence. His dignity was unassailable, yet he was by no means aloof. Conscientious to a fault, thoughtful of others, and affectionate within reasonable bounds, he was the kind of father whose idealized image appears in many wistful books of human family reminiscences ... George was, in brief, the kind of father every son longs to acknowledge as his own" (61).

Moreover, there is Angeline, George's wife, to whom Mowat dedicates his work: "For Angeline--the angel!" Mowat not only gives Angeline a name, but he endows her with feminine characteristics. Angeline is a determined female that attracts Mowat's attention. She is an amazing mother, and Mowat called her "inspirational." She "has beautiful tail" and "wrinkled her lips, bared her superb white teeth" (113). To Mowat, Angeline represents female characteristics that rarely exist in any woman he knows. On many occasions, Mowat could not hide his fond of Angeline. According to Mowat, to know a she-wolf, like Angeline, is to love one; "I respected and liked George very much, but I became deeply fond of Angeline, and still live in hopes that I can somewhere find a human female who embodies all her virtues" (62). One of her virtues, for example, is fidelity and devotion: "unlike dogs, who have adopted many of the habits of their human owners, wolf bitches mate with only a single male, and mate for life" (62). In another situation, when Mowat notices the disappearance of Angeline, he gets uneasy and worried: "There was still no sign of Angeline, and this, together with the unusual actions of the male wolves, began to make me uneasy too. The thought that something might have happened to Angeline struck me with surprising pain. I had not realized how fond I was becoming of her, but now that she appeared to be missing I began to worry about her in dead earnest" (96-97).

Furthermore, Mowat never forgets to name the other male wolf "whose true relationship to the rest of the family was still uncertain, but as far as I was concerned he had become, and would remain, 'good old Uncle Albert'" (66). According to Mowat, Uncle Albert is a bachelor. He does not have a wife or children, and he prefers this social status. In Ootek's view, "some wolves actually preferred the "uncle" or "aunt" status, since it gave them the pleasure of being involved in rearing a family without incurring the full responsibilities of parenthood" (122). Moreover, one of Uncle Albert's jobs, in addition to bring food, is babysitting. For example, Mowat "had several times seen her (the female wolf, Angeline) conscript Albert (and on rare occasions even George) to do duty as a babysitter while she went down to the bay for a drink or, as I mistakenly thought, simply went for a walk to stretch her legs" (70).

3.4.2. Family

Mowat has changed the popular vision of the wolf pack, long viewed as a band of competitive brutes, to be actually an extended family: "One factor concerning the organization of

the [wolf] family mystified me very much at first" (63). In *Never Cry Wolf*, Mowat portrays the wolf as an extremely social animal. They live in a social unit called pack, which has a family structure which is very similar to humans. It consists of a mated pair of wolves – George and Angeline, whose relationship is more stable and more loyal to each other than humans are: "Angeline and George seemed as a devoted mated pair as one could hope to find. As far as I could tell they never quarrelled, and the delight with which they greeted each other after even a short absence was obviously unfeigned. They were extremely affectionate with one another ... whereas the phrase 'till death us do part' is one of the more amusing mockeries in the nuptial arrangements of a large proportion of the human race, with wolves it is a simple fact. Wolves are also strict monogamists" (62). Other members of the wolf family are young pups and uncles (Albert), and every member knows its role. For example, when the pups are very small, it is the responsibility of George and Uncle Albert to bring food to Angeline so she does not have to leave the den. When Angeline wants to take some rest, both George and Uncle Albert, take turns playing with them and even baby-sitting.

Moreover, like humans, Mowat observes that the wolves share strong social bonds. They frequently visit each other, have fun together and educate their pups among their family members. For an instance, Mowat observes that some strange wolves are spending some time with Angeline, the female wolf. When he told Ootek of what he had seen, the Eskimo man "was not surprised, although he seemed to find my (emph. Mowat's) surprise rather inexplicable. After all, he pointed out, people do visit other people; so, what was odd about wolves visiting other wolves?" (119) In addition, as a family member, the wolves not only visit each other but they have fun and go together in expeditions: "The pups had left the summer den and, though they could not keep up with Angeline and the two males on prolonged hunts, they could and did go along on shorter expeditions. They had begun to explore their world, and those autumnal months must have been among the happiest of their lives" (140).

Furthermore, the wolves, like humans, have their schools and ways of educating their own pups, which "never slow to join in something new, also roused and galloped over to join their elders" (142). Mowat observes that all the wolves in the pack take part in educating the pups from birth, teaching them to hunt, and play: "It was half an hour before the pups came back. They were so weary they could hardly climb the ridge to join their elders, all of whom were now lying down relaxing. The pups joined the group and flopped, panting heavily; but none of the adults paid them any heed. School was over for the day" (145).

3.4.3. Emotions

In one of their studies over wolves, Bill Tomlinson and Bruce Blumberg (2003) argue that "each wolf has an emotional state at every moment; the wolf is able to recognize all of the other wolves; he is able to form an association between each other wolf and the emotional state

that he tended to experience during previous interactions" [30]. In *Never Cry Wolf*, Mowat presents his wolf characters--such as George, Angeline, Uncle Albert and the pups-- as having emotions such as happiness, love, nervousness, fear, anger and playfulness. In doing this Mowat is among, according to Towler (1989) "a group of Canadian writers who internalize the emotions of their animal protagonists" [32].

In *Never Cry Wolf*, Mowat has shown how wolves have the ability to suffer in the same way and to the same degree that humans do. Mowat believes that wolves are like us in having feelings. They can suffer, enjoy and even love. For example, when Mowat laid mouse traps, George, the male wolf, went into one of them, "the shock and pain of having a number of his toes nipped simultaneously by an unknown antagonist must have been considerable" (74). Mowat "felt badly about the incident. It might easily have resulted in a serious rupture in our relations" (74). However, it is "George's sense of humour ... led him to accept the affair as a crude practical joke – of the kind to be expected from a human being" (74). In addition, wolves also fall in love. For example, in a chapter entitled, "Uncle Albert Falls in Love," Mowat describes Uncle Albert's first experience in falling in love with Kooa: "During the next week, we sometimes caught glimpses of the lovers walking shoulder to shoulder across some distant ridge ... They lived in a world all their own, oblivious to everything except each other" (107).

3.4.4. Imitating Wolves

We are natural imitators and usually imitate others out of love. "It is a fact of life that we imitate those we admire. We adopt their vocabulary, we try to look like they look and behave as they behave. Sometimes this is unconscious" [12]. That is typically true In *Never Cry Wolf* where Mowat's fond of the wolves makes him, unconsciously, behave like them: "wolflike, I occasionally raised my head and glanced round me" (127). Out of his love and admiration to those wolves, Mowat imitates them in every action: "I never did see wolves catch pike; but, having heard how they did it from Ootek; I tried it myself with considerable success, imitating the reported actions of the wolves in all respects, except that I used a short spear, instead of my teeth" (83).

Moreover, to Mowat not only are the wolves admirable in their actions, but also in their sleep. For about two days of observing the wolves, Mowat was badly in need of sleep but he could not because he is afraid that he is going to miss something important. In search for a solution to this problem, a wolf offers him an answer: "I could think of nothing adequate until, watching one of the males dozing comfortably on a hillock near the den, I recognized the solution to my problem. It was simple. I had only to learn to nap like a wolf" (60). To Mowat's surprise this does not work because he could not get enough sleep. Mowat finds out that his lack of sleep is because of him and not of the wolves as he could not imitate them perfectly: "after the first two or three naps I failed to wake up at all until several hours had

passed. The fault was mine, for I had failed to imitate *all* of the actions of a dozing wolf" (60).

3.4.5. Animalizing Humans

In his attempt to humanize wolves, Mowat goes to the extreme by animalizing humans. Like Gulliver in Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* (1726), Mowat has observed "many virtues of those excellent quadrupeds, placed in opposite view to human corruptions"² [29]. Similarly, Mowat confesses that the many virtues of wolves placed in opposite view to human ones, had so far opened his eyes and enlarged his understanding that he began to view the actions of humans in a very different light: "Whenever and wherever men have engaged in the mindless slaughter of animals (including other men), they have often attempted to justify their acts by attributing the most vicious or revolting qualities to those they would destroy; and the less reason there is for the slaughter, the greater campaign of vilification" (156).

In contrast to Mowat's humanizing depiction of wolves, he portrays some humans as "beasts" and perceives them with disgust: "my original plan was to write a satire about quite a different beast – the peculiar mutation of the human species known as the Bureaucrat" (v). In *Never Cry Wolf*, many of Mowat's human characters are portrayed as "animalized humans." They are big liars who lie for the purpose of their own benefits regardless of any moral concern for other animals: "The trappers whom I interviewed informed me that wolves were rapidly destroying the caribou herds, that each wolf killed thousands of caribou a year just out of blood-lust, while no trapper would think of shooting a caribou except under the most severe provocation" (16). Mowat knows that the trappers are lying. They are the ones who are taking the life of thousands of Caribou for fun and sport: "A white trapper who does not kill more than five hundred deer a year himself will go into a perfect paroxysm of fury as he tells you how the wolves are slaughtering the deer by the tens of thousands. He has no proof, of course; but then, who needs proof against the wolf?" (Mowat, *People of the Deer*, 1952: 82) To Mowat, this white trapper is an animal in human shape. Unlike him, "the wolf never kills for fun, which is probably one of the main differences distinguishing him from man" (136). For this reason, Mowat does not have any sympathy for the trappers who hunt for sport and he depicts them as malicious hypocrites. "Much is said and written about the number of deer reputedly slaughtered by wolves. Very little is said about the actual numbers of wolves slaughtered by men" (155).

Moreover, to Mowat the problem with those hunters is that they are encouraged by some corrupt government agents: "Government agencies from hunters, trappers and traders seemed to prove that the plunge of the caribou toward

extinction was primarily due to the depredations of the wolf" (67). Mowat realizes that it is humans, not wolves, who are the real bloody creatures on earth. According to Mowat, "we are the primary threat, I underline that. We human beings are the primary threat to the survival and continuation of life on Earth. And I don't think that life is going to put up with us much longer" [4]. Mowat admits that all humans, including even himself, are accused of their deep-rooted prejudices against animals especially the wolves. The symbolic scene at the end of *Never Cry Wolf* where Mowat finds himself face to face with "two wolves in the den" (161), indicates "the irrational but deeply ingrained prejudices completely overmaster [human] reason and experience" (161). In spite of his long knowledge of the wolves, and admitting that the "milk of human kindness was not flowing in my veins" (147), Mowat could not get rid of his dark "human ego" and its previous prejudices against the wolf (162). At the end of his experience with the wolf, Mowat was "appalled at the realization of how easily I had forgotten, how readily I had denied, all that the summer sojourn with the wolves had taught me about them ... and about myself" (162-63).

4. Conclusion

Being considered as "an imaginative literary plea for canine preservations," *Never Cry Wolf* has been successful in creating a different wolf myth [14]. Throughout the text, Mowat works vigorously to dismiss the ancient and even modern myths that show wolves as savage killers of animals and humans. Through Mowat's intimate and humanized portrayal of wolves, he hopes that people will become acquainted with the real wolf: "We have doomed the wolf not for what it is but for what we deliberately and mistakenly perceive it to be: the mythologized epitome of a savage, ruthless killer – which is, in reality, no more than the reflected image of oneself. We have made it the scapewolf for our own sins" (viii).

Mowat attempts to dismiss any misunderstandings and misconceptions about wolves that lead to people's ungrounded fears towards them. In the relationship between Mowat and the wolves, readers gradually have a positive mental image of the wolf. By living with, and observing closely these wolves, Mowat comes to know them for what they really are: "On three separate occasions in less than a week I had been completely at the mercy of these 'savage killers;' but far from attempting to tear me limb from limb, they had displayed a restraint verging on contempt, even when I invaded their home and appeared to be posing a direct threat to the young pups" (51).

To sum up, Mowat's encounter with the wolf motivated him to reflect on the collective prejudice he was living out, and on his participation in his culture's wolf perception. After this meeting with this pack of wolves, Mowat began to awaken to a new vision of human's relationship to the wolf. His experience with the wolves invites us, to use Randy Malamud's (2007) words, "to come close, to understand that animals' lives are intermingled with our

² There is a striking similarity between Farley Mowat's *Never Cry Wolf* and Part IV of Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*, "A Voyage to The Country of the Houyhnhnms." For example, similar to Mowat's love and respect for the wolves, Gulliver loves the horses to the extent that he holds only "love and veneration for the inhabitants, that I entered on a firm resolution never to return to humankind, but to pass the rest of my life among these admirable Houyhnhnms" (195).

own and that our prosperity is ultimately interdependent on theirs. We're all in this together" [22]. The text's message is simple that humans should "go open minded into the lupine world and learn to see and know the wolves, not for what they were supposed to be, but for what they actually were" (52).

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