

**SAIL AWAY, SAVE A WHALE: OCEAN AWARENESS IN
CHILDREN'S BOOKS AND PICTURE BOOKS**

**NAVEGUE, SALVE UMA BALEIA: SENSIBILIZAÇÃO PARA OS
OCEANOS EM LIVROS ILUSTRADOS E LIVROS-ÁLBUM PARA
CRIANÇAS**

Marisa da Silva Martins
FCSH Nova of Lisbon,
Institute of Contemporary History

Abstract

This article discusses two children's books, *The Whale Watchers* (2022), written by Dougie Poynter and illustrated by Amberin Huq, and *Calling the Whales* (2023), written by Jasbinder Bilan and illustrated by Skylar White, as well as one picture book, *The Tale of the Whale* (2022), written by Karen Swann and illustrated by Padmacandra. Highlighting the relationship between children and whales, the article draws upon ecocriticism and ecology in the context of children's literature. Arguing that these narratives present both species as climate activists, the article also explores the significance of the text, not only for the purpose of exposing environmental issues, but by also contributing to environmental literacy and pedagogy. This article aims to conclude that whales' representation throughout the narratives bestows ocean awareness, leading the children to experience and engage with the sea.

Keywords: children's literature, environmentalism, whales, ocean awareness, activism

Resumo

Este artigo analisa dois livros infantis, *The Whale Watchers* (2022), escrito por Dougie Poynter e ilustrado por Amberin Huq, e *Calling the Whales* (2023), escrito por Jasbinder Bilan e ilustrado por Skylar White, bem como um livro-álbum, *The Tale of the Whale* (2022), escrito por Karen Swann e ilustrado por Padmacandra. A destacar a relação entre as crianças e as baleias, o artigo recorre à ecocrítica e à ecologia no contexto da literatura infantil. Com o argumento de que estas narrativas apresentam ambas as espécies como activistas do clima, o artigo explora também o significado do texto, não

apenas com o objetivo de expor questões ambientais, mas também contribuindo para a literacia e pedagogia ambientais. Este artigo pretende concluir que a representação das baleias ao longo das narrativas promove uma consciencialização do oceano, levando as crianças a experimentar e a envolverem-se com o mar.

Palavras-chave: literatura infantil, ambientalismo, baleias, sensibilização para os oceanos, ativismo

Introduction

In recent decades, humanities have been increasingly interested in sciences and environmental studies by engaging and exploring the planet we inhabit, as well as the relationship between humanity and nature (Adamson, 2016; Oppermann, 2016; Siperstein, 2016; Emmett, 2017; Heise, 2017). Moreover, humanities have also started to acknowledge the oceans, in all probability encouraged by recent developments on marine biology and oceanography sciences, as well as because of the environmental damage (Dobrin, 2021; Mentz, 2023; Oppermann, 2023). Consider just a few of the issues the ocean has been witnessing: sea-level rises, threatening coastal communities; pollution, toxic waste and detritus caused by ships and cruises; deep-sea mining and the problematic creation of artificial islands. The collective oceanic awareness is imperative now more than ever. However, as stated by Mike Brown and Kimberley Peters, there seems to be “a gap in this literature concerning the ways in which we engage with seas and oceans with a will to inspire action and evoke change” (2019, p. 2).

Children's literature has always been populated with animals, particularly speaking animals, leading David Rudd to comment “the association of animal and child in children's books is so common that it is easy to forget the figurative nature of this alliance” (2009, p. 242). Anthropomorphic animal stories have, thus, always been popular amongst publishing houses. Non-surprisingly, whales are one of the most favoured and sought out animal characters in children's books, alongside dogs, cats, and bears. In spite of this, not much attention has been devoted to the representation of the biggest mammal on the planet in children's novels, apart from Sinead Moriarty's research on whaling in children's literature, *Antarctica in British Children's Literature*, published recently by Routledge. This article aims at highlighting the importance of this mammal's presence in children's books and picture books, arguing the whale's power of engaging young kids to interact and protect the oceans.

Children's Literature, Environment and Ecocriticism

The foundational contributions for the field of ecocriticism have been provided by the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment in 1992, shortly followed by the journal *ISLE: Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (1993). Further fundamental works include an anthology entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in*

Literary Ecology (1996), edited by Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, which addressed the lack of commitment by the literary studies on the matters of the environmental crisis. Succinctly, Glotfelty and Fromm establish ecocriticism to be “the study of relationship between literature and the physical environment” (1996, p. xviii). Therefore, ecocritics accept that human existence and literature are, undoubtedly, associated with nature and as a theoretical scope “[ecocriticism] negotiates between the human and nonhuman” (Glotfelty and Fromm, 1996, p. xviii). On a more recent note, introductory works, such as Grey Garrard's *Ecocriticism* (2011) and Ken Hiltner's *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader* (2015) have broadened the extent of ecocriticism analysis.

On the other hand, ecocritics have brought attention to children's novels and picture books, alluding to how environmental concerns could be detected as far back as children's literature from the eighteenth century (Sigler, p. 148). Just as ecocriticism has grasped the potential of narrative and visual literacy for educating younger audiences, the academy has witnessed a proliferation of publications. Firstly, the publication of an issue of *The Lion and the Unicorn* dedicated to ecology in children's texts, “Green Worlds: Nature and Ecology” (1995), as well as another issue published by *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, named “Ecology and the Child” (1994-95). Secondly, an additional ground-breaking title would be *Wild Things: Children's Culture and Ecocriticism* (2004) by Sidney I. Dobrin and Kenneth B. Kidd. This last publication has given rise to a new branch of ecocriticism in the context of children's texts, which delved into the relationship between children and animals: Zoe Jacques's *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg* (2015), Anna Feuerstein and Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo's *Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Childhood Studies and Animal Studies* (2017), and Christopher Kelen and Chengcheng You's *Poetics and Ethics of Anthropomorphism: Children, Animals, and Poetry* (2022), to name a few. Thirdly, Nina Goga et al. volume on ecocritical analysis, concerning children's texts, YA novels and picture books (2018). Thus, the study investigates the correlation between children's literature criticism and current environmental challenges, albeit solely across Nordic texts. In addition, this volume is structured around five distinct themes: ethic and aesthetics, landscape, vegetal, animal, and lastly, human. Coming from a posthumanism perspective, these works dialogue with the boundaries between human and non-human, debating on the influence of both anthropocentric anxieties and ecocentric viewpoints manifested in the texts. Yet, there continues to be a shortage of research in regards to the representation of oceans and sea animals through the lens of literary studies.

Oceans and Children

Although our planet is an oceanic one, given the fact that 71% of the Earth's surface is covered with water, oceans have been significantly neglected in humanities over the last decades. The paradigm is, however, positively shifting, mostly due to Sidney I. Dobrin's research published under the title *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative* (2021). The author dwells on the idea that human inhabitants perceive the ocean as a mere place, a territory, which is seemingly unoccupied. The understanding of aqua

nullius, reminiscent of terra nullius, is largely influenced not only by an anthropomorphic view of the world (Dobrin, 2021, 2), but also by colonial and postcolonial times (e.g., cartography). Shifting the discussion from earth/soil/land themes to ocean, Dobrin establishes the concept of blue ecocriticism. Notwithstanding "blue", ecocriticism also deals with oceanic issues, but with minimal regard. As such, Dobrin contends that:

Blue ecocriticism is at once an attempt to emphasize the significantly overlooked importance of ocean in ecocritical work and to call to question the critical function of doing so. Simultaneously, blue ecocriticism strives to consider the ramifications of those representations of ocean upon and within cultural imaginaries and to provide what might be thought of as an oceanic fluency (2021, p. 8).

Overall, blue ecocriticism advocates ocean awareness. On one hand, it encourages a recognition of the ocean and its implications toward human culture and on the other, it dives into the gaps of ecocriticism as a field. Furthermore, Steve Mentz's most recent textbook, *An Introduction to Blue Humanities* (2023), fills the gap between environmental humanities and oceanic literature, encompassing ocean-centric approaches to various classical literary texts. Correspondingly, Oppermann's *Blue Humanities* (2023) highlights the adduced conclusions from the previous critics, not only reflecting on the correlation between oceanography and humanities, but also limnology.

Nonetheless, the most recent interest on blue ecocriticism does not entail an absent of contemporary body of literature about the oceans. On the contrary, oceans have always been present in literature and culture from Mahabharata to the Bible and Qur'an. Expectedly, oceans and marine wildlife have also started to emerge from the pages of children's books, and for the most part picture books. Cetaceans, notably, have long been mesmerising youngsters and grownups alike. Mark Peter Simmonds notes that, "there are some 90 species in the mammalian order Cetacea, and, remarkably for such large mammals, more are still being discovered. Each species has its own distinctive food and habitat requirements" (2017, 126). Cetaceans' mysterious nature certainly magnifies human curiosity. Nevertheless, academic research on the biggest mammal of our planet in the grounds of children's fiction continues to be mainly lacking. Apart from this, Sinead Moriarty has charted a vast corpus about whaling for children, stating:

In the whaling literature for children, the protagonists gain control of nature through killing the whale, which is made to represent the wild Antarctic landscape. Antarctic whaling narratives for children also tell the story of the development and demise of a large-scale commercial industry in the most inaccessible landscape in the world (2018, p. 39).

In this sense, whales have been perceived as a way of addressing the history of whaling and its consequences to marine life through the context of children's fiction. However, this article will focus on the representation of whales so as to promote ocean awareness, in light of Nathalie op de Beeck's suggestion: "Scholarship in children's literature (...) must pay greater attention to how texts represent and promote environmental awareness" (2017, p. 118). As the cited bibliography has asserted, the intersection of marine sciences and humanities prove to be a fruitful approach from

anthropocentrism and toward a biocentric perspective. As such, I argue that children's novels and picture books, whether by promoting activist intervention or helping readers to develop empathy, constitute a critical tool to address the human impact on the environment. The selected works, in particular, generate not only a deeper connection between children and whales (human and nonhuman dynamics), but also engage children with contemporary oceanic issues.

The Tale of the Plastic Soup Sea

From *Amos and Boris* by William Steig (1971) to *Humphrey, the Lost Whale* by Wendy Tokuda (1986) and *The Eye of the Whale* by Jennifer O'Connell (2014), whales have connected with children for the purpose of teaching them the oceanic way, their culture, troubles, and life threats. One of the most widespread dangers to sea creatures, particularly to cetaceans, is marine pollution. In conformity with E. C. M. Parsons and Danielle Monaghan-Brown:

Pollution comes in a variety of forms including industrial waste, agricultural chemicals, sewage, radioactive discharges, litter, oil, and noise. Cetaceans occupy a high trophic level and as such are particularly susceptible to contaminants. Small concentrations of these contaminants can accumulate and become magnified higher up the food chain (2017, p. 81).

Considering the global impact of pollution to cetacean populations, it is clear why numerous children's authors and illustrators expose this message. In addition, despite consisting of literary texts, the selected works comprise insightful information about the environment and, specifically, water-centric concerns.

Written by Karen Swann and illustrated by Padmacandra, *The Tale of the Whale* (2022) is narrated by a brown-skinned ungendered child who meets a whale. Enticed by the whale's song, the child accepts its invitation to an oceanic journey. In the first pages, whale and child share quality time together, exploring the diversity of oceanscapes: "We swam over mountains, through valleys of sand/An ocean in motion, a bright busy land/With carpets of colours that breathed with the sea.../I watched with the whale and the whale watched with me" (Swann, pp. 13-14). Padmacandra's illustrations draw the reader in with a rich palette of dark blues and greens, by means of emphasising the wonders of a healthy seascape. Although, as soon as they reach Arctic waters, the emotional depth of the picture book shifts. When its belly rumbled loudly, the humpback whale opened its mouth, revealing a ton of different plastics (Swann, pp. 15-16). Whale and child stare at each other, tears in their eyes, as the little one understands the purpose behind the sea journey: "I understand now what he'd brought me to see:/An old water bottle, a toothbrush, a straw,/A crisp packet, fishing nets, ten bags or more;/Some food wrap and cartons, a large coffee cup/The soup of the ocean, he'd swallowed it up" (Swann, pp. 19-20). Thereafter, the pages give way to four panels, presenting seals, turtles and seagulls endangered by marine debris. The message behind the picture book's title becomes clear: this tale is an unhappy one and it is the result of human impact on the oceans; the harsh reality exposed by the humpback whale is both warning and a cry for

help. The whale takes the child back home, both still saddened by what they know and experienced. Even so, the picture book concludes in a more positive tone as the child makes a promise to tell the world about the tale of the plastic soup sea (Swann, p. 26). Addressing the reader directly, the child remarks, "you've heard the whale's story... Please, change it with me". As Goga et al advocate, the representation of nature through various sources and media (including literature) may influence children's acumen towards the environmental crisis (2018, p. 1). This is a point previously stated by Sigler as well: "Currently, young readers can discover how to 'save the earth through kid power'" (1994, p. 150). This is most evident in *The Tale of the Whale*, which not only deals with the consequences of animal's ingestion of plastic debris, providing useful information to children on this matter, but also advertises more sustainable praxis. In fact, the last two pages illustrate a beach cleaning campaign organised by the main character of the story, which, in turn, accentuates the importance of collective action to a biocentric way of thinking. Swann's picture book is both lyrical and emotional, inspiring its readers to, as the main character does, listen to the tale of the plastic soup and respond to the environmental crisis.

Additionally, *The Whale Watchers* also highlights the major oceanic threats that whales and other sea creatures struggle with day by day. The narrative follows the story of Finn who, alongside his younger brother and mother, goes to Scotland during the summer holidays. As his mother is a marine biologist, Finn is cognizant of the insidious threats towards marine wildlife: "He knew about the whales all around the world that were washing up on beaches, their stomachs filled with plastic, the crabs found trapped inside scrunched-up plastic cups, the seabirds chocking on plastic bags and plastic bottle tops" (Poynter, p. 11). Despite the enthusiasm showed by his younger brother, Finn is less optimist in the matters of saving whales and other sea creatures. The protagonist is rather frustrated having to avoid the usage of plastic bags, bottles, and various plastic packaging, since he believes it is too late to save "these beautiful, majestic creatures of the deep" (Poynter, p. 13). Finn is not only saddened by the sea's living conditions, but also tired of facing these issues covered by the media, "he was trying to rub out the thought, erase the images of dying animals and plastic-polluted seas that had haunted him since" (Poynter, p. 17). In fact, he shows some symptoms of eco-distress (or eco-anxiety), namely stress and the feeling of helplessness regarding climate change, subsequent of experiencing an ecological event (e.g., witnessing a little whale's beaching in the Thames), as well as regularly reading news about ecological threats.

Finn's family visit to Scotland is a consequence of his mother's work. She explains how her job on tracking particular whales is fundamental, in order to learn more about their habits, behaviours, knowing their eating and breeding grounds. At some point in the novel, Finn addresses his anxiety, discussing it with his mother, while explaining her that trying to fight back climate change seems pointless, when humans will not stop using plastic. In contrast, Finn's mother gives a more positive perspective by stating:

Whales are not all dying, Finn! Yes, some are endangered, but you know, since the commercial whaling ban came in, numbers of certain whale species like humpbacks, have hugely recovered. When we put our minds to it and come

together, humans have the power to turn these things around..." (Poynter, p. 36).

Not only does she endorse the importance of collective action, but also clarifies how whale faeces are saving the planet. According to Joe Roman: "Whales can also transport nutrients to surface waters by releasing faecal plumes and urine in their feeding areas, as they respire, digest, metabolize, or rest at or near the ocean surface. This 'whale pump' likely plays a role in enhancing productivity in biological hotspots" (2014, p. 380). Therefore, whales are considered marine ecosystem engineers, because their excrements release nitrogen, which is increasingly beneficial for the ocean's health, as well as to the marine food chain. Furthermore, their faecal plumes are rich in iron, feeding, in turn, phytoplankton. Phytoplankton is also crucial for the environment since it is capable of absorbing high quantities of harmful carbon from the atmosphere. Nonetheless, upon hearing his mother exposing some whale facts, Finn continues to resist a more optimistic approach towards climate change and the environment. At this point in the novel, Finn apparently contrasts with the protagonists from Swan's picture book and Bilan's text, but this has much to do with him dealing with his own frustrations and, ultimately, eco-anxiety.

Children and the Creatures of the Deep

Bilan's *Calling the Whales* presents a brighter outlook for both whales and climate change. Satchen and Tulsi feel that it is their responsibility to protect the ocean and its sea creatures: "That's why we have to keep going with our work. We can't wait around for the adults to take action. It's up to us. As my dad says, we can do anything if we put our minds to it" (Bilan, pp. 5-7). The protagonists present themselves as young climate activists, being yearly involved in beach cleaning and other activities for the purpose of environmental awareness and protection, such as sponsored runs/walks and fund raising. One day, Satchen and Tulsi decide to take the boat to the nearest island for a fun nature walk day. During this activity, the children catch sight of a whale. Although puzzled at first about the whale's proximity, Tulsi quickly comments that whales can get lost, "confused by all sounds of boats' sonar and stuff" (Bilan, p. 25).

As reported by Lindy Weilgart, "marine mammals, but especially cetaceans, rely on sound for all of their vital functions such as food finding, predator or hazard avoidance, mating, group coordination, navigation, orientation, and overall sensing of their environment" (2017, p. 112). Living in a largely acoustic world, cetaceans, and marine wildlife in general hinge on sound for their vital activities. Underwater noise pollution is thus affecting most marine species and it has, in fact, become an animal welfare concern (Weilgart, p. 113). Despite emphasising this issue, the novel points out another threat to sea creatures, since the humpback whale is entangled in a fishing net: "The tangled mess of plastic rope and netting has wound itself around one of his fins, fixing Angus to the spot" (Bilan, p. 35). In point of fact, bycatch is one of the main threats to marine animals, predominantly to cetaceans. The unintentional capture of sea creatures is the result of the growing human population which continuously demands oceanic food sources, hence overfishing, as well as a hazardous lack of management and control in fisheries.

Calling the Whales not merely addresses these dangers but clarifies entanglement as a cetacean welfare issue:

The huge nets used to catch fish are cast way out from the boats. Some of them are walls of netting up to 100 km long and they're attached to the sea floor by thousands of hooks and traps. So many whales and dolphins get caught in them and then they can't get back up to the surface to breathe. Or they get trapped and starve (Bilan, p. 66).

Apart from this, the protagonists also mention possible solutions to the problem, speaking directly to the adult characters, "you can get involved in beach clean-ups to help remove this rubbish from our beaches. You can also make posters to let other people know about the dangers" (Bilan, p. 66).

Similarly, *The Whale Watchers* relates to cetacean entanglement. When Finn, his younger brother, and their new Scottish friend Skye explore the surroundings, they notice a young minke whale stranded on the beach (Poynter, p. 97). The kids quickly detect that the whale has plastic in its mouth: "It was a bit of plastic sheeting, a long, thin strip of it. It was the sort of material a box might once have been wrapped in, but now it had wrapped itself around the whale's head. It was trapped in his mouth, in the bristles of his baleen" (Poynter, p. 101). Shortly after, the kids find out the beached whale is Arrow – the missing minke whale Finn's mother was looking forward to study more about. Concomitantly, they also observe how many boats were dangerously close to the shore, pointing to the fact that the vessels were responsible for the disoriented whale.

Whilst some entanglements can be shed by the marine animals themselves, Arrow's entanglement required a whole team of trained biologists who gave their best to sooth the whale, keeping it calm and as hydrated as possible. A little crowd of locals gathered on the beach, and together they waited until the tide returned to shore and Arrow was afloat again. When that finally happened, the locals cheered noisily, but Finn's mother asked them to be quiet. Understanding they could cause further alarm and fright to Arrow, the crowd shifted their excitement to a "hushed silence, barely daring to breathe" (Poynter, pp. 128-129). Tourism, associated with whale-watching is also a growing threat to cetaceans, not solely because most whale-watching requires a large vessel, but boat noise could be responsible for interrupted whale communications too, triggering elevated stress levels in cetaceans (Parsons and Monaghan-Brown, p. 82). As a marine biologist, Finn's mother is notably aware of this growing issue and tries to inform the crowd on the best behaviour. As such, the scene also provides valuable information to the readers that may experience a similar circumstance and, in turn, showcases the adequate demeanour humans should display while dealing with cetaceans.

After saving the whale, the crowd gathered once again, in order to get involved in the beach cleaning campaign. One of Finn's mother colleagues talks about plastic pollution, particularly microplastics, and its impact on the ocean: "Did you know that just a single one-litter plastic bottle can break down into enough tiny pieces of plastic to out a piece on every single mile of beach on the planet?" (Poynter, pp. 141-142). The choice of wording is rather catching, not solely does it enhance children's curiosity, as well as it may affect adults' education on these matters (Beeck, 2017, p. 118). As Finn finally came

to terms with the fact that one plastic bottle could make a difference, the same response could be mirrored by the reader. Moreover, the author offers a large section of the book dedicated to the scientific terms and themes behind the story. On account of this, the readers can find more information about the human impact on the planet; single-use plastics; climate change; the various whale species; different whale facts (e.g., whale pump and whale fall); the impact of plastic on whales, and lastly some sustainable practices to revert these issues.

Conclusion

The texts examined here evoke a powerful message, representing real animals and real welfare issues. As underlined previously, cetaceans and most sea animals are exposed to various threats. By reading about environmental affairs, the child reader can thus be an advocate of these teachings, as declared by Tisnawijaya and Kurniati, "the discussion of Ecocriticism could be considered as a critical and creative tool for educating readers" (2021, p. 233). Furthermore, these narratives suggest that not only individual acts of change can make a difference, but also that environmental solutions should be pursued by the children themselves. In these texts, cetaceans are responsible for showing the oceanic issues they are struggling with, as well as promoting ocean awareness and social responsibility. Accordingly, I argue that the characters examined here developed eco-citizenship, as a result of their interaction with cetaceans. It is only upon experiencing the environmental crisis, namely cetacean entanglement, and the impact of plastic ingestion on whales, that children characters engage in ecological solutions. Notwithstanding Echterling's assertion on the limitations of passive activism, which assumes that "certain lifestyle changes will be enough to combat a wide range of environmental problems (...) and/or the government and industries will eventually follow the public's 'green' lead" (2016, p. 290), children's literature continues to hold the potential to educate younger audiences towards a biocentric, and water-centric, ways of thinking. Sustainability, conservation, animal welfare should be worldwide purposes. Children's novels and picture books are able to provide information about the current environmental concerns, while also giving prominence to the importance of empathy to animals. This is especially relevant in the case of sea mammals because the interactions between humans and sea wildlife is less likely to occur, apart from commercial watching. Children's literature is able to illustrate the wonders of our oceanic planet, inspiring us, and presenting action-oriented insights for the future generations to protect it better.

Acknowledgements

I would like to give my thanks to Ekaterina Shatalova for providing me with a copy of *Calling the Whales* from the publisher.

References

- Adamson, Joni, & Michael Davis (eds.) (2016). *Humanities for the Environment. Integrating Knowledge, Forging New Constellations of Practice*. Routledge.
- Beeck, Nathalie (2017). *Environmental Picture Books*. Naomi Hamer, Perry Nodelman and Mavis Reimer (eds.) *More Words About Pictures. Current Research on Picture Books and Visual/Verbal Texts for Young People*. Routledge, pp. 116-126.
- Bilan, Jasbinder (2023). *Calling the Whales*. Barrington Stoke.
- Brown, Mike, & Kimberley Peters (eds.) (2019). *Living with the Sea. Knowledge, Awareness and Action*. Routledge.
- Dobrin, Sidney I., & Kenneth B. Kidd (2004). *WildThings. Children's Culture and Ecocriticism*. Wayne State University Press.
- Dobrin, Sidney I. (2021). *Blue Ecocriticism and the Oceanic Imperative*. Routledge.
- Echterling, Clare (2016). How to Save the World and Other Lessons from Children's Environmental Literature. *Children's Literature in Education*, 47, pp. 283-299.
- Emmett, Robert S., & David E. Nye (eds.) (2017). *The Environmental Humanities. A Critical Introduction*. The MIT Press.
- Feuerstein, Anna, & Carmen Nolte-Odhiambo (2017). *Childhood and Pethood in Literature and Culture: New Perspectives on Childhood Studies and Animal Studies*. Routledge.
- Garrard, Greg (2011). *Ecocriticism*. Routledge.
- Glotfelty, Cheryl, & Harold Fromm. (1996) *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*. University of Georgia Press.
- Goga, Nina et al. (2018). *Ecocritical Perspectives on Children's Texts and Cultures*. Nordic Dialogues. Palgrave Macmillan.
- Heise, Ursula K., Jon Christensen, & Michelle Niemann (eds.) (2017). *The Routledge Companion to the Environmental Humanities*. Routledge.
- Hiltner, Ken (2015). *Ecocriticism: The Essential Reader*. Routledge.
- Jacques, Zoe (2015). *Children's Literature and the Posthuman: Animal, Environment, Cyborg*. Routledge.
- Kelen, Christopher, & Chengcheng You (2022). *Poetics and Ethics of Anthropomorphism: Children, Animals, and Poetry*. Routledge.
- Mentz, Steve (2023). *An Introduction to the Blue Humanities*. Routledge.
- Moriarty, Sinéad (2018). *Antarctica in British Children's Literature*. Routledge.
- Oppermann, Serpil, & Serenella Iovino (eds.) (2016). *Environmental Humanities: Voices from the Anthropocene*. Rowan & Littlefield International.
- Oppermann, Serpil (2023). *Blue Humanities: Storied Waterscapes in the Anthropocene*. Cambridge University Press.

- Parsons, E. C. M., & Danielle Monaghan-Brown (2017). From Hunting to Watching: Human Interactions with Cetaceans. Andy Butterworth (ed.) *Marine Mammal Welfare. Human Induced Change in the Marine Environment and Its Impacts on Marine Mammal Welfare*. Springer, pp. 67-89.
- Poynter, Dougie (2022). *The Whale Watchers*. Owlet Press.
- Rudd, David (2009). Animal and Object Stories. M. O. Grenby and Andrea Immel (eds.) *The Cambridge Companion to Children's Literature*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 242-257.
- Sigler, Carolyn (1994). Wonderland to Wasteland: Toward Historicizing Environmental Activism in Children's Literature. *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Vol. 19, No. 4, pp. 148-153.
- Simmonds, Mark Peter (2017). Evaluating the Welfare Implications of Climate Change for Cetaceans. Andy Butterworth (ed.) *Marine Mammal Welfare. Human Induced Change in the Marine Environment and Its Impacts on Marine Mammal Welfare*. Springer, pp. 125-135.
- Siperstein, Stephen, Shane Hall, & Stephanie LeMenager (eds.) (2016). *Teaching Climate Change in the Humanities*. Routledge.
- Swann, Karen (2022). *The Tale of the Whale*. Scallywag Press.
- Tisnawijaya, Christy, & Geni Kurniati (2021). Sustaining Life with Trees: Ecocriticism Perspective in Selected Picture Books. *Lire Journals*, Vol. 5, No. 2, pp. 233-253.
- Weilgart, Lindy (2017). Din of the Deep: Noise in the Ocean and Its Impacts on Cetaceans. Andy Butterworth (ed.) *Marine Mammal Welfare. Human Induced Change in the Marine Environment and Its Impacts on Marine Mammal Welfare*. Springer, pp. 111-124.

Bionote

Marisa da Silva Martins has a BA in Portuguese and English Studies (2015) and a MA in Anglo-American Studies (2017), both at NOVA University Lisbon. Her dissertation was on British Children's Literature and Post-Colonial Studies, which are her main areas of interest. She is currently enrolled in the same field of studies as a PhD student at the same institution. Moreover, she is working at Institute of Contemporary History (IHC) as a researcher. For her doctorate, she is still investigating British Children's Literature produced from the nineteenth to the twenty-first centuries. She has presented papers on Children's Literature, Postcolonial Studies, Food Studies and Ecocriticism. She is also interested in Mythology, Ancient History, Young Adult Literature, Folk and Fairy Tales.

Email: marisa.martins@campus.fcsh.unl.pt

Orcid: 0000-0002-7642-3857

Martins, M. (2023). Sail away, save a whale: ocean awareness in children's books and picture books. *Child studies*, (3), 63-71. <http://doi.org/10.21814/childstudies.5239>

Received: August 2023

Published: December 2023