Enviromental Issue in Al-Hadiqah An-Nazifah short stories

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ABSTRACT:

This article examines the short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* through the ecocritical perspective of Cheryll Glotfelty, which places the human environment relationship at the center of literary analysis. This approach emphasizes that literary texts not only represent human experience but also depict ecological dynamics and the impact of human behavior on nature. The analysis shows that the short story presents the garden as a living ecological space and a site of interaction among various beings, including humans, the bulbul bird, and the turtle. The environmental degradation caused by the children's anthropocentric behavior becomes the core ecological conflict in the narrative. The animal characters function as an allegory of moral environmental voices that criticize human behavior and foster ecological awareness. The transformation of the children's attitude from neglectful to responsible illustrates the formation of environmental ethics, as emphasized by Glotfelty, that literature has the power to move readers toward ecological consciousness. Thus, this short story not only provides entertainment but also offers a pedagogical message on the importance of preserving the environment.

Keywords: *Ecocriticism, Cheryll* Glotfelty, *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah, literature and environment, ecological ethics*

A. INTRODUCTION

Modern literary studies no longer focus solely on humans as the central subject, but also on the relationship between humans and the natural environment. This shift in attention gave rise to ecocriticism, a literary approach that places the environment at the center of analysis. Cheryll Glotfelty, a key figure in this movement, defines ecocriticism as "the study

of the relationship between literature and the physical environment."[1] Through this definition, Glotfelty emphasizes that literature is an important medium that represents nature, articulates environmental problems, and offers ethical ideas related to ecological sustainability.

Ecocriticism shifts the paradigm of literary criticism from anthropocentrism which positions humans as the axis of life to ecocentrism,[2] which views nature as an integral and living part of the entire narrative. According to Glotfelty, every literary text should be read by considering three aspects:

1. how the environment is represented,
2. how the text portrays practices of environmental degradation or preservation, and
3. how literature can cultivate ecological awareness.

In this context, the short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* becomes an interesting example because it raises the issue of public-space cleanliness through a dialogue between humans and animals. Although it appears simple as a children's story, it actually contains profound ecological critique. The presence of the turtle and the bulbul bird shows how non-human beings also become victims of environmental damage caused by human behavior. Through an ecocritical lens, this short story can be read as an effort to cultivate environmental ethics in its readers, as Glotfelty emphasizes that literature has the power to foster ecological concern through aesthetic and narrative experience.

Thus, the analysis of this short story is not merely a description of its plot, but also a mapping of how the text presents human nature relations and reveals the ecological values embedded within it.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecocritical studies are rooted in Glotfelty's view, which states that literary analysis must include the representation of the environment, human actions toward the environment, and the ecological messages contained within the text.

Buell enriches ecocriticism by describing the environment in literary works as an "ecological actor," an element that influences the lives of characters and the development of the plot. Garrard explains that ecological destruction in literature is often caused by human domination over nature, while Love views literature as an effective medium for ecological education. Slovic adds that narrative storytelling can build environmental awareness.

These theoretical foundations support the analysis of the short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* in understanding how a children's story can function as a medium for shaping environmental ethics.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach using an ecocritical text analysis method. The results of the analysis, based on ecocritical theory, can be explained through the following four main steps:

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[1] Cheryll Glotfelty, *"Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," dalam The Ecocriticism Reader.* (University of Georgia Press, 1996), 18.

[2] Cheryll Glotfelty, *"Introduction: Literary Studies in an Age of Environmental Crisis," dalam The Ecocriticism Reader.* 20-21.

1. A comprehensive reading of the text to identify environmental elements.
2. Thematic coding based on Glotfelty's three focal points: the representation of nature, human actions toward the environment, and ecological messages.
3. A narrative analysis to examine the interactions between humans, animals, and nature.
4. An ecological interpretation grounded in ecocritical literature (Glotfelty, Buell, Garrard, Love, Slovic).

The object of this research is the short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah*.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Representation of Nature as an Ecological Space

The short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* presents the garden as an ecological space inhabited by various creatures. The garden is not merely a backdrop but a shared living environment where the Balluth tree, the turtle,[3] the bulbul bird, and human children interact. The opening scene, which depicts the bulbul bird flying "above the large Balluth tree" before approaching the turtle's home, emphasizes that the garden functions as an ecosystem providing shelter and life for animals.

From Glotfelty's perspective, nature in literary works must be read as an "ecological actor," an entity that is not passive.[4] This is clearly reflected in the story: the degradation of the garden is not merely a visual setting but influences the behavior and lives of the characters especially the turtle, who feels disturbed and ultimately loses its home.

Anthropocentrism and Environmental Degradation

The central conflict of the story stems from the children's behavior, as they treat the garden as a recreational space without responsibility. After playing and eating, they "leave fruit peels, tissues, and plastic bags on the ground."[5] This act reflects an anthropocentric tendency the assumption that humans are free to use nature without considering the consequences.

The turtle, as part of the ecosystem, directly experiences this impact. It decides to leave because it "can no longer remain in this place," as the garden becomes dirty week after week.[6] This phenomenon shows that environmental destruction affects not only aesthetics but also the survival of other living beings.

In ecocriticism, this condition is recognized as ecological degradation caused by human domination. The story illustrates how the unequal relationship between humans and nature can create disharmony within an ecosystem.

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[3] كان العصفور الجميل يطير فوق شجرة البلّوط الكبيرة، حيث تقيم السلحفاة

[4] Lawrence Buell, *The Environmental Imagination*. (Harvard University Press, 1995), 7–8.

[5] لم تجب السلحفاة عن سؤال العصفور، ولكنها استأنفت الحديث قائلة: أن الأطفال الأشقياء يأتون إلى الحديقة في عطلة نهاية الأسبوع ليلعبوا بالكرة، وبعد الانتهاء من ذلك يجلسون تحت شجرة البلوط لتناولوا طعام الغداء، وحين ينتهون من أكل طعامهم يتركون قشور الفواكه، والمحارم الورقية، والأكياس البلاستيكية على الأرض، ويعود إلى بيتهم.

[6] عزّ على العصفور أن ترحل صديقته السلحفاة، فأخذ يفكر في طريقة مقنعة، لتتراجع عن رحيلها، ثم قال: أرجوكِ أن تبقى هنا، وسنتعاون في حل المشكلة.

Animal Characters as an Allegory of Ecological Responsibility

The bulbul bird and the turtle play meaningful roles as allegorical ecological voices. They criticize human behavior and attempt to maintain the cleanliness of the garden. For example, the bird and the turtle create posters containing environmental messages such as:

"Keep this garden clean."
"Environmental cleanliness is the foundation of good character."
"Cleanliness is part of faith."[7]

These slogans function as forms of ecological education within the context of a children's story. The representation of speaking animals reinforces Glotfelty's idea that literature has the power to articulate a "non-human perspective," one that calls out environmentally harmful behavior committed by humans.

Transformation of Environmental Awareness

The children's change in attitude reflects a process of developing environmental awareness.[8] After several weeks without cleaning the garden causing it to become increasingly polluted one of the children says:

"This place is so dirty. How can I eat in a place like this?"**[9]**

Their ecological awareness emerges not through direct scolding but through personal experience. The children then work together to clean the garden, collect waste, and pledge to bring garbage bags every week. This demonstrates that behavioral change among humans is a crucial component of environmental sustainability.

The turtle's astonishment when it returns[10] and finds the garden clean reinforces the message that ecological sustainability depends on human morality. The ecosystem can recover when humans assume ethical responsibility in caring for the environment.

E. CONCLUSION

Through Glotfelty's ecocritical reading, the short story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* successfully presents a comprehensive ecological relationship between humans, animals, and nature. The story demonstrates that, first, nature is not merely a setting but an ecological space that must be protected; second, environmental degradation is rooted in anthropocentric human attitudes; third, animals are portrayed as ecological agents who voice environmental concern; and fourth, environmental awareness develops through direct experience and moral responsibility.

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[7] "حافظوا على نظافة الحديقة"، " نظافة البيئة دليل على حسن الأخلاق"، " النظافة من الإيمان".

[8] Scott Slovic, *"Ecocriticism: Storytelling, Values, Communication, and the Environment," dalam The Routledge Handbook of Ecocriticism and Environmental Communication*. (Routledge, 2019), 3–5.

[9] صاح أحد الأطفال بصوت عال: هذا المكان متسخ جدا، ولن أتناول طعامي فيه.

[10] اشتاقت السلحفاة إلى بيتها، فقالت تحدث نفسها : سأعود إلى بيتي، حتى لو بقيت أنظف الحديقة وحدي . وسارت نحو بيتها، ولما وصلت قرب شجرة البلوط أثارها ما رأته من نظافة الحديقة، فاستغربت قائلة : ترى من كان ينظف الحديقة بعدي ؟

Literature particularly children's literature in this case serves not only as entertainment but also as a medium for ecological education. As Glotfelty asserts, literature has the capacity to instill sustainable environmental ethics, and this short story stands as a concrete example of how ecological values can be fostered through a simple yet powerful narrative.

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