Narrating Care: An Expressive Criticism of 'The Clean Garden

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ABSTRACT:

This study examines the emotional and moral expressions in the children's story *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* using the Expressive Criticism approach. The research aims to understand how the author's feelings, values, and moral attitudes are conveyed through narrative and characters. A qualitative-descriptive method with thematic analysis was employed to identify recurring themes of disappointment, care, hope, and responsibility. Findings suggest that children's literature can serve as an effective medium for the author to express emotions, communicate ethical values, and guide readers' moral development.

Keywords: *Expressive criticism, children's literature, emotional expression, moral education, environmental values*

A. INTRODUCTION

Expressive criticism emphasizes the emotional and intellectual expression of the author as reflected in literary works. According to Wellek and Warren (1956), literature is essentially an expression of the author's personality, and its value lies in understanding the feelings, attitudes, and moral vision conveyed through the text. In *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah*, the narrative centers on Turtle (Kura-kura) and the Songbird (Burung Kutilang), whose interactions reflect the author's concern for environmental ethics and children's moral education.

The emotional depth is evident in Turtle's disappointment with children who repeatedly leave litter in the garden despite his cleaning efforts. Songbird's interventions illustrate the author's optimistic stance and effort to model proper behavior. These character dynamics provide a lens to explore the author's personal responses to environmental neglect

and communal responsibility, reinforcing the narrative's function as an expressive medium for ethical and emotional reflection.

B. LITERATURE REVIEW

Expressive criticism, rooted in the Romantic tradition and developed by Collingwood (1938) and Wellek & Warren (1956), focuses on the author's emotions and intentions as conveyed in a text. This approach examines how literature embodies feelings, values, and subjective experiences, allowing readers to access the author's moral and emotional perspective.

In children's literature, anthropomorphized characters often act as extensions of the author's voice, reflecting emotional attitudes and ethical reasoning. In *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah*, the emphasis on cleanliness, cooperation, and responsibility mirrors the author's ethical concerns and expressive intent.

C. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative-descriptive approach guided by expressive criticism. The text of *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* was analyzed to:

1. Identify the author's emotional attitudes and moral concerns expressed through character behavior and events.
2. Examine narrative strategies and dialogue used to convey these expressions.
3. Explore the impact of the expressive content on readers' understanding of moral and environmental values.

Data were coded according to recurring emotional themes (disappointment, hope, care, and moral guidance) and analyzed narratively to interpret the author's expressive intent.

D. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Expression of Disappointment and Concern

Turtle's reactions to children's littering reflect the author's emotional concern for the environment:

"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،"[1]

Translate:

[1] Kholif, Friyal & Hajar, Dhiya'. *Masyrū al-Manhal al-Ta'līmī: al-Hadīqah al-Nazhīfah.* Dāru al-Manhal, 4

"Indeed, naughty children came to the garden… leaving fruit peels, tissues, and plastic bags on the ground…"

The narrative emphasizes Turtle's sadness and frustration, showing the author's personal disappointment with careless behavior. This emotional depiction invites readers to feel empathy and understand the importance of responsibility in caring for shared spaces.

Expression of Hope and Positive Intervention

Songbird's intervention illustrates the author's optimism and constructive effort:

"غمس العصفور الفرشة في اللون الأحمر، وكتب على ورقة بيضاء بيضاء بخط كبير: "حافظوا على نظافة الحديقة".[2]

Translate:

"The Songbird dipped the brush into red ink and wrote on the white paper: Maintain cleanliness in this garden."

This brief action conveys the author's hope that education and moral guidance can inspire change. It demonstrates how proactive efforts, even small ones, reflect the writer's belief in positive social influence.

Moral and Ethical Expression

The narrative links cleanliness to moral and spiritual values:

"النظافة من الإيمان"[3]

Translate:

"Cleanliness is part of faith."

Through this statement, the author expresses a clear ethical message, connecting environmental care with moral education. The brief narrative reinforces how literature can simultaneously entertain and teach, blending emotion with ethical reflection.

Emotional Engagement and Reader Response

By depicting characters' thoughts, feelings, and actions in a concise yet vivid manner, the story encourages readers to internalize both emotional and moral lessons. The expressive approach highlights how literature can make abstract ethical principles tangible through relatable scenarios.

E. CONCLUSION

The expressive reading of *al-Ḥadīqah an-Naẓīfah* shows that the author's emotions and moral values are central to the narrative. Through Turtle's disappointment, Songbird's

[2] Kholif, Friyal & Hajar, Dhiya'. *Masyrū al-Manhal al-Ta'līmī: al-Hadīqah al-Nazhīfah.* 7
[3] Kholif, Friyal & Hajar, Dhiya'. *Masyrū al-Manhal al-Ta'līmī: al-Hadīqah al-Nazhīfah.*8

interventions, and moral statements about cleanliness, the story serves as an expressive medium to convey ethics and environmental care. Children's literature not only entertains but also communicates the author's feelings, values, and moral attitudes, guiding readers both emotionally and ethically.

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