



Analysis of humans cruelty in Kari Sutherland's "Dumbo Circus of Dreams"

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Abstract. This article deals with environmental issues represented in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel by Kari Sutherland. There are some environmental issues which are represented clearly in *The Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel. There are three problems to discuss in this article. The first is about how elephants are treated badly by humans. The second is about the impact of human cruelty towards elephants. The last is about the role of humans in restoring animals rights. Descriptive qualitative method is used by applying Garrad's theory of ecocriticism to analyze the problems. The results of this article are: the elephants treated by humans as moneymakers, physical abuse, and verbal abuse. It also found that the impact of human cruelty towards elephants includes limited life and physical and mental injuries. The role of humans in restoring animal rights through human awareness of animal rights and replacing animals with other objects.

Keywords: Animals, Ecocriticism, Human Awareness, Human Cruelty, Impact.

1. INTRODUCTION

Along with the increasing of human population in this era, it causes a lot of damage to nature. Human activity has the potential to harm the environment (Bertens, 2007, p. 207). Some of the human activities that cause damage to nature include illegal logging, sea bombing and hunting animals. The greed of humans towards nature is manifested in cruelty towards animals, thus harming their population, even though humans need to maintain animal populations on earth to ensure the sustainability of the ecosystem. This research is important to understand the impact of human cruelty to animals, which can lead to the extinction of animal populations and negatively impact the sustainability of environmental ecosystems. An ecosystem is a complex system made up of biotic and abiotic components that interact with one another (Jorgensen, 2009, p. 3). The interaction between the two elements is not maintained due to human activities that damage the ecosystem. This is an interesting topic to discuss where the relationship between humans and animals is a serious concern for the integrity of natural ecosystems in this era. This concern to the ecosystem is known as ecocriticism. According to Cheryll Glotfelty (1996, p. xix), ecocriticism is the study of how literature and the natural world interact. Ecocriticism is a branch of study that focuses on maintaining natural ecosystems so that humans can learn about literary environmental criticism. Furthermore, literature serves as a platform to communicate significant social, political, or environmental messages (Estafeta, et.al., 2023). Many interesting topics in the current literature discuss environmental issues, such as the problem of ecosystem

destruction. According to Bennett (2004, p. 35), literature is the kind of writing that deals with the strange parts of experience, cognition, and feeling the most persistently and provocatively. A writing made with ideas and experiences produces a good literary work. Some literary works discuss how human cruelty, especially the treatment of elephants, can damage the ecosystem. One of which is a novel titled *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* by Kari Sutherland. The novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* tells the story of a baby elephant named Dumbo who has long and large ears. Due to the fact that Dumbo's ears are unique different to other elephants, the circus owner feels cheat and makes the circus audience laugh. Due to his large ears, which enable him to fly, and it make the circus owner treats Dumbo as moneymaker. The cruel treatment that is described in the novel is suitable to be analyzed using animals ecocritical theory. The writer applies Greg Garrard's ecocritical theory as a support to analyze the issues that arise in the story. The writer is interested in analyzing how humans treat the animals in the circus depicted in the novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams*. The writer also interest to analyze the impact of bad treatment and the human role in restoring animal rights in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel. The ecocriticism theory applies to the analysis because it is able to explore environmental problems between humans and elephants described in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel.

The writer found four previous studies using ecocriticism theory by Greg Garrard. The first is a thesis entitled *An Eroded of Ape's Species in Greg Cox's Novel "War For The Planet of the Apes": An Ecocriticism Analysis* by Hosen in 2019. Second, it is a thesis entitled *An Ecocritical Analysis of Nature Condition and Environmental Stewardship in J.R.R. Tolkien's The Hobbit* by Amril Bachtiar in 2019. The third, a thesis entitled *The Beginning of the End: An Ecocriticism Analysis on Clive Staples Lewis' the Chronicles of Narnia: The Last Battle* by Sungkono, Widodo et al in 2015. The fourth, an article entitled *An Ecocritical Analysis of Young Adult Dystopian Novels in Veronica Rossi's Under the Never Sky* by Azizah, R., & Sa'adah in 2017. The writer found one previous study which discussed the movie *Dumbo 2019*, an article entitled *Moral Message in Dumbo Movie 2019* by Marwani, Fami, and Kristyowati in 2022.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Ecocriticism

According to Garrard (2004, p 5), ecocriticism is the study of how humans and other creatures have existed throughout human history. It also involves an examination of the term "human" itself. Because the term ecocriticism is concise and can be easily transformed into other terms such as ecocritical and ecocritic, many students prefer it (Bachtiar, 2019, p. 11). According to Bachtiar's statement, the terms ecocritical and ecocritic are meant to be ecocriticism. Ecocritic refers to a person who wants to live in a healthy environment and who expresses their theories as written material in order to achieve that healthy environment. The kritos is an arbiter of taste who wants the house kept in good order, no boots or dishes thrown about to destroy the original design, and the oikos is nature, a place Edward Hoagland calls our widest home (Howarth, 1996, p. 69). Ecocriticism is the term for the multidisciplinary study of literature and the environment. It looks at environmental events or occurrences that affect a circle of ecosystems and studies writings that discuss environmental problems or damage to a natural ecosystem and are included into literary works like novels. It follows that literature and nature, the environment and its problems are inextricably connected,

where natural and environmental phenomena, which are viewed not only as locations and atmospheres but as being full of complicated problems and have an impact on the aesthetics of literary works. The writer limits the discussion to the interaction between humans and animals because it seems like a broad issue for ecocriticism. To conduct a deeper analysis in this research, the study of animals is necessary to deliver evidence for the explanation of the reciprocal relationship between humans and animals shown in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel.

Animals

A combination of human control over animals' habitat and the advancement of technology, their existence is becoming increasingly rare. Animals are abandoned to brutality and suffer unfair treatment by humans with the hand of tyranny, and there are artificial and useless barriers between humans and animals (Garrard, 2004, p. 137). Humans' selfishness toward nature causes them to forget about animals' rights. The newly founded, multidisciplinary field of study known as "Animals" focuses on how humans and animals interact with one another (Rahman, 2018, p. 96). In the study of the relationship between humans and animals, problems like animal rights and animal representation in terms of cultural analysis are widely discussed (Garrard, 2004, p. 136). The two primary branches of the humanities' examination of the interactions between humans and animals are the philosophy of animal rights and cultural analyses of animal representation.

Animal extinction is a result of poor human behavior. Since animals cannot speak, they cannot complain. This calls for the right treatment of animals. Freedoms cannot be attained without the connections that enable them, and they will be constrained by social norms and human nature. According to the World Organisation for Animal Health, an animal is considered to be in a good state of welfare if it is healthy, at ease, well-fed, and able to exhibit natural behavior without experiencing pain, fear, or discomfort (WOAH, 2008, p. 235). In addition to animal welfare, Greg Garrard's exposition of animal notions in the book *Ecocriticism the New Critical Idiom* includes information on bad treatment, the impact of bad treatment, and ways to restore animals rights.

The animals treated bad by humans

Animal cruelty can sometimes happen arbitrarily in this era. They engage in violent behavior without having a particular history such as animals as money makers, get physical abuse, and verbal abuse. Without any type of philosophical comfort or hope, animals are cast adrift in a corrupt civilization (Garrard, 2004, p. 146). Animals as pets by members of society are often treated as money makers for profit. There are several instances where humans torture animals while utilizing them as a source of profit, including elephant circuses, snake dances, and monkey mask shows. Animals are made to play roles that go against their natural tendencies in order to money makers. Combining human and animal postures to make mockery of them (Garrard, 2004, p.141). When an animal's physical appearance is not to human liking, humans make them the subject of physical abuse and verbal abuse.

The impact of humans cruelty

It is not a privilege but rather a sadness that a gorilla or chimpanzee is removed from the wild and nurtured alone among humans in order to get what those humans regard as an education (Garrard, 2004, p. 137). Animals can lose their freedom and receive a limited life if they are abducted by humans and taught things that are against their nature after previously having the freedom to dwell in the forest. They would not only cease to exist if they were doing this with regard to the most fundamental human feelings, such as whether an elephant is happy, annoyed, terrified, aroused, weary, sore, or angry, but they would also frequently die. Animals can experience a wide range of emotions, such as joy, happiness, guilt, and more (Garrard, 2004, p. 138). Negative emotions like despair, sadness, and hurt are triggered if humans are cruel to animals. Allow humans to know that they are unhappy and desire respect, and express all of these feelings. All of them have physical and mental injuries. It can be concluded that animals can experience pain if they are mistreated.

Human's role in restoring animal rights

Animals can be replaced with other objects or returned to their natural habitat as a way to restore animal rights. For example, the elephants used in circus performances are normally genuine elephants that have been transformed into elephant dolls. Liberationists who advocate for animals typically place the limit of moral concern at the point of sentience or emotion. Singer considers this to be in the middle between mollusks and crustaceans, leaving mussels on the menu but removing crab and lobster from it (Garrard, 2004, p. 139). Animals confined for too long in pain lead humans to release animals into their natural habitat to preserve the animal's population. This is done out of sympathy and moral reasons. In replacing an animal with something more readily available, liberation is usually done for moral and emotional reasons. The reason why Mussels are still available but crabs and lobsters are not is because humans are generally attracted to crabs and lobsters which causes them to become extinct, but Mussels are still available.

3. METHOD

The design of this research is descriptive qualitative, that analyzes the humans cruelty towards animals which is represented in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel by applied ecocriticism which is proposed by Greek Garrard. The process of research involved emerging questions and procedures, data typically collected in the participant's setting, data analysis inductively building from particulars to general themes, and the writer that makes interpretations to the meaning of the data (Creswell, 2014, p. 4). Based on Creswell's statements the writer delivered procedures and questions to analyze the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel as the source of data. The author's narration and individual character utterances served as the data for this study. The writer applied ecocriticism study to analyze individual character utterances to determine what their experiences were using the particular to general approach. The main research instrument in qualitative research is the writer (Yin, 2011, p. 40). The research instrument is the writer herself because the writer herself collects the data and provides interpretations after collecting the data.

The process of gathering data involves a number of techniques, including interviewing, observing, collecting and evaluating, and feeling. Because the study's data are words

that appear in the novel, this study refers to the process of collecting information (Yin, 2011, p. 131). The data were collected through close reading in order to comprehend the meaning of the character's utterances and the author's narration, depictions of human cruelty towards elephants in the *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel by Kari Sutherland. When the data collection is sufficient to answer the research question, the data collection was completed.

According to Miles, Huberman and Saldana, data analysis contains three link sub-processes: data reduction, data display, and drawing conclusions or verification. (Miles, Huberman and Saldana, 2014) Based on this statement, the first process is data reduction. In this process, the writer focuses on the important things in the novel, especially the data in the novel related to the theory that was used in the analysis. In order to make the information more understandable and capable of answering research questions, the writer chooses and reduces the data. The second is data display. The data can be presented in simple and clear explanations for easy understanding of all this research. The third is drawing conclusions/ verification. The writer analyzed, described, and explained the data based on the research question. Following the completion of all research questions pertaining to the ecocriticism theory applied to this study, the conclusions are presented.

4. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Animals Treated Bad by Humans

Humans are often cruel to animals. Animal cruelty, such as the inhumane treatment of animals in circuses, is a purposeful act committed by humans to gain enjoyment from the pain of other living things. A circus is a group of humans who entertain an audience by performing acrobatic feats, clowning, using trained animals, and other events (Ward, 2019, p. 2). There are many forms of human cruelty in the circus, however it is found in *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* novel are (a) As moneymakers, (b) Physical abuse, (c) Verbal abuse

(a) As moneymakers

Human life is generously supported by nature. From the goods and services that ecosystems provide, it is clear that humans depend on ecosystems to fulfill their needs. Humans are seeking new approaches to fully utilize natural resources, including the use of animals in business. The increasing use of animals in businesses such as circuses is a form of utilizing wild animals for personal gain as moneymakers. Something that can be used to generate profit in the form of money is a moneymaker (Schiff, 2020).

They're important. Especially this season. It goes against my nature, but for once, **I have made an investment.**" He smiled calmly up at Holt. Holt's shoulders sank. There really was no other option—the circus was family, home, and job all rolled into one (Sutherland, 2019, P. 38).

According to the text above, investment is the activity of putting money into a project or business with the intention of making a profit. An elephant is purchased by Mr. Max Medici for the circus. Mr. Max Medici views elephants as a crucial investment strategy to make money throughout the circus season.

(b) Physical Abuse

Physical abuse is a common type of violence committed by humans against animals. Kicking, strangling, shooting, beating, purposely poisoning animals, and other physical abuse are all considered to be physical abuse (Garcia, 2022, p. 2). Physical abuse typically occurs in the entertainment industry, such as in circuses. Although they originally serve an amusing purpose, circuses can contain violent undertones.

Rufus stalked up, whip in hand. He sneered at her, smiling maliciously and **cracking the whip at her feet.**

"Hear 'em making fun of your ugly baby? Who is gonna help him now?" "EEEEAAAUUGGGGHHH!!!!"

Mrs. Jumbo trumpeted loudly. She fled into the main ring (Sutherland, 2019, P. 101).

At the circus, Mrs. Jumbo overheard Dumbo crying. Rufus is prompted by this to initiate and engage in physical abuse by hitting Mrs. Jumbo's leg. Then Mrs. Jumbo shouts and runs to help Dumbo.

(c) Verbal Abuse

Verbal abuse is emotional violence committed by the use of harsh words such as insults, threats, reprimands, and frighteners with the intention of instilling fear in an animal or otherwise exerting control over it. According to Garrard (2004, p. 141) verbal abuse that makes mockery of animals by fusing traits of humans and animals. Animals do understand human language, as demonstrated by the fact that many pet owners speak to their animals as though they understand when we say (sit) (Wonderopolis, 2014).

"That's not a baby; **it's a blanket,**" Catherine said from her spot in the crowd. She crossed her arms, clearly disgruntled there wasn't a cute and cuddly creature to pet.

"It's a **one-ton set of drapes,**" Ivan added."

"They do seem **a little bit big,**" Milly offered. Medici pulled on the sides of his hair, a gesture Holt recognized as panic. "**I have fake freaks in the freak show.** I don't need a real one in the center ring," the director yelled. "We've been swindled! (Sutherland, 2019, P. 61).

The circus crew feels cheated by the birth of a baby elephant that is different from the usual baby elephants. Most baby elephants are born cute, small and funny. Dumbo was born with large and wide ears, which made him different from other normal baby elephants. This made the circus crew verbally abuse Dumbo. They mocked Dumbo as a blanket, a one-ton set of drapes, little bit big ears, and fake freaks.

4.2 The impact of humans cruelty

The *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* is a fictional novel that tells the story of a baby elephant named Dumbo who has long and wide ears. Dumbo stands apart from other newborn elephants because of his large ears. In the circus, Dumbo is frequently mistreated by the performers. One reason why animals suffer is because of circuses. Animals are unquestionably mistreated, tortured, and kept in small cages by humans. In order to concentrate on earning money for the benefit of humans themselves, babies are taken

away from their mothers. It doesn't get the freedom of a typical wild animal. Dumbo's life is also only for the circus.

(a)Limited Life

Animals' understanding of human commands is their most admirable trait. Animals used in circuses to entertain the audience. Animals taken from the wild are trained before performances so they can obey directions from humans. For example, an elephant trained to stand behind another elephant that normally walks on four legs. Elephants are trained to ride bicycles, jump in rings of fire, and walk on tightropes. Additionally, the trunk that is often used for eating and drinking has undergone rigorous training to learn how to write and paint. It is not good practice for humans to train animals. Elephants are forced and under pressure to want to comply with what humans ask of them. The elephant lives a wild animal's life in the forest, which is in opposition to society. Animal training by humans is not done in a good way. Elephants are forced and pressured so that they want to obey what humans teach them. This is contrary to the elephant's life as a wild animal that lives naturally in the forest. The animals working in the circus have a limited life. They are separated from their families and exploited by humans. A limited life is one that lacks the freedom to follow the wishes of the animal itself.

Holt and Pramesh herded the rest of the elephants back to their pens and locked them in. Then, at Medici's direction, **they quarantined Mrs. Jumbo in an old lion's cage**. Her baby circled around the outside, poking his trunk through the bars to reach his mother (Sutherland, 2019, P. 103).

Mrs. Jumbo was sequestered in the old lion's lair alone. She's separated from Dumbo. Being apart from his mother makes Dumbo unhappy. Dumbo spins around in front of the old lion's lair in order to see Mrs. Jumbo. The quotation above shows that circus animals feel limited lives since they are kept in cages. As a result of this cruel act, they are separated from their families and unable to live freely in their habitat.

(b) Physically and Mentally Injured

Animal cruelty committed by humans in circuses has a detrimental effect. Animals subjected to such brutal treatment risk suffering both physical and mental injury in addition to a shorter existence. Circus animals appear happy, well-treated, and free from abuse. Unfortunately, organizations in favor of animal rights assert the opposite. They contend that circus animals suffer maltreatment, boredom, and "psychotic behavior" (Roleff, 1999, p. 191). On occasion, animals are treated well in animal circuses. However, only when the trainer benefits from the animal circus itself, and naturally, only temporarily before things return to normal. Similar to *Dumbo Circus of Dreams*, the elephants in this novel are injured. They were mistreated while at the circus, which resulted in their injuries. The action can injure the elephants in the novel physically and mentally.

"Reaching up, Rufus unhinged part of the wall and slammed it down, **scaring** Mrs. Jumbo. As she scrambled away, she wound up on the ramp, slipping and **sliding toward the ground**." (Sutherland, 2019, P. 58)

Based on the quotation above, Mrs. Jumbo has physically and mentally injured. Mrs. Jumbo was afraid because Rufus threatened to throw the wall down if she tried to escape her cage in the text "Reaching up, Rufus unhinged part of the wall and slammed it down, scaring Mrs. Jumbo." The anxiety characteristic of scaring is what damages Mrs. Jumbo's mentally injured. Fear compels Mrs. Jumbo to follow Rufus' instructions, when Mrs. Jumbo exited the cage, she was physically injured. She was slipping and sliding towards the ground. This is the end effect of human cruelty that can harm animals.

4.3 Human's role in restoring animal rights

Animals are living things with breathing, adapting, and nutritional needs. Animals have the same rights to life as humans do, including the freedom from hunger and thirst, suffering, damage, and abuse, the ability to express their natural activities, and the right not to be killed or treated inhumanely. Many humans frequently disregard the rights of animals and subject them to the injustice of life but, there are also many humans who try to restore the rights of animals. In this part, the writer analyzes data that shows and describes the role of humans in the novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* to regain the rights of elephants. The ways that humans restore the rights of elephants in the novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* are: (a) human awareness of animals rights and (b) replacing animals with other objects.

(a) Humans awareness of animals rights

Animals like tigers and lions, which should be able to run wildly across the savanna, or koalas and monkeys, which should be able to cling to trees, or bears and elephants, which should be able to stroll leisurely through forests, or whales and dolphins, which should be able to swim freely in the ocean, must be kept in captivity and exploited in the circus in order to prevent them from moving anywhere. To maintain the lives of animals, however, human understanding of animal rights is important. As seen in the novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams*, which not only details human cruelty to animals but also demonstrates the existence of humans with morals and an awareness of animal rights.

"A cousin of mine has a cargo ship that sails tomorrow night, bound for Bombay." Pramesh pulled out a folded paper and set it down atop the map. Milly and Joe peered closer—it was a schedule for all the ships coming and going from the port that night. Pramesh pointed to one line. **"If you can get them to the port, I promise you I'll take them home."** "Pramesh, you'd really go with them?" As eager as Milly was to set Dumbo and Mrs. Jumbo free, this would mean a true disbanding of their troupe (Sutherland, 2019, P. 257).

In the circus, Pramesh performs as a snake charmer. He would leave the circus and take his cousin's cargo ship back to his country. The ship will depart for Bombay tomorrow night. According to the phrase "If you can get them to the port, I promise you I'll take them home." Dumbo and Mrs. Jumbo were invited to go with Pramesh. He assured them that a cargo ship would carry them. If they remained in New York, Dumbo and his mother wouldn't be safe. Pramesh takes them through the schedule of their journey to Bombay. This occurs as a result of Pramesh's awareness of animals' right to live in freedom.

(b) Replacing animals with other objects.

Animals are frequently used by humans as circus attractions. During circus shows, animals are frequently made to participate in lethal attractions. The population of circus animals will decline as more of them pass away from being compelled to perform. Scarcity will affect animals whose populations are declining. As a result, several nations, like the United States, ban the use of animals in circuses. (PAWS, 2023) Instead of using animals, they use replacements like 3D hologram projection technology. The technology allows for the display of fake animal attractions. Humans are making an attempt to reduce animal extinction. The human efforts to replace animals with other objects in the novel *Dumbo Circus of Dreams* involves replacing the animals with a clown wearing an animals costume.

"Ladies and gentlemen," Medici called. "Introducing our world-famous flying elephant!"

Fwoop! An air cannon blasted a clown in an elephant costume through the air. He landed on a trampoline and somersaulted away. Medici smiled, then waved the crowd onward.

"Welcome to the Medici Family Circus—where we believe no wild animals should ever be held in captivity" (Sutherland, 2019, P. 312).

Medici Family Circus replaces the circus animals with other objects such as, replacing the elephant with a clown wearing an elephant costume. Based on the sentence "Welcome to the Medici Family Circus-where we believe no wild animals should ever be held in captivity," Mr. Max Medici and the circus crew have played a part in restoring animal rights by forbidding the crateging, abuse, and separation of wild animals from their families. In order to prevent animal abuse and exploitation in circus acts, Mr. Max Medici replaced clowns wearing costumes for the animal attractions. The aim is to raise awareness of the importance of animal welfare and provide a means to turn circuses into places to learn about animals, rather than for exploitation.

5. CONCLUSION

Today, there are still cases of animal cruelty. In *Dumbo Circus of Dreams*, humans attempt to kill, and strangle animals. The writer has shown an ecocriticism analysis of the animals in the story, the writer found three kinds of animal treatment. Animals are used as money-makers by making investments, animals get physical abuse by hitting, and animals get verbal abuse with the mocked Dumbo as a blanket, a one-ton set of drapes, little bit big ears, and fake freaks.

Humans have the highest power in nature. They arbitrarily treat animals. They hit, and kick them as an investment and mock them. Humans commit these atrocities without

thinking about the consequences. The writer reveals two effects of human cruelty to elephants: the elephant's life is limited and physically and mentally injured. Mrs. Jumbo is quarantined from her baby, which makes the elephants sad. She also gets physically injured with scarring and sliding towards the ground.

The writer found that there are characters' struggles in this novel to struggle for the rights of animals. They are aware that animal rights are important. Rufus and the circus crew's attempt to help Dumbo and his mother get to Bombay by cargo ship. They moved Dumbo and his mum from New York to Bombay because New York was too dangerous. The writer also finds that humans play a role in restoring animal rights by turning animals into other objects of performance. Clowns wearing elephant costumes become similar to elephants. From this novel, the readers can know that not all humans are bad because some of them show their concerns for animals.

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