

## **NATURAL CONDITION AND ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUE IN SHUSTERMAN'S DRY NOVEL: A STUDY OF ECOCRITICISM**

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### **Abstract:**

*The research aims to analyze environmental issues in the form of water crisis in the novel Dry by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman. The story focuses on the main character Alyssa using an ecocritical approach by raising six concepts, namely pollution, apocalypse, wilderness, dwelling, animal and earth which are put forward by Greg Garrard. The approach used in this is a contextual oriented approach, which views literary works as cultural products that are closely related to social, political, and environmental conditions at a certain time. The results of the research show that Dry significantly presents ecological issues through natural disasters, social conflicts, the collapse of community structures and the struggle for survival in the midst of the disasters that occur. In addition to the concepts of wilderness, animal and earth are also seen in the efforts and behaviors of the characters in their adventures and also their responses to animals. This research is expected to contribute to the study of environmental literature, as well as become a reference in ecological literacy learning through literary work.*

### **Abstrak:**

*Penelitian bertujuan untuk menganalisis tentang isu lingkungan berupa krisis air dalam novel Dry by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman. Cerita berfokus pada tokoh utama Alyssa dengan menggunakan pendekatan ekokritik dengan mengangkat enam konsep yaitu pollution, apocalypse, wilderness, dwelling, animal dan earth yang di kemukakan oleh Greg Garrard. Pendekatan yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah contextual oriented approach, yang memandang karya sastra sebagai produk budaya yang berkaitan erat dengan kondisi sosial, politik, dan lingkungan pada masa tertentu. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa Dry secara signifikan mempresentasikan isu-isu ekologis melalui bencana alam, konflik sosial, runtuhnya struktur masyarakat dan perjuangan bertahan hidup di tengah bencana yang terjadi. Penelitian ini diharapkan dapat memberikan kontribusi dalam kajian sastra lingkungan, serta menjadi referensi dalam pembelajaran literasi ekologi melalui karya satsra. Novel Dry menjadi contoh penting bagaimana fiksi dapat menjadi media kritik terhadap krisis lingkungan yang nyata..*

### **Kata Kunci:**

Natural Conditions,  
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Ecocritical theory first emerged in the late 1980s and flourished in the 1990s in response to rising global awareness and environmental concerns. In 1978 William Ruckert used the term ecocriticism and then the theory of tyersebut was put forward by Greg Garrard through his book *Ecocriticism* 2004, which became one of the first references in the study of ecocriticism by offering concepts such as pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, earth, animals and others to help understand the representation of nature and the environment in literature. Garrard explains that ecocriticism is an approach to literary studies that emphasizes how literary texts represent nature, the environment and human interaction with nature and animals.

According to Bracke (2010), ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between humans and nature in literature, film, and other cultural expressions. This theory is also a trend in the study of English literature, it discusses the natural apocalypse and environmental conditions. Garrard (2003:5) stated "Ecocriticism is unique amongst contemporary literary and cultural theories because of its close relationship with the science of ecology". Ecocriticism has an important role in examining natural and environmental issues through an interdisciplinary approach that connects literary studies with ecological and environmental issues. Meanwhile, according to Chawla (2020) stated that a relationship between nature and children is an important relationship for children's well-being and also for their future. Therefore, as a perfect creature of God, humans have full responsibility in maintaining and preserving the environment and nature, especially the supply of water in the present and in the future for the sake of a prosperous life.

## **METHOD**

In analyzing the novel *Dry* by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman, the researcher used ecocriticism theory, which is an approach to literary studies that highlights the relationship between literature and the environment. specifically, this research refers to the six main concepts of ecocriticism by Greg Garrard, namely pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animal and earth. These six concepts are used as an analytical framework in identifying and interpreting the representation of natural conditions and environmental issues raised in the novel. As Dewi (2019) statdet that basically, research of literary work has distinction method than the other research studies, due to in literary research the theory becomes method in conducting study. The main data in this study is in the form of relevant quotes from *Dry* novel which shows a picture of the water crisis and its impact on the environment and social life of the community. Data collection techniques are carried out by deep reading, close reading, documenting data and marking parts of text relevant to ecological issues in the novel then classifying data based on six Garrard concepts.

In line with the paragraph above, As Zuhriah and Dewi (2024) poin out that theoretical approaches to literature are methods of interpreting literature from various perspectives such as text, reader, author, and context This research uses a context-oriented approach to examine environmental and natural issues in *Dry* novels. According to Klarer (2004), the contextual approach tries to place literary texts against the background of historical, social, or political developments. This approach allows researchers to gain deeper insights into the themes and meanings of the text. In addition, the research is also analyzed through a collection of literature where the primary source of this research is a *Dry* novel, while the secondary sources include books on ecocritical theory, especially from Greg Garrard and other journals and scientific articles related to the concept of ecology in literature. This research aims not only to analyze

environmental issues in literature, but also to understand how fictional narratives can shape human ecological consciousness.

## **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

In this section, findings and analysis related to the representation of natural conditions and environmental issues contained in the novel *Dry* by Neal and Jarrod Shusterman are presented using ecocritical theory with six concepts by Greg Garrard, namely pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animal and earth. These findings not only show that the novel presents the setting of the water crisis as a fictional element, but also implies a social and ecological critique of human behavior in treating nature.

### **1. Pollution**

The word pollution means the process of making air, water, soil, etc. dirty; the state of being dirty. Not only is something considered dirty, something that annoys humans and causes discomfort such as noise is also considered pollution. Garrard (2012:13) stated that the proliferation of types and sources of pollution means that artificial light and noise may now be considered pollutants. In other lines, pollution is both in physical forms such as industrial waste and symbolic such as environmental damage that reduces biodiversity and environmental health as depicted in the novel. Some data with the concept of pollution have been found in the novel, here are the data.

"I've just got the runs, is all". "I'm pretty sure that the tap water Was bad. Worse than bad. I think your uncle has Dysentery, maybe all of Dove Canyon has". (Shusterman, 2018:139).

In the words of Uncle Basil above, he was not only dehydrated but also suffering from diarrhea. By the time he showed the water faucet to Alyssa and Kelton, Kelton had realized something. He realizes that the water that Uncle Basil and his girlfriend are consuming in Dove Canyon has been polluted and bad to the point of causing him to dysentery. Kelton assumes that it may not be only those affected by dysentery, but even the entire residents of Dave Canyon.

In Garrard's ecocritical theory, the concept of pollution includes all forms of contamination that can damage the environment, including pollution of air, water, soil and even sound and light. Garrard also explained that pollution not only has an ecological impact, but also threatens human health and social stability. In the quote, it can be seen that tap water, which should be a source of life, is actually a source of disease in the form of dysentery. This indicates the existence of water pollution, either caused by toxic substances or the failure of the water treatment system due to a crisis. As a result of this pollution, the public health of Dave Canyon has been compromised.

### **2. Wilderness**

Wild nature is considered a symbol of ecological integrity, where ecosystems flow in harmony without human intervention. As Garrard (2012:66) stated "The idea of wilderness signifying nature in a state uncontaminated by civilization". Therefore, the word wilderness can also be interpreted as nature that has not been touched by human activities or used as a place for human habitation and is only inhabited by wild animals. According to Cole (2014) "Wilderness must be managed and that sound management should be built on a foundation of wilderness

science". Understanding the concept of wilderness is key in conservation efforts and in depicting the relationship between humans and nature in various literary and cultural works. The data found are as follows.

"There's a path that runs down Aliso Creek Canyon that goes all the way to the beach". "It's all wilderness, and we'll be isolated". (Shusterman, 2018:69)

Alyssa found a road called Aliso Creek Canyon which would connect to the shore, but Kelton said that the road was wilderness and had not been touched before and that if they passed through it they would likely be isolated. This reflects the general understanding of wildlife as a place that is far from civilization or human settlements and has wild characteristics that cannot be controlled. In literary works, wilderness is also often described as a space that not only provides protection from the destroyed earth but also creates new challenges. Therefore, in this novel, Aliso Creek Canyon can be a way out but can also be a risky place due to lack of resources and other threats.

### **3. Apocalypse**

In the context of ecocriticism, apocalypse leads to the depiction of a major destruction or disaster that causes human life and nature to be threatened. Based on Vasso (2018) "Apocalypse refers to an event that is actually catastrophic that destroys the environment and society". That means not only covering the end of the world physically, but also describing the fear of the consequences of human actions on the environment. In addition to the aforementioned explanation, Hambrik (2011) argued that apocalypse is the precautionary tale, jeremiad, and elegy are distinct strategies that may express apocalyptic elements. Humans are responsible for nature which leads to human actions or behaviors towards nature, a dark depiction of the consequences of excessive exploitation of nature becomes a warning for humans. Here, the researcher interprets that the concept of apocalypse is not only about the catastrophe of the universe but also the social structure and morality of the disaster and also the struggle to survive in facing it.

"California water crisis deepens. Residents urged to conserve". (Shusterman, 2018:15)

The statement on the news certainly made the people of California, especially Alyssa and Kelton's family, who were increasingly anxious, they were forced to save water in all conditions. They don't even give their neighbors a bit of water. They even had to reduce the amount of drinking, from eight glasses a day to 6 glasses a day because the Tap-Out situation is getting worse and even now the Los Angeles Aqueduct is also dry.

"I saw old man get trampled to death. I saw a mother steal water from someone else's child. I even saw a man pull out a knife and murder a stranger in cold blood". (Shusterman, 2018:91)

As mentioned by the previous writer, the concept of apocalyptic does not only focus on natural disasters, but also describes how humans respond and survive in the midst of natural destruction. The concept of apocalyptic often focuses on the major phenomena that destroy civilization and follows the struggle of individuals or groups to survive in a world that has changed drastically. Neal and Jarrod Shusterman's novel *Dry* is a strong representation of this concept, presenting the water crisis as the center of the conflict that fueled the emergence of a form of survivalism.

"If I take it, this woman will die. If I don't take it, my brother will die". (Shusterman, 2018:245).

In Garrard's ecocriticism, apocalyptic describes situations of great destruction, collapse of the social order, and extreme moral dilemmas resulting from environmental crises. Apocalyptic

thinking highlights the conditions in which humans are forced to face terrible decisions in a collapsed world.

#### **4. Dwelling**

The concept of dwelling in ecocriticism is one of the important approaches expressed by Garrard in his book *Ecocriticism*, dwelling is not only related to physical dwelling, but deeper than that. It is a way of living and living which is inseparable from duties and responsibilities, how humans build relationships with nature and the environment appropriately, morally and continuously. Not only that, dwelling also implies how life, death and human work on earth are. Garrard stated (2012:117) "Dwelling is not a transient state; rather, it implies the long-term imbrication of humans in a landscape of memory, ancestry and death, of ritual, ritual and work". Therefore, dwelling is a concept that is very relevant in the study of ecocriticism, including in looking at how figures or communities in literary works establish or lose a healthy relationship with their environment. The data found are as follows.

"Daphne's place. She's still in that big house over in Dove Canyon. Says they still have water here". (Shusterman, 2018:29)

As a result of this crisis, a person is forced to leave their place of residence, as explained earlier, dwelling is a human relationship with the place of residence and its environment. In the above data, he represents the concept of dwelling by describing how attachment to dwelling is highly dependent on the availability of natural resources and how the water crisis tests the sustainability of human relationships with their environment.

"We're leaving for our bug-out come daybreak". (Shusterman, 2018:115)

Bug-Out is a safe place belonging to the Kelton family that they have prepared in case of an emergency, there are many supplies ranging from food to water that they are looking for. As in the previous explanation, Garrard explained that dwellings are more than just dwellings, they involve a sustainable human relationship with the environment. The relocation of their residence shows the failure of their dwelling in their place of origin because they can no longer support their lives due to water crisis, social chaos to threats and dangers.

#### **5. Animal**

Animals are not only as objects present in literary works, but as part of a life system that has the right to be considered ethically and philosophically. It makes the reader to criticize the position of humans over animals, as well as how the representation of animals in culture and literature often reflects domination, exploitation that degrades their existence. Garrard (2012:146) argued "study of the relations between animals and humans in the humanities is split between the analysis of the representation of animals in history and culture, or animal studies, and the philosophical consideration of animal rights". From this quote, Garrard wants to show that the concept of animals can be analyzed from a cultural perspective as a representation and ethics, namely from the rights of an animal. He highlights that in literary representations, animals are often used as metaphors or tools to portray human characters.

"Their dog, Kingston, who's looking sluggish, comes up to Alyssa and nudges her with his nose, his nose is way driver than a dog's ought to be. I pour some water out on the patio for him to lap up, which he does". (Kelton statement) (Dry, 2018:63)

In ecocritical theory, Garrard emphasizes the importance of examining how animals are represented in literary works and how human treatment of animals reflects ethical, cultural and ecological values. Animals are not just symbols but living beings that also have limits to suffer and deserve attention. In the data, Kingston a dog who is described as suffering from lack of water. His dry nose showed that he was severely dehydrated, then Kelton who gave him water was a form of concern and humanity for animals and animal rights.

## **6. Earth**

In this context, the Earth is a representation of the entire ecological system that supports life and that is now in a critical condition due to human activities.

In addition, Garrard (2012:189) stated that "ecocriticism demands attention to literal and irreducibly material problems such as ozone depletion and it also depends upon the insight that scientific problems are never fully separable from cultural and political ones". Garrard also emphasized that understanding the earth in ecocriticism is inseparable from the problems of climate change, environmental degradation, and exploitation of natural resources. By understanding Garrard's concept of Earth, readers are invited to build a deeper ecological awareness that the earth does not belong to humans alone, but rather shared home whose sustainability depends on how we treat it.

"This book is dedicated to all those struggling to undo the disastrous effects of climate change". (Shusterman, 2018)

The above data is an explicit statement that reflects the concept of Earth in Garrard's ecocriticism, although this sentence appears as the author's dedication not in the fictional narrative, but it is nonetheless important because it affirms the ideological and ecological motivation of the work. This is supported by following data.

"No storm surges, no debris fields, tap-outs are as silent as cancer." (Shusterman 2018:15)

The phrase The Tap-Out is as silent as cancer creates a very powerful metaphor: ecological damage that is not seen dramatically, but is very deadly and progresses slowly but surely. In ecocriticism, specifically the concept of Earth, this illustrates that environmental damage is not always loud, but its impact is profound on the earth and human survival.

## **CONCLUSION**

Atas dasar temuan tersebut, maka dapat disimpulkan bahwa ada perbedaan yang signifikan. Based on the results of the analysis using the ecocriticism approach with six main concepts from Greg Garrard, it can be concluded that the novel *Dry* by Neal Shusterman represents environmental issues in a strong way and is relevant to current ecological conditions. The water crisis that is at the heart of the story not only illustrates the impact of environmental damage, but also shows how humans react to ecological disasters that they themselves cause. Through the concepts of pollution, wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animal, and earth, this novel conveys a moral message about the importance of preserving nature, building ecological awareness, and reflecting back on human relationships with the surrounding environment. *Dry* has succeeded in becoming a medium of criticism and reflection on the exploitation of nature and human ignorance of its long-term impacts.

Suggestion This research is expected to be an initial reference for literary studies that combine environmental studies and fiction. Researchers can further develop this study by analyzing other eco-themed novels or by using a more diverse approach to ecocriticism. In addition, this study can also be applied in the world of education, especially in literary learning

that is oriented towards the formation of environmental awareness. Literature does not only function as entertainment or aesthetics, but also as a means of ecological education and advocacy that has a wide impact on readers.

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