

# THE DISHARMONIOUS RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN NATURE AND HUMANS IN H.A. SWAIN'S *HUNGRY*

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## Abstract

This research aims to (1) identify and explain the disadvantages of humans' imbalanced attitudes toward nature in H. A. Swain's *Hungry*, (2) reveal kinds of efforts of the main character to return to the natural life portrayed in the novel. The researcher used qualitative descriptive content analysis. The data of the research were significant expressions related to disharmonious relationship between humans and nature taken from the novel. This research has two findings. Firstly, there are two kinds of disadvantages of humans' imbalanced attitudes toward nature and humans: damaged nature (the absence of living trees and animal, the ruined environment, and the extinct of food resources), and dependent humans (being addicted to technology, and being unable to live naturally). Secondly, there are three efforts of the main character to return to natural life: supporting underground community that cares about nature, raising the awareness of people in her community about the disadvantages of unnatural life, and settling down in a natural community.

**Keywords:** disharmonious relationship, humans and nature

## INTRODUCTION

Humans' imbalanced attitudes can lead to the disharmonious relationship between nature and humans themselves. Sometimes, humans tend to ignore nature just for the sake of their own interests. However, as stated by Jiang (2010:1) the relationship between people and nature is interdependent. It means that there should be harmonious relationship between them that requires humans' balanced attitudes.

Environmental issues depicted in the literary works are usually reveal harmful activities that humans do. Glofelty (1996: xx) states that this is the time when the consequences of humans actions are damaging the planet's basic life support systems. Humans can change their ways or

they face the global catastrophe, destroy much beauty and kill countless fellow species. It means humans need to understand more about nature itself to save the nature. Humans' activities can damages the nature. Yet, humans do not have awareness in trying to fix nature. In literary works the understanding that enlighten humans to become aware about nature and to live in harmony with nature is reflected.

In hungry by H.A. Swain such environmental issue are also depicted, in a city name inner loops people tend to ignore and regard that technology can replaces nature. Instead to fixing the damaged nature the people tends to develop advanced technology to replace it. It makes people unable to have natural life.

This research tries to explore the topic of humans-nature relationship in H.A Swain's *Hungry* (2014). This research has two aims namely (1) to identify and explain the disadvantages of humans' imbalanced attitudes toward nature, (2) to reveal kinds of efforts of the main character to return to the natural life portrayed in the novel.

This research is expected to give contribution in English literature. The readers can have understanding related to ecocriticism theory and the importance of saving the environment for sustainability of the ecosystem.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

This research used qualitative research design. The main source of this research is a novel entitled *Hungry* written by H.A. Swain. The objects of the analysis are the environmental problems in the novel and the struggle of the main character, Thalia Apple, to get back the harmonious relationship with nature.

The techniques of collecting data employed by the researcher in this research were explained steps: (1) reading the novel, (2) interpreting and highlighting of the words and sentences which were related to the topic of the research, (3) collecting and classifying data, (4) cross-checking the data. After collecting all data, the researcher analyzed them through some processes: (1) categorizing the significant data from the insignificant ones as the evidence for the

finding, (2) the significant data were classified into some categories, (3) to make the inference, the data were examined based on the content and related theory, (4) applying the measures of trustworthiness by triangulation process. The triangulation process was accomplished by consulting the findings to the supervisors and by asking two students of English Literature Study Program as the peer-reviewers.

## **FINDINGS**

This research finds two important points related to the disharmonious relationship between nature and humans. The explanation is provide bellow: (1) Kinds of the disadvantages of humans' imbalanced attitudes toward nature and humans, (2) kind of effort of the main character do to return herself to the natural life.

### **Kinds of The Disadvantages of Humans' Imbalanced Attitudes toward Nature and Humans**

In *Hungry*, humans are too proud of their advanced technology and ignore nature. This attitude actually gives disadvantages toward nature and humans life. The nature becomes more damaged because of the lack of humans' awareness. The disadvantages of humans' imbalanced attitude can be categorized into damaged nature and dependent humans.

In relation to damaged nature, there are three phenomena that can be observed:

the extinct of living tress and animals, ruined environment, and the extinction of natural food resources.

The broken nature in the story has been replaced by the advanced technology. The hologram of trees, grasses and flowers is the example. Humans ignore the existence of the living trees and animals. Humans prefer to replace the living tress and animals after there are perceived to be no longer beneficial. Eventually, the living trees and animals became extinct soon.

In the ghostly branches of a hologram tree, light winks off the shiny side of something red and round. I hesitate to reach for it. It's just a projection of the past on to the present after all, but it looks so real that I can't help myself. I raise my arm. My body feels hollow and slow. (Swain, 2012: 1)

The quotation above depicts how the hologram trees and fruits look so real. The sophistication of advanced technology replacing the original tree does not make humans curious about the beauty of the actual nature. Humans in Inner Loops do not care and abandon the original trees and animals. Humans realize on nature, If nature is ignored, humans cannot life naturally. Although advanced technology is regarded to replace the nature, humans cannot life naturally because technology cannot fully replaced the function of nature. The hologram only provide visual of trees. Thus, people can only see the visual of the trees without the experience to touch the real trees. Beside the

function of tree to filter the carbon dioxide cannot be done by the trees in the hologram.

Ruined environment as a part of damaged nature is also depicted in this novel. There is an air pollution that becomes the main problem after the extinct of the plants. In fact, the presence of plants can help humans' life because plants can reduce air pollution that humans created. Though the main cause of pollution is human itself, on the other hand plants can help human beings out of their own trouble through nature system. This condition is reflected in this following quotation.

"Let's just get out of here," I say, then I immediately regret it when we push through the double doors and walk outside into thick, acrid smog that smacks me in the face like a dirty wet sock. (Swain, 2012: 209)

The quotation above shows that the air in Outer Loop is very polluted. In this community, the air is mixed with the acrid smog that is very unhealthy. This is the impact of the extinct trees in Outer Loops. In fact, the presence of plants can help to reduce air pollution. Plants can absorb carbon dioxide and turn it into carbon monoxide which is good for human's respiratory system.

The extinct of Natural food resources is also part of the disadvantages of damaged nature. Plants and animals are the sources of natural food. The best nutrition for humans' body is in plants and animals. Yet, without preserving nature, including plants and animals, humans cannot find natural food

sources. In Inner Loops, humans are more interested in developing food substitute when natural food resources cannot fulfill their needs.

Although, food substitute is expected to replace the function of food for humans, Humans naturally react to their need of hunger toward natural food by producing the sound from stomach. It means that, the necessity of humans' organ cannot be deceived with the help of food substitute. This situation is reflected in this quotation below.

“I don't even know what a roasted chicken is.”

“But someplace deep inside, your brain does,” says grandma. “And my description was so powerful that it woke up the eater in you for a moment. I mean, come on, human beings ate food for hundreds of thousands of years before the inoculations. It's a normal, natural response, Thalia. Nothing to be ashamed of.” (Swain, 2012:14)

The quotation above shows that in body metabolism the natural food can make the humans' bodies system run from the mouth to the rectum. When natural food is replaced by food substitute, the metabolism can be disturbed.

In relation to dependent humans, there are two phenomena that show the dependence: being addicted to advanced technology and being unable to live naturally.

The first dependence is due to the comfort and convenience provided by advanced technology. Subsequently, humans are gradually losing their interest towards

their surrounding. In *Hungry*, the phenomena of humans' addiction on technology make their boundary with other humans become loose, and it is clearly described at the setting of the story. People in this society are addicted to Gizmo or mobile phones. They feel that they cannot live without it. This situation is reflected in this quotation below.

“Just tell Annie one time to coordinate all our calendars with a repeating event. Then we'll be synched up, and when Gretchen checks my daily calendar to generate my to-do list...”

“I know how to do it,” Grandma clarifies. “Just seems unnecessary.”

(Swain, 2012: 10)

The quotation above shows that Thalia's grandma feels that the use of Gizmo can influenced their family relationship. Although she life together with her daughter in the same house, her daughter chooses to use Gizmo to communicate with her instead of talking directly to her. It shows that humans become overly rely on technology and make their make family bound loose.

The second dependence is seen from the inability of humans' body to live naturally because of consuming food replacement. Actually, humans need to live naturally. It is because humans' body needs nutrition provided by food from the nature. If natural food is replaced by food substitute, which is called Synthamil by the people of Inner Loops, it can influence humans' organ because it cannot function optimally when processing the substitute food. The digestive system in the body does not run naturally.

Grandma told me that the hardest thing to get used after the inocs and nutritional beverages was not using the toilet anymore. For the longest time, her body would think it needed to eliminate, but of course it didn't. There is no more waste. Efficiency in everything.  
(Swain, 2012: 39)

The expression above shows that Thalia's grandma tells her that getting used to food replacement is the hardest adaptation for the humans' body organs. Normally, human digestive organs will continue to work because of the nutrition of natural food. When humans eat the food replacement, the nutrition is not compatible nor adaptive by the organs. Thus, the humans' organs are forced to work in appropriately.

Addiction to advanced technology can cause humans to live in an unnatural way. Humans naturally get help from nature and will return to support the nature by way of nurturing them. However, some humans who are more caring and proud of advanced technology will lose a natural life. By living with advanced technology and neglecting damaged nature, humans' organ is unable to work normally.

### **Kinds of Efforts of The Main Character do to Return Herself to The Natural Life**

This part reveals the main character's efforts to return to the natural life after realizing that there are an environmental problems in her city, Inner Loops. Seeing the problems, Thalia wants to return to natural life. There are three efforts she does to return

to natural life. They are supporting underground community that cares about nature, raising people awareness about unnatural life, and settling down in a natural community.

Firstly, Thalia's supports the underground community through the Internet. She understands that the internet connects all people in this community. Therefore, she uses the Internet to spread her supports. She writes a message which she called a letter to action to move people to protest the arrest of the leader of underground community. She understands that One World, the one who ruled the city, has power in propagating the situation and makes fabricated news about underground community. Yet, Thalia believes that if all members in underground community stay together they have the power to protest. This situation is reflected in this following quotation.

They, like us, believe One World has too much power and seek ways to create a different future. If you find the arrest of Ana and her followers despicable, speak up! Spread the word. Protest the arrest!!!  
(Swain, 2012: 181)

Thalia's desire is to save nature after knowing the purpose of One World taking over food distribution and replacing all natural things with technology. Thus, she tries to raise people's awareness through the letter and video about the situation outside Inner Loops. She realizes how necessary for humans to have a consciousness about nature because humans are a part of nature.

Secondly, Thalia tries to raise people awareness about the harm of unnatural life in inner loops. Unfortunately, Thalia cannot persuade all citizens in her city to give attention to nature and the bad intention behind One World. As a fugitive, it is difficult for Thalia to move. Therefore, after she posts the letter to action, people who support underground community begin to protest against One World. This situation is reflected in this following quotation.

I go back to the original call to action I posted yesterday, which seems like weeks ago. There is a huge response.  
(Swain, 2012: 202)

The quotation above shows the response of Thalia's letter to action. The people of the underground community are motivated to protest against One World and its wicked actions that have harmed nature and humans.

Lastly, Settling down in a natural community is the last efforts for Thalia to return to the natural life. She does not have another choice after being a fugitive. For her, a seed is the new hope to return to natural life. She finds the seed in Hinterland after taking a long journey. Before getting the seeds, Thalia feels desperate and almost decides to return to her city. However, she keeps her will to return to natural life.

Moreover, getting the seed and meeting people who share the same concept about nature is the result of Thalia's long journey. This situation is reflected in this following quotation.

The people up here have been so kind since we arrived. Helped us find a cabin and brought us food and cloth. They love Basil because he can fix all the machinery that's broken, and they're teaching me how to farm. Of course the thing I like best is the Apple trees. When the snows are gone, they tell me, we'll be able to walk barefoot in the dirt and plant our own. If we could a signal up here, life would be much better, but for now, we're doing okay. (Swain, 2012: 371)

Although, Thalia cannot return her city to natural condition, but she still wants to have a natural life and invites people to do so. The seed becomes her starting point to join a natural community and live with its people. They used technology while nurturing nature. It reflects the harmony of humans-nature relationship that she has dreamed.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis above, some conclusion can be drawn. (1) The disharmonious relationship between humans and nature can be harmful not only to nature but also humans. (2) From the three efforts taken by the main character, the two have not succeeded yet. The unsuccessful efforts are because One World as the power controller is in opposition to preserves nature. Besides, the people of the city are ignorant of the harm of unnatural life. One effort, however, is successful. It is settling down in a natural community, it can be concluded that it is difficult to raise people's awareness about the importance of nature for human beings.

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