

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The study elaborates on exploitation and resistance performed by the main female character in *The Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter. In the introduction chapter, the writer presents the background of the study, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study, and scope and limitation of the study. All the subchapters of the introduction chapter are necessary for the basis of the study to be conducted.

1.1 Background of the Study

Nowadays, the exploitation of women and animals still occurs in this era. People treat women based on the cultural hierarchy, which makes them do housework while raising their children; they need to serve their husbands and are not allowed to spend the money received from their husbands, even if it is only for their monthly expenses. Some want women to earn more money without getting enough rest. This type of exploitation still exists today.

In addition, exploitation can also happen to animals, working without rest because they must entertain humans in various ways, such as doing attractions. A circus is a type of entertainment industry that employs animals to assist and perform dangerous attractions, and animals are frequently mistreated for lack of proper food or training so intense that they are in pain but must continue to work.

Thus, the exploitation experienced by animals in the circus shows that animals are used to get material advantages for the owner. Exploitation also happens to women, which gives privilege to men. Ecofeminism responds to the exploitation of animals and women so that there is no more exploitation. Griffin in Warren (1997, p.214) stated that the ecofeminist approach is based on previous natural processes but does not exclude human consciousness. These ideas strengthen and clarify the ecofeminist viewpoint on women's oppression and the social construction of gender. Based on this statement, ecofeminism is a process that includes human consciousness regarding the oppression of women, which leads to the exploitation experienced by women; this can be used as a supporting idea to

explain how women can have the same rights and be treated.

As stated in paragraph three, it can be expounded that the exploitation of animals and women still exists in real life and literary works. One of them is portrayed in the novel *The Nights at the Circus*, where the main character, Sophia Fevvers, is exploited since someone adopts her in the brothel. Even though she is a human, she also has wings that make her be displayed as an object to the public. She also becomes a sexual object towards the men in the brothel.

When she is exploited, Sophia Fevvers also resists exploitation in the novel. According to Agarwal, as cited in Parameswaran (2022, p.4), ecofeminists have taken a remarkable active leadership role operating within a traditional system in resistance movements demanding environmental justice. Hatfield (2021, p.4) also mentioned that Sophia Fevvers represents how women and nature can work together to challenge patriarchal norms. Women who are oppressed and exploited have the right to voice their independence and rights to stand in equality with men.

Moreover, ecofeminism also comes from two theories, ecology and feminism, which synergize in the same factors. One is the exploitation both faces, where the surrounding environment is taken excessively. According to (Donovan, 2016, p.99), many humans and animals share the same characteristics: they are individuals with stories of biographies of their own, dislike pain and enjoy pleasure, and have identifiable desires and needs. In other words, the animals also share the same pain as humans in the way they are being exploited and abused. Ourkiya in Vakoch (2022, p.9) explained that men are equal to culture and women are equal to nature, which makes men more beneficial in terms of power and hierarchy.

Furthermore, Koch (2022, p.2) also explained that ecofeminism's contents in exploiting the environment are the same as the structure of exploitation of the feminine body and subjecting it to patriarchal oppression; it reveals the relations between the environment and the feminine body. According to Donovan (2016, p.50), the human subject over the natural "object" in science or the cultural fields of art and literature legitimizes the exploitation of animals for human use and pleasure from laboratories to artistic production.

In addition, the novel *The Night at the Circus* was published in 1984 by Angela Carter as an author of the novel. This novel has received much critical

attention among feminists, considering that the novel features a main character, a woman named Fevvers, with wings ushering in the twentieth century; having the ability to fly prefigures the newly liberated woman, which symbolises that woman in the New Age, no woman will be bound to the ground. Therefore, Angela Carter was a postmodern writer, novelist, short story writer, poet, and journalist, and she was also one of the boldest and most original writers of the 20th century (Finney, 2006).

According to Heinemann (2023, p. 1), Angela Carter was born in 1940. Her work breaks many long-established taboos and mores, not least in her forthright realigning of women as central to and in control of their narratives. Her novel entitled *The Nights at The Circus* (1984) won the James Tait Black Memorial Prize (for fiction) and was adapted for the stage in (2006) and named as the best-ever winner of the James Tait Black back in (1919). Then, the novel *The Night at The Circus* became Carter's masterpiece. That is why the writer chose to analyze this novel in this study.

The writer will examine Sophia Fevvers, a half-swan hybrid, who was exploited as a result of the patriarchal culture that still existed at the time, such as being seen as an object and being considered inferior. Fevvers, on the other hand, Fevvers fought back because she did not want to be seen as an object, but rather as herself, who already had a famous name as an aerialist in the circus in this novel who is experiencing the exploitation and resistance by using the theory Aesthetic of Care by Josephine Donovan which explains about the exploitation and resistance to analyze the novel. Yang in Vakoch (2022, p.379) states that Angela Carter is a postmodern writer with fantastic historiography invested in undermining the patriarchal idealization of femininity and humanity by reimagining intimate woman-animal contacts and hybridization.

Seven previous studies were written by several writers related to this study's data and theories. The first study is entitled *Rewriting Leda and the Swan: An Ecofeminist Analysis of Angela Carter's The Magic Toyshop* (1967) and Lorna Crozier's "*Forms of Innocence*" (1985) and "*The Swan Girl*" (1995) by Oro-Piqueras and Mina-Riera (2018). The second study is entitled *Nature, Caged Bird, and Constrained Women: An Ecocritical Feminist Reading of Angela Carter's*

Story *The Erl-King* by Neimneh (2020). The third study is entitled Women's Role in Overcoming Nature Exploitation in Disney Movie *Frozen II*. The fourth study is entitled Escaping to Nature: Ecofeminism in the Children's Book *Bridge to Terabithia* by Ardini (2023). The fifth study is The Body as an Abode of Freedom: Redefining the Female Self Through Angela Carter's *Nights at The Circus* Hatfield (2021). The sixth study is The Construction of Female Identity in Angela Carter's *Nights at the Circus* by Paulíčková (2021). Lastly, the seventh study is Angela Carter's *Nights at The Circus: A Feminist Spatial Journey to Emancipation and Gender Justice* by Krifa (2020).

The difference between this study and the previous studies that have been mentioned above is the study's objectives. The writer wants to examine the exploitation experienced by the main character, as well as the resistance to face the exploitation and the power to live as herself against the stereotype of patriarchy in *The Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter. Moreover, this study also uses the Ecofeminism theory of aesthetic care, proposed by Josephine Donovan (2016), while postmodernism in this study refers to the novel, categorised as postmodern literature. The gap of this study must be produced here by conducting the study about "Ecofeminism Examined in Angela Carter's *The Nights at the Circus*."

1.2 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study, the writer focuses on the study questions below:

1. What exploitations are experienced by Sophia Fevvers in Angela Carter's *The Night at the Circus*?
2. How is the resistance she does in Angela Carter's *The Nights at The Circus*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

The research objectives of this study are:

1. To identify the types of exploitation of the main female character in the novel
2. To discover the types of resistance of the main female character in the novel

1.4 Significance of the Study

The writer expected to show the importance of this study of the novel *The Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter with the same relevance as the previous study and in the ecofeminism field about exploitation and ecofeminism of the main female character in the novel *The Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter (1984). Theoretically, this study concentrates on making a significant contribution by using ecofeminism theory by Josephine Donovan (2016), and practically, this study can contribute to the development and can be used as a consideration in finding a gap for the next researcher.

1.5 Scope and Limitation of the Study

The scope of this study deals with ecofeminism, specifically Aesthetic of Care, by Josephine Donovan (2016). Ecofeminism is used to analyse the exploitation, human-animal relationship, and resistance in *The Nights at the Circus* by Angela Carter.

This study's limitations are focused on the character's utterances and the author's narration in Angela Carter's novel *The Nights at the Circus* (1984), which will answer the research questions based on the theory proposed by Donovan (2016).