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Representation of ecological issues through satire in Winston Groom's *Gump & Co.*: An ecocritical study

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Abstract. This paper explores the depiction of the ecological crisis through satire in Winston Groom's *Gump & Co.*, from an ecocritical perspective. The purpose of the present research is to trace and understand different types of ecological criticism inherent in the satirical narration in the novel. This research employs the technique of qualitative textual analysis of specific events in the story, dialogue, and points of view connected with human-environment relationships. It was found that satire is an effective narrative technique that raises awareness of environmental problems such as over-exploitation of natural resources, pollution, and commodification of nature, as well as socioecological consequences of losing biodiversity. Unlike in films where negative human activities are made to appear normal, they are depicted as clearly unreasonable and unethical in the novel. According to the results obtained, the use of satire in the novel significantly contributes to the formation of ecological consciousness as readers are given opportunity to reconsider their attitude towards nature without obligatory moral preaching. Thus, the research proves that popular literary works can take part in environmental debate through depicting ecological problems in a simplified way.

Keywords: ecocriticism; environmental degradation; *Gump & Co.*; literary analysis; satire

Abstrak. Artikel ini mengkaji representasi krisis ekologis melalui satire dalam novel *Gump & Co.* karya Winston Groom dari perspektif ekokritik. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi dan menginterpretasikan berbagai bentuk kritik ekologis yang terkandung dalam narasi satiris novel tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis tekstual kualitatif terhadap peristiwa naratif, dialog, dan sudut pandang terpilih yang menggambarkan interaksi antara manusia dan lingkungan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa satire berfungsi sebagai strategi naratif yang efektif untuk menyoroti berbagai persoalan lingkungan, termasuk eksploitasi sumber daya alam secara berlebihan, pencemaran, dan komodifikasi alam, serta konsekuensi sosial-ekologis dari hilangnya keanekaragaman hayati. Alih-alih menggambarkan tindakan manusia yang destruktif sebagai sesuatu yang biasa, sebagaimana sering ditemukan dalam film, novel ini menampilkan tindakan tersebut secara tegas dengan mengungkapkan ketidakrasionalannya serta menyelipkan kritik moral yang kuat. Hasil penelitian lebih lanjut menunjukkan bahwa satire memberikan kontribusi yang signifikan terhadap pembentukan kesadaran ekologis dengan mendorong pembaca untuk merefleksikan secara kritis sikap mereka terhadap alam tanpa bergantung pada penyampaian pesan moral secara eksplisit. Penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa karya sastra yang diadaptasi ke dalam budaya populer, seperti *Gump & Co.*, dapat memberikan kontribusi kultural yang bermakna terhadap wacana lingkungan dengan menawarkan kritik yang bernuansa sekaligus kuat terhadap krisis ekologis.

Kata kunci: analisis sastra; ekokritik; *Gump & Co.*; kerusakan lingkungan; satire

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the condition of the Earth has been quite concerning. Among the most pressing problems are deforestation, climate change, environmental pollution affecting water, land, and air, and the excessive exploitation of natural resources (Subramanian, 2018). Serious threats can occur at any time if no action is taken to prevent the environmental crisis. The increasing human population has a significant impact on the environment, as the need for natural resources also increases (Crist et al., 2017). As a result, the exploitation of natural resources has increased significantly in recent years (Bruyninckx et al., 2024). Actions such as the uncontrolled disposal of solid waste, industrial waste, and other toxic materials have become serious environmental problems that threaten human survival (Deb et al., 2021). If these actions continue, they will cause disharmony between humans and nature. The environmental crisis not only affects the ecosystem but also social culture and human life (Chu & Karr, 2017).

In relation to the environmental crisis currently being discussed, there is a literary study known as ecocriticism. In the context of ecocriticism, literature can be defined as works that address not only human life but also the interaction between humans and the natural environment. Ecocriticism is a field of study that examines the reciprocal relationship between literature and the natural environment. An earth-centered approach serves as a central focus of ecocritical literary research (Glottfelty, as cited in Wijayanti, 2024).

When viewed through an ecological lens, literature has the potential to probe the connection between culture and nature and, with it, raise awareness of environmental concerns (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). In fact, Bergthaller et al. (2014) assert that the ecological crisis encompasses not just biophysical damage to our environment, but also impacts on social and cultural systems—especially the ways of knowing and articulating nature. This shows that literature is important, as we can witness in poetry, drama, and novels how human beings interact with their environment and adapt to what surrounds them.

Satire is one of the methods used by writers in storytelling to expose societal flaws through humor, irony, exaggeration, and ridicule in order to depict and criticize human faults and misbehavior. The aim is to bring readers' attention to the mentioned problem and make them reconsider their position to change something (Abrams & Harpham, 2014). There are several forms of satire in general. Horatian satire, which is associated with Horace, a Roman poet, is known for being rather light and amusing. It ridicules people's common faults and provokes laughter in people in relation to themselves as well as society. Unlike Horatian satire, Juvenalian satire is rather severe in nature. It criticizes corrupt institutions, authorities, and misbehavior in a rather sarcastic way and aims at provoking concern or anger among readers. As for Menippean satire, it does not concentrate on people but on ideologies, beliefs, worldviews, or ways of thinking of people. It usually employs various themes and tones (Feinberg, 1967; Highet, 1962).

Despite differences between these satires, they both share one common characteristic – satires seldom express criticism straightforwardly. On the contrary, they use humor, irony, and exaggeration of situations in order to draw the attention of readers to some inconsistency or discrepancy. It is this indirect criticism which makes satire unique. As the message is delivered through the story rather than stated explicitly, readers can perceive it correctly and make their own conclusions regarding the problem. Thus, satirical messages can criticize even serious problems without losing their entertainment qualities, making it appropriate for discussing environmental problems, as is further discussed in the next section.

At the same time, within the area of literary ecology studies, satire is widely used by authors to criticize inappropriate attitudes to nature. Usually this form of satire contains humorous, sarcastic or ironic elements. According to Garrard (2004), another feature of environmental criticism of literature is that it appears not straightforwardly, but indirectly or via indirect rhetoric. It allows using satire as a medium of criticism.

According to Mantiri & Handayani (2020), ecological satire is applied to two essential themes: the depiction of the harm done to the ecosystem, and, generally, the actions of people who usually do not care much about nature. Humor employed by satire possesses the ability to make readers unlearn their defense mechanisms; thus, what seems normal will turn out to be both a moral and ecological issue (Schmidt, 2025). Moreover, Bonnici et al. (2023) claim that the presentation of environmental messages using humor will have a better effect on the reactions of the audience than the informative method of communication. From the foregoing discussion, one can come to the conclusion that satire as a literary technique has an important role not only as a stylistic tool but also as a means of questioning the relations between people and nature.

The object chosen for this study is Winston Groom's novel *Gump & Co.* (1995). This novel can be seen as a continuation of the story from the film *Forrest Gump* (1994), which was already widely known. *Gump & Co.* continues the story of Forrest Gump, a character with a unique personality and an unusual life journey. After a series of rather “wild” experiences in the previous story, Forrest enters a new and more challenging phase of life. He has to take on the role of a single father, responsible for raising his son, Forrest Jr., amid unstable living conditions. To survive, Forrest tries various jobs, ranging from pig farming to working at an oil refinery. However, as might be expected, his life never runs smoothly because unexpected events continually alter its course.

The storyline also takes Forrest through several major events in American and world history, such as the Arab–Israeli conflict and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Forrest keeps getting “swept up” in these happenings, sometimes even unaware of what is taking place around him and of the repercussions of his actions. This is where the particular attraction of the novel comes from, since these incidents, apart from being amusing, provide a peculiarly selfish view of historical change, seen through the eyes of a narrator too innocent to realize his importance. Unlike *Forrest Gump*, which centers primarily on Forrest's misadventures, *Gump & Co.* delves more deeply into his emotional growth and his evolving role as a father. Fatherhood takes on real significance in his relationship with Forrest Jr., as he attempts to compensate for life's instability by becoming a better father and giving his son the life he himself never had.

Gump & Co. not only narrates the life adventures of its main character, but it also explores the human–nature relationship, particularly through Forrest's experiences as a pig farmer and a practitioner of maritime resource exploitation. This has to be read as a critique of the relationship between humans and nature, with a barbed quip at human arrogance. Satire is a literary device employed by writers to critically expose and ridicule problematic individual and collective behaviors, thereby encouraging readers to reconsider their attitudes and fostering greater awareness (Azizah, 2018).

It creates a sense that acts of environmental degradation are the norm through the eyes of Forrest—a naive witness. This is intentional because it is exactly through this lens that the reader can view the negative aspects, including their harmful effects on the environment. I think this is an effective mode for such critique; it seems non-invasive, neither direct nor didactic. In other words, the book allows readers to recognize the environmental issues raised in the story without being forced to explicitly accept its message. The selection of *Gump & Co.* as the focus of study in this paper is clearly linked

with the environmental issues that remain topical in modern societies: environmental pollution and resource depletion caused by humans. Thus, a few of the narrative methods can serve the functions of criticizing environmental issues and building ecological consciousness (Radhakrishnan, 2025). Furthermore, Slovic (2010) discusses how ecocriticism investigates human involvement with the non-human world and how these experiences are represented in a specific literary work. While environmentalism is not a primary theme in *Gump & Co.*, satire provides a critique of humanity's relationship with nature subtly without reducing its potency. In this respect, the study aims to examine how satire functions not only as a literary form, but also as a means of shaping readers into ecocritically aware individuals, as encouraged by these popular literary works.

Several previous studies have examined ecocritical readings of literary texts, particularly novels, and these studies provide an important foundation for the present research. In broad terms, the connections between narratives in novels and environmental degradation are an area that researchers tend to look into while pointing out how humans typically have a fairly fraught relationship with their non-human surroundings. For instance, Fadli et al. (2021) studied environmental damage in the novel *Serdadu Pantai* using an ecocritical approach. It should be noted that the impact of toxicity on the degradation of marine ecosystems presented in the novel is not an isolated concept but rather one that is interrelated to such concepts as social and economic. Exploitation of the sea and its marine resources happens as a result of insufficient awareness of the environmental issues and insufficient education related to environmental protection in the coastal regions due to the dependence of coastal population from the sea for living.

Another research done by Manullang et al. (2021), and described in the story *The Legacy of Heorot* shows that the relationship between humans and the environment is mostly negative. The forests, lakes, and fields suffer as a result of settlement development and illegal hunting of animals, thus destroying the environment and endangering species' extinction. Thus, it can be seen that people do not think enough of their impact on nature. Additionally, in his novel *Kita Pergi Hari Ini*, Greg Garrard (as cited in Pambajheng & Sari, 2023) identifies several ecocritical elements, including animals, home, the environment, and the Earth. This study is significant because the novel teaches lessons about the conservation and sustainable use of various resources. By contrast, Azizah (2018) looks at the novel *The World According to Anna* in regard to environmental issues through a satirical narrative approach. The results indicate that satire serves as a tactic to call out the human disposition of subsequent denialism, and also hints at the need to urge readers to rethink how they view ecological matters. This research is still relevant, and although the object of study may differ and the period of its use may vary, it reiterates the role of satire in enabling environmental critique in literary works.

Nevertheless, more precisely speaking, there are very few studies focusing on popular ecological satire in novels at best, and even fewer that discuss *Forrest Gump* or *Gump & Co.* Most of the research output regarding *Forrest Gump*, in both its film and novel incarnations, has focused on non-ecological lenses. A clear picture of the film can be depicted from an existentialist perspective (Sehrawat & Chaudhary, 2021). On the other hand, Istiqlal (2021) focuses more on the self-concept of the main character in the novel. Further, a study by Labs et al. (2015) examines the portrayal of emotions in the film, while Astuti & Prasetyo (2020) describe the educational values and how Forrest's behavior is affected by intellectual disability.

However, there is a relatively small amount of research that examines *Gump & Co.* directly. This means that even though the objects of study are not always the same, this research remains based on previous studies. Because *Gump & Co.* is a continuation of *Forrest Gump*, the character relationships,

narrative style, and manner of social critique remain largely unchanged, although the story context has advanced further.

As outlined above, there is no doubt that a research gap still exists in the study of satire and ecological issues in Winston Groom's novel *Gump & Co.* This research builds on more recent studies that deal with satirical narrative as an aesthetic practice to critique the part-human, part-alien relationship between humans and nature within the wider economy of literature, providing examples of how resource exploitation gains natural acceptance by society through capitalist narratives, both fictional and virulent. This study is novel in attempting to merge ecocritical practice with satire analysis, particularly in the context of satirical fiction that has largely been overlooked by academic scholars: sequels.

This approach is adopted because it allows environmental problems not only to form the background of the narrative, but also to examine how the narrative style conveys such criticism indirectly. Thus, through this lens, specifically in ecocritical studies, the research hopes to show how significantly successful satire can be as a method of critique in popular literature. The method is effective not only in illustrating environmental decay, but also in raising awareness of the escalating ecological degradation in modern society.

METHOD

The present study uses a qualitative approach and textual analysis technique in the quest for identifying the message and environmental critique embedded in Winston Groom's novel *Gump & Co.* Qualitative research refers to a type of study that is geared toward discovering the meaning of a text or phenomenon in question. According to Creswell (2018), the goal of qualitative research is to examine or understand the meaning individuals or groups may assign to a social or humanistic problem. In the case of the present research, such problems concern the relationship between man and nature, as well as the environmental critique through ecological satire found in the novel. The main source of data for the current research is the novel *Gump & Co.* (1995) written by Winston Groom. Additional data will be collected from peer-reviewed scientific journal articles, books, and other academic publications.

The data analysis technique in this study refers to the qualitative data analysis model by Miles and Huberman. This model consists of three main stages: data condensation, data presentation, and conclusion drawing (Miles et al., 2013). The researcher condensed the data by selecting relevant passages from the novel and simplifying them to identify passages that contained themes of ecological satire and environmental degradation. The selected data were then compiled and organized for examination. Finally, conclusions were drawn by interpreting the patterns and variations in meaning that emerged from the data, resulting in a clear picture of the forms of ecological criticism expressed in *Gump & Co.*

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The analysis shows that the critique of environmental destruction is expressed even through a childlike, apparently simple storyline in the form of subtle satire running through *Gump & Co.* Natural resource depletion, environmental pollution, and exploitation do not take themselves too seriously. Rather, these insights take the form of Forrest Gump's naive and candid view of life. This makes a

mockery of human dealings with nature and, at times, makes them incomprehensible. According to Skiveren (2024), satire and humorous expressions in environmental studies create significant challenges for readers by challenging their unwillingness to move beyond narrow ways of thinking while motivating them to think more critically about the ecological crisis.

Similarly, *Gump & Co.* makes use of satire to comment on the complicated nature of modern environmental issues faced by humans today. Chapron et al. (2018) suggest that satire works well for presenting issues with broader social implications—environmental crises among them—because it can encourage reflection without becoming preachy. The exploitation of nature and economic interests are depicted, at least in the novel, as business as usual. And here is where the biting satire comes in. From the point of view of Forrest, readers are exposed to how the quest for business, economic advancement, and power typically ignores their ecological implications. Based on these findings, the types of ecological satire in the novel can be divided into the following categories

Satire on the Excessive Exploitation of Natural Resources

The wanton exploitation of natural resources is, after all, one of the environmental criticisms that literary pieces often dwell on. Indeed, for many authors, satire is a tool to criticize human greed: continuing to utilize natural resources without actually thinking about their long-term implications. Winston Groom has, among other things, written an ecological satire using the story of the shrimp industry that booms and then crashes due to overfishing in *Gump & Co.* The narrative is unpretentious, but it is sharply cynical. The processes of exploitation, resource depletion, and the resulting social impacts are portrayed as if they were normal, when in fact this is where the irony lies. When examined more closely, this form of satire becomes evident in several passages of the novel that illustrate how exploitation takes place, how resources begin to run out, and how communities ultimately experience the consequences.

1

The problem was that we were running out of shrimp to catch. It seems that everybody in the whole world wants shrimp. People in places like Indianapolis who had never even heard of shrimp a few years before were now demanding that every fast-food restaurant serve them up big platters day and night. We caught shrimp as fast as we could, but there were just so many to go around. After a few years, we weren't catching half what we had when we started, and in fact, the whole shrimp industry was in a panic. (*Gump & Co.* P. 7)

In the quote above, Groom describes the crisis in the shrimp industry caused by overfishing. The word “panic” demonstrates the collective anxiety that occurs when resources are nearly depleted. The satire in this quote is conveyed not through direct insults but through irony: humans only become anxious when nature can no longer meet market demands. Forrest’s innocence in conveying this event actually highlights the folly of an economic system that prioritizes short-term profits over the sustainability of natural resources.

1

"Srimpin's finished down here, Gump," says one captain. "They done fished out all the shrimp years ago. Now you gotta have a boat big enough to go all the way down to Mexico afore you can make a profit." (*Gump & Co.* P. 178)

The second extract displays the state of ecological collapse more directly. The captain's flat, matter-of-fact delivery implies that the area has lost its shrimp population entirely and that it will not be restored there in the near future. The satirical element, oddly enough, comes from how flat and simple the delivery is, as if it were just something you do. For example, here Winston Groom appears to take a swipe at economic minds who have come to treat environmental destruction as a “normal”

byproduct of economic activity, with no sense of moral duty. The impact is not only ecological but also extends to social life. This is further illustrated through the following dialogue, which carries a tone of condemnation.

1

"Oh, yeah? Well, my name's Miller. Smitty Miller. I remember your bidness. Fished us all out of shrimp and put everybody out of work to boot." (*Gump & Co.* P. 181)

In the quote above, satire emerges in the form of direct criticism from the affected communities. Industries previously thought to bring prosperity have, instead, left behind unemployment and poverty after resources have been exhausted. Groom satirizes the promise of economic prosperity, which turns out to be a sham. The critique is delivered without a lengthy narrative, yet it is powerful enough to demonstrate that the exploitation of nature always leads to human suffering.

Thus, the satire of the exploitation of natural resources in *Gump & Co.* depicts humans as greedy, reckless, and thoughtless. Market greed drives massive exploitation, while ecological awareness only emerges after nature has been destroyed. Groom presents this critique not through moral discourse, but rather through a straightforward narrative and simple dialogue that only enhances the satirical effect.

This satire even goes beyond showing that nature itself is damaged, as it also damages the very life of communities, both social and economic. Communities disappear, livelihoods evaporate, poverty and inequality rise, and the prospects for social conflict increase. In this context, *Gump & Co.* delivers a strong ecological critique of excessive and unsustainable resource exploitation. Through a simple yet ironic mode of storytelling, the novel reminds readers that neglecting the environment ultimately not only harms nature but also humans themselves.

Environmental Pollution Satire in the Name of Business

Apart from excessive exploitation of natural resources, *Gump & Co.* also presents sharp satire on environmental pollution justified in the name of business. Groom places various industrial and livestock practices within the simple narrative of Forrest Gump, exposing the reader to the reality of environmental damage seen as a normal part of economic activity. In this way, Groom critiques the business worldview that often sacrifices environmental health for material gain. One form of this satire appears in the following scene involving a pig farm owner.

1

"Well, for one thing, the people in Coalville, the little town where my farm is, they are all the time complaining about the smell. Now, I admit that hogs smell, but the hell with that, Gump. Business is business. I got a thousand hogs, and all they do is eat and shit all day. Of course it's gonna smell. I got used to it, why can't they?" (*Gump & Co.* P. 48)

This quote recounts the residents of Coalville's complaints about the strong odor emanating from the character's pig farm. The farm owner admits that the pigs do create an odor, but he refuses to consider it a problem. "Business is business," he says, justifying environmental pollution in the name of business continuity. He emphasized that, with such a large pig population, odor and waste were inevitable.

However, instead of seeking solutions, the farm owner demands that the surrounding community adapt, as he himself has become accustomed to the situation. If the farm's environmental pollution, such as feces or leftover animal feed, goes unchecked, it will trigger protests from residents due to the associated odor and environmental degradation (Lestari, 2022). This depiction shows how

business interests are placed above the community's comfort and health. Groom portrays the selfish and inconsiderate attitudes of business owners through direct and harsh language, allowing readers to perceive the criticism indirectly. Larger-scale pollution is also depicted in the novel through the following oil spill.

1

Not long afterward, some fellers from the Coast Guard come aboard, complainin we have just dumped ten million gallons of crude oil into Prince William Sound. Birds, seals, fish, polar bears, whales, and Eskimos—all will be destroyed by what we have now done. (*Gump & Co.* P. 139)

In this excerpt, it is described that after the oil spill, Coast Guard officers come aboard the ship to explain the scale of the damage. A massive amount of crude oil, around ten million gallons, contaminates the waters of Prince William Sound and threatens the balance of the ecosystem in the area. The impact not only damages the sea as a living space, but also disrupts the survival of various forms of life. It affects seabirds, seals, fish, polar bears, and whales—not to mention the thousands of Eskimo communities who rely almost entirely on the sea. This is significant because the fact that a number of different creatures, including humans, are mentioned in succession implies that there is no singular form of damage but rather a pervasive and interconnected system of loss. An oil spill will affect numerous facets of life, both ecological and social in consequence, which re-emphasizes just how delicate the balance between humanity and nature is.

Forrest describes this event in a monotone, even voice, as though the ecological catastrophe were just another inevitable byproduct of industry. That is exactly where the beauty of satire comes in: a simple presentation of a major, destructive part of our world, almost as if it were commonplace. Instead, this narrative style indirectly mirrors a greater human viewpoint, one that is heavily influenced by corporations that rationalize environmental destruction for the sake of the economy and maximal efficiency. Through the naive eyes of Forrest, irony is much more apparent in the fact that whenever something looks “normal,” there must be a very severe problem.

In showing how a pig farm intends to dispose of its waste on the road and how an oil spill is no different than a regular occurrence in any business operation, Winston Groom highlights the problematic nature of an economic ideology that holds pollution to be an “acceptable cost” of doing business. This ideology becomes reality due to the fact that the priorities of business operations include efficiency and profit maximization before anything else within the practical case. In addition, it is quite in line with scientific viewpoints that hold such an economic process to inevitably lead to ecological and social consequences unless adequate regulation and appropriate pollution prevention measures are taken. What is fascinating about the satire used by *Gump & Co.* is the fact that it is indirect and non-judgmental. It is, in fact, an indictment veiled as a set of mundane events narrated by a naive hero.

Satire on the Social Impact of Environmental Damage

Environmental damage depicted in *Gump & Co.* The destruction of nature does not stop at environmental damage; it also has serious consequences for the community's social and economic life. Groom shows that when natural resources are exploited without long-term consideration, the destruction left behind is not only physical damage to the environment but also the collapse of the social structures that have depended on those resources. This is evident in Forrest's narrative as he visits a town in economic decline.

3

1 I used the time to go down to the town and sort of wander around. Coalville was not much of a place. A few thousand people, maybe, and a lot of them were out of work because the coal seam that caused the town to be there in the first place had played out. (*Gump & Co.* P. 50–51)

This excerpt depicts the economic decline of the town of Coalville. Forrest spends some time wandering around Coalville and realizes it is not a thriving town. The town was initially founded on coal mining, but when the coal seam was exhausted, mining activities ceased. As a result, many residents have lost their jobs, and unemployment has risen. Cities that once thrived on natural resource exploitation have now become sluggish and abandoned.

Winston Groom shows how complete dependence on a single natural resource can make communities highly vulnerable when a crisis occurs. A town that once thrived on mining activity gradually turns into a stagnant social space that has lost its direction. Interestingly enough, all of this is described through the eyes of an innocent Forrest as if everything that is happening around him is quite normal. It is here that the satirical effect becomes apparent. The simplicity of narration hides the great tragedy taking place on the human front. Thus, *Gump & Co.* proves that the process of unsustainable exploitation of natural resources results not only in the destruction of nature but also poses economic uncertainty for the future of the community surrounding these places.

A Satire on Political Power and Global Capitalism

Industrialism and business practices are especially targeted objects of *Gump & Co.* ecological satire; nevertheless, so is the interrelation of politics and global capitalism in terms of the exploitation of oil deposits by the countries. Geopolitical confrontations between countries in the international arena are often hidden by purely economic factors, promising great benefits, as can be seen from the work of Winston Groom in the context of conflict in terms of energy deposits. It appears that certain political and economic policies are interconnected in their nature while ecological and humanitarian consequences are neglected. Satire does not imply criticism in this case, but rather narration of the stories as though it is normal practice. Here the irony of human behavior, according to which natural resources are connected with constant strategic necessity of surplus, is revealed, regardless of its unexplainable consequences on human life and ecology.

1

Saddam and his Arab army are occupying the little country of Kuwait, which was known mostly for having a bunch of oil wells. As a matter of fact, there was enough oil in Kuwait to run the entire United States of America for ten years, which I suppose was why we are here. We are fixing to throw them out, so we can keep the awl. (*Gump & Co.* P. 155)

Forrest describes how he explains the United States' backing of the war in Kuwait in this excerpt. He states that Kuwait was invaded by Saddam Hussein and the Iraqi army, and that it is also known for its oil wealth. The official reserves are said to be huge, large enough to serve the needs of the United States for a lengthy period. This explanation leads us to the point that economic reasons, particularly those linked with energy, are one of the strong underlying motives for the military presence there. The next thing you hear is that the military operation aimed to push Iraqi forces out, so that this resource could be "secured."

The main purpose of the military operation, Forrest added, was to drive the Iraqi troops out of Kuwait so that they could keep the oil. More than just humanitarian or political arguments, "So we can keep the oil" reiterates that this armed conflict is really a question of economic interests. Forrest expresses this in the simplest terms, and so the very cold truth of war is revealed. It can be said, then, that from

afar, environmental concerns were never the primary reason for the conflict, as the war was fought over natural resources. With this quote, Groom satirizes modern warfare over resources, particularly oil.

The expression “so we can keep the oil” might seem innocuous on its face, but it reveals much more than that. It relies on this naive mode of expression, which presents to readers the idea that conflicts are not solely caused by humanitarian or political reasons, but are in fact driven by much clearer economic interests. This is how Winston Groom creates his satire of modern military conflicts, which are almost always related to conflicts over natural resources, especially oil. The absurdity of global politics is more visible through the naive perspective that comes from the narrator. *Gump & Co.* critiques a capitalist-driven global economy that is increasingly reliant on fossil fuels and reinforced by political and military power. The ecological satire of the novel drives home the point that environmental destruction from oilism is no mere accident, but instead the logical culmination of political choices made decades ago that have consistently favored global capitalist economic imperatives.

Animal Objectification Satire

Ecological satire in *Gump & Co.* goes beyond the standard criticism of the exploitation of natural resources and pollution: it zeros in on how people simplify our view of nature outside into one of a mere economic need, an economic tool, or another form of entertainment. Winston Groom illustrates how animals are seldom treated as endowed with intrinsic worth and sentience but as mere production tools or leverage points. That view is more anthropocentric; it puts human interests above the survival of other living beings. This form of objectification is referred to as “animalistic” and is evident in the manner in which a female pig, or “sow,” is perceived only for her reproductive capabilities. This perception is part of the criticism of how beings can be reduced to mere ‘use value’ depending on economic conditions.

"It's about Wanda. I mean, you ain't gonna..."

"Oh, no-no, I ain't gonna do anythin like that. I think we'll keep her on here as a brood hog, you know? She will be fine". (*Gump & Co.* P. 59)

This excerpt details a conversation between the characters about the fate of a female pig named Wanda. Initially, concerns arose that Wanda would be treated harshly or over-exploited. However, the farm authorities confirmed that Wanda would not be slaughtered or treated in such a manner, but would instead be kept as a breeding hog, a sow used exclusively for breeding. The decision to “keep” Wanda was actually based on economic considerations. Wanda was kept not out of concern for her welfare as a living creature, but rather because of her productive value within the livestock system.

The expression “She will be fine” is used to appease others while simultaneously masking the fact that Wanda is still treated as a means of production. Through this scene, Groom shows how living creatures are reduced to commodities in the logic of business. Animals are no longer seen as living beings, but rather as sources of profit whose functions must be maximized. The relaxed, non-confrontational delivery reinforces the satirical critique of the practice of objectifying living creatures within an exploitative economic system. The objectification of living creatures is also seen in the use of wild animals for entertainment, as in the following scene.

1

On Mondays, when the Holy Land is closed, the reverend rents out the lion and his tamer to a local bar for fifty bucks a night, where they bet people that nobody can beat the lion in a rasslin match. (*Gump & Co.* P. 103)

This quote notes that lions were often used in religious ceremonies in the Holy Land. The barn was rented out by a priest when the bar was closed on Mondays. The lion and its handler were rented to a local bar for a fee as entertainment. At the bar, the lion was forced to wrestle with humans, and patrons bet money on the belief that no one could defeat it.

This incident demonstrates how wild animals are treated as entertainment and as tools for gambling for economic gain. Lions are not seen as living creatures with needs and safety, but rather as exploited spectacles. Groom presents this incident in a casual, almost absurd tone, allowing readers to perceive an indirect critique of the commercialization of living creatures. This novel shows a form of exploitation that not only destroys nature but also devalues animal life. The combination of religious, entertainment, and business elements in one incident adds to the satirical irony, as a potentially cruel practice is justified and normalized for financial gain.

Ecological Satire on the Pollution and Commodification of Nature

Deep ecological satire in *Gump & Co.* This is also evident in depictions of environmental pollution and in how humans treat nature and culture as commodities. In several parts of the novel, Winston Groom presents seemingly ordinary situations from Forrest Gump's perspective. However, they actually critique the human tendency to ignore ecological and cultural values for economic gain. This is evident in the following quote.

2

There was no department store around, so I went into a novelty shop where they were peddling everything from gold nuggets to eagle feathers, but finally, I saw what I wanted to get for little Forrest. A genuine Alaska Indian totem pole! It was not one of those big ole ten-feet-tall totem poles, but it was about three feet, anyway, and was carved with eagle's beaks and faces of stern-looking Indians and bear's paws and all, and painted pretty bright colors. (*Gump & Co.* P. 134-135)

In this excerpt, Forrest is told that he is in a place without a general store, so he enters a souvenir shop. The shop sells a variety of unique items, from gold nuggets to eagle feathers. Among these items, Forrest finds an Alaska Native American totem pole, which he then buys as a gift for his son, Little Forrest. The totem is medium-sized, decorated with carvings of eagle beaks, human faces, and bear claws, and painted in bright colors. In the story, the totem pole is treated as a common item of merchandise, sold alongside other items such as eagle feathers and gold.

This sequence of events satirically highlights how indigenous cultural icons are reduced to consumer goods despite their spiritual significance and connection to the land. Groom satirizes the practice of capitalism, which not only exploits nature but also diminishes the ecological and cultural value of these symbols. Groom depicts this incident in a casual and innocent tone, as if the purchase of these cultural objects were a commonplace matter. The satire on environmental damage is also evident in the depiction of water pollution affecting the livelihoods of coastal communities, as seen in the following quote.

2

"Yeah. Ain't as profitable as shrimp used to be, but there are some oyster beds still left out there. The problem is, people are scared of eating them raw these days—too much pollution or something. They can make you very sick."

"Can a man make a living catchin' oysters?" I ast.

"Sometimes. Depends on a lot of things. Pollution gets bad, they close down the beds. Then there are storms and hurricanes, and, of course, your competition."
(*Gump & Co.* P. 179)

The conversation shifts to the condition of the oyster industry after the shrimp business is no longer profitable. As per certain reports, although there were just a few spots left where oysters could be harvested, the popularity of eating raw oysters had become less because of the pollution issue. Oysters can be hazardous if the water they grow in is polluted. This indicates that it is no cakewalk for people working as oyster harvesters. There could be various things that could affect their earnings, like pollution that could compel closure of oyster harvesting areas at times, bad weather like storms and hurricanes, and rivalry among other fishermen.

In *Gump & Co*, environmental pollution is portrayed as directly linked to the economic prosperity of coastal towns. While the pollution of the seawater is obviously an ecological issue, it has also a direct effect on the well-being of consumers and the earning potential for the fishermen. Instead of that, amazingly enough, everything is being presented with a flat and monotonous tone as if nothing out of ordinary was happening there. All the problems are not being described straightforwardly and thus the reader can see how ironic it all is. People experience the consequences of environmental destruction in everyday life, but the death of people becomes a regular event. What is even more telling is the following phrase.

"Cause the best kind of place for oysters to grow is where there is the dirtiest, nastiest kind of pollution there is. Don't you know that?" (*Gump & Co.* P. 185)

The passage continues to explain the great qualities of the water used to grow oysters. As one of the characters mourns sarcastically. The fact is that oysters thrive in very polluted water. The statement is expressed with a sense of certainty and truth, as if there was a very obvious connection between the growth of oysters and the presence of silt in the water. Thus, a strong ecological irony emerges. The degraded state of the environment is seen as 'beneficial' for certain products.

It seems like this kind of discussion proves how polluted environments have become just an inevitable part of life when it brings profit. However, in such way, people unknowingly reverse the values of ecology by treating the unfavorable conditions not as a problem, but as an opportunity. In this fragment, Winston Groom gives a critique of the production and consumption-based way of thinking.

In fact, if one considers the three passages from the book *Gump & Co.* mentioned above, one may observe that this satire tells a somewhat similar story on a bigger scale. Not only this satire exposes resource hoarding, but it also reveals how easy it is to integrate pollution and the use of nature for profit into everyday life. The plain diction and apparently naïve perspective adopted by the author make it clear that environmental degradation is not challenged because it has been conventionalized and thus accepted as long as it brings profits.

Ecological satire in the study of *Gump & Co.* appears to be a usual phenomenon conveyed in narratives set in ordinary places that are either ironic or plain. What could be the reason why the exploitation of natural resources, pollution, or even the commoditization of nature can be an integral part of our daily life? In fact, the answer to this question is contained in Forrest Gump's naivety as a character. It is exactly this approach to narration that makes Winston Groom deliver a biting criticism of the way humans relate to nature.

The results of this paper are consistent with Azizah (2018), who found that satirical elements in *The World According to Anna* are able to criticize the environmental issues. However, the satire in *The World According to Anna* is more obvious and allegorical, while the environmental criticism in *Gump & Co.* is more implicit and indirect. A similar inconsistency can be identified as well while comparing the results with Mantiri & Handayani (2020), whose research on the novel *Suara Anak Keerom* showed that ecological satire is more explicit in the form of sarcasm and direct criticism.

CONCLUSION

This analysis proves that *the novel Gump & Co.* written by Winston Groom employs satire to address ecological criticism in a subtle but powerful way. From the point of view of Forrest, a character who sees everything through naiveté, the readers can observe different examples of human-made destruction of nature: resource exploitation, soil and water pollution, and commercialization of nature, all with a total lack of control and in a most natural way, and that is the strength of this novel. With no preaching but in a simple way, it brings the reader to the understanding that something ordinary may be a sign of real danger to the environment. Satirical material, thus, becomes a popular tool for environmental awareness.

From a broader perspective, this research demonstrates that environmental problems should not be viewed as issues related only to nature. Environmental problems are intertwined with human psychology and behavior, particularly in the context of capitalism and economics. It is evident from the text how the excessive focus on making profit ends up ignoring the future consequences of such actions, which are both environmental and social. Hence, the study of ecocriticism and satire studies is very much relevant in this context.

In this research, its novelty lies in the fact that the relationship between ecocriticism and ecological satire in *Gump & Co.* has not often been studied before. In this case, the results indicate that environmental criticism can also be found in the literature that does not belong to works concerning ecology issues. However, in this research, there are certain limitations connected with the fact that there is one object and only one methodology applied. This finding opens avenues for future research on this novel and other literature works that address similar themes and how readers respond to satire in their environmental messages.

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