

## **BOOK REVIEW OF *ANIMAL INSTINCTS***

**WRITTEN BY NELL DIXON**

Endah Nurwanti and Ariya Jati, S.S., M.A

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University, Semarang

### ***ABSTRACT***

*This book review describes the struggle of animal sanctuary owner, Clodagh, to maintain her sanctuary under the theme of love. The purpose of this book review is to discuss Clodagh as the main character along with the plot and the theme she sets in. Describing intrinsic elements of the novel, the writer discusses the plot and the theme in relation to the main character. From this review, the writer finds that *Animal Instincts* uses romance as the theme, progressive plot, and a main character who has an extraordinary personality and has her 'animal' instinct. The witer concludes that humans have two aspects in their life, namely love and trust, which can lead humans to the truth in their life.*

*Key words: love, doubt, trust, truth, betrayal.*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The writer intends to review Nell Dixon's *Animal Instincts*. This novel is one of Nell Dixon's novels which has romantic theme. The writer chooses *Animal Instincts* to be reviewed because the writer finds it is interesting to discuss the romance in this novel as the theme. The writer thinks love is one thing which is very close to human's life. It can be love to family, friends, environment or animals. Through the romance of this novel, Nell Dixon shows to the readers that love can lead humans to faith and the truth.

*Animal Instincts* is a novel about the effort of a girl named Clodagh Martin to maintain her Rainbow Ridge animal sanctuary and to try to get her love by trusting her 'animal' instinct.

The purpose of this book review is to discuss the characteristic of the main character, Clodagh who never gives up to maintain her animal sanctuary. She is reserved, kindhearted, and uneasy to trust people, and she has her 'animal'

instinct. The writer thinks it is interesting to discuss the main character of the novel who has extraordinary personality.

## 2. REVIEW OF ANIMAL INSTINCTS

The story of *Animal Instincts* are reviewed from the following points: theme, plot, and characters.

### 1.1 Theme

Hornby states that a theme is the subject of talk or a piece of writing (1987: 895). While, Kennedy and Giola state that the theme of a story is whatever general idea or insight the entire story reveals (2002: 195).

The theme of *Animal Instincts* is romantic. Romance is a feeling of love that everybody ever feels towards family, friends, animal, environment, or lover. Because of that many literary works use romance as the theme.

Love which Clodagh, the main character of *Animal Instincts*, feels towards Jack is included an erotic love. Erotic love is the craving for complete fusion, for union with

one other person (Fromm, 1956: 52). This novel shows how Clodagh and Jack are falling in love to each other and how finally they admit their love to each other.

Nell Dixon uses romance to be the theme of *Animal Instincts*. Through this novel, Nell conveys the meaning of life, that is, about love, truth, trust, and doubt. In this matter, when Clodagh is falling in love with Jack, she is doubtful about the sincerity of Jack until she knows the truth about Jack and sees his sincerity, and all of those feeling bring her into trust and love.

### **1.2 Plot**

A plot is define as secret plan, (either good or bad); conspiracy plan or outline of the events of a story, especially of a novel or drama (Hornby, 1987: 642). According to Perrine, a plot is the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed (1988: 41).

In *Animal Instincts*, the plot of the novel starts with a conflict from Immi, Clodagh step-sister. Then the readers will be presented with Clodagh's own conflict concerning her sanctuary. The main

conflict of this novel, which is her love, takes place when Jack finally dates her. The main conflict is added with some surprises about Clodagh past love story and the fact that her own volunteer is someone who betrays her and attack the sanctuary to get her own benefits.

Love life of Clodagh Martin is not as simple as the flowing water. She has a very bad experience of love which makes her lose her identity:

*It wasn't until we broke up that I realised what a controlling relationship it had been. Jonathan used to tell me how to dress, where to go, what to eat. . . by the time we split up I had no identity of my own (Dixon, 2009: 172).*

Clodagh always does what Jonathan tells her because she loves him and she thinks Jonathan loves her too. That is why Clodagh changes her style, eats what Jonathan orders, and goes where Jonathan asks her. Clodagh is just like a robot for Jonathan . When they split up, Clodagh loses her own identity.

Then she knows Jack, and she is actually falling in love with him but she does not want to admit it or maybe she does not realize that she is interested in Jack's charm:

*Stupidly, my heart rate went up a notch as it always did when I was close to Jack. He was drop dead gorgeous. I mean seriously gorgeous – every female I knew from tots to grannies fell for his crooked smile and the dimple that appeared in his right cheek. However lovely Jack might be, though, I always had to remember that he was the enemy. Unusually, that was something both Susie and Jade agreed on (Dixon, 2009: 17).*

Clodagh's heart is always beating abruptly when she meets Jack; she is interested in him. She admits that Jack is gorgeous and may make all women like him, but she always reminds her heart that Jack is her enemy.

In chapter two Nell shows that Jack also shows his interest to Clodagh.

*....I knew he'd been involved in a bidding war with Lovett's for Long Meadow and recently he'd started to show a more personal interest in me (Dixon, 2009:16).*

Lovett is Jack competitor and they have been competing for Long Meadow, where Clodagh lives and her sanctuary in, for a long time.

Although Clodagh feels that Jack has personal interest in her, she and the volunteers are suspicious to Jack. Because Jack is a property developer and he may take over the land of the sanctuary.

*....Jade thought he fancied me but Susie, like me, was suspicious of his motives (Dixon, 2009:19).*

*....He might be gorgeous and sexy but he was also the man who wouldn't hesitate to take the sanctuary and its land away from me if he spotted an opportunity. I had read and heard plenty of stories about his ruthless commercial streak. Jade and Susie had both been quick to fill me in on tales of Jack Thatcher and*

*his ability to sniff out a business that was in trouble* (Dixon, 2009: 19).

That is the issues which Clodagh heard about Jack, that he is a property developer that will do anything to run her business.

Until finally Jack asks Clodagh to have a drink together, but Clodagh refuses it. Her ego defeats her feeling. Because, actually the girly part of her wants to accept Jack's invitation but she can not, because she remembers the struggle of the sanctuary:

*What to do? The girly part of me wanted to say yes, but unless my interview at the bank could secure the sanctuary's future the sensible part of me had to say no. I didn't have much confidence around men and Jack was way out of my league. He'd asked me a few leading questions at the pub last night about my plans for the sanctuary, and I couldn't shake off the uneasy feeling he might be circling, vulture-like, about my business. I also had*

*the new problem of Immi. I didn't want to leave her alone in the house, especially if she wasn't feeling good* (Dixon, 2009: 20).

But, finally, on another occasion, Jack is dating Clodagh. Although in some cases make her realize that Jack is someone who may be take over her land.

*It seemed as if my suspicions about Jack's motives for asking me out were correct. I could almost hear vulture wings flapping. My piece of pie suddenly didn't taste so good and I laid down my fork* (Dixon, 2009: 43).

Actually Jack is also falling in love with Clodagh and that is why he always tries to save Clodagh when there are incidents of vandalism at the sanctuary.

*"I care too much about you, Clodagh, to risk anyone hurting you. Yes, I wanted to catch her out, but more than anything I wanted to keep you safe"* (Dixon, 2009: 305).

With all the vandalism which happen at the sanctuary, Clodagh,

Immi, and Marcus invite Jack to have a meeting and investigate who the culprit actually is. Yet, Jack misunderstands that meeting. He thought that Clodagh was still suspicious to him.

*“...You’ve already accused me once of trying something underhand to acquire your property....”*(Dixon, 2009: 211).’

That is what Jack says to Clodagh because he thinks Clodagh is still suspicious with him. He thinks Clodagh accuses him that he maybe someone behind all of the attacks.

*“...He thinks I’ve set him up. That I believe he’s the one behind the vandalism and that asking him to call round was some sort of trap...”*(Dixon, 2009: 213).

Jack thinks Clodagh set him up at the meeting with Immi and Marcus. He thinks that the meeting is a trap for him. What Jack feels is normal because he knows that he is someone which everybody thinks behind the attacks. But he does not do that. The meeting that discuss all

the attacks complete with the dates looks like made to trap him.

Clodagh’s deed which is like if she is still doubtful with Jack make him suddenly keep distance to Clodagh and it makes Clodagh feels that she missed Jack.

*I checked the answerphone for messages, more in hope than expectation that Jack might have tried to call me* (Dixon, 2009: 235).

Deep inside Clodagh’s heart, she hopes that Jack will call her, because she misses him and she feels guilty for upset Jack.

In the top attack of the vandalism, that is, in the open day at the sanctuary, Jack proves that he is not involved to the vandalisms happened at the sanctuary.

*“I think I know what she was doing.” Jack stepped out from behind the buddleia.* (Dixon, 2009: 298).

Apparently, Jack has follow Jade and finds out what is the reason Jade to attack the sanctuary. That was he does during keeping a distance with Clodagh.

*“We had CCTV footage of you wiping your fingerprints off the petrol cans,” Jack said (Dixon, 2009: 300).*

At the beginning, Jade will not admit what she has done until Jack said that he had CCTV footage which records her crime.

*“The money you were getting from George Lovett to report on Clodagh’s finances so he could plan a strategy for buying her out.” Jack tone was hard (Dixon, 2009: 301).*

Jack also said the reason why Jade attacks the sanctuary. That was because she gets the money from Lovett to report everything about Clodagh so Lovett can plan a strategy to buy Clodagh’s land. Jade is one of the trusted volunteer who now betrays Clodagh. Money can change everything.

After Jade is arrested, finally, both Jack and Clodagh confess their feeling that they love each other. Clodagh also realizes that maybe finally she can learn to trust her ‘animal’ instinct.

*My breath caught in my throat as I read his feelings in*

*his eyes. ‘And I think I trusted you with mine and never realized.’*

*“I love you, Clo.”*

*Bubbles of happiness fizzed about inside me like champagne trapped in a bottle just before the cork pops.*

*“I love you, too.” It was true, I did. It had been coming on mayor’s ball my feelings had been growing stronger with each meeting. It had been why I’d been hurting so badly without him, why my heart had ached when I’d doubted his intentions. I’d been wrong, so many times, about him. Jack had been there for me at every crisis. He was everything that Jonathan hadn’t been and more. The wonder wasn’t that I loved him, but that he loved me.*

*He wrapped his arms around me and I gave my self up to his kiss. Immi had been right: Jack was one of the good guys. Maybe Jade had done me a favour – maybe I’d*

*finally learned to trust my animal instincts* (Dixon, 2009: 306).’

Instinct is a strong feeling which Clodagh has, and that is how she finds her love for Jack to know all the truth about the incidents, and to learn to trust someone. All these times she just plays with her mind, with what she wants, not with what she feels from her heart. She always defeats her feeling. With all the incidents, finally she can use her feeling well.

### **1.3 Characters**

Hornby states that a character is person is well known; person in a novel, play; person in some ways unusual (1987: 140). Characters may seem to flat or round, depending on whether a writer sketches or sculpture them (Kennedy, 2002: 78). Kennedy states that flat characters tend to stay the same throughout the story, but round characters often change – learn or become enlightened, grow or deteriorate (2002: 78).

Clodagh Martin is the main character who has a simple life style which is opposite to her step-sister lifestyle.

*....Her lifestyle is a million miles away from mine; hers is glamour and glitter, mine denim and doggy* (Dixon, 2009: 3).

Clodagh is a kind of girl who are reserved. She has a big trouble to keep the sanctuary open, but she does not want the volunteers to know how unidyllic the sanctuary is:

*I wasn't about to tell her where I was going. Not that it would be secret for much longer if I didn't get the loan I needed to keep the sanctuary open. All the helpers knew we were broke, but no one knew quite how bad it was* (Dixon, 2009: 12).

For the sanctuary, she will go to the bank to get the loan. Susie, her volunteer asks her where she is going to go, but Clodagh does not want to tell her, because she is reserved. She thinks she can do anything by her self.

Clodagh is the type of girl who has a extraordinary personalities. Her ego is always



opposite to her heart. Trusting someone is also something uneasy for her.

*....If I could have chickened out without losing face in front of Immi I would have. To night I was about to do something I hadn't done for years.*

*Trust someone* (Dixon, 2009: 166-167).

It looks like actually she is afraid to start something which she does not do for a long time, that is, trust someone. She is going to tell Jack about why she is suspicious about him, and the most important is why she is uneasy to trust people, her past.

Like the title of the novel, *Animal Instincts*, Clodagh also has her 'animal' instinct, although it needs many times to learn it.

*....Immi had been right: Jack was one of the good guys. Maybe Jade had done me a favour – maybe I'd finally learned to trust my animal instincts* (Dixon, 2009: 306).

Finally, she can learn to trust her instinct or that humans usually called it as feeling.

Based on the theory about flat or round characters, the main character of *Animal Instincts* is the flat character because she stays in the same personality as the good character of the novel.

## **2. IMPRESSIONS OF *ANIMAL INSTINCTS***

*Animal Instincts* is Nell Dixon's romance novel which shows the reader some matters of life, such as love, betrayal, doubt, faith, trust, and truth. The writer thinks that *Animal Instincts* is a good novel because the author can wrap the story into one complete love story seasoned with life matters which is very common in humans' life. So, it will be easy for the readers to understand the story line.

The back of the novel says that it is a comedy romance novel. Yet, the writer thinks it is not; there is no comedy in this novel. The story of the novel is serious, although it is easy to understand its story.

Another matter in this novel is how important a family is for

someone. The family is a place to comeback in every condition where humans are - only family which will always accept them.

Through *Animal Instincts*, Nell Dixon shows that true love is worth fighting. Using instinct, humans should trust their feeling to lead them to true love, although it may be hard to get the true love.

The writer also thinks that this novel is for the readers who are over eighteen years of age, because there are some aspects about lust in this novel.

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