

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

In literary texts, readers could experience the sensation of living in a specific environment situation depends on how it is portrayed. The idea of involving the environment as a prominent aspect in a literary text may represent the human-nature relationship both in physical context and in narrative text. This statement is according to Glotfelty's suggestion which was written in her book entitled *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* (1996). Glotfelty formulates that human culture interconnects to the physical environment (1996, xix). Furthermore, a portrayal of the environment in a literary text is representing a human-nature relationship with environmental issue depends on how the author portrays it.

The environment is one of the prominent aspects of human life. The condition of the environment is directly affecting the human way of thinking. This interconnection is best described as a human-nature relationship. Since the beginning of human civilization, literature has directly represented how human beings perceive something including the surrounding environment. As the Ecocriticism approach believes, humans already have their ancient roots in showing environmental criticism through literary text (Buell 2005, 5).

Surprisingly, much 21st century literature portrays the environment in a catastrophic situation. This event may represent a crucial situation that society does not know.

In nowadays, many literary works portray the environment as a destroyed environment, post-apocalyptic environment, and many other dystopia settings. The portrayal of a destroyed environment is the latest form of human-nature relationship in the present era. The human–nature relationship is a seemingly dynamic connection that is naturally created regarding that human is one part of elements that shapes the complex ecosystem (Glotfelty 1996, 12-13). Many novel authors nowadays put in ecological and ecocritical issues to make the readers realize how important the environment is. Josh Malerman, an American novelist, wrote many novels that take sets in a post-apocalyptic environment. Josh Malerman receives many awards from his writings such as Michigan Notable Book Award, nominated as Bram Stoker Awards for Horror works, and many more. Most of Josh Malerman’s novel genre is horror, such as his famous work *Bird Box* novel.

Bird Box novel is a novel that tells the story of human survival in a post-apocalyptic environment. In the *Bird Box* novel, humans have to blindfold their eyes when it comes to going outside. If someone did not blindfold their eyes, the invisible creature can make a human went insane, attempt suicide, or endangers other humans. The invisible creature itself is depicted as a creature that has no physical appearance. The novel itself has a complex non-linear plot to describe the story. Josh Malerman tends to narrate his novels in the horror and thriller genre

just as *Bird Box*, *Black Mad Wheel*, *A House at the Bottom of A Lake*, and *Unbury Carol*. Unlike his other novels, Malerman is describing the environment or nature as a threat for humans only in the *Bird Box* novel. Furthermore, the environment in the *Bird Box* novel is portrayed in a post-apocalyptic situation with the terror from the invisible creature as part of the nature aspect which is found interesting to be analyzed by using Ecocriticism. By utilizing environment and nature aspects as the main source of conflict in the whole story, *Bird Box* novel encourages this study to analyze and describe the human-nature relationship within. After identifying the presented human-nature relationship in the post-apocalyptic situation of *Bird Box* novel, this study will discover a represented ideology that may represent an ecological issue.

The aspect of nature is described as a living entity and nature is not a mere setting (Glotfelty 1996, xxi), which brings a similarity between the nature that is portrayed in the novel and the nature that exists in the real world. Within the *Bird Box* novel, the invisible creature is a dangerous creature that hunts humans. To survive, humans live inside their houses or live isolated and blindfolded. The significant discussion about the *Bird Box* novel according to the topic and the issue would be explained regarding the human-nature relationship and environment representation in this novel. The environment in the text is different from the physical environment. As to recall, the environment situation in *Bird Box* novel is portrayed as a territory with full of threats from the invisible creature, and lurking wild animals around the human territory. Compared to the physical environment, we would not encounter wild animals such as wolf, bear, or an

invisible creature that able to make human insane and commit suicide in surrounding neighborhood. This brings a new issue, what is the purpose of a post-apocalyptic environment such as portrayed within the text.

According to (Glotfelty 1996, 216) environment becomes the manifestation or a product of epistemology that gathers not only human nature relationships but also human and human relationship. This may be related to the difference between the description of the fiction environment and the real ones. By describing and explaining the distinction of the environment within a literary work, this study may define the underlying ideologies from the author and its concerns towards the nature condition nowadays. In the core of Ecocriticism theory that derived by Glotfelty, she is describing that human and nature are interrelated to each other (Glotfelty 1996, 21). The relation between humans and nature is very complex, one of the most significant aspects towards humans and nature is that the human way of thinking is affected by nature. Literary works are also inspired and impacted by the environment around the author. This makes the nature aspect very significant towards the idea of literary writings by a human. In this study, the process of nature affects the human character would be analyzed to discover the author's purpose and ideology behind the portrayal of the post-apocalyptic environment inside the novel *Bird Box*. The human-nature relationship in the *Bird Box* novel would be analyzed as the main discussion of this study. The ideology behind the post-apocalyptic environment could bring up the hidden message of how the author tries to make the readers aware of the environment's condition.

A study has been found discussing objection towards nature as the representation focusing on how nature represents gender and power relation as real context from society (Neimneh and Shureteh 2020). This may encourage the current study to define nature as a representation of real context from society. The main topic that covers this study is how nature is represented in the novel as the current condition of the environment in the world. Many literary works nowadays utilize the genre of environmental dystopia as the prominent setting of the literary work. Environmental dystopia is used as the representation of the current environment that is endangered by human action (Moore 2017). The awareness of nature is relatively low. Due to its condition, this study is encouraged to describe more about the underlying ideology from the environment within a novel to increase society environmental awareness.

In the *Bird Box* novel, it can be seen that nature and its non-human aspects are depicted as a danger for humans. Humans tend to live indoors rather than outdoors to avoid danger from the non-human character in this novel. This kind of action is a representation of how humans are affected by nature and creating a relationship of human-nature in the *Bird Box* novel. It is clear that most settings within a novel or a literary work representing a context inspired by reality. What may differentiate this study from its previous and related study is the focus of finding the ideology behind the post-apocalyptic environment in the novel with current environmental conditions that are mostly found contaminated and polluted caused by humans.

The problem within the *Bird Box* novel is about the portrayal of nature. Nature itself has to be signified as a living being that gives a huge impact and conflict towards the storyline of the novel. To solve this problem, the writer should use the correct theory for a specific novel. By using the *Ecocriticism* theory by Cheryl Glotfelty, this study would be able to explain or describe the following problem that was found within the *Bird Box* novel. Within this study, research that examines the human-nature relationship and the hidden ideology behind the portrayal of the post-apocalyptic environment in the novel will be discussed furthermore. As a reference, a previous study that analyzed the *Bird Box* novel will be delivered as the supporting idea of nature hostility in the *Bird Box* novel. A study conducted by Laura R. Kremmel entitled *Blind Survival: Disability and Horror in Josh Malerman's Bird Box* analyzes *Bird Box* blind survival in a gothic environment (Kremmel 2018). The previous research focused on discussing the binary opposition between blindness as monstrous and blindness as life-saving in the *Bird Box* novel. Kremmel believe that the binary opposition aspect in the novel is happened because of the idea of privileging vision sense over other senses and discrimination towards people with visual impairment actually represented along the story.

A different study delivered by another author which discusses different representation in *Bird Box* novel. The blindfold or blindness in the *Bird Box* is actually representing society's ignorance in responding a crucial event that reported in the media (Küçük 2019, 2). This study is focusing on how formal elements such as blindfold and character's behavior shaping a representation in

reality context. In his study, Küçük argue that the *Bird Box* novel shows us that society's ignorance can cause a catastrophic event that lead into an extinction for human being (Küçük 2019, 5). Surprisingly, both of those studies are sharing similar focus. Both studies only focus in revealing a representation that strongly related with human and society. This focus which occurs in both studies best known as anthropocentric interpretation. In contrast, this study attempts to reveal a representation that related with the environment and its condition in reality context. Also, this study examines on how human and nature affecting each other as previously described by Glotfelty's notion of human-nature relationship.

This study is crucial for literature readers and researchers in the modern era. The Global Warming and Pollution issue is an urgent problem for humankind. However, the percentage of awareness from people is still very low. Even for several sides, there is no consideration at all towards nature and ecological sustainability. By delivering this study and delivering the expected goals may increase the awareness of nature sustainability to the readers, researchers, and future authors. Furthermore, the study would contribute to Ecocriticism theory as a well-developed theory and issue toward literary works.

1.2 Statements of the Problem

Based on the issue that delivered briefly in the background, the statement of main problem could be concluded as following:

1. How is the human-nature relationship of the post-apocalyptic environment in the *Bird Box* novel portrayed?
2. What is the ideology behind such portrayal of the post-apocalyptic environment in the *Bird Box* novel?

1.3 Objectives of the Study

Based on the statements of the problem above, the objective of the study is:

1. To describe the human-nature relationship of the post-apocalyptic environment in the *Bird Box* novel.
2. To describe the ideology behind such portrayal of the post-apocalyptic environment in the *Bird Box* novel.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is very crucial to be conducted as an action towards the low awareness of nature sustainability. To raise awareness, green studies and Ecocritical perspective views are needed to boost up the awareness regarding the environment. So the awareness could increase and be comprehended by the readers and researchers to be more mindful about the environment. In this 4.0 Industry era, nature awareness is very low. It may endanger the earth's environment and could backfire on the environment's inhabitants. The

environment itself can only be saved by the natural inhabitants, which is human, to rejoice in the corrupted environment and fix the polluted environment.

This study is dedicated to the total awareness of nature sustainability during the Global Warming era nowadays. This study may contribute to the researchers that focused their research on Ecological ways of thinking towards the literary works that affect novel authors. As a benefit of the awareness, the readers could sharpen their perspective towards the environment and care about the surrounding environment. Furthermore, the awareness could be spread worldwide and save the earth's environment as the vessel of humans to live and survive. This study is also designated to the future author of green writings as a reference or supporting idea in exploring the depth of green studies. By supporting the green studies, this study may trigger other disciplines to be more aware of environmental sustainability and help to create eco-friendly technology. The study of *Bird Box's* novel from an Ecocritical point of view is also a form of tribute to the following author of the novel, followed by previous studies and the author of the grand theory of Ecocriticism. Hopingly, this study can help other future studies towards Ecocriticism, human-nature relationship, and the text *Bird Box* (2014).

1.5 Definition of the Key Terms

1. Ecocriticism : Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and physical environment (Glotfelty 1996, xviii).

2. Human-nature relationship : Symbiosis or interconnection between human and nature that affect each other (Hinds and Sparks 2011).
3. Environment : Shape of body that represent the natural aspect of world such as water, forest, savannah, and more (Hinds and Sparks 2011).
4. Post-Apocalyptic : a portrayal of fate of the world that hinge on the arousal of the imagination to sense a real context crisis (Buell 2005)