

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

More often these days we will hear news about area development through urbanization or the construction of infrastructure at the cost of the local ecosystem with what is known as environmental degradation. The act of environmental degradation can be explained as an unwanted shift or disruption towards the environment, be it through the exploitation of resources, destruction of ecosystem, habitat, and wildlife, and also pollution (Johnson et al. 1997, 585). While indeed, humans must develop themselves, understanding the surrounding environment becomes more progressively important to sustain further long-term development of the local region and create a harmonious relationship with nature. Without such understanding between humans and nature, exploitation of nature under the name of development will always continue which can bring devastating impact to both sides.

The exploitation of the environment has been conducted since the beginning of time by humans to support their life. As the human population increases, the demand for resources that comes from nature follows, which causes a massive change in the local ecosystem (Wright and Boorse 2017, 5). Such exploitation then increases exponentially with the arrival of the first industrial reformation that happened in Britain in the late 18th century. This continuous exploitation slowly degrades the quality and diversity of the ecosystem that exists on earth.

In looking at the various environmental problems that are caused by human beings, deforestation is one of the constant problems that exist throughout human actions. Forest is an important part of biodiversity in an ecosystem and the earth as a whole, in part of its function as the lung of the world. However, the need for more space for the development of human beings, means that the forest will be converted to meet the demand for living space or industry. According to Newton, such acts of deforestation are becoming more common around the world, starting from the 20th century (Newton 2007, vii). Indonesia is one of the countries that reflect the deforestation problem in the 21st century.

Indonesia as a developing country requires lands to expand its industries which can be acquired by forest conversion. Studies have shown that the urge to convert the land increases due to economic activities, agriculture, infrastructure, and the demand for trade commodities in Central Kalimantan (Susanto et al. 2018). The recent plan of the Indonesian government of new capital in Borneo can have a devastating impact on the surrounding ecosystem. According to the studies that previously have been conducted, cities have large carbon footprints in the surrounding region, thus potentially creating indirect damage to the surrounding hinterland (Teo et al. 2020). Among other things, the said space can result in the loss of usable farmland, altering the local climate, and even reducing the surrounding biodiversity (Seto et al. 2011).

What alarming regarding environmental degradation is that we almost cannot see it change until it is already happening. A study has shown, that most impact that is

caused by environmental degradation, be it air, ground, or water, needs at least 25 or more years to finally have a visible impact on the human population (Tyagi, Garg, and Paudel 2014, 1496). This could well mean that the society that caused the degradation might not experience any changes of their surrounding nature, instead, it is the next society that will face the consequence.

However, it cannot be denied that natural resources are an important asset for the continuity of society. By taking resources from the environment, humanity will be able to survive albeit degrading it in the process. Indeed Bukharin stated that since the beginning of its inception, society has had to extract material from nature (2013, 136). This resource then will be converted into another form that is useful towards itself. One of these forms is literature.

Literature can be seen as a device that is connected to human society and their action. Simply put, literature is a form of record of what human has seen in their life, the knowledge they have pooled together, or what they have thought and felt about those aspects of it which have the most immediate and enduring interest for all of us (Hudson 2015, 10). Books as literary works are a great tool for humans to get themselves closer to life. Books often exploit the imagination of readers in materializing what is contained in the text, giving it a flavor of the reader themselves and creating more everlasting memories. In this way, books can be said as having control over the reader thus may influence their views regarding their decision in life. Therefore, the novel *Uprooted* by Naomi Novik is chosen as the subject of the study.

Uprooted is a stand-alone book that won four out of six nominated awards such as Nebula Awards for Best Novel, Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel, British Fantasy Award for Best Fantasy Novel, and Mythopoeic Fantasy Award; all of which were received in 2015 (Novik 2015). The novel also is planned for an adaptation, but until now there is no further information about it. This book is not Novik's first book, however. Her first novel series before *Uprooted* is called *Temeraire*, where the story revolves around history and fantasy. Through this first series, she then received the Astounding Awards for Best New Writer.

The novel *Uprooted* is set in the medieval fantasy world between two kingdoms, Polnya and Rosya, and the forest which separates the two kingdoms. The main character, Agnieszka, lived in a small village called Dvernik in a country called Polnya and located in the valley next to a forest. The problem then arises in the form of the forest next to where the main character lives, where both nature and the human engage in a fight to destroy one and another. This led her to decide to either destroy the forest or to somehow save the forest and live harmoniously with nature.

The book *Uprooted* is interesting to discuss due to its recent release in 2015, its fantasy medieval themed, and how it all revolves around nature, in this case, a dangerous nature. Not only its depiction of nature is dangerous, but the novel also explores how we as a species can create a connection with nature to then live alongside it. The novel being recently released means that it has plenty of relevance with what happened in today's conditions. This fact then related to the depiction of nature makes the whole novel can be said as the representation of what happened in

the past decade between human activities and nature. However, the interesting twist of medieval fantasy-themed makes it more relatable to the general audience with how this genre is always popular such as from the acclaimed novel and movie *Lord of the Rings* to the more recent HBO's *Game of Thrones* and Netflix's *The Witcher* where it always garners a lot of audiences.

There are two previous studies conducted using the same object of analysis, namely the novel *Uprooted*, before. The first previous study is conducted by Irina-Ana Drobot entitled, *Why is Fantasy Fiction Popular Nowadays? The Case of Uprooted By Kim Novik* (2019). This study takes Structuralism as a tool to analyze the novel to find why fiction-fantasy novels are popular nowadays. The other study is conducted by Sara Gonzalez Bernardez entitled *The Fantasy of the Female: Gender Construction in the Fantasy Genre* (2018). The study seeks to find how women are represented in a fantasy novel using the theory of representation by analyzing two novels, namely *The Kingkiller Chronicle* and *Uprooted* as its object of the study. In this study, the writer will examine the object through the Ecocriticism lens to find out the representation between nature and humans within the novel *Uprooted* and also how the human works to create a sustainable living condition with nature.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

To examine the representation of human and nature relationship and how it affects the characters within the novel, the study would like to answer several questions for the analysis:

1. How is the conflict between humans and nature depicted in the novel *Uprooted*?
2. How does human struggle to create sustainable living with nature in the novel *Uprooted*?

1.3 Objective of the Study

Following the statement of the studies mentioned above, the aims that the study will try to achieved and answered are:

1. To explain how the human and nature conflict is depicted in the novel *Uprooted*.
2. To reveal how humans take action to create sustainable living with nature within the novel *Uprooted*.

1.4 Significance of the Study

This study is analyzing how nature will react eventually, if not now, against how humans behave around nature. While there is already plenty of such analysis, the writer hopes that this research can be used as additional data in this pool of research. Regarding the research, the writer hoped to present a result on how we can see nature from the nature point of view, which in turn gives us a better insight on how we should treat and act towards the surrounding environment. This, the writer hopes, will not only further our effort in creating a harmonious living environment for the betterment of our future but also avoid unnecessary destruction of the surrounding environment.

The writer also hopes that this research may broaden the view and knowledge about environmental literature and the physical environment. In addition, the writer hopes this research can help both writer and readers in understanding and giving insight more about Ecocriticism and environmental literature.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Sustainable: A dynamic process designed to meet today's needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Cooper and Palmer 2005, 180).

Environmental Literature: The writing that considers the relationship between human beings and the natural world (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, xviii).

Nature: The whole of material reality, considered as independent of human activity and history (Ducarme and Couvet 2020, 4).

Ecocriticism: Study of the relationship between literary works and the physical environment (Glotfelty and Fromm 1996, 8).