

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

There has been a huge shift of paradigm in the way of seeing life in which it is important to recognize that everything on this earth is interconnected with each other, and the relation between nature and culture is no exception. This perception regarding how the world is supposed to be viewed as a whole rather than collection of separated beings is related to the concept of “*web of life*” proposed by Fritjof Capra, in which he suggests that every living being has reciprocal relationship with each other and are part of a big network called ecological community (Capra 1997, 11). By recognizing the interdependency between each aspects exist within this world, it is believed to be an answer to environmental problems exist in today’s era, especially since human beings are starting to lose the sense of unity with their environments. Through the understanding of the concept of “*web of life*”, it may help them to create harmonious relationship with nature so that both can coexist in order for this world to function properly.

In order to achieve the goal of living harmoniously with nature, it takes a lot of efforts to understand the complexity behind the relationship between nature and human beings. Human beings should have the consciousness regarding how they use the natural resources and how they treat the natural world. Instead of just taking advantage or exploit the nature, it is better to develop a mindset of taking only what

is needed without destroying it in order to preserve the nature itself (Wang 2009, 298). Most importantly, human beings should change their system of life and abandon their anthropocentric view which causes them to separate themselves from nature completely, where in fact human beings are just one particular part of the whole network of life. By having this kind of ecological consciousness, human beings will be able to obtain what is called as ecoliteracy or the ability to understand and have knowledge about the principles of ecology itself, so that they can put it into practice in hoping to achieve a sustainable system of life (Capra 1997, 297). Some may argue that such knowledge can only be acquired through specific education related to the issue, however knowledge about nature can also be obtained through direct contact with nature or experiencing the life in the wilderness which will make people question about themselves as a part of the whole universe and perhaps able to feel reconnected with the nature itself (Naess 1987, 38).

In order to overcome the environmental crisis, recognizing that everything within this world are interdependent and realizing the importance of knowledge about how the ecology works are vital in achieving the consciousness that the development of both human beings and nature should coexist in which the process should not negatively affect the ecological balance (Biriukova 2014, 36). Therefore, the issue of coexistence between nature and culture becomes very intriguing to be delved into. In order to live side by side with nature, it requires a balance and collaboration between every aspects, including: nature and culture. Culture itself encompasses not only human beings but also other aspects and any inventions made

by them such as: science and technology which support the well-being and development of humans' lives (Walsham 2002, 361).

Unfortunately, there are a lot of misconceptions regarding the issue of development in which there is an apparent separation between science or technology which supports the human beings' developments and nature, while making a whole system that is exclusive to serve humans' needs only (Capra 1997, 11). Therefore, once again ecological awareness is needed in order for human beings to realize that their actions will definitely affect nature and nature will respond accordingly to how human beings treat them (Capra 1997, 12). It must be noted that all living beings have values and that the interdependency between human and nature implies that human needs nature to provide them, while nature needs human beings who have the conscious mind to preserve and protect them. That kind of ecocentric view thus, will create sustainable community which allow the current generations' needs to be fulfilled without threatening the fate of future generations can be created (Capra 1997, 297).

Hence, a novel titled *Nation* (2008) written by Terry Pratchett is chosen for this study in order to elaborate further about the issue of coexistence and interconnectedness between nature and culture. *Nation* is an alternative history and low fantasy novel which was published on 2008 and received the title as Michael L. Printz Honor Book in 2009. In the novel, the harmony between both the aspects of nature and culture is depicted through the main characters' journey in rebuilding Nation. In this novel, the tsunami which at first perceived as natural disaster and killed the people in an Island called Nation turns out to have a significant role in

helping both main characters—Mau and Daphne in rebuilding the island with a better and more sustainable society. During their survival, both Mau and Daphne also experience some spiritual events which allow them to recognize the importance of the whole web of life and develop the sense of eco-spirituality which emphasizes on the sacredness of nature (Schalkwyk 2011, 90).

At the end, the characters discover that Nation was once the center of advanced civilization, it is then transformed into one of the world's center of science (Pratchett 2008). Regardless of the development being done, this novel has a utopian ending which is very unlikely to happen when nature finally comes in touch with human beings. What makes the novel more intriguing is the fact that the whole aspects within the novel, namely: the individuals, nature, science and human inventions can work together to achieve coexistence between nature and culture and create a more sustainable system for the people who live on that island. This then lead to the argument that by developing ecological consciousness and eliminating the human dominance, the coexistence between both human and nature alongside with sustainability are possible to be achieved.

There are only few studies that have been done on the same object, most of them focus on the characters and the process of them rebuilding the nation. In their researches, Fateha (2018) manages to reveal the interpretation behind what happens to the characters and the utopian agenda within the novel, whereas Deszcz-Tryhubczak (2013) reveals how the utopian theme in Nation manages to improve the students' English language skills in building their arguments and making hypothesis. The two studies seem to agree on several notions, namely: the tsunami

is something beyond humans' comprehension and has great impacts on the characters' intellectual development. The discoveries were found in both studies through Meta-modern approach and several linguistic approaches. Moreover, the two studies also acknowledge the role of the main characters—Mau and Daphne whom are responsible for the creation of harmony within the island. However, none of the studies above are done through eco-criticism approach despite how the nature is represented as a significant aspect and the role of the place itself as a major proponent of the characters' journey.

Regarding the issue, this study further analyzes about how nature affects the characters' perspective and treatments towards their environments while also helping them in the process of rebuilding a sustainable society. Numerous empirical studies have examined the representation of nature and how most of the ideology shows that human likes to portray nature as threat or evil. However, little attention has been paid to how the environment can actually influence the characters' perspectives about nature which play a significant role in the process of achieving the harmony between nature and culture, since most studies only focus on revealing the ideology and categorizing the characters based on their role within the environment and their behaviors towards nature. To date, there has not been much eco-critical study on fantasy novels and literary works which has utopian theme and emphasize on the coexistence between nature and culture.

Thus, ecocriticism is utilized in this study to examine the relationship between nature and human beings. Ecocriticism itself according to Glotfelty is an earth-centric approach which is used to examine the relationship between literature

and its physical environment (Glotfelty 1996, 18). This study, however, specifically applies the concept of “*web of life*” proposed by Fritjot Capra as its main theory. Alongside with several supporting theories, namely: the concept of apocalypse and wilderness proposed by Garrard to analyze further about the representation of nature through the depiction of tsunami and the island, also the concept of ecospirituality to examine the aspect of sacredness of nature portrayed within the novel.

## **1.2 Statement of the Problems**

In order to examine the representation of nature within the novel and how it affects the characters and their relationship with the environment, this study would like to answer several questions to elaborate the analysis:

1. How do the tsunami and the island influence the way the characters perceive the relation between human, nature and culture?
2. How do the characters’ perspectives about the relation between human, nature, and culture trigger them to be more concern on the importance of development and living sustainably within their society?

## **1.3 Objectives of the Study**

Related to the statement of the problems mentioned above, the aims that will be achieved and answered through this study are:

1. To elaborate how nature that is represented by the tsunami and the island influences the characters’ perceptions on the relation between human, nature and culture.

2. To reveal how the perspectives of people of Nation regarding the interconnectedness between human, nature and culture trigger the development of an allegedly more sustainable system within their society which then result in the coexistence between both nature and culture.

#### **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This study is being conducted in hoping that it will contribute to the expansion of ecocritical studies on various genres of literary works, especially fantasy and alternate history novels. In addition, this study may provide a glimpse of information on how such object and what kind of aspects within a novel that can be analyzed through ecocriticism perspective.

The writer also has the expectation that this study will be beneficial for both the writer and the readers in educating both parties regarding the relation between human and nature, how both can coexist, and perhaps how to implement what has been studied in real life. In addition, this study is expected to trigger the emergence of future studies on similar issue and motivate other researchers especially those who take interest in ecocriticism study to do more researches on the same or other objects.

#### **1.5 Definition of Key Terms**

*Coexistence* : the ability of individuals and their surroundings to exist together and have a relationship that is not detrimental to certain parties (Kriesberg 1998, 182-198).

- Culture* : a shared set of norms, beliefs, values, and idea within a social group (Walsham 2002, 361).
- Eco-literacy* : ability to understand the basic principles of ecology and to live accordingly (Capra 1997, 304)
- Nature* : everything that is not made by human (Williams 1983, 223).
- Sustainability* : meeting our own needs without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs (Cooper and Palmer 1992, 182)