

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. The Background of the Research

The relationship between humans and nature is very close. Nature provides what humans need, and humans should always keep nature sustainable. But humans, with all their greed, forget this reciprocal relationship. They forget that the connection should be one that does not only benefit one side. Cutting down trees illegally, burning forests, dumping waste into rivers, building greenhouses, and using excessive motorized vehicles can damage nature. It is like the forest fires in Australia that occurred in December 2020 and the recent flash floods in Malang, East Java, which claimed lives. These two disasters are also indirectly influenced by human actions that increase the earth's temperature and reduce and damage water catchment areas. People seem unaware of the impact of their actions. Jason Antony Byrne, in his article entitled "The Human Relationship with Nature," said that a growing number of academics have begun to argue that our interactions with nature shape how we see the world, how we treat one another, and how we relate to the environment that surrounds us ( Byrne 63). It means that human relations with nature shape how humans behave. Gerri Bates says the same thing in his book entitled "Alice Walker: A Critical Companion" that people's ability to think about nature and their surroundings freely had a profound impact on the attitudes and beliefs of individuals centuries later who would return to early spiritual systems for understanding of the world in which they found themselves ( Bates 173). If someone treats nature well or poorly, it will affect his behavior.

Humans mistreat not only nature, but also women feel the same way that is considered inferior and treated unfairly by men in a patriarchal society. Both feel the same oppression. That is why women and nature have a close relationship. It is in line with what Susan Buckingham in her article entitled “Ecofeminism in the 21st Century” that some of the North American and Australian analysis views proposed that women had a special relationship with nature and that this proximity to nature qualified them to speak more eloquently on its behalf (Buckingham 3). It is also supported by Davion’s opinion that women have been associated with nature, the material, the emotional, and the particular. In contrast, men have been associated with culture, the nonmaterial, the rational, and the abstract (Davion 9). Then came the ecofeminism movement that opposed the oppression of both nature and women. This term was coined in 1974 by the French writer Françoise d'Eaubonne. When feminists are interested in why women are treated inferior to men, and environmentalist is interested in why nature is mistreated by culture, then they connect that, creates the theory of ecofeminism.

In literature, many writers have adopted this new concept in their writings. One of them is Alice Walker. She is known for her excellent work reflecting an ecological, spiritual, and feminist outlook. She is an American novelist, short story writer, poet, and social activist. She was the first African-American woman to receive the Pulitzer Prize for Fiction for her work *The Color Purple* in 1983. She has won many awards and honors in writing and humanity. In her thesis for her master’s degree entitled “A Spiritual Revisioning: Alice Walker from an Ecofeminist Perspective,” Lauren Espasito found that Walker criticizes the

cultural and social practices of systems that enforce dominance over black women and nature through poetry, literature, and essays. Walker works to dismantle hierarchical relationships that oppress women and the environment, depriving both spirituality and reverence (Esposito iii). She tries to fight the oppression of the weak, women, people of color, and nature through the works she writes.

One of Alice Walker's works that use nature and women as the main topic is *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*. This novel was published in 2004. *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart* is a novel that concerns and raises environmental issues, primarily about self-discovery through nature. According to Jim Unah in his article entitled "Self-discovery: Who am I? An Ontologized Ethics of Self-mastery", self-discovery comes from self-examination, and self-examination occurs when someone starts to ask the question "who am I?" to himself. He noted that according to existentialists, self-discovery comes from constant self-analysis and commitment to a set of values. What matter is not this or that isolated act but the sum of one's actions. This gives existence meaning and purpose (Unah 145 &155).

The novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart* is about the protagonist's spiritual journey to discover herself, which transforms her life. The main character is Kate Talking-tree. She has always been a wanderer in her life. She is a famous novelist. She has been married several times. At the age of 57, when she is in a relationship with a man younger than her, she decides to go on an adventure in the Colorado River and Amazon forest to discover herself and resolve the complexities in her mind. Kate needs change in her life. After following the trip, Kate feels more

at peace and can make decisions for her future life: marrying her lover Yolo. While Kate goes on an adventure, Yolo also travels to Hawaii. When they met again, they were complete and at peace.

Walker seems to make the main character Kate become a representation of herself in the real world. As stated by Sandra Cox in her dissertation entitled “Ethical Engagement: Critical Strategies for Approaching Autoethnographic Fiction,” Alice Walker, in her novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*, and Toni Morrison, in her novel *Mercy* write about a specific subject position both as authorial figures generating fiction and as narrating subjects portrayed through characters within that fiction, their works can be understood through the lens of autoethnography. She stated that Morrison and Walker present their characters in the stories like the authors that work to augment a dominant discourse (Cox 48). In *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*, there are some similarities between Walker and the character Kate. They are both famous writers. They are also black women actively fighting for black people's rights. In the story, it is said that Kate was a former activist in the black freedom movement in the 1960s. In real life, the same year, Alice Walker became an activist in the civil rights movement who fought to eliminate racial discrimination against African Americans and restore their voting rights in America. Another similarity is that they have both been divorced in their previous marriages.

In her novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*, Walker describes Kate as a woman who needs to heal and make peace with the past to move forward into the future. Silvia Pilar Castro-Borrego, in her book entitled “The Search for

Wholeness and Diaspora Literacy in Contemporary African American Literature,” said that since the 1980s in contemporary literature, black women's writers, the search for wholeness reflects the beauty that is manifested through healing the soul and body and is a process that takes on the dimension of reconciling the past and the present., the mystical and the real, the spiritual and the physical - all in the context of an emerging worldview that welcomes synthesis and expects generative synthesis and contradiction. Walker, who belongs to the category mentioned by Silvia in her novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*, creates a character with a complicated past and heals herself by following a spiritual journey in the Colorado River and the Amazon Forest. The beauty of the Colorado River and the beauty of the Amazon forest can certainly heal her. Spiritual trips to the Colorado River and the Amazon jungle, as Kate did, also exist in the real world and still exist today. Even the sacred medicinal plant that Kate drank also exists in the real world named Sacred Ayahuasca. It proves that some parts of the story reflect the real world.

I choose this novel because it illustrates how nature's healing power can help humans discover themselves. Another reason for choosing this novel is because Alice Walker is also one of the best writers in America, as she won the Pulitzer Prize for her novel *The Color Purple*. This analysis will use ecofeminism, expressive, and Greg Garrad's wilderness concept.

The role of nature in self-discovery is essential to investigate in this novel because I would like to uncover how nature can help people discover themselves. I want to prove that nature is essential in discovering and healing a person. Because

there are still a lot of people who are not aware of the important role of nature in self-discovery. So, the title of this research is “**Self-Discovery in Alice Walker’s *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart: An Ecofeminism Interpretation*”**.”

### **1.2. Identification of the Problem**

The novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart* covers a wide range of topics. In this study, I want to show how women and nature are represented in the novel, as well as the role of nature in women's self-discovery. I believe the author intends to convey to the reader through this novel that nature is a healing medium. I'm curious about how nature can help a woman heal through ecofeminism and the wilderness concept. As a result of this research, I hope to demonstrate how nature can aid in healing.

### **1.3. Review of Related Literature**

To support this research, I read several related studies that explain the same novel: *Now Is The Time To Open Your Heart*, a similar topic or issue in self-discovery and has the same theory of ecofeminism. The purpose is to get a deeper understanding to explain the problem. I review several studies that other researchers have conducted to see their opinions and views.

The first related study is an article entitled “Ecosprituallity and Healing in Alice Walker’s Novel *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart*” (2014), written by Prashant Pawar and Trupti Patil. They claim that Walker's primary concern is no longer the survival of her people, but, maybe more crucially, the survival of the whole world. Alice Walker’s works including the novel *Now Is The Time to Open*

*Your Heart* reflect an excellent ecological, spiritual, and womanist outlook. These researchers found that, Walker through the novel *Now Is The Time to Open Your Heart* forces reader to think about the relationship between human and nature which is considered an intimate one and also about the existence of Mother Earth and her healing power (Pawar 297). This article improves my knowledge about the main character's spiritual healing. I think it will be better if the author revealed the problems of Kate and other women in the novel that made them decide to follow a spiritual journey.

The second related study is an article entitled "Discovery of Female Wholeness: A Spiritual Ecofeministic Study in Alice Walker's *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart*" (2014) written by Mundanat Leelavathi and Abirami V. They claim that the ecofeminist spiritual tendency in *Now Is the Time to Open Your Heart* is mapped out through self-discovery, spirituality, relationship to nature and ancestors, and also struggle for social and economic justice (Leelevathi 216). By using spiritual ecofeminism, she got the result that Alice Walker successfully demonstrates the importance of holistic self-realization and evolution through spiritual sojourns in which she discovers the medicinal and aesthetic quality of nature, the significance of human bonds, and the power of ancestor connectedness in addition to female wholeness through her narrator Kate Talkingtree. From this I know that the female wholeness of the main character

The third related study is an article entitled "Journey of the self in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*" (2016) written by Basma Majid. According to this article, the researcher said that Kate, the key character in Alice

Walker, achieves female wholeness. He found that Kate used old-world traditions and new age philosophy that using meditation, ancestor worship, reincarnation, medicinal and hallucinogenic plants, and ecological responsibility to transform herself physically and gain a better knowledge of her place in the universe. The researcher said that new-age believers embrace the concept of environmental responsibility as well. Overall this article help me to understand the journey of the main character kate in the novel to reach wholeness. Besides the complete explanation, the paragraph arrangement is not very good and systematic. It would be great if the writer adjusted where the paragraph should be at the beginning and the end.

The fourth related study is an article entitled “Self-Discovery in *The Colour Purple*” (2016) written by Nitesh. The researcher said that Alice Walker's true intention in writing "The Color Purple" is not only to give voice to black women, but also to provide them with a path to follow in order to achieve their freedom. Walker takes the reader on a journey with her main character, Celie, from sexually abused child to passive wife to free woman. The novel's main theme is a ray of hope even in the midst of despair. Celie suffers a lot, but she never gives up. She is capable of liberating herself from the harsh conditions in which she lives. The researcher found that Walker emphasizes the importance of women learning to make "room" for themselves. The novel's female characters demonstrate Walker's point by facing challenges head on. This article teach me how to see the self-discovery in a character.



The fifth related study entitled “Role of Nature in Self-Exploration in Margaret Atwood’s *Surfacing*” (2012) written by Vijeta Gautam & Jyotsna Sinha. The researchers said that the protagonist in the novel embarks on a psychological journey that takes her directly into the natural environment as she struggles to restore her identity and roots. The language, events, and characters in Margaret Atwood’s work, like the journey itself, represent a civilization that oppresses and exploits both woman and nature. The researchers found that *Surfacing* by Margaret Atwood depicts men’s misuse and women’s use of nature. Women’s link with reproduction and men’s with environmental abuse, in particular, as a metaphor for men’s assault of women. My conclusion is that the main character in the *Surfacing* novel can heal herself after she sees the similarity between herself and nature, that is being oppressed. She as a woman is oppressed by men and nature is oppressed by the Americans. In the end, she realized that humans are inseparable from nature and humans can be complete after appreciating nature. This article is very good at conveying ideas because it is always supported by data taken from the novel itself.

The sixth related study is an article entitled "The Mutual Relationship between Human and Nature on *The Secret Garden* and *Sarongge*: An Ecocritical Reading" (2009) written by Ignadhitya Herdiana and Eva Najma. The goal of this research is to demonstrate the mutual interaction between humans and nature that influences mental and physical healing as depicted in Frances Hodgson Burnett’s *The Secret Garden* and Tosca Santoso’s *Sarongge*. To demonstrate how intimate the link between nature and people is in the novels, the writers employ qualitative methodologies and eco-criticism. The researchers found that in the novel *The Secret*

Garden, Mery and a child who suffer from illnesses, recover mentally and physically after they heal a dead garden. then in the novel Sarongge, they found that Rene also recover from her lung diseases through nature in Sarongge. The authors argue that everything is dependent on how natural conditions are; if natural or environmental conditions are not healthy, human health may suffer. Human health, on the other hand, will be healthy if natural conditions are maintained by humans. It all depends on how humans interact with nature. This article made me understand about the mutual relationship between human and nature.

The seventh related study is an undergraduate thesis entitled “*The Role of Women in Sula and Tanah Tabu Toward Nature: An Ecofeminism Reading.*” written by Rizka Maqhfira Medsi from Andalas University. This thesis examines the role of women in daily life in Toni Morrison's novel *Sula* and Anindita S.Thayf's novel *Tanah Tabu*. The researcher discovered a distinction between the two works in that *Sula* depicts the confidence of women who are hostile to the patriarchal system, whereas *Tanah Tabu* depicts forbearing women who abide by the norms unquestionably. The researcher found that in *Sula* the role of men is described as weak and women are strong beings. This is following the fact that usually men are always considered strong creatures and women are weak creatures. While in *Tanah Tabu* the role of men is described as strong and women are weak creatures. This research helps me understand how to analyze the role of gender in a social environment in a literary work.

In conclusion, all of these studies are very helpful for me in conducting research and reporting research. Some have made the novel *Now is the Time to*

*Open Your Heart* an object of research and have a topic that is almost similar, namely self-discovery but does not involve nature's role in it because the current study analyzes the role of nature in self-discovery. What makes this research different from previous research is that this research uses expressive approach to see the connection between the work itself with the author. It is mean that I connect the story in the novel with the life of the author in the real world.

#### 1.4. Research Questions

There are several issues about self-discovery in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*. To limit the scope, two research questions were formulated, they are :

1. How does the author represent women and nature in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*?
2. How does the author depict the role of nature in woman's self-discovery in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*?

#### 1.5. Scope of the Research

This research is focused on the relationship between woman and nature in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*. Therefore, I limited this study to two discussions. *Firstly* How does the author represent woman and nature in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*?. *Secondly*, I analyze How does the author depict the role of nature in woman's self-discovery in Alice Walker's *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart* . In doing so, I applied ecofeminism, expressive approach and wilderness concept.

### 1.6. Objectives of the Research

This study will see the reciprocal relationship between woman with nature especially the role of nature in self-discovery. Based on the problem statements above, the objectives of this research can be formulated as follow, *Firstly* to analyze how the author represent woman and nature in the novel *Now is the Time to Open Your Heart*. *Secondly* to analyze the role of nature in woman's self-discovery.

