

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Nature is one of the inseparable aspects of human life. The condition of nature is directly affecting the human way of thinking in surviving their life. The interconnection between human and nature is best described as a human-nature relationship. Nature is the whole of the physical world which exists outside of any human actions (Bourdeau 10). Nature is a place for humans to live and fulfill human needs. Bourdeau's interpretation of nature provides people with an example that humans are also part of nature because they live with other species that live in the world, but human activity sometimes causes people to do so. In view of human thinking that has a tendency to dominate nature, they are often separated from their understanding of natural phenomena.

Both of humans and nature are two inseparable things, they have any roles in life and have many reciprocal relationships. Humans and nature naturally shape the mutual relationship to live in harmony. Humans need nature to fulfill their lives and nature also needs humans to preserve it. Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm(1996), in their book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* describes the reciprocal relationship between human and lands which is includes environment, they considering that nature is not just as the stage for human acted out, but nature is

also an actor in the drama (xxi). It means humans and nature are not separated. The concept of reciprocal or mutual relationship is undeniable by a human. If humans treat nature well then nature also give everything that humans need. On the contrary, if humans treat nature badly and arbitrarily, nature can also make humans suffer. Because as living things humans cannot be separated from nature and that treatment is basically a mutual relationship or reciprocal relationship among them.

Many people nowadays lose their interest in nature due to a variety of factors. Some of the factors are selfishness and absence of understanding toward nature. Essentially, humans require nature to survive because nature provides the things that humans require. Meanwhile, nature needs human help and support to conserve it rather than destroy or exploit it. The most crucial aspect of the human-nature relationship is how humans use nature without destroying it. Humans have to know how to treat nature as well, when nature is damaged, nature will have a significant impact on human life. Nature as a source of life for humans, will die if treated unwell. One of the examples is when humans need a river to find some water, but humans unable to take care of nature, humans' life will be destroyed and really get suffered. Humans will not be able in utilizing nature in daily life anymore.

In order to achieve the goal of living harmoniously with nature, humans need a lot of effort 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 using nature, it is better to develop a mindset of taking only what is needed without destroying it in order to preserve nature itself (Wang 289).

Nature is an essential part of the emergence of a literary work in writings. Literature is a fictional work that has portrayed human life in society. Literature addressing environmental degradation helps humans better understand and care more deeply about damage at all scales. Literature revealed the ambiguities of ecological problems and their impact on human life and future. It solves in many more ways. Eco-criticism or the news articles used to do and can be valuable and really engaging tools for environmental action. Ecocritical attention has primarily focused on 19th and 20th in British and American texts. It shows non-fiction nature writing, nature-conscious fiction and poetry.

As the global ecological catastrophe has worsened, global citizens' concern about the natural crisis has grown dramatically in recent years. In such conditions, literary criticism is compelled to focus on the interaction between humans and the natural world around in literary works. According to Glen A. Love, literature has a social function to play in changing the direction of human awareness in order to focus on humanity's place in the threatened natural world, whereas literary critique loses interest in ecology. It is anticipated that it will be able to restore energy (237-238). As a result, current attempts to reinterpret literary works through discussions of ecocriticism have resulted in the discovery of literary works that bring up nature as the dominant aspect.

Ecocriticism is focused on the connection between humans and nature. Some scholars and writers who conducted ecocritical research used a variety of approaches, including eco-politic, eco-psychology, eco-feminism, ecology and race, and many other interdisciplinary approaches. These approaches show that many works capture the interaction of human and nature both in destructive and constructive representation. Literary works are an inspiration and imagination of the author based on their life experiences. Many authors take some inspiration for their writings from nature.

One of the writers that put nature as a critical aspect in his works is Forrest Carter. In his novel, *The Education of Little Tree*, Forrest Carter clearly illustrated the relationship between humans and nature. This novel is kind of a memoir-style novel that write by Asa Earl Carter under the pseudonym Forrest Carter. The first published of the novel is in 1976 by Delacorte Press. This novel is set in 1930s Tennessee, Appalachia. This novel was also endorsed as an authentic autobiography recounting Forrest Carter's childhood experiences in the Appalachian mountain with his Cherokee grandparents.

As stated by Chang in his article, he argues that the novel entitled *The Education of Little Tree* is a story about a five-year-old boy named Little Tree that teaches ecological philosophy (60). The novel's main character is Little Tree. Little Tree is a young orphan. He born with mixed-blood from his parents who father is Cherokee and mother is White. His father died when he was four years old, a year

after his mother died and a year after his father died. Little Tree was raised by his Cherokee grandparents after his parents died. Little Tree was educated in the Cherokee traditional way which nurtured and instilled in him the lifestyle of Cherokee such as whiskey production, farming, nature, love, mountain life and society by constantly guiding him and fostering independence in him. Little Tree, who is live in a cottage located in the mountain named Appalachian with his grandparents.

“MA LASTED a year after Pa was gone. That’s how I came to live with Grandpa and Grandma when I was five years old” (Carter 1).

It shows the setting information about Little Tree when he decided to live with his grandparents by that quotation. In Carter’s novel *The Education of Little Tree*, Little Tree’s grandparents teach him how to live in harmony with his surroundings. His mountain people and Native American grandparents live in the manner described by George Bird Grinnell:

“The Indian’s life was passed . . . in close contact with nature. He drew his sustenance from the earth and wild creatures that lived upon it. He was part of nature, and better than anything else he knew nature.” (Cornell 111).

Cherokee are an American indigenous people who lived in the southern Appalachian Mountains. In the early nineteenth century, the Cherokee tribe was forced to leave its homeland and relocate west of the Mississippi by the United States of America. As

explained by Perdue, recently the Cherokee tribe is concentrated in eastern Oklahoma, with only a limited legacy in the mountains of western North Carolina (xiii). Generally, Perdue also described that Cherokee hold some traditional way in their life. The first one is harmony and balance, the second one is sharing and order, and the concept of three worlds. The concept consists of the upper world above the sky, the human world, and the lower water world. The Cherokee tribe believes that if they live their lives in harmony, balance, and order, they will be blessed by the Great Spirits of the upper world. Otherwise, lower-world spirits would emerge from caves and deep springs and wreak havoc. The Cherokee also recognized the concept of the soul, believing that after physical death, if one had lived a harmonious life, the soul would enter a spirit world to be with other souls who had also lived harmonious earthly lives.

Li-Ping Chang said in his article “The Significance of the Natural World in *The Education of Little Tree*.” (2014) this novel describes human and nature interaction and the way humans love nature especially the Cherokee family. It will investigate the ecological values portrayed by the traditional Cherokee way of life as presented in Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree*. Chang wishes to state in this article that this novel explores human appreciation and love for the natural world, which is consistent with traditional ecological Native American philosophy.

1.2 Identification of the Problems

In *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter shows the relationship between human and nature that represented by the Cherokee tribe in the novel. Thus, this research focuses on describing the harmonious relationship between the Cherokee tribe and nature. Forrest Carter's novel is one of media which record how humans interact with nature. I assume there must be some impacts given by humans' treatment that lead the harmonious relationship with nature, whether nature will be safe or not. Humans cannot live without nature and need nature to survive. Nature gives all resources that are necessary for living. In this analysis, I want to expose how human's relationship with nature that described by the Cherokee's life with their several philosophical values on nature. I believe Cherokee's culture and behaviors have some impacts to make them live in harmony with nature. *The Education of Little Tree* by Forest Carter demonstrates deep views on environmental phenomena, and I believe the writer intended to deliver an underlying message to his readers that will change their perspective in this novel and real life.

1.3 Review of the Previous Studies

There are some previous researchers that scrutinized either the same work or the same topic with the writer's research. The first article entitled "Multicultural Education as Seen in Forrest Carter's *The Education of Little Tree*." (2017), written by Ignasius Indra Kristianto. He revealed that Little Tree that belongs to Cherokee's culture believes that they will only take their daily needs from nature as a way to

save nature. This article finds that *The Education of Little Tree* is giving several impacts such as possessing cultural pride, historical knowledge, cultural knowledge and children respect other cultures in their society. Ignasius said that children shall be able to merge into the society without losing their cultural identity. Little Tree as a main character proudly belongs to Cherokee culture to love and save nature. Forrest Carter in his novel *The Education of Little Tree*, grandparents promoted that children's respect towards other cultures should be fostered. In this case, Little Tree respects and accepts Cherokee culture as a way in his life, especially to love nature.

The second article that is relevant to this research is "The River Exist, Therefore IAm: Ecocriticism, Nature and Human Nature in Willa Cather's *The Enchanted Bluff*" by Alireza Sardari. This article challenges the human-nature binary to help us look at the natural world stripped of established stereotypes. The results indicate that nature is an indivisible portion of human identity. Furthermore, humankind and the natural world are codependent and interconnected. This article also emphasizes that preserving the natural world is, indeed, the prerequisite for the protection of humanity. It is giving information to the writer about how human and nature are interconnected.

The third journal article that is relevant to the writer's topic is "Exploring Representation of Nature in Literature: Ecocritical Themes in the Fiction of Satur Apoyon." (2016), written by Khareen B. Culajara. She reveals five representations of nature in Satur Apoyon's collection of short stories. The five representations of nature

are: nature as destroyer, nature as the cause of suffering, nature as abode of the gods, nature as mysterious and elusive, and nature as feminized and sexualized. Culajara linked these representations of nature to the culture in the Philippines. She argued that the stories act as a transformative cultural agency that doubles as an ecological dimension of discourse (Culajara 162). By reading her analysis, the writer can have a better understanding about how culture can affect people's perspective on nature.

The fourth, in 2018 Saputri scrutinized Ecological Consciousness in J. C. George's children book entitled *The Talking Earth*. In doing this research, she applied Bannan-Watts and Chang's ecocritical theory focused on natural elements such as soil, water, vegetation, animal, and ecocentric view. It was found out that there are four kinds of ecological consciousness in the said novel: understanding the essence of nature, showing concern to the condition of nature, understanding the interdependence between living beings and nature, and knowing the ways nature speaks. Her finding also shows there are four children literary elements used by the author in portraying ecoconsciousness in the novel. They are character, point of view, setting, and the theme. The captivating part of this research is that she managed to combine two different theories to provide a deeper understanding which is useful for me to enrich my analysis.

The fifth article that is relevant to my research is "William Faulkner's Environmental Awareness in His *Go Down, Moses*", written by Agustin and Najma. They revealed that Faulkner used nature to dominate and conquer nature. In this article, both of the writers find how William Faulkner categorized three of

environmental awareness in his novel. One of them is loving and respecting nature. The writers said that Faulkner wants to show that only with sincerity and humility will nature accept humans. Modern weapons and equipment here symbolize human pride, and by surrendering them, humans can show respect for nature. By this article, I conclude that compassion is a basic thing that a person needs to have in order to love and respect the environment.

All of the previous studies mentioned above help to support my ideas about the issues addressed in this research. This research is being carried out by analyzing the relationship between humans and nature in *The Education of Little Tree* using ecocriticism theory from Aldo Leopold and Glotfelty. The study differs from previous research. In the novel, I emphasize human behavior toward nature by focusing on nature lovers.

1.4 Research of the Question

This research will answer the following question:

1. How is the harmonious life between Cherokee and nature as described in *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter?
2. What are the philosophical values of the Cherokee tribe life?

1.5 Scope of the Research

This research focus to pursue an understanding of the relationship between human and nature, as portrayed in Forest Carter's novel *The Education of Little Tree*. Forrest Carter paints an almost surreal picture with his novel of how the Cherokee

tribe as Native American Indian with their cultural relationship in spiritual, human, and nature. This research is limited to a few points. First, this study will examine the harmonious relationship between humans and nature reflected by some characters in the novel, *Little Tree*, grandfather and grandmother, and Willow John. Second, this research will reveal the philosophical values of Cherokee life toward nature and how they apply it that lead to the society and sustainability of nature. Third, this study will reveal the underlying message that Forrest Carter wants to convey to his readers.

1.6 Objective of the Research

Based on the statement of the problems stated before, the objective of this study is to figure out how nature is represented by the Cherokee tribe on the relation between human and nature in *The Education of Little Tree* by Forrest Carter. The second one is to reveal the harmonious relationship between Cherokee and nature with their own culture and philosophy.

