

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of the Research

There have been many genres of literature rising these days, one of them is post-apocalyptic genre. There have been many post-apocalyptic novels/ graphic novels/ pop culture media gain its popularity such as *The Walking Dead*, *I am Legend*, *The Stand* and many more. Post-apocalyptic novels started to arise in the 1950s and 1960s after the World War II finished. One of the appreciated post-apocalyptic novels is *The Road*, written by Cormac McCarthy and published in 2006. Kristian Bo, a post-graduate student of University of Tromso in her thesis entitled “A Study of Encounters with Post-Apocalyptic Evil and Survival Strategies in Matheson’s *I am Legend*, McCarthy’s *The Road*, and Kirkman’s *The Walking Dead: Compendium One*” declares that post-apocalyptic novel is not a separate genre, but it is actually a sub-genre of science fiction. She also defines that post-apocalyptic fiction describes an individual, group or society surviving in the ruins of the old world after a final disaster destroyed the world (2013: 3-4). To put it bluntly, the writer sees post-apocalyptic fiction offers a condition in which the world had been destroyed by enormous disaster that dissolved civilization. In post-apocalyptic novel, the struggle to survive is clearly illustrated with many obstacles such as lack of food, water, oxygen, etc. Post-apocalyptic novels can act both as a warning of what might happen in the future world and author’s anxiousness of what is happening today.

In post-apocalyptic novels, the center of reader attention would be the dying nature. Nature becomes a new concern in literature lately since consciously or not, literary works contain the element of non-human world which is nature. Timothy Morton in his book entitled *Ecology Without Nature* defines nature on two different levels. He states “nature, a transcendental term in a material mask, stands at the end of a potentially infinite series of other terms that collapse into it” (2007: 14). It means that nature never has its own meaning but it stands for other terms such as fish, grass, mountain, sun, air, water etc. On another level, he defines nature as a norm, means that if something is unnatural so it does not conform to a norm (14).

Human, since the beginning of existence, is always dependent on nature for living. Human needs nature, but then human tends to think that they are the center of everything in this universe. The relationship between human and non-human world is rarely symbiotic. It is more like exploiting and dominating nature without the effort to keep it safe. Global warming and endangered species are two major current problems happening right now in our world as Lawrence B. Slobodkin propose in his book entitled *A Citizen's Guide to Ecology*. He argues that humans are now numerous enough, and each of it is making demands on our environment. Humans will make serious damage to nature even if they are extremely careful (2003: 155).

The crisis of ecology that is happening in our world today may result a condition that post-apocalyptic novel describe. *The Road* offers a post-pastoral world illustration in which the world is no more stable and beautiful. In post-pastoral world, the struggles to survive are clearly seen, such as lack of food,

water and oxygen. The earth where the place becomes space is dying. In post-apocalyptic world, human inhabits meaningless space rather than the world of nature. The nature becomes meaningless since it does not produce anything anymore. The source of living is rarely found and not supporting for life anymore. The nature also has no beauty where human used to enjoy it. Living in post-pastoral world aims to fulfill human's need day by day. Human's activity in post-pastoral world changes from enjoying the nature to staying alive.

The Road which was awarded 2006 The James Tait Black Memorial Prize and 2007 Pulitzer Prize for fiction focuses on the nature of the world after cataclysm destroyed civilization. Moreover, he tried to highlight how moral value would be number two in order to survive. These two issues are seen in most of the part in this novel, especially on the characters' behavior. *The Road* is a story about a journey of a father and a son to the Southern beach after an enormous disaster destroy the world and civilization. As in most of post-apocalyptic novels, this novel shows that the earth does not produce anything anymore, automatically cannibalism are rising in fulfilling human's desire (McCarthy 127). In order to satisfy those desire, human often ignores moral value and prioritize their needs.

Moral value became one of the most important issues in literary work. Especially these days, when critics tend to use modern criticism rather than traditional approach. Dromi and Illouzin in their article entitled "Recovering Morality: Pragmatic Sociology and Literary Studies" argue that many would think moral criticism is less sophisticated than the others (2010: 9). Many even ignore the moral value since they just want to be entertained by literary work. However,

they state that moral issue is so essential since literature can deliver moral value in a different way. Literature is not only intellectually or aesthetically challenging but also educating reader as well. Moreover, Dromi and Illouzin add, it is interesting to see how fictional characters address issues of real life injustice and evoke reader (12). It is important nowadays since human start to disregard moral value in order to achieve their goal.

Indeed that morality should be the number one in living life. However other questions emerge, if the characters keep moral value in mind, how would they survive? The doubt is raising whether morality influences the nature or the nature influences morality. In measuring morality in this novel, we cannot just put aside the influence of nature. The writer assumes there are some moralities which are influenced by nature and some others are not. Hence, the writer entitled this research **Nature and Morality of Post-Pastoral World as Seen in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road***

1.2 Identification of Problem

The writer believes that nature in *The Road* has changed into meaningless space. Moreover in relation to nature, the writer assumes that dying nature influences some human's moralities while some others are actually human self-ego. It seems like McCarthy wants to show it by giving a clear contradictory between characters, the major and minor characters who have different morality.

1.3 The Scope of the Research

This research is basically applying ecocritical approach. The writer will limit the research in intrinsic analysis. It will focus on how nature changes after an

enormous disaster happened and relate it to human's morality in this such situation. In this research, human's morality is seen through characters' behavior, which are the father, son and some other supporting characters.

1.4 The Research Question

There are some questions that will be answered by doing this research, they are:

1. How does McCarthy portray the change of nature especially in the post-pastoral world in *The Road*?
2. What human's moralities that are influenced by the change of nature portrayed in *The Road*? And how does nature influence it?

1.5 The Objective of the Research

This research has two objectives. The first is general objective, which is to enrich the research of literary criticism particularly on contemporary works with the genre of post-apocalyptic novel. While the specific objective is to show how *The Road* pictures the post-pastoral world and how it depicts the change of nature. In addition it will reveal the influence of post-pastoral world toward human's morality. Lastly, it will discover the morality which is influenced and not influenced by the change of nature.

1.6 The Review of Related Studies

Many critics had analyzed *The Road* whether it is as individual object or comparing it with other post-apocalyptic novels, but some considered the nature. A number of articles and journals regarding moral issue emerge in the novel has been produced from 2006 until 2015.

The first article the writer reviewed is on *Interlitteraria* journal in 2015 entitled “Post-Apocalypse: Culture and Nature in Gundege Repse’s and Cormac McCarthy’s Works” written by Inese Vicaka. Vicaka here in her essay compares 2 post-apocalyptic novels, *The Road* and *Stigma* by two authors with different background. In her article, she puts Estes statement that in post-apocalyptic fiction, humans become marked as beasts since they steal, kill and cannibalize each another. Both novels produce fear, chaos, violence, loss of morality, yet hope for redemption. Vicaka uses the word “moral depression”, meanwhile the writer chose to say it “moral degradation” for those barbaric lifes above. The part that brighten the writer’s view about these novels which she stated, that at the end of the story, there is still hope, a possibility of redemption, that humans have a tool which can bring back nature. She also talks about ecofeminism “the wife in *The Road* text and Asja in *Stigma* text are victims of the oppressive and violent culture”. The difference between her work with the writers’ later on, that she focuses on the ecocriticism only meanwhile the writer will highlight the human behavior when nature is no longer producing their needs.

The next study reviewed here is interesting because it offers a different point of view in seeing cannibalism which generally considered as immorality. Meanwhile Karl Becker in his master thesis in California State University, Chico

titled “The New World of The Post-Apocalyptic Imagination” argues that cannibalism in *The Road* is a symbol for consumerism that eliminates all pretense of humanity. Further he added that cannibalism is the borderland *The Road* traverses the line dividing moral and immoral behavior and the ultimate symbolic link to their consumerist part from which they are fleeing (2010: 41-42).

Terry Gifford has his own opinion about *The Road*. An article by Terry Gifford entitled “Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road* and a Post-Pastoral Theory of Fiction” was published on Portal Edition journal in 2013. *The Road*, according to Gifford is a novel “without nature” since the environment is destructed or dead. Gifford also states *The Road* is post-pastoral fiction which means a fiction that illustrates the absence of Nature. *The Road* ignores environmental justice stated by Gifford. What he means by environmental justice is caring for “Other” must include both humans and the more-than human. This article only focus on how post-pastoral world is described in the novel, what are the environmental crisis and justice. It would be so much different with the writer’s focus later on, since Gifford does not relate the two aspects which the writer concerns with, nature and morality. Also Gifford does not see the relationship between those two aspects.

The last article that the writer reviewed is on a Journal of Literary Criticism, written by Megan Toone entitled “The Folks of The Post-Apocalypse: The Road, Religion, and Folklore Studies”. Toone in her article tries to relate morality with religion. She stated that different needs create different ethical parameters. What is and is not acceptable according to religion all change since the priority is to survive, so the ethics and needs change as well. More she added that all concepts of morals based on religion are unstable. In post-apocalyptic

novels, where physical and social structures are gone, hallmarks of religion like material culture and formal traditions cannot be leaned on (2015: 90-91). The writer agrees with Toone's argument so far about religion in this post-apocalyptic novel does not work anymore. This research gives the writer another view in judging morality which Toone considers it without seeing the change of nature.

Based on the previous studies reviewed above, we can see there are many point of views in seeing moral value, such as religion and economy. Morality becomes the most important part in these four analysis. The four analysis above concern about morality only without considering the threatening situation happened in the novel. They do not put morality together with nature therefore in judging morality it sounds bias. The writer has come up with the idea regarding the moral issue which the writer attempts to relate it with the condition of nature itself and how it influences morality reflected in *The Road*.

1.7 Theoretical Framework

The field of environmental literary studies was planted in the mid-eighties, and it grew in the early nineties. The term ecocriticism was firstly coined by William Rueckert in his 1978 essay entitled "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" as Scott Slovic wrote in his article entitled "Ecocriticism 101: A Basic Introduction to Ecocriticism and Environmental Literature". But it did not get so much attention until early nineties with the establishment of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) in 1992.

Simply, ecocriticism concerns about ecology in literary works. Glotfelty and Fromm in (1996) state that ecocriticism is “the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment” (xviii). Ecocriticism concerns about the interconnection between nature and culture. Culture here stands for artifacts of language which is literature. Glotfelty and Fromm state that “as a critical stance, it has one foot in literature and the other on land, and as theoretical discourse, it negotiates between the human and the non human” (xix). In other approaches, it examines the relation between the text, the writers, and the world. Hence for this approach, “the world” is defined as ecosphere.

Meanwhile Slovic defines that ecocriticism is a flexible, porous discipline, readily combining different critical strategies in order to tease out the ecological meanings of all human expression, ranging from high art to popular culture (Slovic 4-5). In accordance with literary work, Patrick Murphy offers a term called ecofiction as quoted in Vicaka’s article titled “Post-Apocalypse: Culture and Nature in Gundega Repše’s and Cormac McCarthy’s Works” (2015:76). Ecofiction is “a composite subgenre made up of many styles, primarily modernism, postmodernism, realism and magic realism. Ecofiction is also a componet of nature-oriented literature which is nature itself as the subject, or the text that says something about human- nonhuman interaction” (76).

The relationship between human and non-human world can be seen in Barry Commoner’s first law of ecology, “Everything is connected to everything else”(Glotfelty and Fromm xix). Human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Thus some questions may emerge for critics in analysing literature by using ecocriticism: how is nature represented in the

novel? What role does nature play in the novel? What influence does nature give to human?

1.7.1 The Concept of Place and Space

According to Buell in his book *The Future of Environmental Criticism*, place and space are not simply antonyms. Geographical concept is considered in defining these two terms. Place entails spatial location, spatial container of some sort while space brings topographical abstraction. Walter offers different definition as quoted in Buell's book that place is seen, heard, smelled, imagined, loved, hated, feared (63). While Tuan in his important work (1997) defines the term of "space" and "place" from the perspective of experience, not only human but also animal. Place are centers of felt value where biological needs, such as those for food, water, rest, and procreation are satisfied (4). "Space" is more abstract than "place", what begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value (6). For example, in this case human, buy a piece of wider space, and then build a house which has meaning, value, concrete form, then it becomes place. The same case with animal, which mark off space used as defence against intruders, then the space becomes place.

1.7.2 The Concept of Post- pastoral World

Post-pastoral was a term proposed by Terry Gifford in his 2012 article "Pastoral, Anti-Pastoral and Post-Pastoral as Reading Strategies". Post-pastoral texts raise the following six questions for the readers; (1) Can awe in the face of nature (eg. Landscapes) lead to humility in our species, reducing our hubris? (2)

what are the implications of recognising that we are part of nature's creative-destructive processes? (3) if our inner nature echoes outer nature, how can the outer help us understand the former? (4) if nature is culture, is culture nature? (5) how can consciousness, through conscience, help us heal our alienation from our home? And (6) is the exploitation of our planet aligned with our exploitation of human minorities? (20-26).

The features of post-pastoral fiction is also proposed by Gifford in his another article (2013) entitled Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* and a Post-Pastoral Theory of Fiction. These are the five features; (1) the writer's assumption and manipulation of the reader's sense of a global environment crisis, even in its absence, (2) the necessity for an aesthetic of nature that is founded in unidealised awe, (3) Adds a moral imperative of responsibility to that quality of unidealised awe, (4) An assumption that caring for the Other must include both humans and the more-than-human if it is to be effective in the long-term and (5) Recognises a dynamic of mutual responsibility, or a dialogic relationship with Another, that is symbiotic.

1.8 The Method of Research

In conducting this research, three following steps are used. The first step is collecting the data. Library research method is applied in this step. There are two types of data taken in order to support this research which are primary data and secondary data. The primary data is the novel entitled *The Road* written by Cormac McCarthy. The secondary data is the other data acquired by reading some books, articles, and journals related to the topic and browsing on the internet.

The second step is analyzing data which firstly the writer reads the primary data which is the novel *The Road*. Then the writer studies the intrinsic element in order to figure out the problem related to nature and morality seen through narrative and characterization . Then the writer will apply ecocritical approach toward the novel to see the change of nature in post-pastoral world and relate it to human's morality helped by the secondary data to strengthen my argument.

The last step is presenting the result of analysis. The descriptive method is chosen since the research is qualitative one. The presentation of the result of the analysis will be the form of words, rather than the forms of neither numbers nor pictures.

