

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Research

Environmental damage is a result of the interaction between humans and their environment. The impact of environmental damage can affect the stability of nature itself and human activities. One of the impacts of environmental damage is climate change. Climate change is a phenomenon that involves long-term shifts in air temperature, weather, and season that result in environmental damage. According to NOAA National Centers for Environmental Information, the warmest temperature occurred during the 21st century, and the worst happened in 2016. These changes can affect the stability of humans, wildlife, and the environment itself. The main cause of this issue is mostly human actions. Some activities, such as mining and industry, give advantages to some people. On the other side, many people completely depend on the environment and take disadvantages from those activities. It illustrates that the continuity of climate change ruins the stability of nature and humans, resulting in scarcity, disaster, and extinction.

In literature, literary work sometimes represents the object (Young 130). It means that literary works represent the environmental condition as a criticism called Ecocriticism. In Ecocriticism, the authors of literary works sometimes put their experiences of what they have seen in the world into their writings. In British literature, the development of Ecocriticism has been started by romantic authors and thinkers. The environment or nature in the eyes of romantic authors is used to criticize capitalist practices and technological industrialism (Hutchings 172-173).

It means that they used Ecocriticism as a celebration of nature over capitalism. This follows Ecocriticism's purpose, which is to simultaneously promote and protect nature (Murti 1). Murfin and Ray stated that the represented events in works are not presented directly but involve certain statements and indications of the events (643). This is supported by the condition of the Romantic era, where industrialist activities and overpopulation were the main factors of environmental problems (Hutchings 175). It leads romantic authors to present environmental problems in their works based on what they have seen. Ecocriticism, in this case, illustrates the relationship between humans and nature as depicted through the environmental problems and the role of humans in it.

In the modern era, many authors represent environmental issues such as climate change that cause environmental damage in their works. The compilation of literary works with the theme of climate change has created a new genre called climate fiction or cli-fi. Climate fiction or cli-fi is a sub-genre of the science fiction (sci-fi) genre that focuses on environmental issues, especially climate change, its impacts, and its effects on life. In its development, climate fiction was heavily influenced by climate science and awareness of anthropogenic warming (Milner 5). Climate fiction is not only considered as a sub-genre of science fiction that puts forward scientific data but rather as a reflection of the actual conditions in the field as experienced by climate fiction authors.

One of the children's book authors who picked the issue of climate change is Ele Fountain. She is previously known as an editor of children's books, which have won numerous prizes. She now begins to write and has published three novels with interesting issues. Fountain has moved to some places in the process of writing

her books. Her first book, *Boy 87* (2018), also known as *Refugee 87* (2019) in the United States, has won four awards. This book discusses the refugee crisis issue and was written while she was living in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia. Her second book, *Lost* (2020), brings up the issue of street children. Then, her third book, entitled *Melt* (2021), completely focuses on the issue of climate change. Fountain has received four prizes: the 2019 Southwark Book Award, the 2019 Portsmouth Book Award Longer Novel, the 2019 Sheffield Children's Book Award Longer Novel, and the 2019 Sefton Super Reads Award. In *Melt* (2021), she conducted in-depth research into the Arctic life and environment, the iceberg, the traditions of the Inuit people, and the living creatures.

Fountain's third book, *Melt*, is categorized as climate fiction as seen in its content that represents the issue of climate change and environmental damage. According to Fountain's statement in an interview, the component of climate change can be found in the form of mood and power of the weather and the character's role in the story (James). This novel provides the impact of climate change on human life and represents the environmental damage. *Melt*, published in 2021, tells climate change's impact on humans as reflected in two different perspectives. In the first perspective, the impact of climate change involves the pattern of Arctic community activity that leads to animal scarcity. In the second perspective, the impact of climate change is seen from human behavior that pollutes the environment which leads to environmental damage. *Melt* novel emphasizes that climate change caused by humans has a negative impact on human life and other living creatures.

This novel takes the point of view of two characters with different backgrounds. The two characters are Yutu and Bea. Yutu is a boy who lives in a frozen village with his grandmother. Meanwhile, Bea is the daughter of a man who works in an oil company and has no friends because she has moved to numerous places during her father's duty. Both are aware of the impact of climate change on their lives. Yutu has realized the impact of climate change due to the scarcity of seals. But he just realized this after getting lost in the wild during a seal-hunting expedition. Bea initially does not really care about the issue of environmental damage until she realizes the connection between her father's job and this most crucial issue. The two characters depend on each other to survive the wrath of the wild.

The researcher intends to analyze *Melt* by Ele Fountain because this novel provides an overview of environmental damage, namely climate change and its impact on humans. This novel shows the impact of climate change on the Inuit community's activities, which are very dependent on nature. In addition, this novel also clearly shows humans' attitudes toward treating nature. Human is positioned as both villain and victim at the same time. The environmental damage affects humans and other living creatures such as animals. The researcher is also trying to raise awareness of the environment to prevent further damage to life.

In conducting this research, the researcher has not found any previous research about Ele Fountain and her works at Universitas Andalas. The researcher chose *Melt* as his research object because this work is considered a new literary work, and the research of this work has not been done before. The researcher believes that this work illustrates the current environmental issue, namely



environmental damage, especially climate change, and its impacts on the Inuit community as a group of people who are very dependent on their environment and the attitudes of humans shown in the novel. Ele Fountain, as the author mentions, has two of her favorite climate fiction novels: *Breathe* by Sarah Crossan and *The Last Wild* by Piers Torday. In addition, she describes her journey as an environmental activist when she lived in Ethiopia, which was then experiencing the worst drought crisis caused by climate change. It inspired her to write climate fiction by taking different views and atmospheres. *Melt* brings the climate change issue in Alaska and its crucial impacts on the natives. By using this novel, the researcher conducted an ecocritical analysis by examining the existence of environment and human activities in the novel entitled “The Impact of Environmental Damage on the Inuit Community as Depicted in *Melt* by Ele Fountain” by using a mimetic approach provided by M. H. Abrams and Ecocriticism focusing on the concept of “wilderness” and “animals” by Greg Garrard.

## 1.2. Identification of the Problem

Environmental damage is considered as the damage to nature that influences human life. It influences the growth of human civilization. Many people are very dependent on nature. One of them is the Inuit community, which lives in the Arctic. In the novel, the environmental damage ruins the life of the Inuit community because their activities are completely related to their environment. The main characters in the novel fight for their environment from the oil mining industry in Alaska. However, the environmental damage caused by climate change already carries other problems for the natives. The researcher believed that *Melt* by Ele

Fountain illustrates the issue of environmental damage and its impact on the Inuit community. Her environmental activities in Ethiopia during the food crisis caused by climate change also inspire this novel. In her journey, Fountain recognized that environmental change massively contributed to people's lives. It causes many crises for people. On the other hand, this change is also triggered by humans and can happen somewhere on Earth. This leads her to fly to Alaska and directly experience the Inuit community's life, understand their problem, and learn about their culture and traditions while writing this novel. Fountain depicted the activities of the Inuit community in Alaska, which was affected by environmental instability caused by climate change. Besides scrutinizing the issue of environmental damage and its impact on the Inuit community, the researcher also wanted to analyze humans' attitudes in the said novel. Since this novel have not been observed before, the researcher decided to study environmental damage and its impacts on human in *Melt* by Ele Fountain by applying two kinds of theory. The first theory is Ecocriticism, provided by Greg Garrard by using his concept of "wilderness" and "animals," and the second theory is the mimetic approach provided by M. H Abrams.

### 1.3. Review of Related Literature

Environmental damage and many other issues related to human-nature relationships have been widely discussed in various sectors, including science and literature. Therefore, various studies regarding the impact of environmental damage and human attitudes towards nature are mostly investigated by experts and scholars, as depicted in a novel entitled *Melt*. *Melt* by Ele Fountain is a climate fiction that reflects the author's concern about the impact of climate change and environmental

damage that affects people's activities and lives and causes an environmental crisis. Moreover, there have been many previous studies on environmental damage and its impacts, as depicted in the novel. In this study, the researcher concludes previous studies related to environmental damage in literary works, environmental damage in British literature, human attitudes and the impact of environmental damage, and Ecocriticism as the main theory used in this research. In this review, the researcher only focuses on the area of British literature. Although many studies have been related to this topic, any research involving Ele Fountain's novel *Melt* as an object has not been done before.

A study related to the topic of environmental damage represented in a novel was conducted by Atikah, Winarmi, and Wardani (2021) in their article entitled "Ecological Damage in the Novel of *Mata dan Manusia Laut* by Okky Madasari" (*International Journal of Multicultural and Multireligious Understanding*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 48-58). They discussed the form of environmental damage influenced by human attitudes and behavior in the novel *Mata dan Manusia Laut*. The theory used is Ecocriticism. This research provides two perspectives to illustrate environmental crises: anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric. In the novel, anthropocentric problems include the weather in Kaledupa and Masalembo, sea waves, tsunamis, and earthquakes. At the same time, non-anthropocentric problems include fish bombs, pollution, and animal deaths. Based on their discussion, the researcher thinks they focus on the causes of the damage, mostly influenced by human activities and nature itself, as they stated that the environment consists of three elements, namely biological, physical, and social environments (50). From this statement, researchers believe that they see the impact of environmental damage on

nature and humans. The strength of this research is that they compare the environmental damage through two perspectives, namely anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric. However, the researcher thinks they should also observe human attitudes and behavior from a good perspective to widely see the role of humans towards nature in the novel.

The next study related to the topic of environmental damage was carried out by Fadli, Yuniawan, and Nuryatin (2022) in their article entitled “Environmental Damage in the Novel of *Serdadu Pantai* by Laode Insan: A Study of Ecocriticism” (*Seloka*, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 112-120). They discuss environmental damage from the perspective of anthropocentrism only in the novel *Serdadu Pantai*. They applied Ecocriticism in this research. They focus on three areas, namely forms of environmental damage, human behaviors, and factors of the behaviors. The setting of place in the novel becomes the main discussion in this article, namely the coral reefs and the sea. Social and economic factors lead to human behaviors in treating nature as they state that the necessity to fulfill the needs of life triggers humans to carry out massive exploitation (115). This is illustrated through damage to coral reefs and pollution, resulting in a crisis. The strength of this research is that it provides factor-in-factor. This study presents an interpretation that is not the factor of damage by humans but also the factor that triggers humans to do it, namely social and economic factors. Social factors are influenced by education, while the necessities of life influence economic factors. Even so, the researcher thinks that in addition to presenting bad attitudes, they must also express good attitudes so that they become a comparison to illustrate a deeper relationship between humans and nature.



Other studies on environmental damage are also conducted in British literature. One of the studies related to this topic was conducted by Leksono and Inda (2013) in their article entitled “Devastation of Earth: An Ecocriticism Study in Cormac McCarthy’s *The Road*” (*Litera Kultura*, Vol. 1, No. 3, pp. 1 -14). This study investigates the representation of environmental damage and its impacts in a British novel, *The Road*, written by Cormac McCarthy. They use Ecocriticism as the main theory and the concept of postcolonialism. In defining the issue, they use “devastation” instead of “environmental damage” to emphasize the highest level of the issue. Leksono and Inda present the devastation from anthropocentric and non-anthropocentric, namely the devastation from nature and the impact of postcolonialism. They mention three types of devastation: atmosphere, land, and sea. However, the researchers think they do not completely emphasize the postcolonial aspect as their aim. Instead, they pay more attention to the non-anthropocentric factor. They also illustrate the impact of the devastation on humans’ attitudes, in this case, the father and his son, as they say that devastation definitely influences the human-nature relationship (13). The advantage of this study is that it provides an in-depth analysis of the impact of devastation or environmental damage on human behavior. Besides, it also broadens perspectives related to environmental issues seen from the aspect of postcolonialism.

The next study was conducted by Safina (2021) in her thesis entitled “Ecocritical Study of Richard Powers’ *The Overstory*” (A diploma thesis of Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim). Safina reveals the relationship between humans and nature, shown through pastoral and environmentalist reactions to natural damage in the British novel *The Overstory* by Richard Powers. The theory

applied is Ecocriticism, provided by Greg Garrard. Regarding environmental damage, Safina highlights human attitudes, which she defines as the environmentalist from the perspective of a conservative attitude. She stated three types of attitudes: having a deep understanding, respecting nature, and raising real environmental movements. The strength of this study is that it gives a wider overview of the issue by comparing the environmental conditions in rural and urban life. She also promotes attitudes to prevent the environment. Moreover, the researcher believes that the writer can present the environmental issues presented in pastoral rather than just illustrating the distinction between rural and urban landscapes in the novel. This study will help the researcher conduct the analysis because it applies the same theory provided by a similar expert to uncover the issue of environmental damage and the human-nature relationship in the novel.

In terms of human attitudes, a study related to this issue was conducted by Najma and Syafitri (2022) in their article entitled “Representation of Human Violence against Nature in Ted Hughes’s Selected Poems” (*Andalas International Journal of Socio-Humanities*, Vol. 4, No. 2, pp. 92-100). They observe environmental damage as a result of human behavior in several poems by Ted Hughes by applying the theory of Ecocriticism proposed by Cheryll Glotfelty and the concept of animals and pollution by Greg Garrard. They use “violence” to define bad human attitudes presented in their treatment of the river and the animals. They highlight two areas of destructive treatments: treatments to place and living creatures. They connect to the treatment of people in the 20th century in England. The strength of these studies is that they interpret human attitudes and relate them to the actual condition of human behaviors in history. In addition, they also convey

messages as they mention that literary works are used to make humans protect nature (94). Moreover, researchers believe that they can also provide solutions related to the issues discussed because Ecocriticism also aims to provide solutions related to environmental problems.

The next study related to the impact of environmental damage was discussed by Halisa and Winda (2021) in the article entitled “Kerusakan Lingkungan pada Kumpulan Puisi Meratus Nyanyian Rindu Anak Banua” (*Stylistika*, Vol. 6, No. 2, pp. 189-196). This study focuses on three things, namely forms, impacts, and solutions to natural damage in 16 poems in the poem collection of Meratus Nyanyian Rindu Anak Banua. The approach used is literary ecology. Halisa and Winda interpret environmental damage through anthropocentric factors seen from the form of damage as a result of human activity. Although they highlight the impact of environmental damage, they do not relate it to human attitudes and only focus on the interpretation of forms in environmental landscape settings in the poem collection. This study’s strength is that it provides an overview of the impact and solutions to the problems encountered. Even so, the researcher thinks that besides illustrating issues, Halisa and Winda should also reveal human attitudes in their study. Moreover, Halisa and Winda did not provide evidence in the form of references or quotations to the elements in the poems. They only provided their interpretation of the contents of the poem collection. Nevertheless, this study provides an overview of data related to environmental damage in research conducted by the researcher.

Scholars and experts have done studies related to Ecocriticism in literature. Zulfa (2021) in “Teori Ekokritik Sastra: Kajian Terhadap Kemunculan Pendekatan

Ekologi Sastra yang dipelopori oleh Cheryll Glotfelty” (*LAKON*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 50-63) argues that the Ecocriticism developed by Glotfelty expands the meaning of “the outside world,” which includes the entire existence of nature on Earth (54). In addition, she also states that Ecocriticism shows the relationship between nature (environment) and culture (human) to create harmony between the two (57). Furthermore, Mishra (2016), in “Ecocriticism: A Study of Environmental Issues in Literature” (*BRICS*, Vol. 6, No. 4, pp. 168-170), looks at the differences in the development of Ecocriticism in America and British. He believes that the development of Ecocriticism in America is a form of celebration of nature and, in Britain, is a reflection of environmental threats from human actions (169). In his *Ecocriticism* (2004), Garrard explains further the relationship between living things and nature. He proposed eight concepts of Ecocriticism on human-nature relationships. However, this research only uses one of his concepts, wilderness, to show the connection between humans and nature as a place not contaminated by civilization (59). Glotfelty’s ideas about human and environmental relations support Garrard’s study.

These studies give important support to this research to unearth the topic of environmental damage in literary works. Many researchers have conducted previous studies related to the topic of environmental damage in literature. However, any study involving the novel *Melt* by Ele Fountain by applying Ecocriticism to the impact of environmental damage and human attitudes has not been discussed.



#### 1.4. Research Questions

This study focused on the impact of environmental damage on humans and human attitudes towards environmental damage as depicted in Ele Fountain's *Melt*.

The investigated questions are:

1. How does the novel show human attitudes towards the environment?
2. How does the novel present the impacts of environmental damage on the Inuit community?

#### 1.5. Scope of the Research

This study focused on the topic of the impacts of environmental damage and human attitudes towards it, as depicted in Ele Fountain's *Melt*. Therefore, the researcher limited this study to two discussions. Firstly, the researcher analyzed the human attitudes towards the environment as depicted in the said novel. Secondly, the researcher analyzed the impacts of environmental damage on the Inuit community presented in the said novel. In conducting the analysis, the researcher applied Ecocriticism to the concept of "wilderness" and "animals" provided by Greg Garrard and a mimetic approach by M. H. Abrams as the approach.

#### 1.6. Objectives of the Study

This study mainly investigated the issue of environmental damage in literary work. The discussion is associated with the attitudes of humans towards environmental damage and the impacts of environmental damage on the Inuit community. Moreover, the objectives of this study involving the problem statement above are to analyze how the author describes human attitudes towards environmental damage as depicted in Ele Fountain's *Melt* and to analyze the impact of environmental damage on the Inuit community.