

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Our world is confronted with numerous environmental issues, primarily resulting from an increasing lack of concern for nature among people. The lack of understanding and selfishness as human beings make the air polluted because of vehicles' exhaust fumes, factory smoke, and also industrial waste, which damage the environment and poison rivers. Humans need to be more concerned about this stuff because if they do not start the change, they will destroy nature slowly. Whereas nature provides things that humans need, the damage to nature could also damage the life of human beings. The careless acts of humans could cause many environmental issues like global warming, ozone layer depletion, the greenhouse effect, and many more. Unfortunately, the solutions for all these issues are still not visible. Juanda, in his article “Fenomena Eksploitasi Lingkungan dalam Cerpen Koran Minggu Indonesia Pendekatan Ekokritik”, stated that climate changes, pollution, and disasters occur continuously without humans realizing, and these are already part of their lives, which could cause damage to the environment and start destroying nature itself (2018:165). The environmental phenomena likely caused by water pollution, forest destruction, and hill landscapes that are deformed because of gold mining are parts of nature exploitation which bring casualties. Nature needs human help to conserve itself, not to exploit and destroy it. This brings up an important point about how the relationship between humans and nature can be formed when humans can utilize nature without giving damage to it. The damage to nature will make a huge impact on human life, absolutely. For example, humans need rivers as a source of water, and if humans pollute the river with industrial waste, they cannot provide clean water anymore. Nature is also an essential part of the emergence of a literary work.

There are a lot of literary works that talk about environmental issues. One of them is *Walden*, which was written by Henry David Thoreau. In *Walden*, Thoreau is told as a person who leaves civilization to stay at Walden Pond in Concord, Massachusetts. It depicts the acts of a human being who is trying to be closer with nature. In this research, the writer will analyze Thoreau's action as a character in *Walden* in order to find the American pastoral elements by how the depiction of the human and nature relationship is discussed in the book.

Walden by Henry David Thoreau is a book that contains 18 essays written by Thoreau himself. It was published in 1854 under the title *Walden; or, Life in the Woods* by Ticknor and Fields. It contains texts about reflection upon the author's simple living in natural surroundings. This is part of Thoreau's personal declaration about independence, social experiment, voyage of spiritual discovery, satire, and a manual for self-reliance (Cathy Lowne, Encyclopedia Britannica). *Walden* details the experience of Thoreau for over more than two years in a self-built cabin near Walden Pond, in the thick of woods owned by his friend and mentor Ralph Waldo Emerson, who was located close to Concord, Massachusetts, when he was practically self-sufficient, growing his own vegetables and doing odd jobs.

Thoreau's decision to move from the city to the forest reflects the American pastoral tradition, which, according to Coughran in "Sub-version of Pastoral: Nature, Satire, and the Subject of Ecology", serves as both a satire and a romanticization of pastoral ideals, while simultaneously questioning and challenging the notions upheld by the naturalists themselves (2010:14). It is considered a work that basically contains a narrative in which the main character leaves civilization to go to the non-human realm in order to gain enlightenment, so that when he feels his goal has been fulfilled, he decides to return to his place of origin after being enlightened and renewed. Although Garrard (2012) stated that there are differences in pastoral culture in American literature and English literature, both in terms of criticism and culture whether in contrast or in comparability this forms a debate about Thoreau's actions in

Walden itself (Garrard 241–54). The importance of pastoral in American ecocriticism, which is oriented towards the rewriting of non-fiction nature, lies in its continuous presentation of a narrative based on the moment when the main character of a literary work chooses to live in non-human nature after leaving his original civilization, then returns after receiving enlightenment and a renewal of his mindset. However, all ideas about pastoral culture are converted into American literature and culture that emphasize agrarianism. The tendency of American literature about the countryside emphasizes the working relationship between farmers and the land in an industrial way, rather than depicting the simplicity of the aesthetics of the relationship between farmers and the land.

The writer conducted this research for several reasons, one of which is the increasing frequency of environmental issues reported in the writer's home country, Indonesia. For example, land clearing has been carried out by the government to implement programs such as establishing a new capital city and implementing a food estate program for food security. Both programs are indeed beneficial for the people's livelihoods. However, there are also physical impacts on the environment, and these impacts are feared to spread widely. What initially only involves logging to clear land will eventually result in the cleared forest areas becoming vulnerable to landslides and flooding (Audia, 2024:5202). Furthermore, the diversity of flora and fauna there could be threatened. Of course, the local community who lives there will also feel the impact of this land clearing, as flooding will damage the crops of residents living nearby. This is a serious concern for the writer because future generations may do the same to nature. Therefore, it is hoped that this research will raise readers' awareness of the importance of environmental preservation.

The writer is motivated to conduct research on *Walden* in order to explore the elements of the American pastoral tradition depicted in the text. *Walden* will be the main

subject for the writer to discover the phenomenon of American pastoral within it, with the hope that this research will benefit readers by encouraging more efforts to preserve nature. This research will analyze how humans, especially Thoreau, view nature as a figure that is loved and respected. This is based on the intention of protecting nature, which is basically a home for human beings. The writer believes that the movement created by Thoreau can pioneer a new lifestyle in which humans can care more about nature through Thoreau's work entitled *Walden*.

1.2 Identification of Problem

American pastoral is very important to ecocriticism because it provides a narrative structure in which the protagonist leaves civilization to enter nature in order to experience enlightenment and renewal. The writer aims to discover how people change their perspective on nature through the American pastoral phenomenon presented in *Walden*. According to the writer, the relationship between humans and nature is about how humans can get more than just a place to live if they give good care to nature. The writer believes that nature can provide pleasure and renewal for humans after they have gained a better understanding of it. The writer will focus the research on describing the relationship between humans and nature by looking at the pastoral phenomena described by Thoreau in *Walden*. The writer will use ecocriticism as an approach to exploring the American pastoral phenomenon described in this book.

1.3 Review of Previous Studies

Henry David Thoreau's book titled *Walden* is Thoreau's work that has received many praises by critics as an American classic that explores natural simplicity, harmony, and beauty. The writer has decided to conduct research on this book with the topic of American Pastoral for this study. Some students have made *Walden* the object of their research. Some

of them also discuss ecocriticism and American pastoral. In writing this research, the writer uses some references to strengthen the analysis. The writer deals with some articles that analyze the same theme and/or topic to support this research. The writer has collected several articles related to the book.

The first article, written by Sayre (2013) and titled “The Oxymoron of American Pastoralism,” explores how the concept of American pastoral is actually not applicable in the American environment itself. He states that the idea of pastoral, originating from European writers, is very contrasting to the discussion of environmental literature in America. Sayre argues that, from a social and ecological perspective, this is indeed a reality that must be accepted, especially by environmental literature activists in America. Socially, the distinction between landowners and shepherds was irrelevant in the young United States, and ecologically, the pastoral way of life, defined as a livelihood based on herds of livestock, was not native to America. The writer himself believes that Sayre’s argument is based on the lifestyle of Native Americans before the arrival of Columbus, who usually foraged in the forest and hunted rather than farmed and raised livestock. This shows Sayre’s lack of field research to understand how the concept of American pastoralism is interpreted today. Apart from that, American pastoral life is basically about avoiding the hustle and bustle of the city by choosing to live a simple life in rural areas or settlements close to forests, which are the main symbol of nature itself.

The second article was written by Sharma (2017) entitled “Thoreau’s Ecocriticism: An Improved Means to Unimproved Ends.” Sharma considers *Walden* an undeniable literary legacy. According to him, the environmental discussion in *Walden* explores efforts to preserve and strengthen interest in the relationship between humans and nature that is built pragmatically. Thoreau’s simple lifestyle without modern improvements is called a better means to a better end. This shows how one can place oneself in nature, understand nature,

and put aside materialism for the sake of nature. Thoreau's efforts for change gradually lead to the fostering and acceptance of the hard work of ecological critics in criticizing in order to achieve a relationship with responsibility towards oneself, society, literary studies, and nature. For him, *Walden* raises the concept of ecological criticism that has an impact on other branches of science. This is an assumption that goes beyond understanding and is able to create a comprehensive discipline in discussing, innovating, and creating healthy environmental literature. Thoreau's belief in nature is considered a new principle that addresses ecological problems to find green solutions to avoid future threats. In my opinion, there are differences between my research and Sharma's. Sharma's is more comprehensive in examining *Walden* using an ecocritical approach. My focus is on how American pastoral life in *Walden* is depicted using an ecocritical approach. Furthermore, based on Sharma's findings, he focuses more on presenting his findings based on his analysis of the chapters in *Walden*. Meanwhile, I prioritized what I discovered during my analysis of *Walden*, which I believe relates to the relationship between nature and humans and how the depiction of the concept of American pastoralism can be conveyed through my findings during my analysis of *Walden*.

The third article, written by Bassani (2021), is entitled "In Wildness is the Preservation of the World: Henry David Thoreau on the Relation between Human and Nature." This study examines Henry David Thoreau's contributions to models of nature conservation, specifically how the relationship between humans and nature should be linked to presence and interaction. It proposes to characterize the models produced since the 19th century. This analysis addresses the relationship between humans and the natural environment in Thoreau's work. It articulates considerations that contradict the central tenet of his approach, namely the harmony of human life with the natural environment, from an ecological perspective rather than merely a relationship of instrumental use and

contemplation. Therefore, an interdisciplinary analysis is proposed, with the aim of contributing not only to environmental ethics but also to the dissemination of Thoreau's ideas in various fields of the humanities and social sciences. This study focuses more on Thoreau's efforts to preserve nature, not only through his writings. Furthermore, Bassani focuses more on Thoreau's life as a figure than on his writings. I personally used this research to examine Thoreau's efforts to preserve nature. I examined how Thoreau's efforts to preserve nature, both in his literary works and in the real world, contradicted or coexisted. Furthermore, Bassani and colleagues applied various disciplines to analyze Thoreau's works. However, the findings of this study only illustrate the relationship between nature and humans and do not clearly depict the American pastoral phenomenon within it.

The next article, written by Chatterjee (2018), is titled "Analysis of Thoreau's *Walden* in Our Time in the Light of Transcendentalism." Here, he states that Thoreau's philosophy of life emphasizes spiritual growth and development, contrasting materialism with hard work and social values. Thoreau advocates self-reliance, self-confidence, and simplicity, arguing that luxury contributes to spiritual stagnation. Thoreau also criticizes technological progress for not improving the quality of life and compares civilization to primitive humans. He advocates philanthropy and reform, emphasizing individual self-realization. He also discusses literature as a valuable heritage, emphasizing its universal meaning and the importance of careful reading. However, Chatterjee does not clearly state the purpose or method used in this study in his abstract. He seems to only write about the development and release of Thoreau's writings that would eventually become *Walden*. Furthermore, although he continues to present his analysis of *Walden*, he only focuses on the extrinsic elements of the text, specifically how Thoreau's transcendentalism movement is presented in *Walden*. This approach is not in line with that of the writer, who aims to research how American pastoral is depicted in *Walden*.

The next article, written by Husain (2023), is entitled "Ecocritical Perspectives on Early American Literature: Henry D. Thoreau's *Walden* and Hector St. John De Crevecoeur's *Letters from an American Farmer*." This article presents an ecocritical analysis of *Walden*, including a study of the development of ecocriticism as a literary subgenre that explores human interactions with the environment. The recent shift in emphasis within ecocriticism has made earlier ecocritical writing styles feel less appropriate in addressing how environmental issues and problems are discussed today. There is an assumption that modern ecocriticism focuses more on feminist writing styles about natural conditions and phenomena in literary works. Thoreau's growing reputation due to his canonization in ecological and literary criticism actually hinders the understanding of his message. Thoreau embarked on a quest for simplicity, self-reliance, generosity, and trust, seeking new ways of thinking and living. He met his basic needs for two years living in a cottage on Walden Pond, Massachusetts, with the hope of living independently with minimal societal interference. Thoreau's travels around the world reflect his deep respect for nature and the importance of living in harmony with it. Husain's analysis focuses on *Walden*, particularly on how environmental conservation efforts can be examined through an ecocritical approach. However, he does not explicitly state the specific theory he uses in examining *Walden*, making his research seem less focused and more general. Furthermore, Husain does not focus solely on *Walden*. He also examines other literary works besides *Walden*, and this differs from the writer's approach, which analyzes *Walden* using American pastoral theory.

The next article, written by Jiang (2019) and titled "On Ecological Aesthetics in *Walden* and Its Practical Significance," discusses the idea of aesthetic values in life as described by Thoreau in *Walden*, with a focus on their application in real life. This is because the rapid development of science and technology in society has put pressure on the natural ecological system, emphasizing the importance of a balanced relationship between humans

and nature for the sake of harmonious community life. He stated that *Walden* is a depiction of a firm attitude towards life that can encourage people to live in order to pursue true happiness. The difference in views between the writer and Jiang is only because Jiang wants to present his writing to his hometown of China, as the country is experiencing a severe ecological crisis, while the writer hopes for a change in society's conscience regarding nature if people begin to pay more attention to it.

The following article, written by Manzari (2012), is entitled "Henry David Thoreau: Literary Transcendentalism." This article focuses on Thoreau's philosophical views as a driving force behind the Transcendentalism movement and as a literary figure who challenged the government in pursuit of his transcendental beliefs. It explores Thoreau's transcendental literary theory and its presentation in his works, focusing on the interconnection between the physical, intellectual, and spiritual worlds. He states that Thoreau's writing is characterized by powerful, nuanced language and a rich vocabulary that interprets the surrounding environment, using straightforward, passionate, concise, and economical prose. His work has had a lasting impact due to the breadth and timelessness of its main themes, which include a belief in a higher truth beyond nature and human existence. Thoreau's work emphasizes the importance of living simply in nature, focusing on the meaning and value of nature, and the importance of simplicity in achieving a higher understanding. In contrast, the writer does not see *Walden* as a clear spiritual projection, but rather as a manifestation of a person's experience in their efforts to become more in touch with nature. Although the writer also sees Thoreau's spiritual perspective while at *Walden* Pond, the writer aims to highlight more of the pastoral elements and phenomena, along with their benefits, in analyzing *Walden*.

The next article, written by Rao (2013), is titled "Henry David Thoreau's Treatment of Nature in *Walden*." He states that *Walden* is considered a bible for the common people,

advocating a simple life similar to life in the forest. *Walden* is a social document about simple life - primitive but happy, isolated but harmonious, pure, and noble. One of the most important vehicles for Thoreau's insight into nature is sound. Sound and silence are important for him as ways to feel the silence he experiences. When other senses cannot perceive it, sound always helps him and connects him with the divine. Thoreau creates an animal cosmos that dramatizes his transcendental vision of the divinity of nature. *Walden* is a story about the various meanings of nature as experienced by Thoreau. He reveals the meaning of nature as experienced by the mind. What Thoreau observes about nature includes both physical and spiritual aspects, and Walden Pond reflects both. The idyllic life described in *Walden* is not merely about environmental issues or moving away from city life, but rather a moral question involving how humans choose to live. Thoreau was one of the greatest naturalists in American literature, known for his close relationship with nature and his belief in the power of conscious effort. For him, *Walden* is considered a masterpiece of American literature. Here, Rao focuses more on the relationship between humans and nature in his research on *Walden*, despite the many environmental, philosophical, and spiritual aspects that can also be explored. He also does not clearly state the method he used in his research, instead simply comparing Thoreau's and Wordsworth's views on nature.

The last article, written by Silva (2020), is entitled "Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*: Immigration, Ecocriticism, and Otherness." This article explores the characters in *Walden* in terms of their characterization, which is considered unnecessary, because developed countries allegedly conceal the truth about what the character is fighting for. The assumption that Thoreau, who was an environmental activist, actually had racial problems is discussed in this article. Silva argues that these tensions are the root of wars masterminded by America. In fact, Thoreau himself saw his ideas as a form of struggle for freedom from dependence on ruling groups known to be capitalists. Unfortunately, this article focuses only on Thoreau's

racial views toward the immigrants he encountered while at *Walden*. Silva does not thoroughly explore Thoreau's efforts to prevent environmental damage and instead emphasizes how Thoreau's political views on government policy could influence the mindset of immigrant communities in America.

The writer has searched for other studies with similar themes and found only one; most of the existing research primarily focuses on Thoreau's spirituality. The articles that explore this idea using a similar approach do not specifically address the American pastoral elements in *Walden*. The writer believes the novel represents the relationship between humans and nature in a well-constructed narrative about individuals choosing to leave civilization behind to live in rural areas, seeking to be closer to nature. All of the reviews above indicate that the majority emphasize Thoreau's spiritual perspective. Meanwhile, in this study, the writer focuses not only on Thoreau's spirituality but also on the relationship between Thoreau and nature, which ultimately demonstrates the importance of better understanding nature so that we can strive to preserve it as a home for humanity. This relationship is clarified through Thoreau's storytelling. Therefore, this book is not only a story about humans choosing to live in a cabin in the woods, but also about the relationship between humans and nature. This research aims to show how nature benefits humankind and what responsibilities humans must take to protect and love nature.

1.4 Scope of the Research

This research is based on the ecocriticism analysis contained in the book *Walden*. The research will focus on how American pastoral phenomena are portrayed in the novel. The writer will focus on the intrinsic elements of the book, especially in terms of characterization and setting, through an analysis of each character's actions and the way the setting is described. The writer will use an expressive approach, namely an approach that analyzes the author's expression and opinion on various issues presented in their literary work. In this

case, the writer will analyze Henry David Thoreau's work entitled *Walden*. In addition, the writer applies ecocritical literary theory in analyzing the novel. The ecocriticism approach is a branch of literary criticism in which scholars analyze texts that illustrate environmental concerns and explore various ways literature represents and responds to nature as its subject.

1.5 Research Question

The writer in this research aims to explore about American Pastoral phenomena that show by Henry David Thoreau in his anthology *Walden*. In order to make the research not out of topic, the writer proposes two research question below:

1. How Henry David Thoreau represent the relationship between human and nature in *Walden*?
2. How are American Pastoral phenomena represented in Henry David Thoreau's *Walden*?

1.6 The Objective of the Research

This research aims to present the depiction of American pastoral in *Walden* by Henry David Thoreau. People need to change their perspective on nature through the American pastoral phenomenon presented in *Walden*. The objectives of this research are to explain the relationship between humans and nature in *Walden*, and to describe the American pastoral phenomena found in the text. The relationship between humans and nature is about how humans can gain more than just a place to live if they take good care of nature. The writer believes that nature can provide pleasure and renewal for humans after they have gained a better understanding of it.