

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. Background of the Research

In recent years, with the intensification of the global ecological crisis, people's concern in ecology has significantly increased. Under such circumstances, literary criticism is also forced to make the exploration of the relationship between humans and the natural environment around them as their main agenda. Glen A. Love said that literature has a social role to change the direction of human consciousness in order to reflect on its position in the threatened natural world, while the interest in ecology is lost by literary criticism. It is expected to be able to restore energy (237-238). Therefore, recent attempts to reinterpret literary works through discussions of ecocriticism have led to a rediscovery of ecological writers, which has never been noticed before.

The recent discussion of ecological criticism is also trying to examine ecological consciousness depicted by the writers in their works. Research on environmental awareness of the authors was conducted by literary scholars through various approaches such as the psychology of the author, ecocriticism and race, and intrinsic approaches that focuses on the narrative elements. The findings show that many writers express their love for nature in their works by presenting ecological values in the stories. These values are considered helpful in encouraging readers to increase their environmental awareness.

William Faulkner is a representative figure among writers who are re-examined from the perspective of ecology. Faulkner's love for the wilderness of

Mississippi and his regret that the wilderness was expelled by modern development have caught the attention of ecological critics. However, some critics disagree that Faulkner should be regarded as an ecological writer. Lawrence Buell argued that Faulkner's works should be read as books on race issues, not environmental ones (11). He elaborated that Faulkner's main interests are society and humans, so it is difficult to place him in the category of natural artists (12).

Different from Buell, Myers asserted that Faulkner is among American writers that put nature as a major significance in their works (648). He also stated that Faulkner and the other writers tried to be part of the solution to the environmental crisis that occurred in the USA in the mid-20th century. During that time, many literary works emerged and criticized the way humans used and interacted with nature. These works influenced environmentalists and activists. Their voices have also prompted a wider discussion of the growing environmental issues in the United States during the 1930s-1940s (Wittenberg 5).

Early research on Faulkner through ecological criticism was mainly conducted by examining the existence of nature in his works and giving it meaning. Scott Russell Sanders said that the wilderness is not a simple landscape in Faulkner's work, but a dynamic medium through which human life appears (183). Yokomizo argues that the dark poetics used by Faulkner in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses* shows the South as an intricate configuration entailing the history of social relations, spatial politics, environmental problems, and human consciousness (12). On the other hand, Song and Berger come up with a common conclusion that is Faulkner comprehensively depicted a direct link between the exploitation of blacks

and the exploitation of land in his works especially in *Go Down, Moses* (1 and 8). These studies are meaningful in that they gave meaning to the existence of wilderness and the interconnectedness of environmental and racial issues in Faulkner's works. However, they have not managed to explore Faulkner's environmental awareness in the said work and link it with his ecological views in real life. Brehm, J. M., et. al in "Environmental Concern: Examining the Role of Place Meaning and Place Attachment" (Vol.26, No. 5 (2013), p. 522–538) defines environmental awareness as people's understanding and awareness of the environment and the related issues. It is elaborated as behaviors that consider the sustainability of nature.

I believe that *Go Down, Moses* reflects the author's environmental awareness which he expressed through the main character of the story, Isaac McCaslin. I decided to examine this topic because environmental issues have long been a dominant topic of discussion for years. The rapid growth of the human population accompanied by an increase in the need for land has an unfavorable impact on the mother earth. It is getting worse due to the massive exploitation of natural resources necessary for the manufacturing of industrial products. Therefore, I presume that environmental awareness should be brought up. A critical reading on *Go Down, Moses* is expected could raise reader's awareness of environmental problems by showing a better way to treat nature as what William Faulkner exemplifies in the story.

Written in seven separate stories, *Go Down, Moses* was originally known as a compilation of stories under the title *Go Down, Moses and the Other Stories*.

Though published as a short story collection in the first edition, William Faulkner considered the book to be a novel and asked the publisher to omit "and the other stories" for the next editions' cover. The novel, which is set in Yoknapatawpha (a Faulkner's fictional county), consists of multiple characters connected to the twists and turns of a large extended family, McCaslin. This novel depicts the interaction of slaves with their masters, their interaction with nature, and social changes in lifestyle in Mississippi that bringing it to the modern era.

The central figure in *Go Down, Moses* is Isaac McCaslin, well known as Ike. He is the heir to the entire land and slaves belonging to the McCaslin family. However, Ike has a different perspective from his predecessors and those around him regarding nature and land tenure systems. For him, land and people are in an equal position and there can be no claim of ownership between them. He also argues that it was human control over land that was the forerunner of slavery and other arbitrary actions that ultimately brought a curse on the McCaslin family—a relationship of incest and endless conflict. To that end, he decided to relinquish his inheritance and move to a small hut as a carpenter.

I chose this novel because as Wittenberg said, it is believed as one of the most important American novels dealing with wilderness and environmental issues in the South (5). As James Seay stated in Rubin's book *The American South: Portrait of Culture*, *Go Down, Moses* has the events and patterns which symbolize the real history (qtd. in Wittenberg 134). The historical fact overwhelmed the virgin forest in the South which provides one ideal model to examine the changes in the Southern landscape and the violence behind those changes. It also implies the



author's environmental awareness in terms of land ethic and views toward wilderness. The analysis was conducted using expressive approach and ecocritical theories including Greg Garrad's pastoral and Aldo Leopold's land ethic.

## 1.2 Identification of the Problems

Despite the fact that Faulkner's works were claimed as books of race issues instead of environmental issues by some critics in the first place, numbers of research on them through ecological perspective have increased in recent years. However, these studies have not been able to scrutinize ecological value in his works by correlating it to his environmental ideas in real life. I found that Faulkner's ecological concern that he showed through several activities and conveyed in various events indicates his environmental awareness. This awareness is well-depicted in one of his works entitled *Go Down, Moses*. Since this topic has not been closely studied yet, I decided to study Faulkner's environmental awareness in the said novel by using Abrams' expressive approach and ecocritical theories including Garrad's pastoral and Leopold's land ethic.

## 1.3 Review of Related Literature

Some researchers have studied environmental awareness in literary works. One of them is Eunju Song that examined Faulkner's ecological consciousness in *Absalom, Absalom!* by combining ecocriticism with the study of nature and race. In his article entitled "Faulkner's Ecological Awareness in *Absalom, Absalom!*" (*English Literature Research*, vol. 52, no. 1, 2010, pp. 219-242), he stated that

Thomas Sutpen, the main character in the story, sacrificed nature and other races in building his kingdom through a vicious exploitation. He then revealed that Sutpen's denial of the interrelationship of nature and human beings eventually led him to his downfall. Song argued that Sutpen's downfall demonstrates Faulkner's contemplation about Southern society that faced unsustainability because they had exploited and destroyed nature and other races and ignored their interrelationship. Despite his extensive analysis, Song does not explore the life of the author in light of his environmental activities so that the findings are not strongly proven. Nevertheless, this thesis provides me a well grounded model in using ecocriticism and expressive approach to analyze a literary work specially Faulkner's.

In his book *Christina Rosseti's Environmental Consciousness*, Williams (2019) also scrutinized the author's environmental awareness in fiction. He examined the influence of Christina Rosseti's spiritual relationship with nature in her writing. In this research, he combined a psychological approach with ecocritical theory. He revealed that Rosseti's characters indicate her desire to gain knowledge in the natural world and share it with audiences. Secondly, Rosseti's writing has a role as therapist for her to evaluate her personal identity. His finding also shows that Rosseti's religious belief led her to seek spiritual analogies in nature and convey it in her works. He added that Rosseti's work can be useful in shaping more ethical attitude towards the environment from a religious environmental perspective. Overall, this book provides a comprehensive study of Rosseti's environmental awareness from ecocriticism and psychoanalytic perspective. This

research also gives me more insights into how an author's way of life influences their writing, especially in light of their environmental concern.

Besides in prose, some researchers also studied poet and playwright's environmental awareness in their poetry and play. Zhang (2018) examined William Wordsworth's ecological consciousness in his poems. He found out that there are three forms of Wordsworth's ecological consciousness in his poems: Coexistence of Both Man and Nature; Man's Respect and Worship of Nature; and Esthetic Value of the Beauty of Nature. In the end of his analysis, Zhang revealed that Wordsworth's ecological consciousness that he expresses through his poetry is significant because it could arouse the reader's concern about nature. I think it would be better if he provided additional information about Wordsworth ecological activities instead of just focusing on the intrinsic elements of the objects. However, Zhang's findings show me a good example in classifying author's environmental awareness into several points so that the analysis could be more systematic.

Another research that examined a writer's environmental awareness in his work is a journal article entitled "Eco-Consciousness in Shakespeare's *As You like It*" by Kumaresan and Boopathi. They revealed that Shakespeare used nature as the setting of the scene to highlight it's beauty. Secondly, Shakespeare expressed his love for nature through the character of Jaques who is described as a true lover of nature who chose to live in the forest. They also argued that Although Shakespeare wrote a pastoral comedy, his ecological conscious mind could not accept some of the characters' actions that resulted in an ecological imbalance in the forest. Unfortunately, the same goes with Song and Zhang, Kumaresan and Boopathi also

did not examine Shakespeare's environmental awareness in real life. Therefore, the analysis is not based on a deep foundation. Nonetheless, this research helps me understand how to analyze a main character's environmental awareness as the reflection of the author's.

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 she managed to combine two different theories to provide a deeper understanding which is useful for me to enrich my analysis.

Jagdish Batra examined the depiction of ecological consciousness in four Indian English fiction, they are *The God of Small Things* by Arundhati Roy (1997), *The Hungry Tide* by Amitav Ghosh (2004), *The Inheritance of Loss* by Kiran Desai (2006), and *Voices in the Valley* by Suravi Sharma Kumar (2012). It was found out that even though the role of nature has been increasing in Indian contemporary fiction, it is only in a form of background except in Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide*. The novel presents a rare phenomenon in dealing with ecological issues.



Batra also argued that this novel gives a portrayal of a mutual relationship between human and nature. I suppose this analysis would be far better if Batra did the analysis by combining ecocriticism with mimetic approach so that the Indian environmental issues could be deeply explored. This thesis gives me a new perspective to study mutual relationship between human and nature in *Go Down, Moses*.

All the studies are conducted by the respective writers in order to highlight the ecological issues and environmental awareness in literary works. Although similar topics may have been brought into attention, the analysis that I want to emphasize has not yet been explored. The first research that also scrutinized Faulkner's ecological awareness, focused on the interrelationship of nature and other races in *Absalom, Absalom!*. The second research that also examined the author's environmental awareness in his work, focused on the influence of the psychological aspect of the author on the representation of nature in the work. The third and fourth research discussed poet and playwright's ecological consciousness in their poetry and play by exploring the intrinsic elements such as character, setting, theme, and point of view. The fifth and sixth research scrutinized the environmental awareness of the characters in the story without relating it to the life of authors. Moreover, the studies also focus on ecocritical issues in a children book and Indian English fiction. Thus, I destined to do another research on Faulkner's environmental awareness in his *Go Down, Moses* by using Garrard's pastoral and Leopold's land ethic, combined with Abrams' expressive approach.

### 1.4 Research Questions

1. How is nature represented in *Go Down, Moses* written by William Faulkner?
2. What are William Faulkner's environmental awareness expressed in *Go Down, Moses*?

### 1.5 Scope of the Research

This research is focused on the topic of William Faulkner's environmental awareness in his *Go Down, Moses*. Therefore, I limited this study into two discussions. Firstly, I analyzed how nature is presented in the novel through Garrard's theory of pastoral. I would like to see how the author represents nature in the story before doing further analysis. Secondly, I examined the author's environmental awareness expressed in the novel. In doing so, I applied Garrard's pastoral and Leopold's land ethic, combined with Abrams's expressive theory.

### 1.6 Objectives of the Study

1. To reveal how nature is represented in *Go Down, Moses* written by William Faulkner.
2. To figure out what are William Faulkner's environmental awareness expressed in *Go Down, Moses*.