

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

As the years fly, human civilization has moved forward, technology has developed rapidly, and state of the natural environment has undergone change. All human activity, whether consciously or not, affects the change of surrounding environment. For examples, fertile land filled by tress now change into residential land, green open land that used to be a place for children to play now turning into multifunctional skyscraper buildings, water ecosystem in river become unstable because people throw many kind of waste there, and many more examples. These issues have become concern for a group of environmentalist organizations, as quoted by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) in *21 Issue for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century*, which discusses human activity affects the environment. Today human actions have become major forces in the operation of the earth system. They increasingly challenge the system boundaries of the planet, which will result in fundamental, unprecedented and unpredictable changes in the earth system (UNEP 3).

“we are facing a global crisis today, not because of how ecosystems function but rather because of how our ethical systems function. Getting through the crisis requires understanding our impact on nature as precisely as possible, but even more, it requires understanding those

ethical system and using that understanding to reform them. Historians, along with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot do the reforming, of course, but they can help with the understanding.” (Glotfelty xxi)

Glotfelty has stated in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader Landmark in Literary Ecology* that today human is facing global crisis especially environmental damage issues. This issue may be caused by lack of knowledge about the nature, therefore human consciousness is less to make stable ecosystem. This problem needs background knowledge of ethical environment system to literate people how to treat the environment well. Subsequent to the understanding of ethical environment knowledge and how to reform them, people awareness will arise automatically (xxi).

On the contrary, people with minimum ethical knowledge will do exploitation through the environment to fill their need. Many countries have experienced some negative impacts on what has happened because of human activity on the environment. Many newspapers carried stories about the natural damage that occurs in some regions, such as a wildfire in Yellowstone Park, a nuclear reactor disaster in Chernobyl, medical syringes washing onto the shores of Atlantic beaches, and controversy over the Spotted Owl in the Pacific Northwest, all these events invite the attention of the US government and announced that the 1990s is “the decade of environment”. Additionally, *Time* magazine called this period as “The Endangered Earth” (Glotfelty xvi).

The numbers of occurrences of environmental damage on the land, therefore, draw a lot of attention to environmentalists, furthermore some scholars interested in discussing these problems for their studies of literature. Start from 1985, Frederick O. Wage edited *Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Method, Resources* whose concern and awareness is in literary disciplines. Likewise, Alicia Nitecki founded *The American Nature Writing Newsletter* in 1989 whose purpose was to enlighten study of writing on nature the environment (Glotfelty xvii).

Peter Barry in his *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* explains that in Romanticism era many writers start emerging to add environmental issues in their literary works –novel, short story, or poems. This movement was begun with Wordsworth's *The Prelude* in 1805. In early 19<sup>th</sup> century, American Transcendentalists were predominantly interested in mountain ranges, prairies, colossal cataracts and space itself. Then, constantly, there are many writers who discuss human relationship with the natural surroundings, such as Milton's *Paradise Lost*, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein*, and Herman Melville's *Moby Dick* (165).

The writing about nature in literary works becomes more popular in last few years. Poems, novels, and also short stories contain full of environmental issues nowadays. One of the literary works that contain full of environmental issues is Jean Giono's short story entitled *The Man Who Planted Trees*. Short story is a piece of prose fiction which can be read at a single sitting (Menrath 1). In addition, short story also does not have such complex storyline like in novel.

Similar to the novel, Menrath also said in his writing, short story is a representation of everyday life story or can also be written based on a true story. In other words, short story is a piece of real life story.

Based on these reasons, writer chooses to use a short story than other literary works. Jean Giono's short story *The Man Who Planted Trees* contain much of nature ethical knowledge and able to gain people's awareness to restore and keep the environment. The researcher argues that the story really illustrates human life associated with the natural surroundings. Hence, the researcher use Ecocriticism from Cheryll Glotfelty as relevance theory and analyze from Ecocentric perspective.

*The Man Who Planted Trees* is a story about a shepherd who were able to change the place he lived, barren valley and almost no life, into a fertile place, full of trees, rich in water, and be a decent habitable for human kind. The environmental issue contained in this story is the natural damage that occurs due to human activities themselves which do not concern about the condition of barren nature. Elezeard Bouffier as the main character in this story is able to change the formerly barren environment into a habitable place for future generations with his own technique; to plant as much of trees all ways long he went through.

That issue is in line with ideology of Ecocriticism which noticed the relationship between human and their natural surroundings. Therefore, the writer feels appropriate to use Ecocriticism theory to examine this short story which goes along with understanding and viewpoint of ecology.

Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty xviii). Glotfelty adds that Ecocriticism takes an earth-centered approach to literary studies. All ecological criticism shares the fundamental premise that human culture is connected to the physical world, affecting it and affected by it. Ecocriticism expand the notion of “world” to include the entire ecosphere. In other words, this theory tries to find the relationship between human and environment from eco-perspective in literary works.

From the explanation above, Ecocriticism theory is very precisely applied to investigate Jean Giono’s *The Man Who Planted Trees* from ecocritical perspectives. Using Ecocriticism theory explained by Cherryl Glotfelty, the researcher would like to find how the relationship between human and its environment moreover how the main character solved the environmental damage emerged in this short story.

## 1.2 Statement of the Problems

Based on the research background above, writer formulates the problem statements as follows:

1. How are the environmental damages depicted in Jean Giono’s *The Man Who Planted Trees*?
2. How is the stability of ecosystem described in Jean Giono’s *The Man Who Planted Trees*?









