

CHAPTER III

ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES AND HUMAN RELATIONSHIP WITH NATURE IN JEAN GIONO'S *THE MAN WHO PLANTED TREES*

In this chapter, the researcher would like to analyze short story *The Man Who Planted Trees* based on the statement of the problems. The analysis uses Ecocriticism theory stated by Cheryll Glotfelty as the main perspective. To avoid a broader analysis, the researcher divides the analysis into two main sub-chapters which are the portrayal of environmental issues and human relationship with nature.

3.1 The Portrayal of Environmental Issues

3.1.1. The Depiction of Nature

The researcher is going to analyze environmental issues based on Ecocriticism theory by Cheryll Glotfelty who explained that before analyzing environmental issues and human relationship with nature within literary works, it is better to firstly declare the representation of nature or nature setting in the story. Therefore, this part explains about the natural condition depicted in *The Man Who Planted Trees*.

This story began with a traveler that makes a long journey around a mountain that is rarely visited by tourists. He then finally reached an area that looks like a dry desert. The place was barren, hot, almost had no plants, and almost had no life as far as eye can see. He walked too far until he descended a valley only to look for some waters because he had been traveling too far and his

water supply runs out. Fortunately, the traveler met with a shepherd and he invited him to take a rest in his cottage.

At this first part of the story, the author has explained how the environmental condition within the story. Nature condition that happened there is very damaged and not maintained well, it is proved with there is no plant grows there and that makes the nature condition become worst.

Based on theory that has been explained by Cheryll Glotfelty, the first phase in analyzing nature in the literary work is explaining about the representation of nature depicted within the literary work. She stated that the description of setting and landscape in the literary work are the most important thing in Ecocriticism analysis. This step is necessary because before we are going to explain the relationship between human and their environment, the next step, we have to know how the nature portrayed in the literary work (76).

Depiction of nature in this short story, at the first, is portrayed as a very barren and dry region. This is explained when the author, which is also character of the short story, makes a long journey from Alps to Provence, France, and decides to take a rest at the village that he passed by to look for some waters. From here, nature is depicted as an inhabitable place because there is no plant grows there except wild lavender, “All this, at the time I embarked upon my long walk through these deserted regions, was barren and colorless land. Nothing grew there but wild lavender.” (1)

The quotation above makes clear that the first condition of the nature within the story is dry and barren. The barren land means that there is no plant

capable to grow there. This condition happens because it was unplanted for long time; people have less of consciousness to look after their environment and land to grow some plants in order to keep their life in future. Because it never be planted before, the land become dry and difficult to be grown by a wood, therefore, when rain came, it will be hard to keep water. Indeed it makes the traveler difficult to find some waters. No waters, barren land, dry, and no life are some evidences that nature condition is already damaged.

With such damage of nature condition, it is possible that there are no other beings are able to survive their life there. This natural condition indicates that nature has influenced human's life. That is also possible when the author stated that he cannot get some waters even there is a well or other water sources.

“I was crossing the area at its widest point, and after three days' walking, found myself in the midst of unparalleled desolation. I camped near the vestiges of an abandoned village. I had run out of water the day before, and had to find some.” (1)

In this quotation, author said that he has walked for about three days in a row until he feels depressed and wants to give up because during that time he still did not find any water sources or people who will help him. He did not need to walk far away if the area that he visited was full of trees or he came to forest region, if such a thing has been ascertained that he would have no obstacles to find some waters. During three days he walked, he also began to realize that he was in the very barren region and almost impossible to find a life. To restore his exhausted energy because he has been walking for three days, he decided to spend

the night in that area. But because his water supply has running out, it forces him to keep walking until he finds some. Until he finally found a village, as noted in the quotation below:

“...These clustered houses, although in ruins, like an old wasps’ nest, suggested that there must once have been a spring or well here. There was indeed a spring, but it was dry. The five or six houses, roofless, gnawed by wind and rain, the tiny chapel with its crumbling steeple, stood about like the houses and chapels in living villages, but all life had vanished.” (1)

He indeed had found a village, but the village is not like other village in general and it is different from what he imagined. He found a village without life in it. Indeed, there are several houses there but it has been destroyed by wind and rain, there is also a chapel but it is not maintained well and its tower was almost ruined, and he also found a spring and well but it drained already. The village was once occupied, but because of its environmental condition was damaged, there is no plant and water, and the village is gradually left behind by its inhabitants, therefore the condition of that village becomes dormant. From the paragraph above, it can be concluded that nature condition has been affecting human and other beings’ life there. This condition proves that the natural damage that occurred was already worst.

“It was a fine June day, brilliant with sunlight, but over this unsheltered land, high in the sky, the wind blew with unendurable ferocity. It growled over carcasses of the houses like a lion disturbed at its meal. I had to move my camp.” (1)

The setting of time when the author made the long journey is June as mentioned above. As we knew before, June is the time for summer in Europe. The sunlight is very bright and when the sun reaches at its highest position, it stings in a skin. Therefore, it was possible when the author feels maximum heat and very bright sunlight, even though he was in a village that ever inhabited by humans. Moreover the area is a barren region without any trees that makes the wind feels like a lion raging because its launch was interrupted. He was disturbed because the area is not safe to live in. He then decided to move his tent and found a new place that safer,

“After five hours’ walking I had still not found water and there was nothing to give me any hope of finding any. All about me was the same dryness, the same coarse grasses.” (1) After discovering the uninhabited village, he decided to continue his journey in order to find some waters. Although in the village he finds a spring or a well, but there is no water inside or it was dried already. Therefore, inevitably, he had to keep walking to find some waters so he could survive. After he continued his journey for about five hours walking what he found at all way long was only a dry land and coarse grasses. In the quotation above it is also said that, during his journey that he did, one thing that he finally realized that he made the long journey is only accompanied by himself. All the things he encounters are just the same; dry and barren land, also his loneliness.

The condition of nature which has no plants means that the environment there has been damaged especially for its soil and they need to be repaired particularly so it can be planted again. That condition was already depicted in the

quotation above. From that quotation, the author said that he seems like hopeless to find neither some waters nor life there, because as long as he can see was only the barren place without hope.

“...It was a shepherd. Thirty sheep were lying about him on the baking earth. He gave me a drink from his water-gourd and, a little later, took me to his cottage in a fold of the plain. He drew his water - excellent water - from a very deep natural well above which he had constructed a primitive winch.” (1-2)

After walking through his long journey, he finally saw a faint black shadow sitting under the one and only tree in that area. The author wrote term *the baking earth* to describe what he feels; the weather was at the maximum heat at that time so surface of the land that he visited feels like being baked by the sun on top of the place.

A man that he met is a shepherd with his thirty lambs around him. The shepherd then gives the traveler some of his waters. A fresh water taken from a well that is dug very deep so the water came out with a clear and feasible to be consumed by human.

Another depiction from the uninhabited village is that the village has inhabitants that look likes as savage tribe. They hate each other considering the severity of life survival there. The main job of its inhabitants is wood charcoal maker while the selling price of charcoal is very low. No wonder if the people feel trapped in that neighborhood and want to get out from that life circle. They feel

the natural damage is the shortage of ecosystem ethic knowledge to maintain the environment for next generation's life. These evidences show lack of human consciousness influenced environmental condition within the story.

“These clustered houses, although in ruins, like an old wasps' nest, suggested that there must once have been a spring or well here. There was indeed a spring, but it was dry. The five or six houses, roofless, gnawed by wind and rain, the tiny chapel with its crumbling steeple, stood about like the houses and chapels in living villages, but all life had vanished.” (1)

In that empty region is indeed there is a village that has several houses and wells, but the condition has been abandoned by its inhabitants. It means that the abandoned village becomes lifeless because there is no life and automatically there is no plant. Those things actually will not happen if humans in that region understand about how to keep the balance of the ecosystem and capable to look after the environment well, therefore between human and their environment occur a good symbiosis.

This region becomes abandoned village because its inhabitants feel that the area they live is inhabitable anymore. They did not have any thought about why its region become die and inhabitable. If they have background knowledge of natural ethic, they will have awareness to keep their environment stable and livable; they will be more respectful to their environment and not only exploit the woods.

The village inhabitants rely on their job as charcoal maker, which is the base material of charcoal is from a log that burned using some tools. Then to keep

going in making a charcoal they have to get some woods to cut down every time they need, thus it makes sure that sooner or later the trees will be disappeared. This condition makes the nature getting worst, they took everything from nature but they did not restore it again. This also makes environment become dry and the soil will be wasted, therefore the land cannot be replanted.

“Furthermore, I understood perfectly well the character of the rare villages of that region. There are four or five of them dispersed far from one another on the flanks of the hills, in groves of white oaks at the very ends of roads passable by carriage. They are inhabited by woodcutters who make charcoal. They are places where the living is poor. The families, pressed together in close quarters by a climate that is exceedingly harsh, in summer as well as in winter, struggle ever more selfishly against each other” (2).

Quotation above stated there are several families that live in unhealthy region. That case certainly has no doubt considering their main job is a charcoal maker, therefore it can be ascertained that thing they faced every day is thick cloud of smoke from charcoal burning. The black smoke from charcoal burning caused people around inhaling carbon dioxide gas. If that gas is inhaled continuously into our body the gas will cause some negative impacts, such as choking, pain, until the worst impact that is death.

At the last sentence in the paragraph said that *struggle ever more selfishly against each other*, therefore the inhabitants in the village fight for their life hardly. They just think about their own life without thinking about anything else,

Therefore, the sale of charcoal itself is not sufficient for the local population lives', considering their main job is as a charcoal maker.

From this fact, the researcher can conclude that their thinking does not reach to the consciousness of look after and preserve the environment for future life because the only thing that is in their minds is just how to survive their life and family with the work they have as a charcoal maker. Another reason which resulted in the destruction of nature in the region is the people there never gain knowledge about what a bad impact if nature can only be taken its advantages without caring for replanting. It can be known because in the story the researcher did not find any evidences to say that its inhabitants had ever undergone formal education.

In the story, author was told that there is one and only man who care so much about the nature, his name is Elezard Bouffier, the main character. He wants to repair his environment which is barren become moisture and habitable "...He supposed it was community property, or perhaps belonged to people who cared nothing about it. He was not interested in finding out whose it was. He planted his hundred acorns with the greatest care." (3) The land is that planted by Elezard Bouffier is a vacant lot unknown of the owner; it may belong to the government. Empty and dry soils are the evidence that whoever the owner, he did not have the awareness to preserve and take care so it will not become empty and dry land. However, it is clear from the quotation above that Bouffier does not care about it and to whom ownership of the land, the most important thing to him is he will

takes care of the land with full of attention. He wants to change the existing conditions; caring for untreated soil to be a land that can be replanted.

“...He had once had a farm in the lowlands. There he had his life. He had lost his only son, then this wife. He had withdrawn into this solitude where his pleasure was to live leisurely with his lambs and his dog. It was his opinion that this land was dying for want of trees. He added that, having no very pressing business of his own, he had resolved to remedy this state of affairs.” (3-4)

Before he lived his life like that; living alone in an arid region, he had a normal life before. He once owned a plantation in the lowlands. He also had a family, his beloved wife and only son, before them one by one left Bouffier. After the occurrence, Bouffier decided to separate himself from urban life; he chose to live in an isolated and deserted place only accompanied by dogs and sheep. In his present life, in his solitude, he was having a lot of time, and therefore he chose to spend his leisure time to change the place in which he occupied by planting as many trees as he realized that the area is in desperate need of the existence of trees. So he intends to make the place become a fertile place and to fill the emptiness of his day.

“Since I was at that time, in spite of my youth, leading a solitary life, I understood how to deal gently with solitary spirits. But my very youth forced me to consider the future in relation to myself and to a certain quest for happiness....” (4)

Awareness to maintain and also to improve the environment that has been damaged is not owned by everyone. It has also been acknowledged by the author himself in the quotation above. Moreover at that time the author is still young. The spirit that he has only dwell on the pleasure and for the future of himself, so it can be sure that he has no thought to keep or improve the state of the environment. He still does not have the awareness that it can keep his survival in the future. No one cares until he feels the need of it and understands the need of the tree for the survival of human life in the future.

“...Hunters, climbing into the wilderness in pursuit of hares or wild boar, had of course noticed the sudden growth of little trees, but had attributed it to some natural caprice of the earth. That is why no one meddled with Elzeard Bouffier’s work. If he had been detected he would have had opposition. He was indetectable....” (5)

The work that has been done by Bouffier, planting a tree, is completely unknown to anyone, including the hunters who come to the place. They think that the trees that grow there are natural occurrences of nature, the trees grow by themselves or they are natural inadvertence. Therefore, no one knows of what has been done by Bouffier. If there is someone who knows about his activity, for sure Bouffier will encounter many obstacles. For example, there is a government or a particular group knows about Bouffier activities, they will prohibit these activities and will recognize the status of land ownership.

“To have anything like a precise idea of this exceptional character one must not forget that he worked in total solitude...” (6) The only person who cares about

perspectives means that the researcher not only looks for human and nature interrelationship, but also observes the relationship from scope of ecosystem stability as stated by Hettinger and Throop in their book *Refocusing Ecocentrism: De-emphasizing Stability and Defending Wildness*. They said that an ecosystem was called as stable system if it is relatively constant over time, if it resists modification, if upon being disturbed it has a strong tendency to return to its pre-disturbance state, and if it moves toward some end point despite differences in starting points (5). In this sub-chapter, the researcher gives explanation from human relationship with their environment evidences in order to maintain ecosystem stability in that area.

Almost all of human and nature relationship happens towards the main character within the story that is Elezard Bouffier. In this case, he tries his best to repair the damaged environment. He did all of it for the sake of restoring the ecosystem stability there. The researcher not only focuses on relationship between main character and his environment, but also focuses on the relationship between the entire human in the region with their environment in case of their activity related to their effort to keep the stability of nature ecosystem.

“The shepherd went to fetch a small sack and poured out a heap of acorns on the table. He began to inspect them, one by one, with great concentration, separating the good from the bad.” (2) From the first quotation, the author told about Bouffier’s activities before he started to plant some oak trees around his cottage. Bouffier began with choosing the best acorns to be planted. He chooses to plant oak trees than other trees. He chooses oak tree because it is capable to live in

deserted area with minimum of water supply. Besides that, oak tree is also known as strong tree, it has dense of leaves, therefore in the future this tree will be able to be a home for many animals and gives much of oxygen supply to human's life. Oak tree also has big stem and strong root that makes this tree capable to be rain receptacle and good water saver for human's life.

While doing his activities, Bouffier always focus with it and he does not feel interrupted with anything around him. He was habitually lives with that condition, because he lives with his total solitude. He decided to live in solitaire when he lost his family and chose to be separated from urban life. Because of that reason, he can do everything, such as examine the best acorns to be planted, totally. Even there is a friend or person around him, he does not feel bothered at all; because he never accepts and talks to a guess before.

“.....And in fact, seeing the care he devoted to the task, I did not insist. That was the whole of our conversation. When he had set aside a large enough pile of good acorns he counted them out by tens, meanwhile eliminating the small ones or those which were slightly cracked, for now he examined them more closely.....” (3)

He chooses the acorns with full attention and very carefully, because he knows so well that the best acorns he plants will produce best oak tree too. He did all of it ungrudgingly because he really wants to restore the damaged nature become green, fertile, and habitable again for human in future life.

The next step he did for planting the oak trees is by soaking the acorns first into water, “.....Before leaving, he plunged his sack of carefully selected and counted acorns into a pail of water.” (3) The good way in planting the oak trees, indeed, is prohibited to let the acorns dry. Therefore, after he chooses the best acorns to be planted, then he soaks the acorns in the water before he started planting the next day. Up to the quotation above, the relationship between Bouffier and his environment occurs in a very good symbiosis. He plants a lot of trees to repair the damaged nature, not only just planting trees to repair the environment, but also paying attention to the acorns that will be planted; he treats that acorns very well until chooses the best acorns to be planted in order to deliver the best oak tree that has good quality too.

After he has chosen the best acorns, then he starts to plant the acorns in the region, “There he began thrusting his iron rod into the earth, making a hole in which he planted an acorn; then he refilled the hole. He was planting oak trees.....” (3). The area that he chose to plant the acorns was area that he passes everyday when he pastured his flocks. Therefore, all along the way he pastured his flock he also plant the acorns in earth. That is why he always brings an iron rod when he was outside to pasture his flocks; its function is to make a hole that ready to be planted with acorns. Thus, this is the way he restored the damaged nature by planting trees as much as he can.

“After the midday meal he resumed his planting. I suppose I must have been fairly insistent in my questioning, for he answered me. For three years he had been planting trees in this wilderness. He had planted one

hundred thousand. Of the hundred thousand, twenty thousand had expected to lose half, to rodents or to the unpredictable designs of Providence. There remained ten thousand oak trees to grow where nothing had grown before.” (3)

He spends all of his time by planting many trees. When he did not do his main daily activities, he starts to make himself busy with activity that is interrelated with nature. From his activities, he was succeed to plant one thousand trees, even though there are some trees which are wrecked and died because of weather or any natural condition. Nevertheless, he never stops planting. He will plant until ten thousand oak trees at those barren lands.

“.....He answered quite simply that if God granted him life, in thirty years he would have planted so many more that these ten thousand would be like a drop of water in the ocean.” (4) He did his task as a human being who has good responsibility with his nature. So he did it with all of his whole heart without pressure from others. He also spends all of his time and energy just for planting those trees ungrudgingly.

Besides he plants oak trees, he also has a plan to plant some beech trees. Beech tree is a tree with big stem and has dense of leaves. The reason Bouffier chooses to plant this tree is because beech tree is able to be a shelter for human in the future. In addition, because the beech tree has large stems and dense leaves, it can act as a rain-fed and well-watered storage. The tree is also able to grow in a wide range of conditions, so when Bouffier planted the tree in the arid region, it

will still be able to grow. Moreover, the beech tree does not require a very long time to grow up.

“Besides, he was now studying the reproduction of beech trees and had a nursery of seedlings grown from beechnuts near his cottage. The seedlings, which he had protected from his sheep with a wire fence, were very beautiful. He was also considering birches for the valleys where, he told me, there was a certain amount of moisture a few yards below the surface of the soil.” (4)

In the quotation above, the author also writes that Bouffier has a strong belief that there are still areas that have moist soil and are very suitable for planting trees. From there he plans to plant another tree species that is birch tree. Birch tree is a type of plant that has a long wooden rod and small. It also includes in a type of beech tree, so it also has almost the same characteristic that is able to live in areas with minimum of water supply. Moreover, it includes in a plant that can be specially planted in a dry soil area well-drained soil.

“.....Now he had only four sheep but, instead, a hundred beehives. He had got rid of the sheep because they threatened his young trees. For, he told me (and I saw for myself), the war had disturbed him not at all. He had imperturbably continued to plant.” (5)

A few years after the trees grew, Bouffier decided not to pasture his flocks again. He sold some of his sheep because of the animals had threatened the trees while he was planting all of his trees. He certainly did not want his business failed

“.....At that time Bouffier was about to plant beeches at a spot some twelve kilometers from his cottage. In order to avoid travelling back and forth - for he was then seventy-five - he planned to build a stone cabin right at the plantation. The next year he did so.” (6)

The area that Bouffier planted spread far from his cottage. When he planted a beech tree, it was 12 kilometers away from his cottage, thus he planned to build a little cottage or cabin made of stone. He does not even think of using any vehicle, he prefers to build a cottage near the nursery so that his access to the land becomes easier. He also built the cottage with an environmental friendly material that is rocks.

“.....It was decided that something must be done and, fortunately, nothing was done except the only helpful thing: the whole forest was placed under the protection of the State, and charcoal burning prohibited.....” (6)

The forest he gradually planted was eventually discovered by the government with the help of the author. It is told in the story that after the author visited Bouffier for the first time, he went to war and defended the State for several years. When he returns to Bouffier, one of his friends who is also a forest ranger knows the existence of the forest. Finally the government also knew about it. Then the two government policies were made in order to protect the existing forests surely for the sake of life in the future.

“.....We found him hard at work, some ten kilometers from the spot where the inspection had taken place. This forester was not my friend for nothing. He was aware of values. He knew how to keep silent.....” (6) Bouffier is always serious in doing all of his activities. At his much older age, he still strives to do his best. He is still able to walk long distances up to 10 kilometers away.

However, from the results he planted the forest that began to be known by many people, it also raises many new threats. One of them must be arrived from human desire to exploit forest resources in excess to the needs and interests of their own business. The exploitation of woods will break the Bouffier forests that he had so long cultivated and guarded with great difficulty. From this, the author asked a help from his friend who is a forest ranger to not tell others about the forest, especially to the hunters and wood cutters. Because his friend has more attention for forest, then he also cares about the balance of nature and ecosystem, he can be trusted not to say it to anyone.

“.....In the direction from which we had come the slopes were covered with trees twenty to twenty-five feet tall. I remembered how the land had looked in 1913: a desert ... Peaceful, regular toil, the vigorous mountain air, frugality and, above all, serenity of spirit had endowed this old man with awe-inspiring health. He was one of God’s athletes. I wondered how many more acres he was going to cover with trees.....” (6)

The change that is felt by the writer is very significant. The land was a desert in previous time, now it turned into a fertile soil and is overgrown with

trees. That condition makes this land becomes habitable area. Bouffier success in restoring the damaged natural conditions related to the author as a servant of God. He did it like the hand of God who was able to turn the deserted region into an extraordinary land. Until the author felt that if Bouffier still continue to do his activities, there will be more areas that are sheltered by the trees.

“It was thanks to this officer that not only the forest but also the happiness of the man was protected. He delegated three rangers to the task, and so terrified them that they remained proof against all the bottles of wine the charcoal burners could offer.” (7)

Another human relationship, other than Bouffier, with its nature occurs quite well after the Bouffier forest is known to many people. Forester who is concerned about the sustainability of the forest performs its duties well. The foresters guarantee the integrity of the forest from the hands that will destroy it. They are asked their promise not to let charcoal makers to take the wood freely.

“.....On the site of ruins I had seen in 1913 now stand neat farms, cleanly plastered, testifying to a happy and comfortable life. The old streams, fed by the rains and snows that the forest conserves, are flowing again. Their waters have been channeled. On each farm, in groves of maples, fountain, pools overflow on to carpets of fresh mint. Little by little the villages have been rebuilt. People from the plains, where land is costly, have settled here, bringing youth, motion, the spirit of

adventure.....now that they live in comfort, more than ten thousand people owe their happiness to Elezeard Bouffier.” (8)

The quotation above is the final condition after what Bouffier has done for the environment. In the area has been built an orderly farm. The rivers and water sources that once dried up are now re-flooded with water. The land that was once dry, now becomes fertile and can be replanted, thus the land in the place becomes valuable and began to be occupied again by the inhabitants. The pulse of life in the place has begun to be felt; gradually the village began to rise. Bouffier's dream of being able to restore life in that place can finally be accomplished and the inhabitants there feel wooded to him for whatever they feel today.

From the evidences and explanations that researcher has described above, the next step is to adjust the evidence to the characteristics of the ecosystem stability that Hettinger and Throop has explained that nature is stable if it satisfies the following conditions: it is relatively constant over time, if it resists modification, if upon being disturbed it has a strong tendency to return to its pre-disturbance state, and if it moves toward some end point despite differences in starting points (5). The characteristics of the whole have been described above will not happen if it is without human assistance. Therefore, all human activities on nature have a very important role in determining the stability of natural ecosystem itself.

In this story nature is told as damaged nature and unfit for habitation after being exploited by the humans who occupy it. Trees are cut down to fulfill their own needs and interests without replanting them to keep them occupied by

humans. From this first evidence, it can be seen that it does not correspond to the first characteristics of ecosystem stability. Nature should not be damaged by human activity.

Human activity in this story actually makes nature become damaged. According to the second nature of the stability of nature, resists modification, according to Hettinger and Throop, human within the story should be preserved nature rather than destroy it. If human destroys nature, it means that nature has been modified.

The third characteristic is it has a strong tendency to return to its pre-disturbance state. This is very appropriate with the activities undertaken by Bouffier as the main character. He really wanted that damaged nature is back into a beautiful and livable nature. He did what he can do to restore the situation by planting as many trees as possible.

The planting of many trees by Bouffier has resulted different natural condition. The first depiction of nature is broken then changes into a green nature filled with trees. The village that was originally abandoned by its inhabitants because it was damaged and dried became worthy to be inhabited. The area became flowed by water that can be a source of human life. It corresponds to the last characteristic that it moves toward some end points in difference points. Moreover in that place there are fields that can be planted to unite people's lives there. Therefore, the land becomes populated by tens thousands people.