

Ecological Criticism in the Pastoral Narrative *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah al-Ma'rab

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Abstract—There has recently been a growing concern about the ecological crisis, which is particularly evident in Indonesia's escalating environmental degradation. Recognizing the pivotal significance of the environment in sustaining human existence, Indonesian writer Nafi'ah al-Ma'rab eloquently articulates the profound neglect and apathy towards environmental concerns in her novel *Luka Perempuan Asap*. Through a meticulous examination of the ecological crisis within the oil palm plantation settings of Riau, the novel serves as a primary data source for this study aimed at delineating the ecological criticism and pastoral narratives embedded within its narrative fabric. Employing a qualitative approach, the researchers adopted both a pastoral narrative and ecocritical perspectives to scrutinize the text. The findings reveal the deleterious consequences of deforestation on oil palm cultivation depicted in *Luka Perempuan Asap*, manifesting in various calamities such as pollution, habitat loss, fauna extinction, and the exacerbation of global warming. The novel elucidates diverse attitudes towards environmental conservation, including reverence for nature as a source of peace, love, friendship, harmonious living, and conscientious stewardship, as well as proactive measures humans can take to safeguard the environment, as demonstrated by its protagonist characters. Moreover, *Luka Perempuan Asap* is a poignant reminder of the imperative to protect the environment and caution against heedless exploitation. It underscores that undue aggression towards nature engenders multifaceted adversities, harming the environment and its inhabitants.

Index Terms—ecological criticism, pastoral narrative, *Luka Perempuan Asap*, ecological damage

I. INTRODUCTION

Humans are continuously challenged by progressive development and technological achievement, and one of those challenges has been the emergence of urban society a particular advancement that has notoriously infiltrated all parts of the globe, simultaneously increasing the complexity of the problems people face all over the world. Indeed, people from every corner of the globe are coming together to protest the endless progress that overtakes and eradicates the surrounding natural beauty and peace of mind that stimulates brotherhood and avoids hostility. Certainly, living close to nature and enjoying the beauty of natural creation can free humans from various burdens. After all, joy, peace, and harmony are essential human needs. Today, however, peace and happiness do not seem compatible with urban expansion. Environmental damage is evident when it comes to human activities subduing nature. Moreover, environmental crises have become an important issue that calls upon all humans to take the situation into account.

Earth is an ideal ecosystem and is referred to as a “mother” who provides life and nurtures it. Thus, preserving an ecological balance on Earth, particularly because it is our only “home”, is imperative. The principle of interconnectedness of all elements in the ecosphere requires all people, as the loftiest beings, to have a sense of responsibility and wisdom to preserve the balance. The sustainability of life requires human beings to be stewards of the planet and give priority to implementing various ways to preserve the environment worldwide.

This is especially true concerning the world population and population density, which have ironically caused the extinction of many species of plants and animals. The imbalance between birth and death rates as a result of population growth has forced people to open up new areas in which to live; thus, this urban spread has destroyed a variety of flora and fauna. Furthermore, it has also had a profound effect on water catchment areas and has caused other environmental

problems as the production of household waste significantly increases and leads to water, air, and land pollution. As the population increases, ecological damage increases even more (Schneider-Mayerson et al., 2020). Moreover, men's progressive attitudes toward making money are other reasons humanity has adopted a destructive spirit that exploits natural resources such as wildlife hunting and illegal logging—activities that continue to be problems in the modern world (Charles et al., 2022). As a result, efforts must be made to make everyone aware of maintaining the ethical use of natural resources to address this condition.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

In response to the ecological issues that started to emerge in the late 20th century, most academics, literary writers, and government officials have put forth efforts to highlight activities for preserving natural ecosystems (James & Morel, 2018). In American literature, the topic was written about as far back as the 19th century by the likes of writer James Fenimore Cooper and poet and essayist Henry David Thoreau. Likewise, in British literature, it emerged in the works of Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth in the early 19th century, raising awareness of environmental concerns and promoting the preservation of natural resources and the environment as well. Today, one of the more prominent literary works that deals with environmental concerns and eco-criticism is Nafi'ah Al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap*.

Bladow (2022) states that eco-criticism is a form of criticism that seeks to examine the relationship between ecology and its various problems through literary texts. Nabulya (2018) declares that eco-criticism is a term coined by intellectuals and academics. It is a theoretical approach that elucidates the position of humans on Earth (Bracke, 2018). Afzal (2020) posits that eco-criticism aims to evaluate the significance of a literary text by considering its ecological aspects. Indeed, eco-criticism endeavors to interpret a literary text while considering the environment. This criticism considers ecology, nature, and environment as foundational elements in the literary texts. Wiyatmi (2016) further asserts that eco-criticism scrutinizes literary texts to elucidate how nature and various issues are intertwined. A literary work does not exist in a cultural vacuum. It exists to guide its readers and teach them how to overcome some of life's problems. Thus, the representation of environmental issues in a literary text serves to enhance people's environmental awareness.

Literary research that focuses on the environment is growing, although it has yet to be as prevalent as other literary research. This undoubtedly poses a challenge for literary researchers to become aware of the importance of conducting environmental research. One of the studies on the environment stated that the roles of social sciences and humanities also carry the same responsibility and significance in environmental matters (Afzal, 2020). Sukmawan (2016) mentioned that ecocritical texts exhibit several characteristics, including pastoral features and apocalyptic narratives. Pastoral literature constitutes an integral component of ecocritical texts found within literary works. Herein lies the importance of the researcher's role in aiding the critique, criticism, and dissemination of knowledge concerning environmental degradation (Dahlan, 2021). As a form of eco-criticism, pastoral narratives can reflect insights into the activities that damage the environment. Therefore, this pastoral narrative has been selected as one of the subjects for studying ecocritical texts, aiming to provide theoretical and practical explanations about environmental awareness.

III. METHODOLOGY

This investigation adopts a qualitative approach, grounded in an ecocritical perspective, to examine the subtleties of pastoral narratives and ecological criticism within the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap*. The primary data source for this study is the aforementioned novel, authored by Na'Fiah al-Ma'rab and published by Solo Tinta Medina in 2017. The methodology of the study involves the immersion of the researcher in the exploration of the text of *Luka Perempuan Asap*. Data collection entails meticulous reading and note-taking from various texts to identify instances of pastoral narrative representations and ecological criticism. Analysis techniques include classification, interpretation, and synthesis to draw conclusions. Additionally, a central objective of this research is to instill a reverence for the environment through the lens of pastoral literature. Data collection primarily involves a documentary study, where the researcher meticulously reads and analyzes textual documents. Data selection is stringent, aligning with the research inquiries to provide relevant insights.

IV. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Na'Fiah al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap* addresses ecological issues such as smog created by fires burning in Riau, causing global warming and air pollution which impact all aspects of life. Indeed, smoke from the burning of forests and land has plagued Riau for years, even resulting in the loss of life. The industrial world, pioneered by capitalists, was capable of altering the culture and civilization established by our ancestors (Wuntu, 2020). For instance, farming communities that traditionally relied on agricultural land for their livelihoods often found themselves compelled to surrender their land, which was "rather forcefully" purchased by capitalists for industrial or commercial purposes. As a result, they were compelled to relocate to the outskirts of town or to become involved in these very industries that took their land away and damaged the environment. Consequently, those who transitioned away from agriculture experienced cultural alienation, which included shifting their lifestyle from a simple agrarian existence to a consumerist pattern, mirroring the lifestyle of those around them. Undeniably, the depletion of natural resources and the rapid growth of the

human population exacerbate the problem of global warming, and the industrialization of the village by capitalists has led to endless suffering for the villagers.

Ecocriticism posits that every object can be viewed within an ecological framework. Ecology can serve as a complementary science in literary criticism. The emergence of ecocriticism is a logical consequence of the growing significance of ecological existence which has increasingly captured human attention. Amidst the dominance of cosmocentric, theocentric, anthropocentric, and logocentric orientations, ecology has been marginalized and often overlooked, distancing it from the central focus of thought (Anggarista & Nurhadi, 2018). These conditions are caused by an imbalance of cultural dominance that excessively exploits nature. This appears to stem from the dichotomous mindset of nature-culture which pits culture against nature. Tatipang et al. (2022) observe that humans often feel physically and culturally marginalized due to the advancements in science and technology, which strongly promote the emergence of industrialization. Moreover, recent unpredictable weather patterns and various natural disasters have compelled the global community to pay closer attention to nature. Humans become apprehensive as nature becomes less hospitable to them. al-Ma'rab employs language as a medium to vividly describe nature, allowing readers of this work to empathize with the story's circumstances, in particular as they are experienced by its protagonist, Mun, the daughter of a capitalist in the village.

Based on the results of studying Na'Fiah al-Ma'rab's work, *Luka Perempuan Asap*, the researchers have identified various pastoral narratives and ecological criticisms in the text. Tables 1 and 2 show examples of both pastoral narratives and ecological criticism, respectively, below.

TABLE 1
FORM OF PASTORAL NARRATIVE IN AL-MA'RAB'S *LUKA PEREMPUAN ASAP*

Pastoral Narrative	Description
Respect for Nature	<i>As proof of respect for nature, the novel's characters try to explain the critical role of nature.</i>
Love and Care the Nature	<i>The characters in the novel try to keep loving and caring for nature by arguing with several people who support environmental destruction.</i>
The Feeling of Responsible and Protect the Nature	<i>Several figures are trying to maintain and protect the forest by collecting evidence of forest damage so that it can be reported to the authorities.</i>

In al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap*, the pastoral narrative vividly depicts various thematic elements, as outlined in Table 1. One of the prominent themes is the profound respect for nature exhibited by the characters. This respect is not merely superficial but deeply ingrained in their actions and beliefs. Through their interactions and dialogues, the characters articulate the importance of nature and its intrinsic value, highlighting its role in sustaining life and maintaining balance. By providing explanations and reflections on the significance of nature, the characters convey a sense of reverence and awe toward the natural world, fostering a deeper connection with it. Furthermore, the narrative emphasizes love and care for nature, portraying the characters as staunch advocates for environmental preservation. Despite facing opposition from individuals prioritizing economic gain over ecological concerns, the characters remain steadfast in their commitment to protecting the environment. Through their unwavering dedication and passionate arguments, they strive to instill a sense of responsibility and empathy toward nature in others. By advocating for sustainable practices and opposing environmental destruction, the characters embody the values of stewardship and guardianship, underscoring the importance of preserving the natural world for future generations.

Moreover, the narrative delves into the theme of responsibility and proactive engagement in protecting nature. In response to the escalating threats to the forest, several characters take proactive measures to document and report instances of environmental degradation to the authorities. By collecting evidence and raising awareness about the detrimental effects of deforestation, they seek to hold accountable those responsible for the destruction of natural habitats. This proactive stance reflects a sense of agency and empowerment, as the characters actively work toward safeguarding the environment and advocating for sustainable practices. Through their actions, they demonstrate a deep-seated commitment to environmental justice and the planet's well-being, embodying the ethos of responsible citizenship and environmental stewardship.

Al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap* masterfully employs the pastoral narrative form to explore themes of respect for nature, love and care for the environment, and a sense of responsibility toward its protection. Through the interactions and actions of the characters, the novel advocates for a harmonious relationship between humanity and the natural world, emphasizing the importance of preserving ecological balance and fostering a sustainable future. The narrative inspires reflection and action by depicting the characters as champions of environmental justice and Earth's stewards, inviting readers to contemplate their relationship with nature and their collective responsibility to safeguard the planet for future generations. Table 2 presents the nuanced exploration of ecological criticism within al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap*, revealing how the work scrutinizes interactions between humans and nature. Themes like ecological imbalance, exploitation of resources, and the ramifications of environmental degradation are meticulously dissected, offering profound insights into humanity's complex relationship with the natural world.

TABLE 2
FORM OF ECOLOGICAL CRITICISM IN AL-MA'RAB'S *LUKA PEREMPUAN ASAP*

Ecological Criticism	Description
Pollution	<i>Irresponsible people carry out air pollution by burning land. They deliberately did this to open new land to plant oil palm—thick smoke everywhere, which causes air pollution.</i>
Land Damage	<i>The crisis of wilderness conditions and new land opening is usually carried out by irresponsible persons' mass burning of land. The purpose of burning the forest is to allow planting oil palm seeds to be carried out more quickly.</i>
Soil Drought	<i>An impact of opening new oil palm lands is the occurrence of drought and long-term drought. Temperature changes, reduced water sources, and rain that does not go down are some of the things caused by land burning.</i>
Extinction of Flora and Fauna	<i>The summer season has lasted a long time because many areas were deliberately set on fire to clear oil palm land. This condition also worsens with the rain that does not go down either, so the flow of water, rivers, lakes, and other springs starts to dry up. Residents who used to go fishing in the river no longer go there because the fish that used to inhabit the river have gone somewhere.</i>
Global Warming	<i>Global warming occurs due to the large amount of land being burned, which increases Earth's average temperature damaging the layer of ozone that protects the planet.</i>

Table 2 illustrates the intricate portrayal of ecological criticism within al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap*, shedding light on the profound impacts of human activities on the environment. One of the central themes explored is pollution, notably air pollution resulting from the deliberate burning of land to clear space for oil palm plantations. This irresponsible practice not only contributes to air pollution but also leads to the destruction of natural habitats and the loss of biodiversity, highlighting the interconnectedness of human actions and environmental degradation. Furthermore, the narrative delves into the repercussions of land damage caused by mass burning, emphasizing the crisis of wilderness conditions and the accelerated pace of deforestation. Opening new land for agricultural purposes exacerbates drought, leading to long-term consequences such as reduced water sources and altered precipitation patterns. This degradation of the land not only threatens the stability of ecosystems but also exacerbates the vulnerability of communities that are dependent on natural resources, underscoring the urgent need for sustainable land management practices and environmental conservation efforts.

Moreover, the narrative explores the dire consequences of human-induced environmental destruction, including the extinction of fauna and the exacerbation of global warming. The prolonged summer season and reduced water sources resulting from land burning devastate wildlife populations, forcing species to migrate or face extinction. Additionally, the large-scale burning of land contributes to global warming, further exacerbating climate change and its associated impacts on ecosystems and human societies. Through its nuanced examination of these ecological issues, *Luka Perempuan Asap* underscores the urgent need for collective action to address environmental degradation and mitigate the impacts of climate change, emphasizing the importance of fostering harmonious relationships between humanity and the natural world for the well-being of future generations.

Regarding the increasing amount of environmental damage, especially in Indonesia, it is necessary to pay attention to all groups (Charles et al., 2022). "As a member of society, the author does not close his ears and eyes to the increasingly damaged nature. These observations are then poured into a work that the public reads. It is hoped that readers of the work will gain an understanding of various environmental problems and the necessary solutions to prevent environmental damage. One of the works addressing environmental damage is the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by Nafi'ah al-Ma'rab. This environmental-themed novel depicts the ecological crisis that occurred in Indonesia. The author adeptly describes various problems of the ecological crisis in the oil palm plantation environment in Riau, such as forest fires, the depletion of springs, and the prolonged haze disaster.

A. Pastoral Narrative in al-Ma'rab's *Luka Perempuan Asap*

Agusryana Syarif and Rapi Tang (2021) stated that the environment is a place for actualization, existence, and interaction for humans. The relationship between fellow humans and other creatures can flourish if there is a symbiosis of mutualism based on the principle of mutually beneficial cooperation. Environmental wisdom is the keyword for establishing a balance in life. Take, for example, a tree. A tree is a living thing that, from birth to death, always surrenders, whether during the dry season with scorching hot conditions or a frigid, rainy season (Rahman & Purwanto, 2020).

The data analysis found forms of representation of pastoral narratives and ecological criticism that Nafi'ah al-Ma'rab is trying to convey. Subsequently, she describes the representation of pastoral narrative forms and ecological criticism in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* by explaining through the pastoral narrative the heroic actions (heroism) shown by humans in saving natural ecosystems. This heroic or pastoral attitude is demonstrated by prioritizing ethics (attitudes) in utilizing nature, such as respect and responsibility for nature. Respect for nature entails a moral obligation for humans to acknowledge and honor nature. Such an attitude stems from the awareness that humans are an integral part of nature, as nature holds intrinsic value (Dahlan, 2021). From the perspective of environmental ethics, respect for nature as an ecological element is grounded in public acknowledgment of nature's inherent worth, thus deserving of reverence. Nature is entitled to respect not only because human life depends on it but also primarily due to the ontological reality that humans are inherently connected to nature. Hence, humans are members of the ecological community. The integration between

humans and nature within this ecological community reflects the existence of interconnections, attachments, inseparability, and the integrity of relationships. In Eastern philosophy, for example, reality is not divided into separate and unrelated fields; rather, it is perceived as a unified whole. Essentially, the Eastern perspective views social interactions and attitudes toward nature as having social relevance. Furthermore, Sukmawan (2016) explains that within the concentric-spiritual perspective of the East, humans and nature are viewed as harmoniously united. Respect for nature is demonstrated through the ability to acknowledge its inherent value, recognition of its entitlement to respect, acknowledgment of its integrity, and respect for its ability to exist, thrive, grow, and develop naturally, according to its own goals and purpose of creation. This concept is exemplified in the following quotation:

Sawit memang mencemari lingkungan dan pertumbuhannya harus dicegah. Lingkungan kita harus sehat. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 131-132)

"Palm oil pollutes the environment and its growth must be prevented. Our environment must be healthy". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 131-132)

Jangan berpikir egois, mereka bisa saja bahagia sekarang, tapi bagaimana dampaknya yang akan datang? Lingkungan akan hancur. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 131-132)

Don't think selfishly. They could be happy now, but what will the impact be in the future? The environment will be destroyed. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 131-132)

From these quotations, the characters' attitude of respect for nature becomes evident. This is demonstrated through their awareness that the environment possesses inherent value due to its ability to sustain a diverse range of biodiversity, making it crucial to respect it. Additionally, the characters' respect for nature is reflected in their explanation of the detrimental effects of waste and oil palm plantations on the environment. Furthermore, respect for the environment is evident in the character's emphasis on the importance of treating the environment with care, as any damage inflicted upon it can have hazardous consequences; for example:

"Apa yang kusaksikan sebenarnya bukan sesuatu yang asing. Pun di kampung banyak orang membakar lahan. Tetapi, kali ini aku punya status yang berbeda sebagai peneliti. Ku lihat Bu Wilda sibuk menelepon ke sana sini. Meski dalam kondisi asap yang kian mendekat, wajah Bu Wilda justru tampak kian girang. seharusnya, jika dia memang seorang peneliti, mestinya dia prihatin dengan apa yang terjadi"

"Mun, kita akan berhasil."

"Berhasil apanya, Bu?"

"Mencegah proyek ini. Kamu masih simpan foto-foto tadi, kan? Ini akan jadi delik dan kita akan menang". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 104-105)

"What I saw was actually nothing strange. Even in the village, many people burn land. However, this time I have a different status as a researcher. I saw Mrs. Wilda busy calling here and there. Even though the smoke was getting closer, Mrs. Wilda's face looked even more excited. "If he is a researcher, he should be concerned about what is happening."

"Mun, we will succeed."

"What did you do, ma'am?"

"Prevent this project. You still have those photos, right? This will be a crime, and we will win". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 104-105)

As seen above, Ms. Wilda's concern for the environment was criticized by Mun, who disapproved of the project involving foreign parties. On the other hand, Mun also declined to participate. However, Mrs. Wilda persisted in her efforts, despite working with foreign parties, because her actions were deemed appropriate.

Love and care for nature are the qualities of pastoral narrative, and they arise from the understanding that, as fellow members of the ecological community, all living things have the right to be protected, nurtured, and not harmed. This principle embodies a moral obligation to extend care to others without expecting reciprocation. The more individuals love nature, the more they evolve into mature human beings, fostering a strong sense of identity (Dahlan, 2021). An affectionate attitude towards nature fosters the desire and behavior to protect and preserve it optimally. Cosmic tranquility and harmony are manifested through an attitude that does not disturb or interfere with cosmic elements. Thus, maintaining cosmic harmony embodies affection and preserves cosmic continuity. Affection can be sustained if humans strive to behave, speak, and act with love towards other living beings (Syarif, 2022). Nature animates humans not only in the physical sense but also in the mental and spiritual realms. Therefore, an attitude of human affection and concern for nature is essential to ensuring human well-being.

In its "psychic" presence, nature consistently prompts caution, thoroughness, and spiritual control over human attitudes and behaviors to prevent damage, exploitation, and subjugation of nature, while also striving for harmonious relationships and inner harmony in life. The attitude of compassion and concern for nature stems from the awareness that all living things have the right to be protected, cared for, and not harmed, and that the protection and care of all living things should be carried out without expecting anything in return. This can be observed from the following quotation:

kenapa kita memikirkan nasib satu orang, lalu mengabaikan nasib ribuan orang? Lihatlah sekarang, Mun, sudah hampir tiga bulan hujan tak turun di Riau. Kamu tahu apa sebabnya? Cuaca sangat gersang. Titik api mulai muncul di mana-mana. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 133-134)

“Why do we think about the fate of one person and then ignore the fate of thousands? Look now, Mun; it has not rained in Riau for almost three months. Do you know why? The weather is very dry. Hotspots started appearing everywhere”. (al-Ma’rab, 2017, pp. 133-134)

From this quotation, it is evident that the attitude of compassion for nature is reflected in the expressions of the characters. This can be observed through their awareness that deforestation leads to permanent changes, where rain no longer falls on the once-forested land. This prompts the characters in the novel to emphasize the importance of forests for humanity and the urgent need to protect them from destruction, especially considering the declining rate of forest growth:

Begini samua, sekarang ada proyek analisis dampak lingkungan. Kamu tahu tanaman sawit itu sangat membahayakan lingkungan, termasuk tanah yang ada di sekitarnya. Konon dalam sehari, sebatang sawit bisa menghabiskan banyak sekali air untuk kehidupan akarnya. Tugas kamu menghitung berapa banyak air yang diserap oleh sawit itu per batang per hari. Dengan data ini maka semakin kuat upaya kita untuk memerangi sawit di provinsi Riau. (al-Ma’rab, 2017, p. 58)

“Look, everyone. Now there is an environmental impact analysis project. You know that oil palm plants are very dangerous to the environment, including the land around them. It is said that in one day, palm oil can use up a lot of water for the life of its roots. Your task is to calculate how much water palm oil absorbs per stem per day. With this data, our efforts to fight palm oil in Riau province will be stronger”. (al-Ma’rab, 2017, p. 58)

This quote illustrates Mrs. Wilda's love and concern for the forests in Riau through her behavior and attitude upon witnessing the land ablaze due to the actions of irresponsible individuals. According to her perspective, setting fire to the forest constitutes wrongful behavior. In contrast, Mun's mindset views burning land to clear it for agricultural use as a common practice often carried out by residents in his village. While Mrs. Wilda's environmental concern may not be entirely altruistic, it appears to be driven solely by material motives. The feeling of responsibility and to protect nature is not solely individual but also collective. This principle necessitates that humans undertake concrete initiatives, efforts, policies, and actions to protect the universe and all within it. This implies that the preservation and conservation of nature are shared responsibilities of all humanity. This shared responsibility manifests in the form of warnings, prohibitions, and penalties for anyone who damages nature or jeopardizes the existence of nature, whether intentionally or not. Moral responsibility extends beyond egoism and anthropocentrism to encompass cosmic concerns. It entails the duty to safeguard nature to maintain the balance and integrity of the ecosystem. In line with the idea, Dahlan (2021) emphasized the responsibility that instills guilt in humans when natural disasters occur due to the disruption of the ecosystem balance. Consequently, humans undertake enormous actions to express their guilt and seek to restore balance amidst the vast chaos. An attitude of moral responsibility towards nature is demonstrated through warnings, prohibitions, and punishments imposed on anyone who poses a threat to the existence of these natural elements, whether intentional or not.

Resistance to the conversion of forest areas was also undertaken by residents in Mun's vicinity. However, one might consider the villagers' resistance to their environment as too late. The reason is that it was only after forest fires blanketed the entire province in smoke and resulted in casualties that people became motivated, realizing the error of their actions. Additionally, their disillusionment grew as they felt deceived and manipulated by companies seeking to clear land. Moreover, villagers worked under coercion, fearing arrest by security forces. Furthermore, the villagers' reluctance to accept and protect the environment stemmed from the influence of outsiders' greed in their village, as depicted in the following quotations:

kawan-kawan, kita orang Malayu haruslah menjadi tuan di tanah sendiri. Tanah ini tanah kita, kitalah yang harus mempunyainya, jangan suruh orang luar datang kemari lalu menikmatinya, habislah kita. Jangan lagi ada orang yang bertanam surga di tanah kita, sedang kita tetap sengsara begini. Kita harus kawal siapa saja yang ingin mencari keuntungan di tanah kita. Tanah kita haruslah kita jaga. “jadi, jangan ada lagi pembukaan kebun sawit di tanah kita oleh orang-orang luar, setuju...?” (al-Ma’rab, 2017, p. 178)

“Comrades, we Malays must be masters of our own land. This land is our land. We must own it. Don't ask outsiders to come here and enjoy it. We will be finished. Don't let anyone plant paradise on our land while we are still miserable like this. We must control anyone who wants to make a profit on our land. We must protect our land. So, there should be no more opening of oil palm plantations on our land by outsiders, agree...?” (al-Ma’rab, 2017, p. 178)

From the quotation, it is evident that responsible behavior and efforts to protect the environment against those who seek to destroy it are portrayed by the characters. This is illustrated by the actions of some characters in the novel who endeavor to gather evidence of environmental damage caused by oil palm plantations, which they intend to utilize in confronting the perpetrators of this ecological destruction. Moreover, these individuals advocating for environmental preservation exhibit an attitude of respecting natural life, as demonstrated through their awareness of avoiding unnecessary harm to nature, refraining from posing threats to the existence of living beings in the universe, adhering to the obligation of preserving nature without causing harm, and allowing nature to remain untouched.

B. Ecological Criticism in al-Ma’rab’s *Luka Perempuan Asap*

To be classified as ecocritical literature, Lawrence Buell (Sukmawan, 2016) outlines several criteria, including:

1. the non-human environment exists not merely as a backdrop but as an active presence, demonstrating that human history is intertwined with natural history;
2. human interests are not seen as the sole legitimate interests;

3. human responsibility toward the environment forms part of the text's ethical orientation; and
4. some understandings of the environment portray it as a process rather than a static concept, which is at least implied in the text.

Environmental degradation arises from humans' philosophies or perspectives regarding themselves, the environment or nature, and their position in the ecosystem. These perspectives include anthropocentric, biocentric, and ecocentric views (Widianti, 2017). Anthropocentric perspectives regard humans as the rulers or center of the universe, assigning exclusive value to humans while considering other entities as mere tools for human satisfaction. According to this viewpoint, humans have the right to manipulate nature as they wish, and moral values solely apply to beings possessing reason and free will. Pollution is the main issue threatening health and the environment. Environmental pollution generally stems from human activities such as transportation, industry, power generation, combustion, factory emissions, and other household activities. As mentioned by Dahlan (2021), pollution refers to living things, energy, matter, and other components that enter or are introduced into water, air, or soil, resulting in changes in their composition and functionality. Pollution typically occurs in locations where its negative impact may not be immediately evident but manifests gradually. Environmental pollution poses increasingly significant problems that need to be addressed due to its implications for safety, health, and life. Literature serves as a means for authors to caution readers about the detrimental effects of pollution on life. *Luka Perempuan Asap* also depicts such impacts:

Tidak ada yang aneh. Tapi orang-orang kota begitu penasaran melihat tajamnya duri pelepah sawit, melihat brondolan yang jatuh ke tanah dalam kemuning, dan minyaknya tercecer dimana – mana. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 100)

“Nothing unusual. But the city people were so curious to see the sharp thorns of the palm fronds, to see the loose leaves falling to the ground in yellow, and the oil was spilling everywhere”. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 100)

From this quotation, it is evident that pollution is highlighted. This novel narrates the visit of the character Mun and several other people, including Mrs. Wilda, to Mun's residence. It indicates that Mrs. Wilda's purpose in visiting Mun's place was to assess the condition of the oil palm plantation. Furthermore, the results of their observations at Mun's residence reveal that the researchers, represented by Mrs. Wilda, noticed unusual occurrences such as oil splattered everywhere, indicating pollution of the surrounding soil. Soil pollution is caused by oil palm farmers and can stem not only from oil but also from various materials such as pesticides and waste disposal, including both industrial and household waste. Besides that:

Kuabadikan api yang menjulang tinggi dengan asap yang tebal”. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 103)

“I immortalized the towering fire with thick smoke”. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 103)

Irresponsible individuals contribute to air pollution by burning land, deliberately doing so to clear space for planting oil palm. In the narrative of this novel, these individuals are paid substantial wages to carry out such activities. The fires resulting from the land burning generate thick smoke that spreads across the area, prompting villagers to flee. Consequently, the village atmosphere becomes enveloped in dense white smoke.

Forest, as part of what is referred to as land, comprises a plant community predominantly composed of trees and exhibits environmental conditions distinct from those outside the forest. According to Dahlan (2021), land denotes a state of nature unblemished by civilization and represents a robust natural construct. This preservation is enacted to safeguard specific ecosystems and species, allowing individuals seeking refuge from the moral decay and materialistic tendencies of urban life, free from human pollution, to retreat there. Forests hold significance for ecocriticism as they symbolize rejuvenation and foster a genuine connection between humans and the environment. In line with this perspective, al-Ma'rab elucidates the damage to the land below:

Kemarin lahan sawitnya sudah mulai dibuka. Tapi karena cuaca lagi panas, jadi lebih baik kita pilih pembakaran saja. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 144)

“Yesterday, the oil palm land started to be opened, but because the weather is hot, it's better if we just choose burning”. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 144)

This illustrates the crisis situation in the wilderness. The clearing of new land is typically conducted through the mass burning of the area by irresponsible individuals. The intention behind forest burning is to expedite the planting of oil palm seeds. As a result of the forest burning process, the air becomes heated, leading to additional disasters such as air pollution, which can affect not only the burning site but also nearby settlements inhabited by residents. Further:

Ini semua ulah orang-orang tamak yang membakar hutan. Mereka hendak meluaskan kebun-kebun hingga merusak lingkungan. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 159)

“This is all the work of greedy people who burned the forest. They want to expand their plantations to the point of destroying the environment”. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 159)

Furthermore, this quotation illustrates the extent of land damage in Riau, where soil infertility arises as a consequence. Soil pollution resulting from land burning renders it challenging for residents to conduct activities, as the land surrounding the oil palm plantations becomes arid. Moreover, drought, as a component of disaster, signifies an unusual state stemming from natural and environmental conditions, including climate change, degradation, biological decline, ecosystem extinction, and heightened natural disasters. Barry (2020) believes that there is an awareness that it is not the end of the world, and that humans, like today's youth, tend to adapt and survive even if civilization is not established. According to Garrard in Barry (2020), disasters trigger social psychology inclined towards paranoia, violence, extreme moral dualism,

and canonization, always invoking imaginative action because they are ever-present. Not all environmental issues are anthropogenic; some significant events occur independent of human intervention such as earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, tsunamis, and meteor impacts. However, it's crucial to recognize the environment's resilience, namely its capacity to restore balance after disturbance, referred to as the homeostatic concept. Therefore, if environmental issues stem from nature, nature itself will restore the environment to a state of equilibrium, or homeostasis. This scenario is depicted below:

Kemarau panjang telah membuat pucuk – pucuk bunga sawit enggan tumbuh. Buah tak ada karena keringnya tanah di Perkebunan. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 142)

"The long, dry season has made palm flower shoots reluctant to grow. There is no fruit because the soil on the plantations is dry". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 142)

The quotation above illustrates that prolonged drought inhibits the growth of new shoots. In the novel, it is depicted that nature becomes unfriendly to humans. The consequence of clearing new land for oil palm cultivation is drought and prolonged dry spells. Temperature fluctuations, diminished water sources, and scarce rainfall are among the outcomes of land burning. Consequently, the yield of oil palm trees declines, resulting in losses for oil palm farmers. This poses challenges for residents, as many rely on the yield of oil palm trees for their livelihoods.

The extinction of fauna is another cause of concern. The study of the relationship between animals and humans in the humanities is divided between philosophical considerations of animal rights and cultural analyses of animal representation (Sukmawan, 2016). This extraordinary phenomenon has recently gained momentum, particularly suggesting that animal cruelty is analogous to slavery and asserting that the capacity to feel pain, rather than the power of reason, entitles any creature to moral judgment as the same can be said of women or Africans who have been mistreated due to morally irrelevant physiological differences. Hence, animals suffer because they fall on the wrong side of the line, which cannot be prevented.

Bahkan, sebagian telah retak. Tak ada lagi kolam yang berair. Ikan-ikan lesap entah kemana. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 138)

"In fact, some of it has cracked. There are no more watery pools. The fish disappeared somewhere". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 138)

The quotation indicates that animals, specifically fish, are gradually becoming extinct in the depicted context. The novel describes a prolonged summer in the region where Mun resides. One of the reasons behind this extended, scorching summer is the deliberate setting of fires in numerous areas to clear land for oil palm plantations. This situation exacerbates with the absence of rainfall, causing water bodies such as rivers, lakes, and springs to start drying up. Residents who once engaged in fishing activities by the river no longer do so because the fish population that previously inhabited the river has disappeared.

Global warming is characterized by an increase in temperature both in the atmosphere and on the Earth's surface. This rise in Earth's temperature significantly impacts and disrupts the ecological balance of life. Temperature represents one of the abiotic elements in an ecosystem, though the primary cause of global warming is biotic, namely human activity (Barry, 2020). The presence of global warming leads to intensified heat on Earth; daytime temperatures are noticeably higher than before. Various human activities, including deforestation, excessive use of motorized vehicles and electricity, as well as industrial, agricultural, and livestock waste, contribute to increased gas emissions.

Cuaca panas yang sangat kian terik menambah kegersangan yang kian parah siang itu. Tim peneliti yang lain berlari-lari mengabadikan api yang membesar dan menyala di kejauhan. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 103-104)

"The hot weather was getting increasingly hotter, adding to the aridity that was getting worse that afternoon. Another research team ran around capturing the fire as it grew and burned in the distance". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, pp. 103-104)

Global warming occurs because of extensive land burning, leading to an increase in the Earth's average temperature. Furthermore, thick, widespread smoke contributes to air pollution. al-Ma'rab elaborates further on global warming in *Luka Perempuan Asap*:

Semua tempat telah rata menjadi putih. Hingga ke sudut – sudut ruangan rumah, tak ada lagi yang tersisa. Oksigen seolah sirna bersama kepulan putih di udara yang bercampur dengan warna kuning belerang sisa pembakaran. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 159)

"Everything has turned white. Down to the corners of the house, there was nothing left. Oxygen seemed to disappear with white puffs in the air mixed with the yellow color of sulfur left over from the combustion". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 159)

The billowing smoke in the sky is a consequence of land burning, rendering the air unhealthy to breathe. The novel describes how the smoky haze has contaminated every corner of the village, turning everything white and severely limiting residents' visibility. Consequently, the residents decided to evacuate to another place until conditions became safe again:

Bumi yang dulu berkah kini telah memerah, memanas, dan mengering hingga nyaris membunuh siapa saja. (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 239)

"The earth that was once blessed has now turned red, hot, and dry to the point that it almost kills anyone". (al-Ma'rab, 2017, p. 239)

The aforementioned conditions depict the consequences of clearing new land. The land is no longer as it once was; it has become dry. Additionally, water sources are dwindling, and smoke from the burning process is spreading everywhere.

Based on the quotations and data evidence provided, the author seeks to convey her anxiety regarding the ongoing issues in Indonesia. First, illegal logging not only results in material impacts but also casualties. Most importantly, if natural exploitation persists, humans will inevitably face extinction. Humans and nature constitute a unified entity within ecological systems. Finally, as stewards of the environment, humans must show respect to nature.

V. CONCLUSION

The impact of destroying forests to convert them into oil palm plantations in the novel *Luka Perempuan Asap* causes several disasters, such as pollution, drought, fauna extinction, global warming, and the loss of society's benevolent qualities like love, peace, sincerity and living harmoniously. These disasters even have national level implications. Planting oil palm has detrimental effects on the sustainability of plants and the surrounding environment due to its voracious consumption of water and nutrients in the soil, leading to the area around the oil palm becoming arid land. This, in turn, contributes to global warming and forest fires, which result in haze and smog. It is imperative to safeguard nature to preserve the balance and integrity of the ecosystem. Efforts to prevent environmental damage include rejecting the destruction of forests for oil palm plantations, changing people's mindsets to return to agrarian farming systems, and abandoning oil palm plantations. This research highlights several attitudes toward protecting the environment, such as love, care, and respect for nature, along with taking on the responsibility that goes into protecting it, as demonstrated by various characters in the novel. In summary, *Luka Perempuan Asap* illustrates the importance of protecting the environment, emphasizing the need to use forests sparingly. The novel teaches readers not to excessively exploit nature, or it may lead to numerous problems that harm the environment and all that lives within it.

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