

**RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE MAIN CHARACTER AND
NATURE AS REFLECTED IN *THE REVENANT* NOVEL BY
MICHAEL PUNKE “AN ECOCRITICISM STUDY”**

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F022201022

A THESIS



**ENGLISH LANGUAGE STUDIES
POST GRADUATE PROGRAM
FACULTY OF CULTURAL SCIENCES
HASANUDDIN UNIVERSITY**

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As a partial fulfillment to achieve Master’s Degree

English Language Studies Program

Written and Submitted by

AHMAT JAELANI

F022201022

To

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MAKASSAR

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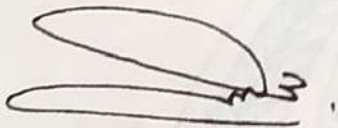
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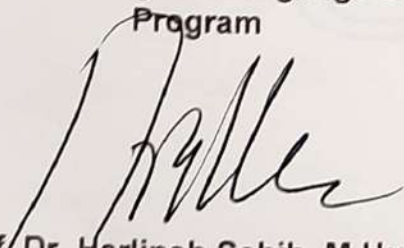
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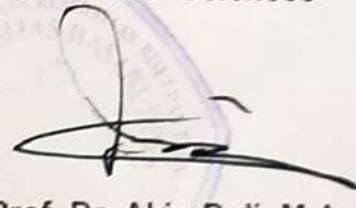
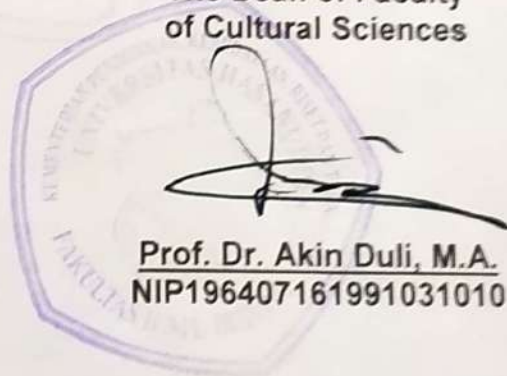
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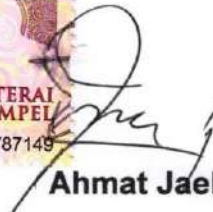
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Ahmat Jaelani

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Makassar, August 09nd 2024

Ahmat Jaelani

ABSTRAK

AHMAT JAELANI. *Hubungan antara Manusia dan Alam Sebagaimana Tecermin dalam Novel Revenant Karya Michael Puncke: Kajian Ekokritik* (dibimbing oleh Burhanuddin Arifah dan Herawaty Abbas).

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah mendalami isu-isu lingkungan yang digambarkan dalam novel *Revenant* karya Michael Puncke melalui analisis mendalam mengenai hubungan antara karakter utama (Hugh Glass) dan lingkungan alam serta dampak yang ditimbulkan oleh hubungan tersebut. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode deskriptif dengan teori ekokritik dan ekosentrisme sebagai alat analisis untuk menjawab pertanyaan penelitian secara komprehensif. Novel ini menjelaskan hubungan antara alam dan karakter utama (Hugh Glass). Dalam cerita tersebut, alam digambarkan sebagai hutan dan hewan-hewan yang dipandang oleh tokoh utama dapat memenuhi kebutuhannya. Sebagai seorang penjelajah, ia memandang alam sebagai sesuatu yang dapat dieksploitasi sehingga membuatnya menebang pohon dan memburu hewan untuk kepentingannya sendiri. Namun, tindakan ini memiliki dampak yang signifikan terhadap kehidupannya dan alam. Temuan penelitian ini mengungkapkan sebuah kebenaran yang memprihatinkan, yakni hubungan antara manusia dan lingkungan seringkali melibatkan ketidakseimbangan dan kerusakan. Tindakan manusia, yang seringkali tanpa mempertimbangkan kelestarian, mengakibatkan kerusakan lingkungan dan kerugian pribadi seperti yang terlihat pada kasus Hugh Glass. Temuan lain menyoroti kebutuhan mendesak untuk melakukan refleksi yang lebih mendalam tentang hubungan manusia dengan alam.

Kata kunci: manusia, alam, ekokritik, *The Revenant*



ABSTRACT

AHMAT JAELANI. *The Relationship between Human and Nature as Reflected in Michael Puncke's "The Revenant": An Ecocriticism Study* (supervised by Burhanuddin Arafah and Herawaty Abbas).

The primary objective of this research is to explore the environmental issues depicted in Michael Puncke's *The Revenant* through an in-depth analysis of the relationship between the main character, Hugh Glass, and the natural environment, as well as the consequential effects of this relationship. The study employs the descriptive method and utilizes ecocriticism theory and ecocentrism as analytical tools to address the research questions comprehensively. The novel explores the relationship between nature and the main character, Hugh Glass. In the story, nature is depicted through the forest and the animals, which the main character believes that it can fulfil his needs. As a frontiersman, he views nature as something to exploit, leading him to cut down trees and hunt animals for his benefit. However, these actions significantly impact his life and the natural world. The research findings reveal a troubling truth: the relationship between humans and the environment often involves imbalance and harm. Human actions, often without consideration for preservation, result in environmental damage and personal injury, as seen in the case of Hugh Glass. These findings highlight the need for deeper reflection on humans' relationship with nature.

Keywords: *human, nature, ecocriticism, the revenant.*



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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of the background of the research that explains the writer's reasons of choosing this title, identification of the problem, scope of the problem, research questions, objective of the research, and significance of the research.

1.1 Background

The concept of literature remains a subject of ongoing scholarly debate. This is a nuanced matter, with Wellek and Warren (1970: 16) asserting that a key conclusion should be drawn: a written work of art is not a simple entity, but rather a highly sophisticated composition marked by intricate layers of meaning and complex relationships. Hudson (2006: 10) shares the perspective that literature plays a significant role as a record of human experiences, providing insight into what individuals should be cognizant of, and guiding their contemplation and emotional response to elements of utmost and lasting importance to all. It functions as a medium for expressing the essence of life through the art of language. As established by Wellek and Warren (1970: 95), literature unequivocally serves as an expression of society. Each society boasts its distinctive structure, characterized by norms of behavior, values, ideas, and challenges. These norms give rise to a rich tapestry of concepts, themes, symbols, and other literary elements, infusing literature with a profound societal significance. Literature, as the embodiment of human expression,

wields the power to not only influence but also shape and refine the perspectives of its readers, offering a comprehensive and authoritative insight into the complex tapestry of humanity, life, and societal values.

According to Spirkin (1983: 102), a society can be defined as a collective of individuals organized within a specific geographical area, united by shared systems, customs, rituals, and laws, and existing as a unified social entity. The intricacy and depth of an individual's social context are influenced by the extent of their integration into the broader social fabric and the influence of diverse societal spheres upon their consciousness and behavior. Consequently, the developmental stage of an individual mirrors the societal developmental stage, and vice versa. Nonetheless, the individual does not assimilate completely into the fabric of society (Spirkin, 1983: 103), retaining their unique and autonomous individuality while contributing to the collective whole. Notably, society shapes individuals just as individuals shape society.

As stated by Emerson (1909: 113), the evolution of humans represented a significant departure from all other forms of life. The capacity of humans to utilize tools, engage in abstract thinking, and strategize for large-scale changes facilitated a far more substantial impact on the environment compared to other forms of animal life. The advancement of culture, encompassing knowledge, technology, tradition, and ideas disseminated across generations, has expedited the progress of human society in contrast to the comparatively gradual pace of biological evolution.

Human beings not only inhabit natural surroundings but also alter them to meet their essential requirements, including water, sustenance, and energy. Policies ought to be formulated to influence fundamental economic and technological components, and nature should be regarded as an entity (Spirkin, 1983:111). Since the outset of human society, considerable effort has been dedicated to reshaping nature. As defined by Spirkin (1983:116), humanity converts the resources of nature into the means for cultural and historical advancement within society. Humans have harnessed and directed electricity to serve the interests of society.

Humans have not only transported diverse species of plants and animals to different climatic conditions but have also actively shaped the environment and the flora and fauna within it. According to Marx and Engels (1977:198), human beings cannot separate themselves from nature, and even when they exert control over it, they are essentially harnessing the laws of nature for their own purposes. It is evident that nature should play a significant role in the complete development of human society. Everything that labor isolates from its immediate surroundings are inherently provided by nature. Just as the earth serves as humanity's primary source of sustenance, it also serves as their repository of tools, offering materials such as stones for a variety of purposes including throwing, grinding, pressing, and cutting, among others (Marx & Engels, 1977:199). Nature constitutes the immediate focus of labor within resource extraction industries, such as mining, hunting, segments of agriculture, and the

generation of energy resources. In essence, nature dictates the raw materials available for manipulation. Therefore, humans continually utilize the principles of nature in their efforts to engage with it.

Regrettably, human actions toward nature have, at various times, displayed significant irrationality. Initially intended for human survival, these actions now inflict substantial damage on the environment, affecting both the physical and mental well-being of humanity. Magdoff (2017:98) defines nature degradation as a critical issue impacting both humans and the environment. This degradation leads to various disasters such as overpopulation, deforestation, biogeochemical flow boundary crises, and global freshwater usage challenges. Consequently, it underscores the urgent need to redefine the fundamental relationship between humanity and the earth.

Indonesia, like many other nations, is currently facing formidable environmental challenges. A study by Hasibuan et al. (2021) has revealed prolonged environmental struggles in the country. One such challenge is the severe deforestation in Sibatuloting, North Sumatra, predominantly driven by the establishment of a pulp factory. Hasibuan further highlights the Indonesia Environmental Forum (WALHI)'s vigorous opposition to this activity, pointing out the factory's exploitation of the forest without compliance with established legislative procedures for environmental management and impact assessment.

Beyond Indonesia, Alaska is confronting a significant environmental

challenge—the dwindling population of certain Arctic species. An in-depth study on *academieedu.com* reveals that ten different animals are teetering on the brink of extinction, with the musk ox being among them. Renowned for its thick, fine wool that offers exceptional warmth, the musk ox is covered entirely except for the horns, hooves, lips, and nose. As documented by Dumont et al. (2006: 15), the musk oxen endured intensive fur trade from the late 18th century to the early 1900s. These animals play a crucial role in preserving the populations of other species, communities, and plants such as willow trees, wolves, and polar bears. The loss of musk oxen would lead to a decline in biodiversity, significantly impacting the planet. According to Erickson (2012: 25), the decline in biodiversity may diminish nature's ability to provide essential goods and services, including food, clean water, and a stable climate. With the increasing human population, there is heightened demand for natural resources and ecosystem services. Hasyim et al. (2020: 9) emphasized that environmental conditions significantly impact society, as all societies are interconnected with their environment. In essence, environmental changes have a direct impact on people and society, posing risks when the environment is endangered. Conversely, when the environment is secure, people and their societies are also safeguarded (Arafah et al., 2020: 1603).

The global environmental challenges serve as a stark representation of the strained relationship between humanity and nature. Bracke (2010: 19) asserts the interdependence of the human-nature relationship,

indicating that humans draw upon nature to meet their needs and, in turn, are responsible for its preservation. Thus, it is imperative to comprehend the reciprocity at play in the human-nature relationship, wherein nature fulfills all human requirements and humans, in turn, must safeguard the natural world they depend upon. It is incumbent upon humanity to learn to coexist harmoniously with nature. As awareness grows regarding the environmental ramifications of human actions, there is a mounting concern for the conservation of nature. Notably, Cunningham (2007: 18) reports that individuals from various societal strata, including religious groups, farmers, loggers, and business leaders, are beginning to emphasize the significance of nature. Furthermore, Andi, K., & Arafah, B. (2020: 423) propose an educational approach pertaining to the natural environment to address this imperative. This method underscores the importance of employing a scientific process to accomplish this objective (Ismail et al., 2020: 294). The aim of this technique is to impart knowledge and comprehension of the environmental landscape, thereby influencing individuals' skills and actions towards the preservation and protection of the natural environment in their daily lives (Arafah & Kaharuddin: 2019: 505). Therefore, there is a critical need to undertake resolute measures in educating people about their environments as an integral facet of their societies. These elucidations clearly underscore humanity's efforts to sustain the equilibrium of nature through their skills and methodologies, with a view to bequeathing a thriving planet to future generations.

All previous discussions are evident in literary works. According to Van Doren (2006: 587), literature is considered highly esteemed writing and is seen as a reflection of the world. Literature can be construed as a written work containing aesthetic merits crafted by authors (Arafah et al.: 2021: 2133). Moreover, Schneider-Mayerson (2015, 114) asserts that the overall increase in comprehension and concern has been expressed by artists and cultural creators, including novelists, through their works. This infers that every aspect occurring in the world can find expression in a written form.

Literary works encompass several genres, including novels, dramas, and literary compositions, among others. Fiction, exemplified by the novel, is one variant of literary work. This study centers on the novel "The Revenant" by Michael Punke, published in 2002 and depicting a series of events in the life of American frontiersman Hugh Glass. Subsequently, the novel was adapted into a screenplay for a 2015 feature film directed by Alejandro G. Inarritu. The novel was reissued in January 2015 in advance of the film's release. The setting is along the Missouri River. Hugh Glass is a skilled woodsman, an expert marksman and hunter, and, most importantly, a survivor. The story begins with a brutal bear attack that leaves him near death. His companions abandon him, believing he won't make it. Against all odds, Glass survives and slowly starts making his way to Fort Brazeau in search of supplies before seeking retribution against Fitzgerald and Bridger, the men who were supposed to be watching over him. Surviving off small game and plants, Glass stumbles upon a group of wolves

feeding on a buffalo carcass. He manages to scare them away with a makeshift torch and enjoys some much-needed rest and sustenance. Once he's regained his strength, he sets out to confront Fitzgerald and seek vengeance.

The Revenant, authored by Michael Punke, is a captivating piece of historical fiction that richly expands upon a true story. This novel is set in the harsh American wilderness of the early 19th century and follows the journey of Hugh Glass, a frontiersman and fur trapper, who exhibits remarkable resilience in the face of adversity. Punke's skillful portrayal of Glass's struggles against nature, starvation, and his own battered body brings depth and authenticity to the narrative. The novel delves deeply into the characters' psyches, particularly Hugh Glass, as he grapples with his desire for revenge and his internal conflict. It also provides insights into the complexities of human relationships and the formation of strong bonds in challenging circumstances. The interactions between Glass and the native people he encounters are particularly thought-provoking and contribute significantly to the development of his character. Moreover, the novel sheds light on Glass's experiences living among the Pawnee tribe and his encounter with a blind Arikara woman, adding to the richness of the storyline.

The novel, *The Revenant* vividly illustrates the deep connection between the protagonist, Hugh Glass, and his surroundings. His battle for survival after a vicious bear attack, followed by being left comatose in the

wilderness, creates a captivating storyline. The book also powerfully portrays the environmental destruction that follows the hunting. The intricate relationship between humans and the environment is the primary focus of our analysis of Michael Punke's *The Revenant* from an ecocritical perspective.

Ecocriticism examines the link between literature and the natural world. According to Glotfelty, ecocriticism approaches literary analysis from an earth-centered viewpoint (Glotfelty, 1996: 19). All ecological criticisms share the fundamental idea that human culture is intertwined with the physical world, impacting and being impacted by it. Ecocriticism broadens the concept of the world to encompass the entire ecosphere. In other words, this approach seeks to explore the relationship between humans and the environment from an ecological standpoint in literary works. Furthermore, Greg (2004: 4) states that ecocriticism delves into the representation of nature in literary analysis as a platform for evaluating the positive and negative aspects of the natural world. By aiming to foster meaningful dialogue, ecocritics encourage a critical examination of our living environment. The primary focus of ecocriticism is the Earth and the intricate relationship between humans and non-humans throughout cultural history, involving a critical analysis of the concept of 'human' itself (Greg, 2004: 5). Notably, ecocriticism stands out in contemporary literary and cultural studies because of its close connection to the science of ecology (Greg, 2004: 5). Therefore, in discussing nature-focused literature, ecocriticism is inherently

linked to the science of ecology. It assumes that all elements, whether living or inanimate, can be examined through an ecological framework and that ecology provides a valuable perspective for critical analysis. The rise of ecocriticism logically aligns with the presence and work of ecologists and warrants considerable human attention.

The concept of Ecocriticism encompasses the scientific study of the interconnections between living organisms and their natural surroundings. Works delving into Ecocriticism emphasize the significance of nature and assert that literature is an integral part of the environment. Nature profoundly influences literary expressions, which have intricately woven environmental elements into their fabric. Many authors, especially novelists, incorporate nature-related imagery into their writings. Literature has evolved in tandem with natural changes, reflecting past and present environments. In turn, literature draws inspiration from nature, which, in reciprocity, relies on literature for conservation. Ecocriticism delves into the intricate relationship between nature and literature, addressing ecological concerns arising from the fluctuating relationship with societal and physical realities. Environmental Ecocriticism views literary works as inseparable from nature and the environment, highlighting associated challenges. The aesthetic qualities of literary creations are influenced by natural and ecological phenomena, viewed as settings rich with complex issues. In essence, Ecocriticism embodies a human response to environmental changes.

The recent environmental issues stem from unsustainable human

activities, marked by the unchecked exploitation of natural resources without regard for their impact on the environment. These interconnected ecological problems prompted researchers to explore environmental concerns through the lens of ecocriticism theory. In particular, ecocriticism theory is being employed to analyze Michael Punke's novel, *The Revenant*, from an ecocritical perspective. Through this approach, the aim is to uncover the dynamic relationship between humans and their environment, and to examine how this relationship manifests within the story. Additionally, the ecosystem theory underscores the significance of the ecosystem portrayed in the novel in shaping human existence.

1.2 Scope of the Research

After reading and learning the novel *The Revenant* by Michael Punke, the writer focuses on identifying the relationship between the main character and environment as reflected in the novel. Furthermore, the writer explains the effects of their relationship in the novel using ecocriticism theory by Cheryl Glotfelty.

1.3 Identification of the Problem

After reading *The Revenant*: a great novel written by Michael Punke, the writer finds out some interesting points to discuss through this research, they are as follows:

1. The interplay between the protagonist, humanity, and the natural world.

2. Nature's dual role as a source of sustenance and a force of untamed wilderness.
3. The detrimental aspects of human exploitation of the environment.
4. The impact of the protagonist's relationship with nature.

1.4 Research Questions

Based on the background of the study explained above, the writer attempts to convey some messages to the audience by presenting a number of facts in the novel which is particularly concealed beyond the narration. Therefore, the formulation of the problem in this research is as follows:

1. How does *The Revenant* novel depict the connection between the main character and Nature?
2. What impact does the depicted relationship between the main character and Nature have in *The Revenant* novel?

1.5 The Objectives of The Research

In accordance with the statement of the problems stated above, this study has two objectives that can be stated as follows:

1. To reveal the relationship between the main character and the environment portrayed in the novel *The Revenant*.
2. To elaborate the effect of the relationship between the main character and the environment in the novel *The Revenant*.

1.6 Significances of the Research

The study explores the connection between humans and their surroundings as depicted in *The Revenant*. The author also discusses how the protagonist's efforts to maintain this relationship with nature can be applied to readers' lives. As a result, this study holds both theoretical and practical significance.

From a theoretical standpoint, it is anticipated that this study will contribute to the understanding of literature and literary research, especially pertaining to ecocriticism theory and the relationship between the protagonist and nature.

On a practical level, the findings of this investigation are expected to aid future researchers and students in comprehending the reasons behind the strained relationship between the protagonist and nature. Indonesia is a country still grappling with human exploitation. Through this research, the author aims to shed light on the factors contributing to the tense relationship between humans and nature. Thus, the author seeks to illustrate that literature can address the issue of human exploitation prevalent in society today. Furthermore, the author believes that this study can have a positive impact on Indonesia's development. By addressing the causes of human exploitation and presenting solutions, this research offers insights into the problems depicted in the novel, enabling readers to prevent such issues and address them effectively using the solutions proposed.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents three topics. First, there is previous research finding. It focuses on the differences of this research from other previous studies. The last is the conceptual framework of the analysis. It shows the correlation among theories, data and objectives of the study. Second, it is the underlying theories which are used in this research. The researcher uses the theory of ecocriticism to analyze the the main character and nature relationship. In order to deepen the analysis, the researcher also employs the ecosystem theory to give a proof on the importance of the environmental issue depicted in the story.

2.1 Review of Previous Studies

Ecocriticism study has been done by several researchers. The research found an undergraduate thesis by Wahyulistyono (2002), from Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta entitled "*Racial Conflict In Michael Punke's The Revenant Novel (2002): A Sociological Perspective*". The purpose of this study is to reveal and analyze the issue of the racial conflict based on the Sociological in Literature perspective. The result of this study showed that the conflict in this novel fulfilled two criterias of the conflict as the indication i.e. armed attack and victims. Based on the analysis, the racial conflict happened because of an attack started by Arikaras against RMF Company. It gives another conflict to the characters of the novel. Michael

Punke wanted to show the conflict issue happened in the society in that time through the historical background of his works including *The Revenant*.

The second research written by Munawaroh, A. (2017) from UIN Sunan Kalijaga Yogyakarta entitled "*The Stages of Hugh Glas's Journey In The Revenant Movie: A Hero's Journey Analysis*". The researcher uses the hero's journey theory. From the film there are seventeen phases that throughout by Hugh glass. 1. The Call to Adventure 2. Refusal of the Call 3. Supernatural Aid 4. The Crossing of the First Threshold 5. The Belly of the Whale 6. The Road of Trials 7. The Meeting with the Goddess 8. Woman as the Temptress 9. Atonement with the Father 10. Apotheosis 11. The Ultimate Boon 12. Refusal of the Return 13. The Magic Flight 14. Rescue from Without 15. The Crossing of the Return Threshold 16. Master of the Two Worlds 17. Freedom to Live.

The third research comes from UIN Sunan Ampel Surabaya, Qomariyah, S. (2019) with the title "*Defense Mechanisms of Hugh Glass in The Novel Michael Punke's The Revenant: A Novel of Revenge*". The important issue of this novel is Hugh Glass' struggle to fight with a mother bear. To study it, the researcher applies defense mechanism and new criticism theory. The results of the study show that Hugh Glass characterizations are brave, wise, and persistent. While the defense mechanism used by the main characters are intellectualization, rationalization, reaction formation, repression and sublimation.

The journal entitled *Saving the Environment: Environmental Lessons*

in Colin Thiele's February Dragon was published by Arafah et al. (2020). The article utilizes the concept of ecocriticism by Glotfelty. Ecocriticism explains human-nature interconnectedness. The portrayal of human-nature relation reveals several values of environmental education that readers, both children, and adults, could learn. Three environmental lessons such as respect, responsibility, and empathy towards other living beings were found in the story. Based on the elaborations, the characters in the novel show their respect, responsibility, and empathy towards other species by protecting the animal and the environment from bushfire's dangers.

The research entitled A Study of Ecocriticism on the Representations of Ecological Conditions in Rawa Gambut by Efendi, A. (2021) determines the representation of the ecological crisis found in the Rawa Gambut drama script written by Conie Sema. The results showed that the themes within the drama script as an ecological crisis in Indonesia due to unfriendly environmental development policies. The representation of the ecological crisis are: 1) ideal ecological conditions are maintained if the utilization pattern is wise and responsible, 2) the ecological crisis is closely related to human intervention, 3) humans are the main cause of ecological disasters, 4) there is a disregard for environmental wisdom principles in the use of sustainable living space, 5) the moral message is the importance of awareness to maintain environmental sustainability, and finally, 6) the author offers an ecocentric paradigm to oppose the ideology of anthropocentrism, which is still the dominant perspective in the natural

resource management This study has implications, along with the importance of educational efforts, to raise awareness of environmental sustainability through drama scripts.

Building upon previous studies, earlier researchers explored the subject of *The Revenant* from various perspectives and methodologies. In this research, the focus shifts to analyzing the portrayal of the relationship between the main character and nature, emphasizing the impact of their connection. Unlike prior studies that employed sociological, hero of the journey, defense mechanism, and new criticism theories, this research takes an ecocritical and ecosystem approach. The emphasis lies on delving deeper into the relationship between the main character and nature, as depicted in Michael Punk's *The Revenant*.

2.2 Theoretical Background

The theoretical background is the crucial point in analyzing literary work. This point is used by the writer as the reference to explain the research. In this part, the writer uses ecocriticism theory by Glotfelty to analyze the environmental problems between the main character and nature in the novel *The Revenant* and the effects of their relationship.

2.2.1 Ecocriticism Study

a. Emergence of History

Literary studies frequently address real-life issues, often depicting or

tackling problems of the world and occasionally offering solutions. Traditionally, up until the 20th century, literary studies mainly focused on race, gender, and class (Glotfelty, 1996: xvi). It is noted that this was due to major publications not shedding light on the environmental issues the Earth was facing - things like toxic waste contamination, species extinction, nuclear waste dumping, ozone layer depletion, and rainforest destruction.

While other related humanities disciplines like philosophy, history, law, sociology, and religion began to address environmental concerns, literary studies remained silent. Glotfelty (1996: xvi) remarked that there were no journals, professional societies, discussion groups or conferences dedicated to literature and the environment.

In the 1970s, a few scholars attempted to initiate discussions on literature and the environment. However, their efforts remained largely unknown because they rarely referenced each other's work (Glotfelty, 1996: 17). As a result, ecocriticism failed to establish itself institutionally.

In the mid-1980s, some scholars began collaborating on environmental and literary studies projects. By the early 1990s, this movement gained momentum following Frederic O. Waage's work *"Teaching Environmental Literature: Materials, Methods, Resources,"* which aimed to bring greater environmental awareness to the field of literary studies (Glotfelty, 1996: 17). Alicia Nitecki also made a significant contribution in 1989 with *"The American Nature Writing Newsletter,"* which aimed to publish essays, book reviews, classroom notes, and information

related to the study of nature and the environment. Some universities started including literary courses and environmental studies in their curricula. The first academic position in Literature and the Environment was established at the University of Nevada, Reno (Glotfelty, 1996: 17). This period marked the first instance of ecocriticism being featured at the MLA annual literary conference in 1991, organized by Harold Fromm in his work *"Ecocriticism: The Greening of Literary Studies"*.

Since the annual meeting of the Western Literature Association in 1992, which led to the formation of the Association for the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE), the popularity of ecocriticism has continued to grow. According to Glotfelty (1996: 17), Patrick Murphy established a new journal in 1993, *Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment* (ISLE), to provide a platform for the consideration of literature and environmental concerns.

Subsequently, there were discussions about naming this new literary discipline. Some suggestions included ecopoetics, environmental literary criticism, and green cultural studies. However, many scholars preferred the term "ecocriticism" due to its brevity and the ease of modification into "ecocritical" and "ecocritic" (Glotfelty, 1996: xx). It is further explained that "eco-" is derived from "enviro," which is synonymous with the science of ecology.

b. The Explanation and Fundamentals of Ecocriticism

Ecocriticism, as a newly emerging literary discipline, was thoroughly

examined in order to establish its definition. Glotfelty claims:

“Ecocriticism is the examination of the connection between literature and the natural world. Similar to how feminist criticism analyzes language and literature from a gender-focused viewpoint, and Marxist criticism incorporates an awareness of production modes and economic classes into interpreting texts, ecocriticism approaches literary studies from an earth-centered perspective. Therefore, ecocriticism can be defined as the literary field that places the earth at the forefront and scrutinizes its portrayal in texts. Consequently, the interaction between humanity and the physical environment becomes the central theme in ecocritical studies”.

Ecocriticism often shares the underlying belief that human culture is interconnected with the natural world, influencing and being influenced by it (Glotfelty, 1996: 19). This means that ecocriticism examines how humans impact nature or are impacted by nature in shaping their culture. This examination ultimately leads to the connection between humans and the nonhuman. In accordance with Glotfelty's assertion, Heise (1997: 1) contends that ecocriticism delves into the role of the natural environment in shaping the imagination of a cultural community at a particular historical moment, exploring how the concept of nature is defined, the values attributed to it, or withheld from it, and why, as well as how the relationship between humans and nature is envisioned. From these quotes, it is evident that ecocriticism explores the role of nature, assigns value to nature, and illuminates the relationship between humans and nature within the text.

In general, literary theory examines the connections between authors, texts, and the world. Additionally, literary theory primarily considers the world as the societal — the social sphere. Ecocriticism broadens the concept of the world to encompass the entire ecosphere (Glotfelty, 1996: xix). The ecosphere encompasses all the interconnectedness of everything

with everything else.

As ecocriticism encompasses a broader view of the world, all phenomena occurring in the ecosphere can be the focus of ecocriticism. This is why there are no limitations on the topic or genre of ecocriticism, as long as the text addresses environmental issues.

The environmental issues depicted in the text are often perceived as the result of human activity. Glotfelty (1996: xx) asserts that this occurs when the repercussions of human actions are detrimental to the planet's fundamental life support systems. Thus, ecocriticism seeks to contribute to the healing of nature's wounds.

Other related disciplines have endeavored to remedy nature from human transgressions. Historians have sought to gain a better understanding of nature, ultimately leading to sound ethical systems regarding nature. Worster (in Glotfelty, 1996: xxi) stipulates: Today, we are grappling with a global crisis not due to the way ecosystems function, but because of how our ethical systems function. Overcoming this crisis necessitates a precise understanding of our impact on nature, but more importantly, it requires comprehending these ethical systems and employing that comprehension to reform them. Historians, in conjunction with literary scholars, anthropologists, and philosophers, cannot effect the reforms, but they can facilitate the understanding. Worster argues that an effective understanding of nature is vital for reforming and preserving nature. Hence, understanding is the first necessary step in assisting with

the reformation of nature.

Concerning Worster's proposal, Glotfelty (1996: xxi) notes that experts from numerous fields have attempted to articulate the importance of preserving nature. For example, anthropologists aim to foster respect for human survival rights. Psychologists seek to uncover the connection between environmental conditions and mental health. Philosophers have identified various subfields such as ecological ethics, deep ecology, ecofeminism, and social ecology to comprehend the causes of environmental degradation and develop an alternative perspective to establish the ethical and conceptual basis for appropriate interactions with the earth. Finally, literary scholars are beginning to educate themselves in the sciences. As a newly emerging literary discipline, ecocriticism contributes to environmental issues by encouraging people to comprehend, care for, and recognize the beneficial connections with the earth.

Prominent Ecocritic Lawrence Buell states that one can observe several trends indicating an evolution from a "first wave" of ecocriticism to a "second" or newer revisionist wave or waves that are increasingly apparent today (1996: 17).

1. First Wave Ecocriticism

In first-wave ecocriticism, "environment" referred to the "natural environment." Essentially, the distinction between the "natural" and the "human" realms seemed more separate than how recent environmental critics have viewed them. Initially, ecocriticism was perceived to be aligned

with the objectives of caring for the earth. Its aim was to contribute to "the struggle to preserve the biotic community" (1996: 21).

The term "environmental" refers to the surrounding conditions that impact living organisms. In a broader sense, the environment encompasses everything that affects an organism during its lifetime. From a human standpoint, environmental issues encompass concerns about science, nature, health, employment, profits, politics, ethics, and economics (Enger & Smith, 2004: 5).

2. Second Wave Ecocriticism or Newer Revisionist Waves

Second Wave Ecocriticism, or Newer Revisionist Waves, is more closely aligned with environmental science, especially life science. The intersection of biological, environmental, and literary aspects found its initial significant critical expression in 1974 with Joseph W. Meeker's publication. In his 1999 essay "Ecocriticism and Science: Toward Consilience?" Glen A. Love points out that a biological perspective has consistently and indispensably accompanied the rise of ecocriticism and the study of literature and the environment. Authoritative biological evidence of environmental degradation served as the natural point of connection, as emphasized, and can claim a lasting and significant relationship to human life (Buell, 2004: 565).

Meanwhile, William Howarth appears to advocate for integrating humanities and science within the context of studying specific landscapes and regions. In this regard, geology is at least as crucial as the life sciences

(quoted in Buell, 2005: 18). On the other hand, Ursula Heise has recently turned to a branch of applied mathematics, risk theory, as a lens through which to explore literature's representation of contemporary anxieties (Buell, 2005: 18). Additionally, others have also argued that ecocriticism's advancement is becoming more scientifically literate.

Similarly, Carson's book *Silent Spring* serves as a great model. Carson delved into an ecological issue with the help of wildlife biologists and environmental toxicologists to demonstrate that DDT was present in the environment in amounts toxic to wildlife. Nevertheless, *Silent Spring* carried out cultural, rather than scientific, work by aiming to make a moral argument. The book's significant accomplishment was transforming a (scientific) ecological problem into a widely acknowledged ecological issue that was subsequently contested in politics, law, and in popular media and culture. Therefore, ecocriticism might not contribute significantly to debates about ecological issues, but it can aid in defining, exploring, and even resolving ecological problems in this broader sense (Garrard, 2004: 6).

Laurence Buell quoted in his book:

"Scientific facts are neither entirely real nor fabricated: the microbial revolution relied on a particular kind of orchestrated laboratory performance, without which the history of science would have taken a different course, but the discovery/invention was not fictional either. Bruno Latour ingeniously proposes the neologism "facts" (a combination of "fact" and "fetish") to describe this understanding of the "facts" of science: "types of action that do not fit into the simple choice between fact and belief" (1996: 295).

According to the previous way of thinking, the archetypal human figure is an isolated individual, and the experience in question activates a

fundamental connection between human and nonhuman. In contrast, according to the latter view, the archetypal human figure is shaped by social categories, and the "environment" is artificially constructed. In both cases, the concept of personhood is defined, for better or worse, by involvement with the environment (Buell, 2006: 23).

2.2.2 Ecocriticism as Literary Criticism

Irrespective of the terminology used, most ecocritical work is driven by a shared goal. Ecocritics aim to explore environmental concepts and portrayals that often underlie cultural debates, sometimes subtly concealed. Above all, ecocriticism aims to assess texts and concepts based on their consistency and effectiveness as responses to environmental crises (Kerridge & Sammells, 1998: 5). All ecological criticism shares the fundamental belief that human culture is intertwined with the natural world, influencing and being influenced by it (Kerridge & Sammells, 1998: xix). An ecological perspective seeks to understand the interdependence of all things, even those seemingly distant. Nothing can be discarded or ignored without consequences (Kerridge & Sammells, 1998: 7).

Ecocriticism examines the connections between nature and culture, particularly the cultural products of language and literature. As a critical standpoint, it is rooted in literature while also concerning itself with the land; as a theoretical discourse, it navigates the relationship between the human and non-human. Ecocriticism broadens the concept of "the world" to

encompass the entire ecosphere (Kerridge & Sammells, 1998: xix).

The primary publication of the critical movement, the American ISLE (International Studies in Literature and Environment) and its younger British counterpart, Green Letters, are notably distinct from other scholarly association journals due to their combination of academic, pedagogical, creative, and environmentalist contributions (Buell, 2006: 6). ISLE was established in 1993 by Patrick Murphy to "provide a platform for critical studies of the literary and performing arts that stem from or address environmental considerations. These would encompass ecological theory, environmentalism, conceptions of nature and their representations, the human/nature dichotomy and related concerns" (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996: xviii).

Meanwhile, ecology is focused on an integrated, holistic understanding of human-natural systems, even though this system - whether seemingly organic or mechanical - is viewed as open and evolving at any given point or space. Simultaneously, an overarching ecological interest in human/nature and human/place interactions is a fundamental and enduring aspect of the discipline, implicit in some of its classical origins and overt in much of its romantic legacy. Ecological concern encompasses specific terms and themes, typically revolving around inquiries into family and community, connections between characters and locations or emotions and places, life and death, and the portrayal and relationship between humans and the environment, such as whether people are part of or distinct

from nature.. The text can be analyzed through the lens of three significant and recurring themes in literary and cultural history (Pope, 2002: 160-161).

1) A depiction of pastoral life.

Traditionally, pastoral literature portrays shepherds, primarily rural inhabitants, in an idealized state of simplicity and innocence, removed from the complexities and excesses of urban or court life. Alternatively, rural inhabitants may be portrayed as crude and backward. The interplay between these states forms the basis of many narratives and underpins the central themes (Pope, 2002: 162).

2) The urban environment as a second nature.

Here, discussions commonly revolve around the pleasures and challenges of urban living without referencing rural life. The metropolis, in particular, is perceived as a complex network of interwoven cultures and subcultures. From a distance, it is celebrated as a place of individual opportunity and social mobility, epitomized by the allure of bright city lights. However, deeper exploration often reveals the city as a site of personal isolation and social alienation, marked by insatiable materialism and financial vulnerability (Pope, 2002: 162).

3) Science fiction: utopias and dystopias.

The genre of science fiction has wielded substantial influence in portraying imaginary worlds characterized as either utopian or dystopian. "Utopia," derived from the Greek term "ou-topos," denotes a nonexistent ideal place, while the term "dystopia" emerged later to describe an

imaginary, nightmarish place. Depending on the observer's perspective, most utopias may harbor dystopian elements (Pope, 2002: 163).

From the three ecological perspectives presented, this study aligns with the pastoral version, depicting rural inhabitants as primitive and retrogressive, evident from the initial stages of the novel. The story initiates with the date September 1, 182, yet subsequently presents the date in reverse: August 21, 1823.

Similarly, Cheryll Glotfelt outlines the developmental phases of ecocriticism, reminiscent of Elaine Showalter's model of the three stages of feminist criticism. The first stage encompasses the "images of nature," examining the portrayal of nature in literature, which is just one aspect of ecocritical studies. Other focal points include the frontier, animals, cities, specific geographical regions, rivers, mountains, deserts, indigenous peoples, technology, waste, and the human body.

The second stage involves the revival of nature writing, a genre of nature-focused nonfiction originating in England with Gilbert White's *A Natural History of Selborne* (1789) and extending to America through the works of Henry Thoreau, Mary Austin, Rachel Carson, Terry Tempest Williams, and others. In an increasingly urbanized society, nature writing plays a vital role in fostering an appreciation for the natural world. Efforts also extend to promoting environmentally conscious works that analyze mainstream genres and identify authors within fiction and poetry who demonstrate ecological awareness.

The third stage, akin to ecocriticism, involves scrutinizing the symbolic construction of species. Literary discourse's definition of humanity is questioned, challenging prevalent dualisms in Western thought that separate meaning from material, mind from body, men from women, and humanity from nature. A related endeavor, under the hybrid label "ecofeminism," explores the link between the oppression of women and the domination of nature. Another theory, deep ecology, delves into the philosophical implications of its radical critique of anthropocentrism for literary study (Pope, 2002: xxiv).

2.2.3 Ecosystem Theory

a. Definitions

Defined by the *Ecological Society of America* in 1997, an ecosystem is described as any area on Earth containing living organisms and their physical environment, including nonliving elements. Ecosystems involve the transfer and storage of energy and matter through living organisms and their activities. Concurrently, the Millenium Ecosystem Assessment (in Wright, 2008: 29) defines an ecosystem as a dynamic network of plant, animal, and microorganism communities interacting with the nonliving environment within a specific location. Regardless of the definitions, an ecosystem can be interpreted as the interplay between living and non-living elements.

b. The Structure of Ecosystem

Wright (2008: 31) explains that ecosystem structure refers to the way

in which different parts fit together to form a complete system. This means that the structure of an ecosystem encompasses the various components and their interactions within the entire system. Biotic and abiotic communities are crucial elements of the ecosystem. Additionally, he defines biotic structure as the way different categories of organisms fit together and trophic structure as the significant feeding relationships between organisms.

1) Main Organism Categories

Wright (2008: 31) outlines that the primary categories of organisms are producers, consumers, detritus feeders, and decomposers. These groups generate food, transfer it through the food chain, and return it to the non-living parts of the environment.

2) Producers

According to Wright (2008: 31), producers are organisms that harness solar energy or chemical reactions to convert carbon dioxide (CO₂) into organic matter. The majority of producers are green plants. Their byproduct is oxygen, obtained through the process of photosynthesis. They typically capture light energy, combine it with water using their green pigment, chlorophyll, and ultimately produce oxygen.

3) Consumers

Consumers encompass a diverse range of organisms, from microscopic bacteria to blue whales (Wright, 2008:33). There are numerous categories of organisms identified as consumers; these include protozoans, worms, fish, shellfish, insects, reptiles, amphibians, birds, and mammals

(including humans). Consumers can be further categorized based on their food source to comprehend the ecosystem structure.

Primary consumers or herbivores are animals that directly feed on producers. These animals can range from large, such as elephants, to small, like mites. For instance, elk, which feed on vegetation, can be considered primary consumers, whereas wolves are secondary consumers because they prey on elk. There may also be tertiary, quaternary, or even higher levels of consumers, and many animals occupy multiple positions on the consumer scale. For example, humans can be classified as primary consumers when consuming vegetables, secondary consumers when eating beef, and tertiary consumers when consuming fish that feed on smaller fish that feed on algae. Secondary and higher-order consumers are also known as carnivores (carni=meat). Consumers that feed on both plants and animals are termed omnivores (omni=all).

c) Detritus Feeders and Decomposers

Detritus refers to waste materials. Wright (2008: 34) categorizes fallen leaves, branches, and tree trunks, dead grass, animal feces, and deceased animal bodies as detritus. Many organisms, such as earthworms, millipedes, fiddler crabs, termites, ants, and wood beetles, specialize in consuming detritus, and these consumers are known as detritus feeders or detritivores. Similar to regular consumers, there are primary detritus feeders (those that directly consume detritus), secondary detritus feeders (those consuming primary detritus feeders), and so on.

The most important group of primary detritivores is decomposers, which typically include fungi and bacteria. Dead leaves and the wood of deceased trees are particularly significant because they decompose instead of being consumed, allowing fungi and bacteria to break them down.

2. Trophic Relationship: Food Chain, Food Web, Trophic Levels

The food chain represents the primary feeding connections between organisms that make up the trophic structure (Wright, 2008:35). An oak leaf is eaten by a caterpillar, which is then consumed by a warbler, which in turn is preyed upon by a hawk. As a result, all food chains are interconnected and create a complex network of feeding relationships known as the food web.

When considering the food chain and food web, these organisms are arranged in a series of levels, such as from producers to primary consumers, then from primary to secondary consumers, and so on. These feeding levels are referred to as trophic levels. All producers are part of the first trophic level; all primary consumers are in the second trophic level; organisms that feed on these herbivores belong to the third level, and so forth.

c. Problems in the Ecosystem

Some scientists might discuss the issues in the ecosystem ranging from its natural composition to human intervention. Weise (2011:1) mentions that the global loss of top predators in the food chain has occurred. She also notes that this issue is the result of human beliefs that top

predators threaten livestock, compete for wild game, or that ecosystems have become too fragmented to support them.

Few scientists understand that the loss of top predators, scientifically known as apex consumers, has numerous impacts on biodiversity. Estes et al. (2011:301) examined how the trophic cascade, the loss of apex consumers in the food chain, affects ecosystem processes. Trophic cascade is described as the transmission of consumer impacts on their prey downward through food webs. It is an effect caused by the disappearance of top predators in the food chain, which influences the lower levels of the food chain. For example, the decline in wolf populations may affect an increase in elk numbers and a decrease in willow trees in terrestrial ecosystems.

Additionally, Estes et al. (2011: 304-306) highlight the indirect effects of trophic cascade on ecosystem processes, categorizing them into four main issues: herbivory, wildfire, disease, physical and chemical influences, and biodiversity. In relation to the overall topic of this research, the impact of trophic cascade on biodiversity is explained. Estes (2011:306) states that the decline in biodiversity may lead to reduced plant populations. For instance, the elimination of wolves in North America in the early 20th century resulted in the failure of new tree growth.

Furthermore, according to the Ecological Society of America (ESA) in 1997, the reduction of coyote populations in the canyons of southern California is associated with declines in songbird populations in the area. As

coyote populations decreased, the populations of their prey, mainly raccoons, increased. With raccoons consuming bird eggs, fewer coyotes led to more raccoons eating more eggs, resulting in a decrease in songbird populations.

In conclusion, Estes et al. (2011:306) suggest that reinstating an effective predation regime is the most effective management approach for preserving biodiversity, particularly in a balanced ecosystem. This implies that a management solution, typically referred to as conservation, is necessary to maintain balanced biodiversity.

d. Conservation Biology

Conservation biology aims to preserve endangered plants and animals in order to prevent extinction. This involves protecting species threatened by natural events or human activities. Conservation biology is divided into in-situ and ex-situ conservation (Saunier & Meganck, 1995: 1).

1) Ex-situ Conservation

Ex-situ conservation involves relocating threatened species outside their natural habitat to places like zoos, botanical gardens, gene banks, and captive breeding programs (Saunier & Meganck, 1995: 1). This is done when there is a high risk to the endangered species in their natural habitat and they need a more protected environment similar to their natural habitat. Laumonier et al. (2009: 1155) describes ex-situ conservation as captive conservation, which means moving threatened species outside their natural habitat.

2) In-situ Conservation

In-situ conservation involves protecting endangered species within their natural habitat. Laumonier et al. (2010: 1158) describes in-situ conservation as the preservation of ecosystems and natural habitats, including maintaining and restoring viable species populations in their natural habitats. Additionally, in-situ conservation is considered the primary method for preserving resources (Possiel et al., 1995: 1). In-situ conservation is the principal way to maintain endangered species and their original habitat. Braverman (2014: 48) states that the main objective of in-situ conservation of target species is to protect, manage, and monitor the selected populations in their natural habitats to maintain natural evolutionary processes and allow for adaptation to environmental changes such as global warming, altered rainfall patterns, acid rain, or habitat loss.

Braverman (2014: 48) explains that the main goal of in-situ conservation is to protect, manage, and monitor endangered or threatened species, allowing them to remain viable and adapt to changing environmental conditions. Furthermore, Braverman (2014: 49) mentions that in the case of threatened species, in-situ conservation involves eliminating the threats they face, whether from human activities or natural events.

To analyze the main character and natural setting in *The Revenant* novel, this study applies Glotfelty's three phases of ecocriticism concepts. First, it examines how nature is depicted in the text, focusing on landscapes,

settings, and other non-living elements in pristine condition or impacted by human actions. Second, it investigates the interactions between humans and nature. This study also examines the aforementioned framework to shed light on specific aspects of stewardship concerning humans and nature in *The Revenant* novel.

2.3. Conceptual Framework

The Revenant by Michael Punke, published in 2002, is a novel that recounts the extraordinary events in the life of Hugh Glass, an American frontiersman. The narrative delves deep into the intricate relationship between the protagonist, Hugh Glass, and the natural world as he grapples with the harrowing ordeal of surviving a bear attack and being left for dead. Furthermore, the novel sheds light on the environmental repercussions of hunting, offering a thought-provoking exploration of the complex dynamic between humanity and nature, presenting both the challenges and potential remedies.

When conducting an analysis of the novel, the researcher employs an ecocritical lens, drawing on the seminal concepts of ecocriticism propounded by Glotfelty. Among the rich array of concepts within ecocriticism, the focus is primarily directed towards first-wave ecocriticism, which is pivotal in its role within the ecosystem. In order to deepen the scholarly inquiry, the researcher integrates ecosystem theory to underscore the tangible real-life implications of the novel's portrayal of the ecosystem.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

