



## Save Chiharus! How Important Forests to Life? (An Ecocritical Study of The Novel 'Kekal' By Jalu Kancana)

Dwiana Binti Yulianti<sup>1\*</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Universitas Muhammadiyah Ponorogo, Indonesia

\*Corresponding Author: [dwiana@umpo.ac.id](mailto:dwiana@umpo.ac.id)

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### ABSTRACT

Literary works may include numerous representations of human life, one of which is connected to the environment. The most recent method of critiquing a discourse on environmental concerns is called eco-criticism. This study tries to describe the eco-criticism included in Jalu Kancana's novel Kekal. An eco-critical perspective and a descriptive qualitative research methodology were both used in this study. The information source is a book-length document. The results of this study indicate that there are seven destructive literary ecocritics. They are forest destruction, transfer of function of nature reserve, new land clearing, pollution, looting of nature reserves, loss of animal habitat, carbon trading. Through this novel, the author conveys messages about nature conservation. Natural conservation must always be maintained because sustainable forests are a source of life for humans and other living things. Vice versa, natural damage will be a source of disaster for human life and other living things. Thus it can be concluded that the results of this study can contribute to the development of eco-criticism in Indonesia. The results of this research are expected to be a reference for readers in raising awareness in protecting the environment so that the environment remains sustainable and can provide benefits to living things.



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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Nature provides various natural resources for the continuity of life. Natural resources are environmental elements consisting of living natural resources, non-living natural resources, and man-made natural resources which are assets that can be used to meet the needs of human life. Natural resources such as water, air, oil, fish, forests, and others are important resources for human survival (Purba, 2020). By being the availability of various kinds of natural resources, it is appropriate for humans to manage and use them properly. Good management of natural resources will improve human welfare, and vice versa. In the management and utilization of natural resources, there must be a harmonious relationship between natural resources and human needs so that there is no conflict of interest between user groups.

Currently, there has been a lot of environmental damage due to human activities. Forest logging is happening everywhere for reasons of development and hunting of animals is increasingly rampant among the community. Humans are increasingly free to exploit the environment without thinking about the impact on the environment itself or for the next human generation. The habit of throwing garbage in any place has become a common habit of today's society. Many people are so complacent with the comfort they are getting at this time that they forget to think about how to preserve nature and the environment.

On the commemoration of Earth Day 2022, ten environmental damages were found that threatened environmental sustainability. The damages are global warming from fossil fuels, poor governance, food waste, loss

of biodiversity, plastic pollution, deforestation, air pollution, melting ice caps and rising sea levels, ocean acidification, agriculture, food and water insecurity, and fast fashion and plastic waste (Putri, 2023). Having this apprehensive condition, the community should introspect themselves against the existing damage so that awareness grows to protect the environment.

Literature is a medium that can be used to influence society because reading literary works will change the mindset of the reader. Literature as a standard expression of what people have witnessed in life, what people have experienced about life, what people have contemplated about the aspects of life that are most directly interesting and strong in essence is life through the form of language. Literature contains about nature which can have a positive impact on people's behavior on environmental sustainability because literary works contain values that can be applied in everyday life (Sutisna, 2021). The existence of a relationship between nature and literature raises a concept about ecological problems in literature, namely eco-criticism. The term is used for literary criticism related to the environment (Sihotang & et.al, 2021).

The phrase "ecological criticism" is derived from the English word "ecological criticism," which is a fusion of the word's "ecology" and "criticism." Ecology is a branch of science that examines the patterns of interactions between plants and animals. Regard for other creatures, humans, and their surroundings. The act of critiquing something can be seen as a way to convey judgment regarding its merits. Eco-criticism is essentially the criticism of the environment (Harsono, 2008). Ecocritical theory is education about understanding the environment through literature.

Eco-criticism is a study that criticizes the environment through literary works. This study develops along with the problems related to environmental issues that appear in a literary work. The way ecocritical research works is by understanding science related to the environment, caring for the environment, analyzing in depth about the environment by understanding the data in a literary work. Eco-criticism is a part of literary criticism by criticizing various aspects of natural life that are treated unfairly by humans (Sutisna, 2021). Eco-criticism is a collaboration between environment and literature (Juanda, 2018).

The novel „Kekal“ by Jalu Kancana is a novel that tells the struggle of a community echoed by Alit and his friends in an effort to preserve the nature reserve from the dirty hands of individuals or groups who want to destroy it. The destroyers of nature are only concerned with the economic side without paying attention to the ecological side in nature reserves. The ideas presented in this novel raise the reader's awareness to care more about nature. Readers will understand the pattern of presentation from the beginning of the story to the end because the plot in the novel Kekal is easy to digest, so the moral message will be clearly displayed in every incident. Based on this, the researcher chose the novel Kekal by Jalu Kancana with eco-critical studies.

Novel „Kekal“ raised the issue of converting a nature reserve, namely the Ciharus Forest area into a new location for the opening of a mining company. Decree legally issued secretly by the Ministry of Environment and Forestry The government agency that oversees BBKSDA. The letter explained that the Kamojang and Papandayan Nature Reserve Areas were downgraded to become nature tourism parks. Through the novel Kekal, Jalu Kancana strongly opposes changing the nature reserve, because it will result in many bad things that will happen. Based on this, an author is proven to start acting on what will happen to the surrounding natural environment which is the background of the literary works he makes.

Glotfelty states that ecocriticism is the study of how literature and the natural world interact. Ecocriticism approaches literary analysis from an earth-centered perspective (Garrard, 2004). The goal of eco-criticism is to examine literature from an environmental standpoint. This study aims to show that the environmental crisis raises cultural concerns relating to literary phenomena in addition to technical, scientific, and political challenges. The word ecocriticism, specifically ecocriticism, is an English term. The phrases ecology and criticism were combined to create the term "ecocriticism." Ecology is characterized as the study that investigates the interactions between

organisms and their natural surroundings. Criticism is described as an evaluation of a literary work that includes praise or condemnation. The focus of literary eco-criticism can be summed up as literary analysis with a focus on the environment (Garrard, 2004). In the literary theory paradigm, ecocritical theory is multidiscipline. On the one hand, eco-criticism uses literary theory, and on the other hand, eco-criticism uses eco-criticism. Literary theory is a multidisciplinary theory as well as an ecological theory. At the level of literary theory, ecocritical theory can be traced to the paradigm of mimetic theory which has the basic assumption that literature has a connection with reality. From the time of the mimetic theory which has the basic assumption that literature has a connection with reality. From the time of the Greeks until now, the paradigm of mimetic theory deals with various trainings. On the other hand, in the Ecological Theory Paradigm. The word "ecology" is a new word creation,

which was first coined by the German biologist Ernest Haeckel in 1869. Ecology is usually defined as the study of the relationship of organisms or groups of organisms to their environment, or it is the study of the interrelationships between organisms. - living organisms and the environment (Garrard, 2004).

Literary eco-criticism is research that represents the state of the environment described in literary works. Eco-criticism is research that connects literary works with the environment, such as loss of wilderness, rapid extinction of animal and plant species, air, water and soil pollution. Through eco-critical research on literature, the author hopes that readers will have an awareness of protecting the environment better (Sihotang & et.al, 2021). Eco-criticism is considered as a human tool to solve various ecological problems (Garrard, 2004).

Ecocriticism can help to determine, explore, and solve ecological problems. Ecocriticism or environmental criticism denotes critical writings that explore the relationship between literature and the physical and biological environment, which are carried out with an acute awareness of the destruction caused by human activities to the environment (Garrard, 2004). Then, Garrard added the earth is a physical state, which humans often exploit at will. Literature will become an aesthetic filter for arbitrary human attitudes and actions. Ecocriticism focuses on exploring the ways in which we imagine and describe the relationship between humans and the environment in all fields as a result of culture. Literary eco-criticism is indeed inspired by (as well as a critical attitude from) the modern environmental movements. Garrard's focus seeks to trace the development of the Movement and explore concepts related to literary eco-criticism, related to the following matters: Pollution, Wilderness, Disaster (Apocalypse), Housing/Dwelling, Animals, and Earth (Garrard, 2004).

According to Harsono, every object can be perceived in ecological networks, and ecology can be used as an auxiliary science in this critical approach, according to the fundamental paradigm of ecocritic. The development of ecocriticism appears to be a natural outcome of an ecological existence that demands more and more of human attention. People are frequently depicted in eco-critical literature as abusing natural resources and ignoring the air, water, and soil that support them, which raises concerns about both human and planetary existence (earth) (Harsono, 2008). Ecocriticism is used to track ideas about the environment and its representations. The existence of literary eco-criticism is based on past environmental problems and thoughts about the sustainability of the earth and its contents in the future (Sukmawan, 2016). Then, Kerridge added that eco-criticism wants to track ideas about the environment and representation (Kerridge, 1998).

A literature can be said to be eco-critical literature if it meets the following criteria: (1) the non-human environment exists not only as a frame but as a presence, demonstrating that human history is implicated in natural history; (2) human interest is not understood as the only legitimate interest; (3) human accountability to the environment is part of the text's ethical orientation; and (4) some understandings of the environment are as a process rather than as a disadvantage (Buell, 1995). Then, Eco-criticism has multiple study objects: literature, art, culture, and [ain' tain. In this essay, the object of ecocriticism that will be used as material for study is literature in the nature-nurture-culture paradigm. In this paradigm, literature which is part of the ecosphere can be studied for its interdependence (Harsono, 2008).

Many studies that examine ecocriticism have been carried out ((Purba, 2020), (Sihotang & et.al, 2021), (Sutisna, 2021)). In analyzing the novel 'Kekal', the writer uses a literary eco-critic approach with Greg Garrard's eco-critical theory, where the main points of eco-criticism are environmental crises namely Pollution, Wilderness, Disaster (Apocalypse), Housing/dwelling., Animals (Animals), Earth (Earth). This research was conducted to describe the natural damage that occurs especially in forests and the struggle of conservationists in maintaining the existence of forests. The findings of this study are anticipated to contribute on the efforts of emphasizing the value of safeguarding the natural environment by maintaining forests so that they can continue to benefit people and other living things.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

Descriptive methodology with a qualitative approach is the research methodology employed. Qualitative research methods use the findings of creation and comprehension to analyze data on natural object circumstances and understanding the phenomenon of what the research object experiences by verbally describing it (Sugiyono, 2015). The qualitative research method, according to Moleong, is to grasp the phenomena of what the study object experiences by describing the forms of words and language (Moleong, 2013.) This is consistent with the issues that will be analysed, and the aim of the study is to describe the types of environmental harm that are depicted in the novel. Sentence fragments, dialogues, and discourses on literary eco-criticism discovered in Jalu Kancana's novel "Kekal" used as information sources for this study.

Reading, taking notes, and library methods are data collection strategies used in literary research. Due to the fact that the data is in the form of text from a novel, the researcher carefully reads *Kekal* by Jalu Kancana's entire text and makes a note of any sentences that use ecocriticism. The researcher then interprets and describes the data in terms of intrinsic elements and ecocritical sentences, specifically pollution, wilderness, disaster, apocalypse dwelling, animals, and earth, in accordance with Greg Garrard. As a result, information about the environmental crisis depicted in the book can be found.

The Miles and Huberman model's data analysis technique, which consists of three stages and was applied in this investigation, is as follows. (1) Data reduction, also known as the simplicity of important data and the recording of data from existing texts. Data from the Jalu Kancana novel *Kekal* were gathered to help with the analysis of the issue at hand, which is literary ecocriticism as it manifests itself in the novel's harm to the environment. (2) Data display, which entails providing data backed up by solid proof and justifications that are consistent with the theory in use. To make it simpler to grasp, the prepared data is then organized in an orderly fashion. Greg Garrard's hypothesis is used to describe information about environmental harm in Jalu Kancana's novel *Kekal*. (3) Drawing conclusions after gathering all the data is the researcher's last step before confirming the information. The environmental harm in Jalu Kancana's novel *Kekal* represents the conclusions drawn from the data that have been captured and obtained through data reduction and data display. Conclusions derived from the data that have been captured and gained through data reduction and data presentation take the shape of environmental damage.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

After reading the novel carefully, the forms of eco-criticism found in the novel "*Kekal*" by Jalu Kancana are: 1) forest destruction ; 2) transfer of function of nature reserve ; 3) new land clearing; 4) pollution; 4) looting of nature reserves; 5) forest and ecosystem destruction; 6) loss of animal habitat; 7) carbon trading.

#### 1. Forest destruction

Forest destruction is carried out arbitrarily without considering the interests of society in general, only for the interests of groups. This can be seen in the following quotation.

“...In the past, my grandfather witnessed how this country's land was dredged when he served as a member of the military in the interior of the jungle in 1967. Many foreign investors were involved in extracting minerals there. Dense wilderness, saving oxygen for humans, leveled for the sake of mining destruction ((Kancana, 2019): 33).

The quote above shows the author wants to convey that the destruction of nature, especially forests, has occurred for a long time. Extraction of natural wealth is based on the interests of people or groups that provide benefits for certain groups. This has had a negative impact mainly on the flora and fauna which should have maintained their beauty in the nature reserve but due to the destruction of the forest that has been carried out, the forest/nature reserve cannot and provides benefits. According to Hinonaung, efforts to destroy forests have generally occurred in society and the government is trying to prevent them by issuing Law Number 18 of 2013 (Hinonaung, 2018). Wirmayanti et.al added that in addition to Law Number 18 of 2013, there was also Forest Protection Government Regulation Number 28 of 1985 which was issued to warn the public so that they are aware of the importance of forests and grow awareness to care for them (Wirmayanti, 2021). Destruction of forests through logging has had negative impacts on the community, for example reduced water discharge, lack of clean water supply, and flooding. This is in line with what was conveyed by (Romarak, 2021). Through this eco-criticism, the author would like to convey the many adverse effects of forest destruction, such as the loss of certain fauna habitats, the depletion of natural resources, the reduction of forests capable of providing oxygen, air pollution, etc.

#### 2. Transfer of function of nature reserve

The Kamojang and Papandayan nature reserve areas were converted from nature reserves into nature tourism parks without notification to the public. This statement can be seen in the following quotation.

- 1) “The letter explained that the Kamojang and Papandayan nature reserve areas were downgraded to become nature tourism parks. And it was inaugurated one year ago without notification to anyone, including outdoor activists (Kancana, 2019):56).
- 2) ... a nature reserve area that was probably protected during the royal era by the adage of possession, curses, disease, and even death, if you entered it, at that time, there were no frills such as a ceremony as a reason to enter it. There is no written demarcation order between the spaces for trees and animals (Kancana, 2019):62).

The quote above states that the function of the Kamojang and Papandayan nature reserves has been reduced to become a nature tourism park. With this transfer of function, the actual function of the forest is lost, such as the

Greenhouse Effect, species extinction, etc. This is in line with what was conveyed by Kusumaningtyas that with the conversion of forests, forests cannot provide positive benefits in life, resulting in greenhouses (Kusumaningtyas, 3. New land clearing

The opening of new land in the Ciharus forest area must be carried out by a group of people with economic goals. With the opening of new land, it is possible to reduce the forest area on which living things depend. The opening of new land in the novel 'Eternal' can be found in the following excerpt:

- 1) "Hah?! How could that be? It's not allowed to have any activities in this nature reserve, how can they open land there?" (Kancana, 2019):55).
- 2) 2) So it is only natural that entrepreneurs who want to clear land for their projects feel disturbed by the Save Ciharus campaign activities". (Kancana, 2019): 62).
- 3) "SK25 ordered by company P for a new land clearing project in Ciharus, apparently that's what made us their target. It is clear that they want this SK25 because commercialization activities within the nature reserve area are of course against the law. ... so a in a cunning way, they play with the law and academics so they have access to exploit nature reserves" (Kancana, 2019): 61)

Judging from eco-critical studies, the opening of new land in forest areas has resulted in several negative impacts, including loss of habitat for rare animals, loss of forest as a flood prevention, and reduced water supply. The government actually prohibited the opening of new land in accordance with the UUPPLH, namely in Article 69 paragraph (1) letter h which basically regulates the prohibition of clearing land, especially by burning. This is due to the various impacts caused by the opening of new land especially if the new land clearing is done by burning the forest, it will cause smoke which has the potential to completely paralyze activities and disrupt public health. Many disturbances are caused by the smoke from burning forests, not only to the surrounding communities in the country but also to neighboring countries (Apryani, 2018).

#### 4. Pollution

The sustainability of the Ciharus forest has been disturbed. The people don't care about the existence of the forest, they don't even pay attention to how to preserve the forest. This can be seen from excerpts from the novel which state that various types of waste are found in forest areas. These quotes are:

"The peaks and busy trails are filled with millions of plastic waste from climbers. Waste is poured into the river by factories. Pollution is blown into the air" (Kancana, 2019): 10).

Today's society has lost awareness about protecting the environment and how our earth will be in the future. They throw garbage at will without thinking about the long-term impact it causes. Likewise with conditions in the Ciharus forest area. Even though the government itself already has regulations governing the Protection and Management of the Environment, namely Law number 32 of 2009 and even Law Number 18 of 2008 concerning Waste Management. However, public awareness is still very low (Nurchahyo&Ernawati, 2019).

In addition, the Ciharus forest area has also been touched by irresponsible people by burning dry branches or burning trees as well. This can be seen in the following quote:

"After a few minutes, some of them set fire to the pile of dry leaves near the bush while pouring someliquid on the tree trunks. Maybe it's gasoline or other flammable liquids" ( (Kancana, 2019):79).

The quote above proves that forests have never been preserved, people even consciously burn forests for their own interests. In fact, this kind of attitude will cause forest sustainability to become extinct and do not rule out the possibility that forests will become denuded.

#### 5. Looting of nature reserves

The existence of a nature reserve is intended as an area for preserving the diversity of plants and animals and their ecosystems, as well as functioning as a protection area for life support systems. However, if there is a group of people who do not support the existence of the nature reserve, of course the function of the nature reserve will not be maximized. As found in the Kamojang and Papandayan nature reserves, this can be found in the following excerpt from the novel:

- 1) "Maybe you don't know that this area is a nature reserve area. We are here asking for your understanding, sis." ((Kancana, 2019): 8).
- 2) "Pepep said, we humans who enter a nature reserve area are like a pig entering a human settlement, or like a rodent in a wardrobe, because it is undeniable, our presence in that place could chase away prey like leopards. ...so that the tigers here lack food, or disturb the Javanese gibbons who are reluctant to mate." ((Kancana, 2019): 8).
- 3) "o that's why we were forced to enter the Ciharus Forest area because trail bikers and climbers often enter it" ((Kancana, 2019): 9).
- 4) "With that smile, I think he still believes that the area that should be natural will return to being sustainable without direct human activity" ((Kancana, 2019): 9).

5) “Dor! Dor! Dor! Instantly all were shocked. It's the sound of a gun” (Kancana, 2019).

From the above quotations, it can be understood that people have entered the nature reserve arbitrarily. They carry out actions that can harm the forest and also the ecosystem in the forest along with the existing flora and fauna. The attitude of reluctance and protecting flora and fauna has disappeared and been replaced by ego for personal gain.

#### 6. Loss of Animal Habitat

Forest destruction by irresponsible people causes animals to lose their habitat. This is certainly very detrimental to the various species of animals in the forest. The loss of habitat for animals can be observed from the following quotation:

- 1) “...I kept telling Pepup as if he didn't know anything about Kamojannng and Papandayan, until stopped and fell silent with the greatest feeling of anger towards the Ministry of Environment, the pride of the government. “If the function is changed, where will the animals go? Didn't the government research the matter first?” ((Kancana, 2019): 56).
- 2) “Not to mention Pangkalan Kerinci who fought for elephant habitat disturbed by paper mills in the Teso and Nilo river areas” ((Kancana, 2019): 151).

In order to illustrate the challenges faced in maintaining elephants owing to the presence of a paper industry, the author incorporates issues that are actually encountered in the real world into his tale. Elephant habitats are dwindling, and there are fewer food sources available. Additionally, stress on elephants is caused by human operations like transport, tree-cutting, and other tasks, which can even alter an elephant's behavior.

#### 7. Carbon Trading

Carbon trading is an activity that makes forests a trading commodity. The quote that shows this statement is

- 1) Yes, in Jambi it is the same as in Riau where carbon trading is rife, Lit. Never heard of? (Kancana,2019): 104)
- 2) Meanwhile, the planting of carbon-absorbing tree species in Barbak National Park actually reduces the natural forest which has decreased by 75% (Kancana, 2019): 105)

The idea behind carbon trading is profitable purchasing and selling. As noted in the novel „Kekal“, human avarice cannot be restrained in reality, which leads to the exploitation of carbon trading. The author's focus is on the issue of planting trees that absorb carbon, which has an effect on the decline of natural forests. There are also people who abuse their position of power and influence in order to misappropriate the proceeds from this carbon trading. The populations near the forests do not receive the promised benefits, and there is no doubt that this money leakage has an impact on the less than ideal preservation of carbon-absorbing trees.

## 4. CONCLUSION

There are connections between and reliance on other living organisms, including humans. Other living things and humans share a symbiotic relationship with nature as a backdrop for their existence. A sustainable environment is necessary for the existence of both humans and other living creatures (animals). In a similar vein, nature needs humanist touches to remain sustainable.

In this novel, the researcher examines the environmental criticism conveyed by the author in the novel. Broadly speaking, the writer finds seven destructive literary ecocritics. They are forest destruction, transfer of function of nature reserve, new land clearing, pollution, looting of nature reserves, loss of animal habitat, carbon trading. Through this novel, the author conveys messages about nature conservation. Natural conservation must always be maintained because sustainable forests are a source of life for humans and other living things. Vice versa, natural damage will be a source of disaster for human life and other living things.

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