

**LAWRENCE BUELL'S ECOCRITICAL ANALYSIS OF POST-
APOCALYPTIC ENVIRONMENTAL REPRESENTATIONS IN
CORMAC MCCARTHY'S *THE ROAD***

THESIS

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FACULTY OF HUMANITIES

UNIVERSITAS ISLAM NEGERI MAULANA MALIK IBRAHIM MALANG

2025

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THESIS

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2025

STATEMENT OF AUTHORSHIP

I state that the thesis entitled "**Lawrence Buell's Ecocritical Analysis of Post-apocalyptic Environmental Representations in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road***" is my original work. I do not include any materials previously written or published by another person, except those cited as references and written in the bibliography. Hereby, if there is any objection or claim, I am the only person who is responsible for that.

Malang, 24 June 2025

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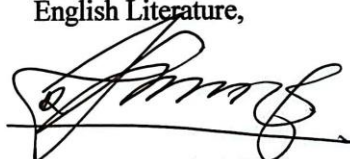
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MOTTO

"Allah akan meninggikan orang-orang yang beriman di antara kamu dan orang-orang yang diberi ilmu beberapa derajat." (QS. AL-Mujadalah: 11)

DEDICATION

There is no most beautiful sheet in this thesis report except the dedication sheet, here the researcher dedicates this thesis to kindest and dearest people, namely:

1. To my beloved parents, Ayah, Ibuk, and Mamak, thank you for all the great sacrifices you have dedicated to me, thank you for every sacrifice of energy, thought, strength, patience and prayers that you always pray for me.
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The researcher realizes that the preparation of this thesis will not be successful without the guidance and contribution of thoughts from various parties. On this occasion the researcher expresses his deepest gratitude to those who have helped complete this thesis. My gratitude goes to:

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Wassalamu'alaikum Warahmatullah Wabarakatuh

Malang, 24 June 2025



Musykinnah Indayati Abror

ABSTRACT

Abror, Musykinnah Indayati (2025) Lawrence Buell's Ecocritical Analysis of Post-apocalyptic Environmental Representations in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Undergraduate Thesis. Department of English Literature, Faculty of Humanities, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Advisor Dr. Ahmad Khozi M. A.

Key word: Eco-critic, Lawrence Buell, *The Road*, Post-apocalyptic, Environment.

This research is motivated by the increasing attention to environmental issues in literary studies, especially in the context of post-apocalyptic narratives that feature ecological destruction. This research uses the object of the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy which presents a picture of a post-apocalyptic world full of threats, resource scarcity, and moral crisis. The purpose of this research is to represent postapocalyptic environmental conditions using Lawrence Buell's ecocritical approach theory. This research uses the method of literary criticism with an ecocritical approach, and the main data source is the novel *The Road*. The data is analyzed based on Lawrence Buell's ecocritical theories that support deeper analysis, one of which uses Lawrence Buell's four main criteria, namely: Non-human Environment as Presence, Human Interest is not the Only Legitimate Interest, Environmental Understanding as a Process, and Accountability of Human Action. The results show that *The Road* represents total ecological destruction through the dead landscape of the world, the gray sky without sun, and the destruction of ecosystems. In addition, *The Road* depicts the natural conditions of the post-apocalyptic world such as the collapse of social structure, loss of morals, and cannibalistic behavior as a symbol of extreme ethical crisis. The conclusion of this study states that the novel *The Road* functions not only as a speculative fiction narrative but also as a powerful ecological critique. The researcher recommends further studies with an interdisciplinary understanding approach between ecocriticism and environmental philosophy to broaden the understanding of the narrative of the post-apocalyptic world.

ثحبلا صلختسم

أبرور، مسكنة إنداياتي (2025) تحليل النقد البيئي للورنس بويل لتمثيل البيئة ما بعد المروع في رواية "The Road" لكورماك مكارثي. بحث علمي. قسم الأدب الإنجليزي، كلية الآداب والعلوم الإنسانية، جامعة مولانا مالك إبراهيم الإسلامية بمالانج. تحت اشرف الدكتور أحمد غازي الماجستير.

الكلمات المفتاحية: النقد البيئي، لورانس بويل، *The Road*، ما بعد المروع، البيئة.

يأتي هذا البحث بسبب ارتفاع الاهتمامات بقضايا البيئة في الدراسات الأدبية، لا سيما في سياق الروايات ما بعد نهاية العالم التي تصور الدمار البيئي. يستخدم هذا البحث رواية "The Road" لكورماك مكارثي، التي وفرت صورة العالم ما بعد نهايته مليئة بالتهديدات ونقص الموارد والأزمة الأخلاقية. الهدف من هذه الدراسة هو تمثيل ظروف البيئة في العالم ما بعد نهايته باستخدام نظرية النهج النقدي البيئي لورنس بويل. يستخدم هذا البحث منهج النقد الأدبي مع النهج النقدي البيئي، ومصدرها الرئيسي هو رواية *The Road*. تم تحليل البيانات بناءً على نظريات النقد البيئي لورنس بويل التي تدعم على تعمق التحليل، ومن نظريته استخدام أربعة معايير رئيسية لبويل، وهي: البيئة غير البشرية كوجود، وأن اهتمام الإنسان ليس الاهتمام الصحيح الوحيد، وفهم البيئة كعملية، ومسائل الإنسان عن أفعاله. أظهرت نتائج البحث أن رواية *The Road* تمثل الدمار البيئي الكامل من خلال مشهد العالم الميت، وسما رمادية بلا شمس، وتدمير النظام البيئي. بالإضافة إلى ذلك، تصف رواية *The Road* الظروف الطبيعية للعالم ما بعد المروع كهدم النظام الاجتماعية، وفقدان الأخلاق، وسلوك أكل لحوم البشر كرمز أخلاق فاسدة متطرفة. خلاصة البحث يشير إلى أن رواية *The Road* لا تعمل فقط كسرد خيالي تخيلي، بل كنقد بيئي قوي. تشير الباحثة إلى بحث استمرري باستخدام نهج فهم متعدد التخصصات بين دراسات النقد البيئي وفلسفة البيئة لتوسيع فهم سرد العالم ما بعد نهايته.

ABSTRAK

Abror, Musykinnah Indayati (2025) Analisis Ekokritik Lawrence Buell Terhadap Representasi Lingkungan Pascaapokaliptik dalam Novel *The Road* Karya Cormac McCarthy. Undergraduate Thesis. Jurusan Sastra Inggris, Fakultas Adab dan Humaniora, Universitas Islam Negeri Maulana Malik Ibrahim Malang. Dosen Pembimbing Dr. Ahmad Ghazi, M. A.

Kata kunci: Ekokritik, Lawrence Buell, *The Road*, Pascaapokaliptik, Lingkungan.

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh meningkatnya perhatian terhadap isu-isu lingkungan dalam studi sastra, terutama dalam konteks narasi pascaapokaliptik yang menampilkan kehancuran ekologis. Penelitian ini menggunakan objek novel *The Road* karya Cormac McCarthy yang menyajikan gambaran dunia pascaapokaliptik yang penuh dengan ancaman, kelangkaan sumber daya, dan krisis moral. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk merepresentasikan kondisi lingkungan pascaapokaliptik dengan menggunakan teori pendekatan ekokritik Lawrence Buell. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode kritik sastra dengan pendekatan ekokritik, dan sumber data utamanya adalah novel *The Road*. Data dianalisis berdasarkan teori-teori ekokritik Lawrence Buell yang mendukung dalam analisis lebih dalam, salah satunya menggunakan empat kriteria utama Lawrence Buell, yaitu: Lingkungan Non-manusia sebagai Kehadiran, Kepentingan Manusia bukan Satu-satunya Kepentingan yang Sah, Pengertian Lingkungan sebagai Sebuah Proses, dan Akuntabilitas Tindakan Manusia. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa novel *The Road* merepresentasikan kehancuran ekologis secara total melalui lanskap dunia yang mati, langit kelabu tanpa matahari, dan hancurnya ekosistem. Selain itu, novel *The Road* menggambarkan kondisi alam dari dunia pascaapokaliptik seperti runtuhnya struktur sosial, hilangnya moral, serta perilaku kanibalisme sebagai simbol krisis etika yang ekstrem. Simpulan dari penelitian ini menyatakan bahwa novel *The Road* tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai narasi fiksi spekulatif, tetapi juga sebagai kritik ekologis yang kuat. Peneliti merekomendasikan kajian lanjutan dengan pendekatan pemahaman interdisipliner antara kajian ekokritik dan filsafat lingkungan untuk memperluas pemahaman terhadap narasi dunia pascaapokaliptik.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This section discusses the background of the study includes previous study, problem of the study, significance of the study, limitation of the study, and definitions of the key terms.

A. Background of the Study

Nature is an integral part of human life. Nature continues to evolve and change over time, creating a complex ecosystem with a relationship between humans and nature. The relationship between humans and nature is a phenomenon that has been going on since the beginning of civilization (Moghadam, Singh, & Yahya, 2015). The dependence between humans and nature is not only important in life, but also to maintain the balance of human needs. The global environmental crisis is an urgent problem faced by humans. According to data from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2023) edition of *Climate Change 2021 - The Physical Science Basis: Working Group I Contribution to the Sixth Assessment Report of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change*, currently issues such as climate change, pollution, and exploitation of natural resources have reached a critical point. Climate change and rising global temperatures are extreme weather events that pose a real threat to many regions of the world. Concerns over extreme environmental impacts are growing, especially with the potential for natural disasters such as floods, droughts, storms, and wildfires to drastically displace human life.

The World Health Organization (2021) in *World Health Statistics 2021: Monitoring health for the SDGs, sustainable development goals*, states that the environmental crisis also has an impact on human health, increasing the risk of disease and other health problems. In dealing with this environmental crisis, various efforts have been made to increase human awareness in maintaining the balance of nature, but the fact is that there are still many humans who are less sensitive to phenomena in the surrounding environment (Amin, et al., 2022). Therefore, representations of the damaged environment are increasingly appearing in various media, including literature or environmental literature as a form of social criticism and call to action. Literary work is a reflection of real life (Ghozi A. , 2008). Novels, dramas, short stories, or poems can make a place to lead to a broader and deeper climate awareness (Schneider & Mayerson, 2018).

Literature has an active role in portraying an environment that reflects current environmental issues. Literature is not only a platform for conveying information about the environmental crisis, but also one of the important bridges of publication and education as a source of inspiration for ecological understanding and action (Andini & Sudarto, 2024). Eco-critical studies emerged as an interdisciplinary field that examining how the environment is represented in literary works that reveal ecological values and assumptions underlying the relationship between humans and nature (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). The development of eco-critical studies has experienced a rapid increase in analyzing nature that is more critical of depictions of nature that are damaged and exploited. Lawrence Buell, as one of the main figures in eco-critical studies, made an important contribution to

understanding changes in environmental representation in literature. In his book entitled “*The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*” (1995), Buell highlights how representations of nature have shifted from narratives of natural harmony to depictions of a damaged and threatened environment due to human activities. Literary works have the power to provide environmental awareness and provide a view of the natural world and ecological disasters (Buell, 2005). Literary works through eco-critical studies become an important space to highlight environmental issues, raise human awareness, and encourage humans to have a sustainable relationship between humans and nature.

One literary work that depicts a degraded environment is the novel *The Road* (2006) by Cormac McCarthy. *The Road* is an apocalyptic genre novel that depicts the author's imagination of a post-apocalyptic landscape. Cormac McCarthy is an American novelist who has written many novels covering Western, southern gothic, and post-apocalyptic genres. *The Road* is a 2006 novel printed by Alfred A. Knopf publishing house. The novel won the national best seller in the same year. The novel depicts the characters of a father and an only child who travel to post-apocalyptic South America. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* depicts a post-apocalyptic world, in which the novel describes the absence of fertile nature, the extinction of flora and fauna, and the collapse of civilization due to disasters that are not explicitly explained. The novel offers a unique perspective on the relationship between humans and the environment under extreme conditions.

Lawrence Buell's eco-critical theory can analyze the natural background in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, a post-apocalyptic story genre. Through his book entitled "*The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture*" (1995), Buell distinguishes between first-generation eco-critics who tend to focus on harmonious representations of nature and second-generation eco-critics who depict damaged and destroyed nature. This concept is crucial in understanding the novel *The Road*, which features a gray, polluted, and uninhabitable landscape. In Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*, the representation of the destroyed environment is not just a setting, but also a symbol of the consequences of irresponsible human actions towards nature. Buell's theory helps in analyzing more deeply the novel *The Road* that reflects and criticizes the existing environmental conditions. Buell in *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001) emphasizes the representation of the destroyed environment, the changing relationship between humans and nature, and the issue of environmental justice. Through the representation of a destroyed or post-apocalyptic environment, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* invites readers to reflect on the consequences and actions that will affect nature. In addition, Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* can also serve as a platform to call for environmental justice issues and encourage collective action to improve and protect nature.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher refers to several previous studies that play an important role in analyzing and deepening the understanding of Lawrence Buell's eco-critical theory and Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. The existence of several previous research studies to provide views and differences in

the research to be carried out, from which researcher tries to find novelty in research being conducted. Previous studies also provide additional insights that support this study theoretically and contextually. *First*, research conducted by Asharuddin (2024) used Buell's eco-critical theory to analyze a novel entitled *Where the Crawdads Sing*, the purpose of the study was to reveal the forms of a child's concern as a story character in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing*. The study analyzed the factors behind the sensitivity of the characters to nature and understood the impact of sensitivity to nature for individuals, families, and communities in the novel *Where the Crawdads Sing* based on Lawrence Buell's eco-critical perspective. *Second*, research by Eukora & Okolo (2022) who used Buell's eco-critical theory to analyze plant life in Joe Ushie's Poetry. In the analysis, the researcher used several poems by Joe Ushie to represent environmental elements that give rise to love, creativity, help, or hope in the relationship between humans and the environment. The study also explains that Ushie the poet is not only an ecologically conscious person, but also a poet with an extraordinary word mastery of flora and plant imagery in his poetry.

Third, research conducted by Jannah & Efendi (2024), in the study used the object of study of the poetry anthology *Negeri di Atas Kertas* which in the study aims to describe the relationship between nature and humans, the forms of ecocriticism in these poems using Buell's eco-critical theory. The research results obtained in the journal article show three poems that reflect the relationship between humans and nature, namely the poems *Tukang Sapu Jalan*, *Bunda Kami Kartini*, and *Ayah*. While the other four poems contain eco-critical elements,

namely the poems *Pagi Probolinggo*, *Anal Pulau*, *Bumi Pertiwi Bersabda*, and *Negeriku Kembali Berduka*. *Fourth*, research conducted by Feifei Wang (2021), in this study the researcher used the object of a novel entitled *The Horse Whisperer* to analyze environmental justice and emphasize an interdisciplinary approach. The researcher focused on analyzing the characters in the story who experience mental suffering and seek healing through their relationship with horses. Not only that, the researcher also highlights ecological awareness and social responsibility under the conditions of modern industrial society.

This section of previous studies focuses on the study of the object to be researched, which is the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. *Fifth*, this study examines how the novel *The Road* is considered a dystopia or a picture of a bad world, as in the research (Adhikary, 2024; Sharma M., 2019). Adhikary's (2024) research focuses on the adverse effects of advanced science and technology that ultimately make the world of *The Road* a dystopia. Mridu Sharma (2019) conducted research that focused on analysis to describe the world in the novel *The Road* as a dystopia. *Sixth*, this research was conducted by (Sharma P., 2024; Bansode, 2023; Yawale, 2023) examined the novel *The Road* in terms of ecology. Prakash Sharma (2024) analyzed the events and atmosphere that give rise to hope depicted by the environment in the novel *The Road*. The next research explores the eco-critical approach in *The Road*, which focuses on understanding the concept of ecocriticism in *The Road* (Bansode, 2023). The last research explores the relationship between humans and nature depicted in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* (Yawale, 2023).

Seventh, this previous study examines the novel *The Road* in terms of psychology which has been researched by (Arunakumari, 2023; Jamal & Jaf, 2023). Arunakumari's (2023) research focuses on examining the psychology experienced by the main character on cognitive processes, emotional conditions, and behavior patterns. While the research by Jamal and Jaf (2023) uses Sigmund Freud's theoretical analysis, this research aims to analyze the causes of human mental damage associated with the novel *The Road*. *Eighth*, research conducted by Pratama and Tarihoran (2023) discusses the functional schemes that work in the story of *The Road*. *Nineth*, Pour and Gharedaqi's (2023) research describes the postmodern found in the novel *The Road* and explores the causes of its emergence in the post-apocalyptic atmosphere. *Ten*, research conducted by Neupane (2022) highlights human nature and morals with post-apocalyptic literature using the lens of Literary Darwinism. *Lastly*, research by Tazbir (2016) analyzes the idea of communality in the relationship between the two main characters in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*.

This research analyzes Lawrence Buell's Eco-critical theory which focuses on the background of the story in a post-apocalyptic world. From previous researchers, it can be concluded that there are studies that use the theory and object of the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. Previous research conducted by Prakash Sharma (2024) examined the same object and theory, but the main focus taken was very different. In the previous study, the focus was on the environment that depicts hope and despair. Meanwhile, this research focuses on representing post-apocalyptic environmental conditions based on Lawrence Buell's eco-critical theory perspective. Thus, this research is appropriate because the researcher

analyzes the novel *The Road* which has a different focus from previous studies. In addition to providing new insights, this study also aims to help readers and researchers how the novel *The Road* represents the destroyed environment. In addition, the depiction of the background story of *The Road* as a representation of a post-apocalyptic world can explore the understanding of the influence of human and nature relationships through literary works for readers and other researchers.

B. Problem of the Study

Based on the above background, this research aims to answer the problem raised by the researcher:

How does Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* represent post-apocalyptic environmental conditions based on Lawrence Buell's eco-critical perspective?

C. Significance of the Study

This research can contribute to the depiction of a destroyed world or a damaged post-apocalyptic environment in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. In addition, this research is expected to be a forum for the community to maintain their concern for the surrounding environment and to always protect and care for nature. Theoretically and practically in terms, this research is expected to benefit other readers. The results of this research contribute to the advancement of eco-critical studies. In addition, readers can also understand how the novel *The Road* represents a destroyed environment and a post-apocalyptic world. The practical purpose of this research is to be a reference in understanding the subjects of ecocriticism according to Lawrence Buell's representation as a medium for increasing knowledge. The

findings of this research are beneficial for readers who want to understand more about eco-critical studies.

D. Scope and Limitation of the Study

This research focuses on analyzing the depiction of the damaged environment according to Lawrence Buell's eco-critical perspective in the novel *The Road*. In this case, the research is limited to the literary work *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy which highlights the environment. In this research, the researcher seeks to describe the destroyed environment in the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy which is set in a post-apocalyptic world. The researcher analyzes how the representation of the environment in the novel *The Road* is in line with the thoughts of Lawrence Buell's eco-critical theory.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To enhance understanding, the researcher provides the following definitions of key terms:

1. Ecocriticism

An approach in literary studies that emphasizes the relationship between literary texts and the natural environment, to understand how literature represents and influences ecological awareness. Buell argues that environmental texts can shape readers' ecological consciousness and have an impact on understanding humanity's relationship with nature (Buell L. , 1995).

2. Environment

A place where humans can find true meaning in life. Humans who live closer to nature can achieve simplicity and spiritual enlightenment. (Thoreau, 1899).

3. Apocalyptic

A metaphor that highlights the massive destruction of the environment and describes the ecological crisis on a scale that threatens human civilization or even life on Earth. In the context of ecocriticism, apocalyptic discourse is often used to highlight the urgency of environmental crises, such as climate change, pollution, and ecosystem destruction, in a dramatic and often dystopic way (Garrard, 2004).

4. Post-apocalyptic Fiction

Post-apocalyptic fiction texts do not just show an aftermath; they seek to represent the end as a moment of revelation about the world we live in (Berger, 1999).

5. Post-apocalyptic Environment

Environmental apocalypticism in literature imagines the consequences of unsustainable exploitation of the earth (Buell L. , 1995).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This chapter explains the theoretical basis of this research. This research starts with Ecocritical Approach, Lawrence Buell's Ecocriticism Theory, Post-apocalyptic Fiction, and Post-apocalyptic Environment.

A. Ecocritical Approach

Ecocriticism is an approach in literary studies that highlights the relationship between literary texts and the environment (Glottfelty, 1996). The eco-critical approach continues to grow along with the increasing awareness of the ecological crisis faced by humans and the world. The existence of a beautiful environment is needed by humans to support a harmonious and calm life. Meanwhile, there are still many environmental conditions that are less well maintained, causing significant effects on humans and their surroundings. Now, many media highlight the relationship between humans and nature that must be maintained, one of which is literature. Literary works are one of the containers that can accommodate how the real depiction of nature. Ecocriticism seeks to explore and describe how nature in literature can reflect, criticize, or shape human attitudes toward the environment (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). This study traces the history of ecocriticism to its development in contemporary literary studies.

The term “*Ecocriticism*” only emerged at the end of the 20th century, within the thinking about the relationship between humans and nature that had long existed

in philosophy and literature. In the Romantic tradition in America, especially in the works of Henry David Thoreau, it had a big influence on the idea of nature as an important element in human life (Buell L. , 1995). In Lawrence Buell's *The Environmental Imagination*, Buell emphasizes that eco-critical thinking can be traced through Thoreau's, especially in *Walden, or Life in the Woods* (1899), which reflects on human relationships with nature through personal experiences in the forest. In its development, the *Nature Writing* movement in America became an early foundation for the development of ecocriticism.

The research process using an eco-critical approach can be classified into several stages according to several experts. In the book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmark in Literary Ecology* (1996), Glotfelty explains the research process using an eco-critical approach by reading literary texts with a focus on how nature is depicted. Additionally, it explores how humans interact with the environment within the story. Furthermore, literary texts must also highlight engagement with environmental issues. Meanwhile, Greg Garrard in his book titled *Ecocriticism* (2004) explains that the initial approach to ecocriticism tends to be descriptive and ethical in nature. The approach described by Garrard begins with identifying representations of nature and the environment, followed by examining the moral or ecological values contained in literary texts. Greg Garrard also concludes several basic categories for nature in literary texts, such as: Pastoral, Wilderness, Apocalypse, Dwelling, Animals, and others. Lawrence Buell, in his book titled *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), provides criteria for texts that are environmentally oriented, which can be used even at the initial stage of the

approach, such as using narrative indicators that show nature is present not merely as a backdrop to the story. The literary text must also demonstrate concern for the environment and depict the ecological impacts of human actions. Although these approaches later developed into theories, this foundation can be used in an exploratory initial approach.

From the above eco-critics, the following conclusions can be drawn regarding the research methodology using the eco-critical approach: *First*, text selection. Readers must begin by looking at literary works that contain elements of nature or the environment. *Second*, contextual reading. Read the text in the literary work with sensitivity to environmental issues and the relationship between humans and nature, rather than reading the text from only one perspective. *Third*, identification of representations of nature. Readers must pay attention to how nature is depicted in literary works, whether as a setting, an active agent, a metaphor, or a symbol. *Fourth*, ethical and ideological analysis. Readers must not only read and understand, but also review the ethical or ideological values related to the environment in the text. *Finally*, connect with ecological reality. Findings regarding the state of nature in literary texts must be connected to real-world environmental issues. This is done so that readers can better understand that the depiction of nature in the story should also be seen as a reflection of the real-world environment. These steps can help readers analyze how research works using an eco-critical approach.

At the end of the 20th century, ecocriticism began to develop as an academic discipline with the publication of *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology* edited by Cheryll Glotfelty and Harold Fromm in (1996). In the book,

Glotfelty defined ecocriticism as the study of the relationship between literature and the environment (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). The concept marks a shift from a literary approach that focuses on cultural and social studies to a broader understanding of human relationships with nature. Early eco-critical studies tended to analyze nature and pastoral literature, such as in Wordsworth's works. However, in the early 21st century, the scope of eco-critical studies began to expand to include contemporary environmental issues, including climate change, ecological destruction, and the impact of capitalism on nature (Heise, 2008).

B. Lawrence Buell's Ecocriticism Theory

Eco-critical theory is an interdisciplinary study in literary studies that examines the relationship between humans and the environment as it exists in literary texts. Ecocriticism not only examines how nature is depicted in literature but also how literary texts can influence readers' ecological awareness and debate environmental issues from an ethical and aesthetic perspective (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). One of the most famous eco-critical writers is Cheryll Glotfelty. One of the earliest and most influential definitions of ecocriticism is in her book *The Ecocriticism Reader: Landmarks in Literary Ecology*, which states that ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment (Glotfelty & Fromm, 1996). This definition marks a shift in literary studies that began to include environmental elements as an important factor in the analysis of literature.

In its development, eco-critical studies were pioneered by several important figures, such as Cheryll Glotfelty, Lawrence Buell, Greg Garrard, and others. The

development of eco-critical research methods makes it possible to analyze various types of texts and media, including literature. This makes ecocriticism develop and become a theory that can be used to analyze various objects of study. Many academic journals publish research on ecocriticism. This academic recognition also solidified ecocriticism as a theory. Lawrence Buell also developed key concepts such as environmental imagination that provide a theoretical basis for eco-critical research (Buell L. , 1995).

Lawrence Buell is one of the figures in the field of ecocriticism who has made great contributions as many environmental issues are considered. In his various works, Buell emphasizes the importance of the relationship between literary texts and ecology and how literature can be influential in raising environmental awareness. In *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* (1995) and *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001), Buell develops a theory that describes the role of literature in shaping human understanding of nature and the ecological impact of human actions. Lawrence Buell argues that ecocriticism involves studying how nature and the environment play a role in literary texts. Buell also proposed four main criteria that determine whether a work can be considered environmental literature, including the importance of the non-human environment in the text and how the text portrays human responsibility towards the environment (Buell L. , 1995).

Lawrence Buell divided the concept of eco-critical studies into several approaches that developed over time. In Buell's works, he highlights how literature can contribute to environmental awareness and how literary texts represent the

relationship between humans and nature. Here are some divisions of the concept of ecocriticism developed by Buell.

First and Second Wave Ecocriticism	First Wave: Focus on the aesthetics of nature.		Second Wave: Relates environmental issues to gender, media, etc.	
Four Criteria for Environmental Literature	Non-Human Environment as Presence.	Human Interest is not the Only Legitimate Interest.	Understanding the Environment as a Process.	Accountability of Human Actions.
Representation of Environmental Crisis and Literature				

1. First and Second Wave Ecocriticism

Buell (1995) in *The Environmental Imagination: Thoreau, Nature Writing, and the Formation of American Culture* distinguishes ecocriticism into two main waves, namely the first wave and the second wave. *The first wave* focuses on the study of nature literature and nature writing by focusing on the relationship between humans and the environment in literary texts. *The second wave* includes the study of broader ecological issues, such as environmental crisis, post-colonialism, and ecological justice. Buell further develops this concept in his book "*Writing for an Endangered World*" (2001), where he highlights how literature can be a tool for reflection on ecological impacts in society.

2. Four Criteria for Environmental Literature

In *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), Buell proposes four criteria that define a text as environmental literature:

a. Non-Human Environment as Presence

The non-human environment plays a significant role in the text, not just a background to the story. The non-human environment plays an important role in the development of the story and is one of the things that cannot be ignored. The depiction of the environment can be key in the development of the characters in the story.

b. Human Interest is not the Only Legitimate Interest

The non-human perspective in the narrative becomes as important as the human perspective. In the depiction of the story, characters are as important as the depiction of the environment. Characters are key in determining the background of a story.

c. Understanding the Environment as a Process

The environment is depicted as a dynamic entity that is constantly changing and evolving. Just like humans, the environment also continues to evolve along with the changes around it. The changes that occur show that the environment is dynamic and adjusts to the changes around it.

d. Accountability of Human Actions

The text invites readers to consider the ecological consequences of human actions. Not only self-awareness, humans also need a reminder to realize the relationship between humans and the environment, one of which is a literary text.

This concept distinguishes Buell's ecocriticism from earlier approaches that tended to focus on romanticizing nature and idealizing the environment. Buell

encourages a more in-depth study of how literary texts can be a change in shaping environmental awareness.

3. Representation of Environmental Crisis and Literature

Lawrence Buell in his book entitled *Writing for an Endangered World* (2001) expands his study by looking at how literature can represent ecological destruction and its impact on humans. Buell highlights literary texts that depict ecological disasters and environmental degradation as part of the human experience. Buell also argues that literature does not only speak of an idealized nature but also of the destruction and pollution that are part of the modern experience.

Apart from the third concepts above, Buell also examines how American literature, especially Nature Writing, contributes to shaping people's understanding of the environment. Buell examines the works of Henry David Thoreau, Ralph Waldo Emerson, and John Muir as examples of texts that not only show beautiful nature but also offer critical reflections on the way humans interact with the environment (Buell L. , 1995). This study is relevant in understanding how environmental narratives have evolved from narratives of natural beauty to criticise of the ecological impacts of modernization. Not only about natural beauty, ecocriticism, and post-apocalyptic literature, Buell also expands the scope of ecocriticism by highlighting how literary texts depict the ecological crisis that threatens human civilization.

C. Post-apocalyptic Fiction

Post-apocalyptic speculates about a new future after the end of the world. Post-apocalyptic narratives are fictions about the reshaping of the world after the end of the world (Kaup, 2021). Post-apocalyptic fiction is a subgenre of speculative fiction or a literary subgenre that depicts a world or society in the aftermath of massive destruction, the world being portrayed as severely damaged ecologically, socially, or technologically. Post-apocalyptic fiction imagines life after a global catastrophe that has destroyed or transformed civilization, imagining a dystopian disaster rather than a utopian revelation (Cristofaro, 2021). The genre's main focus is on human life after the apocalypse, including how they survive, rebuild civilization, or deal with the destruction of values and social order. This genre can be one of the ecological views that reflect the fears and anxieties of modern times, while offering a space for social criticism and philosophical reflection.

The apocalypse may be climactic, such as uncontrollable climate change, nuclear disaster, plague, or virus. Post-apocalyptic stories often take place in a non-technological future world, or a world where only elements of society and technology remain. According to James Berger in *After the End: Representations of Post-Apocalypse* (1999), post-apocalyptic fiction not only depicts the world after the destruction, but also presents “revelations” that reveal the hidden reality of the world before the destruction occurred. Therefore, this genre becomes one of the spaces to explore the relationship between humans and nature in an extreme context, where the boundaries between culture and nature are blurred and ecological order takes center stage. In short, post-apocalyptic fiction is a genre that explores

the limits of human survival and how humans can rebuild or continue to survive amidst destruction.

D. Post-apocalyptic Environment

The environment created in the post-apocalyptic world shows a depiction of an environment that has been devastated. Post-apocalyptic environment refers to the representation of the world after massive ecological destruction, whether in reality or fiction. In this context, the word “post-apocalyptic” is not only the world after a war or technological disaster, but also after a global environmental collapse such as extreme climate change, mass extinction, the loss of social structure, resource scarcity and survival, or the collapse of ecological systems that sustain human life and other living things. According to Frederick Buell in his book *From Apocalypse to Way of Life* (2003), ecological postapocalyptic conditions are not something to come, but are already part of the reality of modern human life, such as climate change, water crisis, and soil degradation. This makes the postapocalyptic environmental narrative a very real place in shaping awareness of the relationship between humans and nature in everyday life.

Greg Garrard in his book entitled *Ecocriticism* - 2nd edition (2012), explains that the post-apocalyptic scenario in environmental literature serves as a critical warning of the long-term consequences of environmental degradation, where nature is no longer a reliable place to live. In a post-apocalyptic environment, the world is on the brink of chaos and uncertainty. The absence of established laws and rules makes the post-apocalyptic environment a place for competition in survival. In line with Lawrence Buell's opinion in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995),

emphasizing that ecological awareness in post-apocalyptic literature can be seen as a form of criticism of industrial civilization and human lifestyles that fail to maintain harmonious relations between humans and nature. The idea of a post-apocalyptic environment shows an impending endpoint or “end of the world” that occurs in the form of an ecological crisis that has taken place due to environmental exploitation (Alt, 2023).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHOD

This chapter discusses the research design, data source, data collection, and data analysis. The explanation provided aim to describe the objectives and forms in a deeper analysis.

A. Research Design

This research belongs to the category of literary criticism to describe the damaged environment according to the perception of Lawrence Buell's eco-critical study in the novel *The Road*. The data gathering methods used in this research include literary study and literary review. Literary study can help researcher in analyzing literary works. Meanwhile, literary review refers to scientific articles, essays, and other electronic media to support the research findings. This research analyzes a literary work entitled *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy using Lawrence Buell's eco-critical theory. In the theory developed by Buell, eco-critical studies is an approach in literary studies that emphasizes the relationship between literary texts and the natural environment, to understand how literature represents and influences ecological awareness.

B. Data Source

The primary data source used in this research is the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. *The Road* was first published in 2006 by Alfred A. Knopf. *The*

Road novel is 287 pages thick. Meanwhile, secondary data is taken from previous articles that follow the object of this research. Secondary data was used as reference material in helping this research. All data in this research is taken through direct quotations from the novel *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy. The data taken in this novel is presented in the form of sentences, phrases, or words.

C. Data Collection

In this research, the researcher has several stages in collecting data. *First*, the researcher reads the whole story of *The Road* by Cormac McCarthy using the close-reading method, which is reading the novel to understand the story text deeply and carefully. *Second*, the researcher makes notes and take some important sentences as analysis data by marking, underlining, and making notes on each data. *Finally*, the collected data was categorized based on the depiction of nature in the post-apocalyptic world in the novel *The Road*.

D. Data Analysis

Data analysis is an important part that cannot be omitted, this part is the core of what is found or analyzed in depth. In this section, the researcher has several steps in analyzing to answer the problems in this research. *First*, the researcher divides several categories in collecting data and identify data that are relevant to the questions in the study. *Second*, the researcher classifies the data following the eco-critical theory of Lawrence Buell. *Finally*, the researcher analyzes or explains in greater depth and answers the problem in the research. That way, the analysis using eco-critical approach in the depiction of the destroyed world in the novel Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* is easier to explain.

CHAPTER IV

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

In this chapter, the researcher presents the findings and data analysis of the representation of the post-apocalyptic damaged environment in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. This research is based on the eco-critical perspective proposed by Lawrence Buell, which includes three concepts: First and Second Wave Ecocriticism, Four Criteria of Environmental Literature, and Representation of Environmental Crisis and Literature.

A. Representation of Post-Apocalyptic Environmental Conditions in the Novel *The Road* Based on Lawrence Buell's Ecocritical Perspective

In this research, the researcher classified and analyzed the sentences in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road* into several sub-chapters that describe post-apocalyptic environmental conditions.

1. Environmental Collapse

In Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*, the environment is depicted as suffering from severe ecological damage. The events leading to the disaster are not explicitly described in the novel, but the effects of the severe damage to nature indicate that the situation is not improving. This refers to the extreme conditions in the novel *The Road*, where the ecological system has been destroyed, rendering it unable to sustain human life or other species. Ecological destruction encompasses the collapse of all elements of the natural environment, such as the destruction of

the atmosphere, the disruption of water and air cycles, the extinction of flora and fauna, and so on.

According to Buell, literary representations can be used to depict ecological damage caused by uncontrolled human activities. Additionally, most people are unaware of their connection to nature and only act when damage has become extreme. In environmental philosophy, ecological damage is often seen as evidence of the failure of human systems, and it always views humans as the center. Total ecological damage is not merely ordinary environmental destruction but the collapse of life itself. This serves as a critique of exploitative modernism and a call for awareness of the relationship between humans and nature. Similarly, the following data illustrates the onset of ecological destruction in Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*.

The clocks stopped at 1:17. A long shear of light and then a series of low concussions.
(p.50)

This sentence is a very important part of the narrative, as it is the first indication of the major disaster that causes total ecological destruction in the novel. The sentence describes “*The clocks stopped*,” which depicts the end of civilization, social systems, and a state of humanity that is no longer the same as before. The sentence describes the cessation of human activity and the beginning of severe destruction of nature. The phrase “*shear of light*” describes a massive explosion, likely resembling a nuclear blast or something similar. Furthermore, the phrase “*low concussions*” refers to low-level explosions, suggesting a tiered destruction, such as shockwaves from a massive explosion. Textually, the sentence indicates the

initial moment of destruction that transforms the world into an uninhabitable one, where the atmosphere changes, ecosystems die, and human civilization vanishes.

In Lawrence Buell's book titled *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), he mentions four main criteria for literary works that can be associated with environmental imagination. The sentence can be analyzed through two of Buell's main criteria. The first criterion is the Environment as an Active Presence. The sentence shows the active and profound destruction of nature. Nature is no longer merely a backdrop but is directly involved as a victim and indicator of human destruction. Nature, which is always depicted as stable, is now shattered by flashes of light and explosions, making the environment not just a backdrop, but an entity that suffers. The second criterion is Ecological Destruction as a Result of Human Actions. This sentence also implies that the disaster is the result of human actions, where the depiction of a massive explosion causes the collapse of time and order. Though not explicitly stated, the imagery of light and explosions is highly characteristic of narratives of disasters caused by human actions, such as nuclear war. Thus, humanity's destructive actions toward one another and the Earth are the cause of total ecological destruction. This depiction is crucial in showcasing a post-apocalyptic world that is destructive and brings ruin not only to nature but to humanity itself.

The country was looted, ransacked, ravaged. Rifled of every crumb. (p.131)

This sentence is one of the most explicit narrative statements about total ecological destruction and the collapse of the world's life support systems as depicted in the novel *The Road*. This sentence not only shows the physical

destruction of geographical areas, but also contains deep ecological and moral meanings. The sentence describes a ‘country’ that has been completely plundered by the surviving humans. Harsh terms like “*looted, ransacked, ravaged*” indicate massive exploitation of nature. Cormac McCarthy uses harsh, forceful language to depict nature as a suffering subject, not just an active object. The phrase “*Rifled of every crumb*” means that no resources remain, everything has been completely wiped out, from food and energy to hope. This sentence reflects the peak of ecological destruction, when nature can no longer provide anything to humans.

The sentence shows that the environment is not just a backdrop, but an entity that has been brutally dominated by human actions. Verbs like “*looted, ransacked, ravaged*” indicate total exploitation of nature, leading to extreme ecological damage. The environment becomes the victim of total ecological plunder. This aligns with Buell's principle that true ecocritical narratives involve the environment as an active actor, not merely as decoration. Buell also emphasizes that strong ecocritical works reveal human involvement in environmental destruction. This sentence clearly shows that humans themselves have destroyed the Earth. There are no natural disasters or cosmic phenomena that are the main causes, but rather human actions that “*plunder*” and “*ravage*” nature relentlessly. This reflects the anthropogenic nature of environmental destruction. This concept is important in ecocriticism because it rejects the narrative that the destruction of nature is ‘fate’ or ‘accident’, but rather a consequence of exploitative human value systems, including capitalism, modernism, and anthropocentrism. Human actions have transformed humans into ecological predators, not guardians of nature.

The blackness he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable. A blackness to hurt your ears with listening. Often he had to get up. No sound but the wind in the bare and blackened trees. (p.12)

This sentence is an atmospheric description depicting the extreme post-apocalyptic environmental conditions. It is highly representative of ecological destruction. The sentence evokes an image of ecological devastation that touches on the visual, sensory, and emotional aspects of humans directly exposed to the destruction of the world. The quote “*The blackness he woke to on those nights was sightless and impenetrable*” depicts a world in total darkness, deprived of natural light, not only in terms of vision but also existentially. Additionally, the quote “*to hurt your ears with listening*” highlights the piercing silence, creating sensory suffering due to the loss of natural life. The absence of other living creatures' sounds highlights the severity of the world's condition due to the catastrophic disaster. The quote “*The wind in the bare and blackened trees*” depicts a severely damaged environment where trees are no longer alive but charred and hollow. This is a narrative of ecological emptiness, not merely destruction but the loss of all functions, sounds, and aesthetic aspects of nature.

In this quote, the environment depicted in the novel *The Road* is not merely a dark setting but emerges as a space that resists and becomes a manifestation of suffering. The phrase “*A blackness to hurt your ears with listening*” suggests that the destruction of nature has created an existential experience that is physically and psychologically painful. This signifies that nature has become a suffering subject, not merely a narrative object. The deafening silence and the trees depicted as “*blackened*” show that the environment has lost its ability to sustain life and beauty,

making it a symbol of destruction. Although McCarthy does not explicitly mention the cause of the destruction, the narrative structure and symbols such as the black sky, charred trees, and the absence of natural sounds point to the consequences of a man-made disaster, most likely a nuclear war or global conflagration. The environment is depicted as a post-apocalyptic space that cannot be restored. In ecocriticism, this reflects modern humanity's inability to sustain the earth, leaving nature barren and silent. The loss of natural sounds is not only an ecological marker but also a sign of the loss of the ethical connection between humans and the environment.

The land was gullied and eroded and barren. The bones of dead creatures sprawled in the washes. Middens of anonymous trash. Farmhouses in the fields scoured of their paint and the clapboards spooned and sprung from the wallstuds. All of it shadowless and without feature. The road descended through a jungle of dead kudzu. (p. 191)

The sentence describes a highly detailed of post-apocalyptic environment, reflecting total ecological destruction in physical and biological. It implies widespread damage, in which nature is depicted as a landscape that has lost its ecological structure and fertility, signifying extreme soil degradation. The quote “*Middens of anonymous trash*” shows the chaos of human civilization, where the traces of destruction not only harm nature but also ecological ethics. This also indicates the collapse of human culture in the face of environmental destruction. Additionally, the description of the “*jungle of dead kudzu*,” where the invasive plant (kudzu) has died, signifies a point of no return in natural regeneration. Nature no longer has any hope of returning to its former state.

In this sentence, the environment is not merely a backdrop but the central narrative depicting ecological collapse. Nature has lost its vitality and appears as a

dissected corpse: eroded, lifeless, and filled with remnants of destruction. The phrase “*shadowless and without feature*” symbolizes the loss of the ecological soul of the world, as if the world has lost its reflection, no longer having orientation or a future. Lawrence Buell encourages literary works to depict the moral and ethical relationship between humans and the environment, including the consequences when that relationship is broken. The description in the quoted sentence, which shows destroyed houses, dead fields, and human waste left behind, reveals the moral darkness of humanity in caring for nature. This destruction is not merely natural but a consequence of the failure of human cultural systems. The phrase “*middens of anonymous trash*” symbolizes a civilization that leaves destructive traces and bears no responsibility toward the environment.

Additionally, Buell emphasizes the importance of linking ecological destruction to the crisis of human civilization, not merely as a natural phenomenon. In the sentence, the destruction of ecosystems cannot be separated from the collapse of social structures. A damaged environment reflects the total collapse of the life system, where humans and nature no longer interact healthily. The death of kudzu, a plant known to be invasive and difficult to kill, is a powerful symbol that even wild nature cannot survive total ecological destruction.

2. The Loss of Social Structure and Civilization

The post-apocalyptic world is not only depicted as a completely dead natural environment, but also as the loss of human civilization and social systems. This is because humans are powerless in the face of a destroyed ecosystem. The loss of social structure and civilization is one of the fundamental critiques in post-

apocalyptic literary studies. In the context of criticism and humanity, the collapse of civilization not only represents the end of social order but also shows the fundamental failure of humans in building sustainable relationships with nature and each other. In the novel *The Road*, society is depicted as having collapsed completely, with no country, law, education, food system, or communication network. All that remains are small groups of people struggling to survive in chaos.

Criticism of social collapse in the novel *The Road* can be linked to modern humanity's inability to maintain a balance between progress and sustainability. When humanity fails to respect ecological limits, the consequences are not only environmental destruction but also the collapse of social structures built on a healthy ecosystem. In a world without data, there is no room for morality, law, or social values; only defense against hunger and threats. The following data from the novel *The Road* illustrates the loss of social structure and civilization.

Charred and limbless trunks of trees stretching away on every side. Ash moving over the road and the sagging hands of blind wire strung from the blackened lightpoles whining thinly in the wind. A burned house in a clearing and beyond that a reach of meadow-lands stark and gray and a raw red mudbank where a roadworks lay abandoned. Farther along were billboards advertising motels. Everything as it once had been save faded and weathered. (p.5-6)

The sentence describes the systemic destruction of social structures and civilization, depicting the traces of a civilization that has been destroyed, where symbols of technology, domestic spaces, and modern capitalism have lost their function and remain only as decaying artifacts of the old world. The phrases “*blind wire*” and “*blackened lightpoles*” indicate the collapse of modern social infrastructure, electricity, communication, and technological civilization. Not only that, with the collapse of the social civilization depicted in the novel, the characters

struggle to find shelter amidst the remnants of destruction. The quote “*Everything as it once had been save faded and weathered*” describes a world that has lost its meaning despite its traces still being present, indicating the remnants of a dead cultural framework. Charred trees without branches, burned-out houses, and gray fields suggest that the environmental disaster is comprehensive, destroying the most basic networks of life. Lawrence Buell highlights that one of literature's functions in responding to environmental crises is to explore how ecological disasters shape collective imagination. In this quote, Cormac McCarthy uses a somber, descriptive narrative style filled with gray contrasts to depict the disconnect between humanity and the natural world.

This sentence shows that the human social and cultural infrastructure has collapsed. Burnt houses and charred electricity poles are symbols of the death of domestic civilization and communication systems, two important pillars of modern society. Words such as charred electricity poles, “*blind*” cables, and faded motel advertisements are signs of the collapse of human civilization. In Buell's view, ecological crisis literature reflects the tension between nature and culture, and shows how complex human systems are unable to survive ecological damage. This quote underscores the failure of modern ecosystems to survive, while also showing that human civilization has become a natural artifact, like fossils in the new geological history.

According to Buell in *The Environmental Imagination* (1995), when the environment emerges as a victim of human system failure, it is not merely a backdrop but evidence of ethical destruction. The environment appears as both the

victim and witness of civilization's collapse. The sentence also serves as a symbol of the failure of consumerist culture and modern commercialism. In a world where food, shelter, and security are no longer available, the motel advertisement becomes an ironic remnant of a human economic system that failed to protect the basics of life. The presence of the motel billboard, still standing but "*faded and weathered*," is a symbol showing that consumerist culture and modernity cannot survive amid ecological collapse. The environmental conditions depicted as a gray wasteland reflect that the land can no longer sustain life, turning the world into an empty shell that has lost its contents.

He walked out in the gray light and stood and he saw for a brief moment the absolute truth of the world. The cold relentless circling of the intestate earth. Darkness implacable. The blind dogs of the sun in their running. The crushing black vacuum of the universe. (p.132)

This sentence deeply expresses an awareness of the destruction of the world, the collapse of human order, and alienation in a post-apocalyptic world. This sentence is a powerful existential example from Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*. In *The Road*, the narrative focus shifts from humanity to a cold, absolute, and indifferent universe. The quote "*the absolute truth of the world*" signifies a moment where the main character perceives reality not from a human perspective but from the condition of the natural world itself. This signifies a truth that is not centered on humanity, but rather about the world as it is without humanity. The word "*relentless*" indicates that the Earth continues to spin, but without human intervention. The Earth becomes the central focus, showcasing a power that cannot be denied by humanity, despite the Earth's dire condition.

The phrase “*the intestate earth*” is a legal term meaning “*without inheritance*.” From an eco-critical perspective, this term signifies the absence of human structure, as if the earth continues to spin without bequeathing anything to future generations of humans. This shows that nature continues to function outside of human structure and interests, even after the collapse of civilization. Cormac McCarthy portrays nature no longer as a home for humans, but as a neutral entity, even indifferent to human existence. Nature becomes a reflection of how civilization collapses when the world is destroyed. In Buell's theory, this critiques the anthropocentric notion that has long placed humans at the center. When civilization disappears, humans also lose their place as meaningful beings.

The following sentences also show the same thing, where nature has become the main agent that humans can no longer resist. The phrase “*Darkness implacable*” describes a darkness that cannot be dispelled, a darkness that cannot be overcome by humans. This becomes a symbol of non-human power that cannot be negotiated or controlled. Nature in this depiction becomes an autonomous entity that does not respond to human desires. The sentence can be interpreted as a depiction of natural elements that move without human direction or consciousness, and the quote also supports a non-anthropocentric understanding. This sentence emphasizes the scale of the universe, which is indifferent to human life, in line with Lawrence Buell's concept that human interests are not the center of everything. The quote fully reflects Lawrence Buell's second criterion, where there is no affirmation of humanity's role as the center of meaning. Nature and the universe are depicted as autonomous entities, even disregarding human existence. The representation of the

world in the narrative is closer to a cosmological and ecological narrative, not a humanistic one.

He walked out into the road and stood. The silence. The salitter drying from the earth. The mudstained shapes of flooded cities burned to the waterline. At a crossroads a ground set with dolmen stones where the spoken bones of oracles lay moldering. No sound but the wind. (p.285)

The quote describes the condition of a post-apocalyptic world that has not only suffered physical ecological damage, but also the collapse of human civilization, where cities as centers of life have disappeared, cultural heritage has decayed, and the world has turned into a silent space without social relations. The quote “*The mudstained shapes of flooded cities burned to the waterline*” implies the destruction of urban centers that represent social systems such as the economy, government, education, and spirituality. Cities that have been burned and flooded are symbols of the collapse of social structures, both physically and metaphorically. Then, the quote “*dolmen stones where the spoken bones of oracles lay moldering*” reinforces the image of the collapse of collective memory. The word “*dolmen*,” as a prehistoric site and the bones of oracles, symbolizes the loss of tradition, spiritual beliefs, and direction in life, indicating that humanity now lives without a past and future orientation. All forms of social order have rotted and crumbled.

The environment in the excerpt is not merely a backdrop but also an agent of change: a city submerged and ablaze, land deprived of its “*salitter*,” and a silent atmosphere—all indicating that the environment has undergone destructive transformation. This change is not natural but caused by human intervention, illustrating the destructive relationship between humans and nature. The phrase “*The salitter drying from the earth*” is not merely a description of drought but also

a symbol of the loss of nature's sacred dimension. This highlights humanity's failure to uphold ecological values. The quote also depicts a long phase of historical destruction, from modern human cities to ancient dolmen sites. Buell emphasizes the importance of viewing the environment as a historical process, and McCarthy clearly shows how the environment has become a graveyard for past civilizations and can no longer sustain modern human life. The silence depicted in the quote is not merely about physical conditions but a metaphor for the collapse of social communication and human identity. There is no longer the voice of civilization. In a collapsed society, there is no law, interaction, or community, and what remains is merely biological existence devoid of human value. Critically, McCarthy illustrates that when nature is destroyed, social order also erodes, as the sustainability of society is highly dependent on the sustainability of the environment. In other words, ecological destruction leads to the collapse of human cultural and ethical values.

They'd begun to come upon dead windfalls of pinetrees, great swaths of ruin cut through the countryside. The wreckage of buildings strewn over the landscape and skeins of wire from the roadside poles garbled like knitting. (p.300)

This sentence visually, systematically, and symbolically depicts ecological destruction. Through his depiction of a damaged landscape, fallen trees, destroyed buildings, and tangled cables, McCarthy creates a concrete image of a post-apocalyptic world. In the context of Lawrence Buell's ecocriticism, this quote reflects not only the loss of the physical environment but also the collapse of social systems and modern civilization. Buell argues that nature in literature can serve as a mirror of human social and moral conditions. In this quote, the mass collapse of pine trees and the devastating damage to the countryside depict a nature that no

longer sustains life. Buildings and power lines symbolize modern civilization; when everything is destroyed and reduced to random ruins, this also signifies the collapse of social, economic, and cultural structures. Technological destruction is not merely the loss of tools but the loss of trust in the social systems that support them.

The quote clearly illustrates that ecological destruction not only damages the physical landscape but also undermines the social, cultural, and technological systems that have long sustained human life. The quote is not merely a description of destruction but also a sharp critique of the fragile foundations of modern culture in the face of ecological destruction, serving as a warning that when humanity fails to care for nature, it also destroys the social structures that depend on it.

3. Resource Scarcity and Survival

Resource scarcity and survival are characteristic features of post-apocalyptic novels, particularly in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. Resource crises are a logical consequence of modern exploitative and anthropocentric lifestyles. In this case, it describes a situation where vital materials, such as food, clean water, and shelter, become extremely limited or unavailable, forcing humans to survive in extreme conditions. In the fictional world of *The Road*, the disappearance of resources reveals the ecological sins of the past, such as humans digging, taking, and consuming more than the earth can restore. Lawrence Buell emphasizes that the relationship between humans and the environment is not only physical but also ethical and historical. In this context, resource scarcity shows the consequences of the loss of ecological ethics, and the place of survival shows the downfall of humanity when social and environmental systems fail simultaneously. Here are

some quotes from the novel that show the main character trying to always meet his needs and continue to survive.

What to do about it? Nothing. Where all was burnt to ash before them no fires were to be had and the nights were long and dark and cold beyond anything they'd yet encountered. Cold to crack the stones. To take your life. He held the boy shivering against him and counted each frail breath in the blackness. (p.12)

In this sentence, it can be understood that nature has completely stopped. This sentence appears when the father character wakes up in a world that has hardly changed, with an unchanging sky, cold weather, and no signs of life or ecological dynamics. Buell emphasizes that in environmental literature, it is very important to view the environment or nature as a constantly changing and interacting process, not as a dead object or static backdrop. Thus, the quoted sentence depicts the absence of natural processes that highlight ecological dynamics. The presence of static darkness signifies the death of the ecosystem, indicating the loss of the environment's role as a system of processes. Ironically, Cormac McCarthy underscores the importance of the environment as a process through the very absence of that process. This underscores the importance of understanding the environment as a complex network of processes, not merely as a backdrop to the story.

The sentence depicts the extreme conditions caused by food scarcity. The data quoted in the sentence shows total helplessness in facing a world that has lost its ecological support. The loss of many natural resources, especially firewood, makes it difficult for them to survive at night or when the weather becomes very cold. This makes the natural environment deadly, as nature has transformed into a daily adversary that humans must confront. The quote “*He held the boy shivering*

against him and counted each frail breath” illustrates that humans no longer survive out of fear but out of love and basic protective instincts, striving to preserve what they can even in helpless circumstances.

This makes the nature in the novel *The Road* understood as a constantly changing process, not a static condition. Readers can imagine nature being transformed into a ruined environment due to human actions. The sentence clearly shows the transformation of the environment from a hospitable place for humans to an uninhabitable one. In the world of *The Road*, nature is not static or stable as it usually is; instead, it has become an environment undergoing destruction, unable to sustain life. Furthermore, although the sentence does not explicitly blame human actions, it can be understood as a reflection that humans must now live with the consequences of ecological destruction that may have been caused by previous civilizations. In this case, the sentence not only shows how they try to survive, but also serves as a space for reflection on maintaining the relationship between humans and nature in the future.

He pushed the cart on through the snow. A few miles each day. He'd no notion how far the summit might be. They ate sparingly and they were hungry all the time. (p.28)

This sentence is a narrative representation of resource scarcity and the struggle for survival. In the novel *The Road*, this sentence contains a profound meaning about the deep-rooted ecological and humanitarian crisis. The description of a cart being pushed through a snowy landscape symbolizes human limitations in post-apocalyptic conditions. The quote “*They ate sparingly and they were hungry all the time*” symbolizes chronic starvation, which is not merely a physiological

issue but a structural crisis reflecting the collapse of the food distribution and logistics systems that once supported civilization. Within the framework of Lawrence Buell's ecocriticism theory, this quote represents how the loss of human ecological responsibility toward ecosystems leads to a complete disconnect between humans and ecosystems, and how the environment no longer appears as a stable entity but as a destructive, ever-changing process. It is clear that ecological destruction not only damages nature but also undermines the social, cultural, and moral dimensions of humanity.

This sentence illustrates the most basic form of food crisis in a post-apocalyptic world. There is no access to food supplies, and hunger becomes a permanent state. This is the concrete manifestation of the scarcity of the most basic resources for humanity. The sentence "*He pushed the cart on through the snow. A few miles each day*" illustrates the survival mechanism in a frozen, lifeless, and aimless world, "*He'd no notion how far the summit might be,*" but they must keep moving. This movement is not a journey toward hope but a delay of death. They move not because they know they will find resources but because if they stop, they will freeze or starve to death. The sentence depicts the father and son pushing the cart through the snow, signifying they are traversing a frozen, barren, and ecologically unproductive environment. Nature is no longer a place that provides or sustains life; it has become a silent enemy that constantly erodes human resilience. Indirectly, this also represents ecological destruction, though not explicitly like the quotes describing the destruction of trees, ash, or burning cities.

The landscape they traverse is the result of ecological destruction that has erased nature's productivity.

The wire was cold and it creaked in the staples. It was darkening fast. They went on. What they came to was a cedar wood, the trees dead and black but still full enough to hold the snow. Beneath each one a precious circle of dark earth and cedar duff. (p.95)

The quotation in the sentence describes a quiet, frozen environment that has lost its vitality, where nature has turned into a bleak landscape that no longer supports normal life. The word “*precious*” indicates that the environment, once considered ordinary, has now become rare and highly valuable, such as the dark earthen circle and the remnants of cedar leaves that could serve as a place to rest, hide from the snow, or perhaps to make a fire. In a situation where all resources have been depleted, even the smallest remnants become valuable, reflecting acute scarcity. This makes the quote a symbol of the shift in values in a world that has lost its modern logistics and power distribution systems. The phrase “*they went on*” suggests an absurd and hopeless form of survival; they keep moving not because they know where to go, but because stopping means death. In this extreme situation, humans survive on the remnants of a damaged environment, and survival becomes their sole existential purpose. There are no social structures, laws, or collective meanings supporting their lives except instinct.

In this sentence, the trees are described as “*dead and black*,” yet they are still able to hold snow, implying that even in ecological death, nature remains a field of life that retains very limited functions. In other words, even damaged nature is still used by humans for their needs; this is another form of survival strategy. The father and son characters do not seek new resources, but scavenge what remains of

the old world's ruins, a condition that reflects the way of surviving in a post-apocalyptic world. Buell emphasizes that in eco-critical texts, nature should not be a passive element, but an active agent that shapes human experience. In the sentence, the quote “*The wire was cold and it creaked in the staples*” signifies social and ecological emptiness, where human infrastructure remains as a silent and frozen framework. The world in the novel *The Road* has experienced total ecological destruction, and this quote shows one form of scarcity of natural resources that can still be used, albeit limited. In a landscape filled with snow, cold, and death, an open circle of earth and a layer of dead leaves become highly valuable for survival. Thus, the concept of scarcity does not always manifest in the literal form of food or water, but rather in the characters' awareness of the value of the remaining ecological remnants.

He left the flarepistol and took the revolver with him and he scoured the countryside for anything to eat but he came back emptyhanded. (p.303)

This sentence is a narrative that shows despair and ecological crisis in a post-apocalyptic world. This sentence can be seen as an act of survival as a reflection of the ecological crisis. The phrase “*he scoured the countryside for anything to eat but he came back empty-handed*” shows a futile search for food, indicating that the ecosystem has completely collapsed, with no plants, animals, or other forms of life to support human needs. From Buell's perspective, this reflects the loss of environmental support, showing that nature in literary texts is not merely a static and eternal backdrop but a dynamic process. The world in *The Road* has undergone ecological changes that not only destroy ecosystems but also sever the chain of life and human consumption.

The quote “*He left the flarepistol and took the revolver*” carries symbolic meaning. The term “*flarepistol*” is a communication tool or distress signal, symbolizing hope for social assistance. However, the father leaves it behind and chooses the revolver, a tool for self-defense. This signifies a transition from hope for community to a harsh individualistic world where self-defense is more important than the possibility of interacting with others. This indicates that the social relationships previously supported by ecological stability have now been completely severed. And the world has become a brutal survivalist arena.

Lawrence Buell's fourth principle of ecocriticism states that ecological literature demands ethical reflection on human responsibility toward the environment. Although *The Road* does not directly explain the cause of the destruction, the failure to find food and the despair arising from the dead environment show that humans now live in a world that has become a victim of past ecological negligence. The father and son's struggle to survive is a tragic reflection of ecological imbalance that has reached the point of collapse. Resource scarcity is not a temporary event but a permanent condition resulting from ecological destruction. Thus, this sentence contains profound eco-critical and humanistic elements, revealing that the environmental crisis is also an existential crisis that destroys the very values of human life itself.

4. Cannibalism

In Cormac McCarthy's novel *The Road*, cannibalism is not only portrayed as an extreme form of behavior, but also as a profound symbol of humanity's ecological, social, and moral destruction. In a world depicted as silent, dead, and

filled with ash, cannibalism serves as the primary metaphor for civilization's decline to zero, when all human values, norms, and empathy have collapsed along with the environment that sustains their existence. In a post-apocalyptic world, humans typically face the dilemma of choosing between survival and maintaining moral values. However, in the novel *The Road*, cannibalistic groups no longer face a moral dilemma; they have completely abandoned human values and live by preying on their kind. This indicates that humanity has been sacrificed for the most basic biological needs, rendering humans no different from wild beasts. This reflects that when the social system collapses, morality also crumbles, replaced by primitive instincts.

Within the framework of Lawrence Buell's ecocriticism, particularly in terms of human responsibility toward the environment, cannibalism is portrayed as the final consequence of humanity's failure to maintain ecological balance. When all other forms of life have been eradicated by ecological disaster, humans turn to eating one another. This is not merely a symbol of a food crisis but a critical warning that when the environment dies, humans cannot survive without sacrificing themselves. In Buell's view, such narratives contain an ethical condemnation of entropocentric practices that ignore sustainability and ecological interdependence. Cannibalism in *The Road* also illustrates that the world in *The Road* no longer has a future. Cannibalism is an act that negates the sustainability of the species, as it poses a threat to the cannibals themselves. Thus, cannibalism becomes a symbol of the nihilism of ecological and social systems.

In the novel *The Road*, Cormac McCarthy creates an opposition between those who maintain human values and the cannibalistic group. This contrast is not only to show moral choices, but to show that surviving with integrity is a form of resistance against destruction. Here is some data in the novel *The Road* that shows cannibalism as a symbol of destruction.

The phalanx following carried spears or lances tasseled with ribbons, the long blades hammered out of trucksprings in some crude forge up-country.... Behind them came wagons drawn by slaves in harness and piled with goods of war and after that the women, perhaps a dozen in number, some of them pregnant, and lastly a supplementary consort of catamites illclothed against the cold and fitted in dogcollars and yoked each to each. (p.91)

The sentence is a representation of the total collapse of human civilization while showing a form of cannibalism. The description of the procession consists of armed men, slaves, pregnant women, and boys who are used as sexual objects by the “catamites”. It paints a picture of a society that has completely lost its moral values, empathy, and humanity. In a world where resources are scarce or extinct, the human body becomes a tool of exchange, power, and consumption. In the context of *The Road*, it can be seen as an extension of the practice of cannibalism, not only is the human body eaten, but it is transformed into a total commodity, both sexually, physically, and symbolically.

The depiction in the narrative shows that the absolute domination of the body and exploitation of fellow humans is a form of cannibalism in a broader sense. When humans fail to protect the environment, they also fail to maintain the ethical system that supports human dignity. As a result, humans consume each other. The sentence also shows a new social form, fascist and militaristic. This implies that the new structures that emerge in the ecological vacuum are structures of power and

domination, there is no law, only force. This description exists in an ecologically dead landscape, with no plants, animals, or production systems left. What is happening in the quote, then, is the impact of the process of environmental degradation on the social order. Ecological destruction not only changes nature, it also changes humans structurally and psychologically. This is a world born from a dead land, and as such, the new civilization that emerges is predatory and cannibalistic. Thus, in this excerpt, it describes a broader form of cannibalism, not just eating the body, but making the human body the only resource in a world that has lost its ecological and ethical foundations.

Huddled against the back wall were naked people, male and female, all trying to hide, shielding their faces with their hands. On the mattress lay a man with his legs gone to the hip and the stumps of them blackened and burnt. (p.112)

The sentence describes the most horrific occurrence of the reality of the post-apocalyptic world. In analyzing Lawrence Buell's ecocritical theoretical framework, this quote reveals that the destruction of the environment does not stop at the death of nature, but extends to the destruction of the value structure and human dignity itself. The images of naked people hiding in fear, and a man whose legs have been cut off to the groin with blackened wounds from being burned, clearly show the systematic and organized practice of cannibalism. In this case, the human body is commoditized, stored, caged, and harvested by the cannibalist. This is the highest form of depiction of dehumanization, where humans are no longer seen as ethical subjects, but rather as consumable meat. In a world that no longer has a food production system, humans are used as the only energy reserve.

Buell states that in ecological literary texts, environmental ethics and human accountability are essential. The excerpt shows a depiction of the extreme consequences of ecological collapse that humans have never addressed or prevented before. A dead nature can no longer provide food, and humans who were once social and ethical beings are now turning into predators of their fellow man. This is the result of man's loss of responsibility for the environment. In addition, the environment in the quote is not portrayed as a passive backdrop, but rather as an ongoing process of destruction. The destruction not only shapes the bleak physical landscape but also structures a new form of society. The quote represents one of the most horrific portraits in *The Road* and symbolizes the culmination of cannibalism as a destroyer of human values. This is reinforced by the dialogue between the father and son in the novel.

"If they find us they'll kill us, wont they Papa?"

"Yes. Yes they will." (p.118)

It is a powerful moment that expresses fear, trauma, and existential awareness in a post-apocalyptic world. The dialogue occurs when the father and son discover a group of people hiding in a house, and waiting for someone to come in to capture them for food. This dialogue shows a close connection to the constant threat of predation by cannibal groups. Through Lawrence Buell's ecocritical view, this dialogue can be read as an expression of how total ecological destruction triggers social and ethical breakdown, to the point where fear of fellow humans becomes natural, even instilled from an early age. The dialogue reflects that in a world that has lost civilization and a decent environment, trauma and fear are the

only legacies that parents can give to children. The world in *The Road* is the result of the failure of human ecological responsibility, so people are wary of each other. It also shows that the environment has profoundly changed human social relations, making the fear of killing or predation a part of everyday reality. Thus, this dialogue can be understood manifestation of cannibalism that not only consumes and exploits human bodies, but also the values that make human beings human.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

In this chapter, the researcher provides conclusions from the eco-critical analysis of the representation of the post-apocalyptic environment in Cormac McCarthy's *The Road*. The researcher managed to answer and explain more deeply the research problem posed at the beginning of the research. At the end, the researcher would like to provide recommendations to readers, especially for readers and future researchers who want to research more deeply about ecocriticism, especially in Lawrence Buell's eco-critical perspective.

A. Conclusion

This study analyzes the novel *The Road* which aims to represent the post-apocalyptic environment according to Lawrence Buell's eco-critical perspective. Cormac McCarthy's *The Road* consistently depicts the environmental crisis through the landscape of the post-apocalyptic world. The world is described as a world of total ecological destruction, the absence of flora and fauna, humanitarian and moral crises, and the depiction of a world that is always gray. Nature depicted in *The Road* is not only a setting, but also an active entity that can influence the characters in the story. Nature is also depicted as an active object that experiences suffering, alienation, and destruction. *The Road* not only offers direct ecological solutions, but also presents a deep awareness of the human connection with nature that has been damaged.

The depiction of post-apocalyptic environmental conditions in *The Road* shows the dark state of the world, the loss of social order, the difficulty of finding resources, and humans who become cannibals to survive, making the depiction of the post-apocalyptic world a world that is not suitable for humans to live in. The environment in the narrative of *The Road* depicts suffering and destruction, charred trees, land that exhales smoke, and a world that is often described as a gray world is a strong marker of a world that has been damaged by human failure to maintain ecological balance. With this research, it is hoped that it will be able to contribute research findings to the field of eco-critical studies, both in theoretical, methodological, and practical contexts.

B. Suggestion

Based on the findings of the analysis, it is suggested that studies on the representation of environmental crises in literature continue to be developed. This research should not stop at developing eco-critical studies, there needs to be further studies on how post-apocalyptic narratives, such as *The Road* or other similar works, can form new environmental awareness in modern society. Readers or future researchers can use an interdisciplinary perspective. Environmental analysis in literary works can be enriched by combining literary geography, environmental philosophy, or ecological psychology approaches to represent the destruction that impacts readers. In addition, making a comparative analysis can also enrich understanding by comparing *The Road* with other works with ecological themes to see how the representation of environmental crises is portrayed and handled differently. This kind of analysis will open up new studies that can show that the

depiction of nature and the way it is handled are not always the same. Moreover, works like *The Road* can be integrated into the world of environmental education and humanities as a medium to build ecological empathy and critical awareness of the threat of environmental destruction.

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CURRICULUM VITAE



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