



Ecocriticism: Toward A New Analytical Approach To Literary Studies And Literary Tourism

Pathom Hongsuwan, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mahasarakham University, Thailand; Email; h.pathom@gmail.com

Pornphimon Srithares, Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mahasarakham University, Thailand; Email; pornpimol.s@msu.ac.th

Abstract. Ecocriticism does not view nature and environment as a mere element in the literature. This framework can be used for in-depth study of literature since it focuses on the role and meaning of nature and environment in the literature, especially the relationship between man and nature, man's attitude towards nature, techniques used in presenting concepts about nature as well as socio-cultural perspectives linked to the political and ethical policies to preserve the environment. Ecocriticism is therefore a paradigm of the study of the relationship between literature and the environment having Ecology and the concept of Environmentalism as a ground of study, analysis and interpretation of the literature. This is another form of discourse practice that can convey meaning and create a new body of knowledge for the current literary studies and literary tourism.

Keywords: Ecocriticism, New Analytical Approach, Literary Studies, Literary Tourism

INTRODUCTION

The modern world thrives through science and technology. Although such advances bring convenience to humans, they also play a large part in posing threats to nature and the environment. The problems of the modern world since late 19th century consists of degradation and harm to nature and the environment caused by human. It has become increasingly more serious such as global warming, a problem that widely affects climate change and threatens the well-being of people in today's society.

The environmental crisis has resulted in a natural paradigm shift that has raised awareness of environmental problems spreading across the world. There are movements of nature conservation in many sectors that create awareness of nature and the environment. In the field of literary studies, scholars begin to present the ecological relationship between nature and man to show the benefits and importance of nature and suggest that literature has a strong relationship with the physical world, including nature and environment. This prompted writers to start producing works to warn readers about the degradation of nature and the environment. Due to the expansion of industrial society and the advancement of various technologies, literature on

¹ This article is a part of a research titled "Ethnic Group Villages in Northeastern Area: The Study of Cultural Creativity for the Mekong River Basin Community Lifestyle Tourism Promotion in Thailand", Faculty of Tourism and Hotel Management, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

environmental problems have become a new genre in the literary circle and have increasingly been brought to focus among scholars in the field of literature.

ECOCRITICISM AND LITERARY ANALYSIS

When we go back and review the origins of this framework, we found that nature and the environment have been officially studied in many American universities in the early 1990s and in 1992, a group of American scholars from various disciplines co-founded the Association of the Study of Literature and Environment (ASLE) (Darin, 2016: 7). This is the starting point for the study of natural and environmental literature to spread throughout the world. The study of literature in relation to natural and environmental issues leads to the term "Ecocriticism", which focuses on nature and the environment as the center, and challenges the 19th century literary criticism framework that view nature and the environment as a setting, an element in the theory of literary studies. Ecocriticism began to emerge as a field of literary criticism in the late 20th century. This term first appeared in "Literature and Ecology: An Experiment in Ecocriticism" (William Rueckert, 1978). It is a compound of ecology and literary criticism and has been popular and widespread. Rueckert defines the term as the application of ecological knowledge to ecological concepts for literary studies as well as the functional role of literature in the biosphere. He states that "Poetry is like a store energy that comes from the major energy generator, language and imagination." He also emphasizes that, "In literature, all energy comes from the creative imagination." Reading, teaching and criticizing is the transmission of that energy with critics and literary teachers acting as an intermediary between literature and the biosphere to release energy and information stored in poetry. Thus, energy may flow through human communities and translate into social action. Later, Cheryll Glotfelty (1996) used this term 'ecocriticism' to study nature and the environment in literature in an attempt to show that ecocriticism studies literature considering the physical world: nature and the environment, as the center in the same way as feminist criticism considers language and literature with a focus on gender and as Marxist criticism places emphasis on manufacturing methods and economic classes.

So far, ecocriticism has two important proposals that argue against contemporary thoughts. First, it argues against anthropocentrism where human is the center of the world. Ecocriticism scholars question the societies and cultures that are based on such attitudes. They support ecocentrism which values the interdependence of all elements in an ecosystem with humans being only one of the elements and human is no longer the center. Second, many thinkers and writers consider the root cause of current environmental problems to be capitalism that causes social inequality and environmental degradation. We are in the Age of Capital driven by capitalism where the value of nature has decreased and nature has become just a type of product and labor (Phacharawan Bunpromkul, 2019: 380-382). Therefore, the relationship between nature and capitalism reflects the complex problem.

Under ecocriticism, human cultures and the physical world can be seen as interconnected and interrelated. Therefore, it aims to study the relationship of the physical world with language and literature which is an important cultural product. Scott Slovic (2000) made additional comments on the role of ecocriticism in the paper "Ecocriticism: Containing Multitudes, Practicing Doctrine." According to Slovic, ecocriticism is a study of the text that clearly describes nature and the environment while also considering the hidden implications as well as the relationship between man

and nature in the text. Similarly, as Greg Garrard explains in his book *Ecocriticism* (2004) that environmental problems must be studied and analyzed both scientifically and culturally. Ecocriticism in literature is an analysis of environmental problems in a cultural dimension tied to the political and ethical aims to preserve the environment. Besides that, ecocriticism has also expanded the scope of literary theory: literary theory in general studies the relationship of the writer, the text and the world. The world often refers to human society, but ecocriticism broadens the meaning of the world to cover the natural and physical world as well.

Ursula K. Heise (1997), a scholar who is interested in nature and environment in literature, is also one of those who spoke of ecocriticism. According to Heise, "Ecocriticism is a new paradigm that arises within literary and cultural studies. This concept focuses on the roles of nature and the environment that have been transmitted through cultural imaginations from the past to the present. In what sense is the concept of nature being defined? In what way was it valued? And how is the relationship between nature and man presented? It also examines the strategies for presenting the role of nature in literature, the study of aesthetics and analogy and language referring to nature. Ecocriticism is therefore a concept that focuses on the role of nature and the environment in literature, especially the relationship between man and nature, concepts or attitudes about nature and strategies used to present the concept of nature." Ecocriticism is therefore a study of the relationship between literature and the environment using the knowledge base of ecology and environmentalism as a basis for study and analysis, which is a discourse that can create meaning and new knowledge in today's literary studies.

The relationship between the natural world and human society is often presented in a wide variety of aspects according to the context of the society. Ecocriticism studies may also study literature presenting stories about nature and the environment using other bodies of knowledge while considering the implications that are hidden. This also includes the relationship between man and nature that is present in the text, or it can be considered the presentation of ecological concepts that diminish the importance of the natural world or the disparate relationship. The study of texts under the concept of ecocriticism is not limited to the study of the relationship between man and nature. It also includes studying political or historical aspects that might reveal the ideology, power, or discourse that have been practiced, which can enable us to discern the struggle and contend for the ideological space related to nature such as the study of class, status, politics, religion, ethnicity and gender. Therefore, the study of ecocriticism in literature does not focus solely on the role of nature and the environment, but it is also a concept that has integrated a variety of sciences applied in analysis and interpretation to understand the literary texts in depth and connected with the social and cultural texts.

Therefore, ecocriticism is not solely focused on presenting the role of nature and the environment. It is also a concept that integrates various fields of science, as Alex Goodbody (2014) states in his paper "Ecocriticism Theory: Romantic Roots and Impulses from Twentieth-Century European Thinkers" that...

An important aspect of ecocriticism is the integration of a multidisciplinary science to help analyze the presentation of the relationship between man and nature. It could be said that the idea is interdisciplinary. Heise (1997: 4) states that the concept of ecocriticism or Green Criticism is one of the emerging interdisciplinary fields which

appear in literary and cultural studies. Ecocriticism analyzes the role of nature and the environment in society. How is the value of "nature" determined? How is it rejected and why? In what direction is the relationship between man and nature expected? How is nature likened in the text? The nature as appeared in the literature may not be directly classified as one of the literary genres. The analysis describes the definitions of the terms "nature" and "naturalness" that the literature has created leading to the manifestation of the existence of nature. In addition, ecocriticism sometimes covers other ideas, such as social, political and economic, in the discussion of environmental and conservation issues. The concept of ecocriticism is also a bridge between scientific concepts and literary and cultural ideas. Science argues about the construction of nature in western culture. There are studies on ozone depletion, extinction of organisms and soil erosion. Science focuses on environmental inequality. Looking through an ecologist's glasses, science is sometimes antagonistic, with the view that scientific advances have resulted in ecological changes. Ecologists support the fight against environmental destruction and a materialistic view.

As mentioned above, ecocriticism is interdisciplinary and so, many scholars have linked it to social science concepts. For example, Buell et al (2011: 430) has linked ecocriticism with Animal Studies, saying that it is often incorporated into the concept of place and animal that play a role in showing the relationship between humans and nature. Animals are represented symbolically and figuratively whereby animals have long been close to humans and a part of nature. Importantly, animals are separated from humans by man-made dividers. Humans and animals face each other in a different shape. They are dangerous to humans. The tamed animals are only cultural products. Sometimes the relationship between humans and animals is portrayed via comparison in order to distinguish between humans and animals. In addition to clash between humans and animals, scholars are also interested in the history of presenting humans and animals as a combination. They view that all human beings have animalhood in themselves. Ecocriticism is rich in scrutiny of animals in literature. Poetry and tales tend to focus on animals and plants on how they differ from human. In ancient western myths, there appear animal characters who can speak. This tradition has been passed down to cartoons and jokes. But in modern literature, speaking animals are taken seriously and linked to man being the enlightened one. And in science fiction, speaking animals show a cross between humans and animals. In summary, the concept of ecocriticism is a concept that looks at the relationship between humans and nature through literary texts with other related concepts being analyzed together in order to clarify the different forms of human views on nature. Ecocriticism offers a wide range of studies. It could be about issues in natural places, animals or any environmental issues.

The above views present a variety of concepts and theories used by the ecocriticism approach, that is, the study of the relationship between literary texts and cultural texts with the environment is multidisciplinary. With the introduction of the concept other fields of science open up new perspectives, such as environmental science, rhetoric, philosophical anthropology, or any other body of knowledge that shows the connection between nature and society and culture. Especially Environmental ethics comprising a wide range of thought positions, such as deep ecology, social ecology, or ecofeminism and modern literary theories such as post-structuralism, Feminism, Marxism, Postmodernism or study of literature of different ethnic groups and postcolonial theory that led to the introduction of issues of power

relations and ideology in politics, culture, gender status, class and ethnicity. This includes creating or maintaining marginalized identities, taking into account natural and environmental issues in literature especially on the issue of environmental justice.

RESULTS

The use of the ecocriticism framework to study literature is therefore a study to examine the relationship between literature and the role of nature and the environment which can be carried out under the following 5 key ideas as summarized by the author proposed that:

1) An attempt to remind readers of the relationship between man and the environment and the natural world that appears in the text of the literature by using an important basic strategy green reading that emphasizes close reading and careful reading. They also raise questions about how nature-related issues such as how nature is presented in the text. How is the construction of words or vocabulary related to nature? How does the nature of the city contrast with the countryside and the forest? What is the role of science and the role of nature shown in the script? What is the link between gender and landscape? Is the word landscape a metaphor? How does environmental ethics or deep ecology educate our reading?

2) An emphasis on language and its role: language cannot be separated from the natural world since it is an integral part of the discourse on nature and the environment.

3) The representation of nature in the script: the representation of nature is one of the characteristics that help to consider whether the literature is about nature and the environment or not.

4) Connecting multidisciplinary fields of science to help analyze especially knowledge of science, environment, politics, economy, culture and ethnology.

5) The integration of various theories, whether Marxist theory, feminist theory, postcolonial theory, cultural studies theory, etc. This makes ecocriticism an interdisciplinary and integrative theory.

Schaff (2011: 166) suggested that literary tourism is part of the heritage industry, and as such it is informed by the industry's nostalgia for the irretrievable past, its pride in the conservation and display of manifest testimonies of cultural achievements. The semiotics of literary places and trails, however, are more complex than those of other heritage sites. They tell spatial stories, which means that places are experienced not only in a material sense, but also in the view of their literary representations, their particular connection to authors and their works.

Tourism is a powerful tool for economic development of nations. It is one of fastest growing area of international trade, particularly for many developing countries. It is because, the environment itself takes significant parts in this industry. However, environmental degradation has been realized in many regions as the result of development of tourism industry. Therefore, the strategies for successful tourism industry is to seek maximize the total benefit from development and preserve the natural environment.

Tourism growth has also had significant environmental impact, however particularly in relation to important ecosystem such as mangroves, forest, and coral reefs. Impact on the physical environment is largely related to tourism infrastructure

development (including resort, hotels, and coastal zone management activities), including soil erosion, landslides, sedimentation, and water pollution.

Most studies done in the field of tourism and economics discuss relationships between a tourism industry and growth in an economy. Many studies concluded that tourism industry takes a significant role in boosting an economic growth.

However, many of the studies also pointed out to a dilemma: natural environment at a tourist destination, its beauty and its pristiness, contribute a great deal to its attractiveness, but as tourists bring about economic growth, environmental degradations follow. In turn, the tourism industry itself suffers from its very own success and the economy ceased to grow from tourism.

While all forms of nature are important because of their intrinsic value, not all natural places and ecosystems have the same worth or significance as 'heritage'. Thus clear choices have to be made as to which is more deserving of or should be prioritized for preservation for preservation attention. Who decides, and perhaps more importantly who has the power to decide or influence decisions?

CONCLUSIONS

The concept of ecocriticism in literature emerges as a new field of literary studies and cultural studies. This concept is rooted in the realization of the importance of nature and the environment to human beings. In particular, it represents the concept of protecting nature and the environment from crises through the study of the relationship between man and nature in literary and cultural texts.

Literary tourism is a subset of cultural and heritage tourism to some scope. When authors or their literature become so popular that people are drawn either to the locations associated with the author or the locations featured in their writing, it creates literary tourism. Literary tourism sites range from the places where the author was born, grew up, lived or died, to the places where the book was written or where it was set. Even if considered as niche, literary tourism is of extending relevance within the field of heritage and cultural tourism (Hoppen et al. 2014: 37-39)

Thus, literature studies under the concept of ecocriticism show not only the relationship between man and nature and the environment or its role in literature but also the role of literature in presenting environmental problems and campaigning on conservation and environmental protection amidst the advancement of science and technology. The concept of ecocriticism seeks to redirect the human discourse on nature but it is not a denial of scientific knowledge. It uses the ideas of science to support their ideas. This includes the view that everything in the world is connected and interacted with each other according to the concept of eco-consciousness and opposes to the anthropocentrism concept, a concept that puts human above nature.

REFERENCES

- Buell, L., Heise, U. K. & Thornber, K. (2011). Literature and environment. *The annual review of environment and resources*, 36 (November), 417-440.
- Bunpromkul, P. (2019). Ecocriticism: literary works, nature, ecology, and the world. In S. Chodudompan (Ed.), *Contemporary approaches to the study of literature* (pp. 375-438). Bangkok: Siampaya Press.

- Glotfelty, C. & Fromm, H. (Eds.)(1996). *Ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology*. Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Garrard, G. (2004). *Ecocriticism*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Goodbody, A. (2014). *Ecocriticism theory: romantic roots and impulses from Twentieth-century European thinkers*. In Louise Westling (Ed.). *The Cambridge companion to literature and the environment* (pp. 61-74). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Heise, U. K. (1997). Science and ecocriticism. *The American Book Review*, 18(5),4-6.
- Heise, Ursula K. (2008). *Sense of place and sense of planet: The environmental imagination and the global*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Hoppen, A., Brown, L. & Fyall, A. (2014). *Literary tourism: Opportunities and challenges for the marketing and branding of destinations*. *Journal of Destination Marketing and Management*, 3, 37-47.
- Pradittatsanee, D. (2016). *Examine environmental issues through the perspective of contemporary American literature*. Bangkok: Chulalongkorn University Press.
- Rueckert, W. (1996). *Literature and ecology: An experiment in ecocriticism*. In C. Glotfelty, & H. Fromm (Eds.), *Ecocriticism reader: Landmarks in literary ecology* (pp. 105-123). Athens: University of Georgia Press.
- Schaff, B. (2011). *In the footsteps of the semiotics of literary tourism*. *KulturPoetik: Journal of cultural poetics*, 11(2), 166-180.
- Slovic, S. (2000). *Ecocriticism: containing multitudes, practicing doctrine*. In L. Coupe (Ed.), *The green studies reader: From romanticism to ecocriticism* (pp. 160-162). London and New York: Routledge.