

EXPLOITATION OF THE EARTH REPRESENTED IN MOANA AND ITS RELEVANCE TO CURRENT ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES: AN ECOFEMINISM STUDY

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ARTICLE INFO

Received: 23-09-2022
Accepted: 19-10-2022
Published: 31-10-2022
Volume: 6
Issue: 2
DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.33019/lire.v6i2.148>

KEYWORDS

Ecofeminism, Representation study, Moana, Environmental issues

ABSTRACT

The issue of gender inequality and environmental, such as flooding, has recently become heavily discussed in the mass media. Both issues are well represented in the animated film Moana. There are many symbols in the animated film that can be related to both ecological theory and feminism. However, by using an ecofeminism approach, the author tries to analyze the symbols and codes that represent the exploitation of marginal parties in the film. From the results of the analysis, it was found that there are many representations related to the exploitation of women and the environment found in the film and this is relevant to the issue of equality and environmental issues today.

1. INTRODUCTION

The relationship of living things with their surrounding environment is a separate science in the field of Biology; namely ecology. However, since the 80th century, when scientists were mutually interested in carrying out collaborative research, literary criticism related to environmental issues emerged which became known as the ecocriticism approach (Glottfelty & Fromm, 1996). Then in 1974, Françoise d'Eaubonne first introduced the term ecofeminism which found a relationship between environmental exploitation and the injustices received by women in a patriarchal society structure (Suliantoro, 2011). This similarity is in the context that they cannot fight loudly and directly to get justice in the midst of capitalism and patriarchy.

Literature that is included in multidisciplinary studies raises social issues that are reflected in literary works (Suarta & Dwipayana, 2014). The nature of literary works that can be a reflection product of the dynamics of society is getting stronger when more and more activists care about the environment and gender who create written and moving literary works related to these issues. This of course has its own meaning, but one of them is to convey a message to the reader or audience



regarding the issue they want to raise. One of the literary media that can convey this message is film media.

Film is one of the moving literary works which besides being able to provide entertainment, it is also able to convey messages. One of the films that raised environmental issues was the film Moana, an animated film produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios in 2016. The film was very popular at its time which earned \$642.8 million in its first month of release (Thompson, 2016).

Moana itself is an interesting phenomenon because the issues raised in this animated film are very relevant to many social issues, namely the representation of color in the midst of the onslaught of white supremacy, gender equality and representation of women leaders, as well as environmental issues. Because the development of film in America before there were many representations of race, culture and other cultures still seemed to prioritize white supremacy and lack of diversity (Susanti, 2021). Moana's film is full of messages that appear through symbols and signs regarding the relationship between humans and the environment and how humans treat the earth, as well as welcoming diversity.

Research related to gender issues and ecological criticism has been carried out several times, one of which was written by Bernadus Wibowo Suliantoro (2011) with the title *Reconstruction of Environmental Ethics in Ecofeminism as a Foundation for Sustainable Forest Management*. This study examines how patriarchy which has a dominant ideology destroys the environment which is also a representation of the relationship between nature and women. Through philosophical methods, namely description, interpretation and holistic, Suliantoro concludes that if society abandons patriarchal thinking, environmental preservation and oppression of women will end. Because these two things provide balance on earth and have a close relationship. This research is related to the author's research who wants to find representations of symbols, signs, sentences that raise the issue of exploitation and oppression of the earth and women in the film Moana using analytic semiotic theory.

Increasing sensitivity to environmental issues and equality by honing critical analysis skills of literary works in the younger generation made the research team interested in carrying out this research entitled *Ecofeminism on the Earth Exploitation Represented in Moana and Its Relevance to Current Environmental Issues*.



Based on the background that has been described previously, the formulation of the problem of this research is how the ecofeminism approach to the representation of environmental exploitation in the film *Moana* is relevant to the content of the environment and current equality.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The main literature review in this research is an ecofeminist approach that can help discuss the root of the problem. As briefly mentioned in the previous chapter, ecofeminism is a theory that emerged because there is a discourse on the exploitation of the earth and the oppression of women who have the same denominator, namely patriarchy (Asmarani, 2018). The patriarchal system that prioritizes male domination in the structure of life has often become a gender discourse, but this then gives new attention when the domination enters the realm of vulnerable groups, namely the environment.

Basically, in all aspects of life, balance is needed. When this balance is disturbed and there is an imbalance of power, then the issue of injustice arises. This power imbalance is often found in patriarchal culture and capitalism, so that ecofeminism criticizes the culture of reproduction and the resulting production which is a negative impact of the development of industrial technology (Fahimah, 2017).

Ecofeminism is a study based on the ethics of caring that is present because it is part of the energy of femininity that can be found in humans, who are often women (Sari et al, 2019). This theory focuses on how human domination over those who do not have power or power will eliminate the balance that should exist for the sake of the preservation of the earth. With increasing human awareness of this issue, the end result of ecofeminism from its theory hopes to achieve equal access, safeguard the rights of every living being and improve the quality of life of various parties (Fahimah, 2017).

3. METHODOLOGY

This descriptive qualitative research collect data through observation techniques through heuristic and hermeneutic reading. The data taken was in the form of words, pictures, gestures, sentences collected in the *Moana* film that raises the issue of ecology and equality. This research started off



by collecting object data using heuristic and hermeneutic observation techniques. After the data was collected, they were analyzed using an ecofeminist approach and analytic semiotic theory. When the results of the analysis were collected, a critical reading was made and the relevance to current issues of equality and the environment is drawn. Once the results of the analysis were collected, a draft of non-technical tools was drawn up that can be used as guidelines for increasing sensitivity to environmental issues and equality through critical analysis of popular and noble literary works that are easily accessible to the public.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The more developed and advanced the times, the more shifting the meaning of Mother Nature, which was previously described as a source of life that must be cared for, then to become a resource that needs to be explored to maximize profits. According to Carolyn Merchant (1989) this is driven by the development of the world which is dominated by the perspective of capitalism and patriarchy which essentially wants to dominate and take control.

In economics, capitalism itself is interpreted as an ideology to get the maximum profit with the least capital. This is certainly not ideal in everyday life because this kind of thinking can result in the exploitation of the weak. In this case, the weak and unable to fight for themselves are marginal groups, one of which is women, and the environment, because they are unable to voice their thoughts.

Besides capitalism, another perspective that is not ideal is patriarchy. Broadly speaking, patriarchy is a perspective that wants to dominate and dominate, both in the social, economic, and several other aspects. this is very detrimental to the weak groups which in the end can be easily controlled.

Seeing these two perspectives, if it is continuously perpetuated, it will create an imbalance in terms of humanity and ecology or the environment. Exploitation of marginal parties and the environment has a long history that in the long term will create destruction for the earth and the living things that live in it.



There are so many symbols, stories and other literary works that seem to have warned of this even from ancient times. The most recent popular work on the issue of equality and balance in nature is Moana.

4.1 Representation of equality and environmental issues in Moana

Moana is one of the animated works launched by Disney, a major American film company. In this animated film, there are many new progressive thoughts that can be analyzed using hermeneutic reading and ecofeminism study analysis. Ecofeminism studies that emerge through representation are present through several characters in the film.

In the film there are many characters and characters, one of which is Te fiti and Te ka. Te fiti is a clear representation and symbol that depicts the earth as the source of life. Where living beings can live in peace and prosperity if they are cared for and treated well. While Te Ka is a representation of the earth's anger when it is treated badly, exploited for the benefit of humans. The rise of Te Ka can be interpreted as natural disasters based on human greed in exploiting the earth, these natural disasters can be witnessed in the form of floods, landslides, reduced food sources, and so on.



Figure 1 Te fiti (left), Te ka (right). source: Google

In addition to the cultural symbols described previously, other symbols that can be taken from the characters of Te fiti and Te Ka are social symbols, or in this context a color symbol. Green is universally interpreted as the color of life, resurrection, fertility, and more. This is also equivalent to how the film Moana in terms of narrative tells the character of Te fiti.



On the other hand, red or dark red symbolizes anger, danger, action and more. This symbol is again in accordance with how Te Ka is told in his narrative portion which is angry with Maui's treatment.

The character Maui here is told as a male demigod who has done things that have a bad impact on the earth. Maui stole Te fiti's heart for popularity. This selfishness is a representation of the desire for domination that arises due to the ideology of capitalism and patriarchy where Maui represents the patriarchal and capitalist ego.



Figure 2 Maui stole Te Fiti's heart. source: Google

The heart of Te fiti itself is a symbol of the source of life which if left and maintained will provide wealth and prosperity for all living beings. Meanwhile, if it is controlled by only one party, it will bring disaster.

This is a symbol of harmonization in the coexistence of all living things on earth without any sense of domination between humans and other living things. If this harmonization is achieved, then the earth will remain prosperous and balanced, but if there is a desire to dominate and dominate which usually comes from the human ego, then inequality will occur and the disasters represented by Te Ka are unavoidable.

The main character in this film named Moana is also a very important representation for equality. There is no traditional scene/tradition that depicts Moana as a princess like the previous depictions of Disney princesses, she shows leadership qualities by saving her community from disaster caused by Te Ka's anger. Another traditional female stereotype (Obioma et al, 2021) that Moana breaks is the stereotype of damsel in distress or women who need help, because in the film's



narrative, Moana actually saves Maui and she puts Te fiti's heart back into place after successfully passing through Te Ka.

4.2 Environmental Issues Analysis

Of the many literature studies that discuss the issue of environmental exploitation and the issue of equality, Ortner (1972) discusses the dichotomy of nature is feminine and culture is masculine. However, Ortner warns that this dichotomy will only support the devaluation and marginalization of women. However, it cannot be denied that the development of the ideology of capitalism and patriarchy perpetuates the idea that the innate function of the earth and women is to serve the masculine power.

Departing from the belief that the innate function of women and the earth is to both give and serve, then the ideology of patriarchy and capitalism can easily carry out such exploitation because they are not aware of the injustices committed in the process.

After the industrial revolution, there was a shift in the purpose of production, which was originally to meet the necessities of life to collect profits. One example is the overproduction of non-recyclable products such as plastic. If the production of goods is only done when the goods are needed, then there will be no excessive waste production that can harm the earth. But again because of the ideology of capitalism

One of the cases of ecological issues is what happened in Pekanbaru, Riau. The absence of proper management of plastic waste and other non-biodegradable waste in Pekanbaru has resulted in many ecological disasters such as flooding in this city (Kausarian et al., 2021). Based on the writings by Kausarian et al and coupled with various news reports that reported the increasing flood disaster in the city of Pekanbaru in recent years, speculation about the cause. In addition to the people's lack of understanding of plastic waste management, there are indications of the public's view of the earth as just a giver whose job is to serve humans, so there is no urgency to provide protection to this earth. Whereas the earth will not be able to protest the injustice they have experienced. The inability of the earth to convey its voice is an equalization of the voice of women as a marginal group in the midst of a capitalist and patriarchal world.



5. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis and discussion above, there are several things that can be concluded. The first thing is that there is relevance to environmental and equity issues in fictional narratives. This relevance is included in the discussion of ecofeminism studies, which are studies that discuss the relationship between women's exploitation and environmental exploitation in a world that adheres to capitalist and patriarchal understanding.

Moana as a popular film, has various symbols that represent the two issues mentioned above. The main characters in the film become representations that have significant meaning, namely Tefiti and Te Ka who represent the earth and the impact that humans will get according to the treatment they give. Moana who represents women's leadership who broke the traditional stereotypes of women in decades. Then Maui, which represents the selfishness and disorganization of patriarchal values and capitalism that wants to dominate.

Analyzing this literary work in a movie form using ecofeminism approach creates an understanding of how the exploitation of the earth can cause a massive impact and disaster, as represented in Moana. There is new light shone on the phenomenon of exploitation that well described in this animated movie in the aspect of environment preservation and gender equality.

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