



From Cindelas to Snow White: A Critical Analysis of Popular Children's Literature with an Ecofeminist Perspective

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Abstract. Children's literature in Indonesia is a genre that is an important part of children's growth and development. Children's literature texts are not neutral stories with no ideological value. Most of these types of children's folklore are reproduced over time. Critically reading various children's literary texts is an important thing to do. It is necessary because it is very likely that the content of the story, plot and characters contain gender-biased values and are not environmentally friendly. Gender and ecological problems have the same root problem, namely domination. Gender issues are related to patriarchal domination, while ecological issues are related to the dominant anthropocentric perspective. This research critically describes children's literary texts or popular reading from an ecofeminist perspective. This research aims to reveal the representation of ecofeminist elements in popular children's stories in Indonesia. Through an ecofeminist perspective, this research seeks to describe (1) how male-female relations and human-environment relations are, (2) analyze the symbolic power of patriarchal and anthropocentrism discourses that exist in children's reading. This research uses the critical discourse analysis method. The subjects of his research are folk tales and fables. The collection methods are documentation and literature review. The data obtained was analyzed using a critical approach. This research is important for two reasons. First, this research is important because the information and findings can be used to determine how children's literature depicts gender and ecological constructions. This description can be used as a guide for parents, teachers and educational practitioners. Second, the results of this research can provide government input regarding children's reading consumption.

Keywords: Children's, Critically Reading, Literature.

1 Introduction

Studies and research on children's literature, especially popular stories, have yet to develop widely in Indonesia. This can be seen from the minimal number of scientific publications on children's literature and the lack of literary scientists who specifically work in the world of children's literature. So, it is not surprising that there has been an opinion that children's literature still needs to be addressed. Regarding the importance

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of children's literature, Cherland stated that children's literature plays a role in shaping children's perceptions of the world around them [1]. Children's literature is important because children learn about the values and beliefs of their culture through stories and fairy tales. Therefore, the messages revealed through the representation of male and female characters in children's reading contribute to shaping children's views about the meaning of being a boy, girl, man, or woman [2]. Meanwhile, Gooden & Gooden [3], state that negative depictions of their gender can influence children's identity and self-confidence.

In this regard, this research is exciting because it looks at gender representation in ecofeminism studies in popular children's stories in Indonesia, such as Cindelas, Bawang Merah Bawang Putih, Timun Emas, Snow White and Beauty and The Best, which to this day are still popular reading materials for children, especially at the elementary school (SD) level. This popularity is also proven by the many online and offline bookstores that provide these stories. According to the observations of popular story researchers, the Indonesian folklore series is published every year and sells hundreds of copies in several online marketplaces. Apart from the many printed books, children also hear popular stories from school teachers, and stories passed down from generation to generation, so they believe they are true.

Children's reading consumption certainly has a role in shaping their worldview, so how ecofeminism is represented in a story will also influence children's perceptions and attitudes about gender-based behavior that is accepted in society. However, unfortunately, to this day, gender has not been represented fairly because it is still. Many popular children's stories uphold stereotypes in a patriarchal society. Gender stereotypes not only limit children's freedom to express themselves but also put pressure on them to behave appropriately according to their gender rather than acting according to their personality [4]. This will undoubtedly influence children, considering that positive or negative perceptions of certain genders formed through this social construction will continue to be ingrained in them if done from the start. Bandura explains that children are great plagiarists because of the experiences they have in their daily lives and the process of observing and imitating the things they follow [5].

Literary works as a space for the author's ideology provide dozens of rooms for interpretation to the reader while simultaneously hypnotizing the reader to unconsciously participate in the flow of doctrine contained in the literary work [6]. This is because reproducing literary works is not isolated from a society's cultural, political, and social context and, in turn, will shape the worldview of the writers, readers, and the people who enjoy it (Bourdieu, 2001). The various divisions of roles attached to each character, regarding how to be a man and a woman, represent the gender ideology of Indonesian society. These different ideologies are embodied in fictional literary spaces, which will later be received by readers [6].

Ecofeminism is a new movement in environmental ethics. As a term, it appeared in 1974 in Francois d'Eaubonne's article: *Le Feminisme ou la Mort (Feminism or Death)*", a piece which hopes that women will lead a revolution to save the earth. In 1976, Ynestra King (Institute of Social Ecology, Vermont, United States) further examined d'Eaubonne's thoughts and showed the connection between gender oppression and natural oppression [7]. .) Ecofeminism talks about how women are very closely related to

the environment in the various ways in which they are perceived, and it sees parallels between the degradation of the natural world and the oppression of women. Ecofeminist theory is a combination of ideas that support the struggle for women's empowerment and achievement and a sustainable environment.

Studying literary works that use an ecofeminist approach requires a conceptual perspective that (1) there is an essential relationship between oppression against women and oppression against nature, (2) understanding nature based on this connection provides an understanding of oppression both against women and nature, (3) include an ecological perspective in feminist theory and practice, and (4) include a feminist perspective in solving ecological problems [8]. The previous research, which studied ecofeminism theory and regional folklore, was carried out by Madi [9]. The findings in three previous studies show that assertive women carry out struggles that can be compared with the actualized ecofeminist movement through their roles that align with the direction of their work. These findings centre on women's efforts to care for and preserve the natural environment. The source of inspiration for their movement is linked to the context of women's existence and nature. In contrast, in this research, the excavation is based on popular children's stories, not solely to find ecofeminist struggles in each story. This research will complement previous studies so that the richness of studying popular tales becomes comprehensive.

The connection between women and nature in these stories will further reveal the connection between the text and the underlying thought conditions regarding women and nature in Indonesian society. In this way, this article can provide an understanding of the connection to the issue of ecofeminism in popular Indonesian children's stories that continue to be consumed today.

This research aims to reveal the representation of ecofeminist elements in popular children's stories in Indonesia. Thus, the resulting construct is related to building a body of knowledge that can contribute to developing a gender-friendly reading of Indonesian children's literature. Therefore, the research entitled "From Cindelas to Snow White: Critical Analysis of Popular Children's Stories with an Ecofeminist Perspective" is worthy of study and can be used as a wealth of internalization in building awareness and new perspectives represented through popular children's stories. In addition, the results of this research can be used to construct popular children's stories in the broader space egaliter.

2 Method

This study used a qualitative descriptive method. The data were collected from documentation of children's literature, i.e. folklore and fairy tales in Indonesia. As for some of the stories of literary texts which will be the subject of analysis are Bawang Putih Bawang Merah, Timun Emas, Cindelas, Snow White, Beauty and The Beast. This study used field notes taking, coding to collect the data and then analyzed them by using Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of existing texts. The collection methods are docu-

mentation and literature review. The data obtained was analyzed using a critical approach. This research critically describes children's literary texts or popular reading from an ecofeminist perspective.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 The Focklore of Bawang Merah and Bawah Putih

The Bawang Putih is a kind-hearted girl, apart from loving her father and mother. Bawang Putih always helped her mother with her work. Starting from giving food to livestock, washing clothes, watering plants, and cleaning the house. (Folklore Series Page: 4)

Bawang Putih often did hard work while living with Bawang Merah's mother; this happened when Bawang Putih's father was trading outside the city, but Bawang Putih never told her father about it (Folklore Series Page: 10)

This core discourse is that passive women are good women, active women are evil women, and excellent/passive women must obtain the help of a miracle or other men to change their fate. Ironically, these folk tales are consumed, accepted, and enjoyed as they are by anyone (both men and women, both young and old). Meanwhile, the illustration of a passive female figure told in Bawang Merah Bawang Putih is included in the muted group. Based on muted group theory, women/silenced groups are depicted as always being in a losing position and needing men's help. Furthermore, one of the basic assumptions of muted group theory is that to participate and be considered suitable in their social environment, women must change their model of communication expression so that it can be accepted by the dominant expression system (men); one example of which is that women must give in and submit to men. -male [10].

Findings from the premise above: women who are passive, forgiving, not aggressive, and accept whatever happens to them (primo) are good women. An active, ambitious, and aggressive woman is a bad woman. Good women will not be able to change their destiny without a miracle or a man's help.

Her stepmother treated her two children very differently. Bawang Merah was very loved and pampered and fulfilled all her wishes. On the other hand, Garlic is treated arbitrarily. Every day, he has to complete all his homework without being allowed to rest (Grameia: 23)

The world of fiction often casts the stepmother as a very evil person or even a very distant monster, not only in the story Bawang Merah Bawang Putih but in several stories such as Snow White and Cinderella. The stepmother is depicted as a cruel figure who forces her to do tiring housework and encourages her children to stay away from their stepbrothers. The evil stepmother stereotype has existed worldwide in fairy tales and folklore for thousands of years. It has been consumed continuously, giving rise to

the assumption that it is accurate and believed by society. Yet almost all examples of violence involve stepfathers, not stepmothers.

When the pumpkin was split, Bawang Putih was very surprised because it contained a lot of gold and gems. The greedy stepmother and Bawang Merah immediately snatched the gold and jewels (Children's Story Series Page: 18)

Impatiently, Bawang Merah and her mother cut open the pumpkin, but it turned out that it was not gold gems that came out, but poisonous animals such as snakes, scorpions, and others. The animals immediately ate Bawang Merah and her greedy mother until they died (Folklore Series Page: 22)

In the picture above, animals such as snakes and scorpions are described as harmful natural elements. This is different from gold, which is described as a positive natural element. The gourd filled with gold depicts human desires in fulfilling their desires. Gold has become something that humans fight over one another so that they are willing to harm other humans. Based on this, humans are the centre of life, while animals are something that threatens and deserves to be exterminated. Nature is sacrificed for human purposes to beautify themselves. This is what makes gold have a specific value for humans. Gold has always been hunted, excavated, and exploited as an expensive commodity. The destruction of nature is a consequence of these various activities. This aligns with Warren's opinion that women and nature are often marginalised.

Snakes are also depicted as dangerous and harmful. Compared to gold, snakes are an image of unpleasant and detrimental things for humans. [11] said that humans often position themselves as "Übermensch." Superhumans whose position is higher than other creatures. Animals are no exception. The implication received by animals, in the interest of covering up their bad traits and elevating their status as superhuman, is that they are sacrificed, humiliated, accused of all kinds of imperfect labels, and used to describe the horror of humans.

Übermensch will not be influenced by other people's opinions, thoughts, or attitudes of the people he comes into contact with. An Übermensch affects the people who come into contact with him, as is written in the quote from the romance *Also Sprach Zarathustra*. (In fact, humans are polluted currents. One must become the sea to receive impure winds without having to become dirty [12]. Nietzsche likened Übermensch to an ocean that will not change even if it accommodates murky water. The essence of all this thinking is that if a human wants to become an Übermensch, then that person must have principles, and he does not need to worry about how his codes relate to others. A person must fight to maintain his principles to achieve his goals.

Nietzsche also believes that dealing with conflict will challenge humans, and all their abilities can emerge optimally by themselves. In Übermensch, what is needed is freedom and the will to power. The measure of success is the feeling of increasing power [13] This is in line with what Bawang Merah and her mother experienced when they had an inner conflict based on feelings of envy; both of them were challenged to carry out specific methods to achieve their goals.

3.2 The Focklore of Timun Emas

Mbok Rondo asked the giant for an extension of time. It would not be delicious if the Timun Emas were given now because its body is still small. Mbok Rondo asks for 2 more years (Folklore Series Page: 6)

The extension of time that Mbok Rondo requested from the giant also illustrates the strength of women in facing things. Mbok Rondo used a negotiation strategy by buying time. Mbok Rondo uses the power of persuasion, excuses, and buying time. (Strong Single Parent)

Hi Mbok Rondo, if you want your child to be safe, ask for help from a hermit in Bukit Valley. There he met a hermit. The hermit gave four small packages containing cucumber seeds, needles, salt, and shrimp paste (Folklore Series Page: 8)

Certain symbols are depicted in the items given by Ki Hermit, all of which are very close to women's lives. As Levi Strauss previously said, "A myth can be used as a door to understanding the culture of the society that owns the myth." [14] In the Timun Emas folklore, several myths are related to cultural symbols, even as characteristics of women. This view can be seen from the various items given by Ki Hermit, the minimum Emarst of which is cucumber seeds. Cucumbers are believed to be able to provide fertility for women. It said, "The cucumber seeds immediately grew and bore abundant fruit. The fruit is large and ripe. Timun Emas took a cucumber and ate it. Then he ran back, and thanks to eating the cucumber, his strength seemed to have gathered again.

The second item is a needle. In West Java (where the Timun Emas folk tale was published), hands are closely associated with women as a weaving tool. This is often depicted in folk tales, such as Sangkuriang (Dayang Sumbi, who loves weaving) and Nini Anteh. Weaving work is also often used. By women, so that the needles, in the end, also became the protection used by Timun Emas. "Magically, the needles turned into thick bamboo trees." Hands, as a weaving tool used by women, became a strong protection when "the bamboo broke." it was like a thorn, piercing the skin of the Giant's feet mercilessly." This shows that needles are not very familiar to men because they become painful when touching the Giant's skin.

Salt and shrimp paste are cooking ingredients that, in Eastern society, cooking is closely associated with women. The salt became the ocean, and the shrimp paste became mud that could drown the giant. All the items used by Ki Hermit to save Timun Emas were significantly related to women's lives because in trying to defeat the giant, Timun Emas was still trying alone. Ki Hermit does not use the power from his body but uses items closely related to women, or at least within the circle of women's lives.

As previously stated by French, women are closely related to nature because of their "matricentric" nature (centred on the mother), "because it is the mother who is more likely to play the main role in activities of connection, sharing and harmonious participation in nature, all of which are oriented towards survival." This means that the folklore text Timun Emas has shown that Ki Perpatapa utilised the power of nature and women as a force capable of saving Timun Emas. The energy that is interpreted, which could perhaps arise directly from Ki the Hermit's body or self, is, in fact, not shown. Ki Pertapa only provides items that are, in fact, closely related to women's lives. Doesn't this mean that something that Ki Ascetic considers vital still originates from women's

lives or is about women? Meanwhile, automatic power itself does not arise from Ascetic Ki.

The kitchen spice weapon in the story of Timun Emas is also a symbol of women themselves. The kitchen is a traditional room identified with women, where she prepares breakfast, lunch, and dinner for the whole family. There is a myth that women can control or gain men's love through their stomachs. Knowledge about cooking is a means for women to get attention from their husbands, children, and the entire family. A wife or mother who is good at cooking will gain recognition as a perfect wife, a mother who cares for and provides family happiness, and a household queen. The kitchen is the only space where women can "command" and control their actions. Outside the kitchen, women face various social pressures as they fulfil roles outside their traditional roles as wives and mothers.

3.3 The Focklore of Cindelas

The Jenggala Kingdom (around East Java) was led by a king named Raden Putra. He was accompanied by a very kind, gentle empress and a beautiful concubine. Unfortunately, the concubine had a jealous and jealous nature. The concubine conspired with the imperial physician to slander the empress. The concubine pretended to be seriously ill. The doctor said that someone had poisoned the concubine. (ceritarakyat.com)

Women in the royal context tend to be passive in their character and behaviour. Women are depicted as physically and psychologically harmonious. This is manifested in her position as empress, having a beautiful face, a kind heart, soft speech, and no nasty blemishes. However, it is quite different from the position of women as concubines who often become antagonists when dealing with the king's consort. This can be seen in the story of Cindelas, who is positioned as a mistress. Labelling a female character named Concubine shows a jealous and evil nature towards the empress's character. The position of the concubine, who was only a female friend in the background, by Javanese cultural views, caused the growth of jealousy towards the empress who had the position of being the King's wife. Women among kings have different roles, which leads to other characters and traits in the characters.

Raden Putra was angry when he heard that. He also ordered his governor to expel and kill the empress in the forest. (ceritarakyat.com)

The male character Raden Putra, a royal leader, has the right to have a wife (empress) and one mistress (concubine). The character Raden Putra, with his power, acts arbitrarily and throws his wife into the forest. This incident illustrates that men have total control over leadership and women. This is in line with the view that some people believe that men are more robust, have more freedom, have the right to occupy influential positions and roles, and are considered to have more rights to control women [6]. This cultural construct continues from century to century and from generation to generation, so people find it difficult to differentiate between "nature" and "cultural construct" as a product of society. Therefore, with the times, this issue needs to be reconstructed to provide adequate space for the balanced existence of men and women in the realities of life.

The Patih took the pregnant empress to the forest. But he didn't want to kill him. He just left the Empress alone in the woods.

The setting of the story of Dewi Sekartaji's exile in the forest was not without reason; the Patih did not kill her and throw her into the forest; this was because he believed that by living in the woods, Dewi Sekartaji would still be alive even though she was pregnant. Dewi Sekartaji depends on nature for her life. Women are considered to have a special relationship with nature. Ruther in Warren explains that the women's and environmental movements are interrelated [15]. This unique relationship can be seen in the words Mother Earth. The word Pertiwi means Earth and is paired with Mother as an expression that shows the Earth as the place where all living things live. In these words, it can be seen that women are considered closer to nature.

In the story of Cindelas, the spring in the forest is described as being able to protect, care for, and maintain the health of reproductive organs. During pregnancy, women need more water than men. When pregnant, a woman not only lives for herself but also supports the fetus in her womb. Apart from consuming water for its own bodily needs, it also functions as an intermediary for the fetus to fulfil its primary requirements in order to survive. Drinking water will have an impact on the health of herself and the fetus in her womb. What the forest provides proves that humans cannot live without nature; the blessing of the forest gives them life. Cindelas was born as a healthy and robust child.

The rooster grew into a strong rooster. Apart from that, the sound of the rooster was extraordinary, "Kukuruyukkk... Cindelas 's house is in the middle of the jungle: his father, Raden Putra.

The narrative above illustrates that the animal can talk and save its master, namely Cindelas and his mother, Dewi Sekartaji. Still, the chicken is described as a solid male rooster. Chickens are an essential part of life. This depiction shows that the patriarchal perspective is still strong.

3.4 The Focklore of Snow White

Nature is synonymous with women, as seen from the closeness/symbols between women and nature. In the text of the fairy tale Snow White:

In a kingdom, there lived a queen who loved embroidery; right in the winter, the queen gave birth to a princess whose skin was as white as snow, her lips were as red as blood, and her hair was as black as ebony, and she gave the name Snow Princess.

In this text, the description of the natural characteristics inherent in Snow White shows that she has a relationship with nature and is close to nature. In various cultures, symbols, and elements of natural fertility are always portrayed by a woman and are often equated with nature [16]. Women and nature have symbolic similarities in the concept of ecofeminism. The similarity between women and nature lies in the oppression experienced by nature and women, which humans often carry out with masculine characteristics [16]. Vandana Shiva has highlighted how women are often the first victims of irresponsible exploitation of natural resources by those living close to those natural resources.

The depiction of Snow White's closeness to nature is not only shown by Snow White's physical characteristics but can also be seen by Snow White's nature. Snow White shows her loving nature, guardian of nature, and motherhood.

She grew into a gorgeous teenager. He also has a good nature, likes to help, and has polite greetings, so many people like him.

The media often depicts women as figures who have similarities with nature. Women have nurturing, protective, and loving qualities like a mother [17].), just like the earth, which is also a place of refuge for its children, namely humans. Even though they have been depicted as independent figures, the feminine and maternal side of women cannot be separated from women. This depiction of women who are independent and strong but cannot be separated from their feminine side, whether consciously or not, is a form of oppression against women. This is because the depiction of the nature and duties of women is defined not as consciousness but as the nature of a woman. In ecofeminism, women and nature are described as having closeness not because of women's character but because they share the same experiences and characteristics. Apart from that, women and nature also have similarities, namely that they are both oppressed by masculine humans [16].

In the story, it is stated that Snow White, as a woman, lived in the forest and met the 7 dwarves (dominated by men). While living in the forest, the dwarves look for food and wood for daily living while Snow White cooks and cares for the dwarf's house. In the written text,

"While Snow White lived in the dwarf's house, Snow White helped clean the house and cook in the kitchen. Then the dwarf looks for the food."

In the Snow-White story context, the dynamics between Snow White and the seven dwarfs include the division of roles in finding food and caring for the household. This reflects traditional views about gender roles in the family. This illustrates how women are often considered responsible for looking after the home and doing domestic work, while men are often expected to work outside the home.

Betty Friedan criticised the image of women as limited to domestic roles and voiced the importance of women having wider choices in their lives, including careers outside the home. (Betty Friedan) and her struggle for women's liberation from a domestic role that was too narrow. In ecofeminism studies, there are incidents where women are always discussed in the kitchen and cooking, while dwarves (men), as humans, are often involved in physical activities.

3.5 The Focklore of Beauty and The Beast

In this story, the objectification of the animals in the palace as human servants can be considered a form of animal restraint and exploitation. This is in line with Nietzsche's that humans must be transcended, who overcome themselves and are positioned as superior humans compared to others.

The next day, Maurice goes to a riding contest on his horse. Unfortunately, he got lost in the wilderness. He needed to find out whether the path he was taking was correct or not.

Übermensch has a decisive role in shaping the overall meaning; namely, the critical emphasis here is on the will to power. Ecofeminism highlights the need to value animals as subjects with their rights and not as objects that can be changed according to human desires.

The concept of true love turns Beasts into humans; this can be interpreted as humans' view that nature and living creatures only have value if they meet human standards or are related to humans. This may devalue the intrinsic value of nature and animals and dampen values, emphasizing the importance of all life forms.

"Because of your arrogance, I cursed you to become a terrible creature. I will leave the rose containing this spell. You must find true love before the last rose petal falls. If you can't find it, you will be a monster forever. (1)

The Beast relies on Belle to achieve his transformation into a human. This can convey that nature and living things only have value if they contribute to or are measured by humans. Ecofeminism emphasizes a more harmonious relationship between humans and nature rather than human domination over nature.

Next, a beast that can change shape based on the power of Belle's love. While there are positive aspects to the Beast's transformation through love, it can also be interpreted as women having a responsibility to "save" or "transform" men with their pets. This can perpetuate the view that women have a role as saviors or changers for men who are in trouble. Although Belle has independent and intelligent characteristics, in the end, she chooses to stay with the Beast and care for him after he returns as a prince. This could be interpreted as a woman finding the meaning of her life in caring for and supporting a man, illustrating aspects of the traditional roles expected of women or Belle in her Traditional Role is very strong.

4 Conclusion

This research confirms that in popular children's stories, ecological and gender awareness in the Indonesian context, especially in children's stories, has not been well developed. In the five stories analyzed, it is proven that there is injustice between women and nature. Unconsciously, what children consume significantly changes how they view women and nature. In reality, women and nature have the same position, namely that they often experience exclusion and exploitation in the realm of literary texts in education.

One of the things that causes low awareness of ecology and gender is that there are still many children's stories or popular stories that use women and nature as objects that cannot stand alone. Literary texts in the world of children to this day are still strongly patriarchal and unfriendly to women and nature. The recommendation for further research is to examine ecological and gender values in implementing education. It is hoped that the results of this research can become a reference for the government, teachers, academics, society, and parents for evaluation and recommendations in choosing children's literature and advice for schools to pay more attention to the values of gender equality and ecology in the scope of education, especially children's stories.

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