

WOMEN, ECOLOGY AND CHILDREN: A STUDY OF ECOFEMINISM IN INDONESIAN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE

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Abstract

Literature is believed to play a role in shaping children's perceptions of the world. Unfortunately, many stories contain significant gender bias. This study uses Theo van Leeuwen's discourse analysis to examine how women and nature experience exclusion from their relationships with other subjects. Several exclusion practices include misogyny/sexism, stereotypes, and unequal relationships, which in this context are used to explore the connection between gender and nature. The findings of this research indicate that women and nature share a significant relationship, as demonstrated through the use of metaphors, natural settings, and the presence of plants and animals that appear directly in the stories. In other part, nature and women seem marginalized as both are portrayed in minor roles and continuously presented as objects. On the other hand, stories are analyzed that reveal a mutual symbolism between nature and women in resisting patriarchal domination.

Keywords: Ecofeminism, Children's Literature, Women, Ecology

Abstrak

Sastra diyakini memiliki peran dalam membentuk persepsi anak-anak tentang dunia, namun sayangnya cerita-cerita yang terkandung di dalamnya memiliki banyak bias gender. Penelitian ini menggunakan analisis wacana Theo van Leeuwen untuk mendeteksi dan meneliti bagaimana perempuan dan alam mengalami eksklusi dari hubungan mereka dengan subjek lain. Beberapa praktik eksklusi yang disajikan antara lain: misogini/seksis, stereotip dan hubungan tidak setara lainnya yang dalam konteks ini digunakan untuk melihat hubungan antara gender dan alam. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa perempuan dan alam memiliki hubungan penting yang ditunjukkan melalui penggunaan metafora, latar alam, keberadaan tumbuhan dan hewan yang muncul langsung dalam cerita. Di bagian lain, alam dan perempuan tampaknya terpinggirkan karena keduanya digambarkan secara minor dan terus menerus diangkat sebagai objek. Di sisi lain, ada juga cerita yang dianalisis menunjukkan adanya simbolisme mutualisme antara alam dan perempuan dalam melawan dominasi patriarki.

Kata Kunci: Ekofeminisme, Sastra Anak, Perempuan, Ekologi

Introduction

Literature is a crucial tool for building national character, serving as a medium for conveying the noble values of a nation and its culture.¹ A nation's identity can be reflected through literary texts, with various studies indicating that stories can express national identity.

Among the literary genres integral to this nation-building process is children's literature, which plays a significant role in shaping children's perceptions of the world around them.² The messages conveyed through children's literature are vital as children learn about the values and beliefs inherent in their culture through stories and fairy tales.

However, previous research has highlighted significant issues of gender bias within children's literature. For instance, Indonesian folklore—such as *Sangkuriang*, *Timun Emas*, and *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*—often perpetuates gender stereotypes, depicting dominant women through narrow beauty standards and confining them to domestic roles.³

Additionally, studies on children's religious stories, particularly Islamic narratives, reveal a similar bias, where women are predominantly portrayed in domestic capacities and subjected to stereotypes.⁴ Children's stories are not neutral; they are crafted with specific purposes and agendas, often serving as entertainment and educational tools.⁵ How children interpret what they read, hear, and see can significantly shape their understanding of the world. Therefore, critically examining children's literary texts is

crucial. In the Indonesian context, the representation of gender injustice in these texts can have profound implications.⁶ Research by Purbani illustrates that children's literature produced during the New Order period has the potential to suppress children's sense of freedom, reinforcing paternalistic and patriarchal ideologies that celebrate boys' freedom while marginalizing girls. This construction of children as dependent on adults hinders their development and sense of agency.⁷

In addition to gender issues, environmental concerns are increasingly relevant. Literature that adopts an ecological perspective is essential in fostering awareness of environmental conditions. Addressing both gender and ecological awareness is vital for Indonesia's future in cultivating a humanist generation. However, in Indonesia, both areas require significant improvement. The country faces substantial challenges in gender relations and environmental education, impacting the younger generation, particularly children.⁸

This research aims to fill gaps in previous studies by focusing on specific popular children's literary texts in Indonesia, examining how the relationships between gender and nature are portrayed. From an ecofeminist perspective, this study will explore how these texts often exclude women and ecological concerns from narratives centered on human experiences. This perspective aims to expose the dangers of patriarchal worldviews and exploitative anthropocentrism, ultimately fostering simultaneous gender and ecological awareness through literature.⁹ Additionally, this study confirms the importance

¹ H. Curtis, W., & Moir, 'Understanding the Storyteller's Art', in *9th Annual Meeting of the World Congress on Reading*, 1982.

² Titien Diah Soelistyarini, 'Representasi Gender Dalam Cerita-Cerita Karya Penulis Anak Indonesia Seri KKPK', *Mozaik*, 14.2 (2013), 100–219.

³ S Setiyawan, R., & Lestari, 'Patriarchal Discourse in Nusantara Classic Children Literature.', *Journal of Critical Reviews*, 7.8 (2020), 2716–25.

⁴ Setiyawan, R., & Lestari.

⁵ Clara Evi Citraningtyas, 'Sastra Anak: Edutainment Dengan Catatan', in *Seminar Nasional Sastra Anak Di Universitas Negeri* (Yogyakarta, 2011).

⁶ Wening dkk Udasmoro, *Sastra Anak Dan Pendidikan Karakter* (Yogyakarta: UGM Press, 2012).

⁷ Widyastuti Purbani, 'Ideologi Anak Ideal Dalam Lima Fiksi Anak Unggulan Indonesia Akhir Masa Orde Baru (Studi Kasus Tentang Fiksi-Fiksi Pemenang Sayembara Penulisan Naskah Fiksi Anak Depdiknas Dan Penerima Penghargaan Buku Bacaan Anak Nasional Tahun 1996-2001)' (Universitas Indonesia, 2019).

⁸ Parker Lyn, 'Environmentalism and Education for Sustainability in Indonesia', *Indonesia and the Malay World*, 46.136 (2018), 235–40.

⁹ G Gaard, 'Children's Environmental Literature: From Ecocriticism to Ecopedagogy', *Neohelicon*, 36.2 (2009), 321–34.

of literary texts in building children's character. Messages promoting love for the environment and responsibility become more impactful when conveyed through literature. Various genres of children's literature contain stories that emphasize nature as a central narrative element. For example, the story of *Timun Emas* illustrates how nature protects Timun Emas from an evil giant. Moreover, Timun Mas herself embodies resilience and represents specific gender traits. This research will critically analyze the relationship between gender and nature in Indonesian children's literature, contributing to a deeper understanding of these crucial issues.

According to Ricoeur's definition, the discourse has four elements: first, there is a subject who expresses; second, to whom the discourse is addressed; third, the world or medium being represented; and fourth, temporality or the context of time. Understanding Ricoeur's discourse elements can help explain why discourse is seen as social praxis since it is already an action. Discourse/text can be analyzed within the framework of activity, social relations, and communication technology. Likewise, literary works are social praxis because they involve the process of meaning-making through actions and social relations, even in the realm of virtuality.

Theo van Leeuwen introduced a discourse analysis model to detect and examine how a group or individual is marginalized within a discourse. A dominant group often holds more control in interpreting an event and its meaning. In contrast, a less dominant group tends to be the object of interpretation continuously and is portrayed in a minor role. Van Leeuwen's view of word and image in discourse refers to Barthes, who stated that an image has multiple opportunities for interpretation. Thus, words are needed to "fix" its meaning (Van Leeuwen, 2008).

Theo van Leeuwen's discourse analysis model identifies and investigates how certain groups or individuals are marginalized within a discourse. It examines how dominant groups have greater control over interpreting and defining events. In contrast, less dominant groups are repeatedly positioned as objects of interpretation and are portrayed negatively or in a minor role.

According to Van Leeuwen (2008), there are two categories of representation: inclusion and exclusion. In the realm of inclusion, social actors are presented within the discourse. In contrast, social actors are deliberately omitted for a specific purpose in exclusion. This research focuses on exclusion—specifically, how women and nature experience exclusion in their relationships with other subjects.

Several exclusion practices presented include misogyny/sexism, stereotypes, and other unequal relationships. Manne (2017) describes misogyny as referring to a social system or environment where women face coercive, hostile, and hateful treatment simply because they are women in a masculine world dominated by men. Misogyny is also referred to as a historical patriarchal system. Meanwhile, stereotypes are judgments about a particular group of individuals (Schneider, 2004, p. 24). In this context, these ideas will be used to examine the relationship between gender and nature.

Some children's literary works used as the subject of study are:

No.	Storybook Titles	Story Type,
1.	Bawang Merah dan Bawang Putih	Fairy Tale
2.	Sangkuriang	Folklore
3.	Malin Kundang	Folklore
4.	Timun Emas	Folklore
5.	Cindelas	Folklore
6.	Kancil	Fable
7.	Novel Seri Mata "Mata di Tanah Melus" Karya Okky Madasari	Children's Novel About Adventure
8.	Novel Seri Mata "Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi" Karya Okky Madasari	Children's Novel About Adventure
9.	"Dru dan Kisah Lima Kerajaan" Karya Clara Ng	Children's Novel About Adventure
10.	Serial Si Anak Nusantara "Si Anak Kuat" Karya Tere Liye	Children's Novel About Adventure

Discussion

A. The Symbolism of Nature and Gender in Indonesian Children's Literature

Indonesian children's literature vividly illustrates the significant relationship between women and nature, which is crucial for understanding the oppression both face. This interconnection is prominently depicted in various literary works. One notable example is the novel *Dru dan Kisah Lima Kerajaan*, which frequently utilizes metaphors derived from plants and animals to convey the characteristics and actions of its characters. For instance, a notable passage states:

“*The Kalpataru tree is the king of Kings*” (Page 40).

This line presents the Kalpataru tree as a symbol of power, directly associating it with masculinity. Such language underscores the intricate relationship between ecology and gender, a recurring theme throughout the novel.

In addition to this work, Indonesian folklore—including tales such as *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*, *Timun Mas*, *Kancil*, and *Sangkuriang*—further explores the connection between gender relations and the natural world. The prevalent use of natural settings and animal characters in these narratives reinforces the notion that folklore in Indonesia is deeply intertwined with gender dynamics. Through these literary representations, children gain insight into the roles and relationships of women and nature, fostering a deeper awareness of the associated forms of oppression.¹⁰

In examining the relationship between gender and ecology, the novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* offers a compelling portrayal of human interactions with nature. It illustrates that nature

is vital for the continuity of life, as seen in the following passages:

“*Gamalama coughed for days. He fidgeted until it finally erupted, taking out everything in his stomach. The earth is also constantly shifting. Small earthquakes happen all the time to tear down large and sturdy buildings*” (Pages 104-105).

“*Matara recounted Pak Zul's story about human souls who had been the patrons of this island for five hundred years. They were people who died in battle or were killed both by the sultanate and by the Portuguese. Those souls remain alive on this island today. Those fortresses are their homes... those souls will kill anyone who will damage their fortress*” (Page 194).

Another significant work is *Mata di Tanah Melus*, which similarly highlights the connection between gender and ecology. This novel features characters like Atok and Mata in a setting filled with natural beauty, where they encounter half-human beings and half-butterfly beings. The narrative also depicts their struggle during a storm at sea, alongside Mata's mother and eight scientists seeking Melus' inheritance.

Okky Madasari's *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* also presents a nuanced exploration of women who are often underestimated. While women are portrayed as weak, they also possess qualities that can be exploited. However, the story evolves to show how many women take on roles traditionally held by men, gaining equal opportunities. This narrative underscores the notion that men and women deserve equal rights and opportunities in all spheres, including education and environmental conservation.

Furthermore, Tere Liye's *Si Anak Kuat* addresses the relationship between gender and nature. Although not overtly focused on environmental themes, the novel conveys that women are susceptible to ecological issues,

¹⁰ Setiyawan, R., & Lestari.

positioning them as one of the most affected groups in environmental conflicts. This vulnerability highlights the broader societal challenges women face.

These narratives' depictions of women and nature provide a strong foundation for an ecofeminist perspective. As Warren articulates, the interconnectedness of oppression faced by women and environmental degradation can be analyzed through an ecofeminist lens, offering insights into the complex dynamics of gender and ecology.¹¹

B. Power Relations and Marginalization in Gender and Ecology

This section explores how groups, individuals, and nature are marginalized within discourse. A dominant group exerts greater control over events and their meanings, while marginalized groups often remain objects of interpretation, depicted in a secondary light. An ecofeminist perspective critically dissects and elucidates these dynamics.

In Indonesian folklore, such as *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih*, the exclusion of women and nature is vividly portrayed. This exclusion is evident in the names and plotlines of the story. The two central figures, represented by the titular plants, are depicted as conflicted women. They are placed in misogynistic roles, positioned against each other in a rivalry for the affection of a man, who serves as the focal point of their contest.

A telling instance of this exclusion is captured in the following dialogue:

“Not the contents of the jewellery; various terrifying poisonous snakes came out from inside the gourd. Shallot and her stepmother finally realize what they were doing was wrong.”

In this narrative, snake and gold are ecological metaphors. The snake emerges as a negative natural element, symbolizing danger and

threat. Instead, gold embodies wealth and the human desire for material possessions. *Bawang Merah* and her mother anticipate discovering beautiful, glittering gold jewellery within the pumpkin. The portrayal of the snake as a menacing presence underscores an anthropocentric viewpoint in which animals are frequently seen as threats to human existence and must be eradicated. Conversely, gold, extracted from the depths of the earth, signifies the exploitation of nature for human aesthetic and material gain—this relentless pursuit of gold positions it as a valuable commodity, leading to environmental degradation.

This depiction aligns with Warren's assertion that both women and nature frequently face exploitation and marginalization. Moreover, the metaphor of the snake in this folklore is particularly compelling. Snakes are portrayed as dangerous and undesirable, reinforcing the idea that they represent something harmful. In this context, the snake is a metaphor for negativity and threats to humanity. Humans often elevate themselves to a position of "Übermensch" or superhuman, viewing themselves as superior to other beings, including animals.¹² As a result, to conceal their shortcomings and elevate their status as superhumans, humans sacrifice, humiliate, and label animals with derogatory terms, using them to personify human flaws.

One notable example is the folklore *Cindelas*, a popular tale from East Java. An analysis of the story reveals elements of misogyny, mainly reflected in the words of the king's concubine regarding the king's consort. This portrayal not only reinforces negative stereotypes about women but also illustrates how power dynamics and gender relations are woven into the narrative.

“The one who did this to me was your empress. It seems that the empress wanted to kill me so that the affection for him should only be to him, and the royal power would fall into his hands.” replied the king's concubine.

¹¹ Rosmarie Putnam Tong, *Feminis Thought* (Yogyakarta: Jalasutra, 2008).

¹² Dewi Candraningrum, "Under Keningar Tree, the Bulls Drink No More: Myth of Mother Merapi". Dalam *Body*

Memories: Goddesses of Nusantara, Rings of Fire and Narratives of Myth, *Jurnal Perempuan Dan PPSG UKSW*, 2014, 11–23.

In stories like *Bawang Merah Bawang Putih and Cindelas*, the portrayal of women reflects elements of misogyny. Misogyny refers to the ingrained prejudice against women, often manifesting as hostility or the devaluation of women in various social roles. In these stories, women are depicted in conflict to win the king's affection, reinforcing a view of women as rivals rather than individuals with their worth. The king, representing masculinity, occupies a central and influential role. The outcome of these conflicts is the attempt by one woman to eliminate another, who is seen as a competitor.

Additionally, a common stereotype is that empresses are always portrayed as gentle and kind, which simplifies and limits the complexity of female characters. This reflects how women are often placed in restrictive roles within these narratives, reinforcing patriarchal ideas. In contrast, concubines are often characterized by dominant traits such as arrogance and jealousy, reflecting two models of exclusion imposed on women. Additionally, the relationship between women and nature is depicted, highlighting how the presence of a chicken can save a woman's life. This is illustrated in the following text:

“Cindelas, the rooster crows, your home lies deep within the jungle, with a roof made of palm leaves; your father is Raden Putra, the king of Jenggala.”

In this fairy *kukuruyuk*, *My lord Cindelas's house is in the wilderness, and the roof of his house is made of coconut leaves. His father is Raden, son of King Jenggala.* the sound of *Cindelas' crowing* states that animals can talk and later save their master, namely Cindelas and his mother, the empress. However, again, the depiction of this chicken is of a man. Illustrated from the text below:

“The chicken's body looks strong and stocky; both legs are muscular stocky.”

Even if positioning the chicken animal as an essential part of life, it still shows that the chicken is a rooster. The tendency to use patriarchal symbols as saviours is still strong. The patriarchal narrative is still dominant in folklore. Another folk tale, *Timun Mas*, also illustrates the same thing. The story depicts a woman who has to face a strong patriarchal condition. The presence of a male giant can be a metaphor for the dominant patriarchal culture. However, this story is different from the previous story. The women in this story are depicted as active and brave. The representation of women who are witty, intelligent and courageous is present in *Timun Mas*' story. The story in *Timun Mas* is interesting in the context of ecofeminism. Women are positioned as active objects. They were negotiating as well as resistance. *Timun Mas* and his mother did this. In addition, using plants as a means of resistance is an essential sign that ecology is an integral part of humans. Illustrated in the text below:

“Those cucumber seeds turned into cucumber fields with very many fruits.”

“The needles turned into tall, densely leafy bamboo trees.”

“The salt turned into a vast ocean.”

“The paste turned into a sea of boiling mud.”

In the context of ecofeminism, *Timun Mas*'s story breaks the perspective of anthropocentrism, which prioritizes humans over nature. The existence of a symbiotic pattern of mutualism between humans and nature is rarely found in other folklore. This story illustrates that the centre of life is not just men, like many stories. In addition to the folklore above, the novel *Dru dan Kisah Lima Kerajaan* also explains the relationship between gender and nature. One part of this novel describes a *Kalpataru* tree, depicted as a king: a metaphor or the role of a symbolic system about trees and masculinity.

In symbolic domination, there is persuasive power, namely, making people recognize,

believe, strengthen, and ultimately change their worldview. This power is also exercised subtly to make individuals, groups, and communities obey the rules of the dominant party. In the forest, various kinds of plants and multiple types of plants not determined by their environment all grow freely without any regulation and regulation. *Kalpataru*, a symbol of life in the real world, becomes dominant and dominates other living beings. The practice of domination can be successful if the dominated parties take it for granted and are unaware of the coercion embedded in the symbols. These symbols act as opening spaces for communication and interpretation of the signs that have been distributed.

The *Kalpataru* tree symbol becomes less relevant when depicted as the king of kings who dominates life in the forest. Meanwhile, in history and literature, it is said that *Kalpataru* is called the 'Wisdom Tree', which means the tree of wisdom. *Kalpataru* in Sanskrit is also interpreted as a symbol of desire, hope and life. At this point, the symbol of a tree with solid root strength and many benefits is still described as a king or a man. At the same time, *Kalpataru* should not only be about the king but also the Queen. In old English law, a forest is an area overgrown with trees where wild animals and forest birds live. Using symbols of masculinity associated with a tree illustrates that female exclusion occurs through plant metaphors.

Furthermore, the novel *Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi* is one of the most exciting novels in ecofeminism. In the cultural context, women in Indonesian society are looked down upon. On the one hand, they are considered weak, and on the other hand, they have their own attraction, which is used as an excuse by the patriarchs to be exploited. However, over time, many women took part in filling the roles of men and got the same opportunities as men, as described by Matara in the novel. Matara is one of the main characters. Matara is described as ambitious,

innovative, and able to compete with her friends. This is illustrated in the text below:

"Matara will soon be a junior high school student, no longer an elementary school student. A favourite school that many people are after has long been the dream of Matara and her parents. Matara has been working hard for so long, especially in the days leading up to the final exam." (Page 12)

The quote above illustrates that the construction of society is starting to realize that men and women have the same opportunities and rights as human beings. Both women and men can equally participate in everything, including education and nature conservation, as well as equality in enjoying the results of the struggle without distinguishing biological differences as the basis for discrimination against women's rights.¹³ Because gender is not a biological difference or the nature of God, the difference between the sexes of men and women is God's nature. Meanwhile, gender is the difference in behaviour between men and women based on the construction of society. So, the behaviour or traits possessed by both men and women are traits that can be exchanged. It is not always men who can become leaders, it is not always men who can become outstanding students, and it is also not because of men that he should not cry.¹⁴

Matara is described as an intelligent girl who wants to advance and can compete with her friends, so her parents are proud to have her. However, when she applied to her favourite junior high school where she lived, it turned out that she could not be accepted. Her mother was very disappointed with the incident. For her mother, not being accepted in a favourite school is one of the most shameful disgraces in this era (*Mata et al. Gapi:13*). The sentence in the novel describes a family concept in the New Order era where an ideal family contains a father, mother, and child. A father who has power over his family, a mother as a complement, or it can be said with a friend

¹³ B Nurgiyantoro, 'Tahapan Perkembangan Anak Dan Pemilihan Bacaan Sastra Anak', *Cakrawala Pendidikan*, 24.2 (2005).

¹⁴ I. Adriana, 'Kurikulum Berbasis Gender : Membangun Pendidikan Berkesetaraan', *Jurnal Tadris*, 4.1 (2009).

who is behind. The mother has to serve her husband and manage the household, including educating children. Children cannot argue with what is set by their parents.

The concept of the family that creates the ideology of Hinduism, where the role of women is always associated with the domestic sphere, including educating children, has been embedded in the culture of society to this day. So, if there is a failure in children, a mother is the most disappointed and feels most responsible for the failure. In the novel, Matara's mother creates a school she manages by herself. It is usually called *homeschooling*, and it has very strict rules. She told Matara to study with her every day. Moreover, Mata could not play on her mobile phone or the internet.

In a harmonious family, awareness is needed to make it happen. One of the basics of carrying out the role for women is the ideology of ibuism, which is that women can harmonize their two dual roles. Ibuism can also be categorized in the image of women. Housewives (housewifization) is the central role of women in the household.¹⁵ The father's role is as a breadwinner who works outside the home to meet the family's needs. In this case, it is described in the novel when his father gets a new job on the other side of the island, and Matara's mother is described as educating Matara on how to succeed. This shows that part of the domestic image is still visible in Okky Madasari's work. This can be seen in the quote below.

"Just when she got the news that her husband got a new job on the island, a brilliant idea came. He was about to start a new life there for her and her son. He will teach his son. He will make his son the smartest. He will avenge his son's failure to be admitted to his favourite school in his way. He believes that his son is not a stupid child, which is as easy as it is to say "fail" and "not graduate". Now is when he will create his school for his son."

Apart from creating *homeschooling*, Mata's mother also found an *ustadz* for her. This does not make Mata even more burdened; it is the Qur'an lesson Matara looks forward to the most, despite the boredom of studying and working on science and math problems. The reason is that in 2 hours, Mr. Zul only uses 1 hour to learn the Qur'an. For more, he tells the stories of the prophet and about his land, namely Gapi Island and Matara, and listens carefully (Mata et al.; 24-25).

The story above illustrates a connection between Matara and the story about natural events told by Mr. Zul, his teacher, reciting the Qur'an. The eyes feel comfortable and appreciate the tale narrated by Mr. Zul, which is described in the sentence, "Matara listened carefully until her mouth fell open. Even after the story was repeated, Matara continued to listen curiously without getting bored" (p: 25). This is by what¹⁶. Said that women are considered more "closer" to nature than men. In addition, women have an innate sense of nurturing so that they have a more caring feeling, build a community without violence, and have high sensitivity to the environment (Sanuniarti, 2015)

Women and nature are considered weak, looked down upon and can be used. If Matara gets oppressed by her family, Gapi Island is described as getting oppressed by immigrants, namely the Portuguese who tried to colonize Gapi Island and exploited spices to be resold to their country, robbing forest catches and also fishermen's products. Murders took place, and there were hundreds of victims of Gapi Island people whom the Portuguese shot, including the sultan. (Mata dan Rahasia Pulau Gapi: 63). The Portuguese tried to control the island of Gapi and made a fort on Gapi for their place to live. It was in the fort that the Portuguese gathered and the place where the sultan was beheaded (Mata et al.: 73). finally, the new sultan, the son of the old sultan and his troops succeeded in encircling and expelling the Portuguese.

¹⁵ Y Ernawati, 'Representasi Ibuisme Dalam Novel Kinanti Karya Margareth Widhy Pratiwi', *Jurnal Perempuan Dan Perlindungan Anak.*, 2016.

¹⁶ V. V Sanuniarti, 'Boenthelan Sebagai Upaya Mengurangi Sampah Kantong Plastik: Kajian Ekoeminisme', *Jurnal Lingkungan Dan Pembangunan*, 1.3 (2015), 227-39.

Responding to this description, Shiva assesses that¹⁷ Through his ecofeminism, he assesses that Western propaganda in proclaiming the idea of 'civilization development' has made the Eastern nation a colony. The West considers Eastern nations thick with traditional wisdom as a backward nation, so development projects with the ideology of capitalism are chosen as a tool for achieving 'progress' according to the Western model of progress.

The sultan who had returned the honour of this country died. He is the sultan who expelled the Portuguese and has returned this earth to his people... There will be no more such a king in this land. The whole country is grieving and losing. The universe also showed its sadness. Gamalama coughed for days. He fidgeted until it finally erupted, taking out everything in his stomach. The earth is also constantly shifting. Small earthquakes happen all the time to tear down large and sturdy buildings (Mata et al.: 104-105)

The relationship between human and natural interactions is grouped into two. Namely, human life that adapts to nature and human life that dominates nature. Human nature is greedy, making humans do anything to fulfil their desires. Not only dominating nature but also dominating their fellow human groups. Moreover, those who have power manage to dominate.

Nature is like a mother who always accompanies people's lives; every tradition is integrated with the pattern of life. Harmony becomes evidence or a tangible sign of every series of daily needs. When greedy people dominate nature and groups of oppressed people, nature will unite with those oppressed because of their equal status, namely being discriminated against; there is a sense of belonging and mutual care between the two. As described in the quote above, nature expresses its sadness when the wise and responsible person who has saved nature from the clutches of greedy people leaves the world and its contents, mountains erupt,

earthquakes occur almost daily, and large buildings collapse. Gapi Island is considered an underdeveloped area, and there has been no progress in the economic sector, with the description that most people's livelihoods are farmers and fishermen. As Ratna Sukmayani et al. in Adon Nasrullah Jamaludin (2016: 75) stated, there are several main characteristics of developing countries, including most of the population (>70%) working in the agricultural sector. b) the industry has an agrarian background, mainly utilizing forestry, agriculture, and fishery products (first and second-sector industries). c) agricultural workers rely on human labour; the position and role of women are very limited and tend to be seen as second class.

Women's lives in the novel are also described as being very limited in the domestic area. Working women are also described as shopkeepers, where someone works inside the house and waits for customers to buy their merchandise; Matara's mother is described as a wife responsible for her household duties, including taking care of her husband and children. An intelligent woman who can set up a particular school for his child but still has to work for her family without being paid. This is in contrast to the man described as working as a fisherman on the high seas and Matara's father, who is described as a holder of a mall and hotel construction project to be established on Gapi Island.

Because Gapi Island is considered to be still underdeveloped, development begins there with the arrival of Matara and her family to Gapi Island, where her father will carry out a hotel and mall construction project on the island. Development has become a new force socialized to the public and is believed to change the fate of millions of poor people who are still underdeveloped.

The construction will be done right on the fort building, a heirloom of Gapi Island. The

¹⁷ M. B Solichin, 'Ketika Alam Dan Perempuan Lembah Baliem Diperkosa Oleh Antroposentrisme Kapitalis: Kajian

Ekofeminisme Dalam Novel Tanah Tabu', *Semiotika*, 19.1 (2018).

sultan managed to surround the Portuguese in the fort and finally drive him away. The people of Gapi Island believe the fort is a heritage that must be preserved. Meanwhile, development will be hampered if the traditional community praises the traditions passed down from generation to generation. They assume that changing traditions will bring danger. The attitude of people who worship tradition hinders change (Simanjuntak & Pasaribu, 1986, pp. 46-48). People believe that the fort is a sacred fortress; whoever tries to destroy it will be spiders ready to attack it and cause death.

"Matara retells Mr. Zul's story about human souls who have been the patrons of this island for five hundred years. They were people who died in battle or were killed both by the sultanate and by the Portuguese. Those souls remain alive on this island today. Those fortresses are their homes... those souls will kill anyone who will damage his fortress." (194)

Matara, a girl interested in stories about natural disasters, including events on Gapi Island, believes in the stories of Gapi Island's story, whether she heard it from Mr. Zul, Molu, or from what she reads in history books. She also saw the incident when her father and his friends who started working on a project in the fort were attacked by poisonous spiders, and some died. Meanwhile, Matara's father was injured in the chest due to the spider's bite. Matara's nurturing spirit led her to stop the project to save the fort as one of Gapi's heirlooms so that nature would not be angry and cause more casualties. She and her friends, the clever talking cat Molu and the poisonous spider, devise a plan.

"We have to find a way to stop this all. Indeed, that is the purpose of our coming to this fortress again, right, Molu? Molu nodded his head. He tried to smile so that Matara would also smile again... While

the spider can no longer think anything. All his energy was exhausted, his stomach starved." (223)

Another interesting title by Okki Madasari is *Mata Di Tanah Melus*. Myths about nature or natural disasters are usually used as symbols of the chaos of the balance between the non-human and human worlds and nature's way of starting to seek control towards its balance (Scott, 2011).

"That little girl, who used to be called Mar by her family [.....] want to see what a giant swallowing the sun looks like." (9)

The giant represents nature's anger, a picture that humans are powerless against nature's anger, and it shows nature as stronger. The narrative above tells a childhood picture of Matara's Grandma, who believed the solar eclipse symbolized evil and anger that could kill humans. However, the incident of the giant who kidnapped her changed her belief because she experienced different things. The giants took her into their pleasant world, full of weeds and trees, and the giants treated it well. In this context, the 'giant' symbolizes an 'angry nature' and is friendly to women. Using an ecofeminist perspective that represents nature as equal to women (Kunze, 2014) emphasizes that the giant friendly attitude towards women is a form of equal relationship between nature and women.

Okky's novel also describes humans' escape from nature through the incident of Mata and her mother, amazed at the freed cows roaming in the wild, in a different scene in Jakarta. Human alienation from nature can be seen in the opinion of Mata and her mother, who feel that domesticated or domesticated animals are better than those left to roam. In this case, Mata and her mother have an exploitative perspective and exclude animals as part of nature by taming¹⁸. Furthermore, the narrative about the Eyes and the Cows illustrates the relationship between nature,

¹⁸ C. J Adams, 'Ecofeminism and the Eating of Animals. Hypatia', *Hypatia*, 6.1 (1991), 125-45.

women and the perspective of belief/spirituality. This depiction appears when Mata, her mother, and the driver who drove them hit a cow, which in Belu culture is believed to be part of their ancestors, so they are allowed to roam free. For hitting it, they have to pay a fine according to customary law. This incident later began all the difficulties Mata and her mother experienced. The eyes see the cow that was hit sadly to see his friend die and then always appears in his dreams to take revenge with a look full of anger. In terms of psychological aspects, this event is a sign of the beginning of the connection between human and animal life. This means there is a transformation in how the Eyes perceive nature, which is represented as an animal. Anthropocentrism views nature as an object, which means that it has no emotions, while on the contrary, this incident makes the Eyes see that the cow as a metaphor for nature has emotions.

Matara's nightmare takes her on a ritual trip to hold a traditional ceremony at Hol Hara Ranu Hitu. However, the journey was not smooth, so they had to stop in the middle of the road to perform a ceremony of permission to the ancestors of Lakmanen. However, it turned out that after the ceremony was finished, they were asked to go home because the ruler of nature did not allow them in Belu. In this case, a mystical approach describes how humans use nature to connect with nature, such as the earth alms ritual used as evidence of gratitude. The failed ritual then led Mata to get lost in the land of Melus, where it was depicted that the protectors of the community were two men, Maun Iso as the guardian of the soul and Ema Nain as the protector of the body of the people of Melus. Both of them protect Melus's land from exploitation. The depiction of men as protectors of the Melus realm is not meant to be based on patriarchy. However, this obscures the dualism that divides men and women from the environment, which seems to narrate that the struggle of nature is women's struggle, so the role of men is excluded and not considered.¹⁹

In another narrative, women as protectors are depicted through two events. First, when Atok and Mata are in the land of butterflies, they meet a half-human woman and a butterfly as Queen. Second, they are caught in a storm in the middle of the ocean, and Mata's mother and eight scientists are looking for Melus' heritage. Laka lorak, believed to be a woman, helps Mata, Atok, Mata's mother, and eight scientists trapped by heavy rain, which turns into the ocean the next day while searching for Tanah Melus. The butterfly queen and Laka Lorak become a metaphor for women as protectors of nature. Laka lorak is believed to be the mother of the earth who saved them from a storm that might kill them. This narrative can be a reproduction of the views of the ecofeminists in the 1970s, who considered the Greek goddess Gaia as a person who protects, protects, and fulfils all the needs of earth's creatures with all her strength²⁰. Through Laka Lorak, which women believe, this also implies implicitly that women have traditional traits such as caring and nurturing, which is intuition or instinct and not a cultural construction. The belief about Laka Lorak and the butterfly queen also reflects that God is imagined through the female character as a substance with strength, love, and independence. In this case, women are placed in high positions and not marginalized.

Conclusion

The explanation above illustrates how the practice of exclusion occurs, both for women and nature. Through an ecofeminism perspective, this research seeks to deconstruct the masculinity paradigm (i.e. an ideology or principle that emphasizes competitive, dominant, ambitious, vertical and self-interested traits), which has hegemonized many things, especially against the framework of feminism and mainstream ecology, and offers alternative understanding in the form of a marriage between ecological thinking and feminism. Some children's stories also show an excellent gender and ecological spirit, such as Timun Mas, Dru, the story of the 5 Kings, and

¹⁹ N. R Howell, . '1997. Ecofeminism: What One Needs to Know. *Zygon*®, 32(2), 231–241.', *Zygon*, 32.2 (1997), 231–41.

²⁰ B. K Scott, *Ecofeminism, Holism, and the Search for Natural Order in Woolf. Virginia Woolf and the Natural World*, 1., 2011.

other similar stories. In this context, Vandana Shiva's ecofeminism concept emphasizes the need for efforts to restore feminine values (love, nurturing and nurturing) as a formulation or offer a solution to the hegemonic masculinity that has permeated in many aspects to be relevant in the story. These women-friendly and ecological stories are based on the overall principle, namely the restoration of creative existence and awareness of nature, women, and men.²¹

Although most stories exclude nature and women, some tend to do otherwise. Women and nature are two things that are related and often experience the same problem, namely exploitation. In some works, women's relations with nature are productively intertwined. In the novel, Ahmad Tohari describes women who are involved in activities that manage the environment wisely. These activities include carefully processing natural resources into food and herbal medicines, using environmentally friendly equipment in daily life, conserving pets and their habitats, and utilizing nature as a medium and a place to play for children. Environmental conservation is the activity represented in Ahmad Tohari's novel, which can be used as a guide for people worldwide to preserve their environment.²² These novels provide evidence of Ahmad Tohari's success in conveying messages to readers about preserving the environment. He describes the beauty and purity of nature in human activities and their negative impact on human life from the destruction of nature. Ahmad Tohari's writings present female figures with wisdom about the environment, manifested in activities that preserve the environment. The description above emphasizes that literary works are a strategic medium to convey gender- and environmental-friendly messages. Children's literature is essential in creating a gender-friendly and environmentally-friendly society.

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²¹ Maria Shiva, Vandana; Mies, *Ecofeminism Perspektif Gerakan Perempuan Dan Lingkungan* (Yogyakarta: IRE Press, 2005).

²² S Yulisatiani, S., Suwandi, S., Suyitno, & Subiyantoro, 'Sustaining the Environment: The Wisdom of Banyumas Women in Ahmad Tohari's Novels', *Rupkatha Journal on Interdisciplinary Studies in Humanities*, 12.1 (2020), 1–11.

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