

Ecofeminism in Chris Wedge's *Epic*

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Abstract

The aims of this study are to analyze the symbols of ecofeminism and the reflection of ecofeminism in Chris Wedge's Epic (2013). In the first problem statement, the researcher analyzes some symbols of ecofeminism and the second, the researcher explains the reflection of ecofeminism in animation movie, Epic (2013). The object and primary data of this study is the movie entitled Epic (2013). The researcher applies two main theories, they are Peirce's semiotics and ecofeminism. This research is kind of descriptive qualitative research. It means that the researcher explains every finding and interprets it based on the theory used. In collecting data, the researcher did steps such as watching movie, selecting primary data, and collecting the secondary data. While in procedure of analysis, the researcher did some steps as like preparing, reading, coding, describing, presenting, and interpreting. As the result, the researcher found that femininity and nature are the symbol of ecofeminism which represented with the existence of woman, flower, forest and animal. The existence of fairies are the sign of human's nature, by that, ecofeminism is reflected in Epic (2013).

Keywords: *symbol, animation movie Epic (2013), Ecofeminism*

Introduction

One of the influential elements of movie is its literary design. Literary design is the elements as like story ideas and the script or contents. The movie usually delivers the moral value for the audience. Sometimes, people are enthusiastically curious to watch movie just to know what the movie tells about. The content of the movie usually is the reflection of human life and its story is usually based on the reality.

The illustration of the animation movie is often similar to the real world image. The human, animals, nature, habits and others are created to be similar. Related to the semiotics study, the illustration in the animation movie can represent unconventional meaning. The representation of nature in the animation movie is actually not only as just the representation of what it is, but it has deeper values than just an entertaining movie for people.

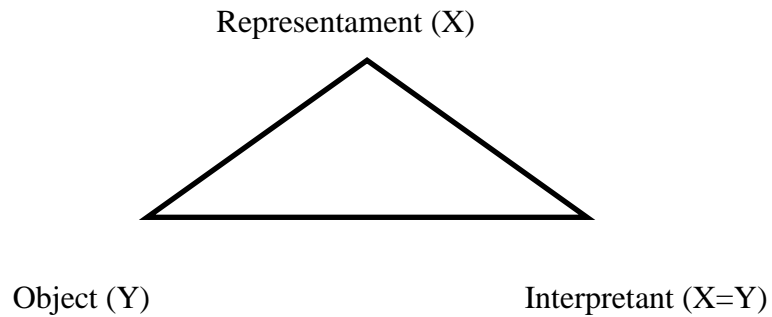
One of animation movie containing many signs is *Epic* (2013). First, *Epic* (2013) is the movie telling about nature which is very good because recently nature becomes the world's issue. The second, the movie reflects the relation of human and other non-human, animals, plants, and even fairy. The third, the movie is full of ecofeminism symbols, where women are metaphorically noted as fertile land where fertile land can grow the plants that is why the semiotic study is applied here. The fourth, the movie presents the good attitudes toward nature which is very suitable for all ages mainly children. The last, the movie has the wise values related to the cultural attitudes toward nature. Considering those reasons, ecofeminism and semiotics theory are best applied to to analyze the movie.

Literary Review

Semiotics

Literature has wide ranges of field. Two of them are semiotics and ecofeminism theory. Semiotics is the study of signs or symbols. The meaning of one sign may differ from the lexical meaning. The phenomena which have been coded as signs are possible to have many interpretations. It depends on the perspective or the point of view. Johansen and Larsen, as stated in Introduction to Semiotics says, "*Semioticss comprises all forms of formation and exchange of meaning on the basis of phenomena which have been coded as signs*" (Johansen, Larsen, 2002: 3).

Sign may represent object, event, action, or one ecological concept. It depends on the interpretation and the context of research's object. (Johansen, Larsen, 2002: 26). It is much easier to know the representation of signs by knowing the major topic of one research's object. Just like what researcher did, *Epic* (2013) presents the struggle to save forest which lead by women, then the concept of women heroic action to the nature is also called ecofeminism. Any signs related to it are considered as signs where it refers to the concept of ecofeminism. In Peirce's concept, the semiotics refers to the triadic relationship. The design is following:



Johansen and Larsen referring to Peirce's thought, he offers the concept of triadic relationship, as following:

- a. A Representament, is something which is close with something or somebody. Sometimes, it is also called as sign.
- b. Object is the real something of a sign or something referred by the representament. It usually can be seen, as like with a picture. But, it can be something imaginary.
- c. Then interpretant is not the interpreter, it is more like the meaning of sign which is existed in someone's thought about the object referred by representament. Three terms above are related one another. Its process of semiotic is unlimited.

Ecofeminism

Ecofeminism adds the commitment to the environment and awareness of the associations made between women and nature. Specifically, the concept of ecofeminism is about the ways both nature and women are treated by patriarchal society (Warren, 1997: 3).

On other side, Ecofeminism is also defined as the idea of women's oppression on matter of nature. Ecofeminism analyzes the hierarchy of women, men, and nature. The drawing parallel of them are can be seen by the ecofeminism theory. As Gerrard states, "The first Distinguishes humans from nature on the grounds of some alleged quality such as possession of an immortal soul or rationality, and then assumes that this distinction confers superiority upon humans. The second distinguishes men from women on the grounds of some

alleged quality such as larger brain size, and then assumes that this distinction confers superiority upon men.” (Gerrard, 2004 : 23).

There are two kinds of differentiation of women and men in matter of nature possession. From the basic law that human are generally equal. Then, What make them feel different is because first, the possession and rationality gives the assumption to the general opinion which lead human to the superiority. The second is the larger brain size of men that lead them to feel more superior. Related to ecofeminism, women are more superior in matter of empowering nature because women are equated with the land, which is fertile and can regrow the plants.

Research Methodology

This research is a kind of descriptive qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative research is focused on finding and exploring the representation, meaning, or the enhancement of shared pattern of behaviour over the time. Descriptive qualitative research tends to use words rather than numbers. By that, the data used is in form of text. The researcher interprets the data and refers to the theory used. By other words, it is in form of description and interpretation. (Cresswell, 2009: 176)

In qualitative research, it follows some steps such as, applying the research approach, fixing what theory applied or its theoretical framework, stating clearly its research object, stating what data applied, the data must be valid and reliable, and following the step of collecting and analyzing data.

Discussion and Findings

By applying Peirce’s semiotics study and ecofeminism, the researcher focuses on gaining the ecofeminism’s symbols. Therefore, the finding of ecofeminism’s symbols and the reflection of ecofeminism are considered as the main discussion of this analysis.

1. Symbols of Ecofeminism Represented in *Epic* (2013)

Ecofeminism can be reflected in many things, one of them is found in animation movie entitled *Epic* (2013). To know deeper about the analysis of ecofeminism's symbols, the discussions is as follows:

Picture of Woman's Beauty Femininity

Femininity is an abstract noun, but it can be represented through some seen and unseen objects. The visible objects as like flower, woman, lipsticks, and others refer to femininity. The invisible things are represented by mostly adjective, like cuteness, loveliness, intelligence, and etc (unseen by eyes). The femininity usually exists in woman herself. Femininity can be represented in form of beauty, behaviour, life style, role, and others. Back to Peirce's conventional thought, the design of woman as the iconic sign of femininity is below:

00:22:05,424 --> 00:22:11,896

MOM : Isn't she pretty?

KID : She's awesome! She moved those trees with her mind!

Mom, can I be queen when I grow up.

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

The dialogue above is between Mom and a Kid. They were just the common fairies. They adored Queen Tara's beauty and power. Queen Tara is described as elegant and powerful character. The bold sentence above shows that Queen Tara is feminine because it is said that she is pretty. Therefore, the bold sentence above shows that the femininity exists in Queen Tara's self by the performance of her prettiness.

Based on the explanation above, the dominant characters as like MK and Queen Tara present their femininity where their femininity is delivered through the beauty, loveliness, and the woman's feeling. Those show that woman is a creature that has love affection. How woman associated with nature is proven that by owning the beauty, feeling and loveliness, she does not tend to do destruction. Oppositely, she cares to the nature. As the conclusion, the woman as symbol of femininity represents the ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013).

Flower

Another iconic sign of femininity is flower. Flower is noted as the iconic symbol of femininity since it is related to woman-ish. The rule of iconic sign is as well as

it has the similarity to the object and it is no need to be learned since it is conventionally recognized. Referring to Peirce's thought, the design of triangle meaning semiotics is below:

In the context of movie, the pod of flower is a term that refers to the heir of Queen Tara. Queen Tara and the followers are told looking for the pod. What did the pod for? Actually, Queen Tara had to choose the pod, so the forest would stay green.

00:11:35,862 --> 00:12:00,118

RONIN : **You know they'd do anything to stop you from choosing an heir.** But don't worry, I've got a plan.

QUEEN : When we were kids he wasn't so serious.

RONIN : Would you like to hear my plan?

QUEEN : And he had the sweetest smile.

RONIN : Look, instead of a public ceremony, I go in with a small platoon...pretend we're stopping for a drink.**We grab a pod, bring it back to you. It blooms, the life of the forest continues.** We're in, we're out.

QUEEN : (LAUGHING) It doesn't work that way.

(Epic Movie Script : 2013)

Based on the conversation above, it is clear that the '*Pod*' is the representation of Queen Tara's heir. The heir of Queen Tara later would be the leader of forest. The heir would be able to grow the forest and could fully control the forest. It then rises the same interpretation of '*pod*' meaning. By the quotation above, it also means that the '*pod of flower*' is the symbol of rebirth and new generation. In this case of course refers to the growth of plants.

As the conclusion, how Queen Tara selects a girl not a man to replace her position as the Queen of forest where in the process of selection refers to the pod of flower that has three colors which means a new generation, is fit to the concept that woman is associated with nature. By other words, it reflects ecofeminism.

Picture of Forest Nature

Nature as the symbolic sign of ecofeminism is derived from the word '*eco*' that means nature. Nature is included anything related to human, animals, forest, land, water, sky, and other living or unliving creature. Nature is the symbol of harmony since all elements gathered become one. Related to the movie, two iconic signs of nature are forest and animal. Forest is the iconic sign of nature. It is noted as

iconic sign of nature since forest is one of the icon of nature besides animal. The common understanding, forest is about trees, land, green, river, animal, wind, and others.

The researcher concludes that forest is the symbol of life. There are many creatures live for instances, human, animals, plants, and even fairy. The process in gaining the meaning of forest is drawn below. Queen Tara and Friends Mandrake and Friends Struggle to save forest Struggle to destroy forest

At the design above, the two opposition groups are involved in a violent war. Queen Tara and friends won the war, and forest still grew well after Mandrake and friends vanished. As the result, forest stayed green. By the semiotics process above, forest is the symbol of life. Ecofeminism also examines the attitude towards nature. Related to ecofeminism, forest as the iconic sign of nature symbolizes the living where it is reached by treating well the nature, as Queen Tara did.

Animal

Applying Peirce's theory, the design of animals as the iconic sign of nature is below, Animal symbolizes the balance for plants. According to ecological science, certain animal gives benefit for plants, and plants give benefits back. The term for this is called *mutualism*. The example of *mutualism* exists in the movie *Epic* (2013). That was when the slug kept the moist of pod's flower. While the benefits or the slug was he got like a shelter to survive. Slug commonly sticks to lotus, or plants lived in water.

00:33:20,833 -->00:33:35,946

GRUB : **We are the official Pod caretakers, sir. It can't survive without us. We keep it moist. Moist is what we do.**

RONIN : You're kidding. You're not kidding. Fine.

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

The conversation above is between Grub, a snail, and Ronin or the leaf man. Grub said that the pod brought by MK would not survive without him. It was because the pod should always be moist. The only one way was by attaching the pod to the snail and slug. It means that animals are as the balance of living. Related to ecofeminism, how animal be treated determines the balance of nature. As the

previous discussion above, that forest is the symbol of living. If nature's balance is disturbed, then the living will be disturbed. Animal and forest are unseparated, since one another is functioned as the balance of nature. Ecofeminism is also discussing how whole creatures live in balance. As the conclusion, the existence of animals in the forest symbolizes the balance of living. In other words, it fits to the concept of ecofeminism.

2. The Reflection of Ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013)

Ecofeminism is reflected in the animation movie *Epic* (2013) are as follows:

Existence of Nature

The existence of nature and its interconnection with women, animals, trees, and other creatures are a sequence of ecofeminism concept. Woman gets more intension in ecofeminism since the discussion of nature is inseparable from the social construction of gender. *Epic* (2013) represents the existence of nature and woman. The discussion is following:

00:00:45,612 --> 00:01:10,035

MK: "Somebody told me once, that if you stand still in the forest long enough you'll see signs of a hidden struggle. Raging between forces of life and decay. That the survival of the forest itself depends on the outcome. And that the good guys need all the help they can get. And that if you don't believe it, take a close look."

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

Related to ecofeminism, MK, as a woman, told the representation of forest. From the narration above, the interconnection between MK and representation of forest is clear drawn. How a woman not a man that tells the narration about representation of nature goes in line with ecofeminism, which is how woman is associated with nature.

The Different Role of Woman's and Man's Group

Based on ecofeminism perspective, woman and man has different role in matter of nature. Based on the movie's content of *Epic* (2013), the different role among the woman's group and man's group is following

Based on each group's characteristic, it is drawn the differences role of man and woman's group in matter of empowering nature. The opposite role of

both group shows that the reflection of ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013) does really exist. Beside that, the rule that woman is associated with nature is really fit. The nature that woman tends to use the feeling rather than logic influences how a woman decides and acts. In this case, the woman decides to keep nature. Related to ecofeminism, woman tends to love nature rather than to mess nature. As the conclusion, woman's role in *Epic* (2013) reflects the concept of ecofeminism.

Ecofeminism as the Result of Deforestation

One of the environmental issues is deforestation. Environmental issues according to Warren are the feminist issues since woman is associated with nature. In other word, it is right that ecofeminism appears as the result of forest destruction or deforestation. The issue is also reflected in *Epic* (2013). The forest destruction is done by Mandrake and friends which they are noted as male's characters.

00:14:29,636--> 00:15:05,970

DAGDA : **She needs to be cut down! At the root!**

MANDRAKE : Exactly. Today we'll show them you just can't stop the rot. If the queen dies without an heir...the Leafmen can't regrow anything. The balance swings in our favor forever. **Leaving you and me...rulers of a desperate, desiccated kingdom.**

DAGDA : I won't let you down...Dad. I know you won't.

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

The dialogue above is spoken by Dagda, the Mandrake's son. Dagda always followed his dad, whatever it was. Dagda followed to destroy forest, and one of his way was by oppressing Queen Tara and friends and nature. Dagda said that he wanted to kill Queen Tara and friends, until nothing was left.

Women's Reaction toward Man's Oppression

One of ecofeminism's intentions is on woman who goes in line with Gaard's idea that is the oppression over genders in matter of nature. In the movie, it is told that woman did such reaction toward the oppression over man. The women's reaction over the man's oppression is presented in *Epic* (2013). The representation is as following.

00:27:15,501 --> 00:27:22,373

RONIN : Your Majesty, come with me!

QUEEN : **Take her to safety! I have to lead them away from the**

crowd!

KID : You're totally my hero!

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

The dialogue above is in the scene when Queen Tara oppressed by Mandrake and followers. It was when Mandrake and followers insisted to take pod from Queen Tara. There, Queen Tara was caught by the Boggans, and she struggled hardly to save the pod. She said "*I have to lead them away from the crowd!*". It shows how the Queen wanted to defeat Mandrake and friends that was by doing tricky way, so that she could save her followers. Related to ecofeminism, it gives the understanding that woman is actively did oppression too. Woman's oppressions is as the result of man's oppression. As the result, woman's oppression in matter of nature reflects the concept of ecofeminism.

Power Hierarchy in Ecofeminism

Women and men have different position in the power's hierarchy of nature. Its hierarchy is drawn as follows:

Nature is possessed by all genders. However, in ecofeminism, women are positioned higher than men. As represented in the *Epic* (2013) is below.

00:11:19,011 --> 00:11:39,197

RONIN : **Queen Tara**, we need to discuss today's ceremony. The Boggans have crossed our border again.

QUEEN : You're not getting enough sunshine. Yes, it's Ronin. **Well, I think he looks silly kneeling.**

RONIN : but I can't get him to stop doing it. I think the Boggans are scouting our defenses. You know they'd do anything to stop you from choosing an heir.

(*Epic* Movie Script : 2013)

The script above is between Ronin (a man), the trusted man of Queen Tara. Queen Tara as the leader had the right to choose the heir of the forest. Ronin's position was lower than Queen Tara. In the story was told that Ronin had a plan about the parade of pod picking, he confirmed it to Queen Tara first. It shows that Queen Tara holds more important role than him. Beside, since their positions were different, Ronin honored Queen Tara by kneeling in front of her, no matter how close their relationship was. It shows that Queen Tara's position as woman is

higher than Ronin as a man. As the result, in ecofeminism, the upper position is held by woman, by all means, woman's position is higher than man in matter of empowering nature.

Epic (2013) presents the women as the leader. First was Queen Tara. She was the leader of good fairy. The second was, the little girl. She was the heir of Queen Tara. Queen Tara's position as the leader was given to her. It then makes a conception that the best ruler of the nature is woman. That conception is fit to the ecofeminism.

The Lesson of the Attitudes toward Nature

The researcher found that the existence of good and bad fairies is the reflection of human nature. Human normally did the good and bad things. It is influenced by their attitudes. Related to nature's philosophy, when human has good spirit, they will tend to keep nature, and as reward the life will still go on. In other hand, when human has bad spirit, they will tend to destroy nature, and as the punishment, the death comes. As the result, the existence of fairies symbolizes the human's spirit, the good fairy is good spirit and the bad fairy is bad spirit. Ecofeminism as one of literary criticism that also examines the attitude of how human treat nature. Thus, the existence of good and evil group of fairy is the proof of cultural attitude toward nature, which it is a part of ecofeminism concept.

Conclusion

Femininity is performed by the existence of woman and flower. The existence of women represents the femininity by their beauty, feelings, and affection. The femininity of women leads them to the action of loving. In addition, flower also represents femininity. By the physical form of flower that has three colors, they are red, white and green; it leads the researcher to take the conclusion that the combination of three colors means the regrowth of plants.

As the conclusion of first mission, the researcher finds some of ecofeminism's symbols, such as femininity which represented by the existence of women, flower, and nature which represented by the existence forests and animals. Four signs above represent the concept of ecofeminim in *Epic* (2013).

The second is the reflection of ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013). Ecofeminism consists of any sequence concepts. The researcher concludes that the reflection of ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013) is reached by several representations. First, it is begun with the representation of nature's existence, then it leads to the different role between man and woman where it guides woman to be associated with nature, then the man did such deforestation and women did such oppression of the deforestation, then it results the power hierarchy of genders in matter of nature, that woman is upper than man. After all, the existence of female (good fairy) and male (bad fairy) symbolizes human's behaviour. When human have good behaviour, they will tend to keep nature alive, while when human have bad behaviour, they will tend to destroy nature. As the conclusion, the main value of ecofeminism is encouraging to have good attitude toward nature.

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