



Women Representation as Symbols of Mother Nature: An Ecofeminism Perspective in Moana Film

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Abstract

Women are often considered weak and discriminated against, so women rise through the wave of feminism. Ecofeminism is one of the social thoughts and movements that connect women and ecology in facing environmental challenges. This study investigates the relationship between women and nature featured in Moana (2016) film from ecofeminist thinking. The study also wanted to examine women's relationships with ecological issues featured in the same film. This study would look at the relationship between women and nature featured in Moana (2016) film from an ecofeminist perspective and semiotic. The study also wanted to examine relationships between women's ecological issues in the film. The emergence of ecofeminism shows the relationship between women with nature and animals. This study uses a qualitative method which is a textual analysis of the movie in six frames. These frames were selected based on several elements from the mise-en-scene. Once the frames are selected, the frames will be analyzed and form the themes and categories. The results found that women's relevance to these ecological issues is divided into three based on the framework of interpretation of the ecological revolution namely ecology, reproduction, and consciousness, women in the film Moana (2016) are often associated with nature through two ecofeminism thoughts: natural ecofeminism and spiritual ecofeminism. In addition, this study also found that women's association with ecological issues is divided into two based on the framework of interpretation of the environmental revolution, namely ecology and reproduction. This study also shows that female characters in Moana (2016) films are more dominant, showing gender equality.

Keywords: ecofeminism; ecology; Moana film; textual analysis; nature

Introduction

Women are often considered weak and discriminated, so women rise through the wave of feminism. Society often uses a patriarchal framework in all aspects of life i.e. men are more dominant. In film there are still many injustices against women in the depiction (Ahmad, 2019). As a result, the wave of feminism began to view women from

a different angle. The first wave of feminism represents feminist activism in Europe and North America, Egypt, Iran, and India early 1800s. In addition, feminism represents institutional and grassroots activities for women's inequalities (Malinowska, 2020). The primary purpose of feminism is to fight for the humanity of women to be equal to men. As the feminist movement rises, the stereotypes of female representation have improved

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through readjusting and reconstruction in media (Melly & Ceaserlyn, 2021). Ecofeminism is one of the theories under the umbrella of feminism theory. Ecofeminism is an orientation towards ecology and the latest developments in feminism theory (Chen, 2014). Ecofeminism is taken from two words, namely ecology and feminism. Ecology is a study that emphasizes the interrelationship of good living that includes ecosystems such as nature, animals, and plants. In contrast, feminism is an awareness of the oppression of women in society in the workplace and family (Siti, 2017).

Ecofeminism can be defined as one of the social thoughts and movements that connect women and ecology in facing environmental challenges (Chen, 2014; Ozturk, 2020). Ecofeminism is not only associated with women but also associated with women's spirituality (Brammer, 1998). Ecofeminism also examines the relationship between oppression against nature and gender. At the same time, it also clarifies gender boundaries, natural control, country, species, and societal inequality (Kongwattana, 2018). This study would like to look at the relationship between women and nature featured in *Moana* (2016) film from ecofeminist thinking. The study also wanted to examine women's relationships with ecological issues featured in the same film. The emergence of ecofeminism shows the relationship between women with nature and plants and animals. According to Sujinah et al. (2019), ecofeminism is a dialect that simultaneously moves through concepts and practices in solving human relations problems.

Moreover, according to Resky & Roro (2019), ecofeminism is a concept about women concerned with nature. In contrast,

Grace et al. (2017) state that ecofeminism bears similarities to this multicultural view of feminism and globalization. Ecofeminism exhibits a form of human activity dominating the world.

The film serves as a medium of presentation to society in shaping thinking (Resky and Roro, 2019). This study would like to look at the relationship between women and nature featured in *Moana* (2016) film from ecofeminist thinking. The study also wanted to examine women's relationships with ecological issues featured in the same film.

The *Moana* (2016) film was chosen because this film was different compared to other Disney princess films because *Moana* is more than a traditional Disney princess (Blastow, 2017). This statement supported by Yamato (2016) says *Moana* is a Disney princess movie in which no princes are hanging around, no boys, no girly hang-ups, and no romantic subplots. According to Kongwattana (2018), *Moana* film differs from preceding Disney animations and implements a new characteristic for the protagonist, not from the royal class but from a small island. Other than that, the ecological crisis is more intensified nowadays, and humans must find a harmonious way of living with nature. So, this film represents the women wanting to prevent and protect nature (Kongwattana, 2018; Susi et al., 2018).

The highlights of *Moana* (2016) film can be seen through a study conducted by Noni Anggraini (2018) in "Representation of Women in the *Moana* Film", which shows the portrayal of women not only doing domestic and household work but being able to do standing work with men. This article aims to describe the representation of women in

the Moana (2016) film and explain gender equality. The analysis used is a discourse analysis which found that female characters in this film are represented as brave, active, energetic, and able to stand on their own.

The study related to ecofeminism is a study by Illona Grace et al. (2017) titled "The Oppression of Women and Nature in the Perspective of Ecofeminism on the "Maleficent" film shows the oppression of women in the Maleficent film. This study also found that this film represents the exploitation of nature by humans. And the oppression of women until the exposure to the dominance of men and women. One of the reasons for the development of various traditions and the women's community has a closer bond with nature.

A study by Pattarapong (2018), in his study "Moana (2016): Negotiating Patriarchy from the Ecofeminist Perspective", aims to explain the relationship between women through films that are analyzed in terms of narrative, signs, and film language based on ecofeminist concepts. This study found many elements about the relationship between women and nature. The women's power has meaning and connotative signs through the cultural idea of ecofeminism.

In 2019, Yogi (2019), analyzed gender stereotypes through the main character in Moana (2016) film. They found the character of Moana shows both masculine and feminine characteristics. However, Moana character shows more dominant is feminine, like loving, tender, and nurturing. Disney movies try to avoid perpetuating gender stereotypes.

According to Mala (2021), the study found the Moana film shows the women characters not concerned with romance. Still,

more on a sustainable spirit of ecological crisis has been found, and women are presented as making concrete contributions to protect and preserve the environment. Besides that, women-nature has a good interconnectedness and beauty in shaping the central theme through ecofeminist representation in this film.

Moana (2016) Film Synopsis

The film Moana (2016) is a Disney film. Moana is very different with other Disney Princess films, such as Cinderella, Snow White (1937), Beauty and The Beast (1997), Sleeping Beauty (1959), and Frozen (2013). Because other films only show the story of the king's princess who lives in the palace wearing beautiful clothes, is good at dancing, and marries the prince (Noni Anggraini, 2018). Other Disney films also often depict the female body as weak and passive (Illona Grace et al. 2017). For Moana (2016) film, directed by Ron Clements and John Musker, was shown in November 2016 and used Dwayne Johnson, Rachel House, and Auli'I Cravalho as the voice of Maona (Blastow, 2017). This 1-hour, 47-minute film tells the story of a girl named Moana who is determined to solve the nature issue by restoring the heart of Te Fiti. This dangerous mission is carried out to save nature that has been damaged by human behavior (Noni Anggraini, 2018).

Moana is the daughter of the Motunui tribe (Chief Tui), who will replace her father as a tribal leader. Since childhood, Moana has been very interested in the sea and wants to sail away from her hometown. Both her parents often prevent Moana from approaching the sea. But everything changes when the Motunui tribe's food sources dwindle due to Maui's

greed. This story begins when the semi-god Maui steals Te Fiti's heart, and then Maui is imprisoned on an island until Moana comes to Maui asking for help so that Maui can return Te Fiti's heart. Maui and Moana faced various challenges while restoring Te Fiti's heart.

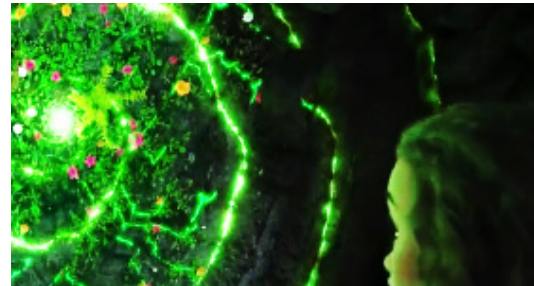
Method

This study uses a qualitative method, a textual analysis of the film in six frames. The selected frames are based on several elements from the mise-en-scene. According to Sikov Ed. (2010) state that mise-en-scene describes cinematic representation in understanding how a film is produced and the reflection of meaning. He added that six elements are formed through mise-en-scene, namely settings, props, lighting (lighting), clothing (costumes), make-up, and behavior (figure behavior). According to Norfaizah & Fazilah (2018), we can read the film script through aspects of film such as storytelling plot, mise-en-scene, character portrayal, dialogue, and visuals. This study uses several mise-en-scene elements such as setting, props, clothing, and behavior in analyzing the text of Moana (2016) film.

Once the frames are selected, the frames will be analyzed using textual analysis. According to Brennen S. (2013), text analysis is about language, what is represented and how to use reason in life. It is an element in finding meaning constructed in social reality. Brennen S. (2013) also adds in the initial textual analysis, the patterns, themes, and categories from this analysis should be determined in advance. Still, they emerge from the researcher's point of view in the in-depth reading material. In addition, Mckee (2003) also defines textual analysis as the analysis

of the text that interprets some text, such as movies, television programs, magazines, advertisements, clothing, graffiti, and so on.

Result



Frame 1: Heart of Te Fiti

The works of by Ron Clements & John Musker in Moana film represent women and nature. Frame 1 represents the thinking of natural ecofeminism put forward by Susan Griffin (2015). This ecofeminist thinking of nature sees that women are a part of nature that carries the traditional qualities of a woman such as caring for and nurturing nature (Tong, 2011).

If viewed through frame 1, Moana, as the main pillar in the film Moana (2016), is the future heir of the Motunui tribe, and Moana, as the future chief of the tribe, wants to restore the fertility of land and sea on their island. The heart of Te fiti (Mother Island) has been stolen by a demigod man dubbed Maui. As a result of Maui's actions, Moana's hometown suffered from a shortage of food sources such as fish, and spoiled food sources such as coconuts turned black. Moana is determined to restore the heart of Te fiti, to restore the greenery and fertility of the soil on their island. It shows that Moana is a major proponent related to the nature of natural ecofeminism because of Moana's concern for caring for their hometown and wanting to restore the fertility of their land portrays Moana as a woman with

traditional traits such as gentle, beautiful, and emotional. According to Fakihi Mansour (2010), in his book *Gender Analysis and Social Transformation*, women are known for their gentle, beautiful, emotional, and motherly nature. The traditional traits of a woman highlighted by Moana show women with nature have a connection in caring for, nurturing, and caring for nature.

Also, another frame shows Moana keeping her pet chicken (HeiHei) from falling into the sea, then while facing Moana's storm and her pet pig (Pua) falling into the sea. Moana immediately gets her pig and puts it on the boat. It indirectly shows that Moana is very concerned not only with nature but also with animals. The display of Moana's frame rescuing a baby turtle from being eaten by a bird and sending it back to sea explains Moana's loving and caring attitude towards animals. Another framing can also be seen through the tattoo painted on the body of grandma Tala (grandmother Moana) in the form of a stingray tattoo. It clearly shows that grandma Tala is a woman who loves nature to the point of being willing to paint a stingray-shaped tattoo on her body. The symbolism of natural ecofeminism can also be seen through the motifs found on the clothes worn by the Motunui tribe, most of which have motifs of flora and fauna, regardless of men or women. Motifs such as coconut leaves, flowers, waves, fish, and many more show the close relationship between humans and nature. On the other hand, the jewelry made from shells and natural resources worn by the Motunui tribe, regardless of whether men or women, represents their love for the environment. It shows that the Motunui tribe greatly values nature and has a connection with the environment.

Spiritual Ecofeminism

The thought of spiritual ecofeminism is a thought articulated by Starhawk & Charles Spretnak in which this thought is a cultural thought that views women and nature as sacred, using the analogy that women outwardly possess motherly qualities (Yulia et al., 2021). Moreover, this spiritual ecofeminism is more inclined to focus on the worship of ancient gods and the rituals of the inhabitants performed with nature. Spiritual ecofeminism uses community development approaches such as performing arts (dancing and singing) and practices to preserve communities for each other (Tong, 2011). According to Vandana et al. (in Resky & Roro, 2019), 'love' is the magic of all things.

In total, in the film Moana (2016), there are eight singing and dancing scenes. It shows that Moana (2016) film emphasizes elements of spiritual ecofeminism. Frame 2 shows Grandma Tala and Moana dancing on the beach's edge. It shows her love for the sea (Noni, 2018). Dancing and singing show that women and nature have a close relationship. The motion of the attraction is the motion of the coastal waves.



Frame 2: Spiritual Dance

In addition, another frame shows Chief Tui (father of Moana) carrying Moana up a mountain where there is a collection of

rocks that the previous chief of the Motunui tribe once placed. It indicates the connection between the community and the tradition of the Motunui tribe, who practice rituals to lay stones for generations as tribal leaders so that their place of residence will be more developed. The laying of the stone symbolizes self-affirmation as a leader of the Motunui community (Talin, 2018).

Spirituals such as the spirit of the sea, Te Fiti (Mother Island), and Te Ka (devil of earth and fire), are also featured in the film. For example, the spirit of the sea has chosen Moana since childhood to put the heart of Te Fiti. For Te Fiti, Mother Island is a woman's land, but after Maui stole her heart, Te Fiti became a barren land. According to Pattarapong (2018), the main body of Te Fiti is the earth, which in the end, Te Fiti as Mother Island transforms itself from barren to earth. For Te Ka, Te Ka's spirit of Te Fiti has changed due to a combination of earth and fire, resulting from a stolen heart that makes Te Ka angry and wants to destroy Maui and Moana.

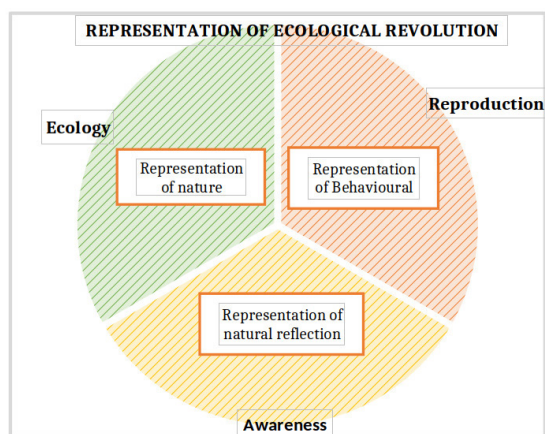


Figure 1. The Conceptual Framework for the Representation of the Ecological Revolution adapted from Carolyn Merchant (1989)

If we look at the spiritual presented by Vandana Shiva and Mies (in Resky & Roro,

2019), the magical love found in this film is when Moana has reached Te Fiti mountain. She considers that Te Fiti's heart skeleton is not on the mountain. Instead, Te Fiti's heart skeleton is with Te Ka. When the sea route opened, Te Ka immediately got Moana. Yet Te Ka's behavior changed from aggressive to passive, and Moana managed to put Te Fiti's heart back lovingly. It shows that Te Fiti can feel Moana's love for nature.

Women and the Ecological Revolution

The study also found that women's relevance to these ecological issues is divided into three based on the framework of interpretation of the ecological revolution by Carolyn Merchant (1989), as shown in figure 1, namely Ecology, Reproduction, and Consciousness. Ecology has a connection between reproduction and consciousness which in this film represents nature, such as plants, plants, and animals that are interconnected with humans.

We can see through Moana that chickens, stingrays, baby turtles, birds, and pigs are part of the ecosystem system that has to do with humans. Moana's well-kept pets are chickens (HeiHei) and pigs (Pua). The display of plants can be seen as a coconut tree which is a source of food for the Motunui tribe, and the flowers that are the decoration on the heads of women of the Motunui tribe show a clear representation of nature in the film Moana (2016).



Frame 3: Flora and Fauna Environment

Frame 3 displays a beautiful archipelago background full of beautiful flora and fauna. According to Noni (2018), Moana features a traditional archipelago background. It shows that the archipelago where Moana lives still retains the beauty of nature, and it has not been explored with development. The maximum use of natural resources is seen in this film through the movements during the dance danced by Moana. The use of every corner of the coconut tree shows the attitude of human beings toward nature (Kongwattana, 2018).

Moreover, an ecological problem unraveled in the film is the destruction of surrounding charities as a result of greedy human attitudes. The display of Maui's mean attitude has caused environmental destruction, in turn spreading to other islands, thus affecting human food resources. Lack of food resources is one of the ecological issues faced.

The second element is that reproduction represents behavior as a human and non-human role in daily life. Relationships between human beings, family, and community socialization carry their respective parts in everyday life (Gadis Arivia, 2006). The depiction of the Motunui tribes working together to collect food sources such as coconuts and fishing shows

a solid reproductive element. Their happy lives (singing while dancing) and doing daily activities together, such as learning to draw, dance classes, piercing, and tattoo art, are also featured in the film.

The relationship between grandchildren with grandmothers, parents with children, and the relationship of tribal chiefs with the community are seen to have their distinct roles. Grandma Tala advised and encouraged Moana to continue her intention to lay the Te Fiti stone. The part of Moana's parents forbade Moana to go to sea since childhood due to her father's experience of losing a good friend while sailing. However, in the end, Chief Tui agreed with Moana's decision and allowed Moana to sail alone.



Frame 4: Relationship between chiefs and community

A precise reproductive framing can be seen through frame 4, which is when members of the Motunui tribe show an empty net, the effect of the destruction of Te Fiti. It represents the relationship between the tribal chiefs taking on the role of problem solvers in all matters in the community's life. Yet in this film, Moana's character is more dominant, further showing gender equality. The role played by Moana as the future head of the tribe, children, and grandchildren is very clearly highlighted in this film. This film also showed Moana's as an acting chief who always wants the best for their people.

Moana's heroic nature is rooted in her destiny since her childhood dream of discovering what is beyond the reef becomes her mission the moment she decides to navigate the unknown seas to guarantee the welfare of her people (Martin, A.B, 2020).

The last element is consciousness, which represents nature's reflection on human beings. Human consciousness represents the results of natural reflection in myth, religion, knowledge, language, and art (Gadis Arivia, 2006). This element of consciousness can be seen through the science of navigation taught by Maui to Moana by using signs or symbols of nature, such as stars, to determine the direction during sail and the temperature of the hot seawater means being in the right direction. Through learning this knowledge, Moana finally mastered the knowledge of sailing and regained the heart of Te Fiti. It represents that the learned knowledge has used nature as a reference source. Next can also be seen through the dance taught by Moana in frame 5. The dance taught by Moana is a traditional dance of the Motunui tribe that has to do with nature. It can be seen through the swing of the hand dance and its movements. The movements of this dance look like waves of water in the ocean. It shows that this dance is a symbol of nature and is applied in every dance movement.

Discussion

It can be seen through frames 1 and 2 by applying different ecofeminist thinking. For frame 1, natural ecofeminism thinking places more emphasis on women and nature. Framing 1 represents women as part of nature that carries the traditional qualities of a woman, such as caring, nurturing, and caring

for nature. These findings corroborated with Yogi's study (2019), which found that Moana's character is portrayed as a feminine trait like loving, nurturing, and tender. Framing one also explains Moana's role as a critical pillar in managing nature. The qualities of caring and love are not only for wildlife but also for animals. Moana's character shows her love towards the people and respect for animal life by defending their chicken (Heihei) in front of other people, which shows Moana's good friendship with animals (Yogi, 2019; Mala, 2021). Moreover, the symbolism of flora and fauna motifs on clothing and tattoos shows women are highly dependent on appreciation and the spirit of nature. Cipriani (2016) said Moana's grandmother has a few tattoos, like a massive manta ray on her back, representing her spirit throughout the film.

Frame 2, on the other hand, explains the thinking of ecofeminism from a spiritual point of view in defining the approach to community development, such as art performances (dancing and singing) and rituals in maintaining the community. This framing is straightforward as there are eight scenes featuring singing and dancing as community development. The practice of preserving the community can be seen when Chief Tui brings Moana to place the stone as a symbol to the tribal chief for generations so that their abode is more developed. Not only that, the appearance of gods or deities and spirits featured in the film is part of spiritual ecofeminism. Moana brings the ecofeminism ideology. Visual connotes works with the environment, feminism, women's spirituality, and the harmonization of nature (Kongwattana, 2018; Brammer, 2020). The evil spirit eventually turns into good due to a woman's love for the environment.



Frame 5: Natural reflection

In addition, frames 3, 4, and 5 present the interpretive framework of the ecological revolution, reproduction, and consciousness. Ecology has a connection between reproduction and consciousness which in this film represents nature, such as plants and animals that are interconnected with humans. Therefore, the film shows that women and natural reproduction are the leading property that creates a link between them. The character of Moana is described as a woman who gives love to her people and the environment, a reflection of ecological feminism (Susi et al., 2018). Like nature, women can reproduce and create life (Ozturk, 2020). Frame 3 shows the ecological system in the film is still maintained in which the beauty of nature, flora, and fauna is explored with development. Frame 4 shows the role played by Moana as the successor to the more dominant tribal chief, which in turn shows gender equality. According to Kongwattana (2018), Moana's father (Chief Tui) shows the failure of a male and not reliable leader, unlike Moana close to nature and independent and solves the environmental crisis by returning the goddess's heart to Te-Fiti. Frame 5 describes human consciousness as representing the results of natural reflection in myth, religion, science, language, and art. Frame 5 shows that the traditional dance art of the Motunui tribe represents nature and can be seen through the hand-wave dance moves and movements. In addition, navigation science is also featured,

where Maui teaches this science, showing that the representation of natural reflection helps in the science of navigation.

Moana's family relationship can be seen more emotionally (Noni, 2018) through the display of strict parental control against Moana to get out of the island and play in the sea, clearly showing that Moana's soul is closer to nature. From a young age, Moana loved to play in the ocean but was forbidden by her parents. It shows that Moana's character is described as naturally loving nature (Kongwattana, 2018).

Conclusion

We conclude that Moana displays different ecofeminism thinking, namely natural and spiritual ecofeminism. The film also represents women as symbols of the Mother of Nature from the natural qualities of women who care, nurture and care for nature. In addition, the film also outlines three elements in the Interpretation of the Ecological Revolution: ecology, reproduction, and consciousness. Representations of nature show the connection between women and ecological systems playing a significant role in dominating the film. The behavioral representation featuring Moana's role as the successor to the more dominant tribal chief further shows gender equality in this film. The model of natural reflection explains human consciousness in representing nature as a science and art often associated with nature. Thus, it is evident that this film by Moana (2016) displays different ecofeminism thinking.

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