Ecofeminism Reflected in Chrish Wedge’s *Epic* (2013)

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**ABSTRACT**

How nature be treated by a human (female and male) results in the different roles between the genders. Woman, who is associated with nature did such oppression and results in the power hierarchy among genders. This paper discusses one main problem related to the woman concerning cultural attitudes to nature which is Ecofeminism Reflected in Chrish Wedge’s *Epic* (2013). This research applied the ecofeminism theory. The data were in the form of the movie's subtitle and the supporting data were taken from books, journals, and other sources related to the topic of discussion. The analysis is presented in the form of a description supported by the main data. As a result, the finding states that ecofeminism is represented through the basic existence of nature, different roles between genders, woman's reaction toward man's oppression and power hierarchy.

Keywords: ecofeminism, woman, nature, hierarchy

1. **Introduction**

Nature was born millions of years ago. Nature then fulfilled with the creature called human. Humans as the element of the universe have completed nature. Human survives because of the power of nature. Nature has power by providing natural resources, as like fruits and vegetables to be eaten by humans, and nature also supplies the fresh air to the animals and all human beings. Nature has given many benefits to human life. Human's attitude toward nature determines the balance of life.

*Epic* (2013) is the movie telling about nature and its changes. The changes that happened are the result of human behavior. Nature which is known as just nature then has a close correlation with the human. The interconnection of human to nature and how women dominantly lead the group in saving the
forest from the destruction is the reflection of human’s cultural attitude toward nature. The oppression of men towards women and nature lit up the woman’s reaction. Who is more powerful between genders results in a power hierarchy. Related to the hierarchy of women, men, and nature, from the perspective of ecofeminism, the woman has an upper and more powerful position than man.

This research purposes to analyze the ecofeminism as the issue of woman, nature, and man. The existence of nature leads humans to be greedy and do bad things for fulfilling the greediness. The deed of greediness is performed by some cartoon characters. The behavior of the characters reflects human nature. The oppression done by the man toward the woman in owning nature leads to destruction. A woman's reaction then leads her to grow it. The narration of the movie by other means that it leads to understanding that a woman tends to have a better position than man. Existence of nature finally lits up the different role between man and woman, which finally it draws its power hierarchy. Though it is an animation movie which is just the representation of a human, however, it also delivers a good value related to the cultural attitude toward nature.

2. Review of the Related Literature

This research is done by applying two theories. They are ecofeminism and Umberto Eco’s approach. The discussion is the following:

a. Ecofeminism
Ecofeminism or ecological feminism is a branch of feminism. It examines the connections between women and nature. The term ecofeminism is coined by French feminist Francoise d'Eaubonne in 1974. Ecofeminism is based on the basic feminist tenets where equality between genders, respects to nature, holistic connections and collaborations become the main rules of ecofeminism. Karen J. Warren explains that,

"Just as there is not one feminism, there is not one ecofeminism or one ecofeminist philosophy. Ecological feminism has roots in the wide variety of feminisms (e.g., liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, radical and socialist feminisms, black and Third World feminisms). What makes
Ecofeminism distinct is its insistence that nonhuman nature and naturism (i.e., the unjustified domination of nature) are feminist issues. (Warren 1997: 3)

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 a patriarchal society.

Ecofeminism is also discussing the effect of gender categories to demonstrate the ways of women in dominating nature. The philosophy also contends that the norms lead to an incomplete view of the world. The practitioners advocate an alternative worldview that values the earth as sacred, recognizes humanity's dependency on the natural world and embraces all life as valuable. (Kathryn Miles, https://www.britannica.com/topic/ecofeminism).

Ecofeminism is a joining of environmental, feminist, and women's spirituality concerns (Spretnak, 1990). While King assumes that,

"As the environmental movement along with environmental crises raised the consciousness of women to the decay of the earth, they began to see a parallel between the devaluation earth and the devaluation of women. Women began to see the link as not a false construction of weakness, but as a strong unifying force that clarified the violation of women and the earth as part of the same drama of male control ". (King, 1990)

Ecofeminism calls for consciousness-raising, healing, and communion with nature. There is little direct action, some call for concern and to be involved in crucial issues. For some people like Eisler, Quinby, Plant, Van Gelder, Clausen, Warren call ecofeminism as a movement. However, their idea is broken down by Diamond and Orenstein that said that there is no group of ecofeminists, no declared leader, and no vague form of organized activity. By that, ecofeminism is not a movement since though there are many ecofeminists, but they don't declare themselves an ecofeminist.

On the other side, Ecofeminism is also defined as the idea of women's oppression on the 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 between women and men in the matter of nature possession. From the basic law that human is generally equal. Then, What makes them feel different is because first, the possession and rationality give the assumption to the general opinion which lead human to superiority. The second is the larger brain size of men, which leads them to feel more superior. Related to ecofeminism, women are more superior in the matter of empowering nature because women are equated with the land, which is fertile and can regrow the plants. Gerrard explains that,

"If women have been associated with nature, and each denigrated concerning the other, it may seem worthwhile to attack the hierarchy by reversing the terms, exalting nature, irrationality, emotion and the human or non-human body as against culture, reason and the mind." (Gerrard, 2004: 24).

Women are signified as the tool to oppose the rationality developed as the general opinion. When women and nature is associated together, it will create a hierarchy where women are more superior to men. The women's domination in empowering nature then breaks the rule of the patriarchal system.

The ecofeminism approach is divided into two camps. The first is referred to as radical ecofeminism. Radical ecofeminism tends to the valuation that femininity is "close to nature". Radical ecofeminism encounters the domination of men over women. The concept of radical ecofeminism is women are inherently closer to nature biologically, spiritually, and emotionally. The second camps refer to the understanding that there is no such thing as "feminine essence" that makes women more close and connected to nature. (Gerrard, 2004: 24-25).

By the definitions and the concept of ecofeminism above, the researcher concludes that the keywords of ecofeminism are, ecology that means nature, the feminism that refers to genders, and the commitment to care to nature.
b. Umberto's Approach

Umberto Eco's approach is applied here in the importance of presentation of data to the result of the analysis. So, to enhance the values of ecofeminism, it is reached by applying Umberto Eco's theory. Umberto states that to enhance one meaning of one word or phrase is by making such rational sequences and still in context. Besides, Umberto Eco in "The Theory of Signs and the Role of the Readers" adds that,

"Semiotics has been defined as a theory of signs by all authors who have conceived of it, from the Stoics to Roger Bacon, from Francis Bacon to Locke, from Lambert to Husserl, not to speak of Saussure, Peirce, Morris, or Barthes." (Eco, 1981: 36)

The references are based on the world arbitrary meaning. He assumed that human beings are evolving in a "system of signs". His concept is inspired by Peirce's work. The distinguishing concept of them is that in addition to words and language, it is also addressed non-linguistic and even natural signs, which do signify, based on a code, or previous learning. 

(http://www.signosemio.com/eco/semiotics-process-and-classification-ofsigns.asp)

3. Research Methods

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 a shared pattern of behavior over time. Descriptive qualitative research tends to use words rather than numbers. By that, the researcher uses data that is in the form of text. The researcher interprets the data and refers to the theory used. Cresswell explains that,

"Qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers interpret what they see, hear and understand. Their interpretations can not be separated from their background, history, context, and understandings."

(Cresswell, 2009: 176)

The researcher uses two types of data. The first is primary data. The primary data is in the form of the movie's subtitle and pictures are taken from the movie entitled Epic (2013).
writers of Epic script are William Joyce, James V. Hart, and Chrish Wedge. The second is secondary data. The researcher uses some books of theories, journals, and other references to support the primary data. The data used in this research is collected by several steps, such as watching the movie, reading the subtitle, identifying the subtitle, classifying the data, then classifying based on its relevance. Afterward, the steps of collecting data applied in this research are describing, presenting and interpreting data.

4. Discussion

The ecofeminism discusses some sequence concepts such as beginning with the existence of nature, how nature be treated by human (female and male) then it results in the different role between the genders, then the deforestation happened, woman that is associated with nature did such oppression, and then it results the power hierarchy among genders. After all, the most important of all is the lesson of cultural attitude towards nature. Shortly, to enhance ecofeminism and its value as reflected in some characters, this research is presented by performing the basic concepts of ecofeminism that are the existence of nature. It is the following:

4.a Existence of Nature

Ecofeminism is grounded by the existence of nature. Nature was born millions of years ago. Nature then fulfilled with the creature called human. Humans as the element of the universe have completed nature. Human survives because of the power of nature. Nature has power by providing natural resources, as like fruits and vegetables to be eaten by humans, and nature also supplies the fresh air to the animals and all human beings. Nature has given many benefits to human life. Humans must keep nature so that life goes into balance.

Besides its benefits, nature also sometimes gives a bad effect on the human. The natural phenomena as like tsunami, earthquake, landslide, and others are the example of its bad side. A human can not avoid them because it is out of their control. However, how about the flood, pollution, water crisis, and climate change? They are also the problems of nature. Those all are the result of human habits. As stated by Susan Griffin,
"Ecofeminism begins with the fact of natural existence. Even if nature cannot be entirely nor accurately contained in language, ecofeminism aims toward the visibility of nature as a reality. With this approach, one can begin to understand that social construction (exploitation, destruction) of nature is implicit in and inseparable from the social construction of gender. The equation is not that women equal nature..." (Griffin, 1997: 219-220).

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)

That narration is spoken by MK. It was at the beginning of the movie. That narration told about the representation of a forest. It was told that the forest kept the signs of hidden struggle. Hidden struggle refers to life or death. It can be understood that the forest is neutral. It is a death when people destroy it, and a life when people keep it. MK's statement was delivered implicitly. By her statements, it can be understood that basically, forest as a part of nature is nonaligned by any genders.

Related to ecofeminism, MK, as a woman, told the representation of a forest. From the narration above, the interconnection between MK and representation of forest is clearly drawn. How a woman, not a man that tells the narration about the representation of nature goes in line with ecofeminism, which is how women associated with nature. By the sentence "And that the good guys need all the help they can get. And that if you don't believe it, take a close look", it can be inferred that MK asked to be closer to nature. Being close to nature is noted as a pro-environment. It means that she cares about nature.
Besides that, according to MK, “nature keeps the signs of hidden struggle”. “Hidden struggle” refers to the struggle of all creatures lived in the forest. They survived to live in the forest. Their life depended on human habits. If human destroys the forest, it must be a death for them, while if human keeps the forest, they will still live.

OLD PLANT MAN: The whole meadow just died. Everything was green, and now it's gone.

OLD PLANT MAN 2: I grew up in that meadow.

CONCERNED JINN: Why isn't the queen doing anything?

DANDELION JINN: If anything happened to her, everything's going to rot! We're doomed! We're doomed!

(Epic Movie Script: 2013)

In the conversation above, the forest is told getting rot. Whereas, at first the forest is presented with trees and all the harmonious living. Then, it changed after the group of destruction came and killed Queen Tara. It shows that when the forest was taken over by man, everything will be rotted. It infers to the concept where man is not associated with nature. Moreover, society got worried when the forest lead by men. It also infers that when the forest was lead by Mandrake's group, the harmony of the forest's living was disturbed.

4.b The Different Role of Woman’s and Man’s Group

Ecofeminism also discusses the different roles of women and men in a matter of nature possession. Nature does not belong to any gender. As an exception, the woman may possess nature since the woman is associated with nature. Why a woman is associated with nature is because she has a feminine essence. Its femininity leads the woman to love rather than to destroy nature.

Based on ecofeminism perspective, women and men have a different role in the 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,
The table above is made based on the sequence of scenes or plots in *Epic* (2013). Based on each group's characteristics, it is drawn the role of the differences between man and woman's group in a matter of empowering nature. The opposite role of both groups shows that the reflection of ecofeminism in *Epic* (2013) does exist. Besides that, the rule that a woman is associated with nature is fit. The nature that woman tends to use the feeling rather than logic influence how a woman decides and acts. In this case, the woman decides to keep nature. Related to ecofeminism, the woman tends to love nature rather than to mess nature. As a conclusion, a woman's role in *Epic* (2013) reflects the concept of ecofeminism.

### 4.c Ecofeminism as the Result of Deforestation

Based on Warren's statement,

“Trees, forests, and deforestation. Water, drought, and desertification. Food production, poverty, and toxic wastes. The biodiversity crisis, wildlife, and maltreatment of animals. What do such environmental issues have to do with women, people of color, the poor, and children?” (Warren, 1997:3).

One of the environmental issues is deforestation. Environmental issues according to Warren is the feminist issues since the woman is associated with nature. In other words, it is right that ecofeminism appears as the result of forest destruction or deforestation. What issues is also reflected in *Epic* (2013). The forest destruction is done by Mandrake and friends which they are noted as male characters.
MANDRAKE: You mean their borders? The Leafmen think they can keep us contained...surround our beautiful island of rot...with their hideous green forest. So arrogant! All in the name of balance. I'm sick of balance. No matter how much of the forest we destroy...the queen regrows it with one wave of her hand.

(Epic Movie Script: 2013)

The script above is Mandrake's sentence. Mandrake was kind of evil fairy and he was the leader of rot and forest destruction. He wanted to destroy the forest with his power. He wanted to defeat his rival, Queen Tara which had an opposite mission. Mandrake admitted that how great he and his followers did to destroy the forest, Queen Tara was still able to grow forest easily. It shows that Queen Tara is the right one to take over the forest since her soul and power were associated with nature. By other means, ecofeminism is reflected by Mandrake's group oppression over Queen Tara.

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 the forest, and one of his ways was by oppressing Queen Tara and friends and nature. Dagda said that he wanted to kill Queen Tara and friends until nothing was left.

By the dialogue above, Mandrake added that he would struggle to destroy the forest by his power, which was making plants rotted. He was proud to be the rulers of the desperate and desiccated kingdom. He wanted to kill Queen Tara, by killing her, he was able to authorize forest, to be destroyed. The dialogue above shows how Mandrake and Dagda wanted to oppress women, that was by making Queen Tara died so that the forest could not grow and just be rotted.
DAGDA: How are we losing?
MANDRAKE: Patience, son. The forest wasn't grown in a day.
DAGDA: **But we can destroy it in one.** Right?
MANDRAKE: Ha! That's the spirit! You take the Pod, **I'll take the queen.**

(*Epic Movie Script: 2013*)

The dialogue above is still between Dagda and his father, Mandrake. The dialogue is about the optimism of Dagda and Mandrake to defeat Queen Tara and to destroy the forest. Besides that, Mandrake again wanted to defeat the Queen. That shows that they oppress women. Though they are kinds of fairy, however, it is the reflection of man's oppression over the woman.

### 4.d Women’s Reaction toward Man’s Oppression

As Greta Gaard assumes that,

"Ecofeminism's basic premise is that the ideology which authorizes oppressions such as those based on race, class, gender, sexuality, physical abilities, and species is the same ideology which sanctions the oppression of nature."(Gaard, 1993: 1).

Gaard's idea of ecofeminism leads to the understanding that the root of ecofeminism is begun from the oppression of race, class, and gender. Nature gives the sanctions of such oppression.

One of ecofeminism's intentions is on the woman which goes in line with Gaard's idea that is the oppression over genders in the matter of nature. In the movie, it is told that women did such a reaction toward the oppression over men. Since the man did destruction towards nature, the woman just did not let it, she fought back against the man's oppression. The women's reaction over the man's oppression is presented in *Epic* (2013). The representation is following,

00:26:42,835 --> 00:26:56,614
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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 hard 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 a tricky way so that she could save her followers.

00:38:58,336 --> 00:39:09,212
MK: What did that?
RONIN: Mandrake. **Tara's power always kept him in check.**

Now nothing can heal what he destroys. Except for that Pod.

*(Epic Movie Script: 2013)*

The conversation above has happened after MK became as small as a fairy. She was shocked seeing that a bit part of the forest had been destroyed by Mandrake. Then, Ronin explained that it was only the Queen that was able to avoid the destruction and normalized the forest. However, Queen had gone away. Related to a woman's reaction over man's, it shows that Queen did such oppression, that is by struggling to defeat Mandrake's power. Related to ecofeminism, it gives the understanding that woman actively does oppression too. Woman's oppression is the result of man's oppression. As a result, a woman's oppression in the matter of nature reflects the concept of ecofeminism.

**4.e Power Hierarchy in Ecofeminism**

In a matter of nature, women are associated with the right hand to handle it. Women and men have a different position in the power hierarchy of nature. its hierarchy is drawn as followed,

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Nature

↓

Women

↓

Men
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Nature is possessed by all genders. However, in ecofeminism, women have 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 a more important role than him.

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

*Epic* (2013) presents women as a leader. First was Queen Tara. She was the leader of a 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 nature is a woman. That conception
is fit to the ecofeminism.

### 4.f The Lesson of the Attitudes toward Nature

Nature has a wide definition, it can be human, environment, and others. The condition of nature in
this movie is represented by forest. The condition of the forest depends on the human's treat. When
humans struggle to keep forest growth, it will be growing. However, when humans treat nature badly,
it will not grow. *Epic* (2013) presents nature as something neutral. It is a place for peace. Animals live
in the forest when the forest is kept well.

Forest is not just a forest that stand-alone, however, it has members. It can be human, animals, and
plants. They are connected to a place called nature. Forest as the symbol of harmony priors the
interconnection between humans, animals, and plants. The most important part of the forest's living
is the relationship among the members. It can be the relationship of humans to animals, and humans to plants. Why it is important is because ecofeminism as one criticism in literature examines the relationship of them. Deeper, criticism in one literature digs how humans treat nature and what impacts they get after treat it in such ways. After all, humans get the lesson.

Nature's law said, "We get what we sow". When humans do best, it will be better as a reward, while when humans do the bad thing, it will be a bad thing as punishment.

00:52:12,430 --> 00:52:24,173
QUEEN: I know you're scared. Just stay with the Pod... be with it when it blooms... and then you'll get back what you've given. You'll get back.

(Epic Movie Script: 2013)

The script above is the sentences addressed to MK. MK wanted to be back normal like a real human, however, she had not done one important mission for the forest. Then, she waited, until the day came to be back. After waiting and helping to take care of the forest, she got back to be a real human. It shows that humans get what they did.

Human nature has two sides, good and bad. When humans follow the good, they will get paid with goodness while when humans follow the badness, they will get paid with the badness too. It is the philosophy of life. Both sides determine human behavior.

Related to the movie, human nature is symbolized by the existence of two oppositional groups of fairies. Queen Tara and Friends are noted as a good fairy because their action is saving the forest from destruction while Mandrake and the followers are noted as the bad fairy since their mission is to destroy the forest. They are two oppositional groups involved in a violent war. On the side, MK was a real human. She changed became as small as the fairy's body and she was involved in the fairy's life. As the theory of semiotics study that focuses on its semiotics process, the researcher found that the existence of fairies is the representation of human nature. At glance, it makes no sense. As a result, the researcher uses its semiotics process to prove that it is really yes. Its semiotics process is described below:
According to Eco, dividing characters into the oppositional group is needed to reveal the different values of the oppositional group. By that, the opposition value of fairies can be seen clearly in the design above.

MK was told became as small as a fairy. She was involved in a fairy's life. She joined Queen Tara's group. Queen Tara's group was a good fairy because their group was struggling to save the forest from destruction. By that, they were considered as good fairies. On another hand, Mandrake was another group of fairy. His group's mission was to destroy the forest. By that, they were considered as bad fairies.

The researcher found that the existence of good and bad fairies are the reflection of human nature. The human normally did 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 a reward, life will still go on. In another hand, when human has a bad spirit, they will tend to destroy nature, and as the punishment, the death comes. As a result, the existence of fairies symbolizes the human spirit, the good fairy is good spirit and the bad fairy is a bad spirit.

Ecofeminism as one of literary criticism that also examines the attitude of how humans treat nature. Thus, the existence of a good and evil group of fairy is the proof of cultural attitude toward nature, which it is a part of ecofeminism concept. In conclusion, the researcher proves that ecofeminism is reflected in *Epic* (2013).

5. Conclusion

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 from the power hierarchy of genders in matter of nature, that woman is upper then man. After all, the existence of a female (good fairy) and male (bad fairy) symbolizes a human's behavior. When humans have good behavior, they will tend to keep nature alive, while when human has bad behavior, they will tend to destroy nature. In conclusion, the main value of ecofeminism as represented in Epic (2013) is encouraging to have a good attitude toward nature.
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