

THE REPRESENTATION OF GENDER BIAS IN CHILDREN'S LITERATURE KINGDOM TALE COLLECTIONS

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Abstract

The importance of addressing the continuance of gender bias in children's literature cannot be overstated. Considering that children, as the intended audience of children's literature, should be agents of change in society, particularly with relation to gender roles equality. The issue addressed in this study is how women are portrayed in Arleen A. *Kingdom Tale Collections*, a collection of children's books authored by a woman. The purpose of this paper is to describe and explain the gender bias towards female and male characters in *Kingdom Tale Collections*. This literary work is created by a woman and will discuss the description of the status and role of women; therefore, feminist literary criticism will be employed as the guiding theory and methodology. This descriptive qualitative research approach obtains its data with a focus on feminism literary critique in the study of literature. The results of this study pertain to the portrayal of gender bias faced by the main female character, including the notion that a woman must be beautiful despite her mental and physical weakness, whereas a guy with a strong body is autonomous and intellectual. Second, the woman must be able to cook and sew for her family, but she cannot pursue a job that is substantially distinct from the male characters. Third, a virtuous woman is shown as possessing a weak and timid disposition. This study concludes that there is still a gender bias in the form of women's domestication as a manifestation of traditional gender norms.

Keywords: *Children's Literature, Kingdom Tale Collection, Gender bias, Feminist literary criticism*

1. INTRODUCTION

Today's feminist movement has been so forcefully echoed and has developed so swiftly across the country, and it remains to be seen whether the nuances of patriarchy or gender bias that sparked this movement are still there in literary works (children's literature), which are a reflection of society. It appears to be a topic worthy of discussion. The primary objective of this thesis is to determine how gender bias is portrayed in Arleen A. Arnett's "*Kingdom Tale Collections*" (2008) for children.

Children's literature has unique and identifying characteristics from literary works in general, as stated by Nodelman (2008: 81) in the findings of his study of six different categories of children's literary writings, where children's literature is characterized by a simple and straightforward style of language and storylines with a greater emphasis on action. Thirdly, there are drawings or illustrations that play a significant part as the text's shadow, and the four protagonists are controlled by children or

animals with the features and conduct of children or adults.

The children literature is different with adult literature, its has distinct qualities when examined from the perspective of its intended audience, according to Hunt (2005:3). Children's literature is a reading medium designed for children, According to the target audience, this children's literature will produce a story that is adapted to the abilities, needs, and reading styles of both child and adult readers. One aspect of children's literature that is readily apparent is the nurturing of children's characters; typically, every work will include ideals that the reader wishes to impart and emulate, in this case for children.

Children's stories have a part in developing children's perspectives, the way in which gender is portrayed in a story will influence children's perceptions and attitudes towards acceptable gender-based behavior in society. There are still many children's stories that adhere to gender stereotypes in a patriarchal culture, thus it must be acknowledged that gender has not been represented correctly thus far. Not only do gender stereotypes restrict children's freedom of expression, but they also put them under pressure to behave according to their gender rather than their personality (Singh, 1998). Given the favorable or negative opinions of particular genders that are developed through this social construction, there is no doubt that this will have an effect on children, and if it is done from an early age, it will continue to be ingrained in them.

Based on this premise, this article examines the depiction of gender in children's stories, particularly those with a kingdom theme, as summarized in the

title "*Kingdom Tale collection*" by Arleen A (2008), through the portrayal of the story's characters. This study is intended to provide an awareness of the significance of gender issues in children's literature as a social reflection of contemporary society. To be able to perform a more in-depth analysis of the above-mentioned issues, we require the following, Consequently, this study will be limited to children's literature from a feminist literary criticism perspective and will only discuss gender representation through the depiction of story characters in stories by an Indonesian woman author named Arleen A with the theme of Kingdom and summarized in a story titled "*Kingdom Tale Collections (2008)*". The new in this study is that children literature with kingdom theme where its dominant with picture can be subject of research uses feminist criticism. It means that feminist criticism is not only used to analyze adult literature with the theme of gender bias, but it can also be applied to describe the existence of gender bias in children's literature kingdom theme as well as what the author did in this study. Another interesting thing in this study is that the author of the story is a woman and the discussion will be limited to the representation of gender bias in female characters, how they are depicted in the story, so that the theory and approach that is considered appropriate to be used in this research is feminist literary criticism. Although this theory and approach has been widely used in other adult and children literature research, the difference in this research is the main data source, namely children's literature entitled Kingdom Tale Collection. As far as the author observes, research on this children's work using a feminist literary criticism approach has never been done.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. The Role of Gender in Feminist Literary Criticism

Feminist literary theory is the most pertinent theory applied or employed in this research, as the author will focus on the analysis of the female characters in "*Kingdom Tale Collection*" in this study. The fact that women face oppression and become victims of exploitation is one of the grounds for the creation of the feminism movement; consequently, feminists attempt to carry out huge movements that can break the cycle of oppression and exploitation. There have been differences over time between feminists regarding what, why, and how oppression and exploitation occur, but the concept of struggle that is the spirit of the movement is understood by all: the feminist struggle is fundamentally for equality and control of body and life, both inside and outside the home (Mansour, 2016: 19).

In the meantime, according to Sugihastuti and Suharto (2015:11), feminist literary criticism is required to comprehend the issue that asserts women's roles are just complementary to men's, oppressed, inferior, and so forth. According to Ratna (2012: 194), women should not continue to be sidelined; they have the right to build a new center in accordance with the postmodernist movement. The author concludes that feminism can be understood as a women's movement that demands equal rights between women and men in the economic, educational, political, social, and cultural spheres in order to end the oppression of women who live in poverty, based on some of the opinions presented previously. This practice has existed for generations. While the objective of literary feminism is a

theory for analyzing gender inequality in a literary work from a female perspective, literary feminism is itself a reading theory.

Feminist literary criticism began to flourish in the 19th century; it represents a society's perspective on the equality of men and women and asserts that women are entitled to equal rights and opportunities. The feminist critique approach derives from the feminist movement in the Western world, which is rooted in the fight for equal rights for women. Patriarchy is one of the key concepts in feminism, because, as Beasley (2005:47) explains, patriarchy is a systemic dominance that has existed for centuries. Men have dominated women throughout history. In accordance with this view, Benneth (2004) asserts that patriarchy is not only "a key problem in the history of women," but also "one of the most pervasive problems throughout history." This is due to the perception that patriarchy is a culture that provides men benefits by encouraging traditional gender roles, notably the domestication of women.

In the early 1920s, there were already indications of a new and distinct approach to the interaction between women writers and literature, which led to the creation of feminist criticism as a literary method. Feminist criticism is a development and trend in theory and study criticism that gained momentum in the late 1960s and has continued to flourish since then. Feminist criticism is a (literary) criticism that aims to describe and reconstruct the experiences of women in diverse literary works, mainly novels and fairy tales, whereas drama and poetry are seldom explored.

Considering that children's literature, according to Taxel (1995: 159), is a

product of consensus based on the prevalent beliefs and ideologies at the time the work was written, gender is also an intriguing and important subject in children's literature. In a society dominated by patriarchal ideology, it is anticipated that the concept of gender held by the community will affect or even determine the portrayal of gender roles in literary works, especially children's literature. On the basis of this principle, the depiction of gender roles in children's literature will have repercussions for the propagation of patriarchal values through the depiction of characters in books that children read. Gender stereotypes are frequently utilized as the basis for gender roles (Gooden & Gooden, 2003). 2001). Gender roles as shown by children's story characters frequently provide readers an impression of the attitudes or behaviors that society considers "proper" for boys and girls.

Gooden & Gooden define gender stereotypes as assumptions about the features of each gender, including physical appearance, physical abilities, attitudes, hobbies, and occupation (2001: 90). Moreover, these gender norms are regularly taught to children. Socialized at a young age by numerous parties, including parents, teachers, and the media, which might take the shape of literary works (children's stories). Thus, children's literature research employing a feminist literary criticism approach emphasizes gender justice in the work through the depiction of male and female characters, their roles, as well as the gender of the author and a variety of other concerns regarding the uniqueness of female characters.

2. Previous Studies

The research about gender representation as a theme especially focused on Kingdom Tale Collections have not found yet. Whereas, there some researchs related with this variable that found and become references of this article. First is by Jenny Mochtar (2008), who uses a comparative literary technique to describe gender ideology in English and Indonesian Chicklit. This studies its compare two literature between Indonesian and English. Then there is Siti Hariti Sastryani's (2008), her research is too description of the gender, but ini viewpoint in French-translated children's literature from the standpoint of both gender theory and children's literature. Other reserchers are Ramesh Nair L. (2009) in his dissertation; he analyzes children's literature as a vehicle for the introduction and development of ideology through a discourse analysis perspective. The last in 2013 years Titien Diah Soelistyarini's she analyses feminist literary criticism technique was successful in revealing Gender Representation in Indonesian children's KKPK tales.

The aforementioned four studies may explore gender in children's literature in general, but the author of this study will describe the representation of gender bias in children's literature via the lens of feminist literary criticism. The use of source data also distinguishes it from past study. This study uses the children's book *Kingdom Tale Collection* by Arleen A as its data source.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This reserch used descriptive qualitative methodh. Its according to Ratna (2008: 46), that research is a textual study employing qualitative

descriptive methodologies, in which data will be interpreted through the presentation of descriptive data. Interpretation of narrative texts in the Kingdom Tale collection as a source of data gained through literary study; books, scientific papers, journals, and internet publications as sources of supplementary data for this research.

In order to understand and describe the data for this study, the text of a children's story will be examined using a close reading technique that consists of four reading stages: linguistic, semantic, structural, and cultural. This research will begin by identifying the text utilized as the subject of study, namely *Kingdom Tale Collection by Arleen A.* Second, compile an inventory of data by using four levels of reading (close reading) to Kingdom Tale Collection stories and diverse children's literature studies literatures; Thirdly, data identification is conducted using a feminist literary criticism technique in order to identify and properly characterize the condition of women's position as a representation of gender in the text; and finally, research findings are formulated.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

With the passage of time, the world of employment for women has essentially expanded, but gender inequality, manifested in the domestication of women's roles, continues to be a major social problem. As a result, the gender question is still one of the most fiercely disputed topics in the world. In light of gender ideological preconceptions, it appears that the roles that women can play are still restricted, and even those roles are still dominated by men. Women who have worked in the public sector are in reality still in the sphere of stereotypes

that have been labeled by society, and this is influenced by one thing that parents do, which is that they have labeled every human being since birth; they are able to differentiate between men and women through the process of learning and division of roles in play. The existence of a mentality and division of labor that distinguishes women and men is the outcome of history and historical growth by the cultural system, which finally results in the formation of a patriarchal society. This is a male-dominated culture in which the role of women is subordinate. This study will explore in detail the depiction of gender prejudice in a collection of children's stories titled "*Kingdom Tale Collections.*"

4.1 Result

a. Representation of gender bias in Kingdom Tale Collections Stories

In the Kingdom Tale Collection story, gender prejudice is clearly depicted, as female characters are still portrayed as complements and rulers only in the home sector (domestication), whilst male characters are leaders and rulers in other spheres of life (family, public, and social). Existence of women's domestication as a manifestation of societal attitudes cannot be divorced from current gender issues. In terms of gender, the roles and positions of women and men are dichotomized. The dichotomy is associated with feminine characteristics for women and masculine characteristics for men, and this dichotomy will continue with the division of responsibilities into home roles for women and public roles for men, resulting in the subordination of women and masculine dominated. With the initial classification of women as attractive, compassionate, and weak, it will further consolidate the position of

women who are regarded as the most suited household leaders. In this collection of tales from the 4 Kingdoms, women are depicted as lovely creatures who must master household administration. The woman must be able to care for family members, particularly in the kitchen (cooking), and it is sexist when women's cooking talents are not appreciated economically but are regarded as a natural family value. Another trait of labeling is that women are expected to be submissive to their dads or husbands, who are in fact men in all issues. This submissive attitude toward women becomes a gender bias because women will be increasingly marginalized in all fields because their lives must be according to what men say (either as their father or their partner), and this will perpetuate the subordination of female characters in the story, where women are merely a complement.

4.2 Discussion

Evidence of the gender bias portrayed in this study can be observed in the quotations from the stories that the author has chosen from the ten titles in the *Kingdom Tale Collection*, but for the sake of this paper, the author will confine the discussion to story 1, story 2, story 3, and story 7.

a. Women are lovely and only concerned with their appearance (lazy), whereas men are strong and skilled in a variety of areas.

In the first tale, titled *The Governors Pearls*, a princess named Rosalia is the sole child of the king and queen of the realm. She has a gorgeous look, but her personality is extremely spoilt, slothful, and self-centered. Always, he wasted his time on something inconsequential. His

father intended for Princess Rosalia to become the future monarch of the realm. Upon observing the character of Princess Rosalia, however, her father collaborated with her governess to devise a strategy to prepare her for the role of king. And the way in which Eliana's daughter was prepared to become the king's successor is what the author identifies as evidence of gender bias. According to the quotation found in the first story:

“Although princess Rosalia was very pretty, she was not a very diligent or friendly person. She spent her day doing nothing. She only cared about her appearance”
(Arleen & herlina, 2008: 3).

When reading this material, it will be assumed that an ideal woman is first and foremost a physically attractive person. This lovely label appears to be an absolute that every woman must possess; nevertheless, when it comes to personality traits, it is the negative side that is emphasized, as evidenced by the quote that the princess has a beautiful face but is unfriendly and lethargic.

Beginning with Putri Rosalia's narrative, which is seen as an ideal female figure with a lovely but slothful face, it is underlined that there is a prevalent perception that women spend more time on irrelevant topics, specifically external or physical attractiveness concerns. This portrayal turns women into animals who cannot be easily relied upon to play an active role in other sectors or for others, as they are spoilt and emphasize their own looks.

Because of this original description, assumptions about women's ability to lead themselves and their need on males

in all areas of life have persisted in society to the present day. In the end, this picture of women narrows the status of women in society to the point where they are viewed as mere complements or second-class people with no function other than domestic administration.

In this narrative, the manly part of the male character is emphasised, in addition to that, the competence or expertise in numerous areas is also clearly obvious. It feels different and contrasts with what is told in the second story, "*The Knight's Sword*." Text to read

"There was a young knight, named Charles. Charles was both a good archer and a good swardman"

"Charles arrow always hit the bull's eye no matter how far away he stood. He always won any archery competitions". (Arleen & Ferry; P 23-24).

The description of the male character as a knight with proficiency in archery and the sword can be easily seen from the language above. Being a knight implies that this male character must be strong and have an athletic body, or maco, while the skills he possesses, such as swordplay and archery, increasingly emphasize the idea that this man is not only physically strong but also intelligent in his ability to master a variety of skills. So that, in society, it becomes normal that males are figures who deserve to play a role as leaders and appear as well as authorities in the public domain.

When the appearance of the female character in story 1 is described as lovely and slothful, it is implied that women only have the ability to dress up. In contrast, the male character in story 2 is

shown as a strong figure who possesses valuable and prestigious expertise. In this tale from the Kingdom Tale Collection, gender bias in the domestication of women and the public for men is clear. Below is a discussion of more evidence that can be uncovered and described on the portrayal of gender bias.

b. Women are only skilled at cooking for their families, while males cook professionally.

Another aspect of the ideal woman depicted in this narrative is her need to be diligent and nimble in home things, particularly in the kitchen or during cooking. In narrative 1, it is revealed that Rosalia's daughter is an only child who will inherit her father's leadership position in the future. Due to the fact that the king had only one daughter, he deemed it necessary to conduct a feasibility test on the princess in order to determine whether it was possible for her to succeed him as monarch.

Princess Rosalia was required to pass the examination as well as her father's examination. The test administered to Rosalia's daughter is evidence of a gender prejudice in this children's literary work, according to the author's literary feminism criticism. The first test administered to Eliana's daughter was tied to her ability to grasp cooking assignments. Although it's plausible that the examinations are for things like leadership science or royal management, it's stated in the story that the exam is for things like kitchen proficiency, specifically cookery. This is evident from the quotation in narrative 1:

"There Rosalia had to help her cook meal for homeless people, rosalia

Heated it” (Arleen &Herlina, 2008 : 13)

The nature of the test, which stipulates that women must be proficient in the domestic realm, specifically in the area of cooking, reinforces the story's gender bias. The idea that a good woman must be a skilled cook, or that a woman must possess this knowledge, is a representation of gender prejudice in this situation. This type of depiction in children's stories appears to be a significant reason why women are only permitted to become leaders in the kitchen or domestic sector to this day. It is not surprising that in society, understanding kitchen matters or cooking is the primary responsibility of women, and being busy in the kitchen is the domain of women. Worse yet, in reality and in this novel, even this expertise is not valued socially and has a material influence on the woman's economy; as a result, this cooking skill is regarded a need and is limited to the home.

The capacity of women to cook has traditionally been regarded as normal, natural, and even essential. This is the reason why women who are as skilled as any cook are undervalued, as their moral and material worth is not higher because they exclusively cook in the home. In contrast to what will occur when this cuisine is performed or requested by men, it will increase a man's economic negotiating power. This is shown in Story 3 entitled "The baker boy's wish box," in which it is described that a young man and his father lived in affluence and were well-known in the town since his father worked as a dependable baker in the palace kitchen. The following text excerpt demonstrates that when men run the kitchen or can produce bread that is in

demand in the kingdom, they are ethically and economically respected.

“Gregory and his father lived quiet comfortably because Gregory father was a good baker” (p.42)

Another tale, Story 7, is titled "The New Cook's Soup," and it tells the tale of a little kid named Bob who aspires to become a cook. A text quote appears and it says:

“Open open a time, there was a teenage boy named Bob. He loves to cook. Even when his friends told him that cooking was girl's thing, he Ignore them”.

The story assumes that Bob's male friends oppose his desire to become a chef because they think that the kitchen is a woman's domain, which is another stark illustration of how women have been domesticated. Bob reportedly remained steadfast and content in his decision to become a chef until his talent was acknowledged by the kingdom and he was appointed chief chef of the royal kitchen.

”.....Bob become head cook” (Arleen &Eorg ; 138).

The text clearly demonstrates that cooking is a skill that is economically important and has a beneficial impact on Bob's position, where he will be more valued and recognized socially and materially, hence enhancing his life. Cooking for women is not something that should be applauded; rather, it is a natural necessity for her family, which is different when done by women, as was

the case with tale 1 above, which the author has detailed.

c. Women are timid and subservient, males are brave and independent

The next test that Princess Rosalia must pass if she wants to be her father's successor in the future is that she must have sewing abilities, according to the first story. Even this stitching ability appears to be a must for women, as even a king's daughter must possess it in the story. This is demonstrated in the language that follows;

"...she had to sew many clothes for old people. Rosalia hated it" (Arleen & Herlina, 2008: 16)"

From the two tests that Rosalia's father gave to Rosalia's daughter as described in the first story's text, Rosalia was asked to cook and sew, and both tests had the sentence "*Rosalia hate it.*"

It is evident from the text that Rosalia's daughter, as a woman, has a poor position relative to men's authority (her father). In our society, we subscribe to the standard or rule that a good and obedient daughter is a child who always obeys the wishes of her parents, even if it is against the child's will. And as a child who must accept his father's orders, Rosalia's daughter is a representation of a child who must fulfill his father's wishes, despite the fact that she did not enjoy cooking and sewing. In other words, another image of an ideal woman is one who obeys her father, who is actually a guy, and does not go against his preferences. It is thought that Princess Rosalia will succeed her father as the leader of the country in the future, but because she is a woman, she must obey her father's or a man's wishes. It seems as

though the narrative will be different if the figure being replaced is a guy rather than a woman.

The representation of gender bias in which women are portrayed as weak, timid, and submissive such that they are required to obey the wishes of males (fathers) without going against them is also evident in other tales from this collection.

As seen in the third story titled "*The baker boy's wish box,*" there is a story about a daughter named Eliana who has fallen in love with a young man named Grogery who is just a baker, but she is forced to accept an arranged marriage with a prince determined by her father, and she has no courage to tell his father that he already loves someone else.

"Grogery, I love you but I'm already engaged to ferdinaan of the fsouthern kingdom, I'm so sorry" Said Princess Eliana (Arleen & Andhika; 2008: 51)

Eliana's statement of remorse to Grogery's daughter is indicative of her despondent, submissive nature; even when her father's decisions include her soul mate, she has no choice but to accept his will (boy). According to this portrayal, which is still prevalent today, when women are going to be married, they tend to follow their father's instructions, giving the impression that they lack autonomy and must always rely on men's judgment. In contrast, women have the right to choose when it comes to marriage and matchmaking, because they will spend the rest of their lives with their partner.

In contrast to what the masculine character Grogery describes in his account. Where Grogery, who has fallen in love with Eliana's daughter, dares to

reveal his feelings to his father, his father, who also wants Grogery to be married, instantly attempts to offer a number of women for Grogery to choose from. As shown in the text below;

“Grogery father introduce him to the most available girls in the village. They were all pretty and nice but Gregory wasn’t interested in any of them” “ ...Then Grogery told his father that he had fallen ini love with Princess Eliana” (Arleen 7Andhika, 2008: 47- 48)

From the preceding passage, it is evident that males have control over themselves and are given the freedom to select what they believe to be good, however women must submit to the will of men. This submissive mentality that appears to be possessed by women accentuates the gender bias that women face, bringing the domestication sector closer and closer to the place and role of women in life; they are the only rulers in the domestic sector.

Still in narrative 3, it is told that Grogery's father pressured him to get married as soon as possible. According to feminist literary critique, the reason why Grogery's father urged him to get married swiftly highlights the existence of gender prejudice in this children's literary story. Gregory's father quickly advised him to get married in order to have a wife who could look after him and their home. The following quotation places a lot of emphasis on the notion that women are expected to handle household duties or other personal matters;

“Our home could use a woman’s care. Rememebr how nice it was when we had your mother around,

He asked” (Arleen &Andhika, 2008; 47)

5. CONCLUSION

From the perspective of feminist literary criticism, a reading of *the children's book Kingdom Tale Collection* demonstrates that the author, who is a woman, is still incapable of describing female characters in accordance with the spirit of the feminism movement. Traditional gender roles (domestication) that are still perpetuated in the novel show how difficult it is to escape the patriarchal influence that the author has experienced in society. This shows that the story's content is still biased towards women.

The domestication of women in this *Kingdom Tale Collection* narrative is well illustrated by the representation of gender bias that is read in stories 1, 2, 3, and 7. Even now, people still hold this depiction of gender bias to be true and a common occurrence in society. This paper has at least three conclusions about the representation of gender bias in the narrative. Among the representations of good or ideal women who are considered to be in accordance with their nature are women who are beautiful, spoiled, and mentally weak (their brains are not intelligent). However, this is not a problem because their responsibilities do not require intelligence, namely household matters. In the story, it is also implied that women must be capable of handling domestic responsibilities like as cooking, sewing, and managing their spouses and homes. The cooking skills of women is not a skill with economic worth; nevertheless, this is not the case for males. The representation of women's third gender bias is a weak, timid, and submissive attitude, which makes women

unable to live or thrive without men's protection and as though they are unable to alter their own destinies without the help of men (both father and mother). In contrast to men, she is free to act as she sees fit.

The portrayal of gender in the children's tale Indirectly, *Kingdom Tale Collection* reinforces the notion of traditional gender norms (domestication of women's roles), which reflects the attitudes of contemporary culture. The message sent by the portrayal of female and male characters in the story adds to the formation of children's perceptions of the characteristics of an ideal boy or girl. In other words, the representation of characters in children's stories will persuade children to conform to the socially acceptable gender roles.

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