

Ecocriticism Representation in the Anime *Miyori No Mori* by Nizo Yamamoto

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Abstract. Environmental issues have become a major issue that concerns all parties, including directors in the anime they make. Many anime take the theme of ecological issues which contain moral messages about the importance of protecting and preserving the environment from damage. One anime that tells about environmental issues is the anime *Miyori no Mori* by director Nizo Yamamoto. This study aims to examine the representation of ecocriticism in the anime *Miyori no Mori*. This study uses a descriptive analysis method, namely a method used to analyze data by describing the data that has been collected as it is without intending to make conclusions that apply to the public. The theory used in this study is the theory of literary ecocriticism put forward by Gerrad which includes: wilderness, disaster, residence, animals, and earth. From the general research results, it was found that of the five points explained by Gerrad in the theory of the environment, five points were clearly described in the anime *Miyori no Mori*, namely the importance of protecting forests from damage, natural disasters caused by human actions, there needs to be harmony between human habitation and the habitation of other creatures such as animals, plants, and as a whole we as human beings must be able to protect the environment on this earth.

Keywords: anime, environment, ecocriticism

1 Introduction

Literary works are related to the phenomena of human life. The creation of scholarly works is an author's imaginative process of responding to phenomena that arise or have occurred in their environment. Authors are free to express themselves in creating literary works, whether on cultural, religious, social, or environmental issues [2].

Nature can serve as a setting in a literary work. Writers use nature as a means to depict the atmosphere that underlies the story in their literary works. This illustrates the connection between nature and literary works, raising new issues in the realm of literature. The approach to examining this issue is called literary ecology, which connects literary works with ecology [3].

Literary works are a reflection of the living environment. Literary works are a place to express the voices that occur in nature. Nature must be treated as well as possible

because it is an important part of human life. Humans need nature for their growth and development, and vice versa. Nature needs humans to care for and protect it [2].

Nature has long been a prominent part of many literary works. Nature is often not just the setting for fictional stories, but can also be the central theme of a work.

Until now, many people think that literary works only revolve around and contain social, psychological, religious, and educational issues. Many people do not know that literary works can be connected to environmental issues. Nowadays, many literary creators are aware of the importance of preserving and protecting the environment. In creating a literary work, they raise environmental issues that are full of moral messages about the importance and value of the environment to always be protected and maintained so that it is sustainable [8].

The relationship between living things as a whole and their environment is studied in the science of ecology. This ecological relationship encompasses physical, biological, socioeconomic, and political factors. This relationship is reciprocal and forms a system called an ecosystem [5].

Humans as living creatures always interact with their environment, resulting in ecological damage such as soil damage, environmental pollution and so on [5].

The environment is something that is closest to people's lives. Talking about the environment is the same as talking about humans, animals, plants, rivers, rice fields, water, land, and so on. Humans are one with nature, live from the products of nature, and together with other living creatures have a relationship with nature [9].

The connection between nature and literary works has given rise to the concept of ecological issues in literature among literary critics. The term ecocriticism is used as a term for the concept of literary criticism related to nature and the environment.

According to Mu'in, literary ecocriticism is a term derived from the English word ecocriticism [1]. This term is a combination of the words ecology and criticism. Ecology can be defined as the scientific study of the relationship between plants, animals, and humans to one another and to their environments. Criticism can be defined as a form and expression of assessment of the good or bad qualities of literary works. Simply put, the focus of literary ecocriticism can be understood as criticism with an environmental perspective.

According to Garrard (2004:5), Ecocriticism encompasses the study of the relationship between humans and non-humans, human history and culture related to critical analysis of humans and their environment. Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between

literature and the physical environment. Just as feminist criticism studies language and literature from a gender-conscious perspective, ecocriticism studies literature with an earth-based (nature) approach. Ecocriticism itself can be limited to the study of the relationship between literary works and the physical environment [6].

In his book, Endraswara states that concern and sensitivity towards the environment must be articulated by anyone, regardless of background. This includes the literary field. In fact, the literary field may be at the forefront of voicing concern for preserving the universe [1].

Ecocriticism serves to identify, explore, and even help resolve more complex ecological problems. Ecocriticism itself is a study that examines how nature is represented in literary works and the relationship between literature and the environment. The goal of ecocriticism is to demonstrate how literary works can reflect concern for environmental issues and contribute to efforts to address ecological problems [1].

The concern and sensitivity of creators towards the environment can be seen in the increasing number of literary works that take up environmental themes or issues. One such literary work that takes up environmental themes is the Japanese anime *Miyori no Mori*, directed by Nizo Yamamoto, produced in 2007 [8].

This anime has an environmental theme, telling the story of the main character named Miyori who is destined to become the guardian of a forest inhabited by various protected animals and also inhabited by forest spirits. One day, people from Tokyo came who planned to build a dam on the river in the forest. The construction of the dam will cause a disaster of forest destruction and environmental ecosystem in the area, will also drown the forest, and the village where the local residents live, who have long lived side by side in harmony with the forest. Miyori, with the help of friends in her village and working together with the spirits who guard the forest, tries to thwart the efforts of the city people.

This anime is full of criticism of human greed that can lead to the destruction of the environment and the surrounding nature. Using Gerard's theory in his book entitled *Ecocriticism*, the author conducted this research to describe ecocritical representation by focusing on five points of literary ecocriticism: wilderness, disaster (apocalypse), dwelling, animals, and earth.

Gerrard defines wilderness as an area dominated by trees and woody plants of various types. The concept of wilderness depicts nature untouched by humans and reflects the strongest natural structures [4]. Gerrard defines disasters as unusual conditions characterized by climate change, damage, and ecosystem extinction. Disasters often

lead to social psychological impacts that tend toward paranoia and violence, resulting in environmental damage, including to humans, animals, and nature (Garrard, 2012:94)

As for shelter, Gerrard explains it is not just a place to live, but a place to live. Several literary works explore the idea of coming and settling on earth, emphasizing the bonds of duty and responsibility [4]. A dwelling is a physical space used for human and animal habitation. According to Garrard, shelter is not a temporary state, but implies a long-term connection of human memory, ancestors and death, ritual, life, and work [4].

As for animals, in this study, the concept of animals is related to the relationship between humans and animals, where both have the same right to life without any differences. Thus, mistreatment of animals can be avoided [4]. Meanwhile, the Earth in his book Gerrard explains that the Earth is the embodiment of life that includes all its contents, including animals and plants, so that efforts to preserve it must be carried out together. The Earth is a fragile whole, where humans are part of the Earth, but do not own it. The Earth is also seen as a biological system that is capable of producing unlimited resources if managed wisely and rationally [4].

Through this research, it is hoped that an explanation will be obtained regarding the ecocritical representation of wilderness, disaster (apocalypse), dwelling, animals, and earth which are told in this anime which will be useful for readers to increase awareness about the importance of protecting and maintaining the environment from various kinds of damage caused by greedy human behavior that wants to take advantage by sacrificing the surrounding environment.

2 Methods

The method used in this study is descriptive analytical. This study employs an ecocritical approach that focuses on Gerrard's five ecocritical literary points: wilderness, apocalypse, dwelling, animals, and earth. The research method used is qualitative. The data source for this study is the anime *Miyori no Mori* by director Nizo Yamamoto. Data analysis was conducted by investigating issues related to the situation and conditions of wilderness, disaster, dwelling, animals, and the earth depicted in this anime. The data were then analyzed and interpreted. After that, the data were presented in descriptive form, followed by conclusions

3 Result and Discussion

3.1 Wilderness

Gerrad defines wilderness as an area dominated by trees and woody plants of various species. The concept of wilderness depicts nature untouched by humans and reflects the strongest natural structures



Fig 1. Natural forest.



Fig 2. The forest is inhabited by various kinds of animals.

Local residents make medicines from plants that grow in the forest. In addition, residents also make household equipment such as chairs, beds and others using wood that grows in the forest



Fig 3. Villagers make bed from trees taken from the forest.

There are several scenes in this anime that depict local communities who use the forest as a source of life. The following is a dialogue when Grandma Miyori explains about making herbal medicine using ingredients taken from the forest

Grandma: *I mix it with some hanboli licorice to make cough syrup. There are many kinds of plants in the forest, most diseases can be cured with the plants there.*

Environmental issues began to emerge when a city ruler proposed building a dam within the forest, which would result in the forest and all its inhabitants disappearing. If the dam's construction plan were to materialize, the forest's function as a habitat for animals and plants, natural resource conservation, and climate regulation would be lost. The forest would no longer be the strong natural structure described by Gerrad in his ecocritical theory.

3.2 Apocalypse

Gerrad explains that a disaster is an unusual condition characterized by climate change, damage, and the extinction of ecosystems. Disasters often lead to social psychological impacts that tend toward paranoia and violence, resulting in environmental damage, including to humans, animals, and nature. In this anime, the disaster depicted is the destruction of natural forest habitats, the disaster of the sinking of villages around the forest due to the construction of a dam in the forest. With the construction of the dam, the victims will be the animals that live in the forest, including the rare animal protected by the state, namely the golden eagle. Residents who live around the forest will also have their villages submerged and forced to move to other areas. Because the negative impact of the dam construction is far greater than its positive impact, the main character of this anime works together with his friends to try to prevent this disaster by thwarting the dam construction efforts. Here are some dialogues that illustrate human greed, which has led to disasters.

Forest Spirit: *I wonder how humans can destroy something so important so easily. They truly are stupid.*

Miyori : *Aren't humans the enemy? The ones who will build the dam are also humans, right?*

The following is a picture of the disaster that will arise if the construction of the dam in the forest continues.



Fig 4. Disaster of village and forest areas that were submerged due to the construction of the dam.

3.3 Dwelling

Gerrard explains that a dwelling is not just a place to live, but a place to live. A dwelling is a physical space used for human and animal habitation. According to Gerrard, a dwelling is not a temporary state, but implies a long-term connection between human memory, ancestors and death, ritual, life, and work.

The representation of literary ecocriticism related to the residence depicted in the anime Miyori no Mori is the residence inhabited by the main character in the form of a village

called Komori Village. Near the village, there is a forest inhabited by various kinds of wild animals, including animals protected by the state.

In Komori Village, the villagers lived peacefully, earning a living from their work as farmers, cultivating their rice fields and gardens. The people who lived in Komori Village lived peacefully alongside the animals that lived in the nearby forest. The villagers never harmed the animals. One of Miyori's grandmother's words to Miyori proves this.

Grandma: *There are many animals in the forest, so don't surprise them. Humans decide whether the forest survives or dies. You must be able to hear the voices of the forest creatures.*

Unfortunately, Komori Village is in danger because there are plans to build a dam on the river that originates from the forest. The dam plan could drown the village and the forest.

This is where the anime director's sharp criticism of human greed that likes to destroy nature is seen.

The following is a picture of a village where residents live side by side with animals that live in the forest.



Fig 5. Villages where villagers live.



Fig 6. Houses where village residents live.

3.4 Animals

In this study, the concept of animal welfare relates to the relationship between humans and animals, where both have the same right to life without distinction. This way, mistreatment of animals can be avoided.

The animals in this anime are depicted living peacefully and protected in the forest. The types of animals that inhabit this forest include pigs, monkeys, squirrels, and even a protected bird, the golden eagle. The local people treat the animals in this forest with kindness. Humans and animals live side by side peacefully.



Fig 7. Squirrel.



Fig 8. Monkeys.



Fig 9. Golden eagle.

The existence of animals living in the forest is threatened when city dwellers plan to build a dam in the forest. If the dam is built, the forest where these animals live will be submerged, along with the animals that live within it.

This anime director, through his work, wants to criticize the actions of a handful of people who want to profit at the expense of the surrounding environment, including sacrificing animals living in the forest whose sustainability should be protected so they don't become extinct.

3.5. Earth

Gerrad explained that the Earth embodies life, encompassing all its contents, including animals and plants, and therefore, efforts to preserve it must be carried out collectively. He explained that the Earth is a fragile whole, of which humans are part, but do not own it. The Earth is also viewed as a biological system capable of producing unlimited resources if managed wisely and rationally.

The Earth depicted in the anime Miyori no Ori is a peaceful place where humans, animals, and plants live side by side in harmony. Villagers have been diligently preserving the forest and its inhabitants for generations. In return, the forest provides a variety of essential commodities, such as herbs and trees whose wood can be used as building materials.

The following is a description of the land situation where the village residents live.



Fig 10. Rice fields.



Fig 11. Hills and mountains.

Unfortunately, this harmony is threatened by a potential disaster caused by city dwellers planning to build a dam on the river. If the dam is successfully built, the plants and animals living in the forest will become extinct. Human greed, avarice, and selfishness are threatening the Earth's condition.



Fig 12. The persons who will kill the golden eagle.

The image above depicts a city dweller attempting to kill a golden eagle, a protected species. If they can kill the golden eagle, they will receive permission to build a dam in the forest.

This is a sharp critique from the anime director of greedy humans who are willing to do anything to damage the environment and kill endangered animals to achieve their evil goals. The Earth will not be sustainable if there are still many greedy humans who destroy the environment for profit without considering the negative consequences for their surroundings

4 Conclusion

The representation of literary ecocriticism in this anime is depicted in various scenes and images. The forest depicted in this anime is inhabited by various wild animals, including rare species protected by the state due to their threat of extinction. The disaster depicted in this anime is the sinking of villages and forests due to the construction of dams by greedy humans who disregard environmental sustainability. The dwellings depicted in this anime are the homes of villagers who live in harmony with the animals that inhabit the forest. The villagers are very protective of the existence and sustainability of these animals. The animals depicted in this anime live peacefully in the forest, undisturbed by the surrounding population, because the residents highly respect their existence. The earth depicted in this anime is a peaceful land where humans, animals, and plants coexist. Humans strive to preserve the animals and plants.

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