



# UNIVERSITAS MUHAMMADIYAH SURABAYA

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

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### 1.1 Background of the Study

The animated film *Encanto* was produced by Walt Disney Animation Studios and released by Walt Disney Pictures on November 24, 2021. The film was directed by Byron Howard and Jared Bush, and the script was written by Charise Castro Smith. *Encanto* is a critically acclaimed musical fantasy film that explores themes of family, identity, and resilience through the lens of magical realism.

*Encanto* (2021) tells the story of the extraordinary Madrigals family who live hidden in the mountains. They live in a magical house and amazing place called “*Encanto*”. In the film, the word “*Encanto*” is defined as charm or magic. Every member of the family has magical powers, except Mirabel. When the family’s magic begins to weaken and the Casita cracks, Mirabel sets out to find the cause. In her search, she discovers a hidden prophecy from her uncle, Bruno, which suggests that she has an important role to play in saving her family.

The conflict comes to a head when Mirabel and Abuela Alma clash over the pressure being put on the family. However, after reconciling, they rebuild Casita together, and Mirabel realizes that her strength is in keeping her family together. Despite the fact that *Encanto* focuses on Mirabel’s search for identity, the film can also be considered an investigation into the impact of trauma on multiple generations, especially among communities of colour and immigrant families (Abate, 2024). After reconciling, the Madrigal family rebuilds the Casita together, and Mirabel realizes that her strength is in keeping her family together.

The reason *Encanto* is chosen for research is because the film presents issues that can be examined using ecofeminist theory, particularly in female characters relationship with the environment and family dynamics. The film metaphorically explores the impact of

societal expectations on women who are often the guardians of the environment and have a large role in local communities to preserve nature. Environmental issues and feminism are rooted in the logic of domination that supports the patriarchal system, so feminists and environmentalists can unite to fight the same injustices (Glazebrook, 2002). There are many fundamental similarities in the way women and nature are treated, so exploring the conceptual relationship between the two is a logical step as the environmental movement and feminism develop (Plumwood, 1986). However, this research will focus on the movie script written by Charise Castro Smith & Jared Bush downloaded from <https://deadline.com/>, which is the official version released by the studio as part of the For Your Consideration campaign.

In addition, the movie *Encanto* has received a lot of praise and awards. *Encanto* won the Academy Award for best animated feature in 2022 (Azgin, 2024) and was also honored at the Golden Globe and BAFTA Awards in the same category. The movie earned over \$256 million worldwide at the box office, with additional success on Disney+ via streaming. The movie received a high IMDb rating of 7.2/10 and was praised for its animation, music, and cultural representation (Bush et al., 2021).

The main conflict in *Encanto* revolves around Mirabel's struggle with self-esteem as she is the only member of Madrigal who does not have magical abilities. However, she soon discovers that her family's magic is beginning to fade, and *Casita* is beginning to crumble. As she investigates the cause, she learns of her Uncle Bruno's hidden visions, which foretell that he holds the key to saving the family. This conflict is resolved when Mirabel confronts Abuela Alma, leading to a heartfelt reconciliation that acknowledges the unrealistic pressures and expectations placed on the family. In the end, the Madrigals rebuild the *Casita* together, and Mirabel realizes that her true talent is to unite and strengthen her family.

The main issue to be analyzed in this study is how *Encanto* relates the characterization of women and nature in the film to the theory of ecofeminism. Ecofeminism views women and nature as equal entities. Their relationship is based on a common experience of

oppression, so it is clear that both deserve recognition and equality (Imroatina et al., 2022). The movie shows how women in the Madrigal family have a unique relationship with their environment, how social expectations weigh on them, and how the crisis in the family also impacts the environment (*Casita*). Using the theory of ecofeminism, this research will reveal how the film represents women's relationship with the environment while criticizing the system that oppresses both.

After reviewing several previous studies that analyzed animated films through the perspective of ecofeminism, the following is an identification of research gaps that can be the basis of this research. Research by Imroatina et al., (2022) entitled "Ecowarriors bring back Kumandara: An Ecofeminism Study Depicted in Raya and the Last Dragon" discusses the representation of ecofeminism values in the movie Raya and the Last Dragon. This study shows how female characters such as Raya, Sisu, and Namaari have an ecofeminist spirit through their role in saving nature from destruction caused by human greed. Meanwhile, a study by Sakinah et al., (2022) entitled "Characterization of Enola Holmes in The Case of The Missing Marquess: A Study Of Liberal Feminism" analyzes the character of Enola Holmes from the perspective of liberal feminism. This study reveals that Enola fights gender stereotypes through her physical appearance, critical thinking, and independence. In another study "Women Representation as Symbols of Mother Nature: An Ecofeminism Perspective in Moana Film" by Jumrah & Karim, (2022) explained that female characters are often associated with nature through the idea of natural and spiritual ecofeminism, which shows the dominance of female characters that reflect gender equality.

The previous three studies discuss the role of women in fictional media from a feminist perspective. Each study used a different approach and focus. The first study used a general ecofeminism approach to emphasize the role of female characters in Raya and the Last Dragon and the beliefs that encourage them to work together and save nature. Meanwhile, the second study focuses more

on the characterization of Enola Holmes from a liberal feminist perspective, emphasizing that she defies patriarchal norms in social rather than ecological terms. In contrast, the third study used a spiritual and nature ecofeminism approach. They portrayed women as symbols of nature, but they did not discuss active resistance to patriarchy or women's agency in an ecological context.

## **1.2 Statements of the Study**

- 1.2.1** How the relationship between female characters with nature and culture as depicted in the film *Encanto*?
- 1.2.2** How do the female characters' interactions with nature and culture in *Encanto* represent the principles of ecofeminism?

## **1.3 Objective of the Study**

- 1.3.1** To describe how the relationship between female characters with nature and culture is depicted in the film *Encanto*.
- 1.3.2** To analyze how the interaction of female characters with nature and culture in *Encanto* represents the principles of ecofeminism.

## **1.4 Significance of the Study**

This research has important academic and theoretically significance, especially in understanding how popular media, such as animated films, represent the relationship between women and the environment through an ecofeminist perspective.

### **1.4.1 Academic**

This research contributes to academic studies by applying the theory of ecofeminism to animated films, where this study is still rarely done in the study of ecology and feminism. Most research on ecofeminism mostly discusses literary texts such as novels and poems or real environmental activism movements such as women's struggles in protecting the environment in the real world. The analysis of Mirabel's character and her relationship with *Casita* can open a discussion about the representation of women, the environment, and

social systems in mass media that can be a reference for further research in similar fields.

### **1.4.2 Theoretical**

From a theoretical point of view, this research expands the scope of application of ecofeminism by showing that this theory can be used not only in the analysis of real environmental issues, but also in symbolic analysis in animated films such as *Encanto*. This research provides insight into how the representation of ecofeminism in the media can influence the way people understand the relationship between gender and the environment.

In addition, this research can also be used as a reference for educators, environmental activists, and gender equality activists in utilizing animated media as an educational tool. The *Encanto* film can be used to raise public awareness, especially the younger generation, about the importance of maintaining ecological balance and appreciating the role of women in environmental sustainability. In addition, this research can also help the creative industry in creating a more inclusive and environmental sustainability-oriented narrative in their media products.

### **1.5 Scope and Limitation**

This research focuses on analyzing 5 female characters in *Encanto* using the ecofeminism approach. These characters are Mirabel Madrigal, Abuela Alma, Isabela Madrigal, Luisa Madrigal, and Julieta Madrigal. This approach is used to understand how the relationship between women and the environment is represented in the film, both in terms of characters and symbols that illustrate the relationship between women and nature. In this research, the analysis will focus on how the female characters in *Encanto* interact with the surrounding environment and how aspects of ecofeminism are reflected in the film's narrative. A movie script is a written document that includes all the narrative and visual elements needed to make a film, whether it is a feature film or a short film. In addition, this research will only focus on *Encanto*'s movie script, so the analysis will

focus more on dialog, narration, and description in the film screenplay to explore the meaning and representation of ecofeminism.

## **1.6 Definition of Key Terms**

### **1.6.1 Nature**

In the movie *Encanto*, nature refers to the surrounding environment such as plants, rocks, trees, and so on that surround the Madrigal family. Nature can also be symbolized through magical powers that are closely related to natural forces, such as in the character Isabela who has the ability to grow plants. Overall, nature in *Encanto* plays an important role in showing harmony, transformation, and balance between human life and the environment.

### **1.6.2 Culture**

In this research, culture refers to the traditions, norms, and social systems passed down within a community, as exemplified by the Madrigal family and the surrounding community. *Encanto*'s culture highlights elements that are specific to Colombia, including gender roles, family structure, the belief in magical abilities, and social expectations of strength and perfection.

### **1.6.3 Encanto**

*Encanto* is the title of an animated film produced by Walt Disney, which is the main subject of this study. The word “*Encanto*” comes from Spanish and means “charm” or “magic.”

### **1.6.4 Ecofeminism**

Ecofeminism is a theory that combines feminism and ecology, which sees the oppression of women and environmental degradation as interrelated problems. It argues that both are rooted in an oppressive and dominating patriarchal system. Ecofeminism focuses on how women are often the victims of natural destruction, and how social forces that oppress women also worsen environmental conditions.

