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CURRENT TRENDS IN LINGUISTIC AND LITERATURE RESEARCH

Semarang, 3 December 2021

Green Studies - Ecocriticism for Literature Research



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Abstract



Recently the term green studies have been regarded as a current trend in doing literature research. With the understanding that in literature, green studies, is the study of ecology within artworks, it is regarded as having a connection to the study of eco-criticism, which is a branch of eco-feminism. Because of this, green studies can be said to have existed for almost half a century. The French writer, François d'Eaubonne's call in 1974 for human beings to stop their exploitation of nature's ecology may be said as the starting point for green studies. The eco-feminists, Lawrence Buell (in Campbell, 2008), Greta Gard (2001), and Noël Sturgeon's (1997) understanding that environmentalists and feminists are connected through their articulated ideologies of the injustices experienced by the minorities based on gender, race, and class have become the main grounding for green studies. Thus, the presentation on "Green Studies – Ecocriticism for Literature Research" will firstly give a historical account of the emergence and then the relationship of green studies with eco-feminism and eco-criticism. As points for discussion, samples of green literary/ artworks were analysed using ecocriticism and/ or eco-feminism perspectives.

Keywords: green studies, ecofeminism, ecocriticism, ecology, gender, race, class

Ecology > Ecofeminism > Ecocriticism

1972

Joseph Meeker's, *The Comedy of Survival: Studies in Literary Ecology* (1972 cited in Mambrol 2016), **coined literary ecology** as the study of biological themes that appear in literary works.

1974

François d'Eaubonne calls on women to **save nature's ecology** from human beings' exploitations (cited in Brammer, 2012).

1978

William Rueckert coined the term **ecocriticism** as the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. (cited in Mambrol, 2016).

1980

Ynestra King at the Institute for Social Ecology developed the concept that **women and ecology are connected** – Women are identified as passive and powerless just like the exploited nature, although it is the women who are loyal to ensure the livelihood of earth's future (cited in Brammer, 2012).

1990

Charlene Spretnak (1990) sees **ecofeminism** as a movement, which concerns with the rise of consciousness in environment, feminism and spirituality.

Eco-feminist theory:

the domination by men leads to the destruction of the environment (Spretnak, 1990).

2001

Greta Gaard, "how we **treat nature** and how we **treat each other** are inseparably linked" (2001, p. 160)

2008

Lawrence Buell in *The Ecocriticism Reader and The Environmental Imagination* sees **ecofeminists** as leaders whom **push environmental welfare and equity** of more pressing concern to the impoverished and socially marginalized: to landscapes of urbanization, racism, poverty, and toxification; and to the voices of witnesses and victims of environmental injustice (cited in Campbell, 2008)

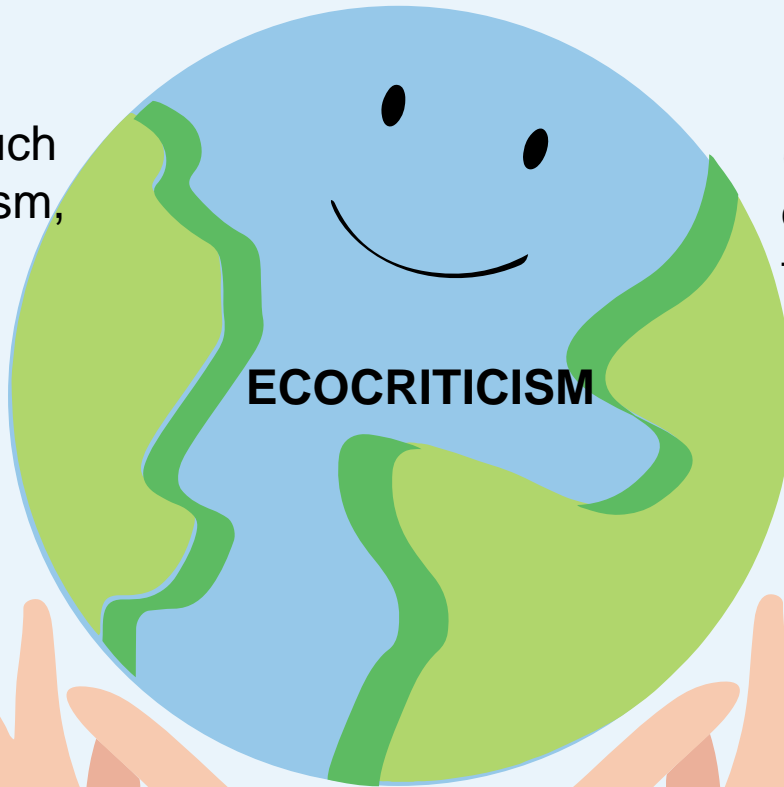
Andrea Campbell (2008): **Ecocriticism is an earth-centered approach to ecofeminism's literary criticism** It asks how nature is represented in literary works. It focuses on the domination within culture: racism, sexism, and class oppression. Women as protector often sacrifice herself to culture.



(3) Ecocriticism offers topics such as environmental literary criticism, green cultural studies and eco-poetics.


(2) Ecocriticism assumes that all forms of life are interrelated.

(1) Ecocritics believe that human culture is related to the physical world.



(4) Ecocriticism extends the idea of the world or the earth to include the entire ecosphere.

(5) Ecocriticism shows a definite relationship between nature and culture, in which literary treatment, representation and thematization of the earth and nature influence actions on the earth.



Highlighted by groups that care about green conservation, ecological disasters such as nuclear war, depletion of valuable natural resources, population explosion, proliferation of exploitative technologies, conquest of space that are used as landfills, pollution, and species extinction have become a major issue in eco-criticism by the end of the 20th century.

In its development, the issues of deep ecology and eco-feminism have become a place to discuss radically what is suspected as an advanced and modern culture.

Anthropocentric (human-centered) and androcentric (male-dominated) society's thinking are becoming a hot discussion among green conservationists. In deep ecology, for example, this group puts forward the importance of the need for a healthy earth environment.

Not only environmental issues are taken into account, but cultural issues related to human attitudes towards the environment and the effects on ecological aspects are also the focus of attention. In the context of environmental ethics, it is understood as a critical reflection on what humans should do in making moral choices related to environmental issues (Lestari, Waluyo, & Saddhono, 2016). One way is to raise awareness of this critical reflection through the study of romance with an ecological perspective in literature.

Ecocriticism = human + nature (environment) in literature = Green Studies

(2) What role does the physical-geographical setting play in the structure of literature and artworks?

(1) How is nature represented in literary works (novels/ poems/ song lyrics/ drama/ art motifs)?



(3) How have writers of literature and artistic works used metaphors about the relationship of earth and its environment? Is there evidence that the earth has been treated unfairly? How does the author show her appreciation of the earth and its environment? Is there a relationship between literature and artistic works in terms of political, sociocultural, and environmental ethical events on the earth with other living things besides humans?

(4) How is the effects of science – e.g. in the form of genetic engineering, reproductive technology, and sexuality/ gender open to critical examination with our earth?

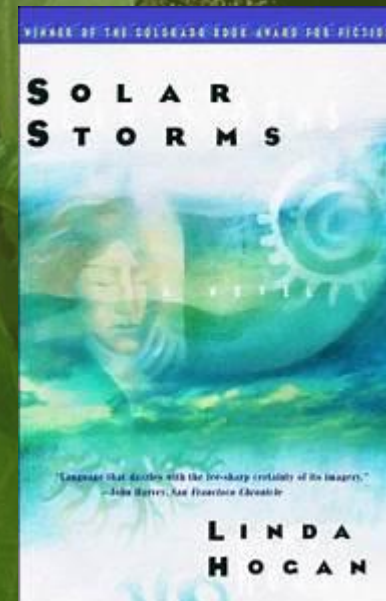
SAMPLE 1: Linda Hogan, *Solar Storms* (1995)

A sample on contesting the alien with the native, civilization with nature, masculine with feminine, or man versus earth can be found in *Solar Storms* discussions.

Written in 1995, Linda Hogan's novel talks about the journey of Angela Jenson who went from her native land of Oklahoma to the boundary waters and more urbane society of Minnesota and Canada. Along her journey, she tells how her family would go from one land to another land in search for a better ground to settle on.

Early in the novel, it is written, **"When the land was worn out, the beaver and wolf gone, mostly dead, the men moved on to what hadn't been destroyed, leaving their women and children behind, as if they too were used-up animals"** (Hogan, 1995, p. 28).

Seeing from the lens of an eco-feminist, the quotation shows the custom for men to empower their land and animals with the knowledge that they are powerless to them, thus following the anthropocentric stream like discussed in the previous subchapters.



Ecocriticism's focus

POWER	POWERLESS
alien	native
artificial	natural
civilization	nature
conscious	subconscious
cultured	native
human	animal
immoral	innocent
machine	earth
male	female
masculine	feminine
mind	body
modern	classic
protagonist	antagonist
rich	poor
ripe	unripe
urban white	naive
write	black
	speech



This man empowerment, unfortunately also applies to their own woman and children in the family. While the husband/ father of the family searches for a more fertile ground, *Solar Storms* illustrates the unfortunate scene that some women and children have had no choice but to do with whatever nature has provided them in order to maintain survival at their worn out land by **“eating carcasses of a hunted deer or cyanide wolves”** (Hogan, 1995, p. 38).

Though it is an unethical behavior already, this kind of degraded life is unfortunately continued in the novel by showing that the endocentric life, i.e. the unattended wives and daughters had to be raped as well by some other men who passed them by. Just like the earth that experiences great exploitation the powerless women and daughters share the same harsh life as though they were something ripe to be cultivated by the hungry-for-sex men.

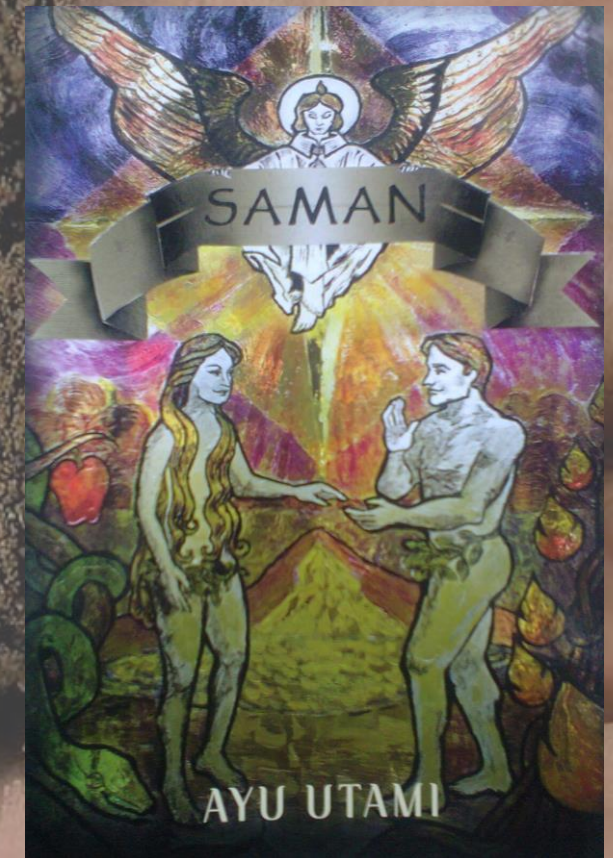
In crying out her anger, Angela is unfortunate to learn from her grandmother that her protest is futile because the wounded feelings of being the powerless had been on ever since **people started killing wolves as an exchange for the usual beaver menu, which drastically decreased in number due to the last logging activity of the pine forests (Hogan, 1995, p. 37)** which had to be done, in order that the white men could built their log cabins on the virgin lands. Thus, no matter how hurt Angela may feel, her grandmother explains that the cycle of the powerful men over the powerless women and the powerless earth may not have any end – unless all human would acknowledge the hurt they have done to nature and remedy it.

SAMPLE 2: Ayu Utami, *Saman* (1998)

In *Saman*, Utami bluntly exposes the unconventional woman protagonist, Shakuntala, who is not afraid to show her protest towards her father and the patriarchy surrounding in general, by becoming a sexually free prostitute.

Tala dislikes her father's belief that **“Hanya lelaki yang boleh menghampiri perempuan. Perempuan yang mengejar-ngejar lelaki pastilah sundal”** [Only men can approach women. Women who run after men must be a prostitute] (Utami, 1998, p. 120). Tala deliberately becomes a prostitute in order that she could become masculine and be the person in charge, or the person who has the power over whatever she does or says. If at one stage she feels like becoming a lesbian by showing her friend, Lalila, how to achieve orgasm; then she can do whatever and whenever she pleases without a man ruling and telling her that it is not feminine to do so.

Such gallant expressions such as these are what make feminists give their applause to Utami, because it is only when women are given their rights to express their feelings and wants openly do feminists believe they can acquire the same equal rights as men, hence making the world a balanced place. This novel is, thus, a good sample of an ecocriticism's cry.

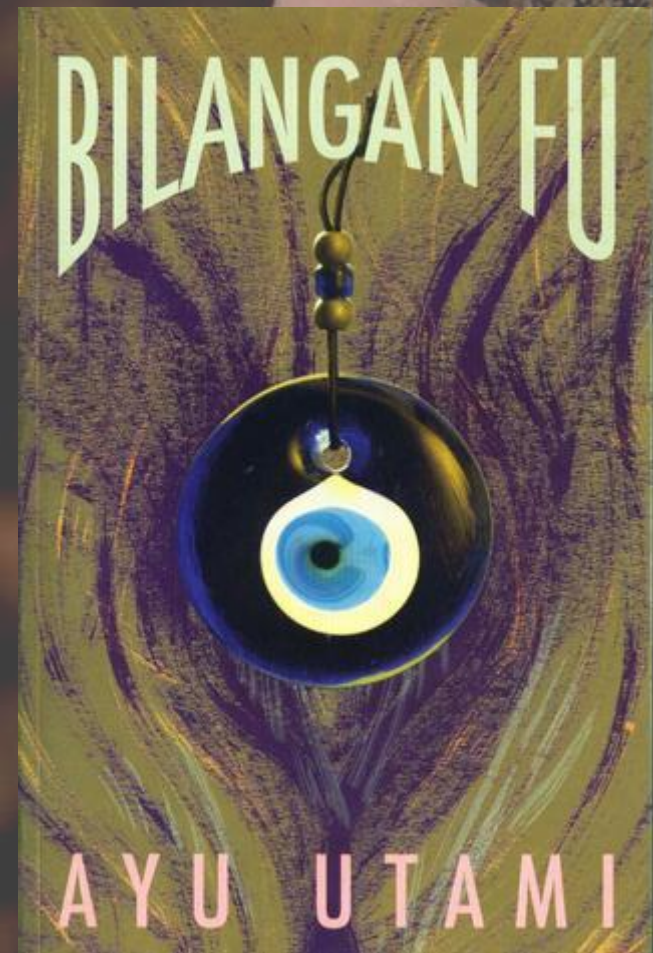


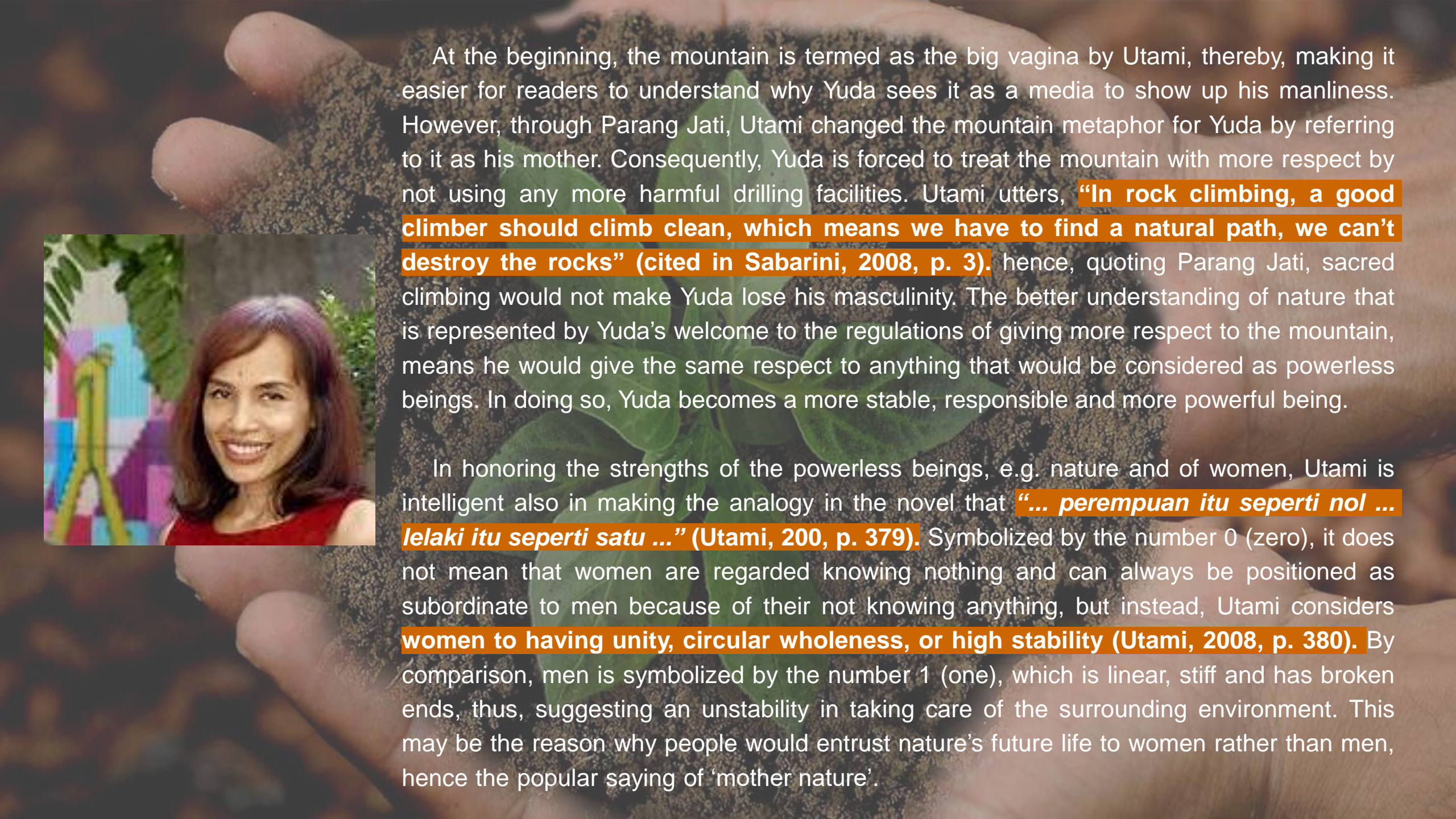
SAMPLE 3: Ayu Utami, *Bilangan Fu* (2008)

Although the protagonist is a male, Yuda, the adventurous mountain climber of Utami's other novel, *Bilangan Fu*, is filled with many of ecocriticism's echo in how to respect environment for the future of mankind. *Bilangan Fu* (The Fu Numeral), was written in 2008. It tells of Yuda who has been written to rely on his drilling equipments to climb the mountain. Yet, further in the story, he is challenged to use a cleaner and more sacred way of climbing by his new friend, Parang Jati, who explains the following:


...pemanjatan bersih...mirip pemanjatan suci. Di dalamnya orang tak boleh melukai tebing. Peralatan yang dapat digunakan hanyalah yang tidak bersikap sewenang-wenang pada alam. Tanggalkan bor, piton paku, maupun pasak... Jika kau tak bisa menempuhnya, maka kau tak bisa memanjatnya. Begitu saja. Itu tak mengurangi kehormatanmu sama sekali. Tak mengurangi kejantananmu juga.

Aku membuka mulutku hendak menggugat dia. Ketika itulah ia bersabda, "Kamu biasa memaku dan mengebor perempuan di ranjang. Dengan ibundamu, pakailah cara lain" (Utami, 2008, pp. 71-72).





At the beginning, the mountain is termed as the big vagina by Utami, thereby, making it easier for readers to understand why Yuda sees it as a media to show up his manliness. However, through Parang Jati, Utami changed the mountain metaphor for Yuda by referring to it as his mother. Consequently, Yuda is forced to treat the mountain with more respect by not using any more harmful drilling facilities. Utami utters, **“In rock climbing, a good climber should climb clean, which means we have to find a natural path, we can’t destroy the rocks”** (cited in Sabarini, 2008, p. 3). hence, quoting Parang Jati, sacred climbing would not make Yuda lose his masculinity. The better understanding of nature that is represented by Yuda’s welcome to the regulations of giving more respect to the mountain, means he would give the same respect to anything that would be considered as powerless beings. In doing so, Yuda becomes a more stable, responsible and more powerful being.



In honoring the strengths of the powerless beings, e.g. nature and of women, Utami is intelligent also in making the analogy in the novel that **“... perempuan itu seperti nol ... lelaki itu seperti satu ...”** (Utami, 200, p. 379). Symbolized by the number 0 (zero), it does not mean that women are regarded knowing nothing and can always be positioned as subordinate to men because of their not knowing anything, but instead, Utami considers **women to having unity, circular wholeness, or high stability (Utami, 2008, p. 380)**. By comparison, men is symbolized by the number 1 (one), which is linear, stiff and has broken ends, thus, suggesting an instability in taking care of the surrounding environment. This may be the reason why people would entrust nature’s future life to women rather than men, hence the popular saying of ‘mother nature’.



The Road Not Taken

By Robert Frost

TWO roads diverged in a yellow wood,
And sorry I could not travel both
And be one traveler, long I stood
And looked down one as far as I could
To where it bent in the undergrowth;

Then took the other, as just as fair,
And having perhaps the better claim,
Because it was grassy and wanted wear;
Though as for that the passing there
Had worn them really about the same,

And both that morning equally lay
In leaves no step had trodden black.
Oh, I kept the first for another day!
Yet knowing how way leads on to way,
I doubted if I should ever come back.

I shall be telling this with a sigh
Somewhere ages and ages hence:
Two roads diverged in a wood, and I—
I took the one less traveled by,
And that has made all the difference.

SAMPLE 4: Robert Frost, *The Road Not Taken*

Literary ecocriticism is motivated by environmental activism and focuses principally on representations of the physical environment, especially of non-human nature. The dualistic separation of human from nature, promoted by Western Philosophy and culture as the origin of environmental crisis, demands a return to a monistic, primal identification of human beings and ecosystem. While nature is not a subject, it has a language of its own. It has been talking to us and its natural signs portend danger and perhaps catastrophe. Whatever happens Nature will go on without us. And so, we are the ones who must act wisely to sustain and value the present living ecosystem and our position in it.

Ecocriticism is a modern theory that describes the interdisciplinary relationship between the physical environment and literature. It describes the application of ecology and ecological concepts to the study of literature. The aspects of Ecocriticism are the show off a rural setting, human nature like feelings, emotions, non-human nature settings such as darkness, weather, seasons and sense of consciousness towards nature and her elements like the impact of science and technology on modern society and medieval society.

The Road Not Taken By Robert Frost

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Robert Frost is a prominent American poet in the 20th century, where in his ' *The Road Not Taken*' and likewise his ' *The Pasture*', ' *The Ghost House*', ' *Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening*,' ' *Mowing*' , ' *Reluctance*', ' *The Death of the Hired Man*', ' *After Apple-Picking*', etc., have focused on ecocritical aspects such as the settings' landscape, sense of consciousness about global changing from nature to technology, pastoral nature, etc. Frost considered nature as a separate and independent entity. Nature, to him is an open book with lessons of mutability which is taught by repetition of days, seasons, years etc. Man learns his limitations, and his lessons for survival from nature. But at times, out of his unquenchable desire, he tries to break the decreed limits of nature.

His poem "The Road not Taken" **recognizes a human's sorrow for not being able to travel both roads being one traveler, yet also learns how choices must be made although that very decision will also prove a human's inability to turn back. Frost emphasized in his poem, the contrast between man and nature as well as the conflicts that arise between the two entities. Frost saw nature as an alien force capable of destroying man, but he also saw that man's struggle with nature as, a 'heroic battle,'** To Frost, nature was essentially a symbolic philosopher and guide to disseminating the subtle and secret lessons of mankind's life. Using rural environment and culture, traditional and natural elements, by way of individual concepts of nature, common language and natural imagery as natural tools, Frost has undoubtedly shown himself as an American eco-critical poet.

Islam, S. (2021) Ecocriticism: A Critical Study on Robert Frost's Selected Poems. www.academia.edu
Ambika. (2011, April). An Ecocritical Reading of Robert Frost's Selected Poems. *The Criterion: An International Journal in English*, ii (1). www.the-criterion.com V2 n 1

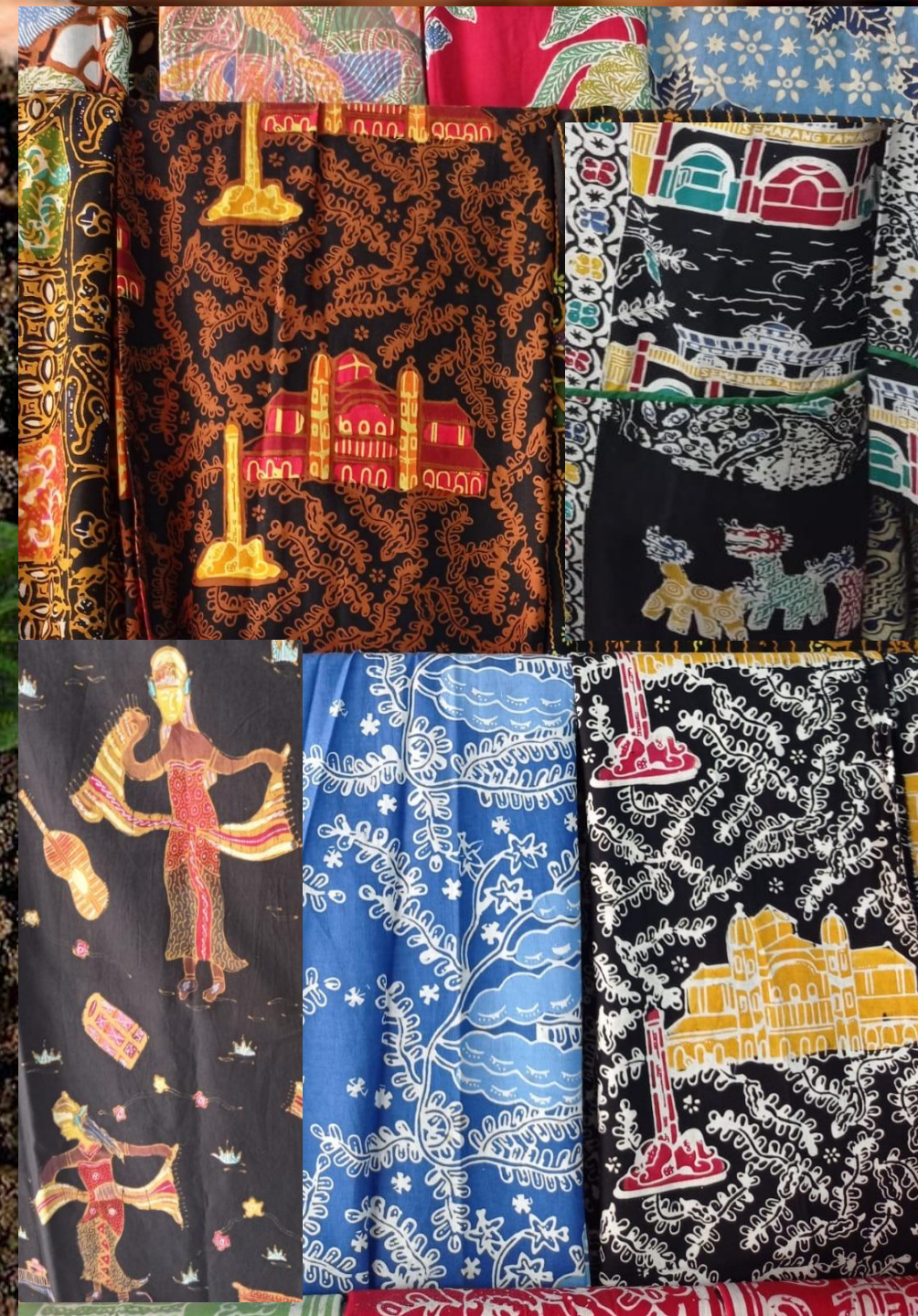


SAMPLE 5: *Batik Semarang* motif

Ecocriticism can study the role of the physical-geographical setting of artworks. In this example the historical aspects is used in consideration for the analysis.

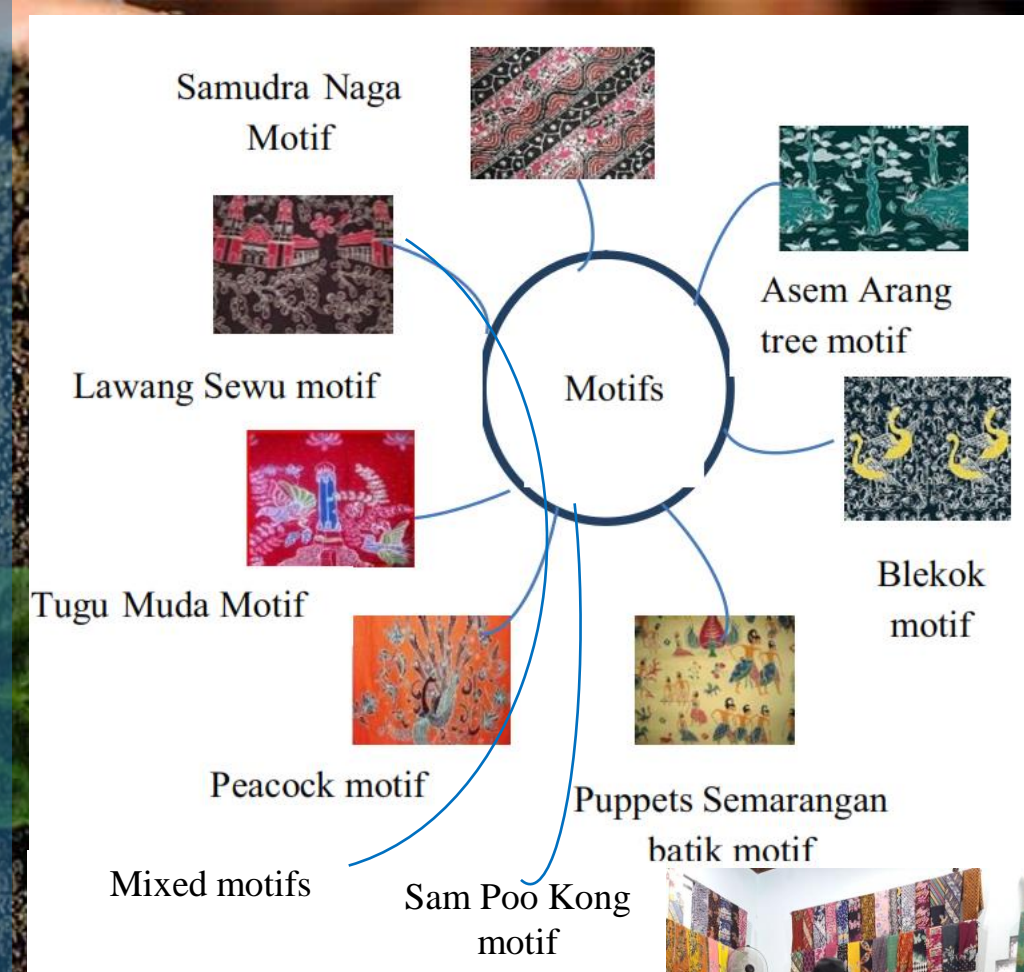
History recorded *Batik Semarang* village to owe thanks to Ki Pandan Arang I who, according to *Serat Kandhaning Ringit Purwo* (1476) opened an area called Bubakan, where one of the names of the village was *Kampoeng Batik* due to many of the people who made batik crafting as their profession. Many centuries after, a Chinese businessman descendant, living in Bugangan village, who managed to keep safe his Tan Kong Tien Batikkerij from the Japanese attempt to burn all Batik factories in Semarang. Married to Raden Ayu Dinartiningsih who is a descendant of Hamengku Buwana III from the Sultanate of Jogjakarta, they both continued their batik skills, which were then passed on to their son Raden Nganten Sri Murdijanti, that made their batik production famous until the 1970s. Unfortunately, this company, which show the cultural hybrid of Chinese and Javanese culture, was unfortunately not continued because there was no successor.

In the 2000s, however, there was a Batik company growing in Bukit Kencana in the Tembalang area under the name Umizie, but in 2006 it changed its name to Sanggar Batik Semarang 16. The studio produced batik with Semarang City icons such as the **Tugu Muda Kiniteran Sulur, Asem Arang, Lawang Sewu, Kawung Semawis**, etc. In order to produce more batik, this company uses a batik stamp facility so that more people can buy their products.



In 2007, Batik Semarang Indah was born in the so-called *Kampoeng Batik*. The batik production here received training assistance from the Regional National Crafts Council of Semarang City. The characteristics of the batik produced are the freedom to take a variety of flora and fauna as a motif with a striking bright color, namely with **a reddish-orange base color**. This color is different from the light brown color from Demak and the blue base color from Kudus. **The presence of fauna in Semarangan Batik is influenced by Chinese culture which features dragons*, peacocks, butterflies, birds of paradise, phoenixes,** and the like. Flora motifs such as bouquets, lung-lungan and cempaka flowers usually appear more in Pekalongan Batik. **Semarangan batik tends to make batik with naturalistic and realistic motifs** rather than symbolic ones like those in Yogyakarta or Solo batik. In its development, in addition to the flora and fauna motifs, Batik Semarangan displays buildings that have become the icons of the city of Semarang.

*) NOTE: Deeply rooted in Chinese culture, **dragon and phoenix** were regarded as the most sacred animals and used to be emblems of emperor and empress. The Chinese dragon is traditionally the embodiment of the concept of yang (male), while phoenix was paired (yin, female) with dragon. They were used as decorative signs on the buildings, clothing and other daily uses articles of imperial palace to highly show off that the emperor as real dragon and son of heaven. Even the bed he sleep on was called "dragon bed", while throne be the "dragon seat", other Chinese vocabularies like "phoenix carriage" and so on were common to show their heaven-sent status... For ancient Chinese people, the dragon is an ideal animal that was worshiped as the ruler of river, lake and sea, bringing rain and water to the earth. He is friendly and wise and honored in the temple being built. A dragon motif gradually adopted the meaning of power and boldness, intelligent and ambitious, heroism and nobility (<https://www.easytourchina.com/fact-v368-chinese-dragon-and-phoenix>).



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