

Issues of women and nature in Indonesian novels: A study of feminism

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Article History

Received 10 February 2025

Revised 25 June 2025

Accepted 22 July 2025

Published 7 September 2025

Keywords

feminism; natural issues; women's issues; Indonesian novels.

Kata Kunci

feminisme; persoalan alam; persoalan perempuan; novel Indonesia.

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to represent the issues of women and nature contained in the literary works of Indonesian female writers. The data sources for the study came from 5 novels, namely *Partikel* and *Aroma Karsa* by Dee Lestari, *Geni Jora* by Abidah El Khalieqy, *Namaku Teweraut* by Ani Sekarningsih, and *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany. The data analysis method applied in this study is the semiotic method through heuristic reading. The results of the study show that the problems about women in the author's view are mystical logic in women, limited exploration of knowledge due to the shackles of religion, the superiority of belief in myths, creating harmful obsession, privileging men over women, women's insecurity when seeking justice, the absence of validation of women's greatness, marriage determined by culture results in inhibiting women's ideals, women are considered subjects who bring trouble/problems, lack of appreciation for young women, inner conflict with their role as mothers, women carrying a mission of peace through marriage, and domestic violence. The environmental problems depicted in the novel are the loss of nutrients in soil, deforestation, water pollution, and forest exploitation.

Abstrak

Tujuan pengkajian ini untuk merepresentasikan persoalan perempuan dan alam yang tertuang dalam karya sastra penulis perempuan Indonesia. Sumber data penelitian berasal dari 5 novel, yaitu *Partikel* dan *Aroma Karsa* karya Dee Lestari, *Geni Jora* karya Abidah El Khalieqy, *Namaku Teweraut* karya Ani Sekarningsih dan *Isinga* karya Dorothea Rosa Herliany. Metode analisis data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah metode semiotik melalui pembacaan heuristik. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan, persoalan tentang perempuan dalam pandangan pengarang adalah logika mistika pada perempuan, keterbatasan eksplorasi pengetahuan karena belenggu agama, kedigdayaan dari kepercayaan pada mitos, melahirkan obsesi yang mencelakai, pengistimewaan laki-laki melebihi perempuan, meskipun perempuan lebih berkemampuan, Rasa tidak aman perempuan saat ingin mencari keadilan, tidak adanya validasi atas kehebatan perempuan, pernikahan yang ditentukan oleh budaya berakibat menghambat cita-cita perempuan, perempuan dianggap subjek pembawa keributan/masalah, kurangnya apresiasi bagi perempuan muda, konflik batin dengan perannya sebagai ibu, perempuan membawa misi damai melalui pernikahan, dan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga. Adapun persoalan lingkungan yang digambarkan dalam novel adalah tanah yang kehilangan zat hara, hutan yang gundul, pencemaran air, dan eksploitasi hutan.

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How to cite this article with APA style 7th ed.

Sumartini, S., Qomariyah, U., & Prabaningrum, D. (2025). Issues of women and nature in Indonesian novels: A study of feminism. *Diglosia: Jurnal Kajian Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*, 8(3), 767—782. <https://doi.org/10.30872/diglosia.v8i3.1235>



A. Introduction

Until now, the novelty of literary works' meaning continues to enlighten readers and critics (Khasanah & Prakoso, 2023). Nevertheless, the topic of the environment and women in Indonesian literature is no longer foreign. Researchers in Indonesian language and literature have widely studied issues related to both. Several previous studies have examined these two topics from an ecofeminist perspective, which seeks to stop the human problems, especially those affecting women, and the natural environment from being oppressed (Wiyatmi et al., 2016). In addition, discussions about the environment in literary studies also fall within literary ecology, or so-called ecocriticism (Arbain, 2020).

The natural environment and women in a patriarchal world have a strong connection; both are often associated with weakness and powerlessness in social culture. Therefore, they are usually made victims of oppression. The environment (nature) in real life is one element that is often oppressed, unprotected, and considered passive in its role in life. Nature is a place for humans and other creatures to survive. Meanwhile, women, both in real life and in the depiction of characters in literary works, often receive subordinate, unfair treatment and are considered backward (Purnomo, 2017). Feminism tries to voice women's issues, eliminating the oppression of women in a patriarchal world (Utami, 2018). One of the works that portrays this is literature. In literary works, women strive for their existence through the thoughts and actions of the characters.

Issues of social inequality related to gender and environmental damage are crucial. They relate to the balance between life and nature, two essential elements of life that are often forgotten, damaged, and abused. One way to maintain this balance is by raising awareness of the importance of promoting gender equality and protecting nature as a habitat for living things. Criticism of natural and environmental issues in literary works aims to highlight the importance of preserving the environment. Several scholarly works have examined ecological problems, starting with human interactions with nature and their role in nature.

In this regard, existential feminism is used to analyze this study. Existential feminism was first pioneered by Simon de Beauvoir, who believed that existence is more than essence. In other words, existential feminism believes that women have the broadest possible freedom over themselves and are valuable for their existence. The environmental (nature) and women's issues and the problems studied in this study come from five novels by four Indonesian female writers: *Partikel* and *Aroma Karsa* by Dee Lestari, *Geni Jora* by Abidah El Khalieqy, *Namaku Teweraut* by Ani Sekarningsih, and *Isinga* by Dorothea Rosa Herliany. This study aims to increase understanding regarding the horizons of Indonesian female writers who represent the issues of women and nature as expressed in the literary works of Indonesian female writers.

Similar research was conducted by Bo (2018) in her article entitled "An Analysis of Lady Chatterley's Lover from the Perspective of Ecofeminism," which explains ecofeminism as a new theoretical critique of literature, combining the oppression and domination of women. There is a critical relationship between women and nature, which stems from their shared history of oppression by patriarchal Western society. The development of eco-feminism significantly affects human attitudes towards nature, especially the relationship between nature and women. Another study, Chae (2019) in her research entitled Postmodern Ecology: Technologically Modified and Commodified Nature in Ruth Ozeki's *All Over Creation* examines Ruth Ozeki's novel *All Over Creation*, describing concerns in highlighting the way biotechnology has created a simulated nature; the distinction between nature as a living entity and a simulated nature, created by genetically modified organisms, tends to be erased in a market society dominated by products. In addition, research conducted by Polcha (2019) in his article entitled "Voyeur in the Torrid Zone" describes John Gabriel Stedman's narrative of the Five-Year Expedition against Rebellious Negroes in Suriname through the literary and scientific culture of natural history, showing how Stedman's acts of sexual domination and exploitation in Suriname are veiled in the rhetoric of science. Another study by Anis Khikmawati examines the types and factors of environmental damage in the novel *Partikel*. This study contributes to increasing insight and references to broaden

the author's perspective regarding natural issues in the novel written by Dewi Lestari. Another study by Putri & Udasmoro (2019) connects the relationship between gender and nature. The study contributes to and strengthens the author's discourse to construct gender identity related to environmental discourse. In addition, Monica Harfiyani (2020) wrote a study on the spirituality of nature and ecofeminism of the main character in the novel *Partikel*, this study strengthens the study of authors who have studies on women's and environmental issues; Wahid Tawaqal et al. (2020) research written related to the description of liberal feminist attitudes and descriptions of the impact of the main character's life choices on the main additional characters in the novel *Partikel*, the study provides additional discourse to understand the author regarding the character's attitudes and motives thereby enriching the author's knowledge. Sumartini et al. (2023) also examined the novel *Partikel* by Dee, which shows children's love for the environment characterized by a deep relationship with nature, a sense of responsibility, and an understanding of protecting the environment. Maswati & Luth (2024) show that in the novels "*Things Fall Apart*," "*Burung Kayu*," and "*Isinga*," modernity is depicted as a destructive force for nature, society, and culture. This provides an understanding for the author to see the perspective of environmental damage caused by modernity. Suryani & Dewi (2024) examined the text's depiction of gender roles, inequality, and the struggle for women's rights in the context of Islamic culture in the novel *Geni Jora*. Finally, research conducted by Hastuti (2024) related to the role of women in access, control, and distribution of benefits from development in the Papua region. This research provides a view of the reality of development in Papua. And the role of women in it.

The above studies reveal several things about the dominance of patriarchal culture and environmental issues. This research strengthens existing research. Aspects related to the oppression of women and patriarchal domination are still depicted. However, this research also complements previous research that did not mention the existence of the mystical logic of women, and the culture of marriage to maintain tribal/group peace.

B. Method

This research is qualitative research with data sources including the novel *Partikel* (2012) and *Aroma Karsa* (2018) by Dewi Lestari, novel *Isinga* (2015) by Dorothea, novel *Geni Jora* (2009) by Abidah al Khaelaqy, and novel *Namaku Teweraut* (2000) by Ani Sekarningsih. These novels were chosen because the authors are women and reflect the authors' views on women's and environmental issues. The data collection technique in this study was a note-taking technique. The researcher noted parts relevant to women's attention to women's and environmental issues (nature).

The analytical method in this study is semiotic through heuristic reading. Heuristic reading is a first-level reading based on principles of linguistics and linguistic theory (Supriyanto, 2021). The data obtained is then classified based on research criteria, namely the forms of women's attention to women's issues and the environment (nature). Then, it is analyzed using a second-level (hermeneutic) reading. Through hermeneutic reading, the researcher interprets the meaning of words and sentences based on literary, social, and cultural principles. The results of this reading are then presented.

C. Results and Discussion

For feminists, there are similarities between the oppression of nature and women. Both the nature of our environment and the idealized nature of women are passive traits that men feel entitled to exploit. However, not every novel studied depicts the oppression of women. This discussion is divided into two sub-chapters. First, the authors' perspectives on women's issues. Second, the authors' perspectives on nature.

1. Author's Views on Women's Issues

The author's views on women's issues are as follows.

a. Women are shackled to mystical logic

Mystical logic in contemporary science philosophy can be interpreted as abductive reasoning that concludes to explain a phenomenon even without empirical evidence (Stern, 2017). In the novel *Partikel*, the character Ibu experiences women's issues. Ibu's understanding of life is shackled by myths/beliefs. In the novel, Ibu Zarah is told she is angry because she is pregnant, as Zarah's father goes in and out of Bukit Jambul. Ibu only believes, as the locals believe, that Bukit Jambul is a haunted place (Lestari, 2012, p. 36).

Javanese society believes in the existence of mysticism, and activities are directed towards the belief in the existence of spirits, jinns, or demons. As Widiastuti (2023) states, Javanese society acknowledges supernatural beings that inhabit certain areas and things that can influence human affairs. Belief in the supernatural fosters respect for supernatural powers, even as a reminder for humans about their position in the broader spiritual ecosystem (Widiastuti, 2023). However, this belief is the fundamental problem for Mother (Aisyah). Therefore, Aisyah cannot understand Firas (Zarah's father), who is conducting research. As a form of the effect of Aisyah's bondage to myth, when Aisyah gives birth to an imperfect baby, Aisyah believes that it is a curse; the residents also think that Firas (Aisyah's husband) has a genie wife, so that the baby is cursed. Aisyah's thoughts make her refuse when her baby is about to be examined/autopsied (Lestari, 2012, p. 46).

The child is not half-snake, but instead suffers from a genetic disorder called Harlequin Ichthyosis. According to Dr. Muhammad Iqbal Ramadhan, upon further investigation, Harlequin ichthyosis is a disorder caused by a gene mutation (Ramadhan, 2021). As a result, the skin of newborns appears scaly. Firas confirms this in the following quote.

"Bukit Jambul did not curse him. He had a genetic disorder called Harlequin Ichthyosis. It took me months to find out because your mother and Abah would not allow an autopsy on your brother's body" (Lestari, 2012, p. 83).

b. Limitations of Knowledge Exploration Due to Religious Shackles

Conservative interpretations of religious practices can limit access to education and self-development in various fields of knowledge (Triono et al., 2022). Women's issues in the novel are also found in Zarah's character. Zarah's critical thinking seems to be constrained by her grandfather's religious understanding. At that time, young Zarah defended her father's research, which required him to travel in and out of Bukit Jambul. Zarah stated that matters of interest need to be questioned and answered. Finding answers is possible through scientific libraries/references or direct action in the field. What Firas did in seeking answers was to question things that intrigued him and then research directly by frequently visiting Bukit Jambul. Zarah's critical thinking when defending her father's actions is reflected in the following quote.

"Dad, I was just checking. What is wrong?" I replied.

"That is just the work of infidels. What else do we need to find out? The holy book is the source of knowledge, Zarah. All the truth is there. Later, science will prove that everything revealed to the Messenger thousands of years ago is true."

"To prove it, one needs to ask, Father. To me, if one sits back and waits, that is foolish."

On the table, I could see Abah's hand forming a fist. A sign that he was starting to get irritated.

"A servant of God will always receive guidance. He does not need to lead himself astray. Firas should use his intelligence to delve deeper into religion, not wasting his time." (Lestari, 2012, p. 129-130).

The shackles of religion have forced Zarah into conflict with her grandfather. For her grandfather, critical action and nature exploration refer to the work of infidels. In the study of theology and the history of Abrahamic religions, the term “infidel” has complex and often controversial connotations and is used to describe individuals or groups who reject or are unaware of the truth of a particular religion, especially Islam (Ahmed, 2023). However, the word *kafir* comes from the Arabic root meaning “to cover” or “to hide,” which conceptually means hiding or denying the truth, or not recognizing the goodness that has been given by God (Jalil, 2019). What Firas did was to research the plants in Bukit Jambul. Even by insisting on Abah’s understanding of religion, Abah said that what Firas did was to mislead himself. Furthermore, the problem of Zarah (a woman) in the novel *Particle* is that her ideals do not seem to receive her mother’s blessing.

“Mother told Hara that her mission now was to live in this world and build a life in the afterlife. She hoped that, one day, her prayers would be worthy enough to save the people she loved” (Lestari, 2012, p. 195).

Aisyah (Zarah’s mother) refers to Zarah and Firas (her husband) in this quote. The word “save” is associated with the word’s “disaster” or “tragedy.” Zarah’s abilities and desires seem to be seen as a disaster by her mother. However, for Zarah herself, it is a joy—a search for understanding the earth, where she lives and stands.

“...For me, wildlife photography is a bridge for many people to get to know their own home: this Earth. Our profession is an important bridge connecting Earth and the human population. We are the ambassadors of nature” (Lestari, 2012, p. 284).

Zarah herself also felt the lack of approval from her mother when she persevered in her dreams. Despite this, Zarah understood her mother’s feelings of anger towards her. This is stated in the following quote.

“Mother’s anger is because her child sees every place in this world, whether it is a hut without walls in the middle of a field, or a wooden building terrace in the middle of the wilderness, as if it were better than his own house. The house that Mother has created and defended with tears and hard work” (Lestari, 2012, p. 245).

c. The Power of Belief in Myths Gives Birth to a Harmful Obsession

Moving on to the novel *Aroma Karsa*. Dewi Lestari writes both of these novels, and the women in the novel *Aroma Karsa* are powerful because of their challenges. Myths and folklore are often considered irrational in society. Paradoxically, they can empower individuals and groups, facilitate collective actions, and form strong social identities (Kasim et al., 2021). The power of myths lies not in their factual truth but in their ability to provide a meaningful cognitive and emotional framework that allows individuals to understand the world around them and find their place (Jinan, 2008). In the novel *Aroma Karsa*, belief in the power of mysticism becomes a distinct energy for the female characters, Janirah and Raras Prayagung. *Aroma Karsa* is the scent Janirah and Raras Prayagung seek. The scent comes from a mystical plant called *puspa karsa*. Janirah, Raras’s grandmother, tells Raras about *Puspa Karsa*, which leads Raras to become obsessed with possessing it. The following is the story of *Puspa Karsa*.

“That is where Grandmother Putri told me about *Puspa Karsa*, a flower whose exact form and location are closely guarded. What is known about *Puspa Karsa* is its power, surpassing all magic and supernatural powers. *Puspa Karsa* is said to appear every hundred years, and each time it appears, it changes the order of the archipelago.

....

Puspa Karsa is a plant with a will and can control the will.” (Lestari, 2018, p. 10). Raras’s belief in the story led her to explore Mount Lawu on three expeditions. Previously, this mystical belief enabled Eyang Putri (Janirah) to break through social class traditions. With the confidence of stealing a small amount of the palace’s sacred flower, Janirah, a courtier, met her master’s daughter, who later became Eyang Kakung Raras. Janirah made Eyang Kakung fall in love, even though the entire family rejected their marriage, especially Eyang Kakung’s family. However, Janirah and Eyang Kakung married and developed a business together. Janirah achieved all of this because of the scent of the sacred flower. The power that arose alongside her belief in the sacred flower is indicated in the following quote.

“The marriage reportedly caused turmoil due to the disparity in status between the two. However, the couple persevered. Grandfather’s connections, which were intertwined with important people, further boosted his wife’s business, establishing Kemara’s first factory in Yogyakarta. “Those who had previously argued finally fell silent. I managed to become richer than my in-laws,” she added (Lestari, 2018, p. 15).

Starting from mystical beliefs, the women in the novel *Aroma Karsa* become increasingly powerful instead of restricted in their freedom of movement. They become more daring in exploring the possibilities that exist. While this may seem idyllic at first, the author recounts that her obsession with searching for Puspa Karsa leads to the death of Raras Prayagung (Eyang Janirah’s successor), the main character, due to Puspa Karsa’s influence. She is killed by Suma, who then develops a special relationship with Jati during the search.

d. Privileges for Men Over Women, Even Though Women Are More Capable

The deeply ingrained patriarchal culture in many societies around the world often places men in a superior position, even though women possess greater abilities than men (Setyawan, 2020). In another novel, *Geni Jora*, the issues depicted by women stem from patriarchal and religious culture. Patriarchal culture privileges men despite women’s greater brilliance. This is evident when Kejora gives his report card to his grandmother. At that time, Kejora was ranked first, while Prahara (a boy) received a warning letter from his teacher. However, the grandmother still prioritizes men based on their gender, not their abilities. We can see this in the following quote.

“Then I spread out my report card in front of him, along with Prahara’s report card and the warning letter from the teacher.... ‘This is your school report card, Grandson. No matter how much Prahara earns in school, as a boy, he still ranks first in the real world. You, on the other hand. No matter how high your academic rank is, you are still a girl and will always be a girl’” (Khalieqy, 2009, p. 62).

e. Women’s Insecurity When Seeking Justice

Sexual harassment is not only a physical attack, but also an attack on the victim’s identity, self-esteem, and sense of security (Yudha et al., 2018). Patriarchal culture places men in a dominant and superior position in society, significantly impacting the feelings of insecurity experienced by victims of sexual harassment (Nurfiana & Aprilia, 2023; Setyawan, 2020). In a patriarchal system, women are often viewed as sexual objects or male property, thus creating an environment where sexual harassment is socially tolerated (Hidayat et al., 2023). As a result, victims of sexual harassment often feel powerless, isolated, and afraid to speak up or seek help for fear of being blamed, judged, or not believed (Yudha et al., 2018).

The novel *Geni Jora* shows that the prioritization of men impacts feelings of insecurity in women. These feelings ultimately create problems for women when they want to speak up about sexual violence they experience. The character Lola, Kejora’s sister, experienced sexual

harassment. Apart from Kejora, no one knew. Lola often cried to express her pain, but was afraid to speak up. Lola felt unsafe if she complained to an adult; she was afraid that her complaint would not make her a victim but instead make her the cause of the incident. Her fear also led her to forbid Kejora from speaking up. Here is an excerpt.

“But Lola kept asking me to keep quiet, not to talk about the incident with anyone.

“If I tell Dad, we will both be safe and you will be safer.”

“Not necessarily. If the opposite happens? Who will guarantee our safety?”

“What do you mean?”

“Father will side with them, because they are his trusted people. If Grandma finds out, she will corner me, corner us both. Therefore, watch your mouth” (Khalieqy, 2009, p. 94).

Like nature, women appear passive when they are mistreated. The result is unaddressed sexual harassment, leading to repeated harassment. Another issue women face in the novel, *Geni Jora*, relates to religion. Men’s legality for polygamy seems disproportionate to women’s permission for polyandry. This is evident in the quote below (Khalieqy, 2009, pp. 259-260).

f. The Absence of Validation on Women’s Greatness

Still on the subject of women, another woman’s issue emerged implicitly when confronted with young men who refused to acknowledge women’s leadership prowess. This occurred when Fatima Mernissi gave an academic presentation around the Grand Jami’al Sunnah Mosque in Rabat. Every time she presented facts about women’s leadership and abilities, the male audience continuously erupted in jeering cheers (Khalieqy, 2009, pp. 19-21). Men’s unpreparedness to face the reality that women are also capable of leadership is a problem.

g. Culturally Determined Marriages Hinder Women’s Aspirations

The patriarchal system limits women’s freedom to pursue personal and professional aspirations while subtly instilling values emphasizing obedience, patience, and devotion as ideal characteristics of a woman (Akgul, 2017). Similar to the novel *Geni Jora*, although set in different narrative areas, the novels *Namaku Teweraut* and *Isinga* also address the challenges faced by Papuan women resulting from patriarchal culture. In the novel *Namaku Teweraut*, women’s challenges arise when Teweraut is prohibited from attending school and is forced to marry.

“Only men are allowed to make statements and decide. Women are accustomed to being obedient and not arguing” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 16).

One of Teweraut’s challenges as a Papuan woman is her customary marriage. Although Teweraut wishes to continue her education and marry her teacher, Deff, she must abide by her parents’ and customary decisions. Teweraut must marry Akatpits, a village chief with six wives (Sekarningsih, 2000, pp. 63-64). Teweraut was not alone; his friend also experienced a similar situation. Cicilia, who aspired to be a health center employee, was forced to marry the village head, who only had an elementary school education and had six wives. Like Teweraut, Cicilia could not refuse, as women were accustomed to being taught obedience (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 192).

Women are expected to comply with parental guidelines, even if this undermines their aspirations. This limits their freedom of movement to the domestic sphere and prevents them from speaking up for justice and self-defense. The author’s perspective on women’s issues is reflected in the conversation between Mama Rin and Teweraut.

“It seems that women are only meant to be objects of entertainment, to be exploited and treated arbitrarily as long as they provide benefits to men...” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 196).

h. Women are considered subjects who bring trouble/problems

This correlates with the story that follows. Despite the enormous sacrifices women make, men ultimately see women as mere troublemakers. Here is an excerpt.

“Is my child a woman? Or a man, as Akatpits envisions? According to him, **only in the hands of men can the realization of village development become a reality. In his view, women are only a source of conflict and chaos. Women are crybabies, women give up easily..... However, from experience, no Asmat woman, after marrying and having children, still has a curvy body shape that is as beautiful as before. They quickly dry out. Wither like a mangrove tree that has run out of coal, the element that fertilizes the soil**” (Sekarningsih, 2000, pp. 271-272).

Another problem arises from the shackles of tradition, prohibiting women from traveling long distances. Even when they travel to work or are independently productive, women are blamed and marginalized as the cause of the problem. This is illustrated when a group of Asmat people who had just arrived in Jakarta fell ill. Comments from other members demonstrate the traditions that bind women. Here is an excerpt.

“Women are so uptight. This is what happens when you do not obey your elders. Women do not need to travel far from their hometowns. This is the proof. The ancestors were furious. They did not want their descendants to leave their care” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 90)

This view is, of course, unfair. Women with the physical strength for long journeys are likely to be restricted, even though they can travel. Another problem arises from fatigue during activities. When men and women are equally tired from outdoor activities, women are burdened with arguments and additional work.

“The arguments with Akatpits began to color my life. I felt like he was making up more and more demands to be served. He would get me food, fix my dance clothes, prepare my makeup, massage me, wash my dance uniform pants, and a series of other orders. I considered the incident this afternoon to be excessive. He did not bring any dance equipment. When asked by the dance director, Akatpits replied, “Forgot.” Then he forced me to hand over my clothes and jewelry. I refused his request. He then threatened to sleep with Akaweten in front of my eyes, because he considered me not fulfilling the duties of a wife” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 127).

i. Lack of Appreciation for Young Women

Women also face problems that put them at a significant disadvantage. The woman in the novel (Teweraut) is deemed unworthy of recognition not because of her incompetence, but because of her youth.

“And when someone beside me greeted me, I woke up from my reverie, Pumu, behind me, protested. I did not deserve the award because I was still young. I was not a *cowut sabenak*. I was not an important person in my village’s women’s group. I did not listen to Pumu.” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 129).

j. Inner Conflict with Her Role as a Mother

In the following story, inner conflict arises, considering that Teweraut is the sixth wife and will soon return to Indonesia after the cultural performance. Teweraut thought about his position in the Akatpits family.

“I had never thought about this during my journey. Would they accept my presence if I were placed in a house with Akatpits’ six wives? Could the seven of us live in peace, adapting to each other? Akatpits had always been mine. Always near me, with me, and I served his every need. Later, where would I fit in when I gather with the others? What would my daily duties be? Would I be able to rebel? Form my identity within new values? That a woman does not remember herself, but rather the humans she will give birth to.” (Sekarningsih, 2000, pp. 156-157).

This thought is natural, given a woman’s instincts regarding her position within the family and future role as a mother with children. Upon returning to Papua, Teweraut stayed at Akatpits’ house, while Akatpits went to Merauke to work. Teweraut again experienced inner conflict. She also regretted having rushed to obey her parents’ demands for marriage (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 186).

k. Women Must Carry Out a Peaceful Mission Through Marriage

The role of women in fostering peace, particularly through interethnic/tribal marriage, is complex and multidimensional. Interethnic marriage can be a powerful catalyst for building bridges between diverse communities, fostering understanding, tolerance, and peaceful coexistence (Nasution & Rokan, 2023). In this context, women often play a crucial role in negotiating norms for reconciliation and peace (Artaç & Oğurlu, 2024).

Women’s problems in *Isinga* novel are only slightly different. In the novel *Namaku Teweraut*, women seem to be told to surrender to the fate of the proposal they present. In *Isinga* novel, women can refuse a marriage proposal unless the refusal has the potential to lead to war. This can be seen in the quote below.

“Mama Kame explained that this is the way of life of the Iko people, the strong people. A woman can refuse a man when he proposes, but she cannot refuse when asked by all the villagers for the sake of peace” (Herliany, 2015, p. 52).

However, in the novel, Irewa, the main character, must separate from her lover, Meage. Irewa’s limited ability to protect herself and achieve peace becomes the central issue that drives the story. In the novel, Irewa is kidnapped by Malom and then used as a tool for peace between the villages of Malom and Irewa.

“Malom from Hobone kidnapped Irewa! The anger of the Aitibu youths reached its peak!”
“...The angry Aitibu youths gathered at a yowi house...” (Herliany, 2015, pp. 35-36).
“Malom, who had not spoken up until now, expressed his opinion. “What if we make Irewa a tool for peace?”
“... If Aitibu agrees to peace, then Irewa becomes Malom’s wife. If they do not agree to peace, Irewa remains Malom’s wife, and Aitibu and Hobone will go to war again.”.(Herliany, 2015, pp. 47-48).

As for Irewa’s powerlessness to reject Malon and having to become a yonime woman (peacemaker) is in the following quote.

“Mama Keme quietly told Irewa that it was a big decision for the two villages that she had to marry Malom. Irewa cried again. She wanted to be the wife of her beloved Meage” (Herliany, 2015, p. 51).

1. Domestic violence

In patriarchal societies, men are often considered the heads of the family and primary authority figures, while women are expected to be obedient and submissive to their wishes (Setyawan, 2020). This inequality creates an environment where men may feel entitled to control and dominate women, including through physical, psychological, economic, or sexual violence (Asnawi & Ismail, 2020). After becoming a wife, four days after giving birth, Irewa, still in pain, was forced to continue doing domestic work and working in the garden. Malon even slapped her when she defended herself.

“On the fourth day, Irewa had not recovered from her illness. Malom began to scold her. Irewa said she felt she had no energy to work. Malom said there must always be *betatas*. She was hungry. The pigs must be fed. Irewa explained about her illness. Malom was annoyed. Irewa was considered to talk too much. He slapped Irewa’s mouth while she was talking. Malom said that tomorrow Irewa must go back to the garden. That was how Irewa’s days were, as if it had been determined that she had to work continuously. Also had to give birth continuously...” (Herliany, 2015, p. 73).

Likewise, in the continuation of the story. Irewa always received bad treatment from her husband. She often experiences domestic violence, even though she has learned to behave generously towards her husband.

“He asked how long she had been trying to be a good woman for Malom, but she was still often beaten” (Herliany, 2015, p. 139).

Such women’s problems are also the result of simplistic thinking. They see life as such for women. Women have no right to refuse.

“These women just go through it all. They do not understand the terms fair and unfair. They do not know that women have the right to refuse. They know that this is how life must be lived” (Herliany, 2015, p. 70).

2. The Author’s Views on Nature’s Problems

The novel *Partikel* explores the deterioration of nature. It depicts soil stripped of nutrients, forests deforested, rivers polluted by industrial waste from gold and silicon mining, and even mountains of garbage in the Pacific Ocean.

a. Soil that has lost nutrients

Indirectly, the description of soil that has lost many nutrients is depicted in the following quote.

“In Batu Luhur, there is no critical land, whether during the dry or rainy seasons. Since my father stopped using chemical fertilizers and synthetic drugs, he has rehabilitated the topsoil in the residents’ fields with mycelium. Like rolling out a magic carpet, the soil rehabilitation with mycelium has successfully decomposed the accumulation of pollutants and restored the freshness of the fields in Batu Luhur. One by one, the farming concept in Batu Luhur has also changed. It is no longer a homogeneous one-crop, but a mixed one. My father

calls it permaculture. The residents call it “*ladang akaladut*” (random field). From the name given by the residents” (Lestari, 2012, p. 25).

The quote indicates that the land in Batu Luhung Village was previously critical. However, after Firas’s efforts to educate residents about avoiding synthetic fertilizers and using mycelium, the land became fertile. This aligns with the statement by Samidjo & Isnawan (2022) that one promising approach to re-fertilizing the soil is using mycelium. Mycelium is a network of fungal hyphae that rehabilitates the topsoil and naturally increases soil fertility. Mycelium, the vegetative part of fungi, plays a crucial role in decomposing organic matter and nutrient cycling in the soil ecosystem.

b. Bare Forest

During her volunteering trip, Zarah also described the deforestation of Kalimantan’s forests, which are beginning to be deforested. Here is an excerpt.

“The Kalimantan Forest is not as dense as I imagined. **It looks like a vast hole everywhere. The remaining forest is history.** The scattered roofs and dense human settlements look like spreading cancer cells. Eating away at the green forest. From up here, I see a wounded Kalimantan” (Lestari, 2012, pp. 198-199).

In the quote, Dewi describes how Kalimantan’s forests are no longer as dense as they once were. They have experienced extensive deforestation in some areas. The words “wide holes” everywhere are a sign of this.

c. Water pollution

Dewi also raised concerns about environmental damage related to water. She questioned the gold and silicon waste that flows into rivers. Here is an excerpt.

“The Left Sekonyer is an unprotected branch of the Sekonyer River, the source of illegal gold and silicon sand waste. Although illegal miners are arrested, fined, and punished, their numbers are outnumbered by the authorities’ capacity. As a result, waste continues to flow into the river unchecked. Hydrochloric acid and mercury levels in the water continue to rise.” (Lestari, 2012, p. 207).

In the same case of water pollution, Dewi Lestari also described the trash mountains stretching across the Pacific Ocean, stretching like the Great Wall of China.

“The Great Pacific Garbage Patch, or Pacific Trash Vortex, began to attract attention several years ago when a sailor discovered a gigantic concentration of trash floating in the northern Pacific Ocean. People excitedly called it the “most massive man-made object,” surpassing the Great Wall of China. It is twice the size of France. Moreover, it has the potential to continue to grow. In water contaminated by the vortex, the number of plastic fragments per liter exceeds the number of plankton by up to six times” (Lestari, 2012, p. 421).

As in the previous analysis, the abovementioned environmental issues illustrate that the Earth is in a critical period. Not only are forests, the world’s lungs, beginning to suffer, but plankton, the oxygen-producing microbes that exceed the oxygen production of plants, are also being squeezed by plastic waste in the oceans. However, according to Plankton (Idrus et al., 2022), phytoplankton play a crucial role in global oxygen production, surpassing terrestrial plants’ contribution.

Phytoplankton are not only the primary producers of oxygen but also form the basis of the marine food web, supporting the lives of various marine organisms (Xiao et al., 2023).

d. Forest Exploitation

In the novel *Namaku Teweraut*, the author explores environmental issues, including the destruction of nature by humans, particularly deforestation. The forests, considered sacred by the Papuan people, are often plundered by non-indigenous people, even forest rangers who are supposed to be paid by the government to protect them. Here is an excerpt.

“Followed by news from the southernmost sub-district. A security guard was beaten to death by two hamlets. The issue is about fraudulent logging revenue sharing. However, the most accurate explanation is the frequent arbitrary actions of officers who feel powerful simply because they possess firearms. **Meanwhile, local people consider deforestation to pollute the forest’s sanctity. They view it all as rape and theft of their property. For your information, the Asmat people go through a series of elaborate and solemn ceremonies**” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 32).

The Papuan people, who still depend on the forest for their livelihoods, naturally treat it with great respect. Even before harming it (cutting down trees), Papuans perform ceremonies to ask permission to use parts of the forest for their livelihoods. Furthermore, new values that have entered alongside the exploitation of many things in the forest and rivers (in this case, crocodile hunting for their skins and water pollution) have resulted in Papuans’ lives not being sufficient, but instead being deficient and complicated. Here is an excerpt.

“Back when we did not know the meaning of money, and there were no logging or crocodile skin merchants, life felt prosperous. There was no reason to worry about game, fish, and sago disappearing from the face of the earth. Nature provided an abundance of everything. You just had to pick it. Fish, game, sago, and fruit. They were freely available in the forest. And what about education?” (Sekarningsih, 2000, p. 191).

Due to the exploitation of nature, the Papuan people are slowly losing their staple food, sago, and the fruits typical of the Papuan forests. Furthermore, fish are also becoming increasingly difficult to find.

D. Conclusion

The results of the study show that the problems about women in the author’s view are mystical logic in women, limited exploration of knowledge due to the shackles of religion, the superiority of belief in myths, giving birth to harmful obsessions, privileging men over women, even though women are more capable, women’s insecurity when seeking justice, the absence of validation of women’s greatness, marriage determined by culture results in hindering women’s ideals, women are considered subjects who bring trouble/problems, lack of appreciation for young women, inner conflict with their role as mothers, women carrying a mission of peace through marriage, and domestic violence. The environmental problems depicted in the novel are soil that loses nutrients, deforested forests, water pollution, and forest exploitation.

Novels by Indonesian women generally explain that achieving a healthy environment or nature requires a collaborative effort from society and academics. Rarities should not be considered collectibles to preserve nature, but images should be captured as a memorable strategy. In line with environmental stewardship, novels by Indonesian women depict building and urban development as considering both social and natural aspects. The social aspects encompass comfort and modernity, and the natural aspects encompass green spaces.

In novels by Indonesian women, female authors possess unique perspectives on tradition (myth). Belief in myth can be both a strength and a weakness for women. However, bringing myth to life in grassroots communities can likely be an alternative way to foster community participation in preserving the natural environment. Indonesian female authors have incorporated myth and logical narratives through the storyline and the characters' speech to offer alternative ways to preserve the environment. Myth serves as an ideology that accommodates women's perspectives on nature for novelists.

E. Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank DIPA LP2M UNNES for funding this research.

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