

A REVELATION OF DECONSTRUCTION ON CONVENTIONAL HERO AND WITCH IMAGES IN TERRY PRATCHETT'S *THE WEE FREE MEN*

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ABSTRACT

This research is a deconstruction analysis which aims to reveal the images that have been deconstructed, and the method used to deconstruct those images in Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men*. This study is a qualitative research using content analysis method. Data analysis was conducted through data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings related to the first objective showing that there are two new images found in the novel along with their indicators. They are (1) the new image of flawed heroes with their unusual appearances, unfit attitudes, and peculiar concepts; (2) the new image of irregular witches who have common looks, are decent, and sensible. The second result is related to the methods used by the author to convey the new, deconstructed images. The author subverts the moral dichotomy to define the new types of heroes and witches. The exposure of the irony is also used to break down the logocentrism toward the conventional images of heroes and witches. Another method is the subversion of gender dualism and the last method is the exposure of unusual diction.

Keywords: deconstruction, logocentrism, conventional images, *The Wee Free Men*

INTRODUCTION

Logocentrism is a term used to describe a privileging of one meaning upon the other. In other words, logocentrism implies that one meaning is superior to its opposite (Eagleton, 1995:131). Logocentrism appears as the effect of binary opposition, which means the exact opposite of words (male/female, light/dark, right/wrong, etc.). Derrida (in Peck and Coyle, 2001:153) states logocentrism as an approach of metaphysics to define truth, knowledge, and being. Logocentrism has developed

and rooted in society for decades through various media like school institution, religion, law, literature etc. However, literature is considered as the most subtle

and effective medium to persuade people to think logocentrically because it is entertaining.

Literature is not only created for mature readers. There is also children's literature. With adventurous plot and amusing characters, children's literature successfully attracts children into making it as an entertainment source. Apart from

its function as entertainment source, children's literature is also used as the amusing way to educate children. Children will imitate the characters' behaviors, way of thinking, and even their looks.

Unfortunately, children's literature does not only contain education. It has other function as a medium to spread logocentric ideology. Through children's literature, younger readers are introduced and trained to think logocentrically. However, not all children's literature has this power to persuade children to think logocentrically. Only the classical children's literatures with didactic lessons contribute in persuading young readers to have logocentric thoughts.

That kind of children's literature shows the readers about things they should or should not do in subtly entertaining way. Hunt (1991:17) explains that children's books are the most interesting media to contribute in society, literature, and bibliographical section due to its combination of words, pictures, shape, and sound. As Lukens (1999:9) states, "they are different from adults in experience, but not in species, or to put it differently, in degree but not in kind." Children who have less experience and knowledge than adults will swallow up

the logocentrism in that kind of literature as it is wrapped up in sweet, entertaining tales. That kind of literature is also read throughout generations; thus it gets more popular and it makes the children easily absorb the logocentrism within the stories (Tatar, 1999:269).

In classical, didactic children's literature, logocentrism gets through the readers' heads through images carried by particular characters. The images here mean more than just physical appearance. It involves the behavior, the role, the way of thinking, and the traits of a character. The images of characters in children's literature usually are pictured to have one dimension of personality; meaning that they do not have dynamic traits and rarely change their personalities drastically. The good character will remain good and so will the bad character.

Logocentrism in classical children's literature will lead people to strictly judge a particular matter to one category. Those who think logocentrically tend to believe for a label of one thing. Furthermore, they also tend to get manipulated easily, as they get used to judge something to fall to just one category. In the end, they will live as one sided people. One-sided people have narrower perspectives and lack of tolerance as they only judge a matter from one angle of thinking. Later, one-sided

people will be stuck in society as they easily believe in false profiling and they resist having broader perspective and tolerance.

It is interesting to analyze the deconstructed images in Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men* because it is read by many people worldwide. The novel also gives refreshment as it offers unusual images of particular characters in children's literature. The aims of the research are to find out what conventional images are deconstructed and how they are revealed by the author.

This research examines the images of particular characters in Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men*. Since the researcher desires to examine the deconstructed conventional images and the way they are revealed, deconstruction literary criticism is used to analyze the literary work. Derrida (1997:115) describes that deconstruction tries to break down the logocentrism by seeking the absence in the text.

To be in line with Derrida, Culler (1985) states that deconstruction does not put reversal of the inferior to the superior, but rather show that both are equal and complementary. Both Derrida and Culler believe that language is full of gaps and ambiguities; thus, it questions the authority of the author to create one, fixed

meaning. They believe that the absence of the text can be used to break down the binary opposition and logocentrism.

A theory about the conventional images of hero and witch are articulated by Hourihan (1997:57-95,175-192). Hourihan states that heroes are usually some well built, White noblemen or rulers. The heroes have great armory skills and have a quest to conquer the evil. Hourihan also utters the conventional images of wicked witches. Wicked witches usually have terrible looks, live alone in dark forest, and master the knowledge of spells, hexes, and all kind of witchcrafts and black magic.

RESEARCH METHOD

Since the data sources of this research are words and the researcher uses content analysis method, this research belongs to descriptive qualitative study (Creswell, 2007:38). The data were taken from Terry Pratchett's *The Wee Free Men* which was published in 2003 by Harper Collins. The novel consists of 375 pages which are divided fourteen chapters.

To collect the data, the researcher read the novel closely, took several notes related to the objectives of the research, interpreted the data that had been

gathered, and categorized the data based on the categories related to the deconstructed, new images of heroes and witches.

The data trustworthiness was achieved by providing rich description; re-reading the data; and conducting triangulation. The researcher consulted this study with two academic advisors and discussed the research with peer-reviewers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The Deconstruction of Conventional Images Found in *The Wee Free Men*

There are two new images that are found in the novel. They are the images of the flawed heroes and the irregular witches. Those new images are different from the conventional images in the conventional fairy tales.

The Flawed Heroes

There are several indicators for someone to be called a hero. A hero usually is a well-built, White male who comes from high class, has noble personalities, masters the arts of fighting and leadership, and goes on a quest to conquer the evil (Hourihan, 1997:57-105). However, the novel shows the unusual images of heroes that rarely appear in conventional fairy

tales. Here are some indicators that the heroes in the novel are not like the heroes in conventional fairy tales:

- Having Unusual Appearances

In the novel, the Feegles are the clan of six inches, blue men who have the fierce looks and wear kilt, bad shoes, and rat-skull helmets.

- Having Unfit Attitudes

The Feegles are the thieves who like to swear, get drunk, and commit some crimes like fighting in public and housebreaking.

- Having Peculiar Concepts and Ideas

The Feegles think that they are dead and now they live in heaven. When they die, they assume that they come back to the land of the living. Based on that concept, the Feegles become the fearless heroes because they think they are dead already. However, the Feegles respect the witches that sometimes it seems that they are afraid of the witches. The Feegles also believe that any written form is dangerous. Thus, they never give away their names because they think it will put them in danger when someone writes them down.

The Irregular Witches

For centuries, logocentrism has lead people into thinking that witches have negative images. Apart from their bad

attitudes, witches are also commonly pictured to have the terrible appearances. Nevertheless, the witches in the novel are different than the witches that usually appear in common fairy tales. Here are some indicators that the witches in the novel are not like the witches in conventional fairy tales:

- **Having Common Looks**

Unlike the witches that have horrible looks, the novel exposes the witches that have the ordinary looks and even the friendly appearances. Tiffany wears the blue sky dress with her brown hair and eyes; Miss Tick has slim look with ordinary face; Mrs. Ogg is a fat lady with the friendly smiles and jokes; Mistress Weatherwax with her tall figure and blue eyes: and Granny Aching with her common, shepherdess look.

- **Being Decent Witches**

All the witches in the story are not pictured as the wicked witches. Instead of being the horribly terrifying witches, they are portrayed as the decent human beings with the emotion, affection, and humanity. Tiffany shows her concern toward her family when her brother is missing regardless how annoying her brother is. She also shows her sympathy for her enemies even though they have kidnapped

her brother. Mistress Weatherwax and Mrs. Ogg express their respect and manner when Tiffany refuses to tell them both about the journey she has and the help she gets.

- **Being Sensible Witches**

Miss Tick is an observant witch. She uses her logic, knowledge, and ability to analyze her surroundings instead of using crystal ball to predict about the things that may come. She also makes living from helping people and has other skill to survive other than threat the villager to give her what she wants. In order to defeat the fairy Queen and her allies, Tiffany use a frying pan and her logic, instead of performing magic and casting spells. Tiffany realizes that to be a great witch, one must limit themselves from using magic and use their head and skill instead.

The Methods that are Used to Deconstruct the Images in *The Wee Free Men*

Subverting Moral Dichotomy

Moral dichotomy can be defined as a strict line to divide the good and the bad in a particular subject. In classical fairy tales, a distinction of good and evil is drawn strictly to prevent such ambiguities and to make such contrastive idea.

If the heroes in conventional fairy tales are always the nobleman with heart

of gold and victorious intention, the Feegles are best known as the thieves. They like to get drunk and their intention to war is not to gain victory, but rather to fight because they like it.

The good witches can also be found in the story. Tiffany offers her guest some food, asks politely for help from the Feegles, helps the innocence, wishes good things to happen upon the strangers, and shows her gratitude toward those who has helped her. Mrs. Ogg and Granny Aching help the villagers to solve their problems without asking for rewards. In return, the villagers give Mrs. Ogg and Granny Aching respects, not fear and horror.

Exposing Irony

The author uses situational irony to deconstruct the images of heroes and witches. Situational irony can be defined as the irony in which contradicts what might be expected with what actually happens.

The Feegles are known to be thieves. It is ironic because the readers have expected heroes to be the man of law. The witches are also the educated and observant when the readers expect them to perform mystical practices and use magic anytime they want.

Subverting Gender Dualism

Subverting gender dualism is not reversing the gender or creating the superiority of female characters over the males. It is more like creating female characters who have the same quality and role as the males.

The Feegles have one best quality in a battle: fighting. However, they have zero knowledge about the things around them. They once have mistaken the eggs for stones and oil lamp for liquors. In the clan, only the female can think and take care of the whole clan members.

When the mother of the clan passes away, Fion must leave to find a clan for her to rule. It is not male who has to seek a clan and rule it, but a female.

Exposing Unusual Diction

The heroes in the story speak using unusual diction and dialect. The Feegles also use the obsolete language like the old, shepherds type of counting.

To emphasize the image of thick, uneducated heroes, the usage of gruesome slangs is also employed in the novel.

CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, there are two images that have been deconstructed in the novel. They are the conventional images of heroes and witches. The heroes that used to be perfect

and noble are pictured as the flawed figures in both appearance and attitudes. The decent and friendly witches are also shown in the novel to subvert the conventional wicked witches images.

To convey those images, there are four methods used by the author. They are: the subversion of moral dichotomy to show the unfit attitudes of the heroes and to express the politeness and manner of the witches; the exposure of irony to show the readers about the things that really occur in the story, instead of the expectation they have for the story; the subversion of gender dualism to give the idea about the equal role and duty of men and women; and the last one is the exposure of unusual diction to emphasize the image of flawed heroes.

The new images found in the novel make *The Wee Free Men* as the new reading to show the readers about the deconstructed characters. Those new, deconstructed images are considered as the new qualities to train the young readers to think broadly, as the book breaks the logocentrism that has lingered in children's literature. Through this book, the young readers are expected to be the active readers and have broader perspectives with the guidance from the advance readers or the older readers who have the competence to explain the

distortions in the story.

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