

# The Position of Children's Characters in Children's Animation Postcolonialism Studies

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## ABSTRACT

### **Keywords:**

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Children's literature has now begun to shift to digital media, known as children's animation. Instead of children's literature being created for children, these works are written, edited and distributed by adults. This shows that adults (parents) have full power over the work that children will consume. Colonialism theory then questions what it means to write for children. This research appears with the real assumption of where the child is positioned in children's cyber literature. The postcolonial approach is used to verify this assumption. The results show that children are treated as objects, a means to endure real problems faced by adults. It appears that writing for children in addition to exploring is also stuffing and imposing the will for the needs of adults: guiding children, training children through the process of reaching civilization which is again the power of adults to define it.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the 2000s digital literature started existing in Indonesia and a research area for researchers, unfortunately most of them missed the views on children's animations that emerged from the mid-2010. Today the industrial world reads the opportunity to make children's literature a high-value commodity (Langer, 2002), especially with the emergence of the Covid-19 pandemics which forced children to stay at home, making children's cyberspace the first choice of parents for entertainment and educating children, so cyber literature should receive attention in the realm of literary research.

Cyber literature is literary literature in cyberspace and the internet that can be enjoyed through digital technology. A literary work on the theme of the internet, computers and peripherals, cyberspace, etc. can also be used as part of cyber literature. There is also a tendency to call digital literature and cyberpunk. Gibson (1984) in his cyberpunk novel *Neuromancer* coined the term virtual world, a reference to virtual reality in one form or another, which he describes as a kind of shared hallucination (Don D'Amassa, 2005). Gibson coined the term to describe the 'landscape' data entered by the imaginary characters with '*jacking in*' - their consciousness directly connects networked computers (Bell, 2007).

Youtube platform is the favorite platform for accessing children's cyberspace works. Since mid-2010, accounts serving children's animation have shifted the quantity of music accounts on YouTube. Based on Rokib's

research (Rokib, 2019) in a period of three years between 1997-2000 it is estimated that there are more than fifty million connoisseurs of cyber literature. This number increased to four hundred million in 2007. By 2020, according to statistics on the Social Blade page, it was already 312,705 M (Social Blade, 2020).

Cyber literature referred to in this research is short cinema through technology media (gadgets) and the Youtube platform. According to the children's literature model, there are many works that are enjoyable and desirable for children (Nodelman, 1988). Viires' (2017) thesis also supports the writer's opinion that cinema on Youtube is part of literature, he states, "... the text is mostly made up as 'pseudo sequels' to a book, comic strip, TV series, or cinema...."

The author chooses the short cinema 'Upin Dan Ipin' and 'Nussa and Rara' episodes at Home Only. The two works were selected based on the largest number of *viewers* and *subscribers* until September 30, 2020 (Social Blade, 2020). In Indonesia both are in the top ranks for the category of children (*more for kids*). Upin and Ipin from Malaysia tells the story of twin boys aged 5 years who live with their siblings and opahs and have friends from various ethnicities and religions (Islam, Confucianism, Hinduism). Aired on MNC TV and Youtube (La Copagques). Meanwhile, Nussa and Rara, a work by Indonesian youth, tells the story of Nussa, a nine-year-old boy and her sister, Rara, who is five years old who live with her Umma, while her father rarely shows up because of work. Nussa and Rara focus on Islamic religious literacy, have been broadcast on NET and Trans TV, active pages only on Youtube (Nussa Official). If the children's literature has been massively published through cyber media and to comoditas, which is interesting to observe is, is there any literary criticism son cyber?

Children's literature can have an important role in voicing or silencing "the other" that can change the ways of human life. Instead of children's literature being created for children, these works are written, edited and distributed by adults. Nodelman (1988) emphasized in his writing: "As far as I know, the writers and readers of the Children's Literature Association Quarterly are adults; children are not the ones who write either the texts we identify as children's literature or the criticism of those texts." So, adults (parents) have full power over the work that will be consumed by children. This questions what it means to write children's literary works or in postcolonial theory known as the theory of *The Other* (the other).

Said (1978) said, "Orientation is not only - because it is - found to be 'Oriental' in all the things that the average nineteenth-century European would take for granted, but also because - perhaps - was made Oriental." Children also succumb to the adult's notion of what it means to be childish and exhibit childish behavior that we obviously want to see. This can happen because they rarely have the strength to show they can do anything else. For example, an adult wants to see children playing with dolls, so they buy a doll, even though he could be playing football if he has the strength to 'fight' the adult's expectations. Words Said force us to confront the uncomfortable conclusion that the inferiority of children against ourselves as a thinker and speaker on them. This is interesting to be used as research material, because seen from the post-colonialism approach, the relationship between parent and child becomes a colonizer and a colony.

Raina's (2010) research on postcolonial texts in Muslim children's literature shows that children's literary texts are deliberately made to form children's cognition according to educational goals. This is emphatically true that literature does not only entertain children but also invites them to discover more about the world. This research is like Eyal Segal's (2016) research which shows that the metaphors used in the text can affect children's cognition or understanding of their world. The two studies above assume that children's consumption of literary works will affect the way they view and live life. Foucault believes that "to 'discover' the 'real' meaning of the text is simply an illusionary practice, which keeps texts in circulation ..." (Foucault, 1972). These studies inspire writers to browse for more detail what the ole h Foucault above.

Thomas's (2019) research shows that the simplicity of cyber stories characters he studied in Malayam is different from text literary characters, he assesses that cyber-stories have their own experiences that limit children's imagination but on the other hand help children find real pictures of objects. This is like Supriatin's research (Supriatin, 2012) which shows that criticism of cyber literature is still needed. This means that the emerging cyber literature must have a control, namely literary criticism, and the author's research is trying to conduct research on cyber literature. Furthermore, there is Rokib's (2019) research which identifies trends, patterns, and approaches in analyzing digital literature. This paper argues that the study of digital literature in Indonesia is shackled by the polemic of quality and its emergence in contemporary Indonesia. This conclusion shows that the quality of cyber literature is still in doubt, according to the author, it is still considered to be only a change of media, from text to hyper-text, so the research that the author will do is useful to prove this doubt.

Based on those studies, it appears that research on children's animation is needed as a control over the work that is consumed by children. This research will enhance the existing research by focusing on forms of colonialism in children's animation, seen from the storytelling and the way children are positioned in the work, with the aim of proving the writer's assumption that is it true that pure children's literary works are written for children? Maybe the work is deliberately created to create colonies (colonies) for adults, so that children obey the meaning created by adults, in children's animation.

## METHOD

Content analysis as a qualitative approach has been a major focus since the 1970s. Raina (2010) noted that "[c]ontent analysis is a flexible research method for analyzing text and explaining and interpreting people's written objects." There are two views on children's literature research as a text.

According to Galda, Ash, and Cullinan (2000) “. . . those studies that examine texts or genres to describe what the authors do, or literary analyses; and those that examine what texts are about, or content analyses.” Literary analysis considers children's literature as objects of literary analysis and criticism and involves reading closed texts. This form of research has increased since the 1970s and focuses on illustration, genre, or style, and reflects a variety of perspectives ranging from narrative, critical, feminist theory and reader response criticism. Content analysis, on the other hand, reflects the interests of the times. It includes many research studies conducted on the image of African-Americans in children's literature as early as the 1960s and 1970s.

On the other hand, more recent research study on children's literature hand, reveals research trends ole h theoretical approach is more complex and more extensive research methodology. The data in this method can be a broader definition of text that is inclusive of any communication between sender and receiver and can include visual images or the relationship between text and images as research conducted by White and Marsh (2013).

The data of this research are snippets of images from the screenshots of children's animation videos entitled Upin Dan Ipin and Nussa Dan Rara episodes at Rumah Saja and the structure of the story. The two works were selected based on the largest number of *viewers* and *subscribers* until September 30, 2020 (Social Blade, 2020). In Indonesia both are in the top ranks for the category of children (*more for kids*). Upin and Ipin works of Malaysian origin tells the story of twin boys aged 5 who live with kaka k and opahnya, and have friends from a variety of diverse races and religions I slam, Konghucu, Hindu). Aired on MNC TV and Youtube (La Copagques). Meanwhile, Nussa and rara, a work by Indonesian youth, tells the story of Nussa, a 9-year-old boy and her sister, Rara, who is 5 years old, who live with her Umma, while her father rarely appears because

of work. Nussa and Rara focus on literacy A gamma-Islam, had been shown on NET and Trans TV, only the active page on YouTube (Nussa Official).

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This study aims to determine the forms of colonialism-control (colonialism- *the others*) in cyber literature "Upin dan Ipin" and "Nussa and Rara" and to find out how child figures are positioned according to post-colonial theory. The explanation of this can be seen through the following explanation.

### The Author Borrows Children's Characters to Convey His Thoughts



The author creates the character of the child character in accordance with the author's expectations of the character of the child in the real world, as seen from the logic of the child character's thought that is hard to believe. A boy named Nussa is child portrayed very mature, calm, and religious in the story Nussa and Rara, so did the stories Upin and Ipin. Nussa is told as a grade 2 elementary school child who is very obedient to her mother, good at religion and able to control emotions well. Nussa told his mother that he would be grateful and not complain even at home. Likewise, the character Rara who conveyed the same thing was no longer nagging to ask to play in the yard or garden. Upin and Ipin's work depicts Upin, who is still in kindergarten, obeying his grandparents to stay at home and help his sister cook nasi lemak. The description refers to figures one and two.

The children's characters created by the author indicate a teaching and hope for children (as connoisseurs of the work). The author's hope is like that of the English philosopher John Locke with his famous 1693 essay "Thoughts Concerning Education" which says that a child's mind is the same as a blank sheet of paper - he calls it "blank slate" - ready to be written (Foucault, 1979). This means that every child has the same ability to learn, and adults are responsible for educating children. But on the other hand, Locke's definition implicitly refers to or inspires the possibility of occupation or conquest. The human group that needs to be observed and described by adults with the power to describe who the child is, what the child should do and what the child's expected behavior is, this is conveyed by the author through the characters. The characters of Nussa and Rara, Upin and Ipin, describe the children as different and as colonization grounds. 5-10 years old suddenly presented as "something" a new world to explore, as Said in his Oriental theory, mastering sometimes seems vague by "educating to be" (Said, 1978). So, the formation of figures as in the work above is part of the colonization of children, namely the efforts of adults (authors) to stuff children with the ideology of "children should be."

### People Adults Omniscient



In the quotations of three and four figures, the parent or adult figures are omniscient and the child on the other hand works hard to know or understand what the adult is saying. In Upin and Ipin's story, Opah knows many things related to what Upin and Ipin can and shouldn't do during the covid-19 period, while in the story of Nussa and Rara the mother knows many reasons Nussa and Rara are not allowed to play outside the house and covid. -19 to be very dangerous. Everything is known only to adults, so children should ask an adult.

This section shows the binary opposition of "the Other" (the Son) which must be transformed (Said, 1978). *The Other* means a condition that one is superior to another. Children as land that are still innocent, are formed and dominated by parents. By utilizing a child's curiosity and admiration for something new and emphasizing the importance of the position of parents as people who have knowledge as well as power, who control and

govern the child. This shows the spirit of indoctrination. This underlines the child arranged and allowed the author (the adult) in the story. In this case the author realizes that children are raw materials that still need to be processed to be useful.

### **Sponsor is Used to Position Parental Supremacy**

The teaching feature found was a scientific text style filled with information and stuffing sponsored messages. As a result, children, shown to be ignorant, are used to position their parents' supremacy. The Nussa and Rara edition at home alone feature shampoo products that are categorized as halal and can repel germs and viruses that stick to the hair. See pictures five and six, Umma tells that the shampoo is suitable for children to keep it clean, halal and avoid viruses. Rara is said to not know what is meant by halal and Nusa does not know what makes the shampoo kill the virus. Ummalah who explains all. In Upin Ipin's story, Kak Ros said that SGM's milk was good for their growth. Upin Dan Ipin did not understand the relationship between growth and milk, so it was Kak Ros who explained it.



Even in children's literature, adults try to force children, by exploiting a sense of "want" as explained by Locke in the term "blank slate" (Foucault, 1979). Children's characters are not allowed by the author to have a choice, it is said that adults understand and know what is best for children. Adult readers must understand that the existence of sponsors is part of the business industry, so once again children are directed to choose according to the wishes of adults (the author's agreement with the sponsor). The story is described by Foucault in the terms "school" and "prison", maybe it is good for children, but for children like imprisoned (Foucault, 1979).

### Take Advantage of Storytelling for The Needs of Parents

By utilizing a child's curiosity and admiration for something new or otherwise, the author makes the story so that the child appears to be obedient and obedient to the orders of the parents, emphasizing the importance of the position of parents as people who have knowledge and power. It is told in Nussa and Rara that those who do not obey will be rewarded with punishment from God Almighty. In the story of Upin and Ipin, when they disobeyed their brother, Upin and Ipin immediately fell and were considered as a result of disobeying their sister's orders.

In Upin Ipin's story, it still contains multiculturalism, but the strong message conveyed is that messages that smell of Islam are possible, because Malaysia is a country with most Muslims. However, the authors Nussa and Rara do not realize that Indonesian children also consist of various religions, ethnicities and cultures so that the strong teachings of Islam do not seem suitable for consumption from National Television in Indonesia because Indonesia is a country that values multiculturalism and cultural diversity of ethnic religions.



The story excerpt in pictures seven and eight shows the spirit of indoctrination about Islamic teachings which is undoubtedly for the good of Muslims themselves. The stories that use children for the needs of the child's parents are always shown as ignorant (Nodelman, 1988). The parental need in this case, is to make a child who is Muslim into a Muslim who is obedient to his God, this is conveyed through stories, because parents need children who are obedient and obedient. In line with that, only adults have the right to test children's thinking powers, because parents (umma, Kak Ros, Opah) are experienced and knowledgeable, and are in control of the child's life. This shows the use of child figures, to suggest that what parents convey is the most correct and good thing for children, because parents need children to see that their parents are completely right!

### Maturity "Anomalies" in Storytelling

As told in picture nine, Upin and Ipin really understands Opah's grandmother's anxiety about her financial condition. Unusually, 5-year-old Upin-Ipin (as told by a Kindergarten level school) can understand this anxiety, so she wants to help sell food on her own initiative. Even Upin was able to cook his own rice under the supervision of Kak Ros. In Nussa and Rara, pictures 10 and 11 tell that the 9-year-old Nussa was able to empathize with online scavengers and motorcycle taxi drivers who were still working outside the home when Covid-19 occurred, citing lack of food and most likely being exposed to the Covid-19 virus. Interestingly, Rara, a 5-year-old child, can empathize and mature in facing having to stay at home.





This shows how mature and grand, the children between 5- and 9-years old face the situations in the story. According to the writer, these child figures, especially Nussa, are grand enough to become everyday portraits. The perfect boy. For a boy he almost never made mistakes like most children. He is more of a perfect portrait of a boy who always teaches to show or tells the audience to behave in accordance with Islamic teachings. This is the anomalous maturity, the adult attitude that the author hides through the child character.

The way of thinking, the way of speaking of the child characters is like an adult forced into the character of children. Hunt once said, a character that is not appropriate (displays maturity) will make children grow up faster than they should be and is like killing a period called childish (Hunt, 2016).

## CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis it appears that child cyber literature is, apart from exploring, imposing one's will on the needs of adults. The child character, seen with postcolonial theory, is explored and utilized by adults, in this case the author (the colonizer who needs the conquest, namely the child). Child cyber literature, Upin and Ipin as well as Nussa and Rara use children for their parents' needs. This study proves that children are treated as objects, to bear the real problems faced by adults, such as children who do not want to obey, children who have not yet fully practiced religious teachings, children who want to play outside but must stay at home. This is very contrary to the original idea of writing for children as companions for children. These works try to shackle them with perfect characterization. This is evidence of subjective problematics from child cyber literature and can be used as further research related to the content presented

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