



HIDDEN ADULT IN OKKY MADASARI'S CHILDREN'S BOOK, MATA DI TANAH MELUS

Ahmad^{1*}, Ashabul Kahfi Susanto², Farooq Shah³

¹ Universitas Islam Negeri Alauddin Makassar, English Department, Faculty of Adab & Humanities, Gowa, Sulawesi Selatan Indonesia

*ahmad.m@uin-alauddin.ac.id

² University of Aberdeen, School of Language, Literature, Music and Visual Culture, Scotland, United Kingdom
a.susanto.21@abdn.ac.uk

³ Abdul Wali Khan University Mardan, Department of English, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
farooq@awkum.edu.pk

ABSTRACT

Okky Madasari is an Indonesian novelist who is popularly known as a critic who used to voice social criticism through her writings. However, such social criticism appears not only in her adult novels but also in her children's novels. In 2018, she first published a children's book entitled *Mata di Tanah Melus*, a novel that talks about the adventures of Matara, a 12-year-old girl in the land of Melus, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. This novel receives appreciation both from readers and scholars, and some scholars have examined how social criticism is reflected in the novel. However, none have analysed the reason why Madasari urges social criticism in this children's book. Therefore, this research aims to discuss the complexity of this children's book and to uncover why social criticism is insisted in *Mata di Tanah Melus*. This is descriptive analysis research in which the researchers' attention focuses on the structure of the novel through close reading. Close reading here means the researchers read the novel several times in the way which Perry Nodelman has suggested: "reading as an adult versus reading as a child" in reading children's fiction. The result shows that *Mata di Tanah Melus* is too complex for children's readers. The complexity can be seen from the high-level language as well as the complicated idea of the story. The complicated issues are clearly seen from the way in which the author insists on social criticism as her ideology, as she has always done in her adult novels. Thus, this research is in line with Nodelman's theory that there is always a hidden adult in children's novels.

Keywords: *Children's Literature, Hidden Adult, Okky Madasari, Social Criticism, Perry Nodelman*

ABSTRAK

Okky Madasari adalah novelis Indonesia yang dikenal sebagai kritikus yang biasa menyuarakan kritik sosial melalui tulisannya. Namun, kritik sosial tersebut tidak hanya muncul dalam novel dewasanya, tetapi juga dalam novel anaknya. Pada tahun 2018, ia pertama kali menerbitkan buku anak berjudul *Mata di Tanah Melus*, sebuah novel yang bercerita tentang petualangan Matara, seorang gadis berusia 12 tahun di tanah Melus, Nusa Tenggara Timur, Indonesia. Novel ini mendapat apresiasi baik dari pembaca maupun akademisi. Beberapa peneliti telah mengkaji bagaimana kritik sosial tercermin dalam novel tersebut. Namun, belum ada yang menganalisis alasan mengapa Madasari menekankan kritik sosial dalam buku anak ini. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk membahas kompleksitas buku anak ini dan mengungkap mengapa kritik sosial ditegaskan dalam *Mata di Tanah Melus*. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian analisis deskriptif dimana perhatian peneliti difokuskan pada struktur novel melalui pembacaan cermat. Membaca cermat disini berarti peneliti membaca novel tersebut beberapa kali sebagaimana cara Perry Nodelman menyarankan pembaca dalam membaca buku anak yaitu "membaca sebagai orang dewasa dan membaca sebagai seorang anak". Hasilnya menunjukkan bahwa *Mata di Tanah Melus* terlalu kompleks untuk pembaca anak-anak. Kompleksitas yang terlihat dari bahasa tingkat tinggi serta ide cerita yang rumit. Rumitnya persoalan terlihat jelas dari cara pengarangnya menegaskan kritik sosial sebagai ideologinya, seperti yang selalu dilakukannya dalam novel-novel dewasanya. Dengan demikian, penelitian ini sejalan dengan teori Nodelman bahwa selalu ada orang dewasa yang tersembunyi dalam novel anak.

kata kunci: *Sastra Anak, Hidden Adult, Okky Madasari, Kritik Sosial, Perry Nodelma*



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INTRODUCTION

In 2018, Okky Madasari published *Mata di Tanah Melus*, a children's novel that talks about the adventures of Matara, a 12-year-old girl in the land of Melus, East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia. Okky Madasari is well-known as a social-critics novelist since most of her adult novels criticize the social condition of Indonesia, such as her debut novel, *Entrok* which criticizes gender discrimination in patriarchal culture Indonesia (Setyorini, 2017).

Mata di Tanah Melus is her first children's novel, and it receives high appreciation from readers and scholars. Wawan Eko Yulianto states that this novel is a work of progressive literature for children because it combines realist and utopian aspects in building the main character's adventure (Yulianto, 2018). Indeed, this 187-page children's book provides a novelty for children's books which are generally circulated in Indonesia. If most Indonesian children's books are in the form of picture books with little text, then this book appears as a literary work with a long narrative and elevates the cultural richness of Indonesian society.

Matara, the main character of the novel, is presented as an urban child who lives in the capital city of Indonesia, Jakarta. However, her mother does not like Matara's school system either in public or private schools. While all parents in Matara's school agree to a school trip to Disney Land, Hong Kong, her mother don't since she thinks that such a trip is just a waste of money and the Disney characters are not worthy of being role model. Therefore, Matara's mother takes her to the land of Melus, East Nusa Tenggara—a place that she believes is better (Madasari, 2018).

What was happening in the land of Melus is the central point of the story. Here, Matara as well as her mother experience a lot of magical things in society. Matara and a boy in her age, Atok, are lost in an unrealistic world, the land of butterflies. Their adventurous loss is full of fantasy as well as dramatic tension. In addition, the dialogues of those two children, Matara and Atok, are somehow innocent, yet sarcastic at the same time.

Interestingly, the story was told from the first point of view of Matara. Thus, Matara is the main character as well as the narrator of the novel. Matara is just a child, but very critical and sarcastic. In other words, she is able to criticize some social issues happening in Indonesia at her twelve-year-old age.

Several researchers have explained how the social issues or social criticism presented in the novel *Mata di Tanah Melus* as explained below. Nonetheless, none of them have examined why this children's book with a twelve-year-old child narrator is full of social criticism, a theme which is uncommon in children's books. Likewise, none have examined the complexity language in this children's book.

As an adult reader, the researcher clearly understands the language and the content of *Mata di Tanah Melus*, including the unstated criticism conveyed by the writer such as the social criticism. The fact that *Mata di Tanah Melus* is a children's book targeted to at least five-year-old readers is clearly stated on the back cover of the book. However, the questions are: do they experience the pleasure of reading as adults do? Do they understand Matara's complicated thoughts and complicated dialogues both in terms of language structure and complex meaning? Will they understand the satirical social criticism as adults do?

Perry Nodelman, an expert on children's literature from Canada, also has the same anxiety as he expressed "How can I (an adult) say anything useful about children's literature if I read it in ways child readers don't?" (Nodelman, 2008). He emphasized that the differences

in perspectives between adults and children in reading children's novels greatly influence the way readers evaluate children's literature. Therefore, to be able to give a good assessment of children's literature, readers must read it the way children read.

Therefore, the focus of this research is to uncover the complexity of languages and ideas of *Mata di Tanah Melus* novel using Nodelman method of reading children's literature: "reading as an adult versus reading as a child", as well as to argue the reason why social criticism is asserted to the novel using Nodelman notion of "The Hidden Adult" (Nodelman, 2008).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Since *Mata di Tanah Melus* was released in 2018, it attracts not only readers' attention but also scholars and critics. It can be seen from the researchers who have examined this novel. Satriati & Hapsarani (2019) analysed the symbolic violence of this children's book. Applying symbolic violence theory by Pierre Bourdieu as well as adult's aetnormativity theory by Maria Nikolajeva, the researchers explore the way in which symbolic or non-physical violence experienced by children is represented in the novel.

Secondly, Andalusia et al (2019) studied how the author of *Mata*, Okky Madasari of the novel criticized the systems of formal education in Indonesia. Using the sociological approach of literature, the researchers argue that even though the *Mata* series is just a children's story, the author successfully voices her social criticism toward Indonesian education systems. Furthermore, the researchers pointed out four points of criticism: the irrelevant curriculum, the school fee, home-schooling rather than formal education, the school privatization.

Similarly to the previous research, an article entitles "*Social Justice in the Fiction Series of 'Mata' Okky Madasari for Girl's Education*" by Budiyanto & Latifah (2020) also studies the three children's books of the *Mata* series and uses the sociological approach as well. Yet, this research focuses on social justice and injustice that occurred in Eastern Indonesia in the post-colonial era.

Lastly, research by Satriati & Hapsarani (2021) also examined social criticism in Okky Madasari's novel. However, they uncovered how the author of the novel used modern fantasy taken from traditional fantasy to criticize the current social situation. Likewise, the researcher presented how duality issues like "traditional vs modern, spiritual vs materialistic, central vs rural" are portrayed in the novel.

Of all the studies above which simply describe how symbolic violence and criticism are portrayed or presented in the story, none of them have questioned why Okky Madasari as the author of the novel asserts social criticism in a children's book where the narrator of the book is a twelve-year-old girl. Moreover, the targeted reader of this genre is also children who are still immature and possibly do not understand the criticism.

The polemic of child narrators in either children's or adult fiction is not a new issue. It has been discussed in some research. One of them is an article entitled "Broaching 'themes too large for adult fiction': the child narrator in NoViolet Bulawayo's *We Need New Names*" which use a ten-year-old girl narrator who is also the main character of the story (Wilkinson, 2016). The researcher argues that a young girl is "old enough to have some understanding of the world she lives in," and it is an "overly-confident and naively honest register of a child" to criticize many issues in Zimbabwe at that time. In addition, the problems of child narrators frequently occur in adult fiction as well, as Destin (2018) mentioned that "If a writer chooses to reject the restraint of childlike language, they then face a different limitation- the loss of an authentic, childlike voice."

Historically, the notion of adulthood in children's literature has always been discussed by scholars. Since the targeted reader of this genre aims to children, the "ethical issue" must be put into consideration. Hunt (2005, p. 2) has pointed out the relationship between adult

writer and critic, as well as child reader as he mentions: "If children's literature is more complex than it seems, even more complex, perhaps, is the position it finds itself in, between adult writers, readers, critics and practitioners, and child readers."

In addition, the ethical debates in children's fiction are also explained by Reynolds who states:

"Critics and other adults involved with children's literature have often pointed to the need for those who write for children to keep in mind that they have a duty of care to their readers, meaning they should do them no harm emotionally (by, for example, making them extremely frightened or depriving them of hope) or educationally (through such things as misinformation or the use of poor grammar). Their concern is a reminder that, when it comes to children's literature, the writer-reader relationship is not one of equals, as it is also an adult-child relationship."

(Reynolds, 2011)

Because of the complex content of children's literature, Nodelman, thus, brings up the theory of "Hidden Adult" in defining children's literature. He criticises how the involvement of adults in the production of children's literature, as he explained:

"It would not be surprising if that were true, simply because the field of children's literature—its production and consumption—is so overwhelmingly occupied by adults. In practical and economic terms, the actual audience for texts of children's literature is not children but rather the adult editors, publishers, reviewers, librarians, and parents who produce, market, distribute, recommend, select, and purchase children's books."

(Nodelman, 2008, p. 207).

Furthermore, he suggests how adults should read children's literature by comparing the way of reading as an adult versus reading as a child.

RESEARCH METHOD

This is descriptive analysis research in which the researcher pays attention to the structure of the novel through close reading. According to Smith, what is crucial and becomes the main methodology in most literary studies is close reading. Therefore, the researcher read the novel several times before determining the specific topic to be examined. After that, it is necessary to read related studies and see the between those studies. The scope of the research was determined and the research was conducted. In analysing the data, the descriptive analysis method was used. This method indeed has "some very notable implications for the study of fiction" since this method and a theory can handle the connection between language and the novel (Fowler, 2013).

In addition, in undertaking close reading, the researchers read the novel several times in the way in which Perry Nodelman has suggested readers in reading children's fiction that is "reading as an adult versus reading as a child" (Nodelman, 2008).

Thus, the researcher re-read this children's novel to be able to assess it, as well as to answer the anxiety earlier. The researcher tried to position himself as a child, not as an adult anymore. Reading activities like this by Peter Hunt are called "childist criticism", where the reader imagines himself as a person who is less experienced and less intelligent than adult readers in general (Hunt, 1991). Even though placing oneself as a child has never been and will never be the same as a child reading — except for an adult reader who has amnesia, at least the existing knowledge and experience of the reader has been put aside.

After re-reading, both in the way a child enjoys reading and as a critical reader who looks at the work in detail, errors and irregularities were found in *Mata di Tanah Melus*. This

is what will be discussed further through this essay, the mistakes that make the novel need to be re-examined as a work of children's literature aimed at children aged five years old.

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

A. A Wise Little Narrator

Besides being the main character, Matara is also the narrator from the beginning to the end of the story. Using the first-person point of view, Matara herself tells her adventures: everything that a twelve-year-old girl sees and feels. However, instead of telling the story as an innocent child like children her age, Matara acts as a narrator who is very wise in looking at the problems of her own life and the problems of other people's lives.

This wisdom is clearly seen in the opening paragraph of the first chapter when she introduces herself and her family.

“Every child always believes that there are no stories that are not real. Until they grow up and no longer have time to hear and read stories. Then to cover up the feeling of loss, the children who have become adults will pretend to hate stories. They will say that none of the stories can be trusted, they are all fabricated and imaginary.”

(Madasari, 2018, p. 7)

The quote above clearly makes no sense if said by a twelve-year-old narrator because it shows the thoughts of a very wise little narrator who has gone through many life experiences. By saying "children who have become adults pretend to hate the story", it shows that the narrator has passed childhood and is in adulthood.

Looking in more detail, the bigger mistake is in the use of the word 'they'. Because the narrator is Matara, the word 'they' in the second and fourth sentences of the passage is Matara's call to other children. That is, the narrator does not place herself as a part of the children. Even though she admitted firmly and in writing that she is “already twelve years old” (Madasari, 2018, p. 8). This is a common mistake in children's stories in which here the author, Okky Madasari, missed to position herself as a child as Nodelman suggested that adult authors in children's literature should “accurately remember or observe childlike experiences shared by large numbers of children.” (Nodelman, 2008, p. 190)

Furthermore, maturity is not only reflected in Matara's character, but also Atok's character, a Melus boy the same age as Matara. In front of Matara, Atok speaks like an adult who calmed Matara by saying, “Don't be afraid.... The Melus were never bad to women and children” (Madasari, 2018, p. 86)

Atok's maturity still makes sense because it is explicitly stated in the novel that the Melus people are never getting psychically old by age. Yet, what is paradoxical is when Matara several times commented on Atok's maturity, saying “.... the way he talks is just like an adult. Maybe he is just a pretend child” (Madasari, 2018, p. 88). Besides that Matara also said that Atok spoke “about things that children of their age should not understand” (Madasari, 2018, p. 99)

Matara seems to remind the reader that Atok is a child who acts maturely. Yet, the fact that it was Matara herself who appeared as an adult. Matara acts as the narrator as well as the main character who is very mature. Therefore, the researcher argues that behind Matara there is a hidden adult that according to Nodelman, refers to the author who creates the novel.

B. Diction and Language Complexity

The choice of diction is an important issue in children's books. The writer must be careful in choosing words that are in line with the age of the reader so that the story is easily understood

by the reader. According to Nodelman, the first and most noticeable indicator of a text intended for children's audience is "the simplicity of style and focus on action" (Nodelman, 2008, p. 8).

However, some high-level vocabularies in the novel will be difficult for children aged 5 years to understand. An example can be seen when Matara got lost in the land of Melus and was encountered by the indigenous people of Melus as a stranger or outsider. She then was interrogated and she described, "Instead of asking back, I just shook my head and replied, 'I'm from Jakarta'". In Indonesian language it is stated "*Alih-alih bertanya balik, aku hanya menggeleng dan menjawab, 'Saya dari Jakarta'*" (Madasari, 2018, p. 82)

"*Alih-alih*" is certainly not a simple word that is often used in everyday conversation; thus, it is not easily understood by children, maybe even by many adults – this word sometimes appears only in critical writings to contradict two different actions or views. In English, *alih-alih* can be translated to "instead of". Unsoundly, the word "*alih-alih*" was said by a twelve-year-old child Matara.

In addition to diction, the complexity of sentences both in structure and meaning is also a problem in children's books because it makes it difficult for children to understand stories. Children's books should use simple and easy-to-understand sentence structures. However, in *Mata di Tanah di Melus*, there are many complex sentences that will be difficult for younger readers.

In the early chapters, Matara appears as a very critical child with complicated language, for example in the quote: "[Papa] let my mother repeatedly protest against my teacher, he agreed with Mama to transfer me to school, but actually none of that mattered to him" (Madasari, 2018, p. 19).

Even in terms of meaning, this sentence is quite complicated and again shows Matara's analytical skills. A 12-year-old child may reflect on her thoughts or observations and conclude "it really doesn't matter to him." If this sentence is read by children, it is not easy for them to understand sentences that require such analysis.

In another part, Matara reveals, "How can people fight about things that are not real, which actually have nothing to do with them" (Madasari, 2018, p. 20). This sentence, apart from being structurally complex, also requires analysis to understand its meaning. How can a 12-year-old kid jump to the conclusion that her parents are fighting about something that isn't real. Meanwhile, from the context of the story what the researcher understand — even if the researcher position himself as an adult reader — is Matara's parents quarrel over differences of opinion, as is what usually happens between husband and wife.

Matara was also able to conclude her parents' quarrels that the problem actually had nothing to do with them. This once again confirms that Matara has high analytical abilities equal to or even beyond adults - an illogical character for a small child.

In this case of sentence complexity, C. S. Lewis, author of *The Chronicles of Narnia*, in writing and developing his children's literature, has suggested that:

"Writing 'juveniles' certainly modified my habits of composition. Thus it (a) imposed a strict limit on vocabulary (b) excluded erotic love (c) cut down reflective and analytical passages (d) led me to produce chapters of nearly equal length, for convenience in reading aloud. All these restrictions did me great good – like writing in strict metre."

(Meek et al., 1977, p. 158 in Hunt, 2005, p. 196)

Furthermore, although long sentences are frequently used in *Mata di Tanah Melus*, it does not guarantee that they are grammatically and structurally correct. Incomplete sentence structures, for example, "With the rocks that I have seen since I first entered Lakaan" (Madasari, 2018, p. 171). This piece is clearly an error sentence and indeed cannot be

categorized as a sentence because it is structurally incomplete — it is merely a subordinate clause without a main clause.

This little thing must be a concern because true children's books must address and teach good and correct language to children, as the British children's book writer, Roald Dahl, said in his interview with Mark West: “A good children’s book does more than entertain. It teaches children the use of words, the joy of playing with language.” (West, 1990, p. 65–6 in Hunt, 2005, p. 196)

The use of high-level vocabulary and complex sentences which are difficult for children to understand has become a polemic in children's literature. John Rowe Townsend believes that indeed children will not be hurt by something they don't understand, but it will be very boring for them because they cannot elaborate on the experience with the text they read (Hunt, 2005, p. 196).

In addition, Ann Fine argues that we should not underestimate children's ability to understand complex sentences. They may get lots of ideas from books and talking to intelligent people. They are more advanced in their minds even though they may not be able to express these ideas. Just because they are not able to reproduce these ideas at a mature level doesn't mean they can't understand them (Bierman, 1991).

Similarly, Hunt criticizes the same thing that language simplification is perhaps not a big problem. However, the matter is that the author expresses big thoughts to his readers and is reluctant to submit to simplifying arguments (Hunt, 2005, p. 198). The complex and complicated sentence structure in *Mata di Tanah Melus* can still be accepted based on this argument. However, what happens in this children’s novel is not only the complexity of language structure but also the complexity of meaning in the way in which social issues and criticism are shown in the novel.

C. Social Criticism: The Complex Issue for Child Reader

In the first three chapters, the readers are presented with a critique of the education system in Indonesia, both in public and private schools. Public schools have religious teachers who often scare students with stories of hell such as the ironed bodies of bad people. Besides that, the teachers give too much homework to the pupils, thus, the children have no time to play and read stories. Meanwhile in private schools — even though there are no two terrible things above — children are taught to spend money extravagantly, for example, going on an international holiday trip at the end of the semester and at the end of the year.

According to Andalusia et al. (2019), Okky Madasari’s criticism of private schools that often hold holidays abroad such as Disney Land actually leads to criticism of capitalism and the bourgeoisie because these holidays are too excessive and just a waste of money for elementary school students. Definitely, the researcher strongly agrees with Andalusia’s view.

Nonetheless, Andalusia et al. did not explain Madasari’s criticism toward formal education which the researchers think is also crucial. Through the character of Matara, Madasari obviously criticizes the existence of religious lessons in schools and the memorization given by religious teachers: “...because I really don't like [a religious] lesson. I was secretly glad, because I was never again appointed to answer questions or to come to the front of the class and recite long memorizations” (Madasari, 2018, pp. 15–16).

The above dislike was expressed by the 6th grade elementary school children, who, if read by other children, could make them dislike religion just like Matara. A child reader would position himself as Matara because they are of the same age. They will probably admire Matara, and when that awe exists, they might also follow Matara's attitude which is full of imagination and adventure, including an attitude of disliking religious lessons in school. Through Matara, *Mata di Tanah Melus* explicitly create a doctrine for children not to like a religious lesson. In

other words, it is the act of secularism in which a belief rejects religion and separates religion from the nation. In addition, principally, secularism “does not regard any religious standpoint [...] as necessary for expressive or intellectual activities, moral conduct, or learning in general”(Zuckerman & Shook, 2017).

Matara's attitude of not liking religious subjects is certainly fine for the sake of freedom of choice. However, the researcher argues that it is perhaps not a good thing to inject into children, specifically if the targeted reader is Indonesian children since Indonesia is not a secular country.

Besides criticizing the education system, the author also criticizes a lot about power relations and natural exploitation. It is mentioned in the novel that the Melus people were driven out because powerful people exploited their environment, crocodile hunting destroyed ecosystems for the sake of making profits, and so on. Criticisms that researchers think are very good to know and should make us as readers aware of this problem.

Yet, again the question is can children understand such criticism, and is it appropriate for the child reader? Puji Retno, in the book review program *Mata di Tanah Melus*, argues that there is a political issue in the novel in which “the conflict of the people of East Timor who did not want to join East Timor and eventually moved countries and settled in Belu”. Ironically, Puji also doubts the suitability of this content for children (Bahasa, 2020).

Frequently the author conveys social criticism through the dialogue of Matara, for example when Matara says, “The people of Jakarta are far more dangerous than Bunang people!” (Madasari, 2018, p. 82). The satire was clearly aimed at people living in the capital city, Jakarta. However, is explained in more detail to the reader: Is it all Jakarta people who are dangerous or only certain groups? Critical readers can easily understand what the author meant by “dangerous” were probably greedy rulers who mostly lived in Jakarta. Yet, ordinary readers such as children will not come to that understanding. Therefore, it creates a stereotype that “the people of Jakarta are dangerous”, and the stereotype has a great chance of giving a universal, clichéd understanding to ordinary readers — especially children — who don't or don't yet understand what Jakarta is like.

In order to avoid overgeneralization, the author should not provide biased information. She needs to clarify that not all the people of Jakarta are dangerous. This can be shown through dialogue between characters, especially Matara himself. When she is accused of being a dangerous person from Jakarta who wants to destroy the Melus people, she should have said, for example, “I am not dangerous”, “Jakartans are not as bad as you think”, or other phrases that can refute the previous statement.

However, instead of disproving the stereotype, Matara just cried while still looking down, “What else can a child like me do in a situation like this?” (Madasari, 2018, p. 82). In this part, Matara is portrayed as a helpless, innocent child, whereas in other parts, she is portrayed as a critical child. It is important to consider the bad stereotypes against a certain group. Moreover, this book will be read by children. Whereas, children's literature should be used to promote diversity, familiarise children with cultural norms, and indeed debunk gender stereotypes (Roberts & Hill, 2003). In addition, a recent study by Lydiah Nganga (2020) has revealed how children's literature has intentionally brought hidden bias, and thus she argues that it is important to bring critical multicultural education in primary childhood education.

D. Why Affirm Social Criticism in Children's Literature?

It is popularly known that before publishing the children's novel *Mata di Tanah Melus*, Okky Madasari is as a writer who always voiced social criticism. From her first novel *Entrok* (2010) to her last, *Yang Bertahan dan Binasanya Perlahan* (2017), she has always brought the values of social criticism firmly into her works. In her novel *86*, for example, she sarcastically criticized the corruption that occurred in a chain of government agencies. In fact, before

becoming a novelist, Okky was already familiar with social issues when she worked as a journalist and often covered social issues such as corruption (Madasari, 2013).

This habit was consciously and deliberately carried over to the time when she wrote *Mata di Tanah Melus* as she acknowledged that she did choose literature to address social issues:

“First, I still have to convey everything in the form of a story. That has also been the principle since I wrote *Entrok* and other adult novels. No matter how serious a social issue, no matter how important a problem, everything is conveyed in the form of a story.”

(Hadiyanti, 2018)

Using fiction to affirm an ideological belief is what Terry Eagleton calls ideological work. Eagleton said that literature is an ideological work in which a writer often expressly insists on including his or her ideology or belief (Eagleton, 2003).

In line with Eagleton, Sutherland opines the same idea as he stated:

“Authors of children’s books are inescapably influenced by their views and assumptions when selecting what goes into the work (and what does not), when developing plot and character, determining the nature of conflicts and their resolutions casting and depicting heroes and villains, evoking readers’ emotional responses, eliciting readers’ judgments, finding ways to illustrate their themes, and pointing morals.”

(Sutherland, 1985)

The fact that previously Okky used adult novels as media to assert her ideology, yet, this time she uses children's novels through the story of Matara's adventures in the land of Melus even though children are not yet able to understand social issues conveyed with high language complexity.

E. Reconsidering the Targeted Reader

Because the social issues raised by Okky Madasari are more appropriate for adult readers, the researcher also wonders: Is it true that *Mata di Tanah Melus* is really made for children, or is the author just using the “child” label to attract more readers like Charles Perrault, a famous French storyteller, did? According to Shavit, Perrault aimed his fairy tales:

“Officially to children as the main consumers, while at the same time using the notion of the child as a source of amusement to allow adults (mainly highbrows) to enjoy the text, too.”

(Shavit, 2009)

Similarly to Perrault, Madasari also targeted children as readers, while at the same time they both used children's themes to attract the admiration of adults. On the introductory page of *Mata di Tanah Melus*, Okky writes emphatically that the book was written: “for Mata Diraya”. Even in an interview coverage, Okky admitted the same thing that he personally wrote a children's book related to the arrival of her first daughter, Mata Diraya. She also admitted that the book was born because of “anxiety about the lack of books or reading for children in Indonesia, especially those written by Indonesian authors” (Hadiyanti, 2018).

However, this statement contrasts with what we find in the content of the novel. As stated in the previous discussion, Okky incorporates too many adult thoughts into Matara's character and generally into the content of the novel. Thus, to understand the message of this book as a whole, an adult way of thinking and critical thinking is needed, a way that children cannot.

In fact, this book is more interesting when read and enjoyed from the perspective of an adult reader. The adult reader will be happy with sarcastic social criticism — something that children cannot or cannot yet understand.

Why is this book so enjoyable for adult readers? Because Okky succeeds in trapping us back to childhood, and remembering childhood is an exciting thing for most adults. This is what Meindert DeJong in Hunt (2005) says that when someone writes for children from adult memories, then he will only satisfy “other adults who have also forgotten their inner childhood. and have substituted for it an adult conception of what the child needs and wants in books.”

Furthermore, a critic of children's literature, Arthur Ransome in Hunt (2005) firmly says that the authors only satisfy themselves through the children's books they write. They write not for children but for themselves, and with luck, children will enjoy what the authors enjoy. He further stated that every single writer wants readers, and there are no better readers than children in this world.

Equally, the researcher argues that the author has successfully satisfied the adults both the reader and the author herself. The satisfaction in voicing social criticism sarcastically through the children's book *Mata di Tanah Melus*, which she wrote.

Because of the complexity of languages, ideas, and criticism, the researcher refuses to believe that Okky wrote *Mata di Tanah Melus* solely for Matara or children of her age, just as Roald Dahl refuses to believe that Lewis Carroll wrote *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* for young children. Both *Mata di Tanah Melus* and *Alice Adventures in Wonderland* are too complex for children.

CONCLUSION

Mata di Tanah Melus is too complex for children's readers. The complexity can be seen from the high-level language as well as the complicated idea of the story. The complicated issues are clearly seen from the way in which Okky Madasari as the author of the novel asserts social criticism as her belief as she has always done in her adult novels. Many researchers have examined how social criticism is reflected in her novel, yet this research, furtherly, uncovers the reasons why Madasari affirms criticism in a children's book. Social criticism for her is an ideology or belief that she would always carry out in her works.

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