

AN ANALYSIS IMAGE OF WOMEN IN LITTLE WOMEN NOVEL BY “LOUISA MAY ALCOTT”

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Abstract

This study describes the image of women in Little Women's novel by Louisa May Alcott. In this novel Image of Women not cannot be separated from the issues surrounding women who experience complicated life, where in this novel one of the characters desribed as a hardworking and doing extraordinary thing by defending her right as a woman by gaining the right to higher education. The background of this novel is lifted from a story during the civil war era in America where a family of four daughters underwent a drastic life change because their father participated in the war so that their children and wives had to leave the city and work to continue their lives. So that one of the daughters has the assumption not to want to get married because love is not important to a woman and family is the most important thing. In analyzing the novel, the method that the writer uses is a qualitative descriptive where the data that the researcher gets from Louisa May Alcott's Little Women novel with 543 pages and published in two volumes, 1868 & 1869 and from novel's quote that leads to the image of women through by (Showalter, 1997) theory and by using the feminist approach. From the research above, it can be concluded that the feminist approach is an approach to assess gender differences and to analyze social and political problems that include the image of women in the novel, which is the main role. So it is good to be used as a feminist research study.

Keywords: *feminism, image of women*

1 INTRODUCTION

Literature is another language of literary work, where literary work itself is an art that is expressed in the form of novels, poetry, and drama in which there are expressions and thoughts from someone who cares about life. In ancient times, literary works were very popular. In the Victorian era, literary works were created as a means to entertain and even pay homage to the queen who was communicated and had meaning from the author or creator of the literary work and had a specific purpose for the sensitivity of an art. Literary work is currently progressing very rapidly. To criticize a literary work requires a study of literature, and this science has existed since ancient times. To clarify the above statement, it is found that there are many classic novels that have various genres, like a little women's novel and one of the romantic dramas such as Romeo & Juliet and other genre dramas. Argument above same like (Wellek & Warren, 1949) opinion where the

essentials of the literature in society not only imitate the life of society but also affect the reader's soul.

In literary works, there are several approaches that can be used in studying literature such as the sociological approach proposed by (Damono, 1984) where this approach is a reflection of the reality of social life in society. The literary psychology approach is an approach that studies human behavior patterns related to their mentality (Wellek & Warren, 1990). And by studying this approach, we can present conflicts in the literature and be seen from the elements of the literary writer.

In this study, researchers are very enthusiastic to analyse the novel *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, which in this literary work uses a feminist approach by (Showalter, 1997) which uses the theory of image of women. In the opinion states that there is a description from the novel *Jane Austen to George Eliot Talking about the appearance of women in everyday life and the values of women in a family*. From this viewpoint, it shows that the image of women has an effect on life. According to (Sakinah, 2014) states that image of women is poured into literary works through figures who often appear in the literature. Meanwhile (Djajanegara, 2002, pp. 19-20) argues that the image of women is based on the literary genre where feelings play an important role in determining that image. Based on the arguments of the experts, the researcher got the point that the image of women is not only seen from their appearance, so that women have to do things that are feminine only. Currently, women are trying to be equal to men by working hard. Even feelings are not very important, so it's not uncommon to find a woman who does things extraordinary of her nature as a woman.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 LITERATURE STUDY

Literature is an absorption word that comes from the sanscrit language which means a text that contains meaning. In general, literature is written work that has an artistic value that reveals the author. The term literature is very popular in the field of linguistics. Literature is growing rapidly so that literature is used as a means of learning but can reflect real life and even literature can become witness and commentators on life (Saryono, 2009, p. 18). After finding other reference sources from discussing feminist studies, such as the analysis of feminist values in the article (Santi, Rahmi, Islam, & Imam, n.d.) wherein the article about Jo's hard struggle to defend her rights as a woman.

According to the article above, it was found that the novel *Little Women* covers values such as equality, difference, choice, concern. Other previous research that discusses feminist studies is sourced from an article (Sumita, 2014) entitled *Media image of women: Feminist discourse*. The result of this research is the word woman from her physical appearance like a body and can be used as an ingredient to change a product with predetermined standards. So this article focuses on the social dynamics of the female body. In contrast to the above analysis, the author's research focuses on the image of women in the novel through feminist studies.

Where the results of the research that the authors get are about the image of women who are depicted through the actions and attitudes of the characters in the novel. In analyzing a literary work, a psychological approach, a sociological approach, a moral approach, and a feminist approach are needed to make it easier doing research. Where a

sociological approach is an approach related to society in society. Moral approach is an approach that discusses a person's attitude in acting. While the feminist approach is an approach that discusses women's rights. In this study, the authors focus on analyzing feminism, especially in the novel *Little Women*.

2.2 Feminism approach

Feminism is a social movement and ideologies which aims to balance social and gender equality. The development of technological advances makes new ideas or thoughts on women's rights so that feminists are critical. Where feminist criticality is a contradiction in women because of gender rights. According to (Wolf, 1994, pp. 27-28), the approach to feminism is divided into victimized feminism (fictional feminism) and feminism that has power (power feminism). Feminism that becomes a victim is seen from the acts of violence that occur to these women. Meanwhile, feminism which has power is women who have the same rights as men. In this study, the authors used a feminist approach to theory (Showalter, 1997) one of the founders of literary criticism and she developed concepts and practices of gynocritics or women as a writer. In this case the fact that women are seen from their writing and image of women. The purpose of this research is for us as readers to better understand literary works, especially to know what feminism. Then to know about women in this novel author used this approach and explain about image of women in this novel.

2.3 Image of women

The image of women is a characteristic of women, in the novel, the image of women is a appears frequently female character in the story and becomes an important figure in the storyline. According to the expert literature image of women is a picture of a woman who is described in detail by a literary writer. The image of a woman is something that cannot be taken because it relates to depicting or explaining the actions, thoughts that the object performs. According to (Ferguson, 1977, p. 16) image is a picture of a woman who only acts as a mother who does all household activities. Meanwhile (Kathy, 1997, p. 27) argues that the image of a woman, namely the body is art, and every woman will definitely pay attention to her lifestyle and body. (Dittmar H, 2004) argue that the image of women in general, every adult woman or child will always pay attention to the ideal body shape. In analyzing this novel the author uses a theory (Showalter, 1997) in which the image of a woman is described as a hardworking woman, and do extraordinary things.

3 METHODOLOGY

This type of research qualitative research, because the data author gets from read the novel and make a identificatin about phenomena from the quotation. Where according to (Sugiyono, 2013, p. 81) say that qualitative research is related to how to analyze written or implied communication. This qualitative research makes it easier for us to analyze a literary work. This research also makes us have to read these literary works over and over again.

In this study, data was taken in the form of a feminist approach from (Showalter, 1997) theory namely the image of women. The data that the author has taken is based on sources from Louisa May Alcott's *Little Women* novel with 543 pages and published in two volumes, 1868 and 1869.

The technique that the author uses in data collection is document study because, with this technique, it is easier for researchers to review documents that are directly related to the topic that the author is researching. The method in this research is the first step to look for references or sources of reference about feminism in literature, after that by watching the film Little Women, and then reading the novel Little Women more than once in detail and with this the researcher finds the image of women in the novel and puts it in writing or make notes about the story.

4 FINDINGS

Based on the explanation above, the writer gets the findings in examining the image of women based on theory (Showalter, 1997) which is concerned with the image of women who hardworking and do extraordinary things. Here are some of the data that the authors found

- **Hardworking**

From the novel the author finds the hardworking attitude of meg march who is the oldest child in the meg march family, where she does homework and helps her family financially by raising children in a king family with a small salary, and meg march also teaches that women can do that even though she used to live well before his family lost her property. As a supporting sentence the author attach:

Data 1

“I know I do teaching those tiresome children nearly all day, when I'm longing to enjoy myself at home, 'began Meg, in the complaining tone again” (p.8).

(From this quote, we can see that Meg is tired of her job, but she remains relaxed and patient for the needs of her family).

Then the author also discovered the hard-working nature of Josephine who is more familiarly called Jo march, she is the second child of the march family and is different from her sisters. Where Jo has a tomboyish nature, and she also works as an assistant at Aunt March's house, she doesn't like Aunt March because she always compares with her sister. But she had to do it because she needed money for her family. Citation in support of researcher 1 allows:

Data 2

“You don't have half such a hard time as I do,' said Jo. ‘How would you like to be shut up for hours with a nervous, fussy old lady, who keeps you trotting, is never satisfied, and worries you till you you're ready to fly out the window or cry?” (p.8).

(Based on these quotes it concludes that Jo doesn't like her job either, but she has to do it for the family finances and to make marmee happy).

Jo really likes writing stories and every time she finishes work and has free time she continues and she knows that even though at this time his family conditions are not conducive to publishing his writings, she keeps trying so that one day his writings can be published and she believes that she will become a famous writer. Author's supporting sentence documentation:

Data 3

“Having told how she disposed of her tales, Jo added, ‘And when I went to get my answer, the man said he liked them both, but didn’t pay beginners, only let them print in his paper, and noticed the stories. It was good practice, he said, and when the beginners improved, anyone would pay. So I let him have the two stories, and today this was sent to me, and Laurie caught me with it and insisted on seeing it, so I let him. And he said it was good, and I shall write more, and he’s going to get the next paid for, and I am so happy, for in time I may be able to support myself and help the girls.’” (p.150-151)

(Based on the quote above is a sentence that shows the hard-working and unyielding nature of Josephine March and she believes that one day she will succeed and make his family happy).

The other quote hard working in the novel, Jo have a ambition to be succses people and she high ambitions to become a successful and famous writer and do something extraordinary in her life. To support the author's opinion following the quote :

Data 4

“I want to do something extraordinary before going to my palace, something heroic or great that will not be forgotten after I die. I don't know what, but I'm expecting it, and intend to surprise you one day. I guess I'll write a book and become rich and famous, it suits me, so that's my favorite dream. — Jo (page 270)

(Based on this quotation Jo has high ambition and because that Jo must hard to work and make the new things to famous).

- **Do extraordinary things**

Things that are not usually done by women in general are done by the character Jo in the novel *Little Women*, such as she has a desire to help her father in the civil war. We can find in the quote:

Data 5

“I’ll try and be what he loves to call me, “a little woman,” and not be rough and wild; but do my duty here instead of wanting to be somewhere else” Nelson (2007)

(From the text quote above we know that Jo's tomboyish nature and she has the ambition to help her father in the civil war and she doesn't want to stay at home like other women).

In another scene, Jo is talking to her mother. She refuses that love is not suitable for women. We can see in the quote:

Data 6

"I'm sick of people who think only love is suitable for a woman."

(Based on quotation above, it can be concluded that Jo hates love so that she has this opinion and is different from women in general).

In a quote from Jo's serious statement novel, when Laurie confesses to loving Jo and Jo rejects it, we can see it in the quote:

Data 7

“I don't believe I will ever marry. I'm happy as I am, and love my liberty too well to be in any hurry to give it up”.

Data 8

“I'd rather be a free spinster and paddle my own canoe. I would. I can't believe childhood is over”.

(From the quote from the conversation above, it can be seen that for Jo to get married is not an important thing and she does not want it, even though in general women should be married).

From the novel, the writer found that there are things that are done outside of our minds as a woman. In this novel, Jo's character does this to help support his family's finances. And the following is the author of the quote:

Data 9

‘My dear, where did you get it? Twenty-five dollars! Jo, I hope you haven’t done anything rash?’ ‘No, it’s mine honestly. I didn’t beg, borrow, or steal it. I earned it, and I don’t think you’ll blame me, for I only sold what was my own.’ As she spoke, Jo took off her bonnet, and a general outcry arose, for all her abundant hair was cut short. ‘Your hair! Your beautiful hair!’ ‘Oh, Jo, how could you? Your one beauty.’ ‘My dear girl, there was no need of this.’ ‘She doesn’t look like my Jo any more, but I love her dearly for it!’ (p.155-156)

(From this quote, we can see that in general, women rarely want to cut and sell beautiful hair which is a crown for women to help with their family finances, and here Jo does it because she wants to help her mother so that he can go to see the one who is seriously).

5 DISCUSSION

Based on the findings and data above, it can be concluded that Jo's character in the novel has a tomboyish and hardworking character. She has a hobby of writing and dreams of becoming a famous writer. In fact, she had thought not to get married because for her love was not the main thing for a woman and she only focused on his family and career. She is also willing to do things that are not usually done by most women, such as selling her hair (which is the female crown) to help her family's economic situation. This research provides an overview and benefits for readers, especially for women who assume they do not want to get married.

From the statement above, the writer uses feminist studies in analyzing the characters in Louisa May Alcott's novel Little Women. where the feminist approach itself has a social and political theory including the image of women, women's oppression, there man dominant (patriarchy), and register theory. But here the author only focuses on discussing Elaine's theory, namely the image of women. Where the author knows that the image of women itself is a character of a woman who is often shown by having a character who is hard-working, has a spirit of leadership, does things that are outside of the norm as a woman. In this case, Jo is the main character and she different from the other characters, so that it can be used as a comparison.

The aim is to see how Jo's character does not show her femininity and the extent to which this character deviates from contemporary women in her era. In this case, Jo deviates from her nature as a woman, which is described through her behavior where she becomes a hardworking woman, has high ambitions to become a famous writer even she does things that are outside of the norm of women like she is not interested in love even she doesn't believe in getting married.

6. CONCLUSION

Based on the result that the researcher found to identified and analyzed the data from the novel, the author gives several conclusions. From the data analysis, a researcher found that there is some point in the image of women in Little Women's novels. The image of the woman in the novel is depicted through a character in the novel who works

hard for her family and does extraordinary things. The character depiction in the novel is a reflection of real-life Louisa May Alcott where she worked hard to achieve her career and she didn't believe in marriage. So in this study, the focus is on women.

The way that the researchers did to get the results of the research was by using the document study technique which involved the researcher having to read the whole novel and find other sources about feminism related to the image of women. To conduct further research, the authors examine several ways that can be done to shorten the time of research and get maximum results, namely by looking at accurate sources and having completed research in feminist studies. In order to become perfect research and can be an accurate source to be used as reference material for further research.

7. SUGGESTION

In this chance, the reader and the next writer will get suggestions from the researcher, including:

1. Read the paper from start to finish so that the reader understands the purpose of this research topic.
2. Please don't think too much about things that are beyond our mind as a woman
3. Future authors researching images of women can use this paper as a reference.

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