



LIBERAL FEMINISM IN ALICE HOFFMAN'S *THE RED GARDEN*

FEMINISME LIBERAL DALAM NOVEL KARYA ALICE HOFFMAN *THE RED GARDEN*

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Abstract

The purpose of the study was to elaborate the value of liberal feminism conducted by the four women: Hallie, Mary, Emily, and Hannah. The main factor why they did such liberal feminism was that they wanted to do things like what man could do even though they had criticism from the same gender as theirs. Using liberal feminism theory, the researcher found that all the mentioned women namely Hallie, Mary, Emily, and Hannah are in struggle to be in equality as man in any kind of life contribution; Hallie without dependence to her husband and her fight for the famine, Mary with the life freedom and education, Emily with the chance to be educated at school for a study like a man, and Hannah with being unmarried woman in the area of married women.

Keywords: choice value, education value, independence value, liberal feminism, liberty value

Abstrak

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah menganalisa nilai feminisme liberal yang dilakukan oleh empat wanita: Hallie, Mary, Emily, dan Hannah. Factor utama kenapa mereka menginginkan kebebasan itu karena mereka ingin melakukan hal-hal yang bias dilakukan oleh lelaki meskipun banyak kritikan oleh kaum mereka sendiri. Dengan menggunakan teori kebebasan feminisme, peneliti menemukan bahwa semu wanita tersebut yaitu Hallie, Mary, Emily, dan Hannah berjuang untuk mendapatkan kesamaan dengan lelaki: Hallie dengan tidak tergantung pada suaminya dan perjuangannya mengatasi kelaparan, Mary dengan hidup yang bebas dan mendapat pendidikan, Emily dengan kesempatan sekolah seperti lelaki, dan Hannah yang memilih tidak menikah di lingkungan wanita yang menikah.

Kata kunci: feminisme liberal, nilai kebebasan, nilai kemandirian, nilai pendidikan, nilai pilihan

Introduction

Commonly speaking, feminism is understood to be the women's struggle to be in equality with man. They are in struggle as gaps between man and woman is unavoidable. A gap that put man in an advantageous position, on one hand. On the other hand, a



woman in disadvantageous one. The cause of the gaps may run as follows: woman enslavement (Tyagi, 2013), male tyranny (Cohen, 2014), male supremacy (Dolezal, 2015 and Savigny, 2015:), sexual affairs (Lynes, 2012), sexual forcefulness (Healicon, 2016 and Snitow, 2015), sex cruelty (Hooks, 2015), and women's manipulation (Hay, 2013).

Because of the mentioned gaps, the woman is in struggle to get their equality with men (Reger, 2012). Feminism, then, is defined as the women's contributions to economies and societies (English, 2015), women's educational rights, women's voting right, women's assistance right and women's salary right (Sica, 2016). Moreover, Feminism refers to the equal opportunity, history, and culture for women (Gerhard, 2013), women's combat against patriarchy (Martin, 2014).

Asha Nadkarni (2014) in *Eugenic Feminism, Reproductive Nationalism in the United States and India* attach feminism to sexuality, Finn Mackay (2015) in *Radical Feminism, Feminist Activism in Movement*, Bell Hooks (2015) in *Feminism is for Everybody, Passionate politics* and Imelda Whelehan & Joel Gwynne (2014) in *Ageing, Popular Culture and Contemporary Feminism* talk about feminism concerning sex, society, and politic, respectively.

Not only does woman's demand equality with man occur in reality but in fictitious works as well, one of which is found in Alice Hoffman's *the Red Garden*. In the novel, the female characters are described as the women who want to be independent as well as free to determine anything in their lives without men's involvement. Their determination seems to run as follows: gain to be independent, to get equal freedom, to get equality in education, equality to choose. This kind of characters belong to liberal feminism (Tong, 2009) that draw the researcher to discuss in this article entitled liberal feminism referring to women's demand to get the previously mentioned determination.

Recently, there has been studies on feminism; starting from Desmawati (2018), using feminism, she studies about a woman's demand for social change, and her short story constitutes a type of resistance to the narrative framing of women in domestic sphere by men, institution, authorities and orthodoxies as marginal and subalterns, all of whom studies about woman's demanding equality with man. Yet, Junaidi (2018), using feminism, refers to the female authors that he studies about women stereotypes based on words of the characters showing that

many women stereotypes paint the works of female authors that differs from the previous ones purely intrinsic element.

Using radical feminism, woman domination and oppression are studied by Thesya (2020) that studies about women oppression in colonialism under a pimp; oppression, suffering, and injustice in the whole life. In the same year, another redundancy of woman's demand for equality with man is studied by Yusuf (2020) that studies about the resistances of woman's struggle that eventually women can work, become intellectuals, and transcend its boundaries by using existentialist feminism as well as in the following year, Arwansyah (2021), using feminism, studies about the gender injustice experienced by the female characters, and the value of character education.

Study on woman's demand for equality with man is still done by Putri in year 2022 but surprisingly, using feminism, she studies about the issues through the use of the language style. It seems that the issue of female author by Junaedi above is followed by Mulyani (2022), using feminism, she studies about women writers employing particular strategies in gendering and degendering their writings as both aesthetic

and ideological expressions which eventually their writings are not *deficient* and *inferior* to their male counterpart; and instead their status and difference as writers are the result of patriarchal dominance and power relation that historically have subordinated and denied them equal public access to education, language, literacy, and literary production.

The issue of woman demanding equality with man still seems to be interesting to discuss by Martinus (2022) and Efendi (2022); the former, using existentialist feminism, studies about how Emoni Santiago's character portrays the domestication of women and how Emoni Santiago embraces her circumstances and being a woman eventually showing that she succeeds in overcoming her dependence on and subordination to men regarding her economic state, personal decisions, and marriage, whilst, the latter, using feminism, studies about revealing the gender injustice such as marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and the workload experienced by female characters.

All of the researchers above Desmawati, Junaidi, Arwansyah Putri, Mulyani, and Efendi refer to the theory of feminism, whilst, Thesya to radical feminism, Yusuf and Martinus refer to existentialist

feminism. Though all of those studies have similarity with the researcher's study, that is, all women in both previous studies and this study conduct a struggle to gain equality with men, however, there is a clear contrast between the previous studies and the researcher's study, that is, none of the previous studies refer to liberal feminism, the researcher's theory used in this article, with such values as gaining independence, equal liberty, education, and choice. Thus, in spite of the fact that this study gives contribution to develop literary study through the use of the liberal feminism, this study has a novelty. Man and woman are equal in the eye of God; therefore, woman is worthy of the same achievement as what man has. The researcher then discusses values of liberal feminism in this study.

Method

Research Design

The researcher used descriptive and dramatic method to find the liberal feminism value through the discussion, description, and report of the women's characters' speaking and acting. Consequently, by the description, discussion as well as the report of the character's speech and action, the researcher gave presentation and analysis of

the liberal feminism value of the main character. Further, for the clear data analysis, the researcher went to liberal feminism to be the main method to examine liberal feminism in Alice Hoffman's *The Red Garden*.

Data Sources

The data source was from the novel of *The Red Garden* by Alice Hoffman. Not all the dialogues as well as the description regarding the characters were worthy quoting here. Only those related to the issue of liberal feminism are.

Data Collection

The researcher, firstly, did the observation by reading the novel, finding the issue, and then getting the related theory. Secondly, the researcher documented the data in that the researcher classified the data that were related to the liberal feminism such as gaining independence, equal liberty, education, and choice. Accordingly, the researcher drew a table with four columns in her note containing gaining independence, equal liberty, education, and choice, respectively, in the forms of speech and action. Lastly, the researcher did the data survey in that the researcher did the analysis of the classified data.



Data Analysis

First of all, the researcher gave explanation of the main characters' liberal feminism. Second of all, the researcher took the quotation connected to liberal feminism. Last of all, the researcher gave the analysis of the quotation and connects the quotations to liberal feminism theory in case of the mistaken quotation.

Result and Discussion

In this sub-chapter, the researcher would like to present the result and the discussion of the study. The former refers to four women conducting liberal feminism values: Hallie with independence value, Mary with equal liberty value, Emily with equality in education value, and Hannah with freedom in choice value

As explained above that all the previous studies above discuss feminism with its branches but none is similar to the researcher's feminism that is liberal feminism. Though the common characteristic of feminism is woman's struggle to get equality as man, however, in liberal feminism the finding narrows down to the values mentioned above that are not found in the previous studies. Consequently, the

researcher starts discussing the latter, that is, what the four women's wishes to get about values; as to the independence value, it refers to Hallie's disobedience to her husband and Hallie's strife for the starvation. As married woman, Hallie should obey to her husband that has been thoroughly understood by all cultures in the world. However, Hallie feels that a woman can live freely without having to be independent to a man. In anything she wants to do, Hallie does not ask for approbation to her husband, she uses her own thought, instead.

"William Brady laughed at her when she set off. He said women weren't hunters and that she'd freeze her fingers off in the cold, but she went out into the snow, the poorly made door wobbling on its nailed hinges as it slammed shut behind her" (Hoffman, 2011).

The disobedience is because of the starvation in her married life. Her husband tells her to stay at home instead of hunting for food. Still, for saving others' life, Hallie, the married woman, does the hunting. What Hallie does is a feminist action since at this time woman is trapped at home culturally in that woman cannot play roles in society. To what Hallie does, the researcher likes to

restate what Sustika (2018) has already stated that an independence does not always refer to living alone. Still, people need others' intervention because human is homo-sapiens in that human is sociable creature, without others they cannot survive.

This is the example of liberal feminism that voices women's rights for freedom, freedom from her husband's social rules. To prove that woman is forbidden to go outside for the life survival can be seen from the other women's attitude of what Hallie has done for the community. The community leaves her and are worried of Hallie "the women stopped speaking when she came near. The men made certain to avoid her, including her own husband. She didn't complain or seem put out. She took every chance to escape their company" (Hoffman, 2011).

As to the equal liberty value, it refers to Mary's wish to get freedom and education. To get freedom here means to do like what a man can do. As a woman, the culture forbids her to do what a man does like doing something outside the house. A woman is strongly banned "'You shouldn't be here,' he said. 'Go home.' 'I'll be where I like,' Mary replied. She took Will's hand in hers. They had been allies in all things, and they were

once again on this baffling night" (Hoffman, 2011).

This is an example of liberal feminism from Mary that everybody can do everything they want to do as long as what they do is not against the law. It is the law of culture Mary is fighting against that a woman is trapped at home. It does not mean that a woman wants to be higher than a man. A woman can have an opportunity to be better than a man, instead. What Mary has done matches with Rosemarie Tong (2009) states that the liberal feminism is aim at creating a society with justice and compassion to achieve freedom and prosperity.

Indeed, Mary's problem here is that she cannot do the search because she is a woman. However, she insists for the same equality as man. Then, Mary is told to be sent home by her brother. On the contrary, she chooses to stay for the quest to show that she is able to do what a man does. It is the search for Amy who has been drowned. Taking pains, she makes to get Amy back from the water by the aid of Yaron and a sniffer dog (Hoffman, 2011).

To get education means that Mary wishes to be educated like a man who can go to school freely. In the culture, a woman is not proper to go to school to be smart. She is



better at home, instead. Mary is in struggle against a culture. She insists on reading books which is disliked by her own mother. "On more than one occasion, Rebecca had taken her eldest daughter aside to ask, 'What good can ever come from a girl with so much knowledge?'" (Hoffman, 2011). It is further an act of gender discrimination by Rebecca, Mary's mother. Tong (2009) states that liberal feminism has goals one of which is opposing sex discrimination and improving woman's status. Also, Mary's mother's words mean that a woman does not have a chance to get knowledge. Therefore, Mary is encouraged to be against such discrimination which leads her to sneak and hide on entering her father's reading room.

As to the equality in education value, it refers to Emily who wishes to go to school like a man. The fact that Emily's parents force Emily to stay at home to help them do things instead of going to school because she is a woman. School is culturally enjoyed merely by man that leads Emily to be against such a culture. It seems that Emily confronts a force to leave school not only from her parents but also from her teachers. Consequently, Emily receives no good treatment as well as no appreciation of her thoughts from the teachers (Hoffman, 2011). To this condition of

the discrimination of education for a woman, the researcher refers to Tong (2009) that states that women are to be provided equality in politics, economy, and education as men. Tong states further that woman and husband are partners instead of servant and employer. As a partner, it means that a woman can make money out of her household. Thus, by education, a woman can have quality in life meaning that she can increase prosperity in her family through her good salary due to high education.

Surely, Emily is, on one hand, in struggle for her right for education as she is a smart person indicated by her coming back from the top mountain through memory of the paths, she passes by without getting lost, though she is on her own. On the other hand, her family stop her effort to do the research which indicates her smartness.

"She could will herself to be invisible. Her family would give up hope and stop their search and here she'd be, safe and alone and free. She could make her clothes out of tablecloths, sleep on a pallet of straw, keep the windows open, leaving behind the overriding fear she carried so close to her bones" (Hoffman, 2011).

The quotation above shows that a discrimination towards a woman that to Emily it is a hindrance of her following education as she is categorized as a smart girl. However, the culture says otherwise that a woman should stay at home though she has a good promise in further education. Though Emily is a courageous woman and freely minded, still, she is an obedient woman in that she follows her family's instruction by staying at home.

As to the freedom in choice value, it refers to Hannah with unmarried choice. As broadly understood that God creates man and woman in order that they live together as couple to produce generations. All human beings mostly are in the hope of having children. In fact, in a certain culture, unmarried person is regarded as a bad person if he/she does it on purpose. It happens to Hannah that chooses not to get married as a husband is a nuisance to her. That there are more wives to be left alone by their husbands is another reason for Hannah to avoid of marriage. Before discussing further, the researcher would like to refer to Tong (2009) for this kind of liberal feminism. Tong states that woman chooses a family more than a career is totally voluntary. It means that when a woman chooses not to get married, it

is a voluntary, too. Hannah chooses to stay at home to grow plantation rather than going and leaving her village. Planting is a happiness for her, indeed.

“More than anything, she wanted a child. Find a husband, someone might have told her, get married, have a baby or two—all easily accomplished even in a small town such as Blackwell. But Hannah was not interested in men. She never had been. She refused to speculate on what this might mean, or admit to the crushes she'd been aware of. She only knew that if she didn't wish to be someone's wife, she couldn't have what she yearned for most in this world” (Hoffman, 2011).

Surprisingly, Hannah wants to have a child but no husband as marriage does not draw her an interest. It could be that in Hannah's culture; society belongs to patriarchal system that does not give woman advantages. In spite of the fact that lots of marital women are in a burden that their husbands do their wives harms. That Hannah chooses to be an unmarried woman is an example of liberal feminism. It seems that



Hannah doesn't feel regretful to be single. She fully understands what is better for her. Her strong decision to be a single woman is supported by surrounding that no one has problems with her marital status (Hoffman, 2011). Thus, such is a liberal feminism that demands women to be independent in their lives. Hannah has the characteristic of a feminist woman that is controlling over herself and being independent.

All in all, though in common the previous studies above discuss about feminism, with its branches referring to women's struggle to get equality as man as well as to avoid of man's oppression, yet, this study is quite different from the previous studies above since the theory is different that is liberal feminism. Then, the finding is so specific: gaining independence value, equal liberty value, education value, and choice value. Thus, the researcher's study here has the novelty.

Conclusion

In this conclusion, the researcher comes to conclude that, all the four women namely Hallie, Mary, Emily, and Hannah conduct liberal feminism which at that time has confrontation from other women; Hallie with independence value referring to

defiance to her husband and her struggle for the starvation, Mary with liberty value referring to get a life freedom as well as education, Emily with equality in education value referring to an opportunity to be at school for a study like a man, and Hannah with freedom in choice value referring to be unmarried woman in surrounding of married women. Thus, this study has given contribution to the development of the feminist literary criticism through liberal feminism finding in the analysis since no previous studies do the analysis about it. More importantly, the researcher hopes so much that there are researchers doing analysis on feminism in other branches of feminism such as Marxist feminism and black feminism in order that the study of feminism develops quickly.

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