

ANALYSIS OF FEMINISM IN THE NOVEL OF *LITTLE WOMEN* BY LOUISA MAY ALCOTT

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Abstract

Women's movement is in order to reach the equality of right with men in many aspects, such as politic, social, economy and culture. Everyone should be treated as equals unless special circumstances apply regardless of the role of men or women. The problem undertaken in this research relate to feminism, specifically on types of feminism within the female characters in the novel and the reflection of the feminism itself in the ongoing developments of the characters. The aims of the research are to elaborate types of feminism and their reflection on feminism in novel little women. This research used a qualitative descriptive method and the source of data taken from Little Women novel. As the result of the research, it described that there are four types of feminism from the novel little women. The characters in the novel reflected in Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Existentialist feminism, and Radical feminism. However, Feminism is reflected by the struggle of the characters in survival, in placing these lives in the world of men (patriarchy), in being comfort with themselves to do what they feel comfortable for her, as well as their protest form to no longer be the object of violence for men.

Keywords: Female characters, Feminism, Little Women

INTRODUCTION

Literature is the work of verbal and written creation regarding the author's intentions which communicated and is referred to as being aesthetics. Literature has three subjects; drama, poetry, and prose. The Prose is divided into two, namely fiction prose and nonfiction prose. *Fiction* refers to literature created from the imagination. Mysteries, science fiction, romance, fantasy, crime thrillers are all fiction genres. Meanwhile, *nonfiction* refers to literature based on fact, including biography, business, cooking, health, languages, religion, art, and music, history, etc. Cuddon (1998:471) stated that literature is a vogue term, which usually denotes works which belong to the major

genres: epic, drama, lyric, novel, and short story. Meanwhile, Klaler (2004:1) states in the most cases, literature is referred to an entirety of written expression, with the restriction that not every written document can be categorized as literature, in the more exact sense of the word. Therefore, the definition usually includes aesthetic and artistic to distinguish from other written document such as newspaper, legal document, brochure, and etc.

Novel as an invented prose narrative of considerable length and a certain complexity that imaginatively deals with human experience usually goes through a connected sequence of events involving a group of persons in a specific setting. A novel

can depict the characters, events, conflicts that reflect the real life in sequence of plot. So, novel is a fictional prose narrative of considerable length and the certain complexity that deal imaginatively with human experience. However, novels perceive people in society and can depict the characters, events, conflicts that reflect the real life.

Little Women novel is a novel composed by American author Louisa May Alcott written just after the Civil War in response to a publisher's demand for a novel, which was originally published in two volumes in 1868 and 1869 it was originally published as two books: Chapters 1-23 were issued in 1868 with the title *Little Women*, and after the book became a sensational success, Chapters 24-47 were issued in 1869 with the title *Good Wives*. Today, both sections are set together as *Little Women*. *Little Women* talks about March family who has four daughters with different characteristics the fourth daughters named Margaret, Josephine, Elizabeth, and Amy. In the novel *Little Women*, we can find the main function of literary works that is to describe, reflect human life, while human life itself is always experiencing growth, as well as the equality of women who will be depicted through the novel *Little Women*.

The feminist movement is usually divided into three *waves*. The first wave in the late 19th and early 20th centuries pushed for political equality. The second wave, in the

1960s and 70s, pushed for legal and professional equality and the third wave, in the past couple of decades, has pushed for social equality. Handayani and Novianto (2004:163) stated that men are more competent, good orientation, strong, active, competitive and confidence than women. This condition is unfair for women, also portray that there is gender discrimination in the past. It happens from the generation to the next until they realize their injustice. It encourages the emergence a belief called feminism. The feminist movement related to women's nature particularly and in general it related to women's emancipation. Women's movement is in order to reach the equality of right with men in many aspects, such as politic, social, economy and culture.

In this era, women have same authority to do something like a man doing in system economic, social, and political, feminism urges the full integration of women into society, demanding women's equal right, equal work, equal pay, equal status and treatments in public and private relations. Rosenstand (2006:566) states, Women and men should have equal opportunities, that women should not be discriminated against based on their gender, and that women and men should get equal pay for equal work, chances are she will say yes and so will most men.

Feminism is a movement committed by women to reject everything marginalized, subordinated, and demeaned by dominant

cultures, both in political, economic, and other social life feminism is a belief that women and men are inherently of equal worth. Because most societies privilege men as a group, social movement are necessary to achieve equality between women and men, with understanding that gender always intersect with other social hierarchies. It can be concluded that women and men should have equal opportunities and believe that women and men are inherent of equal worth so, feminism is a movement of women demanding equal rights between women fully and men.

This research is empirically essential to carry out as it tries to reveal the struggle of women related to feminism issue in literary work. It is a depiction of extrinsic elaboration which is closely related to the intrinsic element of the novel which is a theme of feminism. Basically, this feminism movement arises because of a wanting impulse equalize the rights between men and women who had been as if women are not respected in taking opportunities and decisions within life. There such thinking seems to have been entrenched so women should be struggling to show his own existence in the eyes of the world. The aims of the research are to elaborate types of feminism and their reflection on feminism in novel little women.

METHODS

In this research used a qualitative descriptive method to find out the types of

feminism in the novel of *Little Women* and their reflection on feminism. According to Gay (1996:208), descriptive qualitative involves intensive data collection, which is the collection of extensive data of many variables over an extended period of time, in a *naturalistic setting*. The novel is used because the writer used the statement and collecting data from sentences in the novel that is related to the problem formulation and not on discussing number or statistics. *Little Women* novel as sources of data, which was written by Louisa M. Alcott's, it was released on 1868 with genre fiction, 257 pages with 23 chapters and published by Global Grey illustrated edition. *Little Women* was an immediate commercial and critical success with readers demanding to know more about the characters. The data of this research is the quotations that related to the problems of types and their reflection on feminism. This research is conducted based on several steps of collecting data as follows: 1). Reading the novel *Little Women* and to understand the story; 2). Identifying sentences that related to the problem.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The collected data consists of 33 data, there are 4 classifications of the types of feminism, namely liberal, existentialist, marxist and radical feminism. there are four types of feminism in this novel. That are liberal feminism 46% (15 data of 33), existentialist feminism 33% (11 data of 33),

marxist feminism 18% (6 data of 33) and the last one is radical feminism 3% (1 data of 33).

Liberal Feminism

The children of the March family have worked hard to fulfill their needs and help their mother, they intend to buy something for their mother as a Christmas present by donating their hard-earned money.

"Mother didn't say anything about our money, and she won't wish us to give up everything. Let's each buy what we want, and have a little fun; I'm sure we work hard enough to earn it," cried Jo, examining the heels of her shoes in a gentlemanly manner (p.3)

From quotation above, this data are classified into liberal feminism as the theory stated that liberal feminism is gender equality that freeing women from oppressive gender roles. liberal feminism led to advances in the economic sphere, inequality of opportunity, civil rights, and self - fulfillment. The quotation describes the figure of women who can fulfill their own needs by working hard and have the opportunity to use their freedom to fulfill themselves.

Marxist Feminism

When their father has on duty and cannot be with the family, then one of them must be there to replace her father's position in the family. It describes the role of the family can change and can be a breadwinner.

"I'm the oldest," began Meg, but Jo cut in with a decided, "I'm the man of the family now Papa is away. (p.6)

From quotation above, this data are classified into Marxist feminism that stated woman's conception or herself is a product of her social existence which is largely defined by the kind of work she does. because of Josephine a tomboyish thought of herself as a man who could replace her father while her father went on duty, she worked hard and helped her mother earn money and being a breadwinner for their family.

Existentialist Feminism

One of the first things that we know about Jo March is Boyish, she would rather go out into the world and boldly make her own way than stay at home.

"Don't, Jo. It's so boyish!" "That's why I do it." "I detest rude, unladylike girls!" "I hate affected, niminy-piminy chits!" (p.4)

From quotation above, this data are classified into existentialist feminism that

stated woman must become a self, a subject who transcends definitions, labels, and essences. Jo always do anything in her way and also does not care about the words of others, in the 19th century the depiction of a woman is by using a long skirt and also her long hairstyle, but not for Jo, she is styled as she wants and the characteristic of Jo occurs because she has a friend named Laurie, so her attitude in every day like man.

Radical Feminism

When Amy gets problems in the school because of ignorance of her friends then she should get punishment from a teacher at the school.

"I don't approve of corporal punishment, especially for girls. I dislike Mr. Davis's manner of teaching and don't think the girls you associate with are doing you any good. (p.74)

From quotation above, this data are classified into radical feminism stated that women's biology is closely related to their oppression, as well as all the manifestations of sexual violence. There is a protest about the labeling of women is the oppressed weak and the female body as the object of violence. Jo, as her sister protests over what the teacher has done to Amy, she feels uncomfortable with a physical punishment for a woman,

because the female body is the main object of oppression by the power of men and women closely related to their oppression.

Based on the findings and analysis the researcher found 4 types of feminism in a novel, such as Liberal feminism, Marxist feminism, Radical feminism, and Existentialist feminism. 4 types have been found that refers to existing theories and based on the findings quotation related to the problems on types and their reflection on feminism through actions, speech and thought the characters refers to feminism. Feminism is a movement of equality between men and women, equality between men and women concerning all rights and facilities obtained by men can also be obtained for women. This is reflected through quotations of data that already obtained by proving that the characters in the novel to reflect the various things that refer to the theory of feminism so that the researcher find some data that can be concluded. The 33 data findings are 15 included in the type of Liberal Feminism; women want the same as men about access to capital, fulfill their needs, earn income and make women as an independent human being. 11 data included in Existentialist feminism; *a woman like a man, is being-for-itself, and it is high time for man to recognize this fact.* The self's need for total freedom is too absolute to be shared. 6 data are Marxist feminism; woman's conception or herself is a product of her social existence which is largely defined by the kind of work she does. Then, 1 data is Radical feminism;

women's biology is closely related to their oppression, as well as all the manifestations of sexual assault or as one who is the fundamental cause of women's oppression.

The quotations in the data set that have been obtained can reflect that Feminism is reflected by the struggle of the characters in survival, in placing itself in the world of men (patriarchy), in being comfort with themselves to do what they feel comfortable for her, as well as their protest form to no longer be the object of violence for men.

CONCLUSION

Based on the result of the research, it is described that there are four types of feminism from the novel *The Little Women*. First, the characters in the novel reflected in Liberal feminism, because of what the characters doing to fulfill their own life to earn money through hardwork. Second, Marxist feminism, it reflects the characters show the value of women's work and encourage more equality and capitalism is the cause of women's oppression which is depicted through the role of character positions in the novel. Third, existentialist feminism, it reflects the character who have tomboyish and a woman must become a

subject, transcends definitions, labels, and essences and need for total freedom. Fourth, Radical feminism, it reflects the characters who had a corporal punishment as well as all the manifestations of sexual violence or as one who "insist the sex or gender system is the fundamental cause of women's oppression. Feminism is reflected by the struggle of the characters in survival, in placing these lives in the world of men (patriarchy), as well as their protest form to no longer be the object of violence for men.

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