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FEMINISM THOUGHTS IN ALICE MUNRO'S SELECTED SHORT STORIES

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Abstract

This study analyzes Alice Munro's feminism thoughts in her selected short stories; Alice Munro, whose family has undergone oppression especially her mother and her herself since she was in her childhood, expresses the right of 'speaking' through the female characters about equal rights of women she saw as well as she experienced since her childhood, the women who are oppressed by man as well as the cultural gaps. I then use Feminism as the method, through which I raise the involvement of woman against man as well as against culture both of which are powerful above woman. Likewise, I use sociology of literature as the approach in that I refer to the author's life related to her selected short stories here. Therefore, I find that Alice Munro's feminism's thoughts are reflected through the female characters who are against men and culture domination in the selected short stories.

Key terms: *cultural gap, oppression, feminism, sociology of literature*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini menganalisa pemikiran-pemikiran feminis Alice Munro di cerita-cerita pendeknya; Alice Munro, yang keluarganya mengalami tekanan khususnya ibunya dan dia sendiri sejak dia kanak-kanak, mengekspresikan hak 'bicara' melalui tokoh-tokoh wanita tentang persamaan hak-hak wanita yang dia lihat dan alami sejak dia kanak-kanak, wanita-wanita yang mengalami tekanan oleh lelaki dan gap gap budaya. Feminism digunakan sebagai metode maksudnya menggunakan karakter wanita melawan dominasi pria dan budaya dan sosiologi sastra sebagai pendekatan, yang artinya sosiologi penulis cerpen-cerpen yang dibahas di sini dijadikan rujukan sebagai analisa. Akhirnya saya temukan bahwa pemikiran-pemikiran Alice Munro terefleksikan melalui tokoh-tokoh wanita melawan dominasi budaya dan lelaki di dalam cerita-cerita pendek yang terpilih.

Kata-kata kunci: *gap budaya, tekanan feminism, sosiologi sastra*

Introduction

Alice Munro is a short story writer with feminism thoughts expressed through her female main characters. In an interview, she confirms that she is a feminist living in a part of Canada in which women are able to write more effortlessly than man (Buchholtz, 2016:02). Besides, Alice Munro's stories are about the issues that oppose women (May, 2013:ix) that refers to feminist critique (Defalco, 2018:235) as her position is as feminist (Staines, 2016:01). Earlier, Isla Duncan confirms that Alice Munro's works are feminist through her narrative methods (Duncan, 2011:60). Her criticism to feminist refers to women that cheats on their spouses unregretful that leave their children for romantic imaginary as well as learn to live painfully (Flamingo, 2017:06).

Further, feminism happens because there are gaps in society between man and woman, gaps that posit woman below man: enslavement of woman (Tyagi, 2013:28), patriarchal oppression (Cohen, 2014:04, see also Taylor, 2014:11), patriarchal power (Dolezal, 2015:105, see also Savigny, 2015:03), sexual relations (Lynes, 2012:10), sexual violence (Healicon, 2016:03, see also Snitow, 2015:07), sex oppression (Hooks, 2015:26), and women's exploitation (Hay, 2013:54). Such kinds of gaps lead the women to struggle to get their equality with men (Reger, 2012:05). Feminism, then, is women's donations to economies and societies (English, 2015:03), women's right to education, women's right to vote, women's right to assistance and women's right to work with reasonable salaries and kindly work circumstances for women (Sica, 2016:26). Besides, Feminism is about women's

equal opportunity, women's history, and women's culture (Gerhard, 2013:04), women's fight against patriarchy (Martin, 2014:02).

Feminism, then, is a plan that strives for question biological savings in women's reproductive bodies as the motors of national development (Nadkarni, 2014:12), eliminate sexual aspiration from the female presence to get a more serious, earnest equivalence with men (Nally, 2015:07). Likewise, Feminism is a global, political movement for the freedom of women and society based on equivalence for all people (Mackay, 2015:03) with the feature of feminism and its positive ability to remove sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression as well as women acquisition of equal rights (Hooks, 2015:i-xii) as well as with the position of women in a political movement with specific political goals and objectives. It is a group combined by its political benefits, not its common practices (Whelehan, 2014:25).

From the explanation above about feminism, I narrow down to use feminism regarding woman against man as well as woman's freedom and society with the society here referring to classes of society in that the woman tries to abolish classes in society. Thus, I analyze here Alice Munro's feminism thoughts reflected in the female characters against man as well as cultural gaps in the society.

Further, feminism in the thought of Alice Munro reflected in the female main characters are in the selected short stories as follows: "the Royal Beatings," "the Progress of Love," "Walker Brothers Cowboy," "Sunday Afternoon," "the Hired Girl," "The Beggar Maid," "Family furnishings," "Chaddeleys and Flemings," and "the Office," related to her pursue of the equal rights for women. I choose Feminism because human beings, man and woman have rights to speak freely as long as it is not against the law (Roper, 2012:28). Thus, Alice Munro speaks freely about woman's struggle against man's domination and cultural gap in her writing I analyze.

Recently, studies of women's fight against the domination of men have been done by some researchers: Sadek studies about resistance mechanisms used by African women in a society dominated by male and seeing women used as beating and as polygamy, then empowered themselves by resistance mechanisms based on the concepts of sisterhood and female consciousness. Therefore, they become as superior as men in Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Wizard of the Crow*. Rajasree analyzes Afro-American women that are doubly discriminated from their own community male as well as the white male and white female in Alice Walker's *the Color Purple*. Undergoing sexist oppression, the women struggles to get their identity in society. The result is that through education and economic independence, the women become aware of themselves. The authors in the studies above express the gaps between man and woman or feminism through the characters' point of view, whilst, this study discusses feminism through Alice Munro's thought view point that is expressed

through the speak and action of her characters. Thus, the two previous studies above analyzes the protest of the female characters against the male's power, whilst, this study refers to the protest of the author of the selected short stories mentioned above against the man and culture in reality during her childhood and her adulthood. Accordingly, I discuss in this study Alice Munro's feminism thought during her childhood and her adulthood.

Research Method

The research method elaborated here refers to research design, research approach, data analysis, and data analysis technique.

Research Design

I use descriptive and dramatic research method in analyzing the selected short stories through presenting the characters mainly through description and discussion as well as through reporting the character's speech and action in that I quote the description and the discussion of the woman as well as her speech and action that are against the power of man and culture. Thus, from describing, discussing as well as reporting the character's speech and action, I come to the conclusion that Alice Munro comes up with ideas of equal rights for women that is called feminism thoughts. Thus, to get clear data to analyze, I use feminism to be the only method to analyze Alice Munro's feminism thoughts in Alice Munro's selected short stories.

Research Approach

The research approach refers to sociological approach in that I refer to the sociological life of the author when she wrote her selected short stories. Then, through this approach I come to the understanding that the woman character against man and culture power are the reflection of the author's life.

Data Analysis

The data analysis are taken from Munro's selected stories as follows the selected short stories as follows: "the Royal Beatings," "the Progress of Love," "Walker Brothers Cowboy," "Sunday Afternoon," "the Hired Girl," "The Beggar Maid," "Family furnishings," "Chaddeleys and Flemings," and "the Office." From the mentioned selected stories, I quote the words that have things to do with the feminism. Thus, not all items in the stories are worth quoting here. \

Data Analysis Technique

I collect the data in two tables in my notes; one part of the data are with the character's childhood, whilst, the other part are with her adulthood. Therefore, this kind of technique makes me easy to analyze the problems.

Theory

Sociology of literature is worth applying here that refers to the relationship of art and society, the investigation of social basis of the authors, the relationship of values expressed in literature and values of society, the social background of the artists, the relationship of class and artistic taste, and more general problems of art in society (Wolff, 2018:03). Besides, the novel can represent life in all its fullness (Bertens, 2014:19). Thus, through relating the author's social life and the characters' problem in the selected short stories, I find feminism thoughts of Alice Munro expressed through the characters in her selected short stories.

Discussion

Feminism Thoughts in Alice Munro's Selected Short Stories

Inspired by the female southern authors, Alice Munro reflects the background of her rural life, Huron County, Canada, whose people are against it, in her fiction (Staines, 2016:2-3). Alice Munro's mother struggles against poverty, whilst, she herself is schooled in a harsh environment school (May, 2013:19) that I strongly believe she has reflected the conditions through the female main characters in the short stories I analyze here. In her adulthood, the facts of her married life with her husband that is problematic (Thacker, 2011:114-117) are also reflected in the female main characters in her fictions I analyze here. Accordingly, I divide her ideas of feminism reflected in the main characters into two parts, during her childhood and her adulthood.

Alice Munro's Feminism Thoughts during Her Childhood

Unlike Sadeek and Rajasre who analyzes feminism in the characters in the fictions, I analyze Munro's experience of life that are full of woman's protest against power of man and culture. In "the Royal Beatings," she expresses her protests through the characterization of Rose; she is against culture that separates the life of society, the one that belongs to the poor and the other one to the rich. This kind of expression is influenced by her mother's life that struggles against poverty, whilst, she herself is schooled in harsh environment school (May, 2013:19). Thus, Munro presents herself as Rose who has been marginalized because of her connection with her poor class mate, Cora (Munro, 1978:35), whilst, Flo is presented as the one who puts Rose down for the connection, that I assume this kind of feminism thought comes from her harsh environment school.

Her other harsh environment school can also be seen in "the Progress of Love." In "the Royal Beatings" above, Munro presents herself as the step-daughter who is cornered by her step-mother for the lowly social connection, whilst, here she presents herself as a daughter of an economically poor family. Indeed, Munro here pictures a struggle of a woman, her own mother, presented by the first person I, against her society that corners her mother as being from the poor family (Munro, 2000:11). Presumably, Munro's childhood is pictured according to the society as it is that they divide people into cultural gap that is the poor and the rich. The rich has a power against the poor and through the representation of woman, she voices woman's rights, the rights to have higher education as the "the Progress of Love" describes.

Likewise, in “Walker Brothers Cowboy,” Munro voices woman’s discomfort of the social gap in her surroundings through the daughter of a salesman though it is her father that is responsible for the family. I again assume that it is the picture of the harsh environment Munro and her family undergoes during her childhood. That the woman is trapped in a capital mind is shown by her reluctance to be noticeable by others suggested to be in a higher economy that she thinks she is ridiculed (Munro, 1968:10).

In “Sunday Afternoon” and “the Hired Girl,” I find Munro’s representation of woman’s voice through the characters of two girls who suffer from class difference as they are maids. Besides, the maid character above is the picture of Alice Munro herself that she becomes a maid for a rich family in Rosedale in Toronto with a summer bungalow on an island in Georgian Bay, near Pointe au Baril (Thacker, 2011:59). Whilst, in the mentioned two short stories, the girls are presented to be reluctant to be maids as they have maids in their parents’ house (Munro, 1968:108). Thus, the girls at that times are marginalized in that they are not treated like man who freely goes to school.

Alice Munro’s Feminism Thoughts during Her Adulthood

Munro’s feminism thoughts reflected in the female characters during her adulthood can be seen in “The Beggar Maid,” “Family furnishings,” “Chaddeleys and Flemings,” and “the Office.” Munro voices woman’s equal rights with man in her adulthood can be seen in “the Beggar Maid.” Here, she presents herself as Rose, in childhood cornered socially by her step-mother, having a romantic affair with Patrick that their social relationships cannot go together; Patrick belongs to a rich family whose parents have a department store in British Columbia (Munro, 1978:110), whilst, Rose’s father runs a small store (Munro, 1978:09). That Rose becomes cornered can be seen in the way Patrick’s parents respond to a poverty of other people. That they dislike to be mingled with poor people is readable when Patrick asks Rose to go to Patrick’s parents’ house to introduce her to his parents (for marriage proposal) on a condition that Rose does not tell them that the fee of the accommodation is on behalf of Patrick (Munro, 1978:69). The cultural gap Munro has undergone from her childhood to her adulthood remains still. Through Rose, this condition is still melancholic. Edward Burne-Jones explains the condition of their relation that Patrick belongs to a rich Vancouver household which is known by Rose, representing two different worlds. Their appointments to each other’s families are catastrophic; Patrick’s home is expensive nonetheless full of “true malevolence,” whilst, Rose, is merely shameful when he is in Hanratty” (May, 2013:133). Further, the contrast background between Patrick and Rose illustrated by Edward above can be noticed through Rose’s feeling so oppressed of seeing the house Patrick’s parent lives so luxurious compared to her parent’s house in Hanratty. The house is so thick as it is made of “a half stone, half stucco and-timber” (Munro, 1978:69), close to a beach, whose all windows face the sea. It has been built in “the Tudor style”

(Munro, 1978:69), all of which makes Rose feel uncomfortable because she is not in a habit of living like this.

Munro's concern of social gap she confronts in her real life marrying Jim Munro (Thacker, 2011:114-117) that is voiced by her women character can be seen in this short story through Rose characterization "We come from two different worlds," she said to him, on another occasion. She felt like a character in a play, saying that "My people are poor people. You would think the place I lived in was a dump" (Munro, 1978:63). The social gap Munro confronts also comes from her husband's sister that his sister dislikes Munro's country accent and behavior is a fact (Munro, 1978:64). Also it happens in "Chaddeleys and Flemings," the picture of Munro's feminism thought is described through the characterization of the first person I, like Rose, whose accent, country, and poverty is cornered by her husband (Munro, 1982:16). In spite of voicing woman's equal rights with man presented by husband and wife above, Munro also presents woman against a landlord, the former is a writer (the picture of Munro herself) and the latter is a man with power: property and masculinity in "the Office." Here, Munro describes how a woman struggles to have her rights as a tenant that has been disturbed by the owner of the house (Munro, 1968:51).

In "Family Furnishings," Munro voices woman's equal rights through the social fight of a woman against her own relative as well as the society. Against the former, the woman is economically cornered by her aunt, Alfrida, who is economically successful in the city (Munro, 2001:87), whilst, against the latter, the woman's family is socially cornered by the society (Munro, 2001:88). Both group of people create cultural gap.

Conclusion

Alice Munro's freedom of speaking of women to have equal rights (without a gap in society/culture) has been reflected to the female main characters. Her conscience of the oppressed women is inspired by her family's experience in life; her mother has struggled against poverty, whilst, she herself is oppressed through the education in the worse environment. Her childhood and adulthood that are full of oppression have been represented by the characters of Rose in "the Royal Beatings," Alva in "Sunday Afternoon" and the first person I in "the Hired Girl," "the Progress of Love," "Walker Brothers Cowboy," illustrating Munro's hard life and the fact that she is ever being a maid. Whilst, "The Beggar Maid," "Family furnishings," "Chaddeleys and Flemings," and "the Office," represent Munro's adulthood that are also full of oppression in life inspired by the fact that her married life is in conflict against her husband that ends in divorce reflected in "the Beggar Maid." The female character in "the Office" represents herself that she is a writer.

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