

FEMINISM IN THE NOVEL *JANE EYRE* BY CHARLOTTE BRÖNTE

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INTISARI

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui gagasan-gagasan apa saja yang ditentang oleh para Feminism yang digambarkan dalam novel berjudul Jane Eyre yang ditulis oleh Charlotte Bronte. Objek dari penelitian ini adalah karakter utama dalam novel yaitu, Jane Eyre sebagai fokus analisis atau batasan dari penelitian. Dalam menganalisis objek penelitian, penelitian ini menggunakan teori feminisme liberal menurut Allison M. Jaggar. Teori ini menerapkan bahwa wanita memiliki hak alamiah yang sama dengan laki-laki. Pada kenyataannya, terjadi ketidaksetaraan yang dialami oleh wanita. Diantaranya adalah dominasi laki-laki, ketidaksetaraan dalam pendidikan, ketidaksetaraan dalam profesi dan hak kepemilikan. Penelitian ini mencoba memberi bukti tentang usaha Jane Eyre untuk menjadi perempuan mandiri. Berdasarkan cerita dalam novel, hasilnya membuktikan bahwa Jane mencerminkan feminisme liberal.

Kata kunci: Jane Eyre, feminisme, mandiri, dominasi laki-laki, ketidaksetaraan.

ABSTRACT

The research objective is to find out the ideas opposed by Feminism depicted in the novel *Jane Eyre* written by Charlotte Bronte. The object of the research is the main character in the Novel, Jane Eyre, as the focus of the study or limit of the research. In analyzing the object of the study, the research employs the liberal feminism theory proposed by Allison M. Jaggar. The theory applied that woman as well as man had natural rights. In fact, there are inequality that woman faces. They are man domination, inequality of education, inequality in occupation and the ownership right. The research attempts to give evidence about Jane Eyre's effort to be an independent woman. Based on the story of Jane Eyre in the novel, the result proves that Jane Eyre is a representation of the liberal feminism.

Keywords: feminism, independent, man domination, inequality

INTRODUCTION

Jane Eyre is a novel published in 1847 by a feminist author Charlotte Bronte. This novel tells about a woman's struggle, love and gender relations in 1800's, when Charlotte Bronte grew up. Charlotte had to face hard times when she wanted to publish the novel, she sent the script with the fictitious names, Currer Bell, in order to conceal her true identity as a woman. In 1800's woman had limitation to work even as a writer. Her sister, Emily and Anne Bronte who was also a writer did the same. They were writers known as Bronte sister. The background of this story is in Victorian era where woman is set up by tradition that they must depend on man.

This Charlotte Bronte's work has been chosen because the present writer is interested in the main character, Jane Eyre, who has a strong will to make herself to be independent. This was against social norms, which limited woman to be active in politics, trading, church etc. Woman traditionally works in their home doing mother hooding and child bearing instead of working outside home. Meanwhile, writing is the most possible occupation for woman, which is could do it inside home. The capability of woman doing man's activities is not the same as men indeed, but women also have opportunity in their life. They can, for example, develop their potential, enjoy their housecleaning and rule a career. In 1800s woman still struggled for their rights. *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Bronte depicts how woman fights for equality and struggled against man's domination.

In this novel, Jane Eyre as the main character represents woman struggle against gender discrimination. She wants to stand by herself and be independent. She proves that she is not submissive to man like other women. The story tells how Jane survives and struggles on her own. There are events when Jane has to choose between being independent or obedient to man. Through her traits and thought, the

reader could see how Jane searches for equality and liberty in her life. She refuses the inequality between man and woman.

The aims of this research are to find out the acts attempted by feminist in the novel *Jane Eyre*, her strength in her life, her capability to face the obstacles and find equality and liberty from man's domination in her life.

METHOD

The sources are taken from written materials with the main source is the literary work itself. First, the present writer read the original novel *Jane Eyre*, then found the problems that *Jane Eyre* has to face in the story. The second is collecting the materials and find the answer of feminism idea through Jane Eyre. The supporting materials are the books and articles about the development of feminism and discussion of the work itself and the rests are from internet sites.

The background of the novel for this research is in the Victorian Era where women have limitation for the activities. Most of the unmarried women do the activities inside the house and they prefer to be taught by their mothers instead of going to school. So do the married women, they take care of their children and do not work to support their family. In this novel a smart, independent and brave woman called Jane Eyre is the main character. She realizes that a woman should not be obedient to a man and all of her potentials that she had, could be shown in public. She thanks that a woman should be equal to a man. It is in contrast with the idea of good women in Victorian era who were supposed to surrender, be dependent, passive, and doing housekeeping inside the house (Djajanegara, 2000:5). Victorian society regarded woman as an object and dependent on men. The man domination came from her husband, brother, and men relatives. At the beginning of the Victorian period, women were shut out of most remunerative employments and institutions

of higher education, could not vote, and had few legal rights (Black, 2009:xlii). In this novel, Jane Eyre as the central character wants to fight against the discrimination. There are efforts to release her from man domination. In her journey to search equality, Jane faces many problems, for example, she does not get the freedom to have an education and to speak up her minds.

Woman in Victorian era could not show her existence in public, however *Jane Eyre* is a woman struggle story, similar to its author. As a woman, she can publish her novel with fictitious name. *Jane Eyre* implies woman freedom, choices, and relationship with man. There are common problems that woman faces in during Victorian era for example, her rules in family, her rules in society, and how woman can show her existence. For example, her responsibility towards her husband, that upon marriage a husband had full control of his wife's personal property and any earnings she acquired during the marriage; he had absolute authority over their home and children and he could legally use physical force to discipline the members of his family (Black, 2009:xlii). Woman activities are limited. They could not be as free as man in business, church, public activities such as trading, public election etc. Woman choices were just depended on man and this made a woman imprisoned in their family and society. Woman relation with man was also became a problem. The man capacity to control woman after their marriage made woman has loses her independent. Most of the novels written by women during that period are not related to politics, just give emphasis on equality between man and woman. There are some known feminist writers such as George Elliot, her name is Mary Ann Evans, she wrote *The Mill on the Floss* and published in 1860, Emily Bronte wrote *Wuthering Height* published in 1847, and Elizabeth Gaskell wrote *Mary Barton* and published in 1848. Most of their stories tell about woman, affection

and strength, these things are expressed in an attempt to get her freedom.

Here, Jane Eyre as the main character shows how she suffers and struggles to get freedom from man domination. First, she is an educated woman who workes. She uses her skill and knowledge to become a governess. Jane realizes woman should be free from man's domination because she can support herself. Second, she can choose her love and then get married. She does not marry only for physical need but for love and need to complete each other. Jane, for several times saves and defends people around her. When she is in Lowood School, she defends her friend Helen Burst from Mr.Brocklenburst punishment and she dares to speak against Mr.Brocklenhurst who is rude to his students. Another examples is when she is in Thornfield and becomes Adele governess, she helps Mr. Rochester when he falls from his horse in the winter and helps him when someone burns his room. It shows that Jane has equal capability like a man. She also wants men to pay respect to woman. According to her, men and women are equal. Jane thinks that she gets unfair treatments from man. In term of education, she cannot get the same education as her brother. Even the other woman in that house does not get opportunity to go to school. Related to the ownership, all things in the house are John Reed's because he is the only man in that house. His mother and sister must be submissive to him.

This research carried out what woman fight for through the story of Jane Eyre. There are woman struggles toward man domination, woman opposes the inequality in occupation, woman fights for her right in education, and the last is achieving the ownership right. There are prove about these in the conversation, statement and soliloquies through the whole story.

FINDINGS

1. Woman Struggles toward Man Domination

Jane Eyre, in the story shows her struggle against man domination since she was a child. She lives with her relatives in Gateshead because her parents died. She has inferiority feeling when she lives with her aunt and John Reed, her cousin, the only man in that house. John Reed, a schoolboy four years older than Jane, acts like a master. He does not like Jane Eyre and considers her as troublemaker. He always bullies Jane without any sympathy. John Reed here shows that a man has a power to control and rule the house even though he is a child of the family. This is what Jane thinks about John.

John had not much affection for his mother and sisters and an antipathy to me. He bullied and punished me; not two or three times in a week nor once or twice in the day, but continually; every nerve I had feared him, and every morsel of flesh on my bones shrank when he near. There were moments when I was bewildered by the terror he inspired, because I had no appeal whatever against either his menaces or his inflictions; the servants did not like to offend their young master by taking my part against him, and Mrs. Reed was blind and deaf on the subject; she never saw him strike or heard him abuse me, though he did both now and then in her very presence; more frequently, however, behind her back (Bronte, 1950:6).

John shows that a man is superior regardless their age. Therefore, the others cannot protect Jane when she is bullied by John. No one in the house dares to fight against him. John Reed also always shows his anger and arrogance. He tortures Jane

without any sympathy. He does not think about the psychological impact of his action toward Jane.

.... I instinctively started aside with a cry of alarm: not soon enough, however; the volume was flung, it hit me, and I feel striking my head against the door and cutting it. The cut bled, the pain was sharp; my terror was passed its climax; other feelings succeeded.

“ wicked and cruel boy!” I said. You are like a murderer- you are like a slave driver- you are like the Roman emperors!” (Bronte, 1950:7)

The statement above strengthens the idea that woman is on the oppression and man makes a woman becomes the object of domination. In her position, Jane does not have power to resist the domination. One of the Jane's ways to protect herself is to surrender, sometimes she uses her emotion to resist John as she yells to John and then she gets the punishment. The statement infers that Jane dares to fight against John Reed and opposes him. This means that Jane is a strong woman and does not want to be oppressed by man

2. Woman Fight for Her Rights in Occupation

Jane realizes that education and job are important to express herself and make her an independent woman. After eight years as a student in Lowood, Jane Eyre is appointed as a teacher's staff in Lowood. It can be stated that Jane already has an occupation. She is successful to have a job after her study. It means that she can fulfill her goal to be an independent woman by having a job. After two years of teaching, she feels unhappy with her life in Lowood. It makes her have no more experiences and knowledge. This thought makes Jane already reaches the step to be an

independent woman. The progress of herself about the individual development has changed her thought. She wants a progress and experiences that make her to be independent and have more experience. This following soliloquy is Jane's opinion about the world. Jane shows that women have courage, needs to seek any education and experiences, finds her life outside Lowood and feels the sensations given by the world. Jane realizes that not only a man can work and do things outside. There are also opportunities for woman even though it is not easy to get one. It can be inferred from what she says in the followings.

My vacations had all been spent at school; Mrs. Reed had never sent for me to Gateshead; neither she nor any of her family had ever been to visit me; I had had no communication by letter or message with outer world; school-rules, school-duties, school-habits, and notions, and voices, and faces, and phrases, and costumes, and preferences, and antipathies; such was what I knew of existence. And I know felt that it was not enough; I tired of the routine of eight years in one afternoon, I desired liberty; for liberty I gasped; for liberty I uttered a prayed; it seemed scattered on the wind then faintly blowing. I abandoned it and framed a humbler supplication; for change, stimulus; that petition, too, seemed swept off into vague space: then, "I cried, half desperate, "grant me at least a new servitude!" (Bronte, 1950:90).

This thought of Jane shows that Jane actually wants to be free and independent with her passion to leave Lowood. After she advertises herself in *Shire Herald*, Jane accepts a letter from Mrs. Fairfax. Then she decides to work as a governess.

I examined the document long; the writing was old-fashioned and rather uncertain, like that of an elderly haunted me. This circumstance was satisfactory; a private fear had haunted me, that in thus acting for myself, and by my own guidance, I ran the risk of getting into some scrape; and above all things, I wished for my endeavours to be respectable, proper, *en regle*. I now felt that an elderly was no bad ingredient in the business I had on hand (Bronte, 1950:93).

Finally, Jane accepts a letter from Mrs. Fairfax and she is very happy and excited. The previous quotation shows that Jane actually feels nervous and tries to be calm. Jane attempts to believe in herself and be confident because she wants to be more respected by others. She wants to reach her goal to be a fully independent woman.

3. Woman Fights for Her Rights in Education

Woman is as free as man, they have the same rights. Jane Eyre also faces the discrimination in education. She does not go to a formal school. As a woman, she needs to be more knowledgeable. It proves in the story, before she goes to Lowood School, Jane reads her uncle's book. Jane realizes the knowledge can answer her curiosity and she gets it from books. Finally, her aunt sends her to a School in Lowood. Actually, Jane is happy because at least she can get education. There are still segregation between man and woman in education. In the novel, it is told about John Reed, the only man in Jane aunt's house. However, his mother sends him to the school even though he does not want to. Traditionally, man works to support his family, he must go to school in order to get education and then find a job. Both Eliza and Georgina, John's sisters do not go to

school they just learn things at home. Their mother teaches them. It is also an evidence that woman does not get the same opportunity to get formal education as man. Parents regards that their daughter does not have to go to school because they will eventually be married and guaranteed by their husbands. But, Jane Eyre is a different girl, she realizes that education is the way she can release herself from man's oppression. She reads the Bible, too. Jane Eyre desires to be an independent woman is also reflected in her thought. She wants to use her knowledge to see the world. Jane is a curious girl who really wants to explore the world. This is proved by her journey from her childhood to adulthood in the beginning of the story.

I walked about the chamber most of the time. I imagined myself only to be regretting my loss and thinking how to repair it; but when my reflections were concluded, and I looked up and found that the afternoon was gone, and evening far advanced another discovery dawned on me, namely, that in the interval I had undergone a transforming process; that my mind had put off all it had borrowed of Miss Temple... (Bronte, 1950:89)

In this quotation, Jane realized that her soul has undergone a transforming process. Jane knows the capacity of herself. She is already mature enough. She starts to think her journey as an independent woman. In her adulthood, Jane Eyre begins to prepare herself to go out from Lowood. She wants her freedom and she finds tranquility outside Lowood. She always wonders how life is outside Lowood.

4. Achieving The Ownership Right

Woman actually feels that man ruins her existence because woman is not given any rights to own things. With her efforts Jane could possess things as her

own. Actually, she needs courage and efforts to get her passion to be independent. The following statement is the proof that Jane owns property.

My cottage is clean and weather-proof, my furniture sufficient and commodious. All I see has made me thankful, not despondent. I am not absolutely such a fool and sensualist as to regret the absence of a carpet, a sofa, and silver plate: besides, five weeks ago I had nothing. I was an outcast, a beggar, a vagrant, now I have acquaintance, a home, a business. I wonder at the goodness of God: the generosity of my friends: the bounty of my lot. I do not repine (Bronte, 1950:392).

It can be inferred that Jane was successful not only to own things but also has business to support her life. She gets all the things because of her efforts to make it become her own. Since Jane's parents passed away, she does not have any inheritance left by them. Since Jane Eyre has a job and is a teacher in her own school, she is successful to be an independent woman. She has salary and finances herself. She also becomes an heir and becomes rich after her uncle, Mr. Eyre, leaves her an inheritance after his death. Actually, Mr. Eyre is Jane mother's brother who lives in Madeira. It proves that Jane Eyre is trusted to possess wealth. The following statement is a proof that when Rivers told her about the inheritance.

Merely to tell you that your uncle Mr. Eyre of Madeira is dead; that he has left you all his property, and that you are now rich- merely that- nothing more" (Bronte, 1950:415).

After her long journey, Jane Eyre gets her dream and desire to be an independent woman. She already faces the hard time in her childhood and struggles from her suffering. As a woman that has

limitation to be independent, Jane finally can prove that she is capable to have the right the same as man. Considering that woman is regarded as a weak creature, Jane Eyre shows that woman has to speak up her mind and be brave. Woman should not be submissive to man but man and woman can live equally. She realizes that with her struggle and patience she can pursuit her happiness. She can reach her goal to be an independent woman.

CONCLUSION

This research only focuses on woman struggles for her rights in the novel. Further research on the same topic is highly suggested to support for the next research. The topic about woman is interesting to carry out. There are many cases about gender discrimination that

could be investigated in the woman studies.

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