

Marginalization of the Female Character in the Novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk*: A Study of Gender Feminism

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ABSTRACT: These novels told us about the complex side of a woman against the patriarchal culture like described in these two novels. This study used the techniques of collecting the data using the technique of library, observation attentively, and note. There were two techniques of collecting the data in this study: 1) Reading and reviewing the novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* by Kedung Darma Romansa repeatedly that became the objects of the research, interpreting and noting the things that were related to the marginalization of the characters viewed from the aspect of feminism. 2) Reading several books, articles, the results of the research that had been conducted by the previous researches and all forms of other readings that could be used to support this study. To get rid of her track, Safitri changed her name to Diva Fiesta and lived from stage to stage as a singer and tried to forget what had happened to her when fighting the rigors of the patriarchal culture and surviving in a society that gave her pressure and terror every day.

Keywords: Feminism, Gender, Marginalization, Novel, Literature

I. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the literature works of the social reality genre are getting a place for the literary connoisseurs. One of them is a novel. A novel is a coverage of romance because romance is only a novel term during the second world war. The popularity of romance in Indonesia was because at that time, the writers were affected from the Netherlands. Other European countries were more famous for romance. The replacement of the name for the novel occurred after the independence because the literary mecca changed to England and America. However, both of them emerged their own debate about the meaning of romance and novel. Romance described the chronicle of life more broadly and depicted the great and heroic characters and incidents. On the other hand, a novel was more about the disclosure of the detailed aspects of life and was explained more subtly.

The expertise of the author for this genre emphasizes on the observation of the surrounding environment. The interesting part is that the patriarchal culture still becomes the problem banded with feminism. The research does not need much time and cost. The author only needs to observe and interview the surrounding people. Kedung Darma Romansa (KDR) wrote a story in the novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* from the observations, experiences, and interviews in the region where he was born. The plot, setting, and the names of the characters were close to the readers.

Novel came from the Latin language 'novellas' and was revealed to be 'novies' which meant 'new'. The word of 'new' was connected with the fact that novels were a kind of fiction that emerged lately than short stories and romance. Because novels emerged lately, they provided new things that distinguished them from romance and short stories. In general, romance tells about most of the life story of the human, while novels tell about several episodes of the human's life. On the other hand, short stories only tell about one of the life episodes. These are the differences between novels and other literature works (Waluyo, 2006).

These two novels told about the complex side of a woman. This expose that was appointed by the author was clearly illustrated in the titles of the two novels. *KelirSlindet* is a nickname coming from the name of the sea animal that can be found in the pantura region. The reflection of the name of this animal is used for women working as prostitutes. However, the requirement to become *KelirSlindet* is a young woman who is under 20 years old.

Gender provides a distinctive distance that has an impact on the difference of social roles and functions or known as gender, which is the spotlight for many intellectuals. Whether it is realized or not, this creates the different treatments for men and women resulting in benefiting for men than women (Isma, M. & Gazali, 2016).

The issue of the women's ideology is important to be discussed because it is related to the culture of the society in general (Robert, 1998). At the beginning, the feminism researches on the media focused on the women. In the 1970s, the focuses of the research were movies, media, and cultural studies focusing on images for women (Brunsdon, 1991). The issue about women is knowledge that can be seen from several efforts of the readers/critics/researchers to reveal the gender issues (Kaplan, 1990). Closely related to the emergence of gender analysis is from the feminism movement. In this case, the literature works contain the gender issues, both explicitly and implicitly (Sumiyadi & Yulianeta, 2009) Endraswara, S. (2007). *Metodologi Penelitian Sastr*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Widyatama.

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II. THEORITICAL REVIEW

According to (M. Atar Semi, 1993), literature is the creative result of the human object form and the life with media, namely language. By using the language, the human's ideas, theories, and thinking system can be realized by producing literature works.

The marginalization of women does not only occur in the space of the social life and several traditional texts. In the texts of the literature works, there are not only the religious texts, but also the gender injustice. This is because basically, literature works are the life phenomena, structure and culture of a society. As a work that is produced through the process of imagination, literature work is a reflection of the social phenomena occurred in the society. Literature works come from the contexts of history and social of a nation so that they do not come from the cultural emptiness underlying it (Teeuw, 2015).

At the beginning, feminism was a movement based on the support to equalize the rights between men and women in which as if women were not valued in taking opportunities and decisions in life. Women felt to be limited because the superiority of men. Women were only as flavoring in men's lives. Another form of feminism movement is the criticism of psychoanalysis that demeans women with the excessive sexism. Therefore, women must show their existence in the world (Syuropati, 2017).

There were two ways of the criticism application of the feminism literature used in this study: the first was by identifying the female characters in the literature works. The second was by looking for the positions of the female characters in the relationship with other characters, both the male and the female characters. Thus, this analysis focused more on the ideas or thoughts that were reflected in the words and actions (Isma, M. & Gazali, 2016).

Feminism is the development of the word 'femme' which means women that fight for their rights. Basically, the researches of feminism must pay attention to the culture construction from two organisms, namely men and women. This study tried to test the differences and similarities, experiences and interpretations of both of them in various contexts and kinds of social relationship. On the other hand, sex is categorized as the categorization of men and women biologically (gender). Sex refers more to the biological definition, while the gender is more on the social definition (Karim, 2014).

According to Scott, there are some issues in the use of marginalization concept. First, marginalization is the relative symptom that does not have much significance if compared to the working sector of men and women. Thus, it cannot be made as the generalization universally. Second, marginalization concept does not provide any explanation why it can occur. This concept is more descriptive than analytic (Saptari, R, 1997).

The ideological representation of the female characters in the dwilogi novel by KDR has been available in the previous Indonesian literature works, for example, the character of SitiNurbayain the novel by MarahRusli. He wrote about existential 'rebellion' of women through their female characters. At that time, a woman named SitiNurbaya was symbolized as marginalized by a 'pseudo' value system that was rationalized through the customary law. Besides, the novel of Belenggu by Armijn Pane told about the rebellion of values and the natural cult that emerged from the character of Tini, a female character in the novel (Yulianeta, 2009: 470). Reflecting on the two novels that stole the attention of the era, KDR tried to bring the character rebellion on Safitri or Diva Fiesta in the dwilogi novel. Although the similarities in the resistance with the novel's story style was almost the same, the plot built and sacrifice told were more complicated the main character who struggled to survive to defeat the barrier, especially on the social, cultural, and religious conditions.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

The research method of literature is the way chosen by the researcher by considering the form, content, and literature characteristic as the subject of study. In the method, there are techniques and approaches. Thus, the literature research method will contain scientific approach (side of view) and analysis technique. The accurate research method surely will implement the right research approaches and techniques (Endraswara, 2007).

This study was a kind of research that used Library Research. The major focus at this study was the description of facts about Feminism viewed from the marginalization aspect of the main characters in the dwilogi novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* by KedungDarmaRomansa.

IV. DATA AND SOURCES OF DATA

In this study, the used data were in the form of the quotations of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that had the marginalization element viewed from the feminism aspect in the novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* by KedungDarmaRomansa. The data sources in this study were the dwilogi novel containing 256 pages published by PT. GramediaPustakaUtama and the first printed novel of *Telembuk* 2017 containing 412 pages published by Indie Book Corner as well as several books that were related to the research conducted by the researcher.

TECHNIQUE OF COLLECTING DATA

The techniques of collecting data in this study were by using the technique of library, observation attentively, and note. There were two ways of the techniques of collecting data in this study:

1. Reading and reviewing the novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* by KedungDarmaRomansa repeatedly that became the objects of the research, interpreting and noting the things that were related to the marginalization of the characters viewed from the aspect of feminism.
2. Reading several books, articles, the results of the research that had been conducted by the previous researches and all forms of other readings that could be used to support this study.

TECHNIQUE OF ANALYZING DATA

There were four stages in analyzing the data:

1. Reading carefully the whole contents of the novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk* by KedungDarmaRomansa.
2. Marking the things that were related to the feminism determination from the aspect of marginalization.
3. Identifying the characteristics that were related to the feminism viewed from the aspect of marginalization.
4. Drawing conclusions.

V. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The Synopsis of the Novel of *KelirSlindet* and *Telembuk*

This dwilogi novel had a story about the character of Safitriin whichshe fought for her life and the journey from being a *kasidah* singer until becoming a *dangdut* singer. In her struggle, Safitri entered into a journey of life that was truly complicated and must live alone because she was depressed due to refusing the proposal of a son of a village boss.

As a teenager who just grew up, it was not the time to think about marriage. Because Safitri had the heavy pressure at a young age and had a face that was classified as more than other girls, she attracted all men to marry her. In the middle of the night after returning from the mosque, something bad happened toSafitri. She was raped by a stranger. The quiet and dark conditions made that incident so fast so thatSafitri did not really remember what the man looked like. The incident traumatized Safitri. She often lockedherself in the room. With all the pressure circulating due to the rumors, Safitri did not know anymore where to hide.

Her last choice was Safitri leaving her village, Cikedung. It became a commotion of the whole village. Many people talked about her. Unfortunately, during her journey,she was robbed by a gang of young people and caused miscarriage because of maintaining the goods from the robbers. Safitri was rescued by a man named MangKaslan. From this part, Safitri changed her name to Diva for the stage name because of her talent in singing. Safitriwas used to be a *kasidah* singer in the Cikedung village. In this part, she started to try to become a *dangdut* singer. The fortune began to come to her and she became famous. Because of her popularity, many people tried to bid to sleep with her. So, Safitri became *Telembuk*, a name for a prostitute. Because she had a more beautiful face than other women, she became a prostitute that had a high fee. Her costumers were bosses and officials.

The more familiar Diva was, not many recognized that she was Safitri. However, there were a number of young men of her age from his village who began to be suspicious because they thought that there were similarities between Safitri and Diva. One day, the young man met the Diva after the gig. At first, Diva denied that she was not Safitri. After telling the condition of her family at that time which was apprehensive, Diva started to admit that she was Safitri. It was not that easy. She tried to strengthen and encouraged to return to her home to her hated village. Because of her mother, she chose to go home. Her mother was like a dazed person and often shouted because she remembered Safitri.

Another character,Mukimin, was a son of the wealthy skipper in the Cikedung village. Mukimin was the first love of Safitribecause of the same age and the runny style of Mukimin. Their love story was opposed because they were still teenagers. At the end, the two continued their own stories. Mukiminwas with a girl named Pipit that admitted that she was pregnant with him. He was the son of the skipper,Nasir, who was the most unruly and spent a lot of his parents' money. On the other hand, he was a person who wanted to help his friends when they were struggling with money. He was expected to become a person who understood the religion a lot like his two older brothers who had already received the title of cleric. He never finished his school and learned about theology. He spent his life by having fun with his gang.

VI. MARGINALIZATION OF THE FEMALE CHARACTER IN THE NOVEL OF *KELIRSLINDETAND TELEMBUK*

Many people consider that feminism was born from a patriarchal system in whichthe oppression towards women was based on the system. Then, the experience of left politics and the black power movement were in the 1960s when the organized concepts of understanding inequality were race and class, not gender. This unequal gender relationship is the core of any political analysis. This patriarchal system is believed to be able to explain the universal oppression towards women (Hollows, 2000).

In general, marginalization means the removal process. However, in the literature of women's studies,confusion often emerges in the use of this concept ifit is viewed from the larger context or the perspective of the women. This surely has major implications for the formulation of programs that might be conducted to improve the women's position (Saptari, R, 1997).

The main character in this dwilogi novel told about the life journey of women who struggled to escape from the shackleof injustice. Safitri was a child from Saritem, an ex*telembuk*. Carryingthe name of *telembuk* was underestimated by most of the residents of the Cikedung village although many knew that the local residents worked as that kind of women.

The life of being *telembuk* was treated differently and often became the neighbors' talk.

“The child of *telebuk*, still *telebuk*! Keep dreaming of being a famous person!” said Sukirman. (*KelirSlinder*: 20)

Cornering the work of *telebuk* was often gotten from the closest people. Sukirman cursed Safitri that she would not be famous and thought that she would be like her mother, Saritem. Men looked down on women that they could not be great.

“The child of Saritem, *telebukbapak*,” (KS: 43).

Every Cikedung resident has an economy crisis. Mothers worked to help even became the backbone of the family. Some worked as Female Workers (*TKW*) in the Middle East as servants. Those who did not qualify to work abroad chose to work in the Capital City with various kinds of work like prostitutes. They did not have high education so that they fell into bad jobs. Economic demand was the main factor to become a prostitute because being a prostitute was considered not to have any special skill. This happened to Saritem. After failing to become a Female Worker, Saritem became *telebuk* in her village. The mark was attached to Saritem and downed to her daughter that the child of *telebuk* did not have a future and would be like her mother.

“Let it be, the child of *kajinyupang* matches with the child of *telebuk*, both are not true” (KS: 44).

Labeling someone which is considered not to be appropriate with the cultural norm is the easiest thing to be done in the society. The developing issue becomes the reason to down on and label someone although most people have not known exactly about the issue. In the quotation of the novel, Haji Karta, Mukimin’s father, was a rich man in the village. Many people thought that Haji Karta obtained his wealth by doing *nyupang*. On the other hand, Safitri was labeled as the child of *telebuk* known as the bad person. Children must bear the burden of the names of their parents. Thus, the two jobs of the parents were the target to label the children. The people were reluctant to think far in labeling the children.

“The daughter of Casti, Rukmini, graduated from elementary school and then immediately married. She is still 12 years old. And you, you are 14 years old. Your age is very vulnerable to the immorality. Especially dating, many harmful things. I come here precisely to ask you to the path that is truly blessed by Allah. And clearly this is the Sunnah of the Prophet” (KS: 63)

The hereditary culture was used to urge women by providing the previous examples that had already existed. Her own teacher, Ustadz Mustafa, wanted to marry her. The used pretext was by providing the examples of the young people at her age who were married first.

“Look at Saritem. Because her daughter failed to be the daughter-in-law of Haji Nasir, uh, now she’s back to being a *telebuk*” (KS: 88).

In the quotation above, actually, there was an effort to change the fate of life. Saritem tried to encourage her daughter to accept the proposal of Musthafa so that her life would change by being with a son of a boss. Safitri no longer worked like her mother as a *telebuk*. On the other hand, with the hope that her daughter married Musthafa, the fate of her life would change and stopped being a *telebuk*. However, Safitri rejected this desire because marrying someone she did not love would not make her happy although Musthafa was very rich. The failure of the matchmaking made the issue that was increasingly widespread. Many people cornered and blamed them because their family levels were very different.

“And what if the people know that Musthafa loves her? Then propose to her? Ah, the news will certainly be a warm gossip if it turns out that the two sons of a prominent family love a daughter of an ex *telebuk*” (KS: 88).

The family of Haji Nasir, Musthafa’s father, was famous as a landlord and a very rich skipper. On the other hand, Safitri was the daughter of Saritem who was a *telebuk*. *Telebuk* was a job that was

considered as the dirty work by the society. She was often marginalized and even ostracized by her neighbors.

“Sukirman looked at Safitri. Then, sat in front of her. “Is that true that you were proposed by Musthafa?” asked Sukirman gently.

Safitri was still silent. “I will not force you. It’s all up to you. But Fit, you also have to remember your mother and father. It feels difficult to be good persons. I think you are an adult now, you can think. Musthafa is nice, handsome, well-educated, and from a prominent family. Please, think it carefully. But, everything returns to you”(KS: 96)

As a father, Sukirman tried to mediate the problem between Safitri and Saritem to accept the proposal of Musthafa. However, Safitri never considered Sukirman at all because the roles of the father to protect and provide for life were never carried out by Sukirman. Sukirman realized that his influence to change the decision of Safitri would not succeed.

“Look, Ji, I’m really an ex *telembuk*. Do I not deserve to do good? I’m tired being talked by people all the time, ji. I am a human. I still have pride. You hear right?” Saritem cried. Her body was shed to the ground. He bowed, and several people tried to lift her up” (KS: 108)

Saritem’s resentment peaked and her emotions were unstoppable. When her pride had been harassed because of the failure of their two children to be married. Haji Nasir considered the family of Sukirman to be inappropriate with his family because the son of a skipper was not worthy of marrying the daughter of a *telembuk*. The issue developed in the community was very uncontrollable that Saritem felt that the treatment of Haji Nasir had cornered her family, especially Safitri, who knew nothing. This community portrait was difficult to eliminate the stigma of parents that always obeyed their children. The messy family life of Saritem would be hereditary to their daughter. Then, the equality in the economy was also important in the marriage affairs in the Indonesian culture. Origin, rank, and quality must be calculated so as not to get too far in the gap between the two families.

“Damn child! What do you really want? Saprudin proposed to you nicely, but you rejected him. I am surprised by you. Do you still want to keep singing together with Ratini? If you accept the proposal, we do not need to be tired of earning money. To be honest, I am still hurt by Haji Nasir. You better remember that, Fit” (KS: 188).

The gossip was increasingly spread day by day that Ustadz Musthafa proposed to Safitri and she rejected him. In addition, the action of Saritem who teased Haji Nasir in front of her house added to the long run of the hostility between the two families. This increasingly uncertain situation was used by Saprudin, an owner of the *kasidah* group at the next village, who also wanted to marry Safitri to make her become his singer. However, Safitri also rejected the proposal. This situation added to the complexity of the family of Sukirman. Saritem was mad at Safitri and scared her. She expected that the difficulty of their family would be over if Safitri accepted one of their proposals. Safitri insisted that she would not accept the proposal of the man she did not love.

People whispered to each other. New rumor would begin soon. “If you are pregnant, you are more beautiful. It must taste good,” he said. “You, the child of a *telembuk*! Whose child is in her womb? Maybe the child belongs to many!” Someone else said. They started to talk about Safitri getting pregnant in the midst of the rocking *dangdut* that was getting hotter.” (KS: 196)

“How much is the one hour rate?” She found a paper with short writing under the window of her room. Someone slipped it through the window slot” (KS: 227).

The news of the pregnancy of Safitri was surprising, but unavoidable. Verbal terror for terror continued to attack Safitri. All villagers blamed her without giving her any solution. They just wanted to prove that Safitri was just like Saritem. She was considered as the next generation of *telembuk*. Besides,

someone wrote on a piece of paper, then slipped it through the window of her room. The paper was about the price to be able to date her. This harassment was considered as a joke by the people around Cikedung without considering the feelings and pride of the family of Sukirman, especially the mentality of Safitri. The family of Sukirman was increasingly marginalized from the community as several issues afflicted their family because the decisions of Safitri were contrary to what was expected by many people including Safitri's parents.

“Her facial expressions invite lust. Her smile is very tempting. Ah, once again, at that time, I imagined that I kissed her. Diva is very different. Some people said that she used implants, charms, or a kind of.” (Telebuk: 35).

After often joining with Mang Alex, just hanging out in the Beautiful Cikedung where many *telebuk* looked for masher men. By the time, Diva did not feel good with Mang Alex. She began to know about MakDayem. MakDayem was a famous pimps that often orbited new *telebuk*. The new stage began after Diva knew MakDayem.

“Eighteen? You sell enough. I will introduce you to the big guy. But not now. I have to teach you first” (Telebuk: 41).

The beginning conversation with MakDayem was to make Diva become a famous *telebuk* in Cikedung Indah. Because there was no work anymore, becoming a singer and *telebuk* would be better with the guidance of MakDayem who saw her potential at the age of 18 years. She just needed a ritual from a shaman and some of her men to attract her customers. There was no choice from the life of Safitri who has changed her name to make people know her easily. Having no income and living with the mercy from Mang Alex made Diva follow what MakDayem suggested.

VII. CONCLUSION

The concept of marginalization in the character of Safitri in the *dwilogi* novel by KedungDarmaRomansa was not because of the desire in living a life with the job that was considered inappropriate by the society. The character of Safitri took the risk when she rejected the proposals of Musthafa and Saprudin in which both of them would make her family become better both in the aspects of economy and reputation. Saritem hoped that Safitri would not be a *telebuk* and Sukirman would have a good job.

The character had a struggle before deciding to reject all proposals. She chose to leave her village by carrying the disgrace and leaving the family. The taken risk added the problem in the community. The neighbors' talk and terrors made Safitri increasingly depressed.

The marginalization of the character in this *dwilogi* novel was confronted from the social side and the decision of the character. The problem in the story developed far to bring out the characteristics of the main character, Safitri, through various kinds of great conditions and pressures. In this part, the strength of the character was increasingly marginalized and Safitri was getting stronger. At the end, the solution was to leave her hometown, Cikedung. She hoped that the problem was over, but actually, the new problem emerged and made her parents get more difficult. To get rid of her track, Safitri changed her name to Diva Fiesta and lived from stage to stage as a singer and tried to forget what had happened to her when fighting the rigors of the patriarchal culture and surviving in a society that gave her pressure and terror every day. Safitri proved that her choice was not wrong and she prepared herself for the consequences of leaving the village.

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