

Beyond the Margins: Reimagining Feminism in Literature

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ABSTRACT:

Men and women have their own background and culture, the community has separated the notions of the two genders. Most of the world community assume that men as superior and women as inferior, So, feminist theory is a tool for women to fight for their rights for freedom in the world of politics, social, economic and literature. Feminism is born because women are tired of being subordinated to everything. Feminism is about all genders having equal rights and opportunities. It's about respecting diverse women's experiences, identities, knowledge and strengths, and striving to empower all women to realise their full rights. Through feminism, women are able to show themselves. Women are no longer dangerous creatures and creatures that have been in the minds of men. But women are also able to work and be productive with men. Feminism is not just important for women but for every sex, gender, caste, creed and more. It empowers the people and society as a whole. A very common misconception is that only women can be feminists.

It is absolutely wrong but feminism does not just benefit women. It strives for equality of the sexes, not the superiority of women. Feminism takes the gender roles which have been around for many years and tries to deconstruct them.

Keywords: Feminism, History of Feminism, Gender Equality, Literary Feminism Theory and its analysis.

DEVELOPMENT OF FEMINISM:

The word feminism comes from French word *féminisme* and according to the Cambridge online dictionary feminism is "the belief that women should be allowed the same rights, power, and opportunities as men and be treated in the same way, or the set of activities intended to achieve this state." The term 'feminism' itself is used to describe a cultural, political or economic movement aiming for equal rights for both women and men. Nonetheless, the terms 'feminism' and 'feminist' did not gain widespread meaning use until the 1970s when they started to be used in the public parlance more frequently. The feminist movement involves sociological and political theories concerning with gender difference issues. The movement has been here for many decades, and British women have started to fight against the oppression during mid 1850s when the first feminists started to advocate their thoughts about inequality and when the first suffragette movement emerged, since then women have started working on accomplishing their goals to have the same rights and to have the same position in society as men have. The feminist framework also indicates how problems are defined and the kinds of questions to be asked. Feminism is the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes. Although largely originating in the West, feminism is manifested worldwide and is represented by various institutions committed to activity on behalf of women's rights and interests. Throughout most of Western history, women were confined to the domestic sphere, while public life was reserved for men. In medieval Europe, women were denied the right to own property, to study, or to participate in public life. At the end of the 19th century in France, they were still compelled to cover their heads in public, and, in parts of Germany, a husband still had the right to sell his wife. Even as late as the early 20th century, women could neither vote nor hold elective office in Europe and in most of the United States. Women were prevented from conducting business without a male representative, be it father, brother, husband, legal agent, or even son. Married women could not exercise control over their own children without the permission of their husbands. Moreover, women had little or no access to education and were barred from most professions. In some parts of the world, such restrictions on women continue today.

A brief historical background: Britain as well as France were among the first countries where women started fighting for their rights, education, and above all respect. Simone de Beauvoir wrote that "the first time we see a woman take up her pen in defence of her sex was when Christine de Pizan wrote *Epître au Dieu d'Amour* (Epistle to the God of Love) in the 15th century." However, it was not until the early 19th century when women began to achieve changes in society, it was Mary Wollstonecraft, author of the commanding *Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, who received the lion's share of attention. Wollstonecraft was a woman who, as Arianne Chernock says in her book *Men and the Making*

of Modern British Feminism, “spoke up, quite loudly, for what had been until then a largely silent section of the human race.” Scholars, even today, consider Mary Wollstonecraft to be a founding mother of British feminism and her *Vindication of the Rights of Woman* can be considered as a first unambiguous feminist work. In addition, one of the main social reformers of early 19th century was also Florence Nightingale, who was convicted that women had “all the potential of men but none of the opportunities,”⁸ she pioneered the importance of nursing schools and also advocated better education for women. Nonetheless, not only women tried to establish equal opportunities for both sexes, feminist men also helped advance women’s liberation, although there were not many of them. One of them was an English philosopher, political economist and feminist John Stuart Mill, who was inspired by his wife women’s right advocate Harriet Taylor Mill. Mill once declared: “[T]he principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes—the legal subordination of one sex to the other—is wrong itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.”⁹ Mill also became the first British Member of Parliament to introduce a bill calling for women to receive the vote. Feminists and scholars have divided the movement into three separate waves and each of the waves is significant for the movement in achieving different goals. The first wave refers mainly to the women’s suffrage movement in the 19th and early 20th centuries in the United Kingdom and in the United States, focusing on women gaining the right to vote. Originally, the first wave focused on the promotion of equality and property rights for women and the opposition to chattel marriage and ownership of married women and their children by their husbands. As Margaret Waters claims in her book called *Feminism: A Very Short Introduction*, “for a married woman, her home becomes a prison-house.

The house itself, as well as everything in it, belongs to the husband, and of all fixtures the most abject is his breeding machine, the wife. Married women are in fact slaves, their situation no better than that of Negroes in the West Indies.”¹ Women at that time were treated no better like servants with hardly any rights and possession. Marion Reid in her essay *A Plea for Women*, which has been described as the most thorough and effective statement by a woman since Wollstonecraft’s *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, argues “if women’s rights are not the same as those of man, what are they?” in one sense, she admits, “woman was made for man, yet in another and higher she was also made for herself.” Reid focuses on reasons why women should not be limited only by domesticity and that taking care of household and children should be in interest of both, the wife as well as the husband. Many female writers and feminists argued that what they needed was recognition of what women need to fulfil their potential and their own natures and not only equality. Virginia Woolf, in probably the most notable pages of *A Room of One’s Own*, states her argument about how women’s talents have been wasted.

Walters supports Woolf’s argument and comments on it: “She contemplates a number of greatly talented women from the past, from the Duchess of Newcastle to George Eliot and Charlotte Brontë – who were deprived of experience, intercourse and travel and that is the reason they never wrote quite as powerfully and generously as they might have. Woolf also reasoned that a woman need money and a room of her own to be able to write.” Nevertheless, it was not sooner than in the second half of the 19th century when organized campaigns, clubs and movements for women’s rights emerged in order to improve female condition in terms of education, opportunities to work outside their households, reform in laws affecting married women and, for the first time, for the right to vote. One of the first female groups was called the Ladies of Langham Palace, the name comes from their meeting place, and the movement was led by Barbara Leigh Smith. The group initiated many campaigns around issues that had already been clearly defined, for instance “women’s urgent need for better education and for increased possibilities of employment, as well as the improvement of the legal position of married women.” In her pamphlets Leigh Smith also discussed the problem of marriage settlements, since to that time woman would lose all her property as soon as she got married.

The activism focused primarily on gaining political power, particularly the right of women’s suffrage towards the very end of the 19th century. In Britain the Suffragettes and, possibly more effectively, the Suffragists campaigned for the women’s vote. The suffrage was seen important not only as an acceptance of women in society but also for improving women’s lives. Throughout the end of the 19th century there were many attempts to pass suffrage for women, although the parliament never passed it arguing if women had much influence in Parliament, it would lead, as Walters suggests, to “hasty alliances with scheming neighbours, more class cries, permissive legislation, domestic perplexities and sentimental grievances.” Even though suffragettes did not achieve many victories during the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th centuries they remained persistent. The greatest figures of British suffragettes were the Pankhurst family, Emily Davison or Emily Davies. Emily Davies contributed to female education, she believed women should get the same education as men, and she managed to form a committee to further the prospects of women taking the University Local Examinations, which was established in late 1850s. In 1878 Queen’s and Bedford Colleges began awarding degrees to women, and 30 years later women at Oxford also became full members of the universities.

The Pankhurst family played a major role in the suffragette movement, the leader of British suffragettes, Emmeline Pankhurst, was very politically radical and she is considered to be one of the most influential women in the British history. Also, the Pankhursts established the Women’s Social and Political Union (WSPU). The WSPU effectively and most radically fought for the vote and as Christabel Pankhurst once remarked: “It is unendurable to think of another generation of women wasting their lives for the vote. We must not lose any more time. We must act. Even though,

initially, the WSPU was meant to be only a family organization the shift of the group was gradual, from provoking the politicians to mass marches and demonstrations in Hyde Park. Finally, in 1918 the Representation of the People Act was passed granting the vote to women over the age of 30 who owned houses, and in 1928 the right was extended to all women over the age of 21. 17 Women could finally sit in the parliament after the World War I, although not many of them were elected, as late as in 1840s there were only 12 of them. However, women had been actively serving on school boards and other local bodies since the 1870s, and their numbers increased after the war. The second wave of feminism emerged after the World War II and can be described as the women's liberation movement, which focused on gaining legal and social equality for women, and most importantly on ending discrimination. This period was also understood as a continuation of the first wave of feminism, in fact, the term 'first wave' was coined after the second wave emerged. Since the second wave had slightly different goal it needed a new term. Second wave feminists saw women's cultural and political inequalities as "inextricably linked and encouraged women to understand aspects of their personal lives as deeply politicized and as reflecting sexist power structures." One of the most influential feminists of the early 20th century was Simone de Beauvoir, who is also the author of *The Second Sex* and of the very famous statement "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." De Beauvoir distinguishes sex from gender and suggests that gender is "an aspect of identity gradually acquired. She states that gender is the cultural meaning and form that body acquires, the variable modes of that body's acculturation." Women still attempted to communicate better social position in society and the feminist movements of this period defined its demands for equal education opportunity and equal pay, as well as free contraception and abortion if needed. The distinction from the first wave movement was that the groups were now much smaller, and the women were focusing on discussing particular issues, sharing their experiences and discovering what they have in common as women. Not only the things listed above were topics of discussion, rape played also significant role in the second wave feminism, and even today.

The Origin of Literary Feminism Theory:

Feminism was born in the early 20th century pioneered by Virginia Woolf in her book entitled *A Room for One's Own* (1929). This understanding experienced rapid development in the 1960s, which is one aspect of contemporary cultural theory with an analytical model covering the social, political and economic fields.

The feminist movement in the Western world was triggered by several factors namely:

1. The development of contraceptive techniques, which allows women to free themselves from male power.
2. Political radicalization.
3. The liberation movements and traditional ties, such as church ties, American black ties, student ties, and so on.
4. Secularization, decline of religious authority in all fields of life.
5. Educational development specifically enjoyed by women.
6. Reaction to literary approaches that alienate work from social structures, such as New Criticism and structuralism.
7. Dissatisfaction with the theory and practice of orthodox Marxist ideology.

The liberation movement as mentioned above raises the feminist movement that wants to fight for the rights of women, deconstruct the system of domination and hegemony, and engage in conflict between weak groups and strong groups. Feminist theories are closely related to class and racial conflict, especially gender conflict.

Feminism is generally associated with emancipation, the women's movement to demand equal rights with men, both in the political, economic and socio-cultural fields. In the late 20th century, especially in the West, feminism was one of the most important symptoms.

Feminist figures:

Feminism arises because of demands for equal rights between men and women. Feminism is not just born, there are some figures behind the emergence of feminism theory.

Important feminist figures, such as: Luce Irigaray, Julia Kristeva, Helene Cixous and Donna Haraway.

1. Luce Irigaray

Luce Irigaray, was born in Belgium on May 3, 1930, is one of the famous feminist figures by arguing by rejecting Freud and Lacan's opinion that women are real creatures, symbolic beings and imaginary creatures for men. Irigaray himself focused his attention on schizophrenia, which was considered a personal language or dialect focused on symbolic order.

In order to reject Freud's argument and reject male domination, Irigaray also focused her attention on the role of language, especially women's language. According to him because men have a language house, women also have to build their own language house, a house that frees them from male prison, a house that will be used as a place to carry out a total improvement of fate. So that later women do not speak like women but speak as women.

Irigaray also stated that to match the male phallus, women must speak through language.

And to shape her own image, women must be able to appear for themselves, in a way that is different from what men do.

2. Julia Kristeva

This Bulgarian woman born on June 24, 1941 gave rise to feminism through the display of text as a production material which was a deconstruction of western cultural hegemony. One of the most well-known concepts is semanalysis, a method that focuses not only on the function of language as a means of communication, but also on language material, such as: sound, rhythm and graphic features. Kristeva is a linguist like Irigaray who plunged into the world of feminist criticism. And his interest in feminists also departed from Freud and Lacan's theory which considers women to be weak.

Kristeva pays attention to subjectivity and the social historical aspects of the world of tagging (semiotics). Semiotics is called a feminist. According to him the language is not a monolithic system, but a complex, heterogeneous signification process that exists within and between subjects, from homogeneous structures to language as heterogeneous processes.

3. Helene Cixous

Helen Cixous (June 15, 1937) was a feminist novelist, drama writer, and critic. There are two kinds of attention to feminism, namely: binary hegemony problems in Western culture and Practices Feminine writers who dispose of their bodies. Binary opposition directed for example: father / mother, sun / moon, culture / nature, which often occurs in the context of men and women. To reject male hegemony, according to Cixous it must be done with the practice of feminine writing, the practices carried out in the body with one of the uniquenesses are proximity to the voice. Women must write about themselves, write videos and bring women into writing. Because writing is considered a special space for self-exploration.

Cixous further discussed the relationship between women's texts and mothers as the origin of the sounds heard in all women's texts. The femininity in writing is a voice, writing and voice cannot be separated, the whole talk of women is the voice of women. Physically, women materialize what they think, they interpret it in the body. Women, with other words and writings in their voices, and their writings are the freedom of their identity as acts of words.

4. Donna Haraway

Donna Haraway has a different perspective on feminism. One aspect raised was her enthusiasm in supporting and utilizing modern technology, namely cyborg, although it has a negative impact, but in order to achieve gender redefinition, as a characteristic that is replaced by women, Cyborg is considered as one way to fight for gender equality. Cyborg can be used to break through the biological nature and determinism of human history that has been launched throughout the centuries by the male world.

Feminism Studies:

In literature, feminism is related to the concept of feminist literary criticism, namely literary studies that direct the focus of analysis on women. Feminist literary criticism does not mean female critics, or criticism of women, or criticism of female authors. The simple meanings contained are critics who view literature with special awareness; awareness that there are sexes that are related to culture, literature and life.

Reading as a woman means reading with the awareness of uncovering the prejudices and ideologies of the power of androcentric or patriarchal men, who until now still master writing and literary reading. Sex differences in the poets, readers, elements of work and external factors that influence the situation of literary communication systems.

Endraswara revealed that in analyzing literary works in a focused study of feminism are: a. position and role of female figures in literature, b. lags of women in all aspects of life, including education and community activities, c. pay attention to the literary factor, how does the reader respond to women's emancipation in literature.

Kolodny in Djajaneegara describes several objectives of feminist literary criticism, namely: a. with feminist literary criticism are able to reinterpret and reassess all literary works produced in the past century; b. help us understand, interpret, and assess the stories of women writers.

Kuiper also reveals the objectives of literary feminist research as follows: 1. To criticize canon literary works and to highlight things that are standard based on patriarchy; 2. To display underestimated texts made by women; 3. To establish gynocritic, which is the study of texts centered on women, and to strengthen women's canons; 4. To explore the cultural construction of gender and identity.

The important target in the analysis of literary feminism as far as possible relates to the following:

1. Revealing the works of past and present female writers to make it clear that women are depressed by tradition. The dominance of the particular culture must be clearly revealed in the analysis.
2. Revealing pressure on female characters in literary works written by male authors.
3. Reveal the ideology of female and male authors, how they view themselves in real life.

4. Reviewing the aspects of ginokritik, namely understanding how the feminist creative process. Whether female writers will have a specificity in style and expression or not.
5. Revealing aspects of feminist psychoanalysis, which is why women, both characters and authors prefer things that are smooth, emotional, loving and so on.

Meanwhile, Selden classifies the focus of literary feminism studies into five:

1. Biology, which often places women inferior, gentle, weak and low.
2. Experience, often women are seen as having only limited experience, problems with menstruation, childbirth, breastfeeding and so on.
3. Women have lower mastery of language, while men have "strong demands". As a result of all this, it will lead to negative stereotypes in women, women just winking.
4. Unconscious process, feminist writers have tacitly undermined male authority. Women's sexuality is revolutionary, subversive, diverse and open. However, this is still less realized by men.
5. Feminist authors usually often present different social and economic demands from men.

Analysis of Theory of Feminism:

Feminism as a women's movement to gain autonomy or freedom of self-determination.

Feminism fights for two things that women do not have in general, namely their equality with men and generally, namely their equal rank with men and autonomy to determine what is good for themselves. Analysis in the study of feminism should be able to reveal aspects of women's oppression of men. Feminist issues are always associated with the issue of equality and gender equality. However, it raises by feminists issues. In contemporary theory, attention is no longer focused on women's lives, but rather extends to gender analysis. How does gender influence in human social life. If we are able to see closely, international politics and international relations are only held by most men. Women are not much involved in making decisions and forming international political patterns. The following are the basic assumptions put forward by Feminists:

1. Feminists do not consider human nature to be unchanging.
2. From a feminist perspective, we cannot make a clear difference between 'facts' and 'values'.
3. There is a close relationship between knowledge and power and between our 'theories' about the world and our habits, how we engage with the physical and social environment around us.
4. The postmodern feminists themselves (postmodernists reject the claim of universality), feminists have a common commitment to the social progress and freedom or emancipation of women.

Nowadays, the national defense association or defense of national interests is always attached to the role of men. Meanwhile, only giving domestic roles such as being a 'giver of security' like a good mother, loyal wife, teacher, nurse, and social worker. Thus, a very strong and entrenched understanding emerged that international politics was identified with masculinity such as strength, strength, autonomy, freedom, and rationality.

Male domination of women has influenced literary conditions, including:

- (1) Literary values and conventions are often vital for men, bordering women are always in a position to struggle constantly towards gender equality
- (2) Male writers Men are also biased; including women are fantastic objects that are interesting. Women always use objects at a glance by men. Works that are always siding, namely women who provide people who are useful for venting lustalone.
- (3) Women are figures who become literary flowers, or so-called men, rape, and the like that seem to cornen women in weak position (helpless).

In other words, there are indeed different visions of male and female writers. Both camps often have resistance to each other with no end to the base. That is why; the analysis of feminism should assess Barret (Pradopo, 1991: 142), namely:

- (1) Researchers want to use separate material that is worked on by male and female writers,
- (2) Frequent ideologies influence the work of the author. The ideology and beliefs of men and women are of course in principle.
- (3) Ways that are far from texts that can be used to describe their cultural conditions. Gender differences often affect the customs and culture that are revealed. The traditions of men and women naturally have differences that must be learned in gender analysis.

In detail, according to Sholwater (1988) there are three phases of the tradition of literary writing by women, namely:

1. Women writers, such as George Eliot, often imitate and live the aesthetic standards of dominant men who want women to remain in a respectable position. The main background of their work is the household and community environment.
2. Women writers who have been radical. At this time women have the right to choose which method is appropriate for expression. Likewise the themes are also increasingly complex.
3. The results of women's writings in addition to following the previous pattern, are also increasingly self-aware. Women have realized that they are not "angels of the house" but that there must be emancipation.

Sholwater also emphasized that in the analysis of literary feminism it is necessary to explore further about:

- (1) The essential differences between the language of male and female writers, the differences will be influenced by the different cultural contexts. Do women use more aesthetic language that is full of sense, full of mystical power, old-fashioned, and so on. On the contrary, maybe men are more open in highlighting negative things.
- (2) How far the cultural influence that attaches to women and men in a sense of creation. Do men tend to want to maintain a culture that hegemony women, and on the contrary women are just being resigned, is a very significant picture in the analysis of feminism. There are several misconceptions in understanding Feminism Theory, namely:

1. Men cannot become feminists, they can only be sympathizers or supporters. Gender is the same as gender. Gender refers to the biological anatomy between women and men.
Whereas gender explains the social interests or understanding referred to in those differences.
2. Gender studies in HI are about women. The position and status of women cannot be understood without referring to general ideas about gender and how gender relations have been arranged in society in particular, meaning that gender patterns have taken root in society and that is the measuring point where women's position in HI studies.
3. Studies on gender and HI are only important for women. In fact, in analyzing gender issues, we still have to look at the side of masculinity that is found in men to see how women should be.
4. Feminism is a worldview or paradigm like the others.
5. All feminists are lesbians, except male haters. Feminism is more about understanding and resistance to certain aspects of power and inequality than narrow-minded denunciation.

Feminists fight for how women are not made subordinate to the behavior of international relations and social society. But more to how women are involved and made the main focus.
Feminists believe that if policy makers do not merely make women only live in domestic coverage. However, there are those who miss this theory. Feminists only concentrate on gender relations, more precisely on women. Women use ideas about gender to legitimize unequal status aimed at women. Feminists also universalize women. That is, feminists forget other aspects such as culture, race, class, and so on. Whereas all of these aspects are closely related to social and international dynamics. In literature, feminism is related to the concept of feminist literary crystals, namely literary studies that direct the focus of analysis on women. If all this time it is considered by it that which represents the reader and creator in western literature is male, then the feminist criticism shows that the female reader brings perceptions and hopes into his literary experience.

CONCLUSION

Feminism is born because women are tired of being subordinated to everything. This has traditionally been called women's emancipation, where women demand equal rights in the political, intellectual, cultural and even literary fields. As a literary work, feminism began when Balai Pustaka was continued in the New Poetry period as in the work of Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana through the novel 'Layar Terbang'.

Feminism focuses its attention on women by building a theory that is considered capable of reducing male domination that is very strong. Irigaray (female language), Kristeva (semanalysis), Cixous (the practice of feminine writing) and Haraway (cyborg) with their respective interests make a significant contribution in sustaining the struggle of women. Analysis in the study of feminism should also be able to reveal aspects of women's oppression of men. Feminist issues are always associated with the issue of equality and gender equality. And through feminism, women are able to show their authenticity. Women are no longer as weak creatures and imaginary creatures that have been in the minds of men. But women are also able to work and be productive with men.

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