

FEMINIST APPROACH IN ANN BRASHARES'S *THE SISTERHOOD OF THE TRAVELING PANTS*

Bambang Purwanto
Semarang State University

Abstract

The purpose of this writing is to express that friendship is more important than hostility. The reason of hostility is annoyance, emotion and lack of patience in facing problems. The effect of it is the destruction of friendship and the increase in annoyance among them. Feminist is a method that is used in this writing. The application of this method is to express that man and woman have the right to make their own decisions. Both of them will respect and understand. They will have responsibility for everything they have done. This method is also expressing that human have freedom in their life. In this novel, there are four women. They are Carmen, Bridget, Lena and Tibby. The four of them spend their summer holiday into different places. In their summer holiday, they have experienced incidents which can destroy friendship. Carmen hates her father, Lena hates Kostos, Bridget hates Eric and Tibby hates Bailey. Finally, they realize that annoyance between them can destroy their friendship. The writer used Feminist approach because the main characters wanted to destroy the patriarchy of man. They insist that man can respect woman's opinion.

Key words: Friendship, Conflict, Respect

INTRODUCTION

People always think that friendship is better than fighting. It is always stated in their mind forever but it is difficult to be done. There always be fighting everywhere, starting between human, ethnic or even country. Some writers, especially in literature, do not learn from their own writing but also from any activities they have seen. British literary critic, Greenlaw, has his opinion about it.

"Nothing related to history of civilization is beyond our province': we are not limited to belle-letters or even to printed or manuscript records in our effort to understand a period of civilization', and

we 'must see our work in the light of its possible contribution to the history of culture" (Wellek and Werren, 1963:20).

Literature is one study which exposes human life. Literature has many functions, such as entertaining, giving dreams, showing protest, and many others. Conflict is one of theme that is always shown in story of literature. It is stated in novel, prose, poetry, short story, etc. we can find many themes in literature, such as happiness, sadness, and even the experiences of the writers. By reading story in literature, people can give their own interpretation and it can be different

from the author's interpretation. People can also analyze all characters in that story. In literature, people do not look at intrinsic elements of the story but they can also look at extrinsic aspects in the story. Feminist approach, Structuralism approach, and Psychological approach are some parts of extrinsic elements.

Friendship in *The Sisterhood of The Traveling Pants* is one theme and it shows between four women when they spend their summer holiday. They spend their summer holiday in different places and they also find many problems there. One problem they have is conflict between four of them and some people in society where they spend holiday. They would like to show that woman and man have the same right to solve any problem. Conflict between them is a problem that destroys their friendship and they would like to lose it. According to those women, friendship between them and other people is the main key to solve any problem.

FEMINIST APPROACH

In some places, we can still find patriarchal life. In that place, man will control everything. This kind of reality insist woman that they are not gender who always say "yes" to man's order. Feminist is one approach to show that woman and man must have the same right. Woman is not a gender who always be the loser in controlling human life. Woman can also be a leader to lead man. Juliet Mitchell, Margareth Fuller, John Stuart

Mill, and many others are some women who support feminist approach. They start their action by giving criticism to man. When man cannot solve or answer about it, so they feel that they are better in controlling than man. When they cannot find any writing in literature, they write it and show to public. That reality shows that feminist approach can insist any woman to write in literature.

In 1920, a feminist literary critic, Virginia Woolf gave statement which can shock man gender. All readers, especially man, never appreciate woman's writing because it contains of her writing that is different from man's life. Opinion and idea say that women are not realistic and lack of esthetic (Djajanegara, 2000:23). Because some readers have this opinion, so woman has opinion that all opinions from man are a big mistake. Feminist approach is one approach that supports woman's intellectuality that there will be the same position between man and woman. Feminist is one approach that always protects woman's opinion in any things. Woman also expect that there will not be any statement that woman is under man in any situation.

LOVE

Love is any number of emotion and experiences related to a sense of strong affection. Based on their conflict, actually it is based on love each other but they make mistake in understanding it (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love>). According

to Jannah, love is expressed by human to enjoy, feel and taste time by time. (2005:11). There are four love that we must know; Eros love, Philia love, Storge love and Agape love.

Eros love shows about desire of human. This love can kill someone if this love always controls someone. The second, Philia love, is love to friends. Storge love is a love to our parents while Agape love is a love to God. Carmen, Bridget, Lena and Tibby show that they have a strong Philia love.

FEMINIST APPROACH IN THE NOVEL

Carmen, Lena, Tibby and Bridget are four women who have friendship. They love and take care of each other. They always tell and share to each other. Building relationship is the most important in being mature because friendship teaches us how to interact with each other (Gardner, 2004:109). Their friendship has started since they were born.

“We started being “we” before we were born. We were all four born at the end of summer, within seventeen days of one another: Lena first, at the end of August, and me last, in the middle of September. It’s not so much a coincidence, as the reason we started”. (Brashares, 2004:5)

Loyalty and love is the most importance in the four women and they look at themselves as siblings.

One opinion in feminist shows that they must have something to be shown, they show pant. They never let anything to that pant and

they even never wash as proof that their friendship always sticks to it.

“Tonight we are Sisters of the Pants” Bridget intoned when they’d formed a ring. “Tonight we give the Pants the love of our Sisterhood so we can take that love wherever we go”. (Brashares, 2004:21)

When they find pants, they show that feminist must show willingness to fight against man’s opinion as best as they can.

Conflict between them and people happen when they spend their summer holiday. Lena against Kostos, Tibby against Bailey, Bridget against Eric, Carmen against her father, Albert. By having some conflict, it can give idea that their life was not inhibited by man. They want to be free and they want to give any opinion as free as man’s side. One conflict occurs between Carmen and her father, Albert. Everybody realizes that the father will love and respect his daughter. It is difference between both of them. Carmen always misses her father because her father lives apart from them since he divorced from Carmen’s mother. Conflict between both of them happened when Carmen arrives in her father’s house and she is welcomed by three people. In fact, Carmen does not know all of them.

“Within seconds a woman came into the room with a girl who appeared to be about Carmen’s age. Carmen stood baffled and stiff as the woman and

then the girl each hugged her. They were quickly followed by a tall young man, about eighteen, Carmen guessed. He was blond and broad, like an athlete. She was thankful that he didn't hug her". (Brashares, 2004:58)

According to Carmen, she thinks that her father is a liar especially she knows that her father will get married with one woman who welcomed her. Carmen calls her mother to tell her every condition and situation when she is there.

All of things have been done by Carmen that make her father feel sorry. Carmen thinks that she is not a woman who always keeps quiet when there is someone who lies to her. He never states about his condition, especially his wedding planning. It makes him ask forgiveness to her lovely daughter, Carmen.

"Carmen, I'm . . . sorry. I wish I'd warned you. That was my mistake. I really am sorry". (Brashares, 2004:245)

Conflict in Carmen also happened to her best friends. Lena, as one of her best friend, has a conflict with Kostos. Lena likes Kostos and Kostos also likes Lena. Lena's grandmother also has a feeling that both of them will be a couple. Lena enjoys the condition of Greece and she likes to swim in one of the rivers there. Conflict between them happened when Kostos looked at Lena swimming naked in the river.

"She drew in a sharp breath. Someone was there. She saw the shadow of a figure obscured behind a tree. Was it a man? An animal? Were there vicious, man-eating animals on Santorini? Her peace was broken, smashed to bits. She felt her heart nearly bouncing out of her chest. Fear told her to sink her body back underwater, but a bigger fear told her to run away. She pulled herself out of the pond. The figure emerged. It was Kostos". (Brashares, 2004:109)

Lena is surprised and Kostos has the same feeling. Actually, Kostos' looks at Lena was accidental. Kostos likes swimming and he wants to swim in that river but he is also surprised because in that river he caught glimpse of Lena swimming naked. Lena feels that her grandma always says the best thing about Kostos but she proves that it is wrong. She feels that a woman like her must ask an explanation to Kostos. She always thinks that Kostos is a nice boy but she is wrong.

One opinion from feminist is that they have the same opinion between each other, although to woman. This condition happens to Bailey and Tibby. Bailey always complains to Tibby's action. She also thinks that Tibby steals her own purse but actually Tibby found it after she helped Bailey. Bailey also complains to Tibby when she knows that Bailey took her hand when she got collapsed.

"At the intersection of Wisconsin and Bradley, the girl came to. She looked

around blinking, confused. She squeezed Tibby's hand, then looked to see whose hand it was. When she saw Tibby, she looked bewildered and then skeptical. Wide-eyed, the girl took in Tibby's "Hi, I'm Tibby!" name tag and her green smock. Then she turned to the EMS guys sitting on her other side. "Why is the girl from Wallman's holding my hand?" she asked". (Brashares, 2004:76)

Feminists approach also thinks that both of them must respect each other. Respecting each other is one way to have a good result in deciding a problem.

Bridget and Eric also have a problem when they practice football. Eric is a coach of Bridget. Bridget loves Eric and vice versa. A conflict happens when Eric is rather far away from Bridget. Bridget as a woman feels that she must ask explanation from Eric about it.

"First of all it would be wrong, and second, it's completely against the rules. Bridget tucked a stray strand of hair behind her ear. "Those aren't rules I care about. Eric's face had closed off again. "I don't have a choice about them". (Brashares, 2004:154-155)

Bridget feels happy when Eric gives all explanation about it. Deep inside of Bridget, many ways she used have expressed that a woman is not a person who always follows man's order.

CONCLUSION

When they've done finishing their conflict, they were very happy. All problems between them have gone. They also have loved and taken care of each other. Carmen loves her father and she becomes bridesmaid in his father's wedding ceremony. Besides Carmen, all of her friends can get suitable explanation to solve any problems. Inside their heart, they feel that having their own opinion is a way to show that they are not people who always agree to man's opinion. Faith and loyalty are conditions to show that they are people who always solve any conflict. Both of them are also the main principle in having friendship.

Woman can accept different opinion as long as it is suitable with situation and condition in a field they have. Wise action from the four women stated that their opinion is better than harmful action. All action from people also breaks man's patriarchy. Man cannot give his opinion without looking at woman's opinion. One message from their action is that man will never give his opinion without looking at woman's position. They cannot always state that they are good in giving opinion. It shows that man and woman have the same position in giving any opinion.

REFERENCES

Barker, C. 2000. *Cultural Studies: Theory and Practice*. London: Sage Publications.

- Beauvoir, S. De. 2003. *The Second Sex* (diterjemahkan oleh Toni B. Febriantono. Surabaya:Pustaka Promethea.
- Brashares, A. 2004. *The Sisterhood of The Traveling Pants*. New York:17th Street Productions.
- Cooper, D. E. 2000. "Existential Freedom" dalam *Existentialism*. Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishers.
- Damono, S.D. 1984. *Sosiologi Sastra: Sebuah Pengantar Sastra*. Jakarta: Yayasan Obor.
- Djajanegara, S. 2000. *Kritik sastra Feminis*. Jakarta: Gramedia.
- Eagleton, M. 1988. *Feminist Literary Theory*. New York: Basil Blackwell Ltd.
- Fakih, M. 2001. *Analisis Gender & Transformasi Sosial*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Hassan, F. 1973. *Berkenalan dengan Existensialisme*. Djakarta: Pustaka Jaya.
- <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Love>
- Mills, S., L. Pearce, S. Spaul, and E. Millard. 1989. *Feminist Readings/Feminists Reading*. Worcester: Harvester Wheatsheaf.
- Minogue, S. 1990. *Problemsffor Feminist Criticism*. New York: Routledge.
- Sugihasti dan Suharto. 2002. *Kritik Sastra Feminis*. Yogyakarta: Pustaka Pelajar.
- Sumiarni, Endang. 2004. *Jender & Feminisme*. Yogyakarta: Jalasutra.
- Tressider, Megan. 2004. *Bahasa Cinta, Risalah Cinta dan Nafsu* (diterjemahkan oleh Helmi J. Fauzi). Jogjakarta: Saujana
- Jannah, Izzatul. 2005. *Remaja Bicara Cinta*. Surakarta: Mandiri Visi Media.
- Warren, Austin and Wellek, Rene. 1963. *Theory of Literature*. London: Penguin Books.