

Women's Life Transformation:

**Women's Life Transformation in Early 20th Century Represented by Annabelle Worthington in
Danielle Steel *A Good Woman***

Renny Puspa Sari

English Literature
Faculty of Languages and Arts
State University of Surabaya
rennypuspas@gmail.com

Diana Budi Darma, SS., M.Pd.

English Department
Faculty of Languages and Arts
State University of Surabaya

Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk memahami kehidupan tokoh utama dalam novel Danielle Steel yang berjudul *A Good Woman*, Annabelle Worthington dalam memperoleh kebebasan hidup. Penelitian ini juga memberikan gambaran mengenai tingkatan dan cabang cabang feminisme yang berkaitan dengan karakter Annabelle. Analisis penelitian ini menggunakan beberapa teori untuk memperkuat pembahasan penelitian. Teori- teori tersebut diantaranya adalah Feminism, dekonstruksi dari oposisi biner oleh Derrida, dan teori karakterisasi yang digunakan untuk memperdalam pembahasan. Selain itu, tingkatan dan cabang-cabang feminisme juga akan diaplikasikan dalam pembahasan untuk spesifikasi dari karakter Annabelle. Didalam penelitian ini, Annabelle adalah simbol wanita modern dan bercita-cita luhur diantara wanita wanita tradisional. Dominasi kaum patriarki dan budaya tradisional yang telah lama mengungkung kaum wanita pada masa tersebut menyadarkan Annabelle bahwa ia harus melakukan sesuatu untuk terbebas dari hal tersebut. Penindasan hak kaum wanita oleh dominasi kaum pria juga membuat Annabelle berubah menjadi wanita mandiri. Analisis yang lebih dalam merujuk pada Perang Dunia I yang memberi banyak kesempatan pada para wanita di awal abad 20, terutama Annabelle untuk mengembangkan kemampuan dan mewujudkan impiannya. Transformasi yang terjadi pada kehidupan dan karakter Annabelle adalah bukti dari tujuan hidupnya, menjadi bebas, dan pemenang yang mampu bertahan.

Kata Kunci: kebebasan, modern, bercita-cita luhur, transformasi, dominasi kaum patriarki, budaya tradisional, dan kungkungan.

Abstract

This study focuses on the process and requirements of the main character in Danielle Steel's novel *A Good Woman*, Annabelle in gaining freedom. It also presents the reflection of the stages and branches of feminism related to Annabelle's character. Several theories are applied to sharpen this analysis. Feminism is the main theory in the analysis; it will be combined with deconstruction of binary opposition by Derrida, and theory of characterization to explore the main character, Annabelle. Furthermore, stages and some branches of feminism by Tong related to Annabelle's character are also applied to specify the character of Annabelle as well. In this analysis, Annabelle is a symbol of modern and well determined woman among traditional ones. Patriarchal domination and traditional culture that captivate women in that era raise her awareness to be brave in taking action for her future. Women's oppression by men in that era develops her character to be independent woman. World War 1 gives opportunity to women in early 20th century especially Annabelle to expand her skill and actualize her dream as well. As a result transformation that happens in Annabelle's life and character is a proof of her life goal, to be liberated as well as being survivor.

Keywords: freedom, modern, well-determined, transformation, patriarchal domination, traditional culture, and oppression.

INTRODUCTION

Women's life transformed significantly in the early 20th century. Women who had been living in a restricted rules of patriarchal domination, started to change their conservative life into the modern one. It could be seen when World War I exploded, a great numbers of women grabbed their opportunity to work outside home and explore the skill they had. By the time before World War I occurred, women were obedient creatures that served their entire life only for marriages and family. They had really limited access to the world. As the time went by, women's demand of equality upon men had been commonly appeared through literary works, feminist movements, and many other things. Obviously the development of womanhood which felt so bold especially during World War I had changed the mindset of traditional society. Slowly but surely, the existence of women figure in public eyes were successfully regarded.

It was Victorian era, the era when women were molded to be submissive creatures that stayed at home. Women had no right to choose their future life; meanwhile their future is only marriage and family. Working outside home and writing literary works were noted as inappropriate activities for them. Men dominated almost all aspects of life. Women were "decorative and useful in the home, but that's all" (Carter, 1984: 198).

A Good Woman by Danielle Steel provides the readers several problems of women in early 20th century. The novel briefly captured the struggle of solitary young woman in the era when women had to move and open their mind up. Danielle Steel provides the readers with a representation of women figure who is perfect in accomplishing her dream and being free for any life obstacles. Annabelle Worthington as the main character of the novel gives a representation of free and intellectual American young woman who is passionately achieving all her goals in life. Free, independent, and intellectual are the power of Annabelle in the era when women actualize their action outside home. Annabelle is a tough solitary young woman who successfully encounters the patriarchal domination in her life. Annabelle shows the world that woman can determine her own future life with her free will. (www.daniellesteel.com).

1. Statement of the Problems

- a. How is the process of women's life transformation in early 20th century represented by Annabelle Worthington life and character?

- b. What are the stages of feminism reflected by Annabelle during her life transformation in early 20th century?

2. Solving Problem Plan

The study will take theory of feminism and deconstruction of binary opposition by Derrida. The specification of theory of feminism is the stages of feminism by Toril Moi and the branches of feminism by Rosemarie Putnam Tong. A glance of American and European women's life is also inserted to strengthen the analysis. The combination of feminism and deconstruction of binary opposition works well in this study.

3. Purpose of the Study

- a. To depict the process women's life transformation in early 20th century represented by Annabelle Worthington in the novel *A Good Woman*.
- b. To specify the stages of feminism in the character of Annabelle Worthington during her life transformation as well determined woman in early 20th century.

4. Summary of Theories

Theory of Feminism

According to Toril Moi, the awareness towards condition and socialization can be a crucial tool to differ what it is called 'feminist', 'female', and 'feminine'. The term feminist or feminism is a political tag showing the support for the new purposes of the women's movement which occurred in the late 1960s. (Belsey and Moore, 1989: 117--119). Female is a gender biological status for women. (Barry, 2010: 144). When the women are born as female, they are biologically female but it doesn't guarantee that they can be feminist or feminine. Feminine is a term of women which represents social constructs (patterns of sexuality and behavior imposed by cultural and social norms) and to reserve 'female' and 'male' for purely biological aspects of sexual difference. (Belsey and Moore, 1989: 122).

Branches of Feminism by Rosemarie Tong

The theory provides several critiques of liberal feminism. The first is that liberal feminism focuses too much on women becoming like men and it unnecessarily denigrates the importance of traditional female roles (Tong, 2009: 39). Another critique emphasized the value of rational and emotional that human needed both. A historical critique of liberal

feminism focuses on its racist, classist and heterosexist past (Tong, 2009: 63).

Deconstruction of Binary Opposition

Feminism has a close relation with deconstruction. Both theories work out together because they have similarity which is both theories have no ending. Feminism always developed from time to time and cannot be stopped. So does the deconstruction, in literary terms, a text never stops operating. That means there is no final meaning for the text and it remains a space of possibilities. (Bertens, 2008: 96-97).

If deconstruction really consisted in saying that everything happens in books, it wouldn't deserve five minutes of anybody's attention. Derrida notes that deconstruction is a way of reading texts which has a purpose to enlighten the tension between the central and the marginal in a text. (Bertens, 2008: 100).

American and European Women's Life in Early 20th Century

The dramatic changes and opportunities for women were greatly occurred in the 20th century. In the early of 20th century feminism was a famous issue to look for a women's life restoration, women's right to vote, and guaranteed other equal rights. During 1911-1913 laws set maximum hours and minimum wages for working women. The growth of electric service, expanding factory production of clothing, foods, and household items created a lot of jobs for women outside home. Economic sectors grew rapidly in the early 20th century. Women took a major deal of all these ventures success. (Murphy, 1982: 50).

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is descriptive-qualitative. The method will be explained as follow. The main source of the study is taken from the novel *A Good Woman* by Danielle Steel published at New York 2008.

The data collections are taken from the novel *A Good Woman* including, phrases, quotations, dialogues, and monologues of the main character, Annabelle Worthington. Those will portray how the women's life transformation and Annabelle's stages of feminism in early 20th century based on the novel *A Good Woman*.

The study takes the theory of feminism by Toril Moi and Rosemarie Putnam Tong. The term of feminist critics is completed to explore the issue when it is combined with deconstruction by Jacques Derrida.

The first step that should have been done is reading and comprehending the novel itself. Then, a deep thinking is needed to decide the title of the proposal related to the problem found in the novel. The

process continues to the outlining proposal. After that, the next step is collecting the data that includes quotation based on statement of the problems. Then, the next step is dividing each related quotation based on a specific analysis in the following chapter. There are two statements of the problems, the first is women's life transformation in early 20th century reflected by Annabelle Worthington as the main character and the second is Annabelle Worthington's stages of feminism after facing women's life transition in early 20th century. Those issues are analyzed with specific theories with some help from quotation followed.

ANALYSIS

Process of Life Transformation in Annabelle's Life

Analyzing the character of Annabelle Worthington as the center problem in the novel, the sense of being different with the mainstream of American women's life is boldly felt. While other women were still trapped in circle of patriarchal domination, marriage, and traditional culture, Annabelle indirectly made an effort to vanish the circle in order to be a modern woman. Involving to outside home job as a volunteer reflected Annabelle's willingness to explore her skill instead of staying at home. A lifelike character of Annabelle gives enlightenment to people that not all women think marriage is everything. Traditional women in that era thought that marriage was their life purpose when they were already adult, breeding children was their job, and nurturing family was the most proper job for women.

Men and tradition decided everything for women's life, while it was so easy for men to gain what they wanted in life. The case is quoted in the dialogue below.

"That's true. But if I were a man, I could. Robert could have, if he'd wanted to, and my parents would have let him. Sometimes, it's very difficult being a woman. There is so much you can't do and that's not considered proper. It's really boring," (Steel, 2008: 33)

From Annabelle's statement above, it is clear that the right for women and men is completely different. Women's right was very limited and decided by family, of course the culture as well. Robert in the statement above was Annabelle's brother. While Annabelle and Robert were sibling, their parents still differentiated their rights because of gender. Men could reach everything they wanted in life as well determine

future, but unmarried women should follow traditional custom and family.

Traditional culture in early 20th century considered women's character as good and bad by what she had been doing. When women were doing something right as traditional culture and family required, so they were marked as the good ones. Meanwhile, when the women were doing something according to what their heart or feelings said and that was not a common thing doing by women in that era, they were marked as bad ones. The consideration in differentiating women as good or bad in that era was so unfair. The society regarded women as good or bad ones without putting a huge attention to their life and feelings.

Patriarchal oppression established the social standards of femininity on all biological women to gain people's belief that the chosen standards for femininity are natural. (Belsey and Moore, 1989: 122-123)

The deconstruction of binary opposition takes a major part in this analysis because it shows people how the meaning of word operates, for example through binary opposition that can be changed to reveal contradiction. In this case several comparisons between masculine, feminine, modern, traditional, nature and character in the story are shown. According to Derrida the aim of binary opposition is quoted in the statement below.

"Binary oppositions are heavily imbricated in the patriarchal value system. Underlying opposition man or woman each position can be analyzed as hierarchy where the feminine side is regarded as negative, powerless instance." (S and Shukla, 2003: 52)

Here, the readers will see the contradiction and between the life of Annabelle and Hortie.

Annabelle	Hortie
Modern	Traditional
Had no children	Had children
Open minded	Narrow minded
Working woman	Housewife
Divorced	Married

In the dichotomies above, Annabelle shows the reversal of Hortie. Annabelle as the strong figure of woman, tried to be modern and well-determined one with those characteristics. Obviously, the dichotomies above also show the feminist character of Annabelle.

Furthermore, the turning point of Annabelle's life started when she was left by everyone she loved. That was the right time for her to do the breakthrough of her life her self-actualization because none can stop her or forbid her to do anything she wanted. Self-actualization in this case means ongoing process to develop personal potential. (<http://willpower.4mg.com/whatissselfactualisation.html>) . For Annabelle she could do self-actualization as the opportunity to turn her dream into reality without worrying other people thinking about her. Furthermore, in self-actualization of Annabelle the process will be emphasized rather than the goal.

The process to reach Annabelle's dream to be doctor of course was not a simple thing. There were many things to be sacrificed and left. Furthermore, the struggle could not be separated from patriarchal domination from two men that involved in her life after her divorce. That was the process that female had to face in order to reach, men were always around and became the obstacle, the feminist thought so.

The equal right for women to work is always become a big deal for feminist view. "She had never worked so hard in her life, but it was exactly what she had wanted." (Steel, 2008: 194). From the quotation the reader can figure out how woman could do a hard work and she enjoyed it. That case came up when World War I and II exploded. Many young women worked in hospital contributing their action saving men's life. Obviously women always enjoy working outside home rather than being normal housewife because she could find something new to learn and experience new things in life.

The Significance of Stages and Branches of Feminism

The analysis leads to the stages of Annabelle in being female, feminine, and feminist. Her tendency to be liberal feminist is also captured in the analysis.

In the story of *A Good Woman*, female characters are demanded to be feminine. As the matter of fact, feminine in female characters is always related to submission, dedication, and weakness. Even though in the story Annabelle frequently denied the value of femininity in women's life at that era, she still could not resist it somehow. This is shown in the quotation below.

"Don't tell me you are the one of those women who want to fight for rights and freedom." She didn't seem the type to him, and it would have surprised him.

"No, I'm perfectly happy the way things are. I just wish I could be a doctor." (Steel, 2008: 33)

It was not a common thing for woman at that era to fight for their rights in a radical way or even frontal. That was why Josiah in the first statement sounded a bit cynically on his comment about Annabelle's dream. Women's right and freedom were limited by male domination so women mostly accepted more rather than asked for more. Furthermore, when women denied her nature as patriarchy created for them they will be regarded as unnatural (Belsey and Moore, 1989: 123). Therefore, that typical kind of women would be marginalized by society because they broke the rules.

Annabelle is the type of female who was overpowered by male dominance but that experience turned her to be the brave one who could encounter male dominance. Feminist is connected with radical way and marginalized position. In this case, feminist tried to expose the condition which males dominance over females. According to Spender the truth is women at that time became the victims of male dominance intellectually, emotionally, and physically. In fact some of them put effort to encounter male dominance by stressing their rights, aggressively if it was possible in order to avoid of being defeated as active women. (Belsey and Moore, 1989: 119-120).

Feminist view tries to show people the emphasis of survival and effort to oppose male dominance. In this analysis, Annabelle as the central object who involved in the idea of survival and opposing male dominance presents that ideas in the quotation above.

"Maybe no one," she said, answering his answering his question. "And I don't really care. I've been alone since Josiah left me nine years ago, nearly ten. I have Consuelo, my 'bastard' as you put it. I don't need anyone else. I don't want you." She pointed to the open door again. (Steel, 2008: 321)

For feminist view, solitary struggle and determination of living alone are parts of feminist act. Even though Annabelle reaction towards Antoine offer of marriage sounded not so radical but it presented the sense of being independent which can be noted as strength. The refusal given by Annabelle to Antoine is noticed as she spoke out her marginalized position, just like the feminists advice. In fact especially she had no relatives expect her illegitimate daughter, and she was only a widow. In the quotation above, Annabelle seemed so strong of being single fighter and facing all women's fears in life. Those things created the value of feminism in her character.

The analysis leads to liberal feminism. This feminism branch is focused on gender social justice. In the story, Annabelle lived in the era when women were over powered by male domination and females were chained with a rule called femininity. Therefore, females at that time faced social injustice.

Liberal feminism focuses too much on women becoming like men and it unnecessarily denigrates the importance of traditional women. (Tong, 2009: 39).

Annabelle is the feminist figure in the story who wanted to be liberated. In this case liberated does not only mean as being free and none to tell no, but liberated is about having equal right both for women and men. For example both women and men have the equal chance for their career, deciding future life, and many other equal aspects between women and men. Furthermore, "becoming like men" in the quotation above is not about physically but more to gender equality. Woman like Annabelle who lived in early 20th century was craving for justice between women and men. In early 20th century, females were still marginalized and man dominated many aspects in life.

In the case of Annabelle Worthington, her fate created her to be liberal feminist as none stopped her to reach her dream. She was free to be whatever she wanted to be. The loss of family and relatives made her a strong and solo survival in the era when women fought for their equal rights. As the matter of fact, perhaps not only Annabelle who faced that bitter experience, but also women in that era even got worse than Annabelle did. Her fate liberated her and pushed her to the limit where she could do the best of her.

Perhaps it was destiny. Six months before, she'd been married, hoping to have family one day, in her safe, predictable life in New Port and New York. Now she was alone in France, talking about going to medical school... If this was her dream, she could follow it now. There was no one to stop her. (Steel, 2008: 199)

Liberal feminists have given so much enlightenment for women's life. Through liberal feminist, women in modern era enjoy many of the civil, educational, occupational, and reproductive rights. (Tong, 2009: 47). Annabelle is the woman of early 20th century, product of liberal feminist who is developed and shaped by the modernity among the oppression of patriarchal domination.

CONCLUSION

The explanation and analysis in previous chapter leads to conclusion, here the conclusion is formulated. Annabelle is a symbol of modern and well determined women in early 20th century. She had enabled all the skill she had and finally she brought a fresh idea of independent woman. The transformation happened in her life were the stages she had to get through in order to find a new life beginning, a modern life. Annabelle represented the new image of modern woman who eventually gained the freedom, respect and equality among patriarchal domination and traditional culture. Furthermore, World War I took a major part in the era of women's life transformation in early 20th century especially Annabelle as well as developing their perspectives and characters. Obviously, feminism and deconstruction are very helpful to define and analyze Annabelle's life transformation. The tendency of Annabelle to be liberal feminist is also concluded here. As the matter of fact, the achievement that had been got by Annabelle required sacrifice, dedication, passion, integrity and bravery.

The features of feminism in Annabelle character molded her as independent and brave woman. She internalized the features of feminism from the very beginning of the story and it developed to be something crucial that made her a noble woman. Furthermore, Annabelle was noted as the symbol of women transformation in early 20th century due to her different perspective and character compared with other women around them. World War I gave a chance for women at that time to work and grab equal right and that happened to Annabelle. She was brave to take action for her future such as becoming working woman during and after the war, nurturing mother, and free human being.

Taking action to get a better life future, speaking her mind out, becoming intellectual, and obviously a working woman are the steps for Annabelle to determine her life and be feminist. A strong tendency to be liberal feminist in Annabelle character as well as her life pushed her to be that one. Her tendency to be liberal feminist was found when she took action to be educated, free, and independent woman, she doctor her life goal to be a doctor as well. Facing trouble, surviving from them, and spending her life without male figure in her life shows Annabelle tendency to be liberal feminist. It is because the male figures in her life were only doing harm instead of giving something good or setting her free.

REFERENCES

- Barry, Petter. 2010. *Beginning Theory Pengantar Komprehensif Teori Sastra dan Budaya*. Jogjakarta. Jalasutra.
- Belsey, Catherine and Moore, Jane editors.1989. *The Feminist Reader: Essay in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism* . New York. Basil Blackwell.
- Bertens, Hans. 2008. *Literary Theory the Basics 2nd ed.* London. Taylor and Francis Group.
- Murphy, Mirriam B. 1982. *Woman in the Utah Work Force from Statehood to World War II*. Utah Historical Quarterly.
- Carter, Rosalynn. 1984. *First Lady from Plains*. Boston. Houghton Mifflin.
- Shukla, Sheobhushan and Shukla, Anu editors. 2003. *Multiple Contexts and Insights: Studies in Contemporary Literature*. New Delhi. Sarup and Sons.
- Steel, Danielle. 2008. *A Good Woman*. New York. A Dell Book.
- Tong, Rosemarie. 2009. *Feminist Thought a More Comprehensive Introduction*. University of North Carolina. Westview Press

INTERNET SOURCE

- <http://willpower.4mg.com/whatissselfactualisation.html>
- www.daniellesteel.com