

A study on feminism literary works and Arabic literature learning development

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Abstract

This research aimed to explore the implementation of feminist literary criticism and the development of Arabic literature learning. This research used qualitative case study method with research place in the Arabic Language and Literature Study Program of Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University. Researchers collected data through observation, interviews, and documentation. The results of the study show that the depiction of women in the poem *Asyhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti* by Nizar from a feminist point of view is a positive image and does not reveal a patriarchal culture. It is recommended for lecturers of Arabic literature to further develop a literary learning model based on the study of feminist perspectives through application to students.

Keywords:

feminism; Nizar; literature learning

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INTRODUCTION

It is undeniable that among the numerous factors behind women's oppression are biased Islamic religious interpretations and practices. Therefore, gender discourse in the Islamic context is not something finalized, but on the contrary, it requires continuous reinterpretation efforts in line with the conditions, changes, and the existence of Indonesian Muslim women living amid various changes that continue to occur (Latifi: 2016).

In the literary world, feminism can be used as an approach of literary criticism. As stated by Kolodny in Djajanegara, feminist literary criticism discloses women according to sex stereotypes, both in literature and literary criticism, and shows that inadequate styles and methods have been (used to) study women's writings unfairly and insensitively (Djajanegara, Soenarjati: 2000).

As developed by feminists, gender studies in literary works directs its perspective to several goals, some of which can be referred to as a creative way to liberate women in writing and telling their own experiences outside the conventions, rules, concepts, and premises of patriarchal culture. Gender discourse also seeks to create cultural androgyny, building an equal social order based on feminine values. Through feminists' efforts in studying literary works, the existence of women and their works began to be considered fairly. The same can be seen in the development of literature history in Indonesia. Although the application of feminist studies in the literary field is slower than in other fields, the increase in quantity and quality as well as the assessment and provision of opportunities for women has begun to be favorable (Kusumawati: 2013).

In addition, Reinhart also argues that feminist historians use cultural artifacts (in this context, one of them is literary works) to examine women as individuals or groups, the relationship between

women and men, the relationship between women, the intersection of racial identity, gender, class, age, and the institutions, personalities, and views that shape women's lives (Reinharz: 2005).

Feminism is an awareness of gender injustice that afflicts women, both in the family and society. Feminism serves as a bridge to demand equal rights between women and men. Feminism has a broader meaning than emancipation. Emancipation tends to be used as a term that demands equal rights in all aspects of society. Emancipation only emphasizes women's participation without questioning gender injustice, while feminism has questioned the rights and interests of women who have been considered unfair (Mentari: 2018).

In Arab societies, the presence of women in the family gives a distinctive image, although Islam has emphasized the equality of degrees and dignity between fellow human beings since centuries ago, the poor view of women does not seem to disappear from Arab society. The phenomenon of women's oppression has remained prevalent until the last decade. This can be observed from the various images that color the world's mass media (Latif: 2006).

In Arabic literature there are many writers famous for the hostility and hatred they generate for women, for example al-Ma'arif, Taufiq al-Hakim, Thaha Hussein, Naquib Mahfudz as well as al-Akkad. In al-Akkad's *Al-Insan at-Thani*, he describes the immaturity of women's minds, their tendency to lie and hypocrisy, their unruliness, all of which he says are primitive inborn traits over thousands of years that cannot be changed or eliminated. Likewise, Hathibi as-Sughara's Sarah, Sa'ah, his poem *A'asir Maghrib 6* and others (Latifi: 2006).

Poetry is the only landmark of the social and cultural life of the Arabs. More than an individual artistic expression, poetry was their way of explaining themselves collectively (Loya: 1975).

Nizar Qabbani is an Arab poet from Damascus, which is one of the oldest cities in the world and the current capital of Syria. Born on March 21, 1923, Nizar was born into an upper-middle-class merchant family. His paternal grandfather, Abu-Khalil, was a poet, composer, and theater actor. Thus, the world that welcomed and first recognized Nizar was a world surrounded by the atmosphere of art (Gabay: 1973). Damascus at that time was the center of Syria's economic, political, and cultural life. And like most big cities, social inequality was glaring in Damascus. Subhi: 1958 summarizes Nizar's life in one sentence: "He grew up as a rich boy in a poor neighborhood, an educated young man among the ignorant, and became a progressive man in the midst of reactionaries." (Subhi: 1958).

Nizar is an important icon in modern Arabic literature. A literary critic, Husain bin Hamzah named Nizar Qabbani as the President of the Republic of Poetry. Nizar composed many poems on the theme of love and women. As if he wanted to explain that love and women are like bodies and souls. Always united, not separated (Fathoni: 2017).

One of Nizar's literary works is a poem entitled *Asyhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti*. This poem is one of the titles of the poem included in the anthology of poetry by Nizar entitled *اشهد ان لا امرأة إلا أنت*. The author is interested in studying this poem because the title used is a pun on the creed of *Ashhadu An Lā Ilaha Illallah, لا اله إلا الله*.

Literature learning should not only be dominated by structuralism theory, but enrichment of other theories is needed so that the goals and benefits of literature learning can be obtained by the learners.

Analyzing literary works from a feminist perspective is very important to support the emergence of new methods in literary criticism. Literary learning that is fixated on structuralist literary studies makes the results to not address the moral learning. As mentioned earlier, feminist studies in literature remain a model medium for women's social movements against patriarchy. Feminist studies should not only be a theory of literary studies but should also receive serious attention from literary observers and critics so that it becomes a literary learning material that becomes a means to increase students' awareness of gender issues.

The problem in this study is formulated in the form of questions:

1. How is the depiction of the female figure in the poem entitled *Ashhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti*?
2. How is the development of literature learning based on the feminist literary criticism approach?

Poetry and Literary Studies Feminism Approach

Poetry is a type of literary work other than short stories and novels that pay attention to the sound aspect in it, expressing the poet's imaginative, emotional and intellectual experiences drawn from individual and social life. Poetry is also a literary work that does not make direct reference to the world of phenomena but provides its representation through the distinctive and unconventional use of language that creates an imaginary alternative world. In addition to representing the world through distinctive language, poetry also uses language that contains deep meaning. Through the diction and language style used by a poet, there is a broad meaning and deep intention (Ilmi: 2021).

Poetry in Arabic is called *syi'ir* (Indonesian spelling, *syair*), etymologically referring to the *Mu'jam al-Wasith* dictionary derived from the word *sha'ara-yas'aru-syi'ran*. It means to feel or know. The word *sha'ara* when applied in the form of a sentence: to feel what is hidden, something that is memorable, to think with *syi'ir* (Dhaif: 2011). Based on the etymological meaning, Wordsworth and Auden's opinion can be the terminological meaning. Wordsworth had the idea that poetry is an imaginative statement of feelings, namely feelings that are fantasized or imagined. Auden argues that poetry is more a statement of mixed feelings (Pradopo: 2012).

Feminist literary criticism is a school of literary criticism that focuses on how women and gender are represented in literature, and how that literature influences or is influenced by gender. Feminist literary criticism also questions all forms of patriarchal domination in literature and the ways in which literature can be used as a tool to change unhealthy gender views.

In the field of literature and literary studies, the gender perspective is related to feminist literary criticism, which is the study of literature that directs the focus of analysis to women. If it has been generally taken for granted that it is men who represent readers and creators in Western literature, feminist literary criticism suggests that female readers bring perceptions and expectations into their literary experience (Showalter: 1985).

Feminist literary criticism also often highlights how literature can be used as a tool to change society's views on gender and how literature can help in the struggle to eradicate all forms of patriarchal domination.

Overall, feminist literary criticism is an important school of literary criticism in understanding how women and gender are represented in literature and how literature can influence views on gender. It also plays an important role in the struggle for women's rights and gender equality.

Literature Learning

Literature learning basically carries an effective mission, which is to enrich students' experiences and make them more responsive to the surrounding events. The overall goal is to cultivate, grow, and develop sensitivity to human problems, recognition, and respect for the value system, both in individual and social contexts (Oemarjati: 1992).

Literature appreciation learning aims for students to be capable of understanding, enjoying, and utilizing literary works to develop their personalities, broaden their horizons, improve their knowledge, and language skills (Depdiknas, 2001). According to Lazar (2002: 15-19), the benefits of learning literature include: (1) providing motivation to students; (2) providing access to cultural background; (3) providing access to language acquisition; (4) expanding students' attention to language; (5) developing students' interpretive abilities; and (6) educating students as a whole.

RESEARCH METHOD

This research used qualitative approach with case study method. This research was conducted in the Macro literary theory course class of the Undergraduate Arabic Language and Literature Study Program of Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta. Data collection techniques were observation, unstructured interviews, and participant observation. Discourse observation is carried out to recognize the necessary data about the novel that is used as the analysis case. Then, the data obtained is described and discussed analytically with inductive and deductive approaches based on life norms and gender values.

The research data sources were literary works containing feminist values, and learners who were given literature lessons using the baseline of literary studies based on feminist perspectives. The source of data related to literary works is a poem entitled *Ashhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti* which is suitable as a material for the study of feminism in the field of literature.

Data sources related to the process of literature learning by applying the perspective of feminism studies are taken from students of the Macro literary theory course class of the Undergraduate Arabic Language and Literature Study Program of Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The depiction of the female figure in the *Ashhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti*

The depiction of the female figure in the *Ashhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti* poem, appears in the following stanzas of the poem:

<p><i>I testify, that no woman Knew how to play the game with me, except you No woman handled my sloppiness For ten years as you did No woman, was patient with my craziness As you did No woman, took care of my nails And organized my book And took me to the kindergarten Except you.</i></p>	<p>أشهد أن لا امرأة أتقنت اللعبة إلا أنت واحتملت حماقتي عشرة أعوام كما احتملت واصطبرت على جنوني مثلما صبرت وقلمت أظفري ورتبتي دفاتري وأدخلتني روضة الأطفال إلا أنت</p>
<p><i>I testify, that no woman Looks like oil painting of me In thinking and acting, except you And in maturity and foolishness, except you In getting bored And quickly liking Except you I testify, that no woman Took as half Of my attention as you did And occupied me as you did And freed me as you did</i></p>	<p>أشهد أن لا امرأة تشبهني كصورة زيتية في الفكر والسلوك إلا أنت والعقل والجنون إلا أنت والممل السريع والتعلق السريع إلا أنت أشهد أن لا امرأة قد أخذت من اهتمامي نصف ما أخذت واستعمرتني مثلما فعلت وحررتني مثلما فعلت</p>
<p><i>I testify, that no woman Took care of me as a two months old child Except you fed me sparrow's milk Flowering and games Except you</i></p>	<p>أشهد أن لا امرأة تعاملت معي كطفل عمره شهران إلا أنت وقدمت لي لبن العصفور والأزهار والألعاب</p>

<p><i>I testify, that no woman Was generous with me like the sea And classy like poetry Who spoiled me as you did And ruined me as you did I testify, that no woman Who stalled my childhood Till half century long Except you.</i></p>	<p>إلا أنت أشهد أن لا امرأة كانت معي كريمة كالبحر راقية كالشعر ودللتني مثلما فعلت وأفسدتني مثلما فعلت أشهد أن لا امرأة قد جعلت طفولتي تمتد للخمسين إلا أنت</p>
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Nizar emphasizes the female figure in his poem with sharp allusions. In the middle of the stanza, the author incorporates some rather vulgar phrases into his chosen allusions, but the author brings the poem back to the freest dimension in his love poem. The female character in this poem is described as patient, skillful, charming, endearing, wise, and generous. This can be seen in some of the expressions in the poem's text, which show that the female character is idealized by the author and men in general.

This female character is described by the author as an enchanting figure who makes the author admire her and makes the author unable to avoid his wife's longing embrace. Only a woman controls half of his life, only women can do everything the author wants, as if they can. The author describes this female character as charming and intelligent. The author likens his charming wife to a sea-eyed character and knows that the beauty of the blue sea will mesmerize the beholder.

For the author, this female character is also a woman who deserves to be admired like a sparkling crystal. The author describes how the female character's generosity, like the ocean that always offers beauty, brings various wealth to men.

The author explains that women become sexual victims of men who exist solely to satisfy their desires. This judgment is based on a visual perspective, and there is no denying that these women have captivating beauty. Women stop time and start revolutions. The underlying reason for this is the social stigma that women are the ones who can unite the two factions and even contribute to the destruction of the other.

Woman is a character with weak patience, she can only serve man's madness with all her might and do what man should be able to do himself. The artist identifies the female figure with the subject of the painting but has no right to the painting. Because a painting, as we know it, is the work of the artist himself, poured onto a canvas to satisfy his imagination. So, it is very clear here that the female character is undermined by the depiction of the breast shape. It seems too bold to reveal a part of the work that is truly sensitive to women. In this case, the issue of sexuality is the issue faced by the female character in the poem that she both experienced and felt.

Literature learning based on feminist literary criticism approach

Literature learning is carried out in the Macro Literary Theory course class of the Arabic Language and Literature undergraduate study program, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta. This course discusses macro or extrinsic literary theories which include paradigms, theoretical concepts, how the theory works, and examples of theory application in analyzing Arabic literary works. This course requires mastery of the Arabic cultural and historical aspects and intersects with contemporary social theories for the enforcement of human rights and democracy. After attending this lecture, students can explain literary theories that have an extrinsic character and apply them in appreciating and analyzing Arabic literary works.

Literature learning is conducted through the following steps:

- a. Making learning designs, including determining graduate learning outcomes, course learning outcomes, learning objectives and programs; determining the sequence (syntax) of learning activities.
- b. Implementation of learning in accordance with the design that has been made.
- c. Reflection and assessment of learning outcomes.

In the learning practice of feminist literary criticism, the expected final ability of students is to apply the theory of feminist literary criticism in Arabic literary works.

Table 1. Feminist Literary Criticism Learning Practice Analysis

Expected Final Proficiency	Mastering the theory of feminist literary criticism
Learning Materials	Theory of feminist literary criticism
Learning Methods	Brainstorming, interactive lecturing, paper presentation
Allocation Time	100 minutes
Learning Experience	Listening and asking responses and questions
Outcome Criteria	Capable of describing paradigms, theoretical concepts, how feminist literary criticism works and examples of its application
References	The autonomy of Indonesian muslim women in the novel "Adzra' Jakarta" by Najib Khlil al-Azhar; a feminist literary criticism perspective, by Yulia Nasrul Latifi, <i>Journal of Indonesian Islam</i> , volume 15, number 01, June 2021 <i>Kritik Sastra Feminis Teori dan Aplikasinya dalam Sastra Indonesia</i> , Wiyatmi, Ombak, 2012 "Dekonstruksi femininitas dalam Cerpen "Ana al-Maut" Karya Taufiq Hakim", by Yulia Nasrul Latifi, in <i>jurnal WIDYAPARWA Jurnal kebahasaan dan Kesastraan</i> , Balai Bahasa Yogyakarta, Terakreditasi LIPI 390/AU/p2MBI-LIPI/2012. Vol . 43, No 2 Desember, 2015.

The learning of feminist literary criticism in the class of the Macro Literary Theory course of the Arabic Language and Literature undergraduate study program, Faculty of Adab and Cultural Sciences, Sunan Kalijaga State Islamic University Yogyakarta is carried out by understanding western feminist theory. Then, students present their papers in front of the class and other students ask questions about the content of the paper and the problems in it.

CONCLUSION

Based on this research, it is concluded that the portrayal of women in the poem *Asyhadu An Lā Imroatan Illa Anti* by Nizar according to the perspective of feminism is a positive portrayal and does not expose the patriarchal culture. For the sake of developing the practice of literature learning as a means of planting, growing, and developing sensitivity to basic human problems, recognition and respect for the value system, both in individual and social contexts, it is recommended that Arabic literature lecturers further develop a model of literature learning based on the study of feminist perspectives through application on students. If this model is widely applied, it is expected to be a good model and become valuable for Arabic literature learning models.

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