

WOMEN INDEPENDENCE IN JANE AUSTEN'S *SENSE AND SENSIBILITY* AS A FEMINISM STUDY

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ABSTRACT

This research paper entitled Women Independence in Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility* as a Feminism Study. This research paper aimed to show the form of women independence of Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood as the main characters in *Sense and Sensibility* novel. This research is using feminist critical approach and applies Simone de Beauvoir's theory with her book *The Second Sex* that was published in 1949. This research used qualitative research methods from which the data are taken from books and online sources. Data is classified into main data which is taken from the book itself and supporting data which is taken from online sources that related to this paper. Beside analyzing the forms of women independence, the researcher also analyzed the causes of women independence and the effects of women independence towards the main characters. The novel presents the independence of thought and behavior of women in the 19th century. After all data have been collected and analyzed, it concludes that the causes of the independence of the main characters is their parents, the forms of their independence is Elinor and Marianne Dashwood can prove that they have a good attitude, good knowledge and ability in the world of art although they are just from the middle social class and the effects is they have a positive and negative effect of their independence and get some obstacles of it. However, after overcoming all their conflicts they finally found what they really wants in life and they can live happily.

Keywords: *Women Independence, Feminism, Sense and Sensibility, The Second Sex.*

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

The arguments about man and woman in our society have been shaped in such a way. Society has given the assumption that woman are weak people both physically and psychologically, and tend not to be able to provide their surfer in politics, art or education. Based on that argument, which has been established for centuries before, woman cannot or afford to get a high education. They are only assigned to take care of the domestic works such as taking care of the house and their children. Education that they get is only in the form of education about woman, not political or science.

Therefore, what is expected of woman independence is that woman must dare to demand gender equality. Woman deserve a high education like men and earn their own money. They no longer have to rely on men and not just take care of the domestic works.

They must be independent and does not have to obey the rules that woman should be object to men and whatever is defined by men. Woman are free and independent.

The movement of woman against patriarchal oppression is called feminism. Feminism is the advocacy of woman's right on the ground of the equality of the sexes (Oxford Dictionary). Feminism is the ideology and social movement that aims to change the subordinate status of woman in a society. Feminism is a belief that woman and man should have an equal rights and opportunities either in socially, economically, or politically. The person who believe that woman and man should be treated equally is called feminist. A feminist, Maria & Elizabeth Rahajeng in their book says "True feminism is about freedom. Freedom to choose / make your own choices. Freedom to speak. Freedom to think. Freedom to live in a way that is completely authentic to the core of who you are" (2018).

Society is a large group of people who live together in an organized way, making decisions about how to do things and sharing the work that needs to be done. All the people in a countries, can be referred to as a society (Cambridge Dictionary). Traditionally the sociologist who studies literature is the use of literature as information about society. Literature is also influential in shaping and creating social action. Literary texts have been variously described as reflecting the "economics, family relationships, climate and landscapes, attitudes, morals races, social classes, political events, wars and religion" of the society that produced the texts (Albrecht ; 1954, 426).

Sense and Sensibility is one of the literary works related to social problem especially woman. The novel was written by Jane Austen in 1811. This novel tells about middle and upper class social society. In this novel, the author tells the family of Dashwood who once lived in a good fortune but changed when Mr Dashwood died. Mrs. and Miss Dashwood originally expected by Mr. Dashwood get a lot of inheritance from their uncle, but the reality was not. They only get a little inheritance and who get a lot of inheritance is their stepbrother. Therefore they live only modestly after the death of their father and their mother only expects them to marry a rich man. It illustrates what happened in the 19th century. Women do not get much inheritance over men and they do not get education so they cannot make money themselves, they only expect to be married by rich men. Therefore the writer wants to analyze this novel to be a thesis and choose "*Women Independence in Jane Austen's Sense and Sensibility as a Feminism Study*" as the title of this thesis.

Based on the background above, the writer discusses problems as stated below :

1. What are the forms of woman independence of the female characters reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* novel?
2. What are the causes of woman independence of the female characters reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* novel?
3. What are the effects of woman independence of the female characters reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* novel?

Based on the problem statements above, here are the main objectives of this research:

1. To find out the forms woman independence of the female characters reflected in the *Sense and Sensibility* novel.
2. To find out the causes of the woman independence of the female characters reflected in the *Sense and Sensibility* novel.
3. To find out the effects of the woman independence of the female characters reflected in the *Sense and Sensibility* novel.

1.2 Previous Study

In this chapter the writer tries to present the previous study that discusses the same object, that is *Sense and Sensibility* novel. There are many articles or thesis that discuss Jane Austen's novels especially *Sense and Sensibility*. However the writer did not find any similar discussion with the discussion that the writer will describe in this paper. It also supports that the writing in this thesis is authentic made by the writer. Here are some thesis that discuss *Sense and Sensibility* novel.

One of the research was written by Ahmad Fathoni (2015) who analyzed about social discrimination. In his study, the researcher focuses on the struggles of the main characters, Elinor and Marianne to get life's prosperity using a Marxist approach. The researcher uses qualitative research. The type of research data is text taken from two data sources: primary and secondary. The sources of primary data is taken from the *Sense and Sensibility* novel. Whereas secondary data sources are other materials taken from library books, critics, essays, articles, journals and internet related to the research. In his thesis, the researcher shows some conclusions as follows. First, based on structural analysis, it shows that the character and characterization, arrangement, plot, style and theme of the novel are related into solid unity. Secondly, based on Marxist analysis, the novel tells us that to gain prosperity, the main characters of Elinor Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood must go through several conflicts, such as: cultural conflict and social conflict. Then, after overcoming the conflict Elinor

Dashwood and Marianne Dashwood finally found what they were looking for and lived happily.

Other researchers namely Triyani (2009) who discusses about anxiety of the main character. In this research, the researcher emphasizes to reveal how the main character reflects her anxiety using a psychoanalytic study. The researcher is also using a qualitative study. The data sources that the researcher used are divided into two, primary data is the novel itself and the secondary data source is the other sources related to the analysis such as biography of the author, theory books of literary and also some psychological theory books of Sigmund Freud. The technique that the researcher used in data analysis is descriptive analysis. The researcher concludes that *Sense and Sensibility* novel reflects the author's idea and intention that show there is no benefit from keeping secret in deep feeling. The researcher assumes that Jane Austen tells the problem of the main character causes the conflict of her mental condition. Afterwards it brings her into anxiety because the influence of her personality. Her personality is driven by her id, but her superego always warns her not to allow her id controlling her behavior.

2. FEMINISM THEORY BY SIMONE DE BEAUVOIR (1949)

In compiling this paper, the researcher used the feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir. Beauvoir was born in Paris, France on 9 January 1908. She is a French philosopher and also a famous figure of modern feminism in the early 20th century. Besides that, she is also the author of novels and essays in the fields of politics and social science. She is known for her work in politics, philosophy, existentialism, and feminism. However, her best known work is *Le Deuxième Sexe (The Second Sex)* which is often regarded as the main work in the field of feminist philosophy which marks the beginning of the second wave of feminism.

Therefore, in this chapter the researcher will give an explanation of feminism theory by Simone de Beauvoir. Simone de Beauvoir has written a book about feminism entitled *The Second Sex*. *The Second Sex* was written in 1949, this book contains a complete about women from feminist side and tells about the treatment of women throughout history. Therefore the researcher wants to make it as one of the foundations for the theory.

Simone de Beauvoir opens her book with a question that are the source of the subject matter in *The Second Sex* book and the begining of the creation of the feminism theory, "What is a Woman?". The following is her statement:

"But first, what is a woman? "*Tota mulier in utero*: she is a womb," some say. Yet speaking of certain women, the experts proclaim, "They are not women," even though

they have a uterus like the others. Everyone agrees there are females in the human species; today, as in the past, they make up about half of humanity; and yet we are told that “femininity is in jeopardy”; we are urged, “Be women, stay women, become women.” So not every female human being is necessarily a woman; she must take part in this mysterious and endangered reality known as femininity.” (p.23)

From the quotation above we can see that as long as this time, women are only seen from their reproductive organs. Therefore women are only seen as "the other" or insignificant human being. Society makes the norms and rules of how to be a good woman that society wants.

The Second Sex book has two volumes, seven parts and many chapters. However the researcher takes or applies the theory needed by the researcher and which is suitable for analyzing *Sense and Sensibility* novel by Jane Austen. Therefore the researcher used the second volumes, seventh parts and the latest chapter, namely *The Independent Women*. *The Independent Women* tell about the equality of women with men, as stated below :

“The system based on her dependence collapses as soon as she ceases to be a parasite; there is no longer need for a masculine mediator between her and the universe. The curse on the woman vassal is that she is not allowed to do anything; so she stubbornly pursues the impossible quest for being through narcissism, love, or religion; when she is productive and active, she regains her transcendence; she affirms herself concretely as subject in her projects; she senses her responsibility relative to the goals she pursues and to the money and rights she appropriates.” (p.813)

It is stated that woman will be independent when they will not rely on man (to be parasites) and try to break the rules that say she is not allowed to do anything. They understand that their responsibilities will not be more in line with the rights they have and the goals they pursue. They become the subject and will be free concretely both for their rights and their position in the society.

The woman independence is also about the woman who has to break the argument in the society that woman is an object (a secondary or nonexistent player in social institution). Woman independence itself is the only way that woman can be accepted in the society, this can be achieved through education, knowledge, and hard work. So woman must achieve it all and then not to be undermined by the society.

The points of women independence theory by Simone de Beauvoir are women do not have to rely on man, women can get their equality with men through become a smart woman, have a good attitude, having ability in politics, art or science, and they really knows what the purpose of their life and get struggle to achieve that. Therefore, I will use this theory as the

basis for analyzing the form of women independence which is owned by the main characters of the *Sense and Sensibility* novel, the cause and the effects of her independence by adjusting the theories that have been stated by Beauvoir with the behavior of the characters reflected in the novel.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In analyzing the novel, the researcher uses a feminist critical approach and applies Simone de Beauvoir's theory (1949). The approach that the researcher used to collect the data is using a qualitative approach. Qualitative research methods use qualitative data, such as interviews, documents and observations to understand and explain social phenomena. Qualitative research methods come from social science to enable researchers to study social and cultural phenomena. Nowadays, the use of methods and qualitative analysis is extended to almost every field of research. A qualitative study focuses on the interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings to make sense in the meaning that people bring to this setting (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994).

The object that the researcher used in this final project is novel by Jane Austen's entitled *Sense and Sensibility*. The techniques to collect the data is first, the researcher will read and understand the novel, then the researcher will interpret the data and analyze it.

After that, the researcher will take some important words, sentences or paragraphs which related to the topic, and finally the researcher will elaborate the words, sentences, and paragraphs with the theory which the researcher used.

4. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The Forms of Women Independence of the Female Characters Reflected In *Sense And Sensibility* Novel

In the novel *Sense and Sensibility*, Jane Austen manages to describe the independence of women through the main characters, Elinor and Marianne. Jane Austen describe Elinor as a wise person, good in painting, interested in knowledge, and have a good attitude. Marianne is also have a good attitude but she is imprudent than Elinor, she is good at playing pianoforte, and both of them are really uphold literature especially poem.

4.1.1 The Form of Women Independence Based on Their Personality

We can find a lot of evidence of quotations about this inside the novel, one of which is when Jane Austen introduces the Elinor's character as follows:

Elinor, this eldest daughter, whose advice was so effectual, possessed a strength of understanding and coolness of judgement which qualified her, though only nineteen, to be the counsellor of her mother, and enabled her frequently to counteract, to the advantage of them all, that eagerness of mind in Mrs Dashwood which must generally have led to imprudence. She had an excellent heart, her disposition was affectionate and her feelings were strong, but she knew how to govern them (1811:6).

We can see here Jane Austen successfully describes the definition of women who are independent, wise and have advanced thoughts through the character of Elinor. She has freedom in her thoughts without being restricted by her mother or other people. She had an adult attitude by being a defender of her mother even though she was nineteen years old.

4.1.2 The Form of Women Independence Based on Their Interested in Literature

Besides being smart, Marianne also highly upholds literature, she likes to read books especially poetry (Cowper). Even though Jane Austen in novel *Sense and Sensibility* never tells us that Elinor, Marianne or Margaret (their younger sister) get formal education or school, it is clear that they get their intelligence and knowledge through the books they read at home. We can see her opinion commented on Edward about how to read his poem, as follow:

“Nay, Mama, if he is not to be animated by Cowper! But we must allow for difference of taste. Mama, the more I know the world, the more am I convinced that I shall never see a man whom I can really love. I require so much! He must have all Edward's virtues, and his person and manners must ornament his goodness with every possible charm” (1811:14).

The above text expresses the opinion of Marianne who objected to Edward's appetite for literature. In her opinion he lacked the enthusiasm and taste in reading Cowper's poetry. She also thought that she would not find a man who was exactly what she wanted as a life partner. It is clearly a form of women's independence. Marianne will choose her own life partner, and she will not accept the men who are not chosen by herself.

4.1.3 The Form of Women Independence Based on Their Assessment of Someone

The different opinion from them can also be proven when they discuss their views about Colonel Brandon. Elinor has a different view from Merianne. The following are the quotations:

“My protégè, as you call him, is a sensible man, and sense will always have attractions for me. Yes, Marianne, even in a man between thirty and forty. He has seen a great deal of the world, has been abroad, has read and has a thinking mind. I have found him capable of giving me much information on various subjects, and he has always answered my enquiries with readiness of good breeding and good nature” (1811:39).

For Elinor wisdom in a person is very important. She also likes Colonel Brandon because he has extensive knowledge because of his life experience, he is able to provide information on various topics, and he has very good behavior. According to Elinor, the personality of the Colonel Brandon is enough to make him as a real man.

4.1.4 The Form of Women Independence Based on Their Freedom of Thinking

Wealth and honor are also always the subject of life problems not only in those days, but also now. Jane Austen in her novel has also given her views on it through the main characters. We can see it from the data below:

“Strange that it would!” cried Marianne. “What have wealth or grandeur to do with happiness?”

“Grandeur has but little,” said Elinor, “but wealth has much to do with it.”

“Elinor for shame!” said Marianne, “Money can only give happiness where there is nothing else to give it. Beyond a competence, it can afford no real satisfaction, as far as mere self is concerned”

“Perhaps,” said Elinor, smiling, “we may come to the same point. Your competence and my wealth are very much alike, I dare say, and without them, as the world goes now, we shall both agree that every kind of external comfort must be wanting. Your ideas are only more noble than mine. Come, what is your competence?” (1811:67,68).

In this discussion Elinor and Marianne initially also had different arguments. But they finally have the same thought. Elinor only valued it more from a realistic point of view, while Marianne is more towards shallow logic. However both of these characters are true and very wise in their thinking about wealth. When other young woman may just want to marry a dignified man who is rich and depend on them for the rest of their lives. But not so with Elinor and Marianne.

4.2 The Causes of Women Independence of the Female Characters Reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* Novel

4.2.1 The Cause of Women Independence Because of Their Father

In the beginning of the novel, Jane Austen introduces us the family member of the Dashwood. She also describes the personality of each Dashwood family. One of them is Mr Henry Dashwood (Elinor and Marianne’s father). Jane Austen describes Mr Dashwood as a cheerful, energetic and wise person. This is as stated in the following:

Mr Dashwood’s disappointment was at first severe, but his temper was cheerful and sanguine, and he might reasonably hope to live many years, and by living economically, lay by a considerable sum from the produce of an estate already large and capable of almost immediate improvement (Jane Austen:1811,4).

The above quotation shows that even though Mr. Dashwood's disappointment was very big at first, because his three daughters did not get as much inheritance as he expected, but he is able to face and think wisely. These behaviors indirectly teach their children that they must face any situation wisely. The mindset and attitude of Mr. Dashwood influence Elinor and Marianne has the independency of themselves.

4.2.2 The Cause of Women Independence Because of Their Mother

This is also seen in Mrs. Dashwood. Although there is a very deep sensitivity in Mrs. Dashwood, like Marianne's feeling. Jane Austen sometimes describes Mrs. Dashwood as a mother who has very wise thoughts. We can see it from this quotation :

Some mothers might have encouraged the intimacy from motives of interest, for Edward Ferrars was the eldest son of a man who had died very rich, and some might have repressed it from motives of prudence- for, except a trifling sum, the whole of his fortune depended on the will of his mother. But Mrs Dashwood was alike uninfluenced by either consideration. It was enough for her that appeared to be amiable, that he loved her daughter and that Elinor returned the partiality (1811:12).

The paragraph above shows Mrs. Dashwood's thoughts about how she views her prospective child partners. In the 19th century, most mothers were concerned with the family status and the wealth of prospective son-in-law. But that does not apply to Mrs. Dashwood, for her it is enough that Edward has good temperament, loves Elinor sincerely and that they have the same tastes and feelings.

4.3 The Effects of Women Independence of the Female Characters Reflected in *Sense and Sensibility* Novel

4.3.1 The Effects of the Women Independence in Negative Form

In the *Sense and Sensibility* novel, the researcher found that every independence that has been carried out by the main characters results in several negative and also positive things. The negative things such as the following :

"Yes, but I did not love only him, and while the comfort others was dear to me, I was glad to spare them from knowing how much I felt. Now I can think and speak of it with little emotion. I would not have you suffer on my account, for I assure you no longer suffer materially myself. I have many things to support me. I am not conscious of having provoked the disappointment by any imprudence of my own, and I have borne it as much as possible without spreading it further. I acquit Edward of all essential misconduct. I wish him very happy, and I am so sure of his always doing his duty that, though now he may harbor some regret, in the end he must become so." (1811:194)

The researcher enters this into the category of negative effects because Elinor here must sacrifice her feelings based on decisions she made herself. Other people, even her sister

will definitely think that she is crazy or does not have feelings because she has faced something extraordinary in her life (knowing the person she loves and also loves her turns out to have been engaged to someone else) by simply keeping her feelings of disappointment without telling to anyone even her family.

4.3.2 The Effects of the Women Independence in Positive Form

The effect of women independency in a positive form is reflected in Marianne's character. We can see in the following paragraphs :

"... My illness has made me think – it has given me leisure and calmness for serious recollection. Long before I was enough recovered to talk, I was perfectly able to reflect. I considered the past – I saw in my own behaviour, since the beginning of our acquaintance with him last autumn, nothing but a series of imprudence towards myself..." (1811:257).

All the events that Marianne had gone through in her life, because of her independence, had a result which finally made her aware of the truth and brought it to wisdom. She realized that her attitude had been unkind and far from wise. She also realized that this very sad event in her life was the result of all the carelessness she had done.

The other good effect that occurs to Marianne is that she also has more positive thinking to fill the activities of the next days on her life. As it says in the following paragraphs:

"... I know the summer will pass happily away. I mean never to be letter in rising than six, and from that time till dinner I shall divide every moment between music and reading. I have formed my plan, and am determined to enter on a course of serious study. Our own library is too well known to me to be resorted to for anything beyond mere amusement. But there are many works well worth reading at the Park, and there are others of more modern production which I know I can borrow of Colonel Brandon. By reading only six hours a day, I shall gain in the course of a twelvemonth a great deal of instruction which I now feel myself to want" (1811:256).

Marianne made a very positive decision after the awareness came to her, instead of doing something negative or torturing herself to be sick because of her own feelings as she did before. She now began to recognize wisdom and act more mature. She also promised she would no longer make others anxious or torture herself.

5. CONCLUSION

The researcher has done the analysis, so the researcher wants to make some conclusion based on this analysis as follows :

1. The forms of woman independence of the female characters in Sense and Sensibility based on their personality is they have a wise thought, based on their interested in

literature is they have a good taste and understanding about poetry, based on their assessment of someone is they have wise thoughts and judgments on the people around them and based on their freedom of thinking is they can argue someone's opinion based on good knowledge and they have different opinions from the society in that era.

2. The cause of the woman independence of the female characters in *Sense and Sensibility* is their father makes them to be wise women, and their mother makes them as independence women who have different views from their society at that time.
3. The effects of the women independence of the female characters in *Sense and Sensibility* is they have negative and positive views on independence, the negative view is Elinor chose to prioritize the happiness of her mother and sister which required her to hide the problems she faced but she managed to overcome it well and the positive form is that Marianne struggles to rise up from her love conflicted problems and be wiser in her assessment of life.

6. SUGGESTION

Through this thesis, the researcher wants to give some suggestions to everyone who studied literature and feminism. There are many subjects about feminism that can be analyzed. The researcher gives suggestion based on this study that this study could be the reference or guidance for any researcher to conduct other researcher. The suggestion are as follow :

1. The researcher suggests to other researcher to conduct research with similar topic but in different aspect of feminism in other literary work.
2. This is suggested to other researcher or students of English Departement who are interested in similar discussion about feminism more deeply.
3. For the women outside, we must dare to prove that women have the equal right with men and we also have freedom to make our own decision, we also must dare to prove that we have an intellegent mind, independent self, attitude and principle to be appreciated.

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