

Biographical Approach to the Analysis of Virginia Woolf's Novel: *To the Lighthouse*

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Abstrak

Study tentang biografi secara tidak langsung sebenarnya melampirkan dan memberi gambaran tentang isi novel sebenarnya. Hubungan antara Virginia Woolf sebagai penulis dan novel yang dihasilkan To the Lighthouse, menjadi topik utama pembahasan. Data dalam penelitian diambil dari novel dan biografi penulisnya sendiri. Dianalisa secara kualitatif dengan penyajian yang deskriptiv. Jurnal ini menggunakan teori yang dibuat oleh Austin Warren dan Rene Wellek (1973) dalam bukunya Theory of Literature untuk menganalisa hubungan penulis dan novelnya. Sebagai teori pendukung digunakanlah teori William Kenney (1966) dalam bukunya How to Analyze Fiction untuk menganalisa intrinsic elemen dalam novel tersebut. Analisa jurnal ini menunjukkan adanya hubungan yang erat antara biografi penulis dan novel yang dihasilkan. Tema yang diangkat dalam novel tentang wanita dalam hidup keseharian dan bagaimana mengembangkan dirinya. Adapun terdapat dua karakter wanita yang sering ditonjolkan dalam novel sebagai wanita lemah karena lingkungannya. Karakter wanita ini menonjolkan perbedaan perlakuan terhadap wanita dan pria oleh lingkungannya. Melalui pengambilan tema, pemilihan karakter dalam novel, Virginia Woolf ingin menunjukkan secara langsung posisi wanita pada abadnya, sering ditundukan dan dilemahkan oleh lingkungannya, yang sangat ingin diberantasnya.

Kata kunci : kondisi wanita, Virginia Woolf, dan pendekatan biografi.

1. Background

Warren and Welleck proposed that biography as an account of person's life usually published in the form of a book or essay, or in some other form, such as film. A work is biographical if it covers all of a person's life. As such, biographical works are usually non-fiction, but fiction can also be used to portray a person's life. Biography is principally the story that describes about the life of some figure in certain duration of time. In this case, biography of the author in his or her literary work will sometimes be reflected in the story. The author may appear to works or give influences through the characters.

Virginia Woolf is one of the writers who appear, use media literary novel and essay to criticize the situation of the era she lived. There are always some situation or certain ideas that happen and are brought by certain men in certain community from certain time. Virginia Woolf in 1927 released one of her work entitled *To the Lighthouse*, the novel which becomes famous because it showed the real condition in era which issued that woman was inferior to man. *To the Lighthouse* which shows a little action rather than monologue, told about the Ramsays who intended to sail to the lighthouse which came true after passing ten years.

2. Problem of the study

The problems of this study are:

1. What theme does Virginia want to show in her novel?
2. How does Virginia Woolf's biography reflect the story of her novel?

3. Aims of the study

The aims of this study are:

1. To find out what theme is used in this novel
2. To analyze the correlation between the novel and the life's of Virginia Woolf.

4. Research Method

The data in this study were taken from one of Virginia's works *To the Lighthouse*, and from Virginia's biography itself. They were collected through note taking technique, in which data were found by reading intensively the novel and the biography. The data were analyzed qualitatively by giving necessary description based on the theories adopted and were presented in a complete explanation.

5. Analysis

To the Lighthouse actually told about life in domesticity of a family and the struggling of women to create something. Women generally stay at home to devote themselves to their

husband, family, and children; got little chances to receive education than boys have; there is slightest chance for women to develop themselves in society like men do, such as making works of art, involving in politics, giving opinion, etc. The existence of women in family is being described; the domination of husband in family is shown up. Mrs. Ramsay can be said as the major characters in this novel, which is realized as a women character which gets some unsuitable treatments toward men. Lily Briscoe, the second main character in the novel, experienced gender inequality when she wants to develop herself in painting.

There are five points found in this analysis regarding the relation between the real life of Virginia Woolf and the novel *To the Lighthouse*. Some words which are related to religion such as church, the atheist, pray heaven have been repeatedly many times in the novel. The idea of religion has been grounded since she was child. Virginia's mother believed in God, influenced by her first husband. Virginia admitted that there no God in her life, she noticed herself as an atheist as all of the modernist figures believed. Related to the influence of profession, Virginia Woolf creates the character of Mr. and Mrs. Ramsay like her parents. Her dad and Mr. Ramsay has a good position in their job, but Mrs. Ramsay just like her mother is an housewife who have no opportunities to get a good job. The author reflects herself in the character of Lily Briscoe; her interest in writing is compared with Lily's interest in painting, which found difficult way to actualize themselves as women to create something. In term of marriage, she termed her marriage with Leonard Woolf in 1912 as the most beautiful thing in her life. This idea of marriage, delivered by Mrs. Ramsay who believes that every woman should marry a man, live and happy together.

The other similarity between the author and the novel is the character of Mr. Ramsay to show her father's character, which she wants to reflect the traits of man or husband in domesticity which believes in patriarchy. Patriarchal as Mr. Ramsay reflects in the novel, Virginia Woolf uses her father's trait, Sir Leslie Stephen, who described as the Victorian traditionalist and patriarchal force that squelched her artistic sensibility. She has written that her life is inconceivable because her father would end it so there was no writing. Mr. Ramsay shows the domination to subdue women in his family, when he is much proud to his sons only, and thinks that women have merely vague and hopeless minds.

Another point is education. Education becomes the significant point to be discussed because it is realized that is the Victorian age, it is rare for women to get normal education rather than man. The education between men and women, as it shows in the novel when Mrs.

Ramsay and her husband argued about their children's education. A son which is a man in family becomes a top priority to be proud rather than daughter. Virginia in her Victorian girlhood and inability to obtain the education that was afforded by her brothers initially inspired this feeling of social alienation. She also admitted that she was never at school, never competed in any way with the children of her own age. It was different from her brother, who afforded to be in school, she struggled to convince her being gifted in writing though she was not educated formally.

6. Conclusion

There are some points that can be concluded based on the analysis to solve all of the problems of the study. The plot of this novel is divided into three parts as a symbol of time duration of this novel, and the theme of women in domesticity life and self-development both can be found in the novel. There are two major characters who take many parts in the story such as Mrs. Ramsay and Lily Briscoe. Mrs. Ramsay is realized as the ideal life of Victorian era that devotes all of her life for her husband and does not want to oppose her husband. Lily Briscoe like a radical character who struggles for settling herself free from being equal to men's characters in the story.

The similarities between the novel and the real life of Virginia Woolf can be concluded in five points, such as the influence of education, patriarchy, marriage institution, profession and the influence of religion. The characters of Ramsay's family are like her family. Virginia's mother is an ideal woman who devotes all her life for family, respects her husband and serves the children. She always keeps her faith on her husband, although her husband threatens her in unpleasant way, as Mrs. Ramsay did. A son becomes a top priority rather than daughter; it happens in Virginia and her brother.

7. Bibliography

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