PROFESSIONALISM OF WOMAN RESOURCES IN SARAH BLAKE’S *THE POSMISTRESS* (2010): A FEMINIST CRITICISM

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RENI PARMAWATI
A 320100267

SCHOOL OF TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION
MUHAMMADIYAH UNIVERSITY OF SURAKARTA
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NIP/NIK : 410
Nama : Mauly Halwat Hikmat, Ph. D
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NIM : A 320 100 267
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ABSTRACT

The main aim of this study is to find how Professionalism of woman resources in Sarah’s Blake The Postmistress viewed from Feminist’s perspective, and to analyze the novel based on its structural elements. by correlating its structural elements and social historical background of American in early twenty first century. This study uses qualitative method in which the data are taken from both primary and secondary data source in form of words, sentence and phrases.

Primary data source is Sarah Blake The Postmistress meanwhile secondary data sources are other sources related to the primary data. Data collecting method in this study is library research, and in analyzing the data the researcher employs descriptive analysis. In analyzing The Postmistress, the researcher uses feminist approach.

The outcomes of this study are as follows: (1) Sarah Blake writes The Postmistress as the mirror of American; society through the structural elements of the novel to reflects the social reality. (2) Sarah Blake wants to explain the professionalism does not consider gender in the American society in early of twenty first century through ‘The Postmistress’ novel.

Key words : Professional, Professionalism, Humanr Resources, Women Resources, Phe Postmistress, Feminist Literaary Criticism.
A. Introduction

The theme of *The Postmistress* is professionalism does not consider gender. Professionalism is often described as the loyalty to good manners, honesty and responsibility when dealing with somebody or other companies in the work environment. Those characteristic often includes a high level of excellence going above and beyond basic requirements. The good work may include completing tasks in a timely manner with the highest quality possible and taking pride in completed tasks.

According to Freidson (in Nigel Malin, 2000:181) “Professionalism is the ideology and special set of institutions by which a profession in organized”. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High quality work standards, honesty, and integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.

There are several characteristics in professionalism according to Holmes; service to others, assessment of client needs, theoretical body of knowledge obtained through extended pre-service education, standards for entry, practice, and ethical conduct, professional association to maintain standards, and continuing education and lifelong learning (2010: 1).

Professionalism is not one thing but it is a combination so many of qualities. A professional employee arrives on time for work and manages time effectively. Professional workers take responsibility for their own behavior and work effectively with others. High quality work standards, honesty, and
integrity are also part of the package. Professional employees look clean and neat and dress appropriately for the job. Communicating effectively and appropriately for the workplace is also an essential part of professionalism.

According to Harzing “Most of the women reported that they had found ways to overcome the resistance, they also mirrored findings in that they found that they were very ‘visible’ and had more responsibility than they would have had in an equivalent position in their home countries” (Harzing, 2004:390).

The concept of equality in employment does not mean that men and women are identical or that their roles or needs are identical. Indeed the concept of equality, and even more that of gender equity seek to give equal value and recognition to the different natures, roles and needs of women and men.

B. Research Method

This study belongs to qualitative method. There are two types of data source, namely primary and secondary data source. The primary data source is the novel *The Postmistress*, meanwhile the secondary data sources are other materials related to the study. Both data are collected through library research. In collecting data, the writer takes some steps as follow: Reading the novel for several times to get deep understanding, determining the main issue of the novel, determining the characters that will be analyzed, reading some related books to find out the theory, data and information needed, taking note of important thing both primary and secondary data sources, classifying and
determining the relevant data, classifying the material that has been selected to support in analyzing the novel.

In analyzing the novel, the writer analyzes the data based on Marxist perspective. Focus will be on how conflict of interest reflected in *The Postmistress* novel and in American society in early of twenty first century.

C. Research Finding And Discussion

The writer obtains some research finding in analyzing *The Postmistress* novel. Each finding has some cases to be discussed. After they have examined, all of components will get back together in a schematic manner in the discussion.

1. Findings

In analyzing *The Postmistress* novel, the writer obtains some findings. The findings of the study as follow:

a) Women’s Position

Woman basically had been thought as lower to men physically and intellectually. They were difficult to enter the college or profession because men dominated them, so there were a few opportunities for them. Feminists believe that women are treated as inferior (Andersen,1991:9) It is supported by Mandell in Feminist Issues which stated that “woman was oppressed by a special form of life called patriarchy through which man appropriates all superior
social roles and keeps women in subordinated and exploited position” (Mandell, 1995:14).

In the society women are seen as the second class people. Women position was sub-ordinate to men. They were difficult to enter the collage or profession because it is dominated by men, so there are a few opportunity for them.

In the novel The Postmistress, woman position of Iris James can be seen when she deliver the letters in order to do her job. She worked to manage all the letters and make sure sent them to the receiver safely and precisely. In order to transmit all the letters she transported them by herself by train.

b) Women’s Role

Women’s most significant roles are still regarded as caretakers and house hold; they are always associated with domestic roles. “Domesticity places the house and the work associated with it as women’s most proper place and the function are to harmonize their family life” (Humm, 2002:118).

When a woman decides to work outside the house they will face many form of gender discrimination. Anderson states that:

Woman’s role in economic life has always been underestimated, there are assumptions that woman who stays at home as full-time house-wives are not working and woman who works for wages are doing it for “pin money”, and women’s work is not as valuable as man’s. The result was woman’s work has not been paid the same as men’s get (Andersen, 1997:75).
Ideological definition about women’s roles often begins from institutionalization of division of power and work, and concrete aspect of life. Because more separated productive activity is from domestic activity, the definition develops to be ideological frame. Women are described as supple friend on the bed. Men called it as the cult of true womanhood (Murphy, 1995).

Blake describes that women’s roles cannot be limited on the domestic area but they can enter the public roles, to play an active outside the home. Iris has always become an object in the society, because she is a nice and humble and great worker. She made relationship with other people not based on the religion, races or social class. The role in her position as her friend, Emma is Iris’s friend in the town. Iris always helped Emma because Emma is soft and gentle. Emma is a lonely girl who just married with doctor’s town in Franklin. Role is as a superior, Iris James is a Postmaster of Franklin, Massachusetts, she is hard worker woman. When there are lots of letters she work so hard and manage all the letters correctly. She would do all the work if there are mistake. She corrected all the mistakes and took care all the letters so there no more fault. Role is as a girlfriend, Harry vale the man that she really love to and who made her heart pounding hard. She knows that Harry Vale, the town’s mechanic, inspects the ocean from the tower of the town hall, searching in vain for German U-Boats he is certain will come. At the
age of forty, she’s decide took herself to a spinster’s life, until Harry Vale, the town mechanic, who spends his free time watching for German U-boats from the dunes of Cape Cod, takes a romantic interest in her.

c) Women’s Participation

Every individual in spite of gender, race, and class has the same rights and change to express the ideas, need, and aspiration, such as in work place, education, law, and social. Right are something owned by every person.

The category of freedom in feminism includes politic, economic, and sexual freedom. “Feminist attempt to gain democratic right, the right to have education and occupation, the right to be the Member of Parliament also the right to divorce” (Humm, 2002 :53). “Women also demand the right to choose what they attend to, including having freedom to be what they want to be” (Humm, 2002 :102).

In Sarah Blake’s The Postmistress, women are rarely disbelieved by men in a decision making process, even though it is for herself. This is not fair to her especially if it is looked from point of view. Woman were subordinated to men and are considered having no abilities to do something better than men. Men are especially superior while women are socially inferior to men.
In *The Postmistress*, women seem has participation in decision making process because in this novel the men characters respected and supported the women characters. Iris is also brave person when. Bravely she challenged herself to be bold. She is strong woman. She lived by herself, so she have huge courageous to face others. While sometime she only woman who has fear and need to be protected. She would not show her fear and make the others worry. Iris is very tough woman and with all the characters she had, it made the other respect and supported her even men.

In *The Postmistress*, participation in social structure can be seen in the character. Iris James is the head of Post Office in Franklin, Massachusetts. As the Postmistress, she loved her job and managed her work so well. Iris firmly believes that her job is to deliver and keep people’s secrets, to pass along the news of love and sorrow that letters carry. She takes her duties very seriously through which people’s thoughts and feelings could pass and upon which nothing difficulty or got stuck.

In this novel the main character presented the women’s participation in government organization. Sarah Blake creates a major character; Iris must struggle in job as a woman and a head of Post office. Finally, she did her job very well to prove that as a woman she can be a superior just like men. Iris James, who is the postmistress of the town who very much prides herself on keeping
order in the town by keeping the mail flowing, and she is the keeper of all the secrets. She handled all the letters and sent them to the receiver. She assured that no error in her job as postmaster. She checked and corrected every mistakes,

Participation in social community, Sarah Blake illustrated the major character Iris James as good women. Socially, Iris is hard working woman and she always did her job very well. Even, she liked to do something for other outside her own job. The residents of Franklin often wonder just how much their postmistress knows of what goes on in their isolated community. Whether Iris is tough woman, she is very kind with the others. She loved to help the people at Franklin. It is because she works as postmaster so she has to manage all the letters so she must worked with people and met them one by one.

Behind the postmaster, the telegraph machine whirred into life, tapping out a sharp staccato message. Emma froze, her hand in the box. Iris kept her eyes on the doctor’s wife, listening to the iron hammers, one two, one and two, pounding black letters onto the white sheet. She turned slightly backward, gauging the length of the message. Emma stared at the postmaster. The steel drum turned after the ping of the end of the line. The message continued, clattering across the two women’s silence. (TP: 143).
d) Women’s Rights

The full attainment of equality will provide women with the opportunity to show their ability and give a supportive effect to protest against the subordination of women. By improving their capability and capacity they can fully express their own experience in all public life because, “Feminism is both way of thinking and a way of acting so women needs to actualize themselves as an actor in social institutions” (Humm, 2002: 233).

Some Feminist theories try to put the idea that women and men have the same right and rationality. “…women are human beings capable or rational thought and deserving of the same natural rights granted to men” (Mandel, 1995:4). The feminist argue that as individual, woman has equal right as the man who share her desire and her goal in her life. They should not just do the domestic work but they should participate in economic, political, and law as well.

In this novel Iris Sarah Blake create major character to support women rights in structural position. Iris James worked as postmaster; she has some effort to reach her right. Iris is capable hands on a daily basis. Iris, however, relied on the steady, reliable flow of the mail to ground her in the present. Iris is an expert in reading the patterns in the post. She worked so hard so she can be a proper as her function as a superior and she even better than man for
position. Her boyfriend Harry Vale is only mechanic in the town. It shown that woman can be better than men in structural position.

Right for proper life in society relationship is presented in this novel. Women often got bad treatment from men. In *The Postmistress*, Iris struggle for her own right that is given by her patriarchal society. Iris James got bad treatment from others but she is good person so she received help from her society. She has the feeling that her work is important. Without hesitation, she realized how important her work is. She continued pushing the boundaries to make herself stronger. She worked harder than others. She is postmaster but she delivered and managed the letters by herself. She threw away her fear and indolent to finished all her job professionally.

The Postmistress also illustrated rights to make certain life. Women also have right to choose their own life. Iris James is independent woman. She is unmarried middle age woman who live by herself but she have boyfriend and lots friends so she would not be lonely. She work very hard and she help the others too. She has the respect from the others because she done her job very well and also very kind in her society. Women also demand a right to choose what they attend to, including having freedom to be what they want to be (Hamm, 2002).
2. Discussion

Story is the reflection of what happened in that time. The author describes the phenomena of women position. The analysis of the major character’s condition in position, role, participation, and rights above show that each classification reveal the major character’s. The main character indicated that women should be equal as men. As women worker, they must be independent and professional. In early twenty first century women got equal experience as men. In this novel, the key character Iris James lived in American society where the people live is an individual, well educated, and modern people.

D. Conclusion And Suggestion

Based on the analysis, the researcher concluded that: based on the structural analysis it can be concluded that the postmistress Iris James deliver the message must be professional and does not consider gender. In order to convey the message, Sarah Blake, creates a major character is then put in context of the time and place in which she has to choose between safety and professionalism. She also built a plot that the major character in the Postmistress have to be secured and professional correspond to the setting of time and place, forming unity.

Based on the feminism analysis, it can be concluded that in this novel, Sarah Blake illustrated that the women must be professional when they work in public domain. The novel shows Sarah Blake want to describe that in order to get their rights as human being women should be equal in position as men. Because woman also can do the job very well and professional, they would work hard and can take control of their job. Superior always dominated by men, but in this novel Blake’s illustrates that women can be superior too.
Women are expected not only to accept the condition and wait for the miracle but they must struggle to get better condition in all aspect of life.
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