

THE ASPECT OF LESBIANISM OF CELIE REFLECTED
IN ALICE WALKER *THE COLOR PURPLE* NOVEL (1982):
A FEMINIST APPROACH



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APPROACH

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ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menjelaskan aspek lesbian tokoh utama yang terjadi dalam novel *The Color Purple* (1982) karya Alice Walker menggunakan teori feminisme. Novel *The Color Purple* (1982) dianalisis mengacu pada dua poin. Pertama adalah analisis yang berdasarkan elemen struktural, kedua adalah analisis mengenai aspek lesbian yang menggunakan teori feminisme. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan deskriptif kualitatif. Penelitian ini menggunakan dua sumber data, yang pertama adalah novel *The Color Purple* (1982) karya Alice Walker yang mana novel ini sebagai sumber utama. Sumber data kedua adalah pencarian dari buku, jurnal, biografi penulis, dan sumber yang berhubungan dengan penelitian. Dua jenis sumber tersebut diperoleh melalui perpustakaan dan internet yang dianalisa menggunakan analisa deskriptif. Berdasarkan penelitian tersebut, peneliti menyimpulkan beberapa kesimpulan. Pertama adalah element struktural novel yang diperoleh melalui karakter dan karakterisasi, latar tempat dan waktu, plot, sudut pandang, dan tema yang tersusun menjadi satu sebagai cerita dalam novel *The Color Purple* (1982). Kedua adalah berdasarkan teori feminisme dalam radikal feminisme yang terjadi pada karakter utama dalam novel *The Color Purple* (1982).

Kata kunci: *Lesbian, Structural Element Novel, Teori Feminism*

ABSTRACT

This study aims to explain the aspect of lesbian of the main character that occurred in *The Color Purple* (1982) novel by Alice Walker using feminism theory. *The Color Purple* (1982) novel analysis refers to two points. First is the analysis based on structural elements, the second is an analysis of lesbian aspects that use the theory of feminism. This research uses descriptive qualitative approach. This study uses two sources of data, the first is *The Color Purple* (1982) novel by Alice Walker which is the main source of this novel. The second source of data is the searching from books, journals, author biographies, and research-related sources. The two types of sources are obtained through libraries and the internet analyzed using descriptive analysis. Based on these studies, the researcher concluded some conclusions. The first is the structural element of the novel obtained through character and characterization, the setting of place and time, plot, point of view, and theme arranged into one as a story in *The Color Purple* (1982) novel. The second is based on the theory of feminism particularly radical feminism that occurs in the main character in *The Color Purple* (1982) novel.

Keywords: *Lesbian, Structural Element Novel, Feminist Theory*

1. INTRODUCTION

The Color Purple was written by feminist, Alice Walker and it was published in 1982. In 1983, the year after its first publication, it won a Pulitzer Prize in the fiction category. The book describes the life of a young black woman in the early 1900's and her journey of self discovery. The protagonist is a girl named Celie and the story is told from her point of view.

The Color Purple was written by a feminist. In this novel the protagonist is a girl named Celie and the story is told from her perspective. She was only fourteen years old, in fact she came from a capable family, but she did not know it, she lived with her stepfather, and experienced an act of oppression by her own father. Her stepfather married her to a man, he is Albert, he usually called Mr.____. He has three children, the oldest named Harpo. Celie's life at Mr.____'s house did not happen well until her sister Nettie stayed with her. Nettie is a good friend and every day Nettie goes to school but when she comes home, she teaches Celie what she learned that day. Soon, Mr.____ decided to expel Nettie. Nettie promised Celie to write letters as her communication to Celie, but Celie never received her letters.. When Harpo brought home his new wife, Sophia, this made Celie want to change her life, because Sofia is a brave and dislike woman. When Harpo committed violence to Sofia, Sofia left Harpo and at this moment the lover of Celie's husband came Shug Avery. She is a popular cafe singer famous for her wild manner and her love for men. Celie admires Shug Avery's figure, she sees Shug as a beautiful figure, they make a lifelong friendship. Celie is always open to Shug about anything as well as Shug what it means to make love. Her relationship with Shug makes Celie also learning to be a strong and independent person. Living in Chicago made Celie more independent and her life much better. She opened a pantry shop for women and men. Though the book is centered on the first character, Celie and her life, this book also focuses on other life stories of women in Celie's life including Shug, Nettie, Sophia, and Squeak. These women help each other discover the beauty within themselves and in life by leaning back and helping, they gain the power to fight for their rights and overcome those who oppress and live their lives their way.

1.1 Problem Statement

The main problem of this study are to explain lesbianism in character Celie and analyze what are some aspects of lesbianism contained on the behavior of character Celie in the novel *The Color Purple*.

1.2 Limitation of the Study

The researcher focuses this research in analyzing lesbianism of Celie in Alice Walker *The Color Purple* novel (1982) on Feminist Approach.

1.3 Underlying Theory

This chapter deals with underlying theory the writers present the theories that support to analyze Lesbianism in *The Color Purple* novel. The theory consist of Feminist Perspective.

1.3.1 Feminism Theory

Feminism is an understanding that arise when women demanded to get equal rights as men. The term was first used in the political debate in france in the late 19th century according to June Hannam (2007.p.22) in the book feminism, feminism can be defined as:

1. A recognition of an imbalance of power between the sexes, with woman in a subordinate role to men.
2. A belief that women social condition is constructed and therefore can be changed.
3. An emphasis on female autonomy.

1.3.2 Major Principle of Femenis Theory

The basic principle that can be an approach to feminist of literature. There are major of radical feminism, the explanation will be discussed as follow:

1. Radical Feminism

This flow is based on the view that the oppression of women is due to the patriarchal system. The woman's body is the main object of oppression by male power. Stanton state that

radical feminists focused on sex, gender, and reproduction as the locus for the development of feminist thought. They assume that the oppression suffered by women in all spheres of life rooted in the sexual oppression. Inferiority of women, especially in the public sphere starting from the household life (intercourse), where at the time of sexual intercourse models of men and women are women serve men in order to obtain satisfaction, by any means. Tong also identified two types of radical feminists are radical-libertarian feminists and radical feminists-cultural (Tong 3.p.70).

1.3.3 Lesbianism

The word “lesbian” is derived from a resident of the island of Lesbos in Greece that Sappho. Sappho is a poet who produces lyrical poetry. Sappho poem contains about lesbian love. At that time, homosexual love is understood as being higher than heterosexual romance (Spencer, 2004).

According to Matlin (2004) lesbian is a term for women who directs their sexual orientation to other women or also called the woman who loves women physically, sexually, emotionally, or spiritually. Crawford (2000.p.94) state that “lesbian are women who have sexual desires and emotions to other women or women who consciously identify themselves as lesbian”.

1.3.4 Notion of Aspect Lesbian

There are three aspects of lesbianism by Ann Ferguson is a clinical description of the lesbian aspect, the aspect of self-definition socio-political arena of lesbian culture, and traditional aspects trans historical connecting lesbian women.

1.3.5 Novel

A novel is a work of prose fiction written in narrative style and presented in book form. The novel tells the story, which is usually defined by a series of events that are described in sequence. For over a thousand years the novel has become part of human culture, although the origin of the novel is debated. Apart from that, the novel is a well-known and popular and

valuable work of human writing. The shape and appearance change over time, but the novel remains an important part of the literary culture of almost all societies around the world.

According to Sumarjo (1991.p.29) novel is “a story in form of prose in wide of size measure. Wide of measure here can mean story with part, which is complex, immeasurable story atmosphere and immeasurable the story setting also”.

2. RESEARCH METHOD

The researcher uses a descriptive qualitative research. It is a library research while data sources need literary data. The kind of research has purpose to analyze literature using feminist approach. The first of conducting the research is determining the type of the study. The second is determining the object of the study. The third is determining data and data sources. The fourth is determining technique of data collection. The fifth is determining technique of data analysis. The object of the study of the research is *The Color Purple* novel, by Alice Walker.

3. RESEARCH FINDING

3.1 Analysis Structural Element of the Novel

3.1.1 Character and Characterization

According M.H. Abrams in the Glossary of Literary Terms, the character is a man who is raised in a literary narrative or drama, which is interpreted by the reader has certain moral qualities and tendencies as reflected in the words and actions.

Celie is the main character in this novel. Celie is described as a black girl 14 years old, she suffered physical violence, mental and sexual abuse by people around him. Physically Celie have black skin color, not pretty, no longer able to have children, and not very good but he was able to work hard.

Shug Avery is minor character. Shug described as a jazz singer and also an affair of her husband Celie, in the neighborhood Shug viewed negatively by the surrounding residents, conversation negative was

caused Shug always dressed sensual and wearing pants when singing, but when it should women wearing dresses or skirts. But according to Celie Shug is the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. She highly admired figure Shug Avery.

3.1.2 Setting

There is no specific time background in *The Color Purple* novel. If you glance at the pattern of life and culture in the novel ranges between years 1910-1940.

There are two places which is described as a place setting in this novel is in the South of the USA and Africa. Two points is a point in the South of the United States is Georgia precisely in rural areas and the city of Memphis in Tennessee.

3.1.3 Plot

According to Dick Hartoko, (1948) the plot as the storyline created by the reader in the form a row of events in chronological order, are interrelated and causality are appropriate with what happened to the perpetrators story.

Exposition or beginning relates to the introduction of the story, introducing to the main character and the author also introduces when and where the incidents occur and basic line of conflict (Kennedy, 1983.p.8). *The Color Purple* novel explains exposition that describes a process or idea from the beginning of the story by the main character named Celie. *The Color Purple* is composed of a series of letters: in the first section, the letters are written by the protagonist, Celie, to God; the second section are letters from her sister, Nettie in Africa, and the third section is a correspondence between Celie and Nettie.

According to Kennedy (1983.p.15) complication is the conflict, which leads to the other conflicts. In *The Color Purple* novel conflict is when Celie is forced to marry by his stepfather with Mr .____, he planned to get Nettie, but Nettie refuse Mr .____ eventually he kicked out of his

home Nettie, Celie was alone in the house, she continue to be victims of oppression by her own husband. Nettie while exiled in Africa.

Climax of the story is reached when the conflict goes on and reaches its right point of intensive (Klarer, 1999.p.15). The climax of the novel is when Mr .____ have committed a crime to Celie, she separates Celie with the only person who owned the world she loved so much and loved her. And it all makes Celie angry with her husband, she does not want to become victims of oppression by her husband.

Klarer (1999.p.38) state taht resolution happens when the conflict that has been getting high through the climax starts to be cooling down. Resolution of the conflict is when Celie then left her husband, she knew that Pa was not her biological father, she knows all of the letters were written Nettie. Celie then take a decision in her life, she took control of her life and happiness.

The first is when Celie for the first time sees Shug's photo, she feels impressed with Shug's figure. Then when Celie is married to Mr.____ she meets with Shug, then she establishes a friendship relationship with Shug Then the friendship turns into the feeling of love that Celie feels to Shug. Because of her love for Shug made Celie finally leave her husband to be with Shug Avery.

The plausibility that things make a sense of the story of the novel is the life story of the main character that happens logically. Plausibility in The Color Purple novel is that when Celie finally gets to meet her children and her sister again, she can bring them back home.

3.1.4 Point of View

Point of view in *The Color Purple* novel is a first-person, Walker recounts in a letter first person, the first part of this novel tells the standpoint of Celie, she wrote a sort of diary that is addressed to God, so God knows what's going on with her life and the people around her, while the second part of this novel tells the contents of the letter of Celie and Netie.

3.1.5 Theme

According to Koesnosoebroto (1988.p.76) theme also introduces some concept of a theory of life into some elements that is illustrated in the story. The theme presented in *The Color Purple* novel is about love, friendship, choice, and sexual.

3.2 Feminist Analysis

3.2.1 Feminist Perspective

Radical feminism that can be found in *The Color Purple* novel is when Celie takes the fight against Mr.____ and she leaves Mr.____, she goes to Memphis with Shug, she wants to fight for her rights, and she wants to find her happiness.

3.2.2 Lesbianism Analysis

The Color Purple novel shows about Celie. She is the main character in this novel. Celie greatly admired Shug Avery, her friendship with Shug made Celie fall in love with her, but she hides the feeling because she does not know whether Shug loves her too.

3.2.3 Aspect of Lesbianism

1. Description of Clinical Aspects of Lesbian

1.1 Emotional Interest

1.1.1 Feeling of Love

Celie's love for Shug begins when Celie feels awed at Shug when she first sees a photo of Shug being shown by her stepmother. She feels Shug Avery is a very beautiful woman even according to Shug more beautiful than her mother and from her. Every night she also looked at Shug's photo.

1.1.2 Leisure

Celie was sewing, then Shug came and sat down to join in sewing, sitting side by side with Celie facing Tobias. Celie feels uncomfortable sitting with her husband and

Tobias, then Shug comes and sits next to her. Celie becomes comfortable.

1.2 Sexual Interest

In the *The Color Purple* novel Celie's sexual attraction on Shug looks when Celie sees Shug being naked. And that was the first time Celie had seen the body of a naked woman, she felt aroused by Shug's body.

2. Definition of Personal Aspects in the Socio-Political of Cultural Lesbian

In analyzing *The Color Purple* novel the author did not find the recognition of lesbianism on Celie's character from both herself and her environment. Celie never calls herself a lesbian, even she is confused as to why she has sexual desire and feelings of love for Shug. She thinks female love should be directed at men. Celie's society does not understand the concept of lesbian, and that's why Celie is confused with her sexual orientation.

3. Aspects of Tradition Historical

A pattern of relationship that is almost the same as the above explanation, between Mr.____, Celie, and Shug Avery. Celie loves Shug and has sex with Shug, but by then Celie is also legally Mr.____'s wife. It's just that the wedding Celie and Mr. ____ are not based on economic and procreative reasons. Celie is a financially independent figure, before marrying Mr.____ and after having a pants-making business. She had known for a long time that she was barren, so the reason she was married to Mr.____ for following the wishes of her stepfather was not because she wanted to have a descendant. Meanwhile, the reason Mr.____ married Celie was to replace his dead wife, she wanted Celie to take care of the house and his children.

4. CONCLUSION

Alice Walker as the author of *The Color Purple* (1982) novel, used many structural elements that researcher could analyze. The structural elements which researcher could analyze are: character and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, and theme. There are several aspect could be explained by the researcher, such as: moral, physical, social, and mental.

Through her novel, Walker makes Celie the main character in the novel. She became the centerpiece of the story, as the main character Celie has a strong character, able to love sincerely in the *The Color Purple* novel there are also some protagonist characters like Nettie, Shug Avery, Sofia.

Finally, the researcher finds many moral values from *The Color Purple* novel. *The Color Purple* novel tells about the lesbianism Celie with Shug. In this novel also describes Celie's struggle in getting her rights and happiness.

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