

WOMEN'S EMANCIPATION IN GRETA GERWIG'S *LITTLE WOMEN* MOVIE (2019): SOCIOLOGY OF LITERATURE

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Abstrak

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui bentuk emansipasi wanita dalam film *Little Women* 2019. Penelitian ini juga bertujuan untuk menunjukkan bagaimana sutradara menyampaikan emansipasi wanita melalui karyanya. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian sastra. Peneliti menggunakan teori sosiologi sastra untuk mengkaji film ini. Data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini meliputi data primer yang diambil dari dialog, adegan, dan aktivitas karakter dalam film *Little Women* 2019. Sedangkan data sekunder diambil dari buku, artikel, jurnal, dan website yang terkait dengan penelitian ini. Peneliti menggunakan teknik analisis dokumen untuk mengumpulkan data. Setelah data terkumpul, peneliti menggunakan analisis data kualitatif untuk menganalisis data. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa ada lima bentuk emansipasi wanita yang terkandung dalam film ini. Sutradara menggambarkan emansipasi wanita melalui tiga cara, yaitu dengan menciptakan tokoh, latar, dan peristiwa. Greta Gerwig mengangkat isu emansipasi wanita dalam film ini karena cerita yang terkandung dalam film ini mencerminkan kehidupan masyarakat Amerika di abad ini.

Kata Kunci: little women, sosiologi sastra, emansipasi wanita

Abstract

The objectives of this research are to find out the form of women's emancipation in *Little Women* Movie 2019. This research also aims to show how the director conveys women's emancipation through her work. This research is literary study. Researchers use the theory of sociology of literature to study this movie. The data used in this study includes primary data taken from dialogues, scene and the characters' activities in *Little Women* movie 2019. Meanwhile, secondary data are taken from books, articles, journals, and websites related to this research. Researchers used document analysis techniques to collect data. After the data is collected, the researcher uses qualitative data analysis to analyze the data. The results of this study show that there are five forms of women's emancipation contained in this movie. The director describes the emancipation of women through three ways, namely by creating characters, settings, and events. Greta Gerwig raises the issue of women's emancipation in this movie because the story contained in this movie reflects the life of American society in this century.

Keywords: little women, sociology of literature, women emancipation

1. INTRODUCTION

Women's emancipation is a term that is often heard, but not everyone understands what women's emancipation means. Women's emancipation is a movement that provides opportunities for women to work and study according to their abilities with men. Emancipation is women's liberation from classes, degrees, and low status, whether in education, work, or society. Even though it has entered

the modern era, the gap is still being felt by women. Since ancient times, women have been looked down upon and have a degree below men's. Independence is just a meaningless word for women. They remain entangled in limitations that have no basis.

Women's emancipation is a topic that is often discussed in various media. One of them is through a novel and a movie. *Little Women* is a story by a phenomenal writer, Louisa May Alcott. Louisa May Alcott was a pioneer of feminism in America. Louisa voiced feminism through the writings in her novels. One of her works that speaks about feminism and women's emancipation is *Little Women*. This novel was released in 1868. This novel tells about the struggle of women to achieve their dreams. Women's emancipation is often conveyed through movies, one of which is the adaptation of Louisa May Alcott's famous story " *Little Women* ". This movie has the same title as the novel. After the success of becoming a phenomenal novel, this story was finally made into a film several times. This movie, directed by Greta Gerwig, tells the story of a woman's struggle to achieve her dreams. Greta Gerwig is a director, screenwriter, and actress. Greta had received the best director nomination in the course of her career. In his last two works, he continued to create a movie featuring women in the leading roles. Her first movie, titled *Lady Bird*, tells the story of a woman who struggles to realize her dreams and find her identity.

Little Women movie takes place in Concord, Massachusetts, in 1868. This movie presents a light story full of moral messages for our lives. This movie tells the life of a small family consisting of a mother and four daughters. Every child has a different personality and life principles. Jo, the second child, is a tomboyish girl. She likes to write and dreams of becoming a reliable writer who earns much money to help her family's economy. In general, this movie tells about Jo's struggles in achieving her dreams that others consider unreal. This movie is also spiced with a love story between Jo, Laurie, and Amy. Jo, as the main character, brings a lot of women's emancipation movements, ranging from education, work, and social status. Jo is an intelligent and educated girl. She clearly said why the government restricted schools for girls after her sister, Amy, was beaten by her teacher at school. In the end, Jo also established a school for all children according to their abilities and desires without any gender restrictions.

Little Women movie is a movie that is often used as a research object. Even though researchers have researched it, the research on this movie only focuses on feminist topics, even though other things are more prominent in this movie, namely women's emancipation. Therefore, this study was compiled to discuss the emancipation of women in the 2019 *Little Women* movie. The researcher formulated a study entitled "*Women's Emancipation in Greta Gerwig's Little Women Movie (2019): Sociology of Literature*".

The researcher formulated three objectives of this study: 1). To identify the forms of women's

emancipation contained in Little Women Movie (2019) 2). To describe how the director describes the emancipation of women through Little Women Movie (2019) 3). To discover the reason why the director raised the issue of women's emancipation in Little Women Movie (2019).

The researcher divided relevant and related research to this research into two categories. The first research was taken based on linguistics studies. The researcher take research conducted by (Fridolini et al., 2021; Indrayani, 2022; Aprilia, 2021). Some researchers examine politeness (Fridolini et al., 2021), other research examines directive speech act (Indrayani, 2022), and the last research examines language function (Aprilia, 2021). The research aims to add knowledge related to the object of the study.

Literary studies were relevant to this research were taken from research conducted by (Septiana, 2020; Liebertus, 2021; Sholikhati, 2021; Rosalinah et al., 2022; Santi & Rahmi, 2019; Surahman et al., 2022; Setyabudi & Laili, 2022; Ekasanti & Hermawati, 2019; Dewi & Medina, 2020; Mudmainah et al., 2019; Zhang, 2019). The researcher takes research conducted by the researchers using the same theory to examine the Little Women movie, namely by using a feminist approach. The first research was conducted (Septiana, 2020) this research studied gender stereotypes, and the results showed that there are several forms of gender stereotypes in this movie, namely, Independent and intelligent person who has values, showing equality and success in the public sector. Subsequent research was conducted by (Liebertus, 2021), this research is studied about gender inequality using the Feminist Approach theory. The results of this research show that there are several things; namely, women are expected to be feminine, gentle and supposed to be married, and women can be independent and make a good living by themselves, not depending on men and marriage. The next research was conducted by (Sholikhati, 2021), this research analyzes the main character, Jo, in this novel. The next research was conducted by (Rosalinah et al., 2022), which examines feminism and communication in Little Women's family. The next research by (Santi & Rahmi, 2019) researched the Feminist Values found in the movie Litte Women 2019. Another study that uses feminist theory conducted by (Surahman et al., 2022), researched analysis about the Representation of Women's Inner Upheaval. The result shows that this movie's conclusion represents women's position as marginalized and not getting equal opportunities with men.

Besides using the theory of feminism approach, some other researchers use various other theories to study this movie. The research includes research conducted by (Setyabudi & Laili, 2022), which analyses social conflict in Little Women movie using a sociological approach. This study's result shows two types of realistic conflict in this movie: hostile feelings and hostile behaviour. In other studies that use the sociological approach conducted (Ekasanti & Hermawati, 2019), this research results in that the story of Little Women seems to contradict the struggle of American women

in the late 19th century.

Further research was conducted by (Dewi & Medina, 2020), who studied Feminism in this movie. The results show that there are five types of feminists in this movie, namely Liberal Feminism type, Marxist Feminism and Socialist type, Radical libertarian Feminism type, Psychoanalytic Feminism type, and Postmodern Feminism type. The next research conducted by (Mudmainah et al., 2019) used Tiffany K. Wayne's theory of triple role. This research is focused on Marmee's character. The last research conducted (Zhang, 2019), the researcher analyzed the story of Little Women using a Western humanism perspective. This study highlights that humanism is not a theory that ordinary people can not reach. It can shine in ordinary people like the characters in the story of Little Women.

Little Women is a story that has been analyzed a lot before, but from various studies that the researchers found, there has been no research showing the form of women's emancipation in this movie. The difference between this research and previous research is that the researcher wants to find out the form of women's emancipation and the way the director describes women's emancipation, which previous researchers have not done. The research aims to add knowledge related to the object of the study.

The researcher includes several theories that underlie this research, namely: the sociology of literature and its principles as well as women's emancipation.

The sociology of literature is a discussion analysis conducted on a literary work considering its societal aspects. According to Ratna (2013), sociology of literature is a literary work that considers various social factors. Sociology of literature examines a literary work accompanied by considerations from social aspects. Giving meaning to a system and the background of society and everything that happens in it is a stage. Basically, a literary work tells about various problems that exist in society. According to Wellek and Warren (1948) they stated three principles in sociology of literature: Sociology of Author, Sociology of Literature Work, and Sociology of Readers (Utami, 2019).

Women's emancipation is a term that often hears, but not everyone understands what women's emancipation means. Women's emancipation is a movement that provides opportunities for women to work and study according to their abilities with men. Emancipation is women's liberation from classes, degrees and low status, whether in education, work or society. According to Aruan (2011), the process of liberating a woman from a low socioeconomic class and laws that could limit the possibility of a woman developing and advancing is called emancipation.

2. METHOD

This research is literary study. The data used in this study includes primary data taken from dialogues, scene and the characters' activities in Little Women movie 2019. Meanwhile, secondary data are taken

from books, articles, journals, and websites related to this research. Researchers used document analysis techniques to collect data. After the data is collected, the researcher uses qualitative data analysis to analyze the data.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Forms of women's emancipation in Little Women Movie (2019)

3.1.1 Women's ability to open schools

Education in America before independence could only be taken by elite people. Public schools were accessible only to white people. The primary purpose of the school is to teach basic skills. A woman could build a school, which was very rare then. With the restlessness she is experiencing, Jo continues to think that education for women at that time is terrible and inappropriate. Women and all members of society should be able to get a proper education. She finally planned and determined to establish a school in her neighborhood with her opportunity. This description can be proven through her conversations with Meg and Amy.

Little Women movie (Duration 01:55:08 - 01:55:16)

Jo : *I'd like to open a school. We never had a proper school, and now there are women's colleges opening. There should be a school. For Daisy.*

Amy : *And what will Demi do?*

Jo : *I'll open a school for boys and girls both.*

After Aunt March died, things she had never thought of finally came into her life. Aunt March bequeaths her luxurious home to Jo. Jo considered selling it, but she wanted something more valuable and extraordinary to surprise Aunt March. She plans to turn this house into a school instead of selling it. She expressed her disappointment with the education that women received at that time. Jo built a school for girls and boys. Not only formal education, but this school also provides teaching in the arts, cooking, and self-defense. Jo's scene is a form of women's emancipation. Not only studying women can also set up schools for other women in this world.

3.1.2 Being a teacher

Teacher is a professional tasked with teaching, guiding, training, and evaluating. At that time, qualified teachers were still tough to find, and this was due to the absence of adequate teaching professional training. In addition, almost all teaching professions, both in schools and privately, are dominated by men. However, Jo was able to become a private tutor when she worked in New York City. This can be proven through the following dialogue:

Little Women movie (Duration 00:05:41- 00:05:43)

Mrs. Kirke : *Kitty and Minnie are waiting.*

Jo : *Oh... My students need me.*

Coming back from the Weekly Volcano Office, Jo returned to an apartment. She is seen waiting in a writing room. Apart from working as a writer, Jo teaches as a private tutor. Being a teacher in this year is a rare thing. As seen from the scenes in the movie, the teacher at Amy's school is a man, and the private tutor at the Laurence family is a man. Jo's presence as a teacher exemplifies women's emancipation in education. Jo showed that Women could compete and get jobs as teachers just like men at the time. Jo is known as a very competent teacher for her two students.

3.1.3 The women's ability to earn a living

Earning a living is an activity to support oneself or one's family that aims to earn wages for the services or labor they expend. In married life, earning a living is usually carried out by the head of the family or the father. But in the March family, everyone can make a living in their way. This can be proven through several scenes below.

Little Women movie (Duration 00:05:43 - 00:05:54)

Jo : *Oh... My students need me.*

Friedrich : *Always working.*

Jo : *Money is the end and aim of my mercenary existence.*

Friedrich : *No one gets ink stains like yours just out of a desire for money.*

Jo : *My sister Amy's in Paris, and until she marries someone wealthy, it's up to me to keep the family afloat.*

Jo was the most persistent child among the four sisters. After spending her childhood to youth in her village, she decided to go to New York to make a living. She became a private tutor in one of the apartments. In her conversation with Mr. Fredrich said that until her sister found an established man, she would do any job to support her family.

3.1.4 Being a writers

In one scene, it is shown that Jo plans to publish her story. She visited Mr. Dashwood at the Weekly Volcano Office. In this scene, we can see that the entire room is filled with men. At that time, being a writer could only be done by men. Women's work will never sell well and will not be considered by society. In the scene, it is shown that Jo is hiding her identity. This scene shows that Jo represents the emancipation of women. She revealed that not only men can now work and become writers. Women can do the same thing, namely work and become writers.

Little Women (2019) 00:01:35



Picture 1. Jo is in the Weekly Volcano office to get the story published

The scene above shows that women can become writers and have brilliant career. The picture above tells that the work she sent gradually to Mr. Dashwood has finally been accepted by society and is of great value. Jo sent stories about her life to be published in a book. After going through long stages of discussion, Jo could finally publish a book, get paid according to her wishes, and own the copyright of the works she made. The scene shows the emancipation of women in the field of work.

3.1.5 The women's ability to determine a life partner

Marriage is an activity of binding sacred vows carried out by women and men. Meanwhile, a life partner will accompany our life under any circumstances. In ancient times, choosing a life partner was usually done through arranged marriages, unlike what one of the characters in this movie, Meg. She decided to choose her life partner. Marrying a rich man was the dream of many girls then, but Meg chose to marry the man she loved. This can be proven through her conversation with her sister, Jo.

Little Women movie (Duration 01:31:55 - 01:32:05)

Meg : I want to get married.

Jo : Oh, why?

Meg : Because I love him.

Jo : You will be bored of him in two years, and we'll be interesting forever.

Meg : Just because my dreams are different than yours doesn't mean they're unimportant. I want a home, And a family. And I'm willing to work and struggle. But I want to do it with John.

As we know, one of the ways a woman can save her family is by marrying a rich man. The opposite was done by the eldest daughter in this family, Meg. Meg fell in love with a tutor in the family of Mr. Laurence. She liked the man when she first met him. As we know, Mr. Brooke is a poor man who works as a teacher. Even so, this did not stop Meg from marrying him. This, of course, did not go hand in hand with the societal stigma of the time. Marrying a poor man will add to the burden and problems in life. Meg's decision to marry Mr. Brooke shows the emancipation of women. This shows that women have the right to determine their life partner.

3.2 Depiction of Women's Emancipation in Little Women Movie (2019)

3.2.1 Creating characters

The director divides the characters into two parts, namely characters that support female emancipation and characters that do not support female emancipation, the characters that support female emancipation include: character Jo cares about education, character Jo become a writer, character Jo earning a living for the family, character Meg determining her life partner. characters doesn't support women emancipation: character Aunt March thinks that women cannot determine their path in life, character Amy accepts that women are only a property.

3.2.2 Settings

3.2.2.1 Weekly volcano office (New York City)

Little Women (2019) 00:01:42



Picture 6. Jo is in the Weekly Volcano office to get the story published

In this opening scene, it is shown that all the workers in the room are men. Jo was the only woman in the room. Weekly Volcano Office is a publisher's office in New York City. Being a writer for women at that time was a difficult thing to do. However, Mr. Dashwood, as head of the office, provided an opportunity for Jo to publish the work she brought.

3.2.2.2 School (ex- Aunt March's House)

Little Women (2019) 02:06:30



Picture 7. Aunt March's house was converted into a school

After Aunt March died, she left her mansion to Jo. Having considered selling this luxurious house,

Jo finally turned it into a good school, especially for girls. Jo founded a school for girls and boys with various knowledge taught, ranging from reading, art, and cooking to self-defense. Apart from Jo, her two sisters helped Jo to become a teacher at this school. This scene shows that the environment where Jo lives is very supportive of women's emancipation. This can be proven by Jo's success in establishing a school and Amy's acceptance as an art teacher.

3.2.2.3 Aunt March's house

Little Women (2019) 00:35:28



Picture 8. Aunt March said that women cannot make success on their own

Aunt March is one of the characters who always says that women cannot make decisions in their life. In one scene in her luxurious house, she tells Jo that women cannot decide for her. Every woman should marry a rich man so that she and her family can have a better life. This is undoubtedly contrary to the principle of women's emancipation. Women also have things for themselves without having to depend on other people.

3.2.3 Events

3.2.4 Living a life without a father

This movie tells the life of a harmonious family consisting of four daughters and a mother. Their father left to serve as a war volunteer. This can be proven through the following dialog.

Little Women movie (Duration 00:14:38-00:14:46)

Jo : She reminds me to be good, so Father will be proud when he returns.

Laurie : Where is he?

Jo : He volunteered for the Union Army. I wanted to go fight with him. I can't get over my disappointment in being a girl

Even so, this does not make them grow up as children who lack affection. They grew up loving each other. Their mothers are always swift in educating these children. Their father is seen delivering letters to his family. This is what makes them women who are responsible and always do good. They respect their parents, so they always consider all their behavior not to disappoint them. Their father's departure was also one of the reasons that made them grow into strong and independent women.

3.2.5 Struggling for economy

The March family is a middle-class family without a father as a breadwinner. They are often caught in economic difficulties. This caused Jo to have to work to support her family. She performs various jobs to support her family. This can be proven through the various scenes and conversations below:

Little Women movie (Duration 01:12:17 - 01:12:25)

Jo : Will this be enough for the train?

Marmee : Twenty-five dollars? That's not like Aunt March to be so generous.

Jo : I didn't go to Aunt March, I couldn't bear to.

Marmee : Where'd you get the money?

Jo : I only sold what was my own.

Meg : Jo! Your hair!

Jo cutting and selling her hair is one of the most iconic scenes in this movie. Her father left to become a military volunteer making the family's economy poor. Jo, with all the skills she had, finally decided to cut and sell her hair so that her mother could buy train tickets to visit her sick father. The actions taken by Jo are an example of being economically independent. She does not depend on anyone other than herself. Even though she has an aunt who can lend her money, Jo decides to do things that don't rely on others.

3.2.6 Setting up the school

As told in this movie, the upper classes can only enjoy proper education. The education available to the grassroots is far from appropriate. Education for women is very inappropriate. This can be proven by the scene where Amy gets improper treatment from her teacher at school. This made Jo want to do something useful for the people around her. She received an inheritance in the form of a luxurious house owned by Aunt March. She decided to turn the house into a decent school for children in her neighborhood. This can be proven through the dialogue below.

Little Women movie (Duration 01:55:05-01:55:16)

Meg : What will you do?

Jo : I'd like to open a school. We never had a proper school, and now there are women's colleges opening. There should be a school. For Daisy.

Amy : And what will Demi do?

Jo : I'll open a school for boys and girls both.

Jo's decision to change Aunt March's house benefited the people around her. Thanks to the school, children around it can get a proper education. Moreover, the school also provides space for children to develop their talents.

3.3 Reason of addressing women's emancipation in Little Women Movie (2019)

The director of this movie is Greta Gerwig. This is her second phenomenal work, which received a positive response from movie critics. Greta Gerwig herself is known as a reliable female director in Hollywood. Previously she had received a best director nomination for the 2018 Oscar for her previous work, *Lady Bird*. Through a short interview on TODAY's You Tube channel, Greta explained her reasons for making the movie *Little Women*. She liked the original story of this movie. She revealed that each character in this movie can show many exciting things. According to her, this story is very modern and can still be felt in this era. Adapted from a phenomenal novel, the story described by the novelist at the time this novel was released can still be felt by people who watched this movie in 2019.

This movie reflects the current state of society. The story contained in this movie is a reflection of the life of American society in this century. In 2017 a movement called the Women's March appeared in America. This movement emerged as a protest action welcoming the presidential election. The issue raised by this community is the importance of paying attention to women's rights. The women's movement intensified after the misogynistic President Trump ascended the throne. In both the 19th and in this centuries, the issue of women's rights was still a topic that was continuously discussed.

This movie aimed to make people care more about women's emancipation.

Discussion

Based on the results researchers found about women's emancipation in this movie. The researcher found five forms of women's emancipation contained in this movie. The director describes the emancipation of women through three ways, namely by creating characters, settings, and events. Greta Gerwig raises the issue of women's emancipation in this movie because the story contained in this movie reflects the life of American society in this century.

Based on Wellek and Warren's theory of the sociology of literature, the sociology of literary works is literary works as a reflection of society means that this literary work is a reflection of the social conditions that occurred when this movie was produced. Even though it took place in 1860, this movie relates to the needs of society living in this century. The *Little Women* movie, released in 2019, presented a story about women's emancipation issues. Issues about women are increasingly being discussed by various groups of people every year. At the time this movie was released, the women's movement was increasingly scrutinized by society. We can see this from the progress of women's emancipation in America. The movie's existence reminds us that until now, gender issues have not been resolved in society.

This research aims to add information to previous studies which use the *Little Women* movie as a material object for research conducted by (Fridolini et al., 2021; Indrayani, 2022; Aprilia, 2021; Septiana, 2020; Liebertus, 2021; Sholikhati, 2021; Rosalinah et al., 2022; Santi & Rahmi, 2019; Surahman et al., 2022; Setyabudi & Laili, 2022; Ekasanti & Hermawati, 2019; Dewi & Medina, 2020; Mudmainah et al., 2019;

Zhang, 2019). The difference between this research and previous research is in the chosen topic. This research raises the topic of women's emancipation in the movie by Greta Gerwig, while previous research has raised the issue of feminism in general.

4. CONCLUSION

The conclusion of this study contains three problem formulations: the form of women's emancipation in the movie, the director's way of describing women's emancipation in the movie, and the reasons why the director conveys the issue of women's emancipation in her work. There are five forms of women's emancipation in this movie: women's ability to open schools, being teacher, women's ability to earn a living, being writer and women's ability to determine a life partner.

The director describes the emancipation of women through three events, namely by creating characters, settings and events. The director divides the movie into two parts in character creation, namely characters that support women's emancipation and do not support women's emancipation.

The reason why the director raised the issue of women's emancipation in her work is that the women's emancipation movement is a movement that has existed since ancient times. As time goes on, people are increasingly concerned about this movement. This movie depicts the social situation in America at the time the movie was released. Although the story takes place in the 19th century, this movie still reflects the condition of society, especially women in this century.

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