

Female Voice about Love and Affair in Alice Munro's Three Stories in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini memaparkan pandangan Alice Munro terhadap wanita dan pernikahan sebagaimana yang digambarkan dalam tiga cerita pendeknya, yaitu, 1) "Floating Bridge", 2) "Nettles", 3) "What is Remembered" dalam buku kumpulan cerita pendek yang berjudul *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001). Dalam penelitian ini, penulis menggunakan teori feminis, tepatnya *gynocriticism*, yang diusulkan oleh Elaine Showalter. Penggunaan teori *gynocriticism* dalam penelitian ini difokuskan ke model psikoanalisis, untuk menjelaskan sisi psikologis wanita yang terlibat dalam ikatan pernikahan namun menjalin perselingkuhan, dengan mengambil tiga orang tokoh utama wanita dalam ketiga cerita pendek tersebut, yaitu Jinny, Si Narrator, dan Meriel sebagai pembawa suara Munro. Hasil analisis menyimpulkan bahwa pertama, tuntutan masyarakat akan pernikahan memberikan tekanan psikologis yang besar terhadap tokoh utama wanita. Kedua, wanita butuh pelarian agar bisa mendapatkan *self indulgence* yang mana dalam kasus ini adalah perselingkuhan yang bisa membantu mereka melupakan sejenak permasalahannya. Ketiga adalah bahwa setelah menikah, keluarga merupakan elemen terpenting dalam hidup seorang wanita. Hal ini dibuktikan dengan berhentinya para tokoh wanita ini melakukan perselingkuhan karena khawatir akan merusak dan menghancurkan keluarganya.

Kata kunci: istri, tekanan, pelarian, perselingkuhan, *gynocriticism*.

ABSTRACT

This article describes Alice Munro's thoughts about the relation between woman and marriage, as reflected in three short stories, 1) "Floating Bridge", 2) "Nettles", 3) "What is Remembered", in short stories collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* (2001). In this research, the writer uses feminist theory, namely the *gynocriticism* proposed by Elaine Showalter. The analysis focuses on the psychoanalytic model to explain the psychology of women who are involved in the marriage but have an affair, as reflected in three main female characters in these stories, they are Jinny, the Narrator, and Meriel. The analysis concludes that, first, the social rules about marriage give a big psychological pressure to the main female characters. Secondly, woman needs an escape for having self indulgence which, in this case, is the affair that can help them forget the problems temporarily. Thirdly, after getting married, family becomes the most important element in a woman's life. It is proved by the main female characters stop having an affair because they do not want to destroy their family.

Key words: wife, pressure, escape, affair, *gynocriticism*.

1. Introduction

There are many female authors who have produced various good works. Through their writings, women do not only fight for their equality, but they also contribute to society and make achievements. As a matter of fact, there are thirteen female authors who have become the winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature. Among those women is Alice Munro, who won The Nobel Prize in Literature in 2013, and became the thirteenth female author in the list. Alice Munro is known as a master of contemporary short story. Her unique style in writing stories has allowed her to gain various recognitions. One of her most critically acclaimed work is the short stories collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*.

There are many stereotypes set upon women which violate women's rights. These stereotypes are made to inhibit the women from developing their ability so that they can always be objectified by men. Despite all the restraining rules from society, women cannot be stopped from living in their own way. Through *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* story collection, Munro shows that women are human beings who have their own ways to survive the society without being stuck on the rules made by men to inhabit them. Women are not afraid to ignore the rules in the society to get their desire and to pursue their dreams. This article presents the explanation of how women follow their intuition to pursue their desire in love, as reflected in three selected stories from Alice Munro's story collection *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*.

2. Background of the Research

This article analyzes three selected stories from Munro's collection, namely 1) "Floating Bridge", 2) "Nettles", and 3) "What is Remembered". The way women championing their feeling over social rules and choosing to have an affair are the main issues in these short stories. The female main characters in these stories, Jinny, the Narrator, and Meriel, have a different way of thinking from other women. They are described as women who are easily tempted to have a love affair with a man whom they have never met before, or a man whom she has never met for a long time. The writer focuses the research on finding out the description of women presented in the stories, and the author's thoughts about women's feelings and desire particularly related to marriage and affair.

The way Munro describes her female characters and her thoughts regarding women's affair are best to be analyzed by using the gynocriticism. It is a branch of feminist criticism which was proposed by Elaine Showalter. She distinguishes the feminist criticism into two categories. The first category concerns with woman as a reader where woman is the consumer of male-produced literature; the second category is concerned with woman as a writer where woman is the producer of literature (Barry 123). Gynocriticism exists to criticize the literary works from a female point of view and a woman's experience, and to establish woman as both readers and writers in their own right.

In developing the research, the writer uses three steps to construct this research. Those steps consist of collecting data, analyzing data, and presenting the result of analysis. In collecting the data of this research, the writer uses the library research; reading all related books and documents to get the data. There are two kinds of data, primary and secondary data. The primary data come from the three short stories, 1) "Floating Bridge", 2) "Nettles", and 3) "What is Remembered", which are related to the issue of marriage and affair. The secondary data are collected from other sources such as articles, book, and journal of relevant topic and theory. Analysis is done by applying content analysis method, which focuses on all relevant data about the female character's thought and attitude about marriage and affair. The result of analysis is presented descriptively.

3. Review of Related Literature

The writer provides two previous reviews about *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* short stories collection and compares these following reviews with this research. The first review is an article from website Quill & Quire, Canada's Magazine of Book News and Reviews that is written by Bronwyn Drainie (2001) entitled "*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage*". In this article Drainie focuses on the stylistic of Munro. She analyzes the writing characterization of Munro's works. She says that in two stories from this collection, the main characters end their lives because of incurable illness. She argues that in the rest of the story, Munro shows us the main characters that always have problems of family and secrecy. Drainie also says that Munro has an interest in how the relationships happen, and it becomes her themes in most of her works.

The second review is an article by Mona Simpson in website The Atlantic Monthly (2001) entitled "*Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage: Stories*". In this

article, Simpson focuses on feminist perspective. She says that Munro always writes about the lives of girls and women. Munro always shows us the problems that happen in every woman. In this collection, Munro shows us the main characters who always faces the shock and credibility of the sexuality drives. These kinds of problems always appear in Munro's stories. Simpson also says that in Munro's world, it is the women who stray. It means that woman becomes a stranger in this world. The women are the one who have to adjust their lives in this world. The women's lives are arranged by the world, in this case is the patriarchal system. Simpson states that Munro has a specific idea for her female characters. She argues that "there is a long line of idolized women in Munro's stories, usually independent and childless, living emotionally extravagant, artistic lives, admired by shy, more cautious, and often younger women."

Based on the previous studies, it can be seen that this research is different from those researches because the writer focuses on the gynocriticism which see the woman as writer and the feminist thoughts or ideas of Alice Munro about woman as reflected on her female characters in three short stories in *Hateship, Friendship, Courtship, Loveship, Marriage* collection.

4. Alice Munro's Thoughts about Women and Love Affair

The writer analyses the personality, social life, and the process of the three female characters in Munro's short stories collection start to have an affair with the male characters that is new in their life circle before. These problems will be connected to the psychology and Munro's thoughts about women, marriage and love affair.

4.1 Women and Love Affair

The writer finds that Munro's thought about the uniqueness of women is reflected in her female character's personality and the way they live their lives. The writer analyses how the love affair happens from these three female characters: Jinny, the Narrator, and Meriel. Through these three female characters, we can see that women have their unique thought about relationship and love affair.

4.1.1. Jinny and the Shadow of Death

The first character is Jinny Lockyer from the story "Floating Bridge". Jinny Lockyer is described as a woman who has cancer and hopeless. The impact of her hopelessness is that

she becomes lonely and keeps herself away from the society. Her loneliness is also caused by her husband who does not care about her and flirts with another girl whom they hire to work in their house. Jinny's affair with Ricky is motivated by her disappointment to her husband and her life in general, which has been burdened by her illness. The feeling of hungry for attention makes Jinny commits an affair with Ricky. In addition to it, we see that Jinny's affair with Ricky has helped her realize that there is more to live, that she should live her days with lightheartedness instead of sadness, at least for the time given. The good point in this story is Jinny is not easily deceived with her wish that she will get a full attention, love, and joy from Ricky. She still keeps her mind clear and thinks that this affair does not good for her family. She willingly makes this affair as a temporary escape from her problem in family and social life.

4.1.2. The Narrator and the Unforgettable First Love

The second character is the Narrator in "Nettles". She is a woman who has just divorced with her husband and currently has a new husband. The story flashes back after the divorce. She visits her friend in her family's summer villa and there she meets her long lost first love, Mike, who is the colleague of her friend's husband. Mike is now married and has two children. The meeting reminds the Narrator about the love she had for Mike when she was young. She, indeed, still keeps the feeling for him and the meeting develops the love for more; she imagines how it feels if Mike was her husband, and she hopes Mike to have the same feeling for her. The story shows that first love never ends. The Narrator already has several relationships with some other men, but still she cannot find the same feeling as she feels for her first love. Her journey in looking for true love stops when she meets Mike again. She thinks that from Mike she will get what she wants. She needs someone who can make her comfortable just like her first love could. Thinking about Mike as her husband is enough for her to sooth the despair she feels after the divorce. However, the story shows that Mike does not love her (and never did) but he surely takes her as his good friend, because he tells her the story of his youngest child's tragic death that he never shared with others.

Just like the first story, in this story the Narrator can control her desire of her first love. She keeps her mind clear and still thinks about her children. She does not only care about her family, but also pays attention to Mike's family. After realizing that Mike only

takes her as a good friend, she decides to keep the feeling for herself and let go off her feeling to Mike. At the end, she gets married for the second time.

4.1.3. Meriel and the Boring Happy Life

The last character is Meriel from the story “What is Remembered”. She is described as a happy wife who has a husband who cares and loves her. The reason that makes Meriel do an affair is because she has a boring marriage life. Even though she has a good husband and children who love her, she still cannot erase her boredom. She needs something that makes her life becomes more challenging. Then, when she meets Dr. Asher, her life changes. She finds an attention that she does not get from her husband. The affair between Meriel and Dr. Asher simply happens because she feels challenged to go out of her comfort zone for a while and feels something new. Then, the good point is that she also keeps her mind clear just like two characters in the previous two stories. Meriel does not want to destroy her family either. She decides to forget that affair and do not let other people know about that. Meriel feels that this affair will be her unforgettable challenging story that makes her forget her boring life.

The three stories make the writer comes to a conclusion that women, whatever status and problems they face, share a similarity; they need affection. Woman is a creature who needs warmth and attention from people around her especially from a man who has become their partners. Even if they already get the attention from her partner, but if there is another man who gives them bigger attention they will likely take that just because they feel more appreciated, as illustrated in “What is Remembered”. The writer also finds that women commit affair because they have the reason. They have their own desire. In these three stories, we can see that consciously the women know that having an affair is a problem. They know that it can destroy everything they love, such as their husband and children. They also know that the affair can also destroy their partner’s family if he is already married. However, unconsciously the women need someone who can make them feel comfortable.

Fortunately, these three female main characters also have knowledge of social norm in their conscious mind which control and limit their desire. They obey the norms in the society. Three female characters above show that they do not want to make problem with the social norms. They consciously realize that they cannot insist to keep the relationship longer. These conscious minds help these women to not lose control. Their affairs seem to be a

momentary escape from the problem they face in their marriage. All of the female characters do not continue their love affair and decide to forget the affair to keep their family safe. They do not want to hurt their family, especially their children. Women do not follow their desire without thinking the effect that will happen after that.

4.2. The Reflection of Munro's Thoughts about Love, Affair and Un/Faithfulness in the Three Selected Short Stories

4.2.1 Pressure from the Society of Woman

Alice Munro was born on July 10, 1931, in Wingham, Ontario, Canada. The writer finds that Munro gets many pressures in her life. When she was young, she gets pressure to marry soon from her society, and after she gets married, she also gets another pressure to be a good housewife who always takes care of her family and children. From the beginning, Munro is trying to follow that rule. She is trying to be a common housewife in the society. Information shows us that Munro has tried to be a good wife for her husband and children. Unfortunately, she cannot follow that rule anymore and then she decides to keep a distance with people around her and focuses on her writing. From this information about Munro's personal life, the writer believes that Munro is highly influenced by her own experience in writing her stories. It is reflected in her three characters who also get a pressure to be a good housewife from the society and their family. The writer finds that woman always gets a pressure from the society which always limits and curbs the woman's life. This pressure makes a woman unable to reach their dreams. She cannot fulfill her desire because it breaks the rule of the society.

4.2.2. Self Indulgence as an Escape

In the first explanation the writer finds that woman seemly always get a pressure from the society which can make her feels miserable. She needs something that can make her forget the pressure. The woman needs self indulgence as her escape from reality. The woman is a human being who looks for the condition and someone who will make her feel protected and comfortable. Comfortable is the key thing or the biggest desire that woman has. She will choose to have an affair, because she really needs to feel comfortable in helping her to forget her real life. This affair is the woman's self indulgence and it is an escape from her problem. The woman does an affair because she follows her desire, and in this case her desire is to feel warm, comfortable and affection from their loving partner. She will have a relationship with

someone who protects and comforts her just like Munro describes in her stories. She gets that comfortable feeling from the fresh thing that she gets from the new people. The woman does an affair because she needs something that can make her escape from her current stressful life, even just for a while.

4.2.3. Family is the Most Important Element in Woman's Life

In addition to all reflections of Munro's thoughts in her short stories above, the writer also finds one more significant point; Munro wants to show the reader that having an affair does not mean that a woman is unfaithful to her partner. This situation will be valid if the affair happens because of a reason which can be counted in the future. Then, the woman can be said as still being faithful when she is not carried away into the affair and still has a clear mind to stop that affair because she does not want to destroy any family, whether it is hers or her affair partner's family.

In the end, from all of the information from the personal life of Munro which is reflected in her stories, the writer concludes that Munro uses her marriage and personal life becomes her inspiration in writing. She tells the readers through her stories that woman seemingly always gets a pressure in marriage life. She also tells all of pressure that she gets from the society through her characters. She makes her characters feel the same feeling with her and also makes them to be brave enough to take a risk to help themselves free from the pressures which can kill them. Munro through her stories wants to tell the reader that woman needs self-indulgence as an escape from the pressure. It is just like Munro, who has writing as her self-indulgence as an escape from stressful society, she also makes an escape for her character in facing the reality. With this indulgence, a woman can forget her problem and enjoy her moment and get something fresh which can make her feel comfortable. However, because in these three stories *Jinny*, *The Narrator* and *Meriel* do not have a special ability, so affair seems to be their indulgence to escape from their problems. From the stories, the writer finds that according to Munro this indulgence is really needed for a woman in living her life.

Moreover, the writer also finds that although Munro thinks that the indulgence is important for a woman, but it does not mean she does not mind to destroy her family for it. That is the reason Munro in this case does not allow her characters to continue her affair, because it will ruin the family. According to Munro, family is always the first. Munro thinks that the memory of having an affair is enough for woman in escaping from the reality. By keeping the affair as a memory a woman still can keep her family and children, because no

one could know about that affair. When she does an affair, it does not mean that the woman is not loyal and will betray her family. The woman does an affair because she is loyal, careful, faithful, and loves her partner and family. She does an affair, because that is the only way which can help her escape from her problem in the family and society. She does an affair because that is the way that she can survive from the pressure that she gets from the society and her family.

5. Conclusion

In the three stories, Munro tries to show the readers several things. Firstly, the society rules about marriage give a big psychological pressure for the main female characters. Secondly, woman needs an escape as self indulgence which in this case is the affair which can help woman to forget her problems temporarily. Thirdly, family is the most important element in woman's life. For this reason the main female characters stop having an affair because they do not want to destroy their family.

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