

WOMEN'S STEREOTYPE AND MEN'S DOMINATION AS REFLECTED IN STEPHANIE MEYER'S THE TWILIGHT SERIES

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ABSTRAK

Artikel ini membahas saga *Twilight* karya Stephanie Meyer yang menceritakan tentang hubungan antara manusia, vampir dan manusia serigala. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengidentifikasi imaji perempuan dan lelaki dalam karya Stephanie Meyer. Penulis memfokuskan analisa kepada beberapa karakter perempuan dan pria serta menggunakan teori "*prescriptive criticism*" dari Cheri Register. Register menentukan standar untuk sebuah karya sastra dari sudut pandang feminis. Setelah menganalisa data, penulis menemukan tiga imaji negatif wanita. Gambaran negatif tersebut antara lain penggambaran (1) wanita sebagai sosok yang tidak mandiri, (2) Wanita sebagai pihak yang selalu menuruti perintah, dan (3) wanita sebagai sosok yang kurang terpelajar dalam bergaul dengan masyarakat dan dalam menghadapi masalah. Dari penemuan diatas penulis mengasumsikan *Twilight* saga tidak mendukung pergerakan feminis walaupun ditulis oleh seorang wanita karena karya ini berisikan penggambaran karakter wanita yang negatif serta membawa pesan dan pengaruh buruk bagi pembacanya.

Kata kunci: Kritik feminis, Kritik sastra evaluatif, Twilight Saga

ABSTRACT

This article analyses the *Twilight* Series by Stephanie Meyer. These novels tell about the relationship among humans, vampires and werewolves. This research aims to identify the stereotype of women and men in the novels. The writer focuses the analysis on some of women characters and men characters by applying Cheri Register's "*Prescriptive criticism*". Register has

created standards for literary works from feminist view point. After analyzing the data, the writer found three women's stereotypes. The novel portrays (1) women as dependent beings, (2) women as submissive beings and (3) women as less Intellectual beings. The writer assumes that the *Twilight* series do not participate on feminist development even though the author is a woman.

Keywords: feminist criticism, Prescriptive criticism, Twilight series

1. Introduction

Before the feminist movement in 1960s, men had always given higher positions and large proportion in every aspects of life; such as an in occupation, politics, education, and even in writing. This phenomenon evokes the negative stereotype toward women's characteristic. As Lois Tyson states, "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive;" while at the same time "they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (2006; 85). It shows that women are conditioned as inferior while men get the power to dominate in the society.

Society, culture and literature are the important aspect which contribute to negative stereotype of women. The literary sphere itself was once dominated by men's works in which they set the image of both men and women as they prefer them to be. Almost all of the literary works that written by male author describe the women as inferior. Some female authors even also describe women in the same way. One of the female author who has great success is Stephanie Meyer with her novels the *Twilight Series*.

2. Background of the Research

Lately, popular literatures have attracted great attention of the reader. Yet, not all of the popular literatures are good. Some of them give bad influence to the readers and not is recommended to be read. One of them is *Twilight series* by Stephanie Meyer. This article is aimed to analyze the novel *Twilight Series* in term of the respective questions below:

1. How are women being stereotyped in novels?
2. What kind of male domination found in these novels?

3. Is the *Twilight* series recommended for readers from feminist perspective?

On the contrary, the literary work by female author have achieved a respectable popularity and commercial success in modern society. Meyer is an American female author who writes the novel series.

In this article, the writer strives to analyze the women's character which described by the female author who has not getting involved in feminist movement. The author writes about the women's stereotype and how the patriarchy dominates the society. *Twilight series* by Stephanie Meyer is very popular in the common reader but for the feminist reader these novels are not considered as a good literature. According to Lawrence Blum in his article "Stereotypes And Stereotyping: A Moral Analysis" states that "stereotypes are false or misleading generalizations about groups held in a manner that renders them largely, though not entirely, immune to counter evidence" (251-289). The stereotype comes from the opinion of society and culture. Stereotyping frequently underestimates one person or group. In literary world, women are often being stereotyped as a bad creature. As asumtions that women are weak and lack of skill in some fields. Meanwhile, men are described as a group which can do anything. In short men are better than women.

The writer applies feminist criticism proposed by Cheri Register. Register has three subdivisions in feminist criticism,

(1) the analysis of the "image of women" nearly always as it appears in works by male author; and (2) the examination of existing criticism of female authors. (3) The third type still needs formulating, but it may become the crux of feminist criticism in the future . it is a "prescriptive" criticism that attempts to set standards for literature that is "good" from a feminist viewpoint" (1989, 2).

The writer uses the third point of Register's theory in order to analyse the novels from prescriptive feminist viewpoint. In this research the writer wants to prove the novels of Stephanie Meyer the *Twilight Series* are containing women stereotyping who portrayed as inferior.

3. Review of The Related Studies

In conducting the research the writer uses the novel entitled *Twilight Series* written by Stephanie Meyer as the primary data. The writer also needs supporting data to analyze the novel.

In order to gain respective data, the writer evaluates other previous researches which are related to this research.

The first study related to the novel that the writer has found is an article by Nuxi published on Fanpop.com in 2010. According to him, Bella is daredevil exploit. She does not care about her life. She also puts addiction is not decision, it is severely dangerous compulsion. In his article Nuxi explains that portrait of Bella's Character is very pathetic. She is addicted to Edward, and she adores Edward too much. She wants to give everything to Edward even her soul and her life. This article is similar to the writer's research in term of figuring out that Meyer's novels describe the image of women as inferior figure. The work showed the woman stereotypings are occurs in literary works, even female author does not taking part on feminist movement promotion.

The second study related to the novel was written by Nitzhiya. She stated that Bella is the symbol of the anti-feminist. She is depicted a as weak womann, annoying, whiny, petulant and melodramatic. Since she is a 17-year-old girl, she cannot make a choice as an adult did. For example she makes decision to turn herself become a vampire forever and for the shake of the man she loves.

4. Women's Stereotype and Men's domination in Twilight Series

It is a common knowledge that women and men are always treated differently in society. The society has eventually built up an inequality in term of roles and rights between men and women. As Tyson states, "traditional gender roles cast men as rational, strong, protective, and decisive;" while at the same time "they cast women as emotional (irrational), weak, nurturing, and submissive" (2006:85).

Furthermore, such stereotypes are also presented in literary works in form of character's portrayed. Women are described as inferior in many literary works. Since literature is an important element in the society and civilization, it could brings a significant influence for the stereotyping. At the early era of literary works publication, literary works were mainly written by male authors. These authors portrayed women as dependent, weak, and emotional beings. Later on, many literary works writen by female authors have been published. Unfortunately, some female authors still portrayed women as negative stereotypes in their works. Since the literary

works are written by women themselves, it will convince the readers to believe that those descriptions about women are true.

- **Women as Dependent Beings**

The main character in the series is Isabella Swan, an innocent seventeen years old girl. Bella moves to her father house in different town, after had living 16 years with her mother. In the new town, she quickly makes some new friends in her a new school. Somehow, Bella suddenly becomes a famous person in the town. A male character named Edward Cullen is introduced. He is described as a gorgeous young man who was turned into a vampire when he was seventeen. Long story short, Bella and Edward fall in love.

In another part of the novel, it is stated that Bella has a problem in keeping her balance: she often slips and falls. “The sloshing of my new waterproof boots was unnerving. I missed the normal crunch of gravel as I walked.” (*Twilight* 5). Bella misses her step when she walks, and it happens several times. Bella needs someone to assist her in order to keep her body when she fall. “I tried to concentrate on my feet, but he kept creeping back into my thoughts just when I really needed my balance.” (*Twilight*, 39). In the laboratory, Bella slips again and again. Edward who stands beside her spontaneously catch her up. It can be infered that even for a small thing like walking, Bella still needs help. In short, it reflects how badly dependable she is.

- **Women as Submissive Beings**

There are several examples that can be pointed out from the *Twilight* series. The first example can be seen in Bella's characteristics. At one point of the story, Bella is punished by his father. As stated in the novel from Bella's point of view: “Jacob Black tells Charlie about the motorcycle I'd been riding on the sly”. Jacob does it intentionally because he wants to get Bella grounded (being kept at home) so she couldn't be with her boyfriend. As part of the punishment, Charlie gives Bella new regulation: she needs his permission to meet Edward. As the novel states "Edward had been allowed to see me only from seven until nine-thirty p.m., always inside the confines of my home and under the supervision of my dad's unfailingly crabby glare". (*Eclipse*, 2). Charlie also suggests Bella has to be nice toward Jacob.

At this point, Bella has reached 18-year-old. Yet despite of being an adult and the fact that she really loves Edward, Bella obeys all the rules from her father. She even begins to be nice toward Jacob. She comes to Jacob as her father tells her to. It indicates that Bella is very

submissive to her father, and she is willing to disregard her own feeling or thought over her father's rule.

- **Women as Less Intellectual Beings**

Another stereotype found in the series is women as less intellectual beings. In traditional misconception gender roles, women are considered as less intellectual. It is because women had no access to education in the past and did not occupied strategic jobs or position in society. As the time goes by, people in all over the world has begun to shift their paradigm toward this issue. Women have opportunity to access education and to work in important sectors. Unfortunately, the stereotype is still remain. Some people still believe that women less smarter than men. The case is the same in this *Twilight* series. Meyer as the author apparently still believes that women are less intellectual than men in many aspects. It can be seen from her way of depicting the female characters in the series.

The writer divides the analysis of this point into three sub-points. The first sub-point concern about intellectuality in academic matters. Bella is described as a student who is not good at lessons in school. When she studies in the class, she always thinks about her boyfriend, so she makes the wrong answer when her teacher asks. As the novel says in Bella point of view: ““It was worse because Mr. Varner called on me in Trig when my hand wasn't raised and I had the wrong answer””. (*Twilight*, 16). Beside daydreaming in class, she also bad on calculus. Even, her friend thinks that she needs help with the lessons. ““What? Do you need help with Calculus? ...””, says Jessica when Bella calls her (*New Moon*, 58). It means that Jessica know that Bella has a problem with calculus lesson. She also has nothing to do with literature, as quoted ““I didn't know much about psychoanalysis,...”” (*New Moon*, 55).

Another aspect is non-academic matter. Bella is bad on sport. During the sport practice, she just stands still in ceratain place without making any move. ““It was miserable because I had to play volleyball, and the one time I didn't cringe out of the way of the ball, I hit my teammate in the head with it””. (*New Moon*, 16). The quotation shows beside bad on academic, she also careless which leads her hurts her team mate in the gym class.

Negative stereotypes of women come from patriarchal society. The society is dominated by men and women are being underestimate. To maintain men's domination, there are two things society done. Male characters are presented in particular ways that have superior. It seems Meyer

agree that men's domination is actually alright. This sub-chapter will explain it in two points: the men's domination in relationship, and the men's domination in society.

- **Domination in Relationship**

The domination of men can be found in term of personal relationship. For example, there is a complex relationship between Bella, Edward and Jacob. Yet, the domination is on Edward. Meyer describes Edward as an perfect man who has handsome face, powerful body, and like a magnet for women around him. Edward even says to Bella: "I'm the world's best predator, aren't I? Everything about me invites you in — my voice, my face, even my smell" (*Twilight* 141). Edward believe that he is amazing. Even, his side as a mysterious and dangerous creature even are amazed Bella. "Interesting... and brilliant... and mysterious... and perfect... and beautiful... and possibly able to lift full-sized vans with one hand" (*Twilight*: 41).

Bella devotes her life for Edward. She falls in love with Edward, and she always obeys what Edward told her to. She agree when Edward asked her to stay away from Jacob. He also forbid her to come close to La Push. If she tries to break Edward's rules, Edward will do another ways to restrain her action. For example, Edward once ruins Bella's car so she cannot go anywhere without his permission. It seem that Edward has control over Bella's life which indicates that men have the domination to rule women in personal relationship.

- **Domination in Society**

In human civilization, men are tend to dominate woman since because society believes that men are more powerful and more rational, while women are weaker and less intellectual. In Fact, it is not true. The domination of men over women in society are also reflected in teh novels. It can be infered in a character named Carlisle. Carlisle Cullen is the founder and the leader in Cullen's clan. In his family, he is the one who has authority to change someone to be a vampire. Carlisle has his own reason to change someone to be vampire, whereas not all of the family members want to be vampire. Rosalie, for instance, she never wants to be a vampire, because she does not want to be immortal. "I lived in a different world than you do, Bella. My human world was a much simpler place. It was nineteen thirty-three. I was eighteen, and I was beautiful. My life was perfect" (*Eclipse*, 90). The quotation above shows that when she lived as human in the past, everything was good for her. She had perfect life and she never wanted to change it.

5. Conclusion

After analyzing the novel *Twilight Series* by Stephanie Meyer using prescriptive theory by Cheri Register, the writer concludes that there are two main points that can be identified from these novels. The first main point is Meyer's descriptions concerning to the stereotypes of women as found in the women's characters. The second main point is Meyer's description concerning to the aspects of male's domination as found in the male characters in her novels.

Stephanie Meyer created Bella as the main character and the narrator in these novels, thus the plot runs from Bella's point of view and thoughts. However, Bella's character is portrayed as inferior which away from feminist ideas. Instead, these novels remain the negative stereotypes of women which are actually wrong and need to be cleared. It means that these novels are not good for the woman readers. Meanwhile men are described as the powerful and has superiority in society and relationship. In his novels, Meyer wrote unfair depiction of men and women which absolutely not good for feminist development.

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