



**THE SPIRIT OF FEMINISM REFLECTED IN THE MAIN
CHARACTER OF *MONA LISA SMILE MOVIE*: A STUDY OF
FEMINISM IN A PATRIARCHAL SOCIETY**

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Submitted by:
Widya Ivani Putri
A2B0070119

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PRONOUNCEMENT

The writer states truthfully that this thesis is compiled by her without taking results from other research in any university, in S-1, S-2, S-3 and Diploma degree. In addition, the writer ascertains that she does not take the material from other publication or someone's work except for the references mentioned in bibliography.

Semarang, Desember 2011-12-10

Widya Ivani Putri

APPROVAL

Approved by:
Thesis Advisor,

Dra. Dewi Murni, M.A
NIP. 194508081975011001

VALIDATION

Approved by
Strata -1 Thesis Examination Committee
English Department
Faculty of Humanities, Diponegoro University
On Desember 2011

Chair Person,

Sukarni Suryaningsih, S.S, M.Hum
NIP. 197212231998022001

First Member

Dra. Dewi Murni, M.A
NIP. 194508081975011001

Second Member

Arido Laksono, S.S, M.Hum
NIP. 197507111999031002

MOTTO

**“NEVER TROUBLE ABOUT TROUBLE BEFORE TROUBLE TROUBLES
YOU”**

(The writer)

**HAL TERINDAH DALAM HIDUP ADALAH KETIKA BISA MELIHAT
ORANGTUA TERSENYUM DAN KITA ADALAH ALASAN DIBALIKNYA**

(The writer)

DEDICATION

This paper is dedicated to :

My beloved family

My dearest “yangsa”, friends and everyone
who help me accomplish this paper

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Praise be to Allah, the Cherisher and Sustainer of the worlds, for the mercy and guidance so that the writer can finish this thesis. Much peace and blessing also are upon the Prophet, Muhammad, SAW.

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The writer realizes that this thesis is far from perfect. She, therefore will be glad to receive any constructive criticism and recommendation to make this thesis better. Finally, the writer expects this thesis will be useful for all the readers.

The writer,

Widya Ivani Putri

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ABSTRAK

Film merupakan karya sastra audio-visual yang akhir-akhir ini menyita banyak minat masyarakat. Hal ini dikarenakan film bukan hanya berfungsi sebagai sarana hiburan namun juga merupakan refleksi dan inspirasi kehidupan masyarakat yang sarat akan nilai-nilai sosial dan moral sehingga dapat dikaji lebih dalam.

Mona Lisa Smile merupakan salah satu film yang menyajikan cerita mengenai ideologi feminisme dimana pandangan tersebut sangat bertentangan dengan aturan-aturan sebuah lingkungan masyarakat akademis yang cenderung patriarki. Dalam hal ini penulis ingin mengkaji lebih dalam mengenai pandangan feminis Katherine Watson, tokoh utama dalam film tersebut dan usahanya mengubah pandangan patriarki masyarakat Wellesley yang terlalu memposisikan pria sebagai “yang berkehendak” dan memandang wanita sebagai umat yang sudah ditakdirkan untuk mengisi sebuah peran sebagai istri dan ibu dalam hidup mereka.

Adapun metode penelitian yang digunakan untuk menganalisis film tersebut adalah metode penelitian pustaka dimana penulis menggunakan buku-buku referensi serta sumber dari koran, majalah, artikel maupun internet untuk mendukung kajian analisisnya. Metode eksponensial juga digunakan yakni untuk menganalisis aspek-aspek naratif seperti latar, karakter dan plot; aspek sinematik seperti penggunaan kamera dan *mise-en-scenes*; serta aspek ekstrinsik yang penulis fokuskan pada analisis patriarki dan feminisme. Akhirnya, kesimpulan akhir dari analisis film *Mona Lisa Smile* ini adalah bahwa meski banyak cercaan dan kritik yang dialami Katherine Watson di Wellesley, namun hal itu tidak membuatnya berhenti. Pemikiran feminisnya yang pada dasarnya menuntut masa depan yang lebih baik dari mahasiswa lulusan Wellesley dari pada sekedar menjadi ibu rumah tangga, ternyata dianggap sebagai sebuah pendurhakaan terhadap takdir perempuan. Walaupun pada akhir cerita Katherine Watson memilih untuk meninggalkan Wellesley, namun usahanya tidak sepenuhnya gagal karena salah satu mahasiswanya yang sudah menikah memutuskan untuk mengajukan perceraian atas pengkhianatan suaminya yang—karena tradisi—harus dipendam, dan diapun akhirnya memutuskan untuk melanjutkan pendidikannya ke Universitas Ya

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

In this modern era, literature has been growing very widely. We cannot run from the technology that influences our mind and our life. In modern life, literature outputs are not only prose, poetry and drama but as a result of modernization and development of technology, people create films or movies by recording the events and showing them to the public. Movies usually record cultural, social or political issues and other aspects of society.

Mona Lisa Smile is a movie that mainly talks about the spirit of feminism reflected by the main character, Katherine Watson, who is an art teacher of Wellesley College. She has an ambition to make her students, who are all women, realize that they also have the same opportunities to reach the highest education and to determine their own future as career women.

The third edition of *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, states that;

“Feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interests of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how what they term engendered power imbalances in a given culture are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary texts.” (Guerin, 1992:182)

Based on the quotation above, it is clear that feminist literary critics should focus on the kind of literary texts that reflect feminism and should try to figure out what makes woman struggle against the patriarchal condition and what kind of act and decision they can do to support their belief from the literary text. In this case, the literary text that will be analyzed here is a movie about a reflection of patriarchal condition that is challenged by a new vision of feminism as a result of dissatisfaction toward gender inequality and discrimination.

2. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The problems that will be analyzed in this thesis are mainly about the effort of Katherine Watson to make a change in Wellesley College, the most conservative college in America at that time. The main purpose of Watson is to change the mindset of the students that a woman not only has to end up as a housewife but also has a chance to be a professional career and reach the highest education. The analysis will be focused on the spirit of feminism coming from the main character's ideology and the reactions of the patriarchal society towards it which will also be supported with the intrinsic aspect of film such as theme, setting, character, and plot.

1.3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study can be stated as follows:

- To further comprehend about feminism in *Mona Lisa Smile* movie.
- To analyze the spirit of feminism toward gender inequality in American patriarchal society through the character of Katherine Watson in *Mona Lisa Smile* movie.

- To analyze the social conflict shown in the movie as a result of the feminist ideology of the main character.

4. METHOD OF THE WRITING

To find the data as reference of writing this thesis, the writer uses library research. Library research is a research in a room, conducted by the writer to get some data or information related to the topic from books, magazines, newspaper, internet or audio visual. (Semi: 1993)

The writer also uses two types of approach method to analyze the topic. The first one is exponential approach that will be used to analyze the intrinsic aspects that are related to the motif of the movie, and the images shown in the film. This is in line with *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, “We designate this method as the exponential approach because the inclusiveness of the term suggests at once the several meanings of motif, image, symbol, and archetype” (Guerin, 1992:197). The second one is the feminist approach that is concerned with the feminist ideology of the main character that actually expects to change the the patriarchal culture of a society. The feminist approach is supported by Guerin in his book *A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature*, “feminists believe that our culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interest of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how what they term engendered power imbalances in a given culture are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary text.” (1992:182)

5. ORGANIZATION OF THE WRITING

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION. This chapter consists of background of the study, scope of the study, purpose of the study, method of the writing, and the organization of the writing.

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY OF THE STORY. This chapter contains the synopsis of the movie’s story. The short summary is included in this chapter to give assistance in understanding the story.

CHAPTER 3 LITERARY REVIEW. In this chapter the writer presents the intrinsic aspect, cinematography aspect and extrinsic aspect related to the study. The intrinsic aspects comprise theme, character, setting, and plot. The cinematography aspect includes establishing shot, angle, camera movement, sound and mise-en-scene. The writer also explains the extrinsic aspect to support the analysis in chapter IV. The extrinsic aspects are concerned about the spirit of feminism and patriarchy.

CHAPTER 4 DISCUSSION. This chapter consists of analysis and discussion of the research from the beginning until the end of the study.

CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION. This last chapter puts forward some conclusions based on the study results.

CHAPTER 2 SUMMARY

Mona Lisa Smile is a story which is set in 1953 where the female stereotype is still very obvious. It mainly talks about a woman named Katherine Ann Watson, an Art-history teacher who is graduated from UCLA and going to teach at Wellesley College—a Woman Liberal-Arts College and the most conservative college in America at that time—located in Massachusetts.

After so long Watson has waited a chance to be a teacher of art at Wellesley College, finally the position is hers. In her point of view, she believes that she will be able to make something different in that conservative College to change the mindset of her students. She tries to make a new view that women are also able to reach the highest education and become a professional career instead of living as a wife and a mother. She uses modern arts in teaching as an analogy that women need to open their mind for a new idea; they need not always conform to the female stereotype considering that every woman should be married, have a baby, and serve her husband nicely.

On the other hand, the dean of the college, Jocelyn Carr, finds that the material taught by Watson is actually out of the syllabus and not acceptable by the school. She warns Watson that she should reduce her teaching of modern art to the minimum or she will lose her job at Wellesley. Although the threat of the dean makes Watson daunted, she

still believes that there must be a hope to make her students understand that they should not end up with marriage.

The story later tells about some Watson students' life and relationship. Joan Brandy, one of Watson's students, who is also the smartest one, finally gives up and decides to marry Tommy Donegal after a long dilemma of choosing whether she has to continue her study to Yale or get married like other girls. Joan firstly plans to continue her study to faculty of law so Watson supports her by giving the application form of Yale University. However she finally accepts Tommy's proposal and they are married which makes Watson really disappointed with her decision. The other girl is Elizabeth Warren, the daughter of the head of the Alumni Association, who always actively criticizes the teaching method or something which—in her point of view—is not suitable or out of the standard rule in Wellesley College by publishing it on the campus newspaper. She firstly argues against Watson's ideology about feminism and tries to show her how important a marital status for a woman of Wellesley. But after she is married to Spencer Jones, a lawyer, sooner she realizes that life without a husband is better after she finds that Jones has betrayed her. Later, she falls for divorce and plans to continue her study to University of Yale.

Although it is told that at the beginning most of the students are skeptic to Watson, later they seem to admire and believe her. The ending of the story tells that finally after one year teaching, Watson decides to leave Wellesley College.

CHAPTER 3

LITERARY REVIEW

. 3.1. FILM

Film is usually called as a motion picture or moving picture since it shows a picture inside that is able to move as we can see people do something by a certain medium. According to *Dictionary of English Language and Culture* by Della Summers,

“A film is a roll of material which is sensitive to light and which is used in camera for taking photographs or moving pictures for the cinema; movie, a story, play, recorded on film to be shown in the cinema, on television, etc.” (1992:476)

Based on the definition above, we can understand that a film is a result of situations or activities recorded by a tool like camera that later will be shown in cinema or television. The development of recent technology even creates some revolution in making such a

moving picture. When firstly the moving pictures shown on television were only a record of activities or situations without any sounds, sooner they developed into two dimensions that offer both motion pictures and sounds at the same time. The book *How to read a Film: Movies Media and Beyond* states;

“Moving Pictures are at first glance most closely parallel to the pictorial arts. At first, film could compete directly with painting only to a limited extent; it wasn’t the late 1960s that film color was sophisticated enough to be considered more than marginally useful as a tool. Despite this severe limitation, the effects of photography and film were felt almost immediately, for the technological media were clearly seen to surpass painting and drawing admittedly limited but nevertheless vital respect: they could record images of the world directly.” (Monaco, 2009:45-46)

The statement above shows how actually the film making develops into the sophisticated one as we often find today. Furthermore the recent moving pictures—not only films but also broadcasting news or entertainment—are not only shown in recording but also broadcasted “live”. When we are talking about film, we cannot separate them from the theme or situation exposed in the film itself. As a literary work, film is always related to culture since both of them are inspired by each other. The statement is supported by Lawrence Lorimer in his book *Grolier Encyclopedia of Knowledge* that states;

“Films can record culture and they can treat social and political issues and other aspects of societies to capture relationships difficult to be communicated by other means. Films allow scientists to see aspects of the world that are difficult or impossible to be observed by naked eyes.” (1991:506)

The statement above means that there are some aspects that construct the story of the film so it can be analyzed. The book of *Memahami Film* by Himawan Pratista states that;

“*Film secara umum dapat dibagi atas dua unsur pembentuk yakni, unsur naratif dan unsur sinematik. Dua unsur tersebut saling berinteraksi dan berkesinambungan untuk membentuk sebuah film.[...].Bisa kita katakan bahwa unsur naratif adalah bahan (materi) dan unsur sinematik adalah cara (gaya) untuk mengolahnya.*” (2008:1)

Based on the quotation above, film, just like drama or prose, also has narrative aspects (intrinsic and extrinsic) that construct the film. A film also has some cinematography aspects that are defined as the style or the way to make a film.

3.2. INTRINSIC ASPECTS

1. Setting

Setting is usually referred to the general location, historical period and social surroundings where the actions of a story develop. Abraham as quoted by Koesnosoebroto in his book *The Anatomy of Prose Fiction* describes setting as follows,

“Setting as the general location and the historical time in which the actions occurs in narrative and dramatic work, while the setting of an episode or scene within a work is the particular physical location in which it takes place.” (1988:80)

In few words, we can say that setting is a place where and when something happens.

2. Character

Character is the most important element in fiction, drama or film. Characters are the people told in the story. There are two kinds of character types; the protagonist and the antagonist. Protagonist is the central character and antagonist is the character with whom the protagonist struggle.

Furthermore, according to Foster as quoted by William Kenney in his book *How to Analyze Fiction* (1966: 28-29), there are also a specific type of character feature; a flat character and a round character. Flat character is basically a character that has one side of personality without ever be is changed in whole story. On the contrary, the round character is a character with more complex features of ability, psychology, points of view based on the situations given in the story.

3. Plot

Based on Laurence Perrine's book entitled *The Element of Fiction* (1993:41), plot is the sequence of incidents or events of which a story is composed, presented in a significant order. Plot is the action of the story, the arrangement of happenings as planned by the author. There are five parts of plot according to Koesnosobroto in his book *The Anatomy of Prose Fiction* (1988:824), as follows:

3.2.3.1 Exposition

This is the opening that sets the scene, introduces the main character, tells the audience or reader what has happened before the story is opened, and provides any other background information of the movie or film.

2. Complication

This is part where the conflict begins to rise. The conflicts usually produce suspense and lead to the climax, crisis or turning point.

3. Climax

This is the moment of greatest tension in which the outcome to be decided. The climax is usually followed by a resolution of the complication which the text usually ends.

4. Anti – Climax

This is the part when the tension comes to fall down.

5. Resolution

It is the point of getting the solution of the conflict.

From the explanation of the structure of plot above, we can see that most of traditional fiction, drama and film employ the basic plot structure; Exposition – Complication – Climax – Resolution; which is also called the elements of plot.

2. CINEMATOGRAPHY ASPECTS

A film is not only consists of intrinsic aspects and extrinsic aspects as well as drama or prose, but also consists of cinematography aspects. The word “Cinematography” is derived from Latin “Cinema” that means “Picture”. The book of *Memahami Film* by Himawan Pratista states that in the cinematography, there are some elements, but in this chapter, the writer will only focus on establishing shot, camera angle, sound, and mise-en-scene.

1. Establishing Shot

Establishing Shot is a shot that usually involves a distant framing. It also shows the spatial relations among the important figures, objects, and settings in a scene. It is usually used when the director wants to show the location/set/environment where the action will take place – to create context, for example, moods, rules, time and place.

1. Extreme Long Shot



Extreme Long Shot is a shot in which the scale of the object shown is very small; a panoramic view of an exterior location is photographed from a considerable distance, often as far as a quarter-mile away. It is usually used to show the context of place as shown in the above picture.

2. Long Shot



Long Shot is a framing in which the scale of the object shown is small; a standing human figure would appear nearly the height of the screen.

3. Medium Long Shot



Medium Long Shot is a shot at a distance which makes an object about 4 or 5 feet high appear to fill most of the screen vertically.

4. Medium Shot



Medium Shot is a shot in which the scale of the object is of moderate size; a human figure seen from the waist up would fill most of the screen.

5. Medium Close Up



Medium Close Up is a shot in which the scale of the object shown is fairly large; a human figure is seen from the chest up fill most of the screen.

6. Close Up



Close Up is a shot in which the scale of the object shown is relatively large, most commonly a person's head seen from the neck up, or an object of a comparable size that fills most of the screen.

7. Extreme Close Up



Extreme Close Up is a framing in which the scale of object is very large; most commonly, a small object or a part of the body. It is also called *detail shot*.

1. Angle

The camera angle is the angle view of objects that are in the frame. In general,

the camera angle is divided into three; they are high-angle, straight-on angle, and low angle.

1. High angle



At this point, the camera seems to see objects in the frame beneath it. Usually this technique is used to make an object look smaller. Besides, high-angle is usually also used to show the broad panorama and landscape of a wide area.

2. Straight-on angle



At this point, the camera is parallel to the object in the frame. This angle makes the eyes of the audience on the same level with the object in the frame.

3. Low angle



At this point, camera takes pictures of objects within the frame that is above them. This technique gives the impression that the object in the frame appeared larger, dominant, confident, and strong.

2. Sound

Sound in film can generally be grouped into three types; dialogue, music, and sound effects.

1. Dialogue

Dialogue is the language of verbal communication used by all characters inside the story in the movie and outside the film's story (narrative) as well. Dialogue is a conversation between two or more persons; also a similar exchange between a person and something else.

2. Music

Music is an important element in strengthening the moods, nuances, and the atmosphere in the film. Music can be grouped into two; music and song illustrations. Soundtrack with its lyrics were also often used to support the mood of the scene, such as sad, happy, tense, and so forth.

3. Sound effects

The sound effects in movies are often called noise. All additional sounds such as the sound of dialogue, song, and music are included to the sound effects. For example is the sound of thunder, waterfall, crash of cars, etc. The sound effects have a main function to fill the background noise.

3. Mise-en-scene

According to Himawan Pratista (2008:61), mise-en-scene is derived from France that means "putting in the scene". He also states that this aspect has three elements, as follows:

1. Setting

Setting consists of setting of place and setting of time. The setting of place is also divided into interior (indoor) setting and exterior (outdoor) setting.

2. Costume

This aspect describes whether a character wears clothes or not. Costume is everything worn by the characters including their accessories. In a movie the function of costume is not only for covering the body but also for reflecting the narrative context of the story. For example, if the story is about rich people, the clothes they wear are luxurious and elegant.

3. Acting

Acting that can be seen clearly is gesture and expression. Acting is divided into realistic acting and fictitious acting. Realistic acting is how the appearance, gesture, expression, and voice intonation of the character can be looked like a real condition, and the fictitious acting is the contrary, where the expression of the actors can only be seen from the mimic of their face. To evaluate the acting of the character on the movie, it is important to understand the function and the motivation of the character through the narrative context.

3. EXTRINSIC ASPECTS

1. Patriarchy

The word patriarchy is derived from word “patriarch” that means “father” or “chief of a race”. The *Oxford Dictionary Online* states the definition of patriarchy as follows;

“A system of society or government in which men hold the power and women are largely excluded from it” (October 2011)

From the definition above, it can be inferred that actually patriarchal society tends to oppress women in everything related to men’s business. The term “patriarchy” was previously used to define the autocratic rules of the family by the male head. However, it recently refers to a kind of social system in which power is primarily held by adult men.

Feminism, basically, characterizes patriarchy as a social system that is unjust to women’s position. Patriarchal society always supports to empower men in every parts of life, yet discriminates women for domestic works only. Carole Pateman in her book *The Sexual Contract* states; “The patriarchal construction of the difference between masculinity and femininity is the political difference between freedom and subjection” (1988:207)

It is clear that Pateman is trying to compare between masculinity that refers to freedom and femininity that refers to subjection. It means that in a patriarchal society men are given a large freedom to get highest education, to follow political parties, to decide

their career, to give a vote and so on, yet women must even resist their desire to be what they want.

In addition, according to the book of Gilman entitled *Women and Economics* (1989:111), in nineteenth centuries, there were many women still considered themselves—with pleasure—as a private servant of men and allowed their husband to control their life in all aspects. This was due to the fact that women did not have opportunities to achieve their autonomy in the economic sphere. Gilman emphasizes on the fundamental condition of women under patriarchy: because men control the economic structure of life, women must please men in order to survive.

2. Feminism

Most people must be familiar with the story of Cinderella, a beautiful poor woman living with two ugly stepsisters and her stepmother who treat her very badly. When we try to analyze the story of Cinderella from another point of view, we can find that the story mainly talks about the role of a man who always plays as a savior of a woman. Such a story happens not only in *Cinderella* but also in some other stories like *Snow White* and *Sleeping Beauty* that have the same major idea. According to Charles Bressler in his book *Literary Criticism*, it is states; “Beautiful woman like Cinderella must bear patiently their suffering and accept that they are victims of the circumstances of life. If they accept their lot in life, they will, in time, be rewarded.” (2003: 143)

The statement above shows that society indirectly considers that beautiful (good) women are those who never break the rules, those who always accept everything they get and obey the tradition as their fate. They will look like a rebel when they do not follow the custom. Gender discrimination between males and females actually lead the society to the stigma of the patriarchal standards where men are superior and women are inferior. Men are always considered as powerful, strong and wise in many aspects, yet women are described weak, weepy, passive and mindless. As announced by Darwin in *The Descent of Man* (1871) quoted by Bressler, that women are of a characteristic of [...] a past and lower state civilization, such are being inferior to men , who are physically, intellectually and artistically superior” (Bressler, 2003:145).

Due to the fact that some circumstances have given more chances to men to determine women’s personal and social role in the society, there are many pros and cons concerning a struggle of equality between men and women’s rights. Van Den Bergh in his book *Feminist Practice in the 21st Century*, he describes:

“Feminism is a conceptual framework and made of analysis that has analyzed the status of women (and other disempowered group), cross-culturally and historically to explain dynamics and conditions undergirding disparities in sociocultural status and power between majority and minority population.” (1995:xii)

Furthermore, *Oxford Progressive English: Reader’s Dictionary* describes: “Feminism is a movement for giving women the same rights as men” (Hornby & Parnwell, 1972:169)

Based on the definition above the writer tends to define feminism as a movement or conceptual ideology that is concerned with women’s status in society for reaching equal rights between women and men. Moreover, the purpose of the feminism itself is basically concerned with an effort to create a new vision that women are valuable

and have the same chance to determine their own fates in every aspect of life without men's domination. As Bressler states:

“Feminism's goal is to change this degrading view of women so that a woman will realize that there are not a non-significant Other, but that each woman is a valuable person possessing the same privileges and rights as every man. Woman, feminist declares, must define themselves and assert their own voices in the arenas of politics, society, education, and the arts.” (2008:44)

In few words, women also have the rights to empower their role, not only in domestic work, but they also have to be active in social, art, political, and educational aspects.

Feminism is principally concerned with the problem how a woman can consider herself a “female” and also a “freeman” at the same time. Because of the fact that women are usually referred to the domestic activities and their roles as a mother and a wife, this feminism tries to lead women to a new vision that they are actually able to do what men can do and they should have more opportunities to express themselves in society without neglecting their natural role as housewives.