

Male Shadowing: The Lingering Phantom of Patriarchal Society as Seen in *The Glass Menagerie*

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Abstract

Living in patriarchal society makes women have to struggle hard to be heard. This is because everything is determined by male standard, including what is appropriate or not. When women find a way to vocalize their thought, we have to chew this a little bit. We need to reconsider whether women's voice are really appreciated or women have become a tool or hand extension for men to rule the world. This article would like to see how a strong woman as represented by Amanda tends to preserve the idea of male oriented in *The Glass Menagerie*. The discussion shows that although it is shown that Amanda is able to act as the head of her family to replace her husband, her strong will is being mis-used by the patriarchal system to educate her children according to system values. It demonstrates that men shadow has become a lingering panthom for women in their movements toward liberty.

Keywords: *male shadowing, patriarchal society, The Glass Menagerie*

Introduction

The choice of feminism as the area of interest is not merely because I am a woman, but more because this has become the focus of concern for sometimes. Indeed, cannot be denied that personal experience has influenced this decision. As observed that this personal experience does not belong to me only, this personal experience is not personal anymore, it has been (infact) being experienced by most women in the society around me. Living in patriarchal society makes women have to struggle to be heard. Everything is determined by male standard. What is meant by male standard here is that male is having the highest rank in society. What is considered good in male perspective is good for the whole society, although sometimes it is not good for female members. This has been there in the society for ages, therefore to eliminate the social inequality between male and female is something hard to do and it will face many opponents.

We should admit that the equality is getting better. We can see it from the increasing numbers of females who persue higher education, we can also see it through the choice of occupation which is not too limited for female (although there are still stereotyped jobs based on gender). But does it end there? If we try to observe more, those females who have better education, persue their education just to please males or because they are told to do so by males. This is not the real goal of feminism. Another situation is in political aspect. Women's right to vote is used to be muted, but now we see that women have right to speak their voice in politics. But then again, if we see the phenomena where many women in Indonesia go for the vote of Bupati or other political

position; do they do it for themselves? Or it is because their husbands are the former Bupati? If so then, it makes women are only as the extension of men to rule the society.

Knowing those facts, I come to conclude that the males' shadows are still becoming the lingering phantom of the feminism acts by females.

Literature Review

Virginia Woolf is a British scholar and teacher. She is also considered as one of the early feminists. Her work entitled *A Room of One's Own* has become a foundation of the feminist criticism. She began her work by exploring the relation between women and fiction. She says that to be able to write, a woman must have much money and a room of her own. She also declares that man is the one who defines what it means to be woman and man is also the one who controls political, economic, social and even literary structure. Talking about woman and fiction, there are three possibilities of relationship. It may mean women and what they are like, or it may mean women and the fiction that they write; or it may mean women and the fiction that is written about them. Woolf also gives another possibility that it may mean the mixture between those three possibilities.

Woolf even dares to imagine that somehow Shakespeare has a sister, as gifted as him, and what might happen to her. Will she be as famous as her brother? Woolf predicts that Judith, a name given by Woolf to Shakespeare's sister, was not able to do as her brother did during the age of Shakespeare. When Shakespeare went to school, Judith was probably just stay at home doing some house chores. Although she had the opportunity to read books that were taken from Shakespeare's shelf, still she was not able to express her thought on paper. Her gifted talent therefore never grew, for she did not have 'a room of her own' just because she is a woman. She did not have the chance to show her ability, and she died unknown.

By predicting what happen to Judith, Woolf tries to show that such loss of personal worthiness is the result of society's opinion on women. Society views women are intellectually inferior to men. Woolf argues that women should reject this view and should establish their own identity. Women should challenge this false gender assumption and create a female discourse that will give a real portray of women in the real world. If women are able to accept this challenge, Woolf believes that the spirit of Judith will be able to live again in the present life of women (Woolf, 1919).

Although her work is challenging, the development of feminism was delayed due to the Great Depression in 1930s and the World War II in the 1940 (Bressler, 1999).

Then, Simone de Beauvoir came up with her work *The Second Sex*. She is a French feminist and existentialist. Her work tries to speak out the real world of women. First, she explores the definitions of women which are woman is a womb, that women is imperfect man, female is a female virtue of a certain lack of qualities as what Aristotle says. Beauvoir tried to speak out her mind about the real world of women. She was asking whether the myth of woman plays role in daily life as significant as it is in literature.

She defines about the myth of woman as a static myth. This myth tries to soften the 'division' of humanity into two classes of individual. She also argues that the mythical thought againsts the Eternal Feminine is unique and not able to be changed, although this myth againsts the multiple existence of women. We are told to think that anything concerning to women is not feminine. This is not what happen in reality; real

facts have said on the opposite to the myth. To act as a woman is simply to act as the absolute Other; meaning to say that we should deny all the real conditions which say that woman is the subject and also human being (as equal to man).

Everything in the world is associated with the antonyms. We have a good mother as well as a bad mother. Beauvoir also gives examples that sometimes Mother equals Life, sometimes Mother equals Death; that every virgin is pure spirit or flesh dedicated to the devil. In the work of *The Second Sex*, Beauvoir gives biological data as the fact that there always be antonym that describes a man and a woman. Woman is described as a womb, an ovary, a female. Bearing that description, a woman is considered weak and passive in all aspect including the creation of new life. Based on the biological fact given, a woman is actually active and having the equal position to man.

The world has been ruled by man, thus creating a chance for man to also rule woman. This chance enables man to put himself under category of Master and woman under category of Slave. There is no other job for a woman rather than becoming a slave to man in this patriarchal society. It is imperative for a woman to devote her life to man, because it is his rights. But what about the woman's rights?

There are other myths which give advantage to the ruling caste (i.e. man) to justify his actions on the woman abusement. It is considered natural that woman should take the burden, phisically and psychologically; and man need not to bother himself to share the pain and the burden. Because it is the woman's destiny not man. All things that happen to man and woman, all the difference and the inequality is intended by the Nature.

Beauvoir argues that woman is more than just a slave to man, that woman deserves to be equal to man, as she gives some evidence that woman in fact is an active human being. Woman as the oppressed, needs to struggle to get her rights as a human as equal to man as her oppresser. A woman is not subordinate of a man, she is a fellow of a man. She wants to open the world's eyes to look at woman not in the old perception but through the new lense of thought that woman is a brother to man (Rice, 2001).

The next feminist is Kate Millet who argues that a female is born and a woman is created. Therefore, one's sex, male or female, is determined at birth. While ones's gender, is however a social construct, being created by cultural and norms. Consciously or unconsciously women and men adapt to the cultural ideas established by the society. That is for example, boys do not cry, they should be more aggressive, domineering, stronger; while girls are weaker, passive, calm, and humble. Boys can yell, while girls must not.

Millet believes that family is the main agent of patriarchal society. Through family, society socialize the construction of male and female. If the family still adopt the gender construction existed in the society, the patriarchal society will live on and on. And the equality that female tries to seek will not be achieved.

The way of adapting the prescribed sex roles created by the society is what Miller calls "sexual politics". Women, Millet argues, has to fight againts male dominance as the power center of their culture. To do so, women must establish female social conventions for themselves by creating female discourse, literary studies, and feminist criticism (Bressler, 1999).

The Lingering Phantom of Patriarchal Society in *The Glass Menagerie*

Through the lense of feminism, Tennessee William's *The Glass Menagerie* is observed. There are several aspects of feminism can be observed in this play. But this practice is only focuses on how a family serves as patriarchal society's main institution. Through family, the mediation between individual and society is done. According to Kate Millet, family can serve as a mirror of and a connection with larger society. The life of family can be seen through work of art, thus literature offers important evidence to the readers about how patriarchal society influences its members to socialize the gender role through the certain institution within the society.

There are two female major characters in this story, Amanda Wingfield as a dominant mother, and Laura Wingfield as a daughter. Amanda Wingfield here socializes the gender role toward her daughter Laura, using their mother-daughter relationship. The absence of a father as male figure, makes Amanda as the mother hold the biggest role in the family. She has the authority to control her children, Laura and Tom. Although this might be seen as a good sign for woman to gain power, but the way Amanda uses her power is not for the sake of woman but still under the social construction done by male. She teaches her children that there is different role between male and female, still with stereotyping female as the one who is weak, only focuses on physical appearance, and the ultimate goal of a female is marriage.

There are several things that are being socialized by Amanda to her daughter, Laura, that are constructed by the society where Amanda lives. The first thing is when Amanda tells Laura that a woman should have a gentleman caller. She prepares Laura for adult sex-role; that a woman should have the role as a housewife. That a woman should take care of herself in order to attract man to marry her. We can see it clearly through the scenes below:

AMANDA. Resume your seat, little sister – I want you to stay fresh and pretty – for gentlemen callers!

1290] [Scene One-

AMANDA... Stay fresh and pretty! – It's almost time for our gentlemen callers to start arriving.

1291] [Scene One-

AMANDA (*hopelessly fingering the huge pocketbook*). So what are we going to do the rest of our lives? Stay home and watch the parades go by? What is there left but dependency all of our lives? I know so well what becomes of unmarried women who aren't prepared for occupy a position. ... Of course, some girls *do marry!*

1293] [Scene Two-

AMANDA. Girls that aren't cut out for business careers usually wind up married to some nice man. [*Gets up with a spark of revival.*] Sister, that's what you'll do!

1294] [Scene Two-

Amanda also advises Laura of the art of conversation. She tells Laura that she should master the art of conversation in order to maintain the relationship with man. She says that a woman should not be shy and nervous in having conversation with her gentleman caller.

Laura is treated like a doll, Amanda's doll. Amanda tells Laura what to wear, she helps her to get dress when there is a gentlemen caller about to come. Laura does not have any power to reject the treatment, although she does not really like it and she feels very nervous. As we can see it through scene six:

AMANDA (*impatiently*). Why are you trembling?

LAURA. Mother, you've made me so nervous!

...

Amanda produces two powder puffs which she wraps in handkerchiefs and stuffs in Laura's bosom.

... [Scene Six-1309]

Amanda even makes a plan as if the dinner when the gentleman caller came is prepared by Laura. She wants to 'sell' out her daughter through arranging nice dinner and good meal for them to have, although it is Amanda who does everything. She wants the gentleman caller to believe that Laura is a perfect woman to marry, since her major concern is the activities of domesticity.

AMANDA. Honey, you go ask Sister if the supper is ready! You know that Sister is in full of charge of supper!

.....It's rare for a girl as sweet an' pretty as Laura to be domestic! But Laura is, thank heavens, not only pretty but also very domestic.

[Scene Six-1315]

Amanda also offer sanction if Laura does not do like what she is told to do. Here Amanda is the society's extension to be the authority who gives reward whenever someone does as what the society wants and also sanction whenever someone does not do as what the society wants. This happens when Laura does not do like she is told to do, Amanda gives sanction through prohibition and negative words to Laura. Here is one example:

LAURA. ...I won't come to the table.

AMANDA. What sort of nonsense is this?...it won't be him!...but whether it is or not, you will come to the table. You will not be excused.

[Scene Six-1310]

Amanda becomes the primary agent in patriarchal society, since she has adopted patriarchal values and has adopted societal standards on male and female members of the society and socializes the gender roles to her children. As the agent, she divides the household responsibilities to her children based on their sexual differences. Amanda treats her children differently according to the societal standards, and gives sanctions to

her children's behavior according to societal standards of what behaviors are appropriate and what are not regarding their position in the family and the society.

Amanda emphasizes the traditional role of woman in the society to her daughter Laura that a woman should marry a gentleman one day, but notice that she does not do the same to her son Tom. In Amanda's society, the tendency for a young lady to marry somebody is stronger than the tendency for a young man to marry somebody. It means that women in the society at that time have a great dependency on male figure, in order to survive in the society and able to take care of herself and her family.

As the agent, Amanda also socializes several traditional roles to her daughter Laura as a young lady: a young lady should always stay fresh and pretty for gentlemen callers; a young lady should masters the art of conversation to attract and to entertain young men; a young lady should become a pretty trap for the gentlemen callers; a young lady should have an attractive, charm, and vivacity nature; and a young lady should occupy a position in society, specifically as a secretary (by mastering typewriting and shorthand skills).

The great dependency on male figure in this play implies also in the description of the ways in which Amanda treats her children in decision-making. During this play, it can be said that Amanda never asks Laura about her dreams of life, or her plans for the future. The conversation between Amanda and Laura is more like one way conversation, means that Amanda determines what is best for Laura's life in the future first then says it to Laura, rather than discusses it first with her daughter. In their conversation, Amanda only advises her daughter about what a young lady should do and should become in the society.

Amanda and Tom often have a quarrel about Tom's behavior and opinion about his position in the Warehouse, and about Tom's ambition to be a writer and an adventurer. Actually their quarrel describes the interaction between Amanda and her son, if it compares to the conversation between Amanda and Laura. Amanda shows her great dependency on male figure by trusting her son Tom to help her in making decision. For example, the discussion for Laura's next life in the future is only happened between Amanda and Tom.

AMANDA. You have five minutes. I want to talk to about Laura.

[LEGEND: "PLANS AND PROVISIONS."]

..... We have to making plans and provisions for her. She's older than you, two years, and nothing has happened. She just drifts along doing nothing. It frightens me terribly how she just drifts along... I mean that as soon as Laura has got somebody to take care of her, married, a home for her own, independent – ...I say for your sister because she's young and dependent. I put her in business college – a dismal failure! ... I took her over to the Young People's League at the church. Another fiasco. She spoke to nobody, nobody spoke to her. Now all she does is fool with those pieces of glass and play those worn-out records. What kind of a life is that for a girl to lead?

[Scene Four-

1302]

Amanda only discusses about their family life and her plans for her children's future with Tom instead of involving Laura, though Laura is two years older than Tom. It might be caused by Laura's inferior nature, but it also

might be caused by Tom's position in the family is higher than Laura, concerning that Tom replaces his father's position as a partner of Amanda in discussion and decision-making, though at last it is still Amanda who makes all decisions in the family.

AMANDA. I remember suggesting that it would be nice for your sister if you brought home some nice young man from the warehouse. I think that I've made that suggestion more than once.

TOM. Yes, you have made it repeatedly.

[Scene Five-

1304]

In the introduction has been stated that the equality is getting better; this condition can also be seen in the play. We can see that Amanda is doing an occupation outside the domestic work. But of course the reason of having an occupation is that because the bread winner has gone. If her husband is still doing his 'duty' as the bread winner for the family, Amanda might not have such occupation; she would probably do the domestic work. Thus, it can be implied that the reason for a woman to have an equal position to a man is still shadowed by man.

The equality can also be seen through Amanda's advise to Laura to occupy a position in the society, she also prepares Laura by sending her to a business college. But still Amanda says that the ultimate goal of a woman is to get married. She also tries hard to prepare Laura to get a gentleman caller. It is because the standard in the society is decided by male, thus the goal of a woman is to have a husband who will take care of her.

Conclusion

Amanda is actually a perfect example of the agent of patriarchal society, where there is inequality between man and woman. A mother like Amanda makes the male domination on female grow flourishly. This will raise a question, if every mother is the agent of patriarchal society then when will the real equality between man and woman can be achieved?

This thing does not only happen to Western society but also our society, especially Javanese society. In Javanese culture, male is more dominant to female. Female should only concerns with domestic activities, she should not have higher education than her husband. She should maintain the position, where her husband is somehow higher and the decision maker. Even when there is a female leader, she is viewed as weak, and undecisive. Her action will only be based on emotion, not on rationale.

As being discussed in the introduction, nowadays many women go for the vote of Bupati or the parlement. It seems that it is a kind of trend for women to join the political issues and to get political positions. But then, do they really realize that they will get the power and use the power for the sake of women? Or maybe, they are still under patriarchal social construction which says that they should go on behalve of their husbands? If so, then it will be very ridiculous to see a woman leader as the puppet of her husband's will.

Another thing to consider is that what if a woman tries to gain the ultimate power of herself, to get her own identity, but forgetting her own nature as a woman? A

married woman who has children, for example, having the control over her career, sometimes neglects her duty as a parent. What is the use of the high position then if she could not make it in balance to her marriage life? Would it be a good example for her children having a mother who does not have time to spend with them? Those questions will be the challenge for the present feminists to think of. Will the goal of feminism which is to get rid of the name tag of women as 'the insignificant other', also in line with the nature of being women?

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