

# THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE CHARACTER IN TOM STOPPARD'S THE REAL THING

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the spirit of gynocentrism phenomena through the character, Annie, in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. Gynocentric feminism is related to the power of women in the society. It is a phenomenon which came up in 1970s along the term of women-centered perspective. This phenomenon puts women's position as a center in the society. In this case, their inferiority is no longer portrayed in a patriarchal system. The analysis shows that the portrayal of Annie is categorized as an empowered woman. Thus, women who believe in gynocentric feminism are identified as radical feminists. It occurs because they try to oppose the patriarchal system. Their power used is not only to gain the equality, but it is more than that. By examining the gynocentric feminism in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, the aim of this study is to find out the portrayal of gynocentrism in Annie's character as the main character of the play. To gain more information about gynocentric feminism, the writer uses radical feminism to describe the portrayal of the main character that will be discussed. Moreover, the analysis will also identify the socio-cultural background of the period which influences the portrayal of the main character, such as Cold War and Sexual Revolution. Later, radical feminism can reveal how the female characters are dominant in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and it is supported by the phenomena of gynocentrism which is also influenced by socio-cultural background of the period.

**Keywords:** Gender; Gynocentrism; Radical Feminism; Patriarchy.

### 1. Introduction

Feminism emerged since women oppression and exploitation occurred in many aspect on the surface, such as economics, politics, cultures, educations and so on. Based on Hooks, Feminism is a movement to end sexism, sexist exploitation, and oppression (Hooks 1). In the society, there is a gender discrimination which refers to the cultural programming as masculine or feminine. In this case, the society gives such a construction that should be obeyed if they want to be considered as a man or a woman. Traditional gender roles which emerged in the society gives a definition to be a good man or a good woman. It is about what women should do and should be as a traditional role. It also believes that women are weak, submissive and emotional and it is far different from men's, because they are rational, strong and decisive. This traditional gender role also known as patriarchy. It allows men to dominate women in many aspects.

Patriarchy gives some disadvantages for women, because they have no space to move and voice for their rights. Along the development of the era, women are not only sitting down under the men, they try to fight against the domination and change their inferiority. At some period, women started to fight it and get their rights. There are movements of feminism which is divided into three waves of feminism. All of those movements shows about how to fight the oppression depends on the each period of each wave of feminism. Together, women also want to show that they also have power and they want to get what they want. They want to celebrate the gynocentrism, where women can be centered and get the goals of feminism.

The term of "Gynocriticism" emerged in the 1970s. In this decade, women are empowered, they became active in feminist activity. Women shows that they also can do what man do. According to Jenainati, Showalter coined the term "gynocriticism" is referring to a form of critical practice whereby the "psychodynamics of female creativity" is explored and recorded (Jenainati 125). It proves that in this decade, women become empowered. It makes women categorized as independent women, ambitious, and self reliance. But it cannot simply mention as negative, abusive or lacking because it is clearly different from traditional gender roles. In traditional gender roles views, women should be inferior to men and the one who break it then they called as a bad girl. In this term, Gynocentrism also called as a women-centered perspective because in this term, women should be an empowered and independent woman. They are not always inferior to men, but they also can be superior and can stand beside the men's position.

Based on that case, the writer chooses Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* play as the object of the study. This play actually tells the interesting issue about gender. It shows that the female character, Annie, who portrayed as an empowered woman and she dominated the male character. Actually, this play sets in early 1980s. It is about marriage, emotional fidelity and intellectual fidelity, love, art and pop culture. The female character, Annie, wants to be equal with man. In the beginning, Annie is an actress who is married to Max. But then, she has an affair with another man, named Henry. Henry is Max's boss. Actually, in this story depicts the character of Annie who is strong, abusive and also rule breaker. Annie here is symbolized as a strong woman because she leaves her husband and has an affair with other men. In another case, her way to speak to the male character is abusive. She seems like want to do anything that man can do.

Therefore, the aim of writing this study is to find out the phenomena of gynocentrism in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* and also identify the socio-cultural background of the period related to the portrayal of character Annie. To gain more information about the gynocentrism in the play, the writer will apply radical feminism theory. Gynocentrism is a phenomenon that happened on the era of radical feminism women. By using this theory, the writer hopes this study will gain and give a deeper knowledge about the gynocentrism which reveal in that play. And also enrich the readers' knowledge about English literary works, especially about gynocentrism in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*.

Radical feminism theory developed as a component of women liberation movement. Because this theory belief that emancipation is not enough. Women still in oppression and exploitation. They have to show something more powerful by opposing patriarchy system. This theory seeks to abolish the patriarchal system. Jenainati has argued that the radicals argue for revising language so that male definitions of the world can be appropriated to reflect women's experience and participation in it (Jenainati 101). Not only man who has contribution to change the world but in this though, women also have their capability to do so. Actually, this theory is applicable to analysis this study. This theory can reveal and prove the gynocentrism through character Annie in the play. And This theory is also suitable to analyze the story because the characteristic of female character in this story is more dominant than the male character.

There is literature review which is related to the topic of this study. As the writer has stated before that the phenomenon of gynocentrism does not only existed in the text that was written by female authors, but it is also fine to criticize the text which was written by male authors. As clearly explain in Northcutt's article, his article criticized about gynocentrism in Yeat's *At The Hawk's Well*. In this article, women also portrayed as a figure who powerful and competent. According to Fiona McNeill in *Gynocentric London Spaces: (Re)Locating Masterless Women in Early Stuart Drama*, she argues that most of the plays in London around 20<sup>th</sup> century shows women as the center of perspective. It concludes that women depicted as an active woman who outside the space of the patriarchal system. Actually, gynocentrism does not treat men as a powerless figure, but in this case, men treated himself as powerless because they do not use their power properly. This argument is proven by Nortcutt's article based on the portrayal of male characters in Yeats's *At The Hawks's Well*. And the last study comes from Linda Nicholson in *Women's Oppression, Women's Identity, Women's Standpoint*. In her study, Nicholson has argued that women should show her power because women should be prizing and loving as women by other genders. This study coined that sexuality is the main power to construct the subordinate.

This study uses qualitative research to conduct the data in order to analyze the novel and find out the portrayal of gynocentrism which is portrayed by female character, Annie. And then, the close reading method will be conducted in data collecting step. In collecting the data, the writer uses some sources of internet, journals, and also article which can support the data. After doing these steps, the study will analyze the way feminist ideology identify those issues. Finally, to conclude this study, the writer will propose the response of the female dominance of female character as the representation of gynocentrism in the story.

## **2. The Portrayal of Annie as Manifestation of Gynocentrism**

In the spirit of gynocentrism, women are considered as powerful, creative and prestigious. From time to time, women who become more active and join in many aspects which in patriarchy are categorized as

men's activities which symbolize men's power. Gynocentrism is one of the women's movement which celebrates the women's liberation. It is because of one goal of feminism is to challenge the patriarchal system and they want to show that image of femininity is not always referring to weakness.

In Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, there are two female characters in the story, Annie and Charlotte. Actually, both of them are portrayed as women who different with the definition of the women's stereotype in traditional gender roles. Both of them are depicted as modern women who legal to show their power and also independent. But, the portrayal of Annie in this play is more dominant than other female characters. In this case, the portrayal of Annie's character is feminine woman. Through her character as feminine women, the portrayal of Annie is a beautiful and sensual but she does not portrayed herself as weakness figure.

"Annie does no more than suffer the embrace, looking over Max's shoulder, her face blank" (Stoppard 1195)

In Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, all of the female characters are portrayed as strong and powerful women, especially Annie. In the quotation above, Annie seemed to be careless with her husband's feeling. She did not show her weakness when her husband embraced her. In the same case, the portrayal of Annie is not categorized as subordinate figure. She is treated as a strong and assertive woman.

Annie : This isn't caring. If I had an affair, it would be out of need. Care about that. You won't play on my guilt or my remorse. I'd have none.

(Stoppard 1208)

In the beginning, the play tells to the audience that Annie is an actress who Married to Mas, an actor. The character of Annie is portrayed as a smart person in her job. In this case, both of evidence shows that Annie is an independent woman because she is working and her job is equal with her husband. Besides, she is also active in a politic by joining in some demonstration. It also shows that Annie can construct the concept of women. If in the traditional gender roles, women were portrayed as a weak and nurtured but in addition, the character of Annie is categorized as an independent woman based on the position in her family. In 1972, Pollock has explained that most women in the US are involved in art and media (132). At that time, women were attempting to declare their position in the society.

Based on his work, Stoppard tries to challenge the notion of women's images in traditional gender roles. He depicts the portrayal of Annie as empowered women because Annie's character is portrayed as women who able to challenge the patriarchy. In this case, Annie is portrayed as activist women

Max : It was quite remarkable. Brodie was on his way to the anti-missiles demonstration, just like Annie.

Henry : Really ?

Annie : Yes.

(Stoppard 1193)

In gynocentrism, women's power is the fundamental issue. In addition, women power is not only used to categorize them as empowered women in the society. In other cases, power can be referred to an opportunity to decide something in their life. In Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, the character of Annie is a married woman but she has no children. It is like a freedom for a woman to choose and decide something based on their willingness. In the modern era, most of woman thinks that having a baby is such a big deal in their life. They believe that there are some considerations to decide to have a baby.

Charlotte: Must be some mistake. Smart talk, that's the thing. Having children is so unsmart. Endless dialogue about acne. Henry couldn't do that. He doesn't like research.

Henry : True.

Max : Lot's of people don't have children, in real life. Me and Annie ...

(Stoppard 1189).

The portrayal of Annie is depicted her as decision-maker in her family. By classifying her as decision-maker, the writer assumes that Annie is a competent figure because she has an ability to take control over the male characters.

Annie : We'll go, and then it will be done. Max will suffer. Charlotte will make you suffer and get custody. You'll see Debbie on Sunday, and in three years she'll be at university not giving a damn either way. (Stoppard 1191)

As the writer explained before, gynocentrism does not mention men's figure as a weak person. But in this case, they do not use their power properly. In Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, the male character depicted as dependent, incompetent and passive. This argument is proven by Young, he has argued that gynocentric feminism portrays woman as a dominant figure who deserves a higher degree than men. Here, the portrayal of Max is pathetic because he is crying when Annie decide to leave him.

"He starts to cry, barely audible, immobile. Annie waits. He recovers his voice" (Stoppard 1195)

In feminism perspective, crying symbolizes weakness. In other hand, it is also portrayed as the emotional sides of a person. Men in patriarchy, they are not supposed to cry. The portrayal of Annie and Max are contradictory with the perspectives of man and woman in patriarchy. Another case shows that Max is a man who getting failed in his effort. As feminism believes, men should be strong and they do not obey to get fail in their lives.

Annie : I'm awfully sorry Max, but I love him

Max : Oh, no.

Annie : Yes.

Max : Oh, no. You don't.

Annie : Yes, I do. And he loves me. That's that, isn't it? I'm sorry it's awful. But it's better really. All that lying.

Max : (Breaking up again) Oh, Christ, Annie, Stop it. I love you, please don't.

(Stoppard 1195)

Based on the analysis of the Annie as the female character, the writer impressed that the character of Annie, is categorized as woman who spread the spirit of gynocentrism.

### **3. The Socio-Cultural Background of Period Influence The Portrayal of Female Characters**

Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* is a play set in the early 1980s. the socio-cultural background of the period become influence thing in the portrayal of the characters, including Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*. As a good play, *The Real Thing* is the influence of the period that happened in that time. In *The Real Thing*, Stoppard added his brilliant ideas to depict the portrayal of female character, especially Annie, based on the socio-cultural background of the period that happened in that time. Actually, it is possible to say that the portrayal of female characters in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* was influenced by two major social events at that time namely Cold War and Sexual Revolution.

#### **3.1 Cold War**

In *The Real Thing*, Cold War can be said as one of the period which influence its setting. In Cold War, women is portrayed as independent and active women because they become active in politic by joining some demonstration. In *The Real Thing*, it can be seen in the portrayal of Annie as activist woman.

Annie : Well, he's the only political prisoner I've ever met on a train. He's lucky.

Henry : Political ?

Annie : It was a political act which got him jumped on by the police in the first place so it's ...

(Stoppard 1197)

In this period, women should gain economic and be independent during war time,. It is proven by Hatchett, he said that media portrayed women as the leader in politic by referring the cold war era (11). Women depicted as empowered when portrayed as independent women in political roles. In the same case, Stoppard portrays the character of Annie as powerful as women who were affected by cold war era because she is independent and active in political space.

Max : It was quite remarkable. Brodie was on his way to the anti-missiles demonstration, just like Annie.

Henry : Really?

Annie : Yes.

(Stoppard 1193)

The quotation above shows that Annie is an activist in the anti-missile movement. In her way to the demo down Whitehall, she met Brodie in the train. Brodie is Scots lad and he is a soldier.

Those evidences shows that Annie the characterization of female characters, especially Annie, in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* is influenced by Cold War. According to the play, Cold War is one of the socio-cultural backgrounds of the period which influence the character of Annie as an activist women. The relationship between Annie and Brodie in their political matter is the portrayal of the Cold War movement. It is because they have the same aim in the anti-war movement.

Actually, there is another evidence which clearly shows that this Stoppard's work is influenced by Cold War period. The content of the play explains that Brodie is an American. He is an soldier who against the segments of anti-war movement which is the result of Cold War.

Max : The guts of it, the sheer moral courage. An ordinary soldier using his weekend pass to demonstrate against their body missiles.

Henry : Their? I thought they were ours.

Max : No, they're American.

(Stoppard 1193)

As the writer said before that Stoppard tries to portray the character of Annie as a feminine character to gain her power in political space. It is a kind of manifestation for Annie to become active in the activity outside the house. It also makes Annie to be portrayed as the powerful woman because she does not only active as activist but she is also being portrayed by Stoppard as the center in her life.

Based on the explanation before, around 70s and 80s, Stoppard's works are influenced by Soviet Communism. Because he is interested to the issue on that period. On the other hand, this Cold War happened between US and Uni Soviet. Related to this fact, the writer concludes that Cold War also influences Stoppard's to build the character. Another evidence is Annie who becomes a working women and actives in politic.

### 3.2 The Sexual Revolution

Beside Cold War, another socio-cultural background of the period which influence Stoppard to build the characterization of female character is sexual revolution. It occurred from the 1960s until 1970s in Western. This period refers to a change in sexual morality and attitude of Western women. As a result, women are no longer seen as traditional figures, such as passive and weak. Here, women are portrayed as aggressive and strong because they have the power and authority to do that. In Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing*, the portrayal of Annie is an independent and active woman because she is working and joining in politics. It shows that she has a power.

As explained before, after sexual revolution, the figure of traditional gender roles no longer exists in this period. Because the sexual morality and attitude have changed, the portrayal of Annie is also declared as an aggressive woman because she tried to tease Henry whereas she is actually a married woman.

Annie : Come on, touch me. Help yourself. Touch me anywhere you like.

Henry : No.

Annie : Touch me then. They'll come in or they won't. Take a chance. Kiss me.

(Stoppard 1191)

In the sexual revolution, the major issues are all about sexual activity and marriage. It is a revolution towards American youth and women who change their attitude in the society. Traditionally, American teenagers should be engaged in legal norm before doing sexual activity. According to Greenwood and Gardner, in 1900s, there are no American teenagers who were involved in premarital sex (2010, p.1). It is after the sexual revolution emerged in America, the legal norm no longer exists and the rise of premarital sex increased.

Henry : No. Not really. I don't know. Loving and being loved is unliterary. It's happiness expressed in banality and lust.

(Stoppard 1196)

This is a quotation from the conversation between Annie and Henry, in Henry's apartment, after they decided to live together. The words "banality and lust" show that desire is the important thing to

pursue a happiness. Basically, love is the main foundation in the relationship. Even so, it changes after being influenced by the view in the sexual revolution.

Actually, the portrayal of Annie's character is a married woman; her husband is Max. Then, she had an affair with Henry, Max's boss. Until one day, Max found an evidence which showed that Annie was an unfaithful wife. After the affair was disclosed, Annie decided to leave her husband and chose to live together with Henry. Then, Annie was divorced from Max and Henry was also divorced from his wife, Charlotte.

In the marriage cases, after sexual revolution, divorce is an ordinary thing for people in Western. As Heer and Shechtman said that between 1960-1975, divorce rate was growing significantly and becoming the trend in the society (1981, p.24). It is proven that divorce is such a common thing after the sexual revolution. In this part, it is possible to say that the portrayal of the characters Annie and Henry, through their affair, is an impact of the sexual revolution of Western women.

In the sexual revolution, women were declared as sexy, beautiful and attractive. As Florian stated that in 1950, the portrayal of women should be as sexy and as attractive *even though* they are married (2009 p.11). In *The Real Thing*, Stoppard portrays the female characters, Annie and Charlotte, as women who have seductive appearance. Both of them are sexy, beautiful, and sensual.

"Charlotte enters from the bedroom, having dressed without trying hard"

(Stoppard 1188)

"She goes round the desk and stands in front of him. He takes no notice. She flashes open the robe for his benefit"

(Stoppard 1195)

The first quotation is portrayed by Charlotte when she met Max who visited her house. She regarded Max without dressing properly. In this case, it can be inferred that Charlotte uses her body as an object of men's perspective. Even though Charlotte is a feminine figure but her way of dressing implied her as a seductive figure. The second quotation is portrayed by Annie. When Henry focused on his writing, Annie tried to tease him by removing her robe from her body. This also shows that Annie is an aggressive woman who tries to tease men. According to Brown's work in Florian's *The Sex Revolution : Why American Youth Rebelled*, in the early 1960s until nowadays, women are asserted as physical attraction to men, flirtatious, desirable and sophisticated (2009 p. 11).

According to Heer and Schectman, in sexual revolution there is a term "childbearing" (1981 p. 29). The total women who bore children in 1975 in the United States is less than in 1960. It is because of there are many spouses who decided to use contraception, such as the pill and condoms. In fact, some of them declined to bear children or even having a baby. This phenomenon also happens in *The Real Thing*. In the beginning, Annie and Max are a spouse, but they have no children. In the same case, in Henry's family, he and his wife, Charlotte, only have a child, named Debbie.

#### 4. Conclusion

In this study, the writer conclude that the character of Annie in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* is strong. She becomes empowered woman and center in their life, depends on the characters in the play. Annie is a powerful woman who aggressive, independent and also abusive. She uses her power to break the traditional gender roles and challenge the patriarchal system. All the stereotypes of women in the traditional gender roles is broken down by the character of Annie. The portrayal of Annie in Tom Stoppard's *The Real Thing* can be categorized as a woman who believe in gynocentrism. In other hand, the portrayal of Annie is also influenced by the socio-cultural background of the period, such as Cold War and The Sexual Revolution.

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