

GENDER INEQUALITY IN *EFFI BRIEST* ROMAN BY THEODOR FONTANE

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Abstract: *Woman is one of the many issues discussed in the literature. Throughout her uniqueness, she became a source of inspiration for the author and associate it with the reality in the community. However, several literary texts actually pick up the story about woman experienced gender inequality in her life. Many factors seem to be the causes of women construction in marginal condition and unprofitable in some aspects of life. Woman is a person who has always been looked after the male. Either a character or story enlightens gender imbalance in some characterizations of literature. On the other hand, the problems with gender implications truly have a special appeal to be further investigated, including the object of this study, entitled Effi Briest. Effi Briest is a German-language roman written by Theodor Fontane, firstly published by Insel Taschenbuch 3374 in Frankfurt am Main in 1895. This study uses a qualitative research methods to imply feminism in the exploration about issues surrounding the women portrayed in Effi Briest roman. The purpose of the research is expected to describe how gender inequality experienced by women in relation to their position as wife and children, but they are used to be stereotyped by their surrounding. This is reflected in the different treatment received by the main character of the parents, husband and even the people in the vicinity.*

Keywords: *gender inequality, stereotyping, Effi Briest*

1. Introduction

In this study, I raise the issue of gender inequality represented in the *Effi Briest* roman written by Theodor Fontane. *Effi Briest* is one of phenomenon common literary works in German literature. This sort of Roman story was created in the beginning of 1889 to 1894, and was published in Frankfurt am Main by Insel Taschenbuch 3374 in 1895. *Effi Briest* is one of German literature in the Realismus era which took place in 1848-1890. The geographical situation of Germany in the span of years is still in a Prussian state. The characteristic of literature in the Realismus era is the delineation story related to the reality used in proceeding the story. The daily life included the household affairs, social and work life is the most essence things supposed to be told in that era.

The main problem showed in this *Effi Briest* roman is definitely related to the real life implying to the representative of the woman characters. Fontane also presents an overview of the reality of society which treats women's position unequally to the men in Prussia in the 19th century (Berg, 2010). There were many literatures that focused on issue of marginalization of women's status. In the European world such as France and Russia, there is also a similar theme through a novel titled *Madame Bovary* (1857) and *Anna Karenina* (1877). Isenberg (2002) stated that the phenomenon indicates gender inequality in the realism era towards women is being literary treasures of the countries in Europe.

The literary work has become regime culture and a strong allure towards the problem of gender (Endraswara, 2003). However, the visualized gender issues may often displayed in the unequal constructions. Throughout criticism towards gender inequality, there is an analysis questioning the social injustice of that relation. The analysis is gender analysis which is the process of analyzing data and information systematically about men and women to identify and disclose the status, functions, roles, and responsibilities both of men and women, and also other influenced factors.

The much-discussed gender portrayal in this study refers to the opinion of Ann Oakley (1985) who argued that gender is a cultural issue. He referred to the social classification of men and women who become 'masculine'

and 'feminine'. Furthermore, Fakih (1996:8) outlined the concept of gender as, "An inherent personality on both men and women who are socially and culturally constructed. For example, a woman is beautiful, polite, emotional and motherly. While a man is considered to be strong, rational, manly and powerful." Characteristics and personality are definitely interchangeable and may be changed over time and differed from one place to another, or from one class to another.

The history of gender differences between masculine and feminine going through a long process. Therefore, the emergence of the difference on both seems to be implied in aspects that are in the established order. This was confirmed by the depiction in the *Effi Briest* roman who has addressed gender differences are influenced by various factors such as education, culture, social class, and economic factors that can ultimately lead to gender inequality. Within the object of this study, a main female character was portrayed in a weak position and was became a victim of her parents' interests for the sake of happiness. On the other hand, women are also identified as second-class citizens and in need of protection from others.

In addition, Effi, the main character in the roman *Effi Briest*, depicted as powerless over herself because of the influence of social and cultural construction that dominates her to act in the proper attitude. There is an inherited point of view states that domestic life household becoming a woman primary obligation. The principal tasks are, then manifested in the form of serving her husband, giving the descent, maintaining honor her husband and educating their children so that eventually emerge restrictions on the rights and opportunities of women which are unequal to men in public spaces. In addition, gender relations between the characters in this novel show the inequality as the women's characters seem getting subordinated and have no right to speak what their thinking and feeling up. Patriarchal culture that is perpetuated in the story muzzling the women in the law construction, the values and the norms that precisely locate the women to stand behind the men.

Besides, in the roman *Effi Briest*, Effi is the representative of women are also silenced by the power of her husband because of the dichotomy that confirms the hierarchy of men is higher than women's. The position of women who are often disadvantaged in the realm of family life and society have some implications with the concept of feminism. Beasley (1999) outlined that feminism actually pays great attention to what is considered as marginalized. Therefore, the issue of gender inequality that many women can not harm separated with feminism that aims to identify the position of women is weakened and disadvantaged by a patriarchal culture.

As for the relationship between the concept of gender with the feminist movement is implemented through equality goals to be achieved by both efforts which is to end the oppression and exploitation towards women in some life areas. The existence of feminism is appeared in everywhere, every country, included Germany. It is in line with Hahn via Gableer (1998) stating that the feminist movement in Germany is characterized by the Deutschen Frauenvereins (women association) that linking up the thoughts with ideas to formulate their rights were previously taken by policy states which are bias gender. The women demand in the 19th century are various, ranging from the struggle to obtain the same education, opportunities in the civil and economic rights to opposite sexual discrimination in the political, social, economic and personal.

Gender injustice that occurred in Germany, further, strengthened the feminism which should be fought, currently. The emergence of that becomes the liberation for women who are shackled by the system and norms subordinating the roles. From that phenomenon, in my opinion, the existence of roman *Effi Briest* as the literary work is to record the woman construction that was treated unfairly either in family life or in the social environment. From this frame of mind, I will show how roman *Effi Briest* represented an experience of gender inequality from the main character which is influenced by several factors such as culture, economics, education, and social class.

2. Findings And Discussion

2.1 Gender Inequality Against Women; As Son And Wife

As a child born with the feminine gender, Effi received unequal treatment by her friends, even she has to internalize the attitudes, behavior and her role as the girls in accordance with the construction of a culture that has been established and inherited to her from generation to generation.

»Nicht so wild, nicht so stürmisch, Effi, das geht... «

»Don't get too harsh, don't talk too gruff, Effi.«
(Fontane, 2008:10)

Above is a piece of dialogue spoken by the mother of Effi (Frau von Briest) seeing Effi run here and there friskily, talking loudly with her friends in the backyard. Effi's mother immediately warned her daughter to act more polite and to speak more euphemistically such the girls constructed by the culture in Prussia. It actually reinforced the truth of the paradigm that grows in a society that a newborn baby though not only immediately classified by gender but it will also be given gender. The division between the masculine and feminine gender is understood as something that is not fixed, it is not permanent, and provides an easy to build a picture of the relation of women and men are dynamic, more appropriate to the realities that existed in society. In practice, the actual gender issues become more flexible. This is a proof of an awareness that the aspects of gender differences can also be caused by many things such as deliberately formed, disseminated, or constructed through social, cultural, religious teachings even the country rules. Through these rules, there are teachings inherited about how a child is supposed to behave in order that she/he will become a part of the local community (Bhasin, 2001). It is started from the social and cultural construction belief, in my opinion, there are indications that the mother is running a process of socialization to Effi to act more feminine since she was in childhood and to end it up in her adult. Later, it also strengthened through the different ways to pay attention, take care, even pick out clothes according to Effi feminine gender.

Besides, when Effi is in line 17, She is matched to a Landrat named Geert von Innstetten (Baron von Innstetten). Baron is 38 years old and live in Kessin, Hinterpommern where is a district in Nort East of Germany. Baron visited Effi to propose her without her permission, it is due his confession to Effi's parents.

»... Ich muß dir nämlich sagen, Effi, dass Baron Innstetten um deine Hand angehalten hat.«

»Um meine Hand angehalten? Sie lachte.«

»Das ist nicht der Moment für Scherze. Du hast ihn vorgestern gesehen, und ich glaube, er hat dir auch gut gefallen. Er ist älter als du, aber das ist vielleicht auch gut so. Er hat Charakter und eine gute Position, und wenn du nicht Nein sagst, und meine kluge Effi wird sicher nicht Nein sagen, stehst du mit zwanzig, wo andere mit vierzig stehen. Höher als deine Mama.«

»...I have to say this to you, Effi, that Baron Innstetten just proposed you.

»Propose myself? She laughed.«

»That's not joking. You saw him yesterday, and I was already sure that He loves you. He is older than you, and probably it's the great sign. He has good characteristics and great position, as if you say no, I will never think you're my genius Effi, you're more twenty years than you. You will be much more than Mom.«

(Fontane, 2008:14)

From that conversation, it appears that Effi disbelieve had been proposed by Baron who is none other than his own mother's friends. The mother was also impressed to force Effi approved him by giving consideration related to his position in the community. Berg (2010) pointed out that in the 19th century in Germany, arranged marriages are common and becoming a culture. "For women, marriage is the only requirement to integrate themselves into the community, and if they were still in demand, socially they will be regarded as a garbage. That's why mothers always strive arranging marriages for their daughters." (Beauvoir, 2003: 228). Then Effi has no allowance to decline that such a marriage. Effi is described to be loyal to her mother to marry the selected man in such a young age. In fact, Effi should have acquired the right to get her higher education. From the phenomenon, in my opinion, there is discrimination and deprivation of rights as a woman to continue her study and determine her own life partner.

The next problem is reflected while Effi has to move out and follow her husband to Kessin, since Baron still works there. She feels lonely while spending the time just to wait for Baron returning home. She feels shackled, not allow to get out of home without her husband and not to do her routines, like before.

»Also jetzt sagst du endlich ganz offen, dass wir Frauen in der Ehe nicht frei sind.«

»So you're now feeling opened, that we as woman could not feel free in a knot.«

(Fontane, 2008:21)

The quotation above appeared in the text to show that women suffer limitations role in the realm of life when he was married. Relationships created through marriage constructed women to be in a marginalized position, especially when inequality in the relationship. In addition, Baron is also shown to have maturity in terms of economic, social standing and in the political sphere. It is certainly not balanced with Effi position that does not come from the working class and only depends on her husband. Beauvoir (2003: 230) had mentioned this issue in his book by writing that

in marriage, women has got some wealth in this world; legitimate guarantees protected her from the harmful actions done by the men. Nevertheless, women become slaves of men. When married women acting as head of the economy, women bear the name of her husband; entered the religious affiliation of her husband, joined his class, his environment; she fused in her husband's family, and becomes part of him. Thus, she broke his past for absolute and joint the world of her husband; she gave her husband herself, her virginity, and strong loyalty. She lost the legal rights that carried by the unmarried women.

Construction of the married women makes its position even more marginalized by all unequal rules to be compared with the men. It is similar to the Effi experience in marriage to Baron. Instead of obeying the command of her husband, Effi precisely positioned as *Liyan* or object on masculine superiority of her husband, who is supported by a patriarchal culture that is already entrenched. Men like Baron is able to control the mostly income and social, economics and politics institutions so he has a big power in limiting Effi movement as the real woman and as the wife. Gender inequality in marriage also can not be denied because of the presence of a man like Baron benefited enormously from his achievements. It seems often due to social dominance owned by the husband, the wife like Effi restricted her movement so that she hardly ever gets the freedom to act out and to express out her feeling. It is also reflected when Effi make Baron as her back to sigh and to hope he could fulfill her desire, but in fact, Baron has no desire to negotiate and often refuses her due to his selfish. The proof is in the following dialog quotation.

»Aber Effi, ich bin hier Landrat. Sollen die Leute sagen: Er verkauft sein Haus, weil seine junge Frau Angst vor einem Chinesen hat? Wie sollen sie da Respekt vor mir haben?«

»But Effi, I am a Landrat (state-level high employee). People would say to me: He sold his house due to his wife anxiety towards Chinese people who had died. Then how can they respect me more?«
(Fontane, 2008:59)

From a fragment of the paragraph above, it can be concluded that the Baron really can not meet Effi desire to move away from Kessin. Though, Effi wants them to not live in the house with reasons, she was feeling lonely due to the lateness of her husband heading home and the fear she felt at house. In this case, Baron was more concerned about social and political status if he complied Effi to move. Effi was disappointed with the decision of Baron, but it would be vain. Effi has no voice to express her feeling since her husband is more concerned about public perception than his own wife. Stigma is in line with Bhasin (2001:26) statement that is "The male predominance will be related to the power which then characterized a system in which women are deliberately subordinated through various ways." The depiction of Effi characters who becomes a powerless woman, even in controlling herself. Baron became the highest authority in the family. This dominance is also strengthened because Baron only engaged in the public community through all of his social classes and economical power, which is in contrast with Effi who has no power in any kind of fields. The women construction, for example is Effi in this novel, is clearly suffer because there is a perpetuation of superiority and hegemony of masculinity that is already underway with well-established so that the women position is appeared more crippled.

3. Conclusion

Roman of *Effi Briest* masterpieced of Theodor Fontane is one of the significance German literature going to be discussed due to the relevance between the issue of gender inequality illustrations and the phenomena which is recently occurred in this era. The issue of gender inequality experienced by Effi, the female characters in the roman, displayed that there are some efforts to maintain patriarchy cultural construction. In addition, Effi is

represented as the wife of the government employee who actually marginalized the role as a woman. She is powerless even to herself. This roman, then, strengthened the depiction of the job divisions between women and men which are in the domestic is for women, while in the public is for men. It is supported by a number of factors such as social classes, economic and political owned by the husband so that it is more subordinated Effi position as a woman and a wife. Ultimately, gender unequal experienced by Effi in the *Effi Briest* roman becomes one of treasure in German literature in the 19th century through depictions that women are often being the second-class citizens and beyond the men.

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