

Between housewifery and emancipation in *My Lecturer My Husband* novel by Gitlicious

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Citation: Apriyani, T. & Lixian, X. (2023). Between housewifery and emancipation in my lecturer my husband novel by Gitlicious. *Notion: Journal of Linguistics, Literature, and Culture*, Vol 5(1), p. 47-57. <https://doi.org/10.12928/notion.v5i1.7796>

ARTICLE INFO

Article History:

Received: 6 March 2023

Accepted: 10 April 2023

Keywords:

Feminine

Mystic

Women

My Lecture My Husband

Novel

ABSTRACT

This study aims to examine the actualization of women in the novel *My Lecturer My Husband* by Gitlicious by relying on the formulation put forward by Betty Friedan. The depiction of the minimal role of women in literary production means that female characters in literary works are often portrayed as biased and one-sided. Therefore, it is essential to discuss women's experiences through women authors' works because they have direct experience in describing women's lives. This research is a type of qualitative descriptive research that uses documentation techniques and literature studies as a data collection method. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used was interactive, including data reduction techniques, presentation, and verification. This study shows that women experience an identity crisis because they often surrender to the situation. Circumstances that require Inggit's character to be at a certain point so that she feels have to return to their nature.



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I. INTRODUCTION

The role and presence of women in Indonesian novel writing before the 2000s tends to be neglected. The results of a study conducted by Junus (1984) on the development of Indonesian novels from the 1920s to the 1970s, show that there is no discussion of women authors and their works. This is different from Teeuw (1989, p. 177–179) who still mentions several female writers of pop fiction types such as NH Dini, Rahayu Prihatmi, and Titis Basino, although they are considered to have low literary value (Wiyatmi, 2012, p. 20). In contrast to what was stated by Rampan (1997) that until 1990 in Indonesia there were approximately 40 female writers who were productive in writing literary works and there were 22 people whose works

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were considered to have quite good literary value. Wiyatmi (2020, p. 2) also explains that a number of female writers in Indonesia have never been mentioned by literary critics and literary historians and sadly they generally do not continue their writing careers in the later period.

Today, the development of Indonesian literature has undergone many changes, marked by the emergence of female authors who present various ideas about the world of women. The world of women described by women authors does not only describe women in the domestic sphere of women, but also women in the public sphere. This is a manifestation of the courage of female authors in producing works which can be interpreted as an attempt to find identity. The existence and role of these women authors is easier to understand by using a feminist perspective. Reinharz (2005, p. 67) argues that a feminist perspective can be used to understand women from their own point of view. This perspective is expected to improve the perspective which underestimates women's activities and thoughts. There are several possibilities for the influence of patriarchal culture in shaping the images of women and men, the relations between the two, and the resistance to patriarchal domination which is reflected in literary works. Self-actualization and the role of women in the public sphere are still hotly discussed in various discourses, including in literary works. Self-actualization in question is a person's desire to mobilize all his potential to obtain satisfaction for whatever he wants. The description of the world of women in literary works has a tension relationship between reality and fiction as stated by Teeuw (1989, p. 288). This is based on the idea that in a literary work, the real world and the world of imagination are intertwined and have meaning. Therefore, phenomena which occur in the real world often inspire authors to rewrite them in their literary works. Of course, all of that is returned to one of the functions of literary works as a means to voice the conscience of a society by making people aware of the meaning of life and trying to improve the quality of life.

Self-actualization and the role of women in the public sphere are still hotly discussed in various discourses, including in literary works. It is because the existence of literary works in society cannot be separated from the existence of society itself. Literature lives because there is a community of creators, namely the author as an author. Besides that, literature lives on from the spirit of society, meaning that society is the object of storytelling. The presence of literary works is a reflection of the existence of society. It can also be the author's voice by looking at the reality around him, both experienced by himself and by observing the behavior of the people around him.

Self-actualization in question is a person's desire to mobilize all his potential to obtain satisfaction for whatever he wants. The description of the world of women in literary works has a tension relationship between reality and fiction as stated by Teeuw (1989, p. 288). This is based on the idea that in a literary work, the real world and the world of imagination are intertwined and have meaning. Therefore, phenomena which occur in the real world often inspire authors to rewrite them in their literary works. Of course, all of that is returned to one of the functions of literary works as a means to voice the conscience of a society by making people aware of the meaning of life and trying to improve the quality of life.

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The issue of actualization and the role of women in the public and domestic spheres also did not escape the attention of a young author named Gitlicious or Mbak Git in her novel entitled *My Lecture My Husband*. This novel is the result of Gitlicious writing uploaded on the Wattpad application. As it is known that wattpad is a website or application that allows users to read and submit literary works (Apriyani, 2020, p.112). As a popular literary work, *My Lecture My Husband* is quite popular with readers. It is evident that Gitlicious's work, published on the Wattpad page, has been read 9.2 million times and attracted the attention of publisher RMD to publish this Gitlicious work. Even the producer MD entertainment swiftly produced a webseries on digital television based on the novel *My Lecture My Husband*.

Both the web series and the novel *My Lecture My Husband* have attracted the attention of observers of Indonesian language and literature studies for research. Akhir(2021) examines dialogue based on the webseries *My Lecture My Husband*. Akhir (2021) uses Bathes' semiotic perspective to examine the meaning of the main character's signs of affection in the *My Lecture My Husband* series, and found that there are five signs of affection in the dialogue. Fatoni Aminuddin et al., (2021) examines the side of the violation of the cooperative principle and its implicature in the main character's speech in the webseries entitled *My Lecturer My Husband* episodes 1, 4 and 8.

Meanwhile, studies on the novel *My Lecture My Husband* are of greater interest to language researchers such as: Dawus et al., (2021); Rihanah et al., (2021); and Rosnaningsih (2021). Dawus et al., (2021) examined the types of directive and expressive speech acts as well as the functions of speech acts in the novel, while Rihanah et al., (2021) focused more on the analysis of expressive speech acts only. Meanwhile Rosnaningsih(2021) analyzes the use of deixis in *My Lecturer My Husband* Novel. Based on the search results for literary research with the material object of the novel *My Lecture My Husband* only found in research conducted by Intan (2021). This research aims to dismantle and discuss the issue of symbolic violence in *My Lecture My Husband* Novel. According to Intan (2021) symbolic violence in the novel *My Lecturer My Husband* applies at three levels, namely academic, marriage, and family. Research on the actualization of female characters in the novel *My Lecture My Husband* has yet to be carried out much. Besides, the depiction of the minimal role of women in literary production means that female characters in literary works are often portrayed as biased and one-sided. Therefore, it is essential to discuss women's experiences through women authors' works because they have direct experience in describing women's lives.

The novel *My Lecture My Husband* tells of a husband and wife who seem to help each other, sharing roles and responsibilities. Arya as a husband gives freedom to his wife Inggit to complete her bachelor degree in the midst of her role as a housewife. Arya is described as a husband who has the principle that a mother must be highly educated so that children learn about life from their mother for the first time.

The figure of Inggit in *My Lecture My Husband* Novel is a female figure who has the opportunity to freely actualize herself in the public sphere. However, the problematization of the various issues put forward by the author will eventually fall back on the basic concept which was previously constructed as an embedded practice, namely that women must prioritize and return to the domestic realm. The image of Inggit's figure as described by

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Gitlicious is a woman's condition and view which comes from within herself, which includes physical and psychological aspects (Sugihastuti & Suharto, 2016, p. 112-113). The description according to Sugihastuti & Suharto (2016) has two sides, namely the side of beauty and weakness. Beauty means that women can fascinate men, while weakness means that women are considered weak and are used as an excuse for men to exploit their beauty.

The role and position of women in the domestic sphere is indeed a polemic which continues to be produced even in literary works. Friedan (2001) is a second wave feminist activist who reveals the identity crisis experienced by women. The crisis is related to women's worries that if a woman can complete her education and become smart, then she will fail to become an ideal woman, namely a feminine woman. Previous feminist theories tried to solve the problem of identity crisis in women but found no results. It is because the old image of women (new women) and the new image of women (happy housewives) do not want common ground. At that time, the concept of female body anatomy was a woman's destiny, and women's identity reflected their physical form.

Previously, the ideal female figure was a new woman, namely a woman who pursued a career, enjoyed adventure, and had a lover. The concept of the new woman was successfully socialized through the mass media. In fact, the image of a new woman is not as beautiful as described in the mass media, including in literary works. There are essential values that are at stake for women within their limitations. The essential values referred to here are an improvement in a woman's quality. Indeed, a woman should continue to hone herself and improve her personal qualities because a woman (a mother) is the first school for her children. It is from the mother that a child learns to know all new things in his life.

In the end, a new woman becomes the dream of women who have become housewives. When a woman is married and becomes a housewife, she feels empty. The emptiness in question relates to all the activities carried out aiming to make the children and husband happy (Friedan, 2001, p. 154-155). It can be said that a woman's happiness is very dependent on the happiness of her children and husband.

According to Friedan (Friedan, 2001, p. 157) women's mysticism is the root of the identity crisis experienced by women. Women are prohibited from having a career because it will cause a woman's infeminism. This infeminism is considered to be able to destroy household happiness. Feminine mysticism hinders women's development in two ways, namely by releasing all commitments and life represented through their husbands and children (Udasmoro, 2018, p. 8). Feminine mysticism shapes women's thinking that the ultimate goal of a woman's life is to build love and prioritize family commitments over personal commitments. In the end, feminine mysticism encourages women to get rid of questions about female identity. This is because during the second wave of the feminist movement. The agenda of the second wave of feminism is fighting for women's rights which were not achieved in the first wave of feminism. The second wave of feminism demands the injustice of women and men in the eyes of the law, roles in the family, work environment, reproductive rights, and women's sexuality. The status of a wife was very dependent on her husband's job. This means that the high or low status of a woman is very dependent on the high or low status of

her husband's work. Women will be blamed if they lose their femininity and are asked to return to the domestic sphere and maintain their femininity.

The actualization of women depicted in literary works, based on the feminine mystical concept put forward by Friedan (2001) can be observed in the way in which the identity of the female character is fulfilled as described by the author. The author describes it by giving an example to the reader about how women behave and make decisions to return to the domestic sphere which in the end becomes an object. This study aims to examine the actualization of women in the novel *My Lecturer My Husband* by Gitlicious using Friedan's formulation as the analytical tool.

II. METHODOLOGY

This research is a type of qualitative descriptive research because of the nature of the problems raised which reveal more and understand the facts behind unknown phenomena (Miles et al., 2014). Qualitative research is also expected to reveal hidden meanings by interpreting what is seen, heard and understood. The material object in this study is the novel *My Lecture My Husband* by Gitlicious in 2017 published by RDM Publisher with a total of 257 pages.

The research instrument used in this study is the researcher himself (human instrument) because the researcher also determines her involvement in the research plan. Meanwhile, the data analysis technique used is an interactive data analysis technique as formulated by Miles, et. al., (2002), includes data limitation techniques, data presentation, and data verification. The data reduction stage includes collecting data by reading carefully and repeatedly the material objects in this study. The stage of presenting the data is the stage of compiling the data by selecting and sorting the parts that have been marked according to the focus of the research. The verification stage is carried out in order to draw conclusions with the support of the results of the data validity and reliability of the data. This step is taken so that the data displayed is consistent and valid so that testable conclusions can be produced.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Regarding to the theories, research problems stated in the previous sections, several results and discussion relevant to the topic are presented as follows.

Ideal Female Image

Gitlicious presents Inggit as a modern woman who has grown into a mature woman with passion and ambition for a career. Inggit who wants to actualize herself and prove that opportunities for self-development are wide open for her. Inggit is described as a smart, adventurous, cheerful and independent woman. As in the following quotes.

Yes, I do wander and live alone. As an only child who has never been separated from their parents, being away from them is a test in itself. Usually, if there is a chance to take a day off, I will definitely take the time to go home (Gitlicious, 2017, p. 6).

In the midst of her activities, Inggit also has a love life with medical student Karatama. They have been in a relationship for a year and a half.

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Karatama Reinha is a medical student. He's also in sixth grade like me. We know because of Juna's birthday party during second semester. We started dating in semester three, and our relationship has lasted a year and a half (Gitlicious, 2017, p. 6).

Inggit doesn't want to get married quickly because for her, marriage will hinder her hopes. At the story's beginning, the author describes Inggit's figure as a woman who thinks that marriage will only narrow her space. For Inggit, she must first complete all her goals before getting married. Karatama Reinha feels that he is ready to marry Inggit, but Inggit believes that Karatama Reinha still needs to prepare financially and complete his medical education.

Inggit's physical image is that of a beautiful and enchanting woman. The author describes Inggit as a physically beautiful woman. The enchanting phrase meant by the author is that Inggit can attract the attention of the opposite sex not physically but the attractiveness of Inggit's inner beauty. Inggit's beauty is described by Gitlicious implicitly through Arya's observations for six years which are set forth in poetic form in her diary. On the next page, there are only short little poems of admiration for someone which made me immediately open the next page.

I came back to find a photo of me at the new student admissions ceremony at that time, with a dull and dingy face typical of a student who had just been prospected, and under the photo there was a text, Finally I found you. (Gitlicious, 2017, p. 169).

Inggit's figure has the most important position in Arya's life just like her mother's position. His mother is a housewife who prioritizes the happiness of her husband and children. A woman who devotes herself only to her family. For Arya, her mother is a special female figure. Her mother is willing to make room for her to set aside her needs and desires for the happiness of her children and husband.

... until the last page, I found a photo of me and my mother-in-law, and below it was written, two most important women in my life. from that book I now understand that right now I am the only woman who is most important in his life (Gitlicious, 2017, 169).

The image of the ideal woman described by Gitlicious changed after Inggit married Arya. Even though Arya was the man chosen by her parents, Inggit began to get to know Arya personally. Inggit's image is then described as a figure who can provide happiness and peace for her family. On the one hand, Inggit's image cannot be separated from the construction of patriarchal culture which recognizes her femininity, but on the other hand, Inggit's figure is described as trying to seek recognition for her femininity. The image of a woman with the spirit of a *new woman* described by Gitlicious has turned into the image of an ideal woman because it is Inggit's dream to become a happy housewife. Inggit was proud of her status and position.

Inggit decided to start life by turning over a new leaf, with a calmer mind and a more mature personality in order to get a better life for herself, her husband and her children for the rest of their lives (Gitlicious, 2017, 250).

The image of Inggit as a modern woman in the novel *My Lecture My Husband* seems to have succeeded in breaking out of the domestic sphere. Inggit is described as a woman who is free to actualize herself in the domestic sphere and is able to emancipate. In fact, the public sphere is used to lead women to realize their nature to be in the domestic sphere. The self-

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actualization of women in the public sphere brings their dilemma. On the one hand, they want to be utterly devoted to their family, but on the other hand, God has also entrusted women with advantages to benefit the people in any field. When a woman ventures into the public sphere. For example, when she must prioritize her baby's health and be able to make a choice, which is, of course, very difficult.

Although several times the author shows the image of Arya as a husband who understands the role and position of his wife by sharing roles. Arya does not hesitate to do work in the domestic sphere. Cooking food for Inggit is Arya's contribution to sharing roles with Inggit in the domestic sphere.

After finishing cooking, he took off his apron and poured the fried rice he had made onto the plate I had prepared (Gitlicious, 2017, 200).

Feminine Mystic in My Lecture, My Husband

The existence of women in the public sphere is something to be proud of. However, this is sometimes still a quite complicated polemic, especially in societies with strong patriarchal cultural nuances. The same goes for Inggit's character, when she gets the opportunity to go to college. Several people in her hometown doubted Inggit's success. To realize her hopes of becoming a successful human being, Inggit is willing to go out of her place and work part time so she can pay for her studies.

At the beginning of the story, Inggit's character is described as a young person who does not consider marriage to be a priority in her life. For Inggit, achieving success requires extra energy and time, so getting married will certainly hinder the process of achieving it. At that time Inggit was already dating Karatama, but they did not plan to get married in the near future. Inggit imagined that if she married young, she would be preoccupied with various jobs and it would be difficult to achieve self-actualization. However, when her parents arranged for Inggit to marry Arya, who was her own lecturer, the notion that marriage will be an obstacle to achieving self-actualization becomes difficult, and this assumption fades. Arya is described as a husband who is modern, has an open mind, and always encourages Inggit to complete her education. This support can be seen in Arya's attitude, reminding Inggit to go to college and complete her assignments on time. Arya needs to allow Inggit to take action that will hinder the process of completing her studies.

In the course of her marriage to Arya, Inggit experienced an identity crisis. She tries to find fulfillment of her identity through her husband Arya. Gitlicious passively wants to give readers an example of how married women behave and act. Always put the interests of the family before her own interests. Inggit didn't like going out at night and spending time chatting with her friends at cafes. She prefers to spend time with Arya at home. Cooking for her husband, serving her husband, and accompanying her husband to do campus assignments. Inggit's attitude and actions reflect the ideal image of a woman who is a happy housewife. Of course, proud of his status and position.

Gitlicious also actively depicts the image of women consciously to re-enter the domestic sphere after working in the public sphere. For Arya, all of his dreams have come true, to marry Inggit, the woman he has been aiming for 6 years ago, to continue his doctoral studies

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abroad, and to have triplets. Meanwhile, Inggit, although in the end she was able to complete her undergraduate education, she could not follow her husband and live abroad because her pregnancy condition made it impossible for her to travel far. She must be willing to part with Arya and postpone her desire to continue her education at the postgraduate level.

"Don't force yourself to leave if you know it's risky for you or our child, I don't want you to get hurt." (Gitlicious, 2017, 240).

Actually, Arya did not forbid Inggit from developing herself and actualizing herself in the public sphere. In this case Gitlicious actively provides an example which a wife must be aware of her nature in order to be in the domestic sphere. The pregnancy problem experienced by Inggit is natural, and Inggit is required not to leave the domestic sphere, including burying his dream to continue his studies to the postgraduate level. As in the quote below.

The choice is not good indeed, but I have to know what I prioritize at this time. Going to college while pregnant and also having three babies doesn't sound like a good idea (Gitlicious, 2017, 247).

Even though it's so sorry to have to miss a scholarship which many people dream of after going through a long series of tests, I believe that whatever we do is not in vain. Like I can add insight and become 'closer' to my husband because of the preparation for the scholarship test, for example (Gitlicious, 2017, 248).

The female figure is again faced with a condition where she must consciously return herself to the domestic sphere. Gitlicious wants to set an example that a normal woman is a woman who can prioritize her marriage and her role as a housewife. In this case the happiness of a woman is very dependent on the happiness of her children and husband. This is certainly contrary to the image of women which was originally created by Gitlicious. The female figure presented by Gitlicious in this novel is a modern woman who grows into an adult woman with passion and ambition for a career. A woman who must have the courage to realize her dreams and ideals. However, in the end, women are actualized by Gitlicious as individuals who must consciously return to the domestic sphere.

I'm currently on campus to continue my further education. Even though I gave up the scholarship, to be honest, I wanted to continue my studies so that I would be more balanced with my husband, who already holds his doctoral degree.(Gitlicious, 2017, 250)

In the end, the depiction of Inggit's position in the public sphere created by Gitlicious never exceeds Arya's position in terms of intelligence and education. The author describes Arya as a figure who is intelligent and accomplished and always gets the opportunity to continue to develop herself. The author presents Inggit as a figure who has never had academic or non-academic achievements beyond her husband. Of course, women are still positioned as figures who are still under the power of men. Even when women get the opportunity, women cannot freely take advantage of that opportunity. Modern women in the public sphere always stay under the position of men regarding situation, wealth, or intelligence. Women in the public space are no different from women in the domestic space, who always have to submit to and respect men.

Meanwhile, a woman's decision is a joint decision of the man, not her personal decision. Female characters must submit to the direction of their husbands, and uphold the honor of

their husbands. The author presents the character Inggit who obediently follows Arya's directions. Inggit did this to achieve her dream of becoming an ideal woman who prioritizes her husband's and children's happiness. Inggit is indeed described as being able to take part in the public sphere, but that does not turn her into a figure who can dominate and control Arya. It was as if the public sphere created by Gitlicious was used as an extra world for Arya to control and narrow Inggit's space for movement.

Successful women in the public sphere are made to feel as if they are suffering from an identity crisis, so they have to seek identity fulfillment through men. The way women seek fulfillment of identity is described as a figure that is not only passive (object) but also active. This image of a passive woman (object) is an example to the reader of how women should behave. The image of an active woman is paradoxically pulled back into the domestic realm to become an object.

IV. CONCLUSION

The actualization of women in the novel *My Lecturer My Husband* seems to indicate the flexibility of women's roles in the public sphere. It's just that the actualization of women is described as still not exceeding the position of men in terms of position and intelligence. What the character Inggit does in the novel "My Lecture My Husband" is in line with Friedan's statement that the highest value of a woman is a woman who can fulfill their femininity. The feminism in question is how women can perform their duties as women and can serve their families. In this case, the identity crisis is experienced by women because they often surrender to the existing situation. Circumstances that require women to be at a certain point so that women feel they have to return to their nature. Literary research with a feminist approach is always interesting to do. This study does not pay attention to the outside matters that surround this novel, such as the author's life and the social background of the novel. Future researchers can carry out research with the same object through different aspects, such as the writing technique of the female author in this novel and the congruity between the representation of women in this novel and the actual situation of women during the writing of this novel.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The author's thanks go to Majelis Dikti-Litbang PP Muhammadiyah for funding this research and Ahmad Dahlan University for facilitating this research.

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