GENDER DISCRIMINATION IN THE IRON LADY MOVIE (2011) DIRECTED BY PHYLLIDA LLOYD BASED ON FEMINIST THEORY

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Abstract

This research is about Feminist issue that is gender discrimination of a woman in joining the men world such as politics which is based on The Iron Lady 2011 movie in 20th century, Britain, directed by Phyllida Lloyd. The goals are to find out the why the main character, Margaret Thatcher, is represented as “other” in the British politics and her way to struggle through those hard times. To support the analysis, literary research is used as a method by searching data and references through some books, internet sources, and articles. The topic is analyzed by using the feminism theory consisting of several supporting theories. The conclusion of this thesis is gender discrimination become of Margaret Thatcher which makes her seen as the “other” in the British politics because never ever in Britain women had made it into parliament at that time and by her effort and strict attitude she can also leads the party although she is a woman and break the gender stereotype and create something new into British politics. She makes it through all that and become the first women prime minister in British history who is also the longest Prime minister of the United Kingdom of the 20th century and is successful to bring old Britain into a new great Britain. (Afrizal)

Keywords: Character, feminism, liberal feminist, gender stereotype, British politics
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of Study

Consciously or not, marginalization of women occurs in all aspects and fields. There are many examples of how women are systematically excluded and impoverished. Marginalization, discrimination and subordination of women are also an indirect impact of some policies that are gender biased. Gender bias is the view that one gender is more inferior or lower than the other gender. Gender bias has actually happened since a long time and until now still occurs. The conception that the male is breadwinner makes the men who hold the status as workers. Until today most women are still active in the struggle for equal rights with men or commonly known as gender equality, and they continue to fight vigorously on behalf of all women who still do not have equal rights with men.

The role of inequality between women and men are affected by various norms that prevail in society, the interpretation of religion and socio-cultural constructs that govern the allocation of roles, attributes, stereotypes, rights, obligations, responsibilities, and perceptions of men and women.

In a book entitled Feminist Thought: A More Comprehensive Introduction by Tong, R. (1998), as reflected in the various census reports and statistics development, women’s employment status is often identified as a housewife with domestic duties. Even day-to-day women still participate in working out the domestic sector. The stereotypical views are that women are always irrational and emotional beings, making them less qualified to be leaders, and their opinions are also considered less important and worthy only to domestic activities.

An example of the struggle of women to get equal rights with men can be seen in the movie The Iron lady that tells the story of a woman who smashed through the barriers of gender and class to be heard in a male-dominated world. The story concerns power and the price that is paid for power, and is a surprising and insightful portrait of an extraordinary and complex woman.

The writer will explore further about what are the barriers that would Margaret Thatcher go through and struggled. The writer will try to connect it to the theory of feminist criticism. Feminist theory believes that women should be equal to men in political, social, sexual, intellectual and economic rights (Barry, 2009, p. 121). This theory is the most important to be applied because Feminist criticism theory is used to find what women's emancipation movement demanding equality and justice or rights with men.

The writer takes thesis S1 as previous research to help or support the analysis because the thesis by Dumafi Nur Rachmawati took the same theory with the writer which is about feminist criticism and make sure it is different with the media that writer wants to be analyzed. The title of the thesis is WOMEN STRUGGLES IN THE VICTORIAN ERA AS SHOWN IN BECOMING JANE BY JULIAN JARROLD was a 2010 thesis. The impact is to give the writer another example about what is feminist criticism clearly, how to analyze in feminist criticism theory, how to apply the feminist criticism theory to paperwork and what are the steps to analyze paperwork. What make the writer thesis different with other feminisms or this previous thesis is the politics inside the media which is taken.
1.2 Problem Formulations
1. Why is Margaret Thatchers represented as “other” in British politics?
2. How does Margaret Thatcher overcome the gender barriers in British politics?

1.3 Scope and Limitation
The scope of this paper is the movie entitled *The Iron Lady* supported by the theory of feminist criticism that relate to women right movement.

The limitation is the main character, Margaret Thatcher, but the relation between her and other characters will also be analyzed.

1.4 Goals and Functions
Based on the problem formulation, the goals and the functions are:
1. To see the reason why Margaret Thatcher is represented as “other” in the society
2. To find out the way Margaret Thatcher struggles to go through those hard times.

The function of this paper is to understand about the Feminist criticism theory and to demonstrate to society that women are also able to be a leader and to do what men can do.

RESEARCH METHOD
The method the writer is going to use is literary research to follow qualitative type of research. The writer compiles the data with several ways. Firstly the writer takes gender discrimination as the topic, make sure the topic is reasonable to be analyzed and know what is going to analyze. Second, selections from the movie are chosen based on the Gender discrimination issues. Third, the writer is going to watch the movie and use the way of scanning the movie’s scene to find out the dialogues that consist of women struggle and gender discrimination issues. Next is to find the theories that really can be applied to the topic and last one do not forget to put the source as bibliography. The writer will use any articles, books and something that relate to the topic. All the instruments will be taken from Bina Nusantara University library. The writer will also use the internet as a media to find the articles related to the topic and hope can get many additional data which can be used in supporting this research. The result of this research will be used to answer the problem formulations.

DISCUSSION
In this part, the writer will find out the how the main character, Margaret Thatcher is considered as the other. There are several ways women are considered as the other such as the weaker sex or the second sex, and women as gender stereotype.

Since long time ago, women are always considered as the weaker sex or in other words, the second sex. Women must always obey their husband in every aspect and field. They are not allowed to do many things, especially the work that needs extra energy and need intellectual thinking like fireman, carpenter, politician, lawyer because men always think women are weak, soft, emotional, so they are not appropriate in that kind of job. They are better to do domestic work and take care of children.

In the British politics where men take all the roles, politics is a men’s toy not women, none of the women has ever taken part of it in politics Britain history but Margaret Thatcher is one of the few lady members to participate in Britain politics to compete in being conservative party leader. Some examples of gender discrimination
are the absence of women participation in the parliament and there is no lady or women room for discussing something and meeting.

The day when she is at the parliament building, she wants to go to toilet, she finds a room with the room name written toilet then she opens up and what she see is men toilet with the urinal. She thinks the toilet is separated inside but in fact is not. So, she finds other room and then she see a room written lady member, she think this is exactly the women toilet but the fact is not as she thinks and what she sees just the ironing equipment and chair, there is no urinal.

This shows women in the parliament building do ironing clothes and not more than that. Women here are considered as other in this male-dominated world, they are considered born to take care the household while men are breadwinner, so this fact make women being the second or weaker sex because they life depend on their husband. The room inside the parliament also can be said indirectly that men and women are separated functionally in the parliament. It can be proved on the scene in the next page:

![Picture 3.1 The difference between lady and men room](image)

(00:32:10 & 00:30:12)

Margaret makes it into the British politics as one member of the conservative party. When she is going to the parliament for the first time as the politician, she is shocked because she realizes she is the only woman inside the building, she is surrounded by men with black suit while Margaret is wearing blue. It makes her obviously different with other. The director of this film wants to emphasize women position in the parliament building to show oddity for the men because she is the only one wearing blue the light color but the other wear black to show their masculinity, the trait that must be has as a politician.

That situation also shows a form that women are marginalized by men, however how hard they are struggling to equalize their social position, they are still on the second position, but the motive cannot be easily to achieve and the existence of men cause women can be on the priority or first position. Another scene also wants to stress that portion of women is nothing while men are dominated in politics. The director describes the discrimination in that movie with a foot scene that shows only Margaret who wears high heels from all the people in the parliament room. The scene shows only Margaret is the woman inside the parliament, she wants to show the men that feminine women also can take a role in politics, thus the heels that she wears are showing her feminine side. It can be proved in the movie:
Woman prime minister is not memorable for British society, Margaret Thatcher retired and no more as prime minister, she becomes older and is suffering from a dementia that makes her often experience hallucination about her husband and difficult to distinguish between past and present because she was sad and annoyed when she is left by her husband’s death also when she is down from her position as Prime Minister.

Most of people in the society should know her as the longest serving prime minister in Britain but they do not. They do not even recognize her anymore, one day; when she is shopping at a supermarket but no one recognizes her as ex prime minister. How could it be, as a British society everybody supposed to know who is their ex prime minister but no one know her. Woman is really considered as the weaker sex in the reality, no matter how hard they fight for their position and they reach it, in fact they still will be in the second position as the weaker sex under men in every man point of view. It can be proved through the picture on the next page:

Margaret is willing to be an independent woman and feminist values have been shown by her since in the young age. She wants to be the woman who has same portion, thought, and degree as man. She is a woman who upholds gender equality who gets interested with politics since she was young, politics is seldom to be taken by women because most of them are not courageous enough to take it. They feel intimidated with it in the politics field that generally is ruled by men.
When Denis, her boyfriend purposes to marry her, she tells Denis directly what her thought really about and who she really is. She says to Denis she is never one of those women who stay at home doing domestic work and hearing what her husband wants and orders without give some her thought of idea and voice. She says a lot of things of life for women except just doing the domestic work and breast feeding for children. Life for woman is not just about doing that thing, she wants to do something meaningful and useful in her life because human just live once in this world, she does not want to waste her life to sit silent at home without giving her voice to the society. Women are not born just as housewife and do the house things all the time. It can be proved on the evidence:

Margaret Thatcher: I will never be one of those women Denis- who stays silent and pretty on the arm of her husband or remote and alone in the kitchen doing the washing up for that matter.
Denis Thatcher: We’ll get a help for that.
Margaret Thatcher: No, one’s life must matter, Denis beyond the cooking and the cleaning and the children, one’s life must mean more than that. I cannot die washing up a tea cup. I mean it Dennis.

(Conversation 00:26:11 – 00:26:40)

After Margaret has been elected as the new British prime minister, she started to develop some useful work programs for the welfare of the people. The work programs that have been developed by her are called Thatcherism, which consist of her work policies like privatization, reduce subsidies, hold down the labor wage and others. The policies which have been made by Thatcher are opposed by most of general public and society; most of the society thinks Margaret work programs are not appropriate with the British situation right now. Under her first leadership as the British prime minister economy is get better and employments also slowly is increasing.

Because of her policies British economy and politics decrease, many people in the society disagree with Thatcher policies and want Margaret to change her policies or work programs and also want her to quit being prime minister. The society think Margaret is not suitable to run the politics because she is a woman, one of the people on the demonstration day shout from Margaret outside mirror car and says you’re supposed to be a mother. The societies wants Margaret to be mother than the prime minister because the policies created by a woman are not good and make disagreement form the public. The evidence can be seen on the movie:

Picture 3.8 Labor demonstration against Margaret policies
Margaret Thatcher stays in one of the hotels in Britain; the hotel is where a meeting of minister to discuss about work programs is held. After the meeting is done, Margaret is going back to her room to relax; she and her husband are talking about something. In a while, suddenly they are shocked by the exploding of grenade inside their hotel. The situation shows that she has to accept the dissatisfaction and displeasure against her in ruling the British Politics. The grenade is like a warn to her to give up the Prime minister position and do not interfere about British politics. As a woman she cannot lead the whole British and sit over the men. The evidence of exploding can be showed in the movie in the next page:

![Picture 3.10 Margaret’s room inside the hotel is exploded](image)

Gender stereotypes indicate women and men are different in the way of thinking. Men are intellectual also logical and women are emotional. However Margaret in the movie wants to show the men that sometimes the stereotypical way of women thinking is also useful and has benefit in ruling the politics. When all the ministers of British have a meeting to discuss the work program suddenly the electric and lamp is off, everything is dark, and no one can see each other in the meeting room. Suddenly light appears from a torch held by Margaret Thatcher. This proves that Margaret has prepared anything. Women are more prepared than men in all aspect, even the smallest things; they are also more detailed in concerning things.

Here, Margaret shows the men that if women also have the strength and traits to take part in politics. The symbol inside this scene when Margaret take out her light for lighting is it can be concluded she participates in the politics to enlighten or new breakthrough in this male-dominated world and create a path for other women who want to participate and interested in politics. The literal enlightenment indicates that the existence of women can be good thing for British politics because women can give new idea and new something to the politics. It is shown on the picture below:
The Falkland war is happening in order to take back that land from America because Falkland actually belongs to Britain. With the existence of war automatically must be a sacrifice, there are a lot of soldier die in the war to sacrifice for get back the Falkland. Margaret with her mother’s heart want to write to all the soldiers families to deliver her condolence and say to them all the sacrifice by their children are die with valuable and will be memorized as hero. In this point, every detail that also important and the vision that Margaret Thatcher wants to show women’s intuition can be an achievement in women leadership although this things show the feminine side but the thing precisely become the positive step for women to be the capability in gender stereotype to rule the politics.

*Margaret Thatcher: I tell you what i’m going to write to every single one of these families, these heartbroken families? I am going to tell them that no British soldier will die in vain for the folk land.*

*(Conversation 01:15:11 – 01:15:26)*

**CONCLUSION**

This movie tells about life experience of Margaret Thachter, the first woman prime minister in Britain who put a lot of effort to overcome the entire barrier to reach that position. As the main character in this movie, she shows her personality and attitude.

Gender stereotype becomes the main basic reason issue happens to Margaret thatcher in the movie. At the time around 90’s decade most of female did not want to get involed with politic. It is not about not wanting to get involved but has no the courage to be involved due to the stereotype. But not with Margaret Thacther because she is interested in politics since she was young and she wants to join the politic which is men’s field. She dares to reach her dream although she knows she will face many stereotype treat against her. There are some gender stereotypes treatment experienced by Margaret Thachter in the movie. In the parliament her speech is always treated like a humor or nonsense voice. She has been considered to not understand how to play in politic and know nothing about war strategy. Most of the men in parliament underestimate her and look at her in a strange vision because she joins in a world which is dominated by men such as politics that is usually called as men toy.
The other conclusion is Margaret Thatcher succeeds to overcome the entire barrier in his life from the first she joins the conservative party until she is successful become the first British prime minister. There are several struggles of how Margaret Thatcher overcome the gender stereotype against her. A lot of things have to be sacrificed by Margaret to be the politician; she has to sacrifice her time with their family, children and husband because she gives her life for the society. She shows the men in the parliament that she has the capability to lead Britain to the Great Britain in economy aspect the most also others aspects because she has the experience where she learns from his father as the grocery owner also a politician. In her cabinet, in the other words under her leadership, Margaret Thatcher is successful to create a new work programs and idea called Thatcherism which succeed to make British economy grow faster and business is booming although at first she was refused and blamed about her step and idea because it gives the negative impact to Britain. However slowly, everything has changed to the best. She also succeeds in fighting with America to get back the Falkland which proves to the British society she knows about war and battle ship although she is woman, she know the strategy because she has been battle for every single day of her life. She is called by the Uni Soviet as the iron lady because her discipline, tough, leadership and she says any woman who understands the problems of running a home will be nearer to understanding the problems of running a country.
REFERENCES


