

Millennial Women's Lifestyle in Metropop Novels

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the reflection of millennial women's lifestyles in metropop novels by female authors. The lifestyle of women studied in this paper is taken from the novel entitled *Divortiare* by Ika Natassa and analyzed using gynocritical theory and approach. The results found from the gynocritic analysis are, first, the apartment as a choice of place for women to live shows the expression of millennial women's freedom. Second, millennial women show their success through the work they do. Third, the café is a symbol of the financial stability achieved by millennial women. Fourth, a friendship between women is a source of strength among millennial women. And fifth, divorce is no longer a taboo for women, but a choice from the form of freedom of women's rights in choosing their way of life. These five aspects voice the experiences of millennial women who can achieve freedom and stability in their lives, as well as the experiences of women who are no longer dependent on men.

Keywords: Lifestyle, millennial women, novel, metropop, Gynocritics

1. INTRODUCTION

The study of gender continues to develop along with the times. Gender issues seem to be something that never ends to be discussed. This is because there are things that are different between women and men, one of which is in terms of lifestyle. Women have a different lifestyle than men. Seeing women's lifestyles from their perspective is important to see experiences and history through women's writings. The lifestyles of each generation will be different from one another. Humans living in the previous generation will have a different lifestyle from those living in the millennial generation.

A study of millennial women's lifestyle is important, because, first, lifestyle is a pattern of everyday human behavior in society[1] so that it will be seen how millennial women live their lives. Second, women have different lifestyles from men according to their experiences. Third, the reflection of women's culture can be seen through their lifestyles.

Millennial women refer to women of the modern age who have a different pattern of life and culture from women of the previous century. Furthermore, Rainer revealed that the millennial category is people born between 1980-2000[2]. Referring to years above, they include people in productive age, in the range of 20-40 years. This millennial generation is often referred to as the generation that breaks conventions, especially the

culture that has existed in the previous generation. However, McRobbie has a different opinion, he states that these young people or millennials through their true lifestyle are forming a new culture[3]. Indonesian society in the decade of the 2000s, in this case, millennial women became a more cosmopolitan entity due to the influence of modernity and the influence of the outside world[4]. This generation can be seen through the works of metropop literature. Jordan & Weedon said that metropop is a chick-lit genre in the study of popular literature and is considered to be able to spread a certain ideology[5]. In this study, the novel to be analyzed is a novel by Ika Natassa entitled *Divortiare* which was first published in 2008 and was printed until the twentieth edition in October 2019.

This novel tells the story of the main character of a woman who is divorced from her husband because of her busy life. The main female character named Alexandra is a young woman who has an established job and lifelike millennial woman in general. Another female character in this novel is Wina who works in one of the leading fashion magazines in Jakarta. Natassa is a female writer who displays the life of a typical millennial woman, namely women who are always busy with work, have all the adequate life facilities, and other characteristics of millennial women.

The lifestyle of the female character in the novel by Natassa will be analyzed using the gynocritical theory

proposed by Elaine Showalter. The concept of gynocriticism originates from Woolf's opinion which states that women's writing always shows the nature of female femininity that distinguishes it from male writing. Women produce different writing than men[6]. The purpose of gynocriticism is to form the construction of analytical work by analyzing literary works written by female authors by creating new models based on women's experiences compared to adapting male analytical models and theories[7].

The existing studies, even though they have used the theory of feminism, are still confined by male culture or patriarchy. Showalter no longer questioned the androcentric ideology of patriarchy. For him, what is important is how to see the difference between women's writing and men's writing⁸. According to the gynocritic view, women are separate entities that are different from men, so women do not have to refer to an androcentric culture anymore.

In gynocritical theory, there are four approaches to analyzing women's literary works, namely women's writing and women's biology; women's writing and women's language; women's writing and women's psychology; and women's writing and women's culture[8]. In this paper, the study focuses on discussing women's writing and women's culture.

Related studies on gynocritics are still relatively rare in Indonesia. Several researchers who studied women's literary works from a gynocritical point of view, among others, Yuswanti, et al. produced research that the dominant expression of women in the novel *Particle* by Dewi 'Dee' Lestari is the freedom of women to determine their lives[9]. Furthermore, Putri in her article entitled "Female Experiences in Different Cultural Backgrounds: Gynocriticism on Story of Five Continents" found that based on the experiences of women with different backgrounds from five different continents, it is not easy to be a woman, both young and middle-aged women. because of the disagreement between men and women[10]. In addition, so far there have been many researchers who have studied the novel *Divortiare*, but no researcher has used the gynocritical theory point of view proposed by Showalter to analyze this novel. Therefore, the difference, in theory, is to see how the lifestyle of millennial women in the *Divortiare* novel which is used as an analytical knife in the research becomes a novelty offered by the author.

2. METHODS

This research is a qualitative descriptive study because the results presented are a description of the millennial women's lifestyle in the novel. The approach used in this study is a gynocritic approach to see how women write about millennial women's lifestyle culture. The object of this research is the millennial female character in the novel *Divortiare* by Ika Natassa.

The data used are words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that contain discourse on the lifestyle of millennial women in the *Divortiare* novel. The data that has been collected is sorted and analyzed to explain how women's writing and women's culture are. Furthermore, it will be known how the relationship between women's writing and women's culture is related and the meaning behind women's writing from a gynocritic point of view according to Elaine Showalter.

3. RESULT AND FINDINGS

Based on the research that has been done on the novel written by Natassa, the millennial woman's lifestyle in the *Divortiare* novel is reflected in several things, such as; first, the place to live in the form of an apartment. Second, the hangout places visited by female characters are quite prestigious cafes. The work of millennial women reflected in this novel is an employee of a private bank with the position of relationship manager and employee of a leading fashion magazine in Jakarta. Fourth, the friendly relationship between the characters Alexandra and Vienna. Fifth, the divorce experienced by the main female character in this novel is a choice taken by women without coercion from any party. These five points further show the relationship between how Natassa's writing as a female author and women's culture from a gynocritic point of view.

3.1 Residence as a Reflection of Freedom

Place of residence is closely related to someone's life. Likewise with lifestyle. It can be said that a person's lifestyle, including millennial women, can be seen from the type of residence they choose. Various types of housing are commonly used by Indonesian people, including residential houses, tenement houses, flats, and condotel[11] Each type of residence has different characteristics and types of occupants. The rules that apply in each neighborhood are also different.

In the novel *Divortiare*, the millennial female character is described as living in an apartment. Apartments are included in the category of flats but tend

to be for the upper-middle class[12]. This is because the rental price and the selling price of the apartment are relatively high and have various supporting facilities. In addition, most of the apartments are located in urban areas so that only urban communities are mostly apartment dwellers. The characters Alexandra and Wina are two women who are friends and live together in an apartment.

"Saat aku tiba di rumah, Wina sudah berpiama tidur-tiduran di kamarnya."

"Lho, bukannya aku sudah bilang supaya kamu buang kuncinya setelah kita bercerai?" Aku masih ngotot. Ya nggak lucu aja kalau si Beno masih punya akses ke apartemen ini, masuk-masuk sesuka hatinya saat aku sedang tidak di rumah misalnya."

"When I got home, Wina was already in her pajamas sleeping in her room."

"Well, didn't I tell you to throw away the key after we divorced?" I'm still insistent. Yes, it's not funny if Beno still has access to this apartment, going in and out as he pleases when I'm not at home for example.

Characteristics of apartment residents are indifferent, do not care about the lives of their neighbors. Life in the apartment is a reflection of freedom. Everyone does not care about how the lives of those around them. It is different from the residential environment where people usually live and interact with their neighbors. Natassa portrays the characters of Alexandra and Wina by choosing a place to live in an apartment to show millennial women's freedom in living their lives. Millennial women tend to be busy with their lives, whether they are busy with work, busy with friends, lovers, or busy with themselves. They value freedom so they don't like other people interfering in their private lives. Therefore, the apartment is a choice of place to live that is very representative of millennial women.

3.2 Hangout Places and Financial Establishment

Hangouts have become a lifestyle that cannot be separated from the new urban culture. Millennial women as part of urban culture are also always associated with choosing a place to hang out. As a writer, Natassa always includes the names of well-known cafes located in Jakarta, Indonesia, and cafes in Melbourne Australia in the scenes experienced by the female characters in her novels. The choice of this cafe is not without reason. The author wants to show that the female characters in this novel are women from the

upper-middle class with adequate financial conditions. The female characters in this novel are told that they often spend time together in cafes, both when they are studying in Australia and when they have worked in Indonesia.

Aku dan Wina sedang menikmati afternoon caffeine run di Café Neruda. Aku belajar buat midterm ditemani secangkir hazelnut latte, sementara Wina berkutat dengan Vaio-nya, menyelesaikan artikel tentang Tom Ford.

Wina and I were having afternoon caffeine run at Café Neruda. I learned to make midterms with a cup of hazelnut latte, while Wina wrestled with her Vaio, finishing an article on Tom Ford (p.30).

Aku dan Wina sedang ngopi-ngopi bareng di Coffee Bean Plaza Senayan setelah pemotretan.

Wina and I are having coffee together at Coffee Bean Plaza Senayan after the photoshoot (p.75).

... abis ini kan kita mau makan di Chatterbox lagi.

... after this, we want to eat at Chatterbox again (p. 77).

Aku berjalan meninggalkan Starbucks Sarinah , memikirkan kata-kata Wina

I walked out of Starbucks Sarinah , thinking about Wina's words (p.178)

From the quote above, it can be seen that the author often includes the name of the café in the scene of the female character. Alexandra and Wina are told that they both studied in Australia, they are friends so they often spend time together. Two students doing learning activities and completing assignments in a cafe just to enjoy a cup of coffee illustrates the reality of women's lives who have sufficient financial conditions. They don't have to worry about a lack of money even when they live far away from their home country. The author even clearly wrote down the device used by the Viennese character, namely a laptop with the Sony Vaio brand. In 2008 when this novel was published, the Vaio laptop became one of the prestigious icons for laptop users.

Apart from being in Australia, the author also describes this female character often hanging out in several cafes in Indonesia, such as Coffee Bean and Starbucks. Both of these cafes are cafes that are quite famous, especially among young people. Hanging out at the cafe or just buying coffee from the two coffee shops is a form of urban human lifestyle and this novel is

described as the lifestyle of millennial women in it. Not all millennial women have the opportunity to be able to enjoy such a lifestyle[13]. The character of Alexandra who works as a manager at a private bank shows the close relationship between hangouts and financial stability. When women have achieved financial freedom, they can choose a lifestyle according to their financial capabilities without having to depend on men anymore.

3.3 Career as Evidence of Women's Success

Women in the previous century were always identified with domestic work. Along with the times, women are no longer only in the domestic sphere. As in Javanese culture which says that women are by nature mo telu, namely Macak, Manak, Masak. That means women are only in charge of taking care of the house, as a producer of offspring and cooking in the kitchen. However, along with the development of the times and the knowledge possessed by women, they no longer only dwell in the domestic sphere. Women began to pursue careers in the public sphere. This is even more so among millennial women who are more advanced in education and career levels than women in the previous era[14].

Pekerjaanku sebagai Relationship Manager di BorderBank, salah satu bank swasta asing di Jakarta. Mengharuskanku sering jalan-jalan mengunjungi lokasi usaha nasabah kelolaanku, yang semuanya merupakan nasabah korporasi.

My job is as Relationship Manager at BorderBank, a foreign private bank in Jakarta. Requires me to travel frequently to visit the business locations of my managed customers, all of whom are corporate customers (p. 11)

The author describes the main character named Alexandra in this novel working as a Relationship Manager, namely a manager who deals with corporate customers at a foreign private bank. This shows that nowadays women are not just working, but can occupy higher positions than ordinary employees. Through this quote, the author wants to show that millennial women have proven their ability to work in the public sphere and compete with men. Not only men can occupy certain positions, but women can also do these jobs even better. This means that women have the right to achieve success in their careers.

In addition to the main female character, the female companion character in this novel is also described as having a fairly prestigious job. Wina's character, Alexandra's best friend, is an editor at a well-known

fashion magazine in Jakarta. The work she does allows her to travel to various parts of the world to cover the annual fashion event. From domestic work, the author wants to show through the figures of Wina and Alexandra that these millennial women can even penetrate spatial boundaries in their work. They can travel around areas in Indonesia and even abroad in doing their work.

Global Media, tempat Wina bekerja sekarang, membawahi tiga majalah.

Global Media, where Vienna currently works, oversees three magazines. (p.32)

"Elo masih ingat waktu gue ke New York bulan lalu untuk meliput New York Fashion Week?"

"Do you remember when I went to New York last month to cover New York Fashion Week?" (p.34)

From conversations in the novel, the author shows explicitly that Alexandra can be said to be a successful woman. This was revealed when Wina, who works as a fashion editor, wanted to include Alexandra in a magazine rubric covering successful women. From this, it can be seen that Alexandra is a successful woman in her field of work. The success of women in this novel can be seen from their position in work.

"Gini. Majalah gue kan lagi bikin fashion spread, isinya cewek-cewek muda yang sukses, tapi bukan model..."

"My magazine is making fashion spreads, it contains young girls who are successful, but not models..." (p. 64)

The quote above clearly shows how the condition of millennial women today. Today's women can achieve their success at a young age. Their position in work is directly proportional to the income they get. It means the level of success is also seen from the position and income they receive from their work. So, it can be said that work in the lives of millennial women is a manifestation of their success.

3.4 Friendship as a Source of Women's Strength

The experience of women together with other women creates a sense of commonality and a feeling of being bound together to create a union which in the end produces a source of strength for the woman. Rahman added that women basically have the same problem, namely patriarchy. They gather together, make a relationship to strengthen each other, face, and solve these problems[15].

"Jadi kenapa? Jangan bawa-bawa alasan karena janda makanya elo harus jaim dan menutup diri biar nggak dibilang masyarakat elo kegatelan, ya.... You're young, you're beautiful, there are many fish in the sea, Lex. Go fishing!"

"So what? Don't bring up excuses because you're a widow, that's why you have to keep your image and cover yourself up so that people don't say you're frustrated, okay.... You're young, you're beautiful, there are many fish in the sea, Lex. Go fishing!" (p. 58)

"Lex," Wina memegang tanganku. "Cerita dong. Kalau ada yang mengganjal di hati elo. Elo masih sayang sama Beno? You're better off without him anyway."

"Lex," Wina holds my hand. "Tell me. If something is bothering you. Do you still love Beno? You're better off without him anyway." (p.77)

"Serius, gue seneng banget ngeliat elo akhirnya bisa santai menghadapi masalah beginian, Lex."

"Seriously, I'm so happy to see you can finally relax with this problem, Lex." (p.129)

The friendly relationship of female characters in this novel is shown by the author as a form of mutually reinforcing relationships when women face a problem. The character of Wina is told as a woman who always supports and gives encouragement to Alexandra when Alexandra is having problems. Wina gives spirit and confidence to the character Alexandra that she is a woman who is still young and beautiful so that she does not need to be entangled in post-divorce conflicts.

In Indonesia, being a widow especially for young women is not easy. Many negative views are often shown by society to widows. Widowed tend to be more difficult to accept in society. They consider widows have the potential to damage other marriages. This is what Natassa as a writer is trying to refuse through the character of Vienna. Wina assures Alexandra that being a widow is not a mistake, she still has the right to find another man as a substitute for her husband's existence.

Wina's empathy is also shown when she holds her best friend's hand. Through the touch of the hand, the character of Wina is showing a sense of togetherness as a woman. This is similar to what Humm said that women have the same feelings and the same problem, namely the problem of facing patriarchy[16]. Wina felt a sense of relief when Alexandra had started to relax when she accidentally met her former in-laws while she was walking with her male friend.

3.5 Divorce as a Millennial Woman's Choice

In the previous discussion, it has been mentioned that Alexandra's character is a widow at a fairly young age. The growing stigma in Indonesia shows that being a widow and divorce is something that is taboo and should be avoided. A family should be maintained especially by women because Indonesian women must have basic traits such as acceptance, resignation, patience, and others[17].

For millennial women, the basic traits that Indonesian women should have are no longer relevant for today's life. In addition, this basic nature is more or less detrimental to women, because only women have to accept the situation, be patient with the situation, and do other things that must suppress women's feelings. For the gynocritic view, women must voice what they feel and the experiences they experience.

Pada tahun kedua pernikahan kami, we're both lost.... Akhirnya aku dan Beno memutuskan bercerai. Membodohi diri sendiri rasanya, jika tetap menikah tapi tidak merasakan punya suami atau istri.

In our second year of marriage, we're both lost.... Finally, Beno and I decided to divorce. It's like making a fool of yourself if you stay married but don't feel like you have a husband or wife. (p.19)

The joy of being unmarried, tidak perlu berpikir menabung untuk sekolah anak, beli rumah, atau harga susu yang kabarnya sekarang mahal luar biasa. Guilt-free shopping.

The joy of being unmarried, there is no need to think about saving for your children's school, buying a house, or the price of milk which is said to be very expensive now. Guilt-free shopping (p.206)

The character of Alexandra, as a depiction of millennial women, shows that accepting nature is not a trait that millennial women must possess. Alexandra chooses divorce as a way out of his marriage because of the reason that they have agreed together. Beno, who is Alexandra's husband, is a surgeon who is so busy that he has little time for his wife. In addition, as a doctor, Beno often suddenly has to leave Alexandra because of an emergency call from the hospital. This makes Beno and Alexandra's household life no longer harmonious. As a woman, the author shows the experience of women through the character of Alexandra that women can choose to divorce without having to keep their feelings or lie to their feelings to maintain a marriage.

In addition, Alexandra's character shows feelings of freedom and happiness as an unmarried woman who does not have to worry about buying a house for a family's future, no need to think about the cost of children's education, even the price of children's milk whose price is increasing over time. As a woman, Alexandra can freely use her money for her pleasure. This is a form of women's freedom to enjoy their lives and the results of their hard work. This means that the institution of marriage for some women who are not happy with their marriage becomes something that holds them back. Through this novel, Natassa shows how millennial women can voice their freedom from the institution of marriage and divorce into a normal lifestyle for millennial women.

4. CONCLUSION

Natassa through her novel *Divortiare* based on the views of gynocritics wants to show that millennial women have a different lifestyle from the previous generation. Women's lifestyle can be seen from several aspects that are inherent in themselves, among others, a place to live, a place to hang out, work, friendly relations with fellow women, and divorce in marital relations. From the several aspects that have been analyzed, a common thread can be drawn that millennial women want to voice women's freedom and success in life. The author, through his writings, voices the experiences of women who have been silenced and under-appreciated. That in this lifestyle, not only shows the hedonism of millennial women who are successful in their work but other things should be highlighted behind the success and establishment achieved by millennial women.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Authors would like to thank Lembaga Penelitian dan Pengabdian Masyarakat (LP2M) Universitas Negeri Padang for funding this work with a contract number: 741/UN35.13/LT/2021.

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