

Countering Women's Stereotypes in Taufiq Al-Hakim's *Iziz* Playscript

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Abstract—This research focuses on the main female character, *Iziz*, in the play script of *Iziz* (1955) by Taufiq Al-Hakim. This study used a feminist literary critique approach that focused on feminist values applied in the literary analysis process. In addition, gender theories and gender stereotypes were used to see how the main female character was depicted, whether it confirmed the stereotypes developed in society or not. The stereotype that was used in this research was a dichotomy of female and male stereotypes which were theorized and written by Nasaruddin Umar. The study revealed that *Iziz* was a different woman compared to other women in the era of Egyptian kingdom. She was described as a woman who had courage, dared to fight, and was able to lead her team to uncover the truth of Oziris murder covered by others. He was a king of Egypt murdered and thrown into the Nile. It is concluded that Taufiq Al-Hakim described the main female character beyond the stereotype of women in general. It is known from how the female character can achieve success in her struggle through her efforts.

Keywords—gender, stereotypes, woman, feminist, literary criticism

I. INTRODUCTION

Literature is a text that has two functions: *Dulce Et Utile*. The meaning of this expression is a literary text does not only have a function as entertainment, but also have useful values. Referring to that statement, Arabic literature certainly has those two functions. In his book *Visions of Culture*, Weintraub, a professor of history at the University of Chicago, revealed that Arab writers generally gave color to human civilization. Their contribution is very visible in their expertise and skills in writing literary works [1, p. 27]. The literary writing skills, which are shown by Arabic writers, provide the easiness to the historical readers. The historical experts also read literary texts in order to find out the history of human civilization at certain times — although they do not use literary texts as primary sources. In addition, Arab society is able to create a culture so that it can reach a high level of civilization, which is reflected, among others, in its cultural products that are literary works in the form of poetry, prose, and drama [2, p. 1]. One of many focuses that is observed in the development of civilization is how women are portrayed in literary works.

How women are imaged in a literary work is often used as the main focus of research with corpus of literary works from various worlds—not only Arabic. Ferguson, an expert of woman studies revealed that one of the main problems in a literature study is how a researcher looks at the relationship between a woman's image, myth and reality. Furthermore, Ferguson [3] reveals that most critics begin to conclude that there is a new perspective of women's self that is depicted in literary works. This is believed to be the number of writers who bring up the character of women by characterizing "against" stereotypes of how a woman is in general.

Characterization, which is against stereotypes, is not only found in one literary work from a particular country. Some literary works from various countries present female characters with different stereotypes than how society "shapes" them. An example is Utami's work that shows so many different "female characters"—starting from their nature and how they talk about their bodies. What is interesting besides that is to see how Arabic writers describe the character of women who have always been portrayed as negative through "western" formed media.

The negative image of Arab women by the western media was expressed by Aburwein pointing out that most of what Westerners write about Arab women is based only on exotic imaginary landscapes, generalizations of personal experience or orientalist perceptions [4, p. 2]. In short, Arab women are only used as sexual symbols and are observed as manifestations without deep recognition of their actual character. Throughout the essay, I tried to find out the possible reasons behind this picture. This is directly proportional to how western films, literary works and entertainment are so highly absorbed in various countries, so that the message conveyed by the West regarding the image of Arab women is considered a provision.

In connection with the issues presented above, this paper will discuss a play written by Taufiq Al-Hakim, an Egyptian writer. The drama script's title is *Iziz* [5]. The play script *Iziz* tells about the struggle of a wife who tried to uncover the murder committed by her brother-in-law to her husband in an attempt to seize the throne of the Egyptian kingdom. In an effort to uncover the murder case, *Iziz*, the name of the woman, had to prepare for 15 years while training her son, named Huris, until he was ready to help his mother in revealing the murder case.

Taifun, the brother-in-law of Izis, conducted an attempted murder on Oziris who was the husband of Izis and the king of Egypt at that time. The first attempt of murder is to wash away Oziris into the Nile, which was previously entered into a chest. Oziris drifted to the Biblus kingdom and was saved by the Fishermen. He was welcomed by the King of Biblus and was able to make the Biblus kingdom prosperous. Izis, who sought her husband throughout the country, finally found her husband in the kingdom. They returned to Egypt and lived in a remote area that cannot be found by Taifun and his soldiers.

The second murder attempt was carried out by Taifun to Oziris when they found out where he and his wife lived. Oziris was kidnapped and killed, cut into small pieces, and spread to the Nile so that no one could find his way. This murder caused Izis to be so sad and finally train his son named Huris to avenge his father's grudge. However, the way to take revenge is with the people's court in the Egyptian palace. With the strategy that she set, cooperation with Shaykhul Balad, training Huris, and her courage to speak the truth during the people's trial, made Izis able to open the murders committed by Taifun to the Egyptian king who was also her own brother.

Izis effort, in revealing a murder case involving Taifun, got its own attention in this drama script. A woman, who was an ordinary people—even though she had occupied the throne as a princess—was able to speak a lot and try to reveal the truth in front of the Egyptian people. So, my hypothesis for this paper is that Izis, as a woman, was able to have an extraordinary effect on the disclosure of the crimes committed by Taifun to Oziris-Izis's husband.

Like other studies, this study requires an approach and theory to be used as a "scalpel" analysis. For this reason, in this paper, feminist literary criticism is used as an approach — in addition to gender theory and gender stereotypes that I use as theoretical framework supported by a concept of gender dichotomy [6].

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

According to Wiyatmi [7, p. 1], feminist literary criticism is a literary criticism that uses the framework of feminism theory in interpreting and evaluating literary works. The focus of the analysis of a feminist literary criticism is how women are portrayed in literary works, therefore feminist literary criticism uses a perspective of how women are portrayed in literary works, in relation to men and their society (mimetic), and of course feminism theory [7, pp. 10–11]. In carrying out this criticism, many elements of literary work are considered by researchers. But the most important is gender relations and relations between women and men, which are generally socially constructed [8]. Gender, which is the formation of social life, generally forms women in a subordinate position by men. This puts men in a dominant position while women are in submissive positions. In addition, the submissive position that women receive often makes women unable to do anything and just surrender to what happened to them. So that the suppression is considered normal.

In connection with gender stereotypical inequality in society, an idea emerged to fight for gender equality. Gender equality is the subject of the discourse that is constantly fought for by

feminist movement activists. The discourse of the feminist movement itself began in the 18th century AD when Wollstonecraft, an English writer and philosopher, wrote a work voicing that gender and its role is something formed by social life [9, p. 14].

The social construction ultimately puts women in an inferior or subordinate position by men. Positions that bring women to have little or no opportunity to express their opinions in public provoke reactions from various feminist fighters. Until finally in 1848 in New York, the Women's Rights Convention was held [7, p. 14]. At the meeting, it was formed Declaration of Sentiments and twelve resolutions that emphasize women's freedom in order to voice their opinions in public [9, p. 21].

This is how the early feminist movement fought for women's rights in public speaking in accordance with how liberal feminists presented their goals. Liberal feminists "born" in the late 18th to 19th centuries where their struggle was divided into two groups. One of the liberal feminist groups is contemporary liberal feminists who have the aim to free women from gender role oppression and provide space in forums for women to be able to deliver their voices [9, p. 20].

Gender is a form of social life. According to Fakhri [10, p. 8], gender is a concept that is inherent in men and women who are socially and culturally constructed. So, it can be understood that: indeed the traits that are generally understood as male and female characteristics are actually formed and not present from the time human was born. As what Beauvoir [11] revealed that a woman was born not as a woman, but she was formed by the community so that she became "a woman". Women are actually born without differences in ability and strength with men. What distinguishes women from men is biological things such as sex and reproductive organs. However, the construction that has been formed among people is really difficult to change. This construction forms a gender stereotype which is divided into two opposite sides (dichotomy) between men and women [6] as seen on table 1.

TABLE 1. MALE AND FEMALE CHARACTER DIFFERENCES

Male	Female
- Very aggressive	- Not too aggressive
- Independent	- Not too independent
- Not emotional	- More emotional
- Can hide emotions	- Difficulty hiding emotions
- More objective	- More subjective
- Not easily affected	- easily affected
- Dominant	- Submissive
- Not easy to falter	- Easy to falter in facing a crisis
- More active	- More passive
- More adventurous	- Do not like adventure
- Easy to overcome problems	- Difficult to overcome the problem
- Not easy to cry	- Cry more often
- Appear as a leader	- Don't appear as a leader
- Full of confidence	- Lack of confidence
- More ambitious	- Less ambitious
- More independent	- subordinated
- Not awkward in appearance	- more awkward
- Thinking is superior	- Thinking is not superior

III. METHOD

The study was a literary research with a content analysis design trying to unveil woman stereotypes in *Izis* playscript as the main corpus. It used a feminist literary critique approach that focused on feminist values applied in the literary analysis process. In addition, gender theories and gender stereotypes were used to see how the main female character was depicted, whether it confirmed the stereotypes developed in society or not. The stereotype that was used in this research was a dichotomy of female and male stereotypes

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In the *Izis* drama script, which is divided into three parts, *Izis* character is portrayed as a woman who does not just accept the situation when she get various life problems. In fact, in the book *Argumen Kesetaraan Jender*, women have different stereotypes with the characteristics of *Izis*. This initial hypothesis also opposes the image of women who often cannot fight for their rights and voices [12].

Some of these stereotypes are: easily affected, easily shaky in facing the crisis, more passive, home oriented, not like adventure, difficult to overcome problems, not common to appear as a leader, lack of confidence, less aggressive, lack of independence, and lack of superior thinking. In the drama script of *Izis*, some of these stereotypes were broken by how Taufiq Al-Hakim described the character of *Izis*.

In the gender study, women are more identified as gender who only have space within their domestic area — inside the house. This is motivated by several reasons, one of which is a woman who is considered weak and unable to do anything when in a public space. In this drama script, *Izis* is described as a woman who chooses to get out of her "zone", the palace, to find her missing husband. In this case, stereotypes of women who are said to be adventurous and passive do not apply. Several evidences from the *Oziris* search process conducted by *Izis* are illustrated in the following sections of the drama or dialogue 1.

Dialogue 1

Izis: You know me well. I don't like to come here. what happened made me worry, I was worried even harder ... this heart said that something had happened.

Tut: what happened to your husband?

Izis: He left last night, but until now he hasn't returned home [5, p. 6].

The conversation occurred in part 1 of the first half where *Izis* began to look for ways to find her husband, namely by meeting *Tut* who was known to be able to spell so that something missing could come back again. Furthermore, *Izis*'s search was also told until she walked far to the edge of the river, meeting with fishermen, until finally reaching the land of *Biblus*. Her journey in finding her missing husband was finally discovered when she arrived in the country. Both of these are illustrated from dialogue 2 and 3 below.

Dialogue 2

Izis: Don't you see something floating?

Fisherman: we don't see except floating objects, only canoes floating on the Nile.

Izis : not a canoe, but something. Like a chest [5, p. 21].

Dialogue 2

Izis : Oziriiiis!

Oziris : (Full of happiness) Iziiiiis. (Welcoming the hand of the *izis*, almost can't believe) You are *Izis* ... are you really *Izis*? I am fine and you ...

Izis : As you can see honey, my husband... my dear ...

In the process of fighting for the truth for the people of Egypt, who were deceived by the *Taufun* when he took the position of king of *Oziris*, as a woman, *Izis* was able to do many crucial things. Some of them were able to set a strategy to defeat the *Taufun* in the court before the people of Egypt. She then invited *Syaikhul Balad* to work together. Although *Syaikhul Balad* is a person who is trusted by the *Taufun*, but *Syaikhul Balad* has personal resentment towards his king. The wages promised by *Taufun* to him were never realized and just promises. This was finally used by *Izis* to invite him to join to uncover the truth. This process is illustrated in dialogue 4 below.

Dialogue 4

Izis: Listen. You know that I have a lot of jewelry and valuables, I left in the palace since I came out of the palace looking for my husband.

SB: I know it. he handed over was asked to keep the price by *Taufun* seizing the treasure and still keeping it.

Izis : For you half allotments.

SB : (happy) half?

Furthermore, Al-Hakim described *Izis* as a woman who had a strong stance, was not easily shaken, and was able to defend arguments over the plans she had thought to reveal the truth before the people of Egypt. Is it successful? Not as easy as that, because initially the plan was able to get opposition from the character of the story named *Mastot*—a conflict which is to defend opinions between women and men is presented here. But *Izis* still believes that the plan is the best. This can be found in dialogue 5 below.

Dialogue 5

Mastot: Do you want to use this method?

Izis: What way?

Mastot: take bribes, insult and lie

Izis: please say anything, this is because there is no other way to take this case to the palace.

Mastot: You are now violating the moral goodness of your husband. Our betrayal.

Izis: Whatever, *Mastot*. I do not deny the goodness of my husband. I also didn't betray him at all. My husband did not ask to return to his palace. He did not have an ambition to be the king. What he did was to serve the people. What he hoped was to improve the welfare of the population, especially the peasants and the poor. We try, I and you live this life calmly and peacefully. But *Taufun* did not allow this. do you know what he did to my husband? My husband, whose heart was clean as

clean as a baby, had never been involved in wrong, never thought of having a musu, had never done evil to others [5, pp. 43–44].

Finally, Al-Hakim describes the character of Izis as a woman who is able to prove that she also has independence in expressing opinions in public. This process of delivering opinions by Izis was described when she stood before the people of Egypt. At that time Izis was in a people's court - where life and death were really at stake at that time. Not only that, she is also risking the life of her son, named Huris, to reveal the truth in the process of rising Taifun to become the king of Egypt. This can be seen in dialogue 6 and 7.

Dialogue 6

Taifun: please hear what they say, Izis.

Izis: No, he didn't die from drowning, this is a hoax you spread throughout the monster. You are a fraudulent ruler. You put my husband in a tied chest, then you throw it in the Nile, and you think he died. But the chest floats on the water, and is found by fishermen. Then they picked it up and took it and sold it to the king of Biblus. There my husband is still alive for some time. I came to Biblus then picked him up. We returned to Egypt secretly until giving birth to Huris. We live peacefully, until our existence is known to Taifun. He was the one who killed my husband for the second time, really cruel to you Taifun [5, pp. 54–55].

Dialogue 7

King Biblus: (Exclaims) Wait, wait.

Taifun : (Angry) Who is that person?

Izis : (Happy) this is the proof, he is the proof.

Raja Biblus: (Looking at Izis, asking for permission), I'm sorry I'm late, there is a slight disturbance on the road [5, p. 56].

From the dialogue above, we can find out that King Biblus did come with an invitation from Izis for the trial process. The nature of the initiative that was previously considered not owned by women was actually owned by Izis and proved to be fruitful at the end of the story later. The success began when King Biblus acknowledged that he did know Oziris and confirmed that Oziris was still alive after he was found drifting in the river. This further put Typhoon in a difficult position in front of his own people. The courage which is shown by Izis in the process of fighting for the truth gave fresh air to Izis's stronghold. Even though she is a woman, she is able to do something that is virtually impossible to do if she only looks from how gender stereotypes are

described for a woman. At the end of the story, Izis finally got what she wanted and strived for her freedom and courage.

V. CONCLUSION

The script of the drama *Izis* by Taufiq Al-Hakim describes a woman named Izis who fights gender stereotypes. She was written by Al-Hakim as a woman who had courage, dared to fight, and was able to lead his "team" to uncover the same truth that was covered by Taifun. The ancient time setting shown by this drama, namely Egypt when it still had kingdoms in it, did not prevent the writer from giving a different image to women. Izis is described as a woman who is "different" when compared to other women. However, a deeper study is needed to see whether this Izis character depiction is based on the image of women in ancient Egypt, or an attempt by Taufiq Al-Hakim to give another image to women in literary works born in Arab lands. So it is important in later studies to read and use the author's sociology and history approach (combining primary text with secondary text) to find out whether it is indeed like in the Izis story the woman is portrayed. So that other information that will later be obtained can actually be a contribution to the repertoire of Arabic literary studies.

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