

Original Paper

Eroticism in Ayu Utami's Novels "Saman" and "Larung" and its Implications for Literature Learning in High School

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Abstract

This study aims to describe the depiction of female eroticism, the idea of feminism in Saman and Larung novels written by AyuUtami, and its implications for learning literature in high school. The method used in this research is a descriptive method utilizing qualitative analysis. The data source in this research is Saman and Larung novels written by AyuUtami. Data analysis utilized work analysis technique. Based research result, the types of eroticism include metabolic erotica, biological erotica, metabolic/biological erotica, whereas the expression of erotism includes the mention of genitals, descriptions of sexual scenes, descriptions of sexual intercourse scenes, descriptions of sexual misconduct, descriptions of sensual body parts. The idea of feminism is rebellion against the rules, customs, and norms of society, the movement that always opposes unjust rulers, representating women aiming for freedom, against the patriarchy on women, the struggle for equality and rights between men and women, the struggle against differences the sex system, and the struggle to resist discrimination and cultural values that undermine women. Based research result and its the relevance of core competence and basic competence in the curriculum of 2013, these novels are not relevant to be used as a literary teaching material in schools, but in terms of feminism, ideas can add literature value in high school.

Keywords

feminism, erotism, Saman, Larung, 2013 Curriculum

1. Introduction

Literature is one of the forms of cultural representation that describes gender relations and routines. In addition, literary texts can also reinforce and create new gender stereotypes that are more representative of gender freedom (Sofia, 2009, p.21). In modern times, women in various countries, including Indonesia began to question, sue for domination, and injustice. These forms of injustice include marginalization or economic impoverishment, subordination or insignificance in political decisions, stereotypical formation or through negative labeling, violence, longer and more workloads, and socialization of gender roles (Sofia, 2009, p.12).

Literature is a work that tells the society life in the past as well as present. Literary works as verbal symbols have several roles among them as a way of understanding, how to connect, and the way of creation. The object of literature is the reality, the events that occur in the real world. Thus, literary works can translate events into linguistic form in order to understand events according to the ability of the author. Literary works can be a means for the author to convey thoughts, feelings, and responses about an event. Literary work is also a re-creation of an event in accordance with the quality of the author's knowledge. In creating his literary works can not release the language element. They automatically wrestle with language, because language is the medium for the pronunciation of his literary results (Kasnadi & Sutejo, 2010, p. 36).

Literary works have a wide opportunity to talk about things, including love, men, and women. Creation of literary works can not be separated from social context. Therefore, literary work is not just a daydream, a figment of imagination, or a fantasy, but rather the reality of another life in the author. The reality of life thus appears in self-experience, inner experience, language experience, and author's aesthetic experience (Kasnadi & Sutejo, 2010, p. 134).

A literary work must possess a theme and message conveyed to the reader. Especially in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami on sexuality. The issue of sexuality is one of the greatest humanitarian problems always encountered in literature at any time. The imagery of sexuality erotica is conceptually intended as all the pronunciation of the author (through language) depicting sexuality in the social touch of the imagery of erotic sexuality capable of providing an image (image) that leads the reader to discover beauty in a literary text (Kasnadi & Sutejo, 2010, p. 146).

Indonesian literature has raised a number of themes related to sex and love. Previous literary works, both written by male and female writers, describes sex experience in metaphorical or disguise, as seen in several works including *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk* or *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari. Controversies about sex or images of erotic manners in literature have begun long ago. Eroticism could be paired with pornography. However, between there is the difference between the two. According to Hoed (in Utomo et al., 2001, p.4), eroticism leads more to the description of behavior, circumstances, or atmosphere based on libido, in the sense of sexual desire. Conversely, the atmosphere is based on libido (in a sexual sense) highlighted to arouse lust. Thus, eroticism has the meaning of depictions in terms of action,

circumstance or atmosphere verbally depicted, whereas pornography has a meaning whose depictions are visual, indecent, and dirty. In the eastern societies, *Saman* and *Larung* novels discuss the most intimate and sexually discussed female organs, especially on the part of female characters.

Controversies on sex or images of erotic matters in literature have begun early on. In the *Balai Pustaka* generation's Nota Rinkes, for example, it is considered to violate the norms of society or taboo and inflicts "moral corruption", because the side of sexuality that feels more "new" because of the way of disclosure that is very different from previous patterns; making this feature into the main focus of the audience. So far, most people consider sex to be a taboo as a topic itself. From the point of view of the literary response, the word "taboo" and "moral corruption" is a form of a reader's negative reception of the values or norms that represent the literary society against sex-themed literature. Literature containing sexual theme serve as a bridge in the struggle of feminists to equalize gender. Using these works as evidence, they are still eager to fight for the rights of women, especially in terms of writing sexuality in a literary work.

Feminists and women's emancipation fighters want to position women in gender equality. Feminism can not be separated from the female figure as a fighter. Feminism is a women's movement demanding equal rights between women and men (Moeliono et al., cited by Sugihastuti, 2010, p. 18). Feminism is related to the concept of feminist literary criticism which focuses its analysis on women. There is an assumption that those representing readers and creators in Western literature are men. Feminist literary criticism suggests that female readers bring perceptions and expectations into the literary experience (Showalter cited by Sugihastuti, 2010, p. 18).

Feminist literature critiques concerns "Politics" in the literary system of communication, that is, a politics that alters the life relationships between women and men in literary communication systems (Millet cited Sugihastuti, 2002, p. 20). One of the results of human creation as an effort envision the relationship between women and men is a novel.

Novel is one type of literary work that reveals a wide range of events. Novel gained a lot of attention and interest from many people. In addition, the novel possesses character, behavior, and plot. In other words, the novel involves a number of characters conducting something in a total context organized or arranged in logical order, chronological, causal, and so forth (Azies & Abdul, 2010, p. 4).

Saman and *Larung* novels oriented towards gender equality. The female characters featured by Ayu Utami are figures demanding equality, both in social, political and sex, in particular, the controversy over the issue of sexuality expressed in the two novels. Both of these novels place female characters on par with men. The rapid development of feminism has shifted little by little the imbalances that have occurred so far. This is seen in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami, they are more accepting of other advantages and strengths possessed by women.

In connection with the development of feminism and sexuality controversy issue in both novels, this research is directed at erotism in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami and its implications in high

school literary learning. The reasons for choosing the two novels are as follows: First, *Saman* and *Larung*'s novel by Ayu Utami has courage in raising sex problem and experience, even though the society considers it violates the norms of society. Second, the emergence of two groups, the group that welcomed (positive) and the group who underestimate (negative) the emergence of novel works such as *Saman* and *Larung* by Ayu Utami which raises sexuality theme. Third, the emergence of Ayu's work dared to fight society norm which is rooted in community with cultural conventions. The novel is interesting precisely because it violates the norms of traditional society, so through resistance against violating the norms of society, they discuss women phenomenon, especially in terms of sex. Fourth, *Saman* and *Larung* are novel which content is loaded with gender issues such as politics and sex. When men are engaged in thrilling politics, women are busy discussing the issue of sexuality.

Saman and *Larung* were selected as an object of research in the study of feminist literary criticism. Research on feminism especially on Indonesian novels has been done by some literary observers. The study, among others.

Didi Suhendi (2000) in his thesis entitled Gender in Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, *Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari*, and *Jantera Bianglala* by Ahmad Tohari: Criticism Study of Feminism Literature (*Gender dalam Ronggeng Dukuh Paruk, Lintang Kemukus Dini Hari, dan Jantera Bianglala Karya Ahmad Tohari: Kajian Kritik Sastra Feminisme*) exhibits evidence that women belong to men. The female identity is reduced only to the biological-sexual aspect that utilizes the body as an object of view and possession.

Ernalida (2000) examines the Gender Markers in *Saman* Novel by Ayu Utami and Its Relation to Perceptions of the Palembang Society on Gender Roles (*Penanda Gender dalam Novel Saman Karya Ayu Utami dan Kaitannya dengan Persepsi Masyarakat Palembang tentang Peran Gender*). Research result, among others, is words that refer to the gender of men and women. There are words that refer only to the gender of men and women as well as neutral words, in the sense that they refer to both genders.

Rika Ayu (2002) examines masculine females in *Saman* and *Larung* novels. Research result indicates that there is a process of masculinization aspects of sexuality and aspects of the division of labor.

Yenny Puspita (2003) in Gender and Patriarchy in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami. Research result indicate that there are female characters who experienced masculinization such as Cok, Shakuntala, Yasmin, and Laila. The female characters possess a strong character to object against and sue the patriarchal system. They have the intellectual power and obtain enough education. They are figures representing feminists. In addition, there are special female characters, Upi, Simbah *Larung* and Suprihatin.

Based on research results above, it is clear that the study of feminist literary criticism contained in the literary work is interesting to be studied. Similar previous research with this research is both doing research studies of feminism literary criticism. In contrast to previous studies, this study examines the eroticism of women, especially the depictions of erotic text in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami,

the emancipation movement and the idea of women's emancipation and feminism in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami, and the implications of *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami in high school literature study.

Based on the background above, this research problem is formulated as follows:

- [1] How is the depiction of eroticism in *Saman* and *Larung*'s novel by Ayu Utami?
- [2] How is the idea of feminism in *Saman* and *Larung* novel by Ayu Utami?
- [3] How are the implications of research results on the study of literature in high school?

This research is expected to be beneficial theoretically and practically. The theoretical benefits are expected to illustrate the eroticism described in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami; describes the idea of feminism in the *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami and the implications of research results in high school literature study.

Research result can provide the following practical benefit: (1) For literature readers, adding insight and knowledge regarding eroticism, feminism ideas in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami. (2) For other researchers, this research could be utilized as a reference in conducting further research, especially about eroticism, feminism idea in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami. (3) For Indonesian teachers, contributing literary learning materials, especially in high school literature study and taking the example of good character behavior from the results of the research analysis.

2. Method

In a broader sense, method is perceived as ways, strategies for understanding reality, systematic steps to break the next sequence of causation (Ratna, 2011, p. 34). The method in this research is a descriptive method of qualitative analysis, is a combination of the descriptive method of analysis and qualitative method. "Descriptive analytic method is done by describing facts followed by analysis" (Ratna, 2011, p. 53). Qualitative methods, "The qualitative method is to entirely utilize interpretive means by presenting it in the form of a description" (Ratna, 2011, p. 44). In this research, descriptive method of qualitative analysis is used to describe the eroticism of female sexuality in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami and its implications for literature learning in high school.

The approach used in this research is feminist literary criticism. A feminist literary critique approach is a literary study that leads the focus of analysis to women. If it has been assumed that those representing readers and creators in literature are male, feminist literary critics suggest that women readers brings perception and expectations into the literary experience (Sugihastuti, 2005, p. 18).

3. Research Result

Eroticism in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami includes erotic expressions. The erotic expressions encountered by researchers in *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami is metabolic erotica, biological erotica, and metabolic/biological erotica.

Based research result, erotism in *Samanwere* erotic type and erotic disclosure. The erotic analysis encountered by researchers *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami is a metabolic erotica. Metabiologically meaning, metaphorical, symbolic, and packed metaphorical imagery, which is described in subtle discourse, giving the reader more intensive imagination. In the metabolic erotica, the author delivers the scene to providereader sexual scenes without a rule, an adultery, a free sexual relationship between two characters or an affair. The author also describes the biological disclosure by using pronunciation to indicate infidelity, a free sexual relationship between two characters, scenes of sexual intercourse used naturally. The author also describes depictions through the introduction of human sexual organs expressed in a rough, transparent manner without a symbolic mention of the genitals. The author expressed openly without symbols.

Integrally pronouncing sexuality erotica is combined with the use of metabolic erotica and biological erotica. Erotica metabiological sexuality is used in conjunction with biological erotica. The behavior and culture of a country's sexual perception are depicted by the appearance of a tool that can add to the satisfaction of sex and sexual life in a school community.

The manner in which the erotic disclosure by means of the genital description can be director indirect. For example, mentioning "natural pipe" on the script and so on. Despite the mention of the genitals is disguised, the word implies and has the meaning of genitalia. It also described kiss, hugs scenes up to poking. Descriptions of sexual intercourse scenes are described as something natural. Descriptions of sexual misconduct in the form of sexual practices that deviate from modesty. This can be seen when the depictions of sexual abuse which exceeds existing limits or norms of decency, description of sensual body parts in the form of sensual body portrayals. This sensual depiction is illustrated in a character's physical features such as lips, eyes, nose etc.

There is metabiological disclosure aspect found in *Larung*. In addition to exhibiting the turmoil and sexual behavior with various forms, the aspect of sexuality that describes sex in *Larung* novel also describes the technique of prolonging the game of metaphorical sexuality. Sex life in society is described in *Larung*. Metabolic erotic disclosures describe sexual misconduct and infidelity, exhibiting free sex relationship between sexes. Sex life illustrated in past tense and adultery in society are featured in *Larung*. Biological erotica illustrates sexuality which is visualized clearly, openly, transparently and in detail. It describes biological portrayal through the organs of human sexuality called organal and functional.

Ayu also reveals biological erotica and metabolic erotica together. The biological erotica was expressed in direct words describing male characters. Metabolic erotica is expressed in symbolic and subtle words. *Larung* mentions female genitalia and men exposed subtly or indirectly. The author mentions genitals directly in a vulgar manner, as described in a sex scene. It is described in hugs, kisses, or poking scenes. Erotic element in sexual relationship is described as something natural. Descriptions through sensual abuses are a description of abuse or deviation from modesty relating to sexuality.

Sexual deviation is described in deviated manner compared to existing norm. Description of erotic elements through the sensual body is a description of visible body parts which incites someone's lust, which is a sensual body portrayal.

The idea of feminism flow through each female character in the novel. It is a rebellion against the rules, customs, norms of society, the movement that always oppose unjust rulers, representing women struggle in obtaining freedom, opposing patriarchy which limits women, the struggle for equality and rights between men and women, against differences in the sex system, and rejecting discrimination and cultural values that undermine women.

To obtain the unanimity of meaning in a study, it is necessary to discuss building elements in literary works, especially novels. The dominant elements of *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami are the characters. The characters of the story in Ayu Utami's *Saman* are human. They are named to distinguish one character from another. The names of the characters are *Saman* and four female characters namely Shakuntala, Laila, Cok, and Yasmin. They are young, educated, and possess career.

Saman is a person who has an attitude of caring and loving fellow human beings. *Saman* also has a gentle attitude, is not resistant to violence, and has a concern for the community. Laila is a very courageous, caring, kind and ready to sacrifice herself to person she loves. Yasmin is a lawyer, a smart, rich and productive person. Cok is a cheerful person. Sakuntala is a free person. The auxiliary character in the novel *Saman* is Sihar is a man who already has a wife and a man who is loved by Laila. Rosano is a son of a mining department official who has a friendly but arrogant attitude. Upi is someone who is mentally retarded. Anson is a hard worker who has a blind eye and is an older brother to Upi. Mak Afgani is a kindhearted person. Hasyim Ali is a hard worker. The main characters in the novel *Larung* are *Saman*, Cokorda Gita Magaresa, Laila Gagarina, Shakuntala, Yasmin Moningka, Sihar Situmorang. The technique of depicting characters and characterizations in this novel uses dramatic techniques or indirect techniques. *Larung* has a pleasant yet sometimes frightening, and loving nature. *Nenek* (Granny) *Larung* is a modest and a strong female figure. A strong figure because his body is full pins.

Based on core competencies and basic competencies, the results of this study can not be used as a literary material, especially vulgar language usage. Preferably in the application in school, teachers play an active role to explain as well as possible and guide students in the application of the literary work of the novel. Good and bad wisdom that can be taken in the content of the novel under study. The idea of feminism based on research result is very relevant to be used as a literary study material, especially in increasing insight in high school.

The idea of feminism is in line with Wardani's opinion (2011) who explained that *Larung* is a novel that contains the efforts of the feminist movement, especially about gender conflict and society's view of a woman. This novel is very appropriate to lift the feminism in the literature study through role playing activities. Walidin (2007) explains that:

Since the “Nota Rinkes” of Balai Pustaka, sexuality in Indonesian literature works is considered a negative aspect by the community. However, since *Saman* (1998) was published, the reader’s response to sexuality has changed. This is evident from the positive response of the literary critics of this multidimensional charge of the novel. The reader’s positive response was also born from other literary authors (mostly women) who felt confident to open up the issue of sexuality in a vulgar and diverse manner. In addition, there are indications of disagreement from the general public to the discourses of sexuality raised, such as educational observers, writers who still emphasize morality, and women who do not like being stripped naked in public.

The above opinion provides an explanation that some reader agree with novels with sexual theme. But education-based observers stated their disagreement. Furthermore, Pradopo (in Walidin, 2007) states that:

...has started early. In the generation of Balai Pustaka ‘Nota Rinkes’ for example, is considered to violate the taboo and “damage the morale”. Also, Armijn Pane’s “*Belenggu*” which questioned love and infidelity also caused controversy. In the late 1960s, Motinggo Busye’s Bibi Marsiti’s trilogy is considered to contain many elements of pornography which caused never-ending discussion.

The quotation above explains that in Balai Pustaka generation, literary work containing sex theme is considered to violate the taboo and caused lengthy discussion. However, Djokosudjatno (<http://mwalidin.blogspot.com/2007/12/seksualitas-dalam-novel-indonesia>) explains that:

In the case of sexuality disclosure in the literary works written by female authors, their works received positive readers’ receptions to this new type of novel. For example, Djokosudjatno (2004, p. 7) appreciated Ayu’s efforts in *Saman* and *Larung* as a positive contribution to the discourse on women’s superiority in sexuality. The above quotation explains that *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami is a positive contribution to women’s superiority in sexuality.

The above quotation explains that the *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami is a positive contribution to the superiority of women in sexuality.

4. Conclutions

Based on the results of this study can be summarized as follows:

- [1] *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami describes metabolic erotica, biological erotica, and metabolic/biological erotica. Erotic disclosure in the two novels is seen in scenes that lead to erotism such as mentioning genitals, descriptions of explicit scenes, descriptions of sexual intercourse scenes, descriptions of sexual misconduct, descriptions of sensual body parts in the form of sensual body portrayals.

- [2] Based on analysis result, movement of women's emancipation and the idea of feminism in *Saman* and *Larung* novels are a rebellion against the rules, customs and norms of society, the movement that always oppose unjust rulers, women struggles in obtaining freedom, against patriarchy that limits women, the struggle for equality and rights between men and women, against differences in the sex system, and to resist discrimination and cultural values that depreciate women.
- [3] Based on research result associated with core competence and basic competence in the 2013 curriculum, viewed from erotism perspective, these novels are not relevant to be used as a material for high school literature study. Therefore, teachers must play an active role to explain and guide students in teaching literature, especially novels. Good and bad moral can be taken from the novel taught. However, in terms of feminism ideas, this research can add literature value in high school education.

Saman and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami has multi interpretative nature, hence the researchers suggest:

- [1] Avoid eroticism related material for high school student usage, especially the use of vulgar language in the novel, there should be guidance from teachers and parents.
- [2] For Indonesian language and literature teachers to be more careful in choosing novels to be taught, given vulgar language used.
- [3] For *Saman* and *Larung* novels by Ayu Utami readers to better understand the positive values that exist in the novel.

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