

Women's Voices in Tiffany Reisz's *The Night Mark* (2017)

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ABSTRACT

Tiffany Reisz's *The Night Mark* (2017) is an American time travel novel that talks about women issues, besides the time travel story itself. This study aims at describing women's voices in the novel. The theory used in this study is liberal feminism. The study finds out that there are several manifestations of voices of women different era about their lives, roles, and status both in the domestic area and within the society. It is concluded that the women's voices in the novel are in line with the spirit of liberal feminism, especially in how to see women's lives, roles, and status.

Keywords: women's voices, time travel, liberal feminism.

INTRODUCTION

How far has the literary genres evolved? Hundreds of years since it was pioneered by our predecessors with some modest examples of genres such as romance in terms of theme and epic in terms of form, nowadays, we have a lot of newer or younger genres in literature. Twenty-two years since the turn of the millennium, we already have abundant literary genres. One of those is science fiction.

In the past few decades, we have developed science fiction with its subgenres or variants, including climate fiction (cli-fi), mundane sci-fi, etcetera (Bainbridge, 1986). One of the topics in sci-fi that appears to be one of the most popular ones today is time travel, as we can see in movies: *The Time Machine* (2002), which adapted from H. G. Wells' *The Time Machine* novel (1895), *The Time Traveller's Wife* (2009), *Looper* (2012), *Edge of Tomorrow* (2014), and *The Adam Project* (2022).

Time travel stories are always interesting to follow. It has been human nature that we sometimes have regrets as well as disappointments in life that make us want to "turn back time". Stories of time travels offer us a kind of "solution" towards these feelings, which invite us to imagine how if we can turn back time by reading or watching the stories.

Studies on time travel fictions are interestingly not always related to the formulas. In fact, many of such fictions speak about varied issues such

as women, politics, romance, and etcetera. It is what we can see in Tiffany Reisz's *The Night Mark* (2017).

Tiffany Reisz's *The Night Mark* (2017) is an American novel with the genres of romance and time travel, which belongs to science fiction (sci-fi) genre. It talks about a thirty-one-year-old woman named Victoria Faye Barlow, living in 2015 but accidentally time-travelling back to 1921 and living in a body of a twenty-year-old married woman called Faith Morgan.

This novel presents several important issues such as lack of property right for women, arranged marriage, and sexual harassment in a marriage, by husband towards wife practically. The novel talks about Faith Morgan that runs away from her husband after being tortured due to an unwanted sexual act. Faith Morgan refuses to have sex with him. The law in 1921 did not recognize this kind of abuse as a sexual harassment since it is conducted within marriage. It is much about gender perceptions during that era.

Talking about gender, women are independent creatures, like men. They have passions, just the way men do. However, this fact has been neglected by most societies throughout the history of human beings. For generations, women have suffered a lot. It is because gender inequality has put women as a second class. It happens in many societies (Mansour, 1996).

Feminism as a movement thus emerged in the late nineteenth century to try to deal with such issues. now we have already four feminist waves. Each wave has its objectives. These varieties of objectives result in the categorization of feminism (Tong, 2009).

One of the issues that attracts attention is the imbalance between men's and women's rights to access things such as career, political rights, and public facilities (Donovan, 2000). This issue is already a long-term issue for centuries that makes women discriminated. In this sense, liberal feminism overcomes it. The issues that liberal feminism cover include reproductive rights and abortion access, sexual harassment, voting, education, fair compensation for work, affordable childcare, affordable health care, and bringing to light the frequency of sexual and domestic violence against women (Astrianti et al., 2018; Hooks, 2000).

Liberal feminism tries to release women from oppressive gender roles, in accordance with social roles of women that put them as the second class, such as a belief that women are born to cope with domestic chores while men oversee the public sphere. One of the things the liberal feminists criticize is the people's inability to distinguish between gender and sex. This situation is what makes women are frequently oppressed by men due to their sex status, which leads to the sexism. What is sexism? Sexism is attitudes or behaviour based on traditional stereotypes of gender roles, including the sexual objectification of women (Merz et al., 2015).

METHOD

It is library research that uses a qualitative method, where information is gathered from various sources, such as books, journals, and another

supporting data. In this study, the researcher uses the primary data and literary book from Tiffany Reisz's *The Night Mark* (2017). The data taken include sentences, prose, and words relevant to the problems.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Why feminism developed from America is also inseparable from how related issues criticized by feminism are also very prevalent in America. From time to time, the issue of the position and role of women in America continues to be criticized, fought for, and negotiated. At least in the novel *The Night Mark* is shown how the position and role of women in two different generations.

The novel presents two selves from different eras, one from 2015 and the other from 1921. "Self" needs to be emphasized here in contrast to "physical body" dealing with the context of the story. "Self" here can be understood as "soul".

In this story, two different selves live in the same single figure, when the self or soul of Victoria Faye Barlow, a woman from 2015 is trapped in a body of another woman named Faith Morgan when she is time travelling to the past accidentally.

The quotation below tells how Faye is trapped in the body of Faith Morgan, an eighteen-year-old married girl.

"I can't blame you for not knowing your name. I keep forgetting it myself. But you're Faith Morgan now. It's '21. And you're better off not knowing who the president is. I wish I didn't know."

(Reisz, 2017, p. 66)

Victoria Faye Barlow, called Faye, is a modern woman who is married but does not enjoy the happiness of the marriage. She lives an affluent life as a housewife with a husband who is successful in her career. Apart from that she has not moved on with the departure of her first husband, she also misses her own career as a freelance photographer. That's what made her decide to leave and divorce with her husband and choose to take a job as a photographer who takes pictures of landscapes for calendars even though her income is not much.

It was this freelance work that brought him to a sea accident. When he was dragged into the sea and woke up in the body of another person, Faith Morgan, who was similar to her at a different time, namely in 1921. This incident brings the reader to know the problems experienced by the two figures, which liberal feminism can raise, include issues of sexual violence in the household, the right to give birth, and women's careers.

In the novel, there are two issues found, i.e., career woman as a liberation and Sex without wife's consent as a domestic violence.

1. Career woman as a liberation

Her marriage to her second husband provided her with very sufficient financial security. The husband is so successful in his career that

what his wife asks for will always be provided. However, apparently living as a non-working wife who is only a housewife does not make Faye happy. He experienced so much boredom that he missed the old days when he was active as a freelance photographer.

Living in a prosperous live with a husband doesn't become what Faye want, as seen in the following quotation,

"What do you want?"

What did she want? She looked at her handsome husband with the good job that paid all the bills and took all her worries away. He could give her everything she was supposed to want.

"I don't want to die here," Faye said.

It wasn't the dying that bothered her in that statement. It was the here. She didn't want to die here in this cold, cold house with this cold, cold husband she slept with in a bed made of cold, cold iron.

"And I will die here if I stay," she said with cold iron finality.

The look on his face said he believed her even if he wasn't willing to admit it. She waited. He didn't say anything more.

(Reisz, 2017, pp. 237-238)

The above quotation shows how Faye doesn't feel happy to live only as a housewife who cannot do anything as she wants and dreams of. Besides the fact that she doesn't really love her husband and her inability to give him a baby, she was a photographer who always wants to be a photographer, as shown in the following quotation.

"We have all the money we could ever need or ever want."

Your money, not mine.

"You don't even have to work."

"I miss working." She said"

(Reisz, 2017, pp. 5-6)

Faye hit Reply and typed her answer.

"Richard—I just left husband.

In other words, I'll take the job."

(Reisz, 2017, p. 8)

2. Sex without wife's consent as a domestic violence

Turning to the story of Faith Morgan, the wife of an abusive ex-Navy who runs away from her husband because of his husband's domestic violence. The beginning of the domestic violence committed by her husband was because Faith Morgan refused to have sex with her husband.

"Back where?"

"Back home." He nodded at the expanse of water that if crossed would take her north. Was that where she'd come from? Somewhere north? "Back to him."

To him?

A clue. Finally, a clue.
Faith had left a man and come here.
“Do you think I should go back to him?” Faye asked.
“I know what the law would say. I know what the Church would say.”
“What do you say?” she asked.
“I say if I see Marshall again, I’ll throw him off the widow’s walk into the ocean. Any man who raises his fists to a girl deserves no better, especially when that girl’s his wife. But that’s me. He’s your husband.”

(Reisz, 2017, p. 238)

As stated in the above quotation, to leave a husband without his consent is a mistake and sin for a woman, in the eyes of the law as well as religion, indicated by the sentence “I know what the law would say. I know what the Church would say.” (Ibid). What Faith Morgan has done is a mistake in a patriarchal society where the wife should follow whatever her husband orders. But in the view of liberal feminism, intimate relations carried out on the basis of coercion, even though husband and wife, are a crime that must be resisted. The escape of Faith Morgan became a form of resistance to the crimes committed by her husband in the form of domestic violence that he committed.

CONCLUSION

As a movement, liberal feminist focuses on several issues, and in this novel two issues are found, which are career woman as a liberation and rejection towards domestic violence towards wife as a result of her rejection to non-consensual sexual intimacy. The actions done by Faye and Faith Morgan represent the ideals of liberal feminism, which seek to give liberation towards women in their lives, in accordance with what they want and need for themselves. This novel is a good example of the applications of liberal feminist ideas.

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