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The 8th Literary Studies Conference

(Dis)Empowering Discourses in Literature: Portraits of the Weak and the Marginalised throughout History

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The 8th LITERARY STUDIES CONFERENCE 2019

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Greetings from the Chair

The interplay between power relations and power struggles frames the portraits of the weak and marginalised parties concerning social class, ethnicity, gender, religion, and sexual orientation. Literature and criticisms from many periods might capture and provide clues for the portraits. Therefore, the 8th Literary Studies Conference “(Dis)Empowering Discourses in Literature: Portraits of the Weak and the Marginalised throughout History” attempts to discern the substantiation of the portrayal from various topic areas.

This conference has come to demonstrate persistence and collaboration. It faces an unexpectedly difficult situation due to the COVID-19 outbreak. The virus has weakened human beings in many aspects of life. It gives limitations to interact physically including holding a conference on-site. Longing for the fruitful discussion and reminiscing the good practices from the previous conferences, however, has given the committee a spark to hold the 8th LSC online. The presenters and participants have put their efforts into participating in the conference by submitting their papers and online presentation videos. The submitted papers and the videos are expected not only to enrich our repertoires on the topics but also to strengthen the relationship and collaboration.

The committee would like to express its gratitude to the plenary speakers, parallel session presenters, and all participants for their profound enthusiasm in the LSC. The discussion, ideas, and thoughts in this online conference have engraved a beautiful mark in the history that our yearning for meaning in life has overpowered the difficult situation created by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Thank you.

Yogyakarta, 1 October 2020

Simon Arsa Manggala, S.S., M.Hum.
Conference Committee, Chair

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Representation of *Female Robot* in *The Lady Automaton* by E.E Kellet and *Helen O’loy* by Lester Del Rey: A Study Of Feminism

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Abstract

Robots become part of nowadays human’s life as a sign of technology and cyber world development. The unique thing is that even robots have their gender. The existence of female robots or gynoids in human life raises the question of why should robots have their own gender? The relation between women and technology is quite interesting to be discussed since technology is closed to men rather than women, and it is more masculine rather than feminine. The research aims to describe the representation of female robots in science fiction literature *The Lady Automaton* and *Helen O’Loy*. The researchers want to analyze whether or not female robots are represented as the one which is equal with men or still represented under the patriarchal stereotype toward women as weak, inferior, and marginalized. This research is descriptive qualitative research. Textual analysis method is used to find out the representation of female robots in these two short stories. Feminism approach is used to analyze the gender-relation in the texts. The researchers hope that this research will give positive contributions to the development of technology relate to women’s role in society and literature.

Keywords: *female, feminism, representation, robot*

Introduction

Robot is an inseparable aspect of our century’s lifestyle. Humans desire for robots is an interesting issue to be discussed. Human assumed that robot is more efficient. As a machine, it has a great power that humans do not possess. The other reason is humanity limits human. Human also should not do something for the reason of humanity. Then, robot will replace human to do those things. Human also has a need to gain control over something. That is why they create robot as the object of control. It is quite interesting since then appear female robot or *fembot* as the object of men’s control. The questions then appear ‘why robot should have its own gender? why robot mostly gendered as female rather than male?’

In our real life, the desire for *fembot* is to be a house assistant or domestic use. *Fembot* plays an important role to keep the house clean, to cook for dishes and to serve her master. In fiction, *fembot* appear in the late decades of the eighteen century. *Fembot* prefigured as artificial intelligence. At first, it is identic to a thing, but then it changed into a horror when it became a replicating of human beings. *Fembot* became a way to mimic, even to decode, human nature in a programmable form.

Helen O’Loy by Lester Del Rey and *The Lady Automaton* are two short stories which depicted about *fembot* in fiction. *Helen O’Loy* is a short story published in December 1938 while *The Lady Automaton* by E.E Kellet is a short story published in Pearson Magazine in June 1901. Both of them are written by men writer. The other similarity is both of them depicted men as major character who creates *fembot*. The intention is different. In *Helen O’ Loy*, Dave, a mechanic, and Phil, a medical student, work together on modifying a household robot. So, their first intention actually creates a robot which can cook and clean. In *Lady Automaton*, Arthur Moore, a skillful mechanic, and Phillips, a medical student, develop their invention of phonograph to be a ‘lady’ who would deceive anyone. The ‘lady’ in here is a *fembot*, but Moore chooses to call it as ‘lady’ rather than *fembot*.

The conflict is started when the *fembot* is more successful than he intended. The *fembot* is as perfect as the real women. She is more than a programmable robot, she can express emotion and learn about feminine things such as love and romance. Then, its complexity starts to burden her creator. The relationship between male creator and *fembot* as his creation is an interesting issue that will be analysed by the researcher. The reason why the researcher conducted this research is to enrich the research about science fiction literature which takes female robot as research object. Research on female robot in science fiction is still minimum, and it is because the science fiction itself is considered as ‘new’ and not yet popular as other literary genre. This research will dig deeper about the representation of *fembot* in those short stories, how male treats *fembot* and does it is still represented under the patriarchal stereotype toward women as weak, inferior, and marginalized.

In order to find the answer, a feminism approach is absolutely needed since it helps to investigate power relation between male and female. In this study, the intention of the male characters, Dave and Phil, also Moore and Phillips are analysed by revealing internal factors behind their act in creating *fembot*. Donna Haraway’s concept of cyborgs as in her *Cyborg Manifesto* will be applied in order to answer the research questions. The researcher hopes that this research will be beneficial to understand the relationship between technology, gender and literature and to reveal women’s oppression implicitly in the Science fiction literature.

Fembot as The Representation of Male Fantasy

The appearance of Helen and Amelia Brooke in these two short stories are interesting to be analysed since they was born from male mechanics. Amelia Brooke, the *fembot* in *The Lady Automaton*, was born from the discussion of Moore and Phillips about a phonograph which should not repeat words, but spoke out the suitable answer to them. It was

surprising because Moore created an anti-phonograph in female voice. Then, he developed it into a fembot. *Helen* in *Helen O'Loy* was created by Dave and Phil, because they wanted to have a house-assistant who always obeyed what they wanted and less than female matters, such as: bad temper, emotional, love to argue. From here, we can know that the male mechanics imagine about female.

George Bernard Shaw said that "*Imagination is the beginning of creation. You imagine what you desire, you will what you imagine and at last you create what you will.*" So, it starts by the men's desire. When men has a desire toward women, then they will imagine it. The male mechanics in both of short stories have an imagination about ideal and perfect woman. Moore imagined a perfect Edwardian lady who is beautiful, elegant, able to sing, dance and walk gracefully. He imagined that all the people will amaze and admire her. He imagined about a perfect lady as a symbol of his pride. That is the reason why he creates Amelia Brooke, a fembot who can deceive anyone. People will never know that actually Amelia is a fembot, not a real woman.

In *Helen O'Loy*, Dave imagined about a perfect house-assistant, who can cook for dishes, clean the house, and always obeyed what he wants. Before having *Helen*, Dave created *Lena*, a house-assistant fembot. But then, *Lena* shows her temper that can not be controlled by Dave and Phil. The other reason is Dave ended-up his relationship with his girlfriend because his girlfriend is love to argue. That becomes the reason for Dave to eliminate female matters in his fembot. *Helen* is already fulfil the desire and imagination of Dave about ideal house-assistant. In both of short stories, the male mechanics also imagine about fembot with human consciousness. So, they wanted to create a fembot who could cry when they felt sad and laugh when they were happy. Such of consciousness are possible since the appearance of artificial intelligence. In *Lady Automaton*, Amelia Brooke could express her feeling and in *Helen O'Loy*, *Helen* could learn about love and romance from her surrounding. *Helen's* consciousness is beyond than artificial consciousness, because *Helen* shows woman's desire toward man. She is obsessed to marry Dave, her creator. Dave never predicted before that *Helen* will act like this and have this kind of desire. Dave tried to avoid *Helen*.

"One is not born, but rather becomes, a woman." (Beauvoir, 1973:301). It shows that gender is shaped by the society and culture. Patriarchal culture also involved in shaping female robot. The gender of the robot is given by man and others in society. The male fantasy is one of the reason behind the appearance of female robot. The stereotype of fembot itself also shaped by man. The stereotype of fembot in these two short stories are common, such as: beautiful, submissive, able to do domestic thing and shows no sign of having a mind of her own. Those kinds of stereotype reflected what patriarchal society viewed toward women. The male fantasy itself is the representation of male desire toward women.

Fembot as The New Form of Female Objectification

Objectification toward women has already become the feminism issue for years. Objectification means treating a person as a commodity or an object without regard to their dignity. Men has a desire over power and control. To show their superiority, they need an object to be controlled. Martha Nussbaum (1995, 257) has identified seven features that are involved in the idea of treating a person as an object:

1. *instrumentality*: the treatment of a person as a tool for the objectifier's purposes;
2. *denial of autonomy*: the treatment of a person as lacking in autonomy and self-determination;
3. *inertness*: the treatment of a person as lacking in agency, and perhaps also in activity;
4. *fungibility*: the treatment of a person as interchangeable with other objects;
5. *violability*: the treatment of a person as lacking in boundary-integrity;
6. *ownership*: the treatment of a person as something that is owned by another (can be bought or sold);
7. *denial of subjectivity*: the treatment of a person as something whose experiences and feelings (if any) need not be taken into account.

In this two short stories, fembot appeared as a new form of female objectification. Fembot, although it is not a real women, but it represents women body and character. It is also made of male's fantasy toward the ideal and perfect woman. The instrumentality feature is already proven by *Helen* as a tool to the objectifier's purposes. *Helen* is made for domestic purpose and *Amelia* in *The Lady Automaton* is also a tool to symbolize the pride and honor of her inventor, Arthur Moore. Actually, robot is an object and people can use it as an instrument to fulfil particular purpose. But, when the robot has its own gender, then it will be 'more than just robot'. It will symbolize the gender. The treatment toward the robot will reflect the treatment toward that gender. So, when Arthur Moore shown *Amelia* to the public, his intention is using *Amelia* to show to the world of his capability in making a great invention. Dave also treats his 'female' object as a tool of his own purposes.

The second feature is denial of autonomy. Robot is an object which is lack of autonomy or in other words, they are programmed to follow what the inventor wants. But in these two short stories, the fembot has emotions and consciousness. The male creator's purpose in giving them emotions and consciousness is to make these fembots are more human. But, in fact, after the creators experienced the autonomy of his fembot, they changed their mind and chose to take their autonomy. In the first Dave's fembot case, *Lena*. Dave decided to cut out the adrenal pack of *Lena* after she flew into a tantrum and swore to them. Dave and Phil gave *Lena* emotions and consciousness to make her autonome. But in the end, they shut *Lena* off and replaced her with *Helen*, a robot who is lack of autonomy. It is proved that the male creators deny the autonomy of his robot. In *The Lady Automaton*, Moore gave emotions and consciousness on his fembot. But still, the creator determine what the fembot should do.

The other feature is ownership. Fembot represented a new form of female objectification can be seen from *Amelia Brooke* who is owned by Arthur Moore. In the discussion of Moore and Phillip, Phillip asked Moore to sell *Amelia* as a new and great innovations. But, Moore refused it. Moore said that he would never sell *Amelia* as a new innovations on technology, but he wanted Phillip to show his *Amelia* to public. Moore measured his success not based on the money, but based on how people treated *Amelia*. When people treated *Amelia* as woman, he is already succeed. From these analysis, we can know that besides woman, male created another object that is fembot as an object to be controlled. The power relation is quite clear that female identity will always be under the superiority of men.

The Shifting of Power Relation

In these two short stories, fembots are represented with the stereotype as submissive, exotic or beautiful, the object of men's control, and symbols of male fantasies. The consciousness and emotions which the creator added to them has a purpose to make them more human. In Helen O'Loy, the emotions and consciousness that Dave and Phil added to Helen is beyond the predictions. The consciousness of Helen is closest to the actual consciousness rather than artificial, since Helen could learn from her surrounding about love and romance. After she read adolescent books and romance serial from television, she has a desire to own Dave. Helen's attitude and behavior are changed. She imitated the acts of romance serial and tried to persuade Dave to marry her. Of course, what Helen did made Dave felt shocked and surprised. Dave could not control Helen's desire over him. Then, he decided to go away from his house. But, not long after that, Dave could not deny that he also has the same feeling and desire to own Helen. Finally, Helen got what she wanted. She married Dave.

From these discussion, we can conclude that there is a shifting in power relation. In the beginning man shows his superiority over female robot. They control them and treat them as an object. But in the end, the fembot are succeed in bargaining the power. The male creator finally forget that they are just robot. The male creator felt in love and treated the fembot same as a real woman. Dave married Helen is a proof that fembot also has power to persuade man. In *The Lady Automaton*, Moore finally committed suicide after knowing that his fembot will marry another man. It shows that the creator put his whole life to his masterpiece. The female robot as his masterpiece are the reflection of his fantasy, his desire, his hard-effort and his life. When the fembot was broken, the creator's life was broken inside it.

Conclusion

From the discussion, we can conclude that there is a shifting about power relation between male creator and female robot. In the beginning, fembot is represented the male fantasy about ideal, submissive and perfect woman. The male creator add emotions and consciousness to their fembot in order to make it more human. But then, the consciousness of the female robot is beyond than just artificial consciousness. They can learn from their surrounding and it raises their desire over the creator. In the end, we can see the bargaining power, that fembot although their stereotype is considered as submissive and inferior, they can make the creator admitting their feeling toward them, even submit to them.

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