

CHARACTERIZATION OF ENOLA HOLMES IN *THE CASE OF THE MISSING MARQUESS*: A STUDY OF LIBERAL FEMINISM

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Abstract

This study attempts to portray a female character, Enola Holmes, in Nancy Springer's novel series entitled The Case of the Missing Marquess (2006). This research focuses on examining these research problems: 1) how is Enola Holmes characterized differently from most teenage girls at the setting of time, and 2) what spirit of feminism is illustrated by the novel through the character of Enola Holmes? The study confirms that the different portrayals are shown from Enola Holmes' physical appearance, thought, and personality. Her masculine appearance was against the normative beauty standard for most women in the nineteenth-century tradition. Her critical and logical thought challenged the stereotypical gender role, which positioned women as less intelligent than men. Moreover, her independent and courageous personality highlighted the different traits of Enola Holmes as a young woman at that time. The characterizations reflect liberal feminism by emphasizing women's autonomy and gender equality between men and women.

Keywords: *Characterization, Enola Holmes, Liberal Feminism*

Abstrak

Penelitian ini mencoba menggambarkan seorang tokoh perempuan, Enola Holmes, dalam serial novel Nancy Springer yang berjudul The Case of the Missing Marquess (2006). Penelitian ini berfokus pada mengkaji masalah penelitian berikut: 1) bagaimana Enola Holmes dicirikan berbeda dari kebanyakan gadis remaja pada latar waktu, dan 2) apa semangat feminisme yang digambarkan oleh novel melalui karakter Enola Holmes? Studi tersebut menegaskan bahwa penggambaran yang berbeda ditunjukkan dari penampilan fisik, pemikiran, dan kepribadian Enola Holmes. Penampilan maskulinnya bertentangan dengan standar kecantikan normatif bagi kebanyakan wanita dalam tradisi abad kesembilan belas. Pemikiran kritis dan logisnya menantang stereotip peran gender, yang memosisikan perempuan kurang cerdas dibandingkan laki-laki. Selain itu, kepribadiannya yang mandiri dan berani menonjolkan perbedaan sifat Enola Holmes sebagai wanita muda saat itu. Karakterisasi tersebut mencerminkan feminisme liberal dengan menekankan otonomi perempuan dan kesetaraan gender antara laki-laki dan perempuan.

Kata kunci: *Penokohan, Enola Holmes, Feminisme Liberal*

1. INTRODUCTION

It is generally known that a literary work often portrays the actual condition of the world. This mimetic value of the literary work often attracts the reader's intention to read the work and put the work on the list of best-selling books, even receiving awards. There is Enola Holmes, a female character created by Nancy Springer. One of Enola's series, *The Case of the Missing Marquess* (2006), was nominated as the best children book by Edgar Allan Poe's Award and adapted into a series aired by Netflix. The characterization of the main character, Enola Holmes, can genuinely illustrate how a young woman must deal with some so-called proper behaviors based on English society's demands in the nineteenth century. Backdropped in England in 1888, Enola discovered that her mother was mysteriously missing. Before disappearing, her mother gave her various gifts, but there is not a single hint of her disappearance. After the incident, Enola was taken care of by her two brothers, Mycroft and Sherlock. Mycroft and Sherlock sent her to a school that educated young women, but she refused to comply with her two brothers' wishes. Then, she decided to fly to London to find her mother. What makes this story more than just a children's book is due to its contextual details, which illustrate social problems in English society.

In this novel, the setting of place and time were where the feminist movement still fought for equality. There were unequal rights between women and men in education and the social perception that women did not necessarily need to continue pursuing higher education because they would only take care of the family after marriage. Women were constructed to follow the ideal images as obedient, nurturing, and weak. Meanwhile, men must be strong leaders. Likewise, in the economic sector, many women still earn less than men in their work because women are considered not to be the primary breadwinners but only helpers. The difference between man and woman is constructed through gender roles. However, this gender role does not refer to human anatomy. Women are said to behave obediently, politely, and submissive because they are taught to do so from time to time. In other words, this construction is not innate (Tyson, 2015: 87-88).

The nineteenth-century era in England, which becomes the most crucial contextual background, is also known as the Victorian era. Women's life in this era is far from education, politics, and economics. The gender inequality between men and women is sharply juxtaposed. Men are called independent, and women are dependent only. Furthermore, men have been positioned in the public sphere and are meant to participate in politics. Meanwhile, women are only responsible for the private sphere, and they are

intended to run the household and raise the family. Most women do not channel their choices to vote, so many women activists are hiding in this era. (Steinbach, 2017). The way Springer characterized the main character Enola was different from the very idea of an ideal woman in that era. Thus, it is necessarily needed to examine the characterization of Enola as the topic of the research.

Characterization can be defined as any action by the author or taking place within a work used to describe a character. The kinds of characterization generally consist of direct and indirect characterization. Direct characterization is how the author illustrates the character directly to the reader. Indirect characterization is how the author portrays the character to the reader by another source. Another perspective explains that characterization can be divided into five key categories: Physical description, Actions, Reactions, Thoughts, and Speech. (Reams, 2015: 4). By employing these categories, this study focuses on the novel version concerning Enola Holmes's characterization and using a feminist perspective. Furthermore, this study examines the following: 1) how is the character of Enola characterized differently from young women at the setting of time, and 2) what spirit of feminism is illustrated by the character of Enola Holmes?

There are some previous studies conducted toward the story of Enola Holmes. Rahajeng (2020) concluded that the movie series of Enola showed some androgynous gender expressions of woman characters. This study used Roland Barthes' semiotics to confirm that the characters simultaneously expressed femininity and masculinity. Another study conducted by Adhitami (2021) confirmed that the hegemony of patriarchal ideology caused Enola's resistance. However, both of the studies are concerned with the movie series. Thus, a study on its novel version, mainly by focusing on Enola's characterization, will significantly contribute to the study of the series.

2. METHODOLOGY

This study uses the qualitative method. The qualitative method places the research in its natural setting to understand and interpret the meaning of phenomena. Qualitative research involves studying and collecting various empirical materials that describe moments, meanings, and problems in life (Denzin and Lincoln, 2005). The data collection and analysis were carried out through several stages. The first was close reading the novel and categorizing the characterization by considering the physical description, actions, reactions, thoughts, and speech of Enola Holmes. Here, the characterizations were funneled into three kinds: physical appearance, personality, and thought since the action, reactions, and speech are usually used to uncover a character's

personality. After identifying the characterization of Enola, the data will be analyzed by using Liberal Feminism.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

a. Enola's Boyish and Comfort Wise Appearance

In Springer's *The Case of Missing Marquess*, Enola Holmes is characterized directly and indirectly. She is characterized directly to the reader in the passage regarding her physical looks:

I could not have stayed indoors; indeed, I could not sit down except hastily, to pull galoshes over my boots. I wore a shirt and knickerbockers, comfortable clothing that had previously belonged to my older brothers, and over these, I threw a waterproof. All rubbery, I thumped downstairs and took an umbrella from the stand in the hallway. Then I exited through the kitchen, telling Mrs. Lane, "I am going to have a look around." (Springer, 2006: 7).

Enola illustrates her preference of dressing style by showing the reader what kinds of clothes she likes to wear. Wearing boyish clothes, which she explains that the clothes previously owned by her brothers, Enola highlights her unique clothing style. She even emphasizes the comfort of wearing a shirt and knickerbockers above all, although this dressing style does not meet the clothing standard of a noble young woman. Victorian fashion is marked with an oversized dress, poke bonnets, and modest covers, while males wore dark color, simple pattern, and rigidity clothing. The layers of dress and suits required of the rich and the poor were impractical, at times even uncomfortable (Sessions, 2018), which makes Enola wear more comfortable clothes like shirts and knickerbockers. Her dress mostly followed her mother's style, comfort-wise rather than fashion-wise. It is indirectly characterized when Enola explains how people see her wearing knickerbockers instead of "... *bloomers covered by a waterproof skirt as improper or vulgar*" (Springer, 2006: 16). Women in her age should dress modestly, covering the entire foot. Women are required to dress in layers to cover the lower body, and if women wear frivolous clothes like Enola, they will be considered impolite and shameless.

The indirect characterization can also be seen when her brother, Mycroft, comments on her appearance when they meet at the station. Her older brother criticized Enola's way of dressing as unnatural and embarrassing since she does not wear a hat or gloves, which noblewomen usually wear in England. It is shown in the conversation below.

“Enola’s hair more and more resembles a jackdaw’s nest. Where’s your hat, Enola?”...“Or your gloves,” Sherlock chided, taking me by the arm and steering me towards the station, “or decent, decorous clothing of any sort? You are a young lady now, Enola.” That statement alarmed me into speech. “I’ve only just turned fourteen.” In puzzled, almost plaintive tones Mycroft murmured, “But I’ve been paying for the seamstress . . .” Speaking to me, Sherlock decreed in that offhand imperial way of his, “You should have been in long skirts since you were twelve.” (Springer, 2006: 34)

Enola’s brother, Mycroft, suggests making clothes for Enola from London. According to Mycroft, a tailor from London can make better clothes than a tailor from Kineford for Enola, especially since Enola will be sent to boarding school. Nevertheless, Enola refuses to pursue her education at a boarding school. Mycroft wants Enola to grow up as a proper noblewoman because she came from a noble family. That is why he sends Enola to a boarding school with strict rules, including making her a proper noblewoman’s dress with a corset.

This was considered “charming.” It was also considered moral, the corset being “an ever-present monitor bidding its wearer to exercise self-restraint”—in other words, making it impossible for the hapless victim to bend or relax her posture (Springer, 2006: 65).

As explained aforementioned, Mycroft orders Enola to enroll in a boarding school. Enola thought the worst thing might happen if she followed her brother’s will. However, unfortunately, society's noble dress that is considered beautiful is not as comfortable as they assume. In the Victorian era, women were required to wear a corset. The corset is considered to make a woman’s body a dream in the eyes of society, a beautiful body. The corset can limit the movement of women. Elona has heard of its torture which makes her shiver at the thought. The victim of this corset was a boarding school girl who died due to a severe lung scar. Her questioning mind on how society requires a woman to wear such painful dresses makes Enola feel depressed. She cannot imagine if her body will end up like the girl. She deserves the freedom to decide what kinds of dress are comfortable for her body (Springer, 2006: 65)

b. Enola’s Intelligent and Analytical Thought

Characterizations, particularly related to personality traits and ways of thinking, are often recognized from a character’s actions, reactions, and speech. Reams (2015) said that action, reaction, and speech cannot be undone and therefore are often the most reliable and concrete proof of what kind of person a character truly is. Literarily, a

character's actions, reactions, and speech are typically considered indirect characterization because what they signify is not given directly to the reader. The indirect characterization of Enola's personality can be reflected through Enola's reactions toward her mother's action in raising her to be a broad-minded girl. Her mother was different from most mothers in the nineteenth century. Despite being raised differently, Enola has become an independent, intelligent woman. The paragraph below illustrates it,

I never questioned my disgrace, for to do so would have been to broach matters of which a "nice" girl must remain ignorant. I had observed, however, that most married women disappeared into the house every year or two, emerging several months later with a new child, to the number of perhaps a dozen, until they either ceased or expired. My mother, by comparison, had produced only my two much older brothers. Somehow this prior restraint made my late arrival all the more shameful for a gentleman Rationalist logician and his well-bred artistic wife (Springer, 2006: 17).

Enola's mother might be in a place that made Enola feel free. *"That day I realised, with irrational yet complete certainty, where my mother had gone: someplace where there were no hairpins, no corsets (Ideal or Otherwise), and no Patent Dress Improvers."* (Springer, 2006: 83).

Another indirect characterization can be seen from Enola's analytical thinking when she observes the social issues in London.

London, where penniless boys wore rags and ran wild in the streets, never going to school. London, where villains killed ladies of the night—I had no clear idea what these were—and took their babies in order to sell them into slavery. In London there were royalty and cutthroats. In London there were master musicians, master artists, and master criminals who kidnapped children and forced them to labour in dens of iniquity (Springer, 2006: 29).

After Enola decides to go to London, she dresses as a widow by wearing an all-black-colored outfit. The dress covers up her identity so that her brother Sherlock, a detective, would not find out. This indirect characteristic shows Enola's intelligence.

c. Enola's Independent and Courageous Personality

Springer characterizes Enola's personality indirectly by showing her thought and reaction to her brother's decisions over her life. Enola finally chooses to leave her house to find her mother's whereabouts, running away without telling her older brothers.

So much for a seventeen-inch waist, oatmeal for breakfast and wool next to the skin, matrimonial prospects, the accomplishments of a young lady, et cetera. Such were my happy thoughts as I pedalled across a cow pasture, along a grassy lane, then onto open moorland, and away from the countryside I knew (Springer, 2006: 95).

Enola leaves her life as a young noblewoman who displays modesty with her determined mind. She thinks that as long as she follows her mother's values, her life will be exemplary. Thus, Enola does not hesitate to leave that such women's lives strictly regulated rules. Also, if she goes to London, she can find her mother and live freely, as she wishes.

After Enola leaves her home in Kineford, heads to London, she finds what she wants in her life, as illustrated in the following paragraph.

Or so I had thought. But now, now that I had found my calling in life, I could do so much more. Let my brother Sherlock be The World's Only Private Consulting Detective all he liked; I would be The World's Only Private Consulting Perditorian. As such, I could associate with professional women who met in their own tea-rooms around London—women who might know Mum!—and with the detectives of Scotland Yard—where Sherlock had already filed an inquiry concerning Mum—and with other dignitaries, and also perhaps with disreputable persons who had information to sell, and—oh, the possibilities. I was born to be a Perditorian. A finder of loved ones lost. And— (Springer, 2006: 117).

Enola finds her life's purpose while she is in her escape. Her dream is to become a Private Consulting Perditorian working in the public sphere. She imagines getting together with other professional women out there and gathering to talk while drinking tea. She is not afraid to compete with men because, for Enola, she can and is confident of achieving that dream.

d. The Spirit of Liberal Feminism in Enola's Characterization

The term feminism was first used in political debate in France in the late nineteenth century. Feminism is an idea, ideology, or movement based on equality between women and men in various fields, politics, economics, education, and society. Traditional gender roles place men as rational, strong, protective, and assertive. Furthermore, this excludes women from similar roles in leadership and decision-making positions (Tyson, 2015: 80-82).

Liberal feminism celebrates women's rationality and autonomy over their fundamental rights. (Tong and Botts, 2017). Tylor and Mill stated that individuals are permitted to pursue their abilities and freedom, provided that they do not harm and hinder others during the process. Taylor and Mill also emphasized that society must give women the same political rights, education, and economic opportunities as men to achieve equality between the sexes (Gerson, 2002).

The characterization of Enola Holmes reflects Liberal Feminism. This spirit can be seen from her authority to role over her physical appearance. Although she was forced to wear a particular dressing style, she resisted. Enola did not want to be controlled by her brothers and society's rules which require a young woman like her to wear a particular dress. Here, the autonomy of self is illustrated through her action, showing that she knows she has the right to decide the things she likes or does or not. Enola's thought here is in line with liberal feminism, which focuses on personal independence and autonomy (Wolff, 2007) .

Enola's behavior illustrates feminism in England at that time. The feminism depicted in Enola is liberal. In that era, the gender stereotype of a woman was still limited to traditional gender roles, in which women should be responsible for the domestic sphere and must be behaved accordingly based on patriarchal construction. Like Enola, she had an older brother whose rule she had to obey as a younger sister. However, she chose to escape from the school, where her brother had enrolled her and sought her mother to London. The characterizations of Enola reflect the feminist movement, which emphasizes the importance of individual liberty and equality between man and woman, particularly in the public sphere. (Tong, 2009)

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Case of the Missing Marquess is one of the novels by Nancy Springer that got the attention of many people for its different characterization of the main female character, Enola Holmes. Following the theory of liberal feminism, the issues analyzed are the characterization of Enola and the spirit of liberal feminism presented by Enola in the novel. However, this study is limited since the focus is only on the main character, Enola. Another pivotal character to be analyzed is Enola's mother since she is the one who raised Enola into a liberal feminist young woman. This topic can be future research for those interested in studying this novel.

5. REFERENCES

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