A FEMINIST CRITICISM ON THE MAIN CHARACTER OF
“BEST KEPT SECRETS” BY SANDRA BROWN

A Thesis
Submitted to Letters and Humanities Faculty
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of Strata One

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ENGLISH LETTERS DEPARTMENT
LETTERS AND HUMANITIES FACULTY
SYARIF HIDAYATULLAH STATE ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY
JAKARTA
2010
ABSTRACT


This analysis aims to know how the major female character is characterized and how her characteristics reflect the feminism ideas. The data of the main character and characterization are collected by finding the evidences from the dialog in the novel and based the behavior and the attitude of the main character. To get the feminist values, the data are analyzed by using descriptive analytic technique.

“Best Kept Secrets” is a famous novel, which is written by Sandra Brown. It presents about woman’s struggle to achieve equality. Alexandra Gaither is the main character in this story; she can prove that she can be as equal as other people can. She is able to get high education and work to earn own money so that she can manage her life independently.

Besides that, she is able to defend her life and to solve her problem by herself even though there are three powerful men who always try to stop her investigation. Alex walks into their territory and tries to solve the problem that happened 25 years ago. Alex is unwelcome in that town. She finds herself alone. She is always oppressed, but she can survive through the oppression and she can be against it.

Finally, the writer finds out that Alex is not only as a feminist character who can fight against the system of patriarchy, but Alex is also a character who represents power balances.
APPROVMENT

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JAKARTA
2010
LEGALIZATION

The thesis entitled “A FEMINIST CRITICISM ON THE MAIN
CHARACTER OF “BEST KEPT SECRETS” BY SANDRA BROWN” has been
defended before the Faculty Letters and Humanities’ Examination Committee on
June 1, 2010. The thesis has already been accepted as a partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of strata one.

Jakarta, June 1, 2010

The Examination Committee

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief. It contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other or diploma of the university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment has been made in the text.

Jakarta, June 1, 2010

Ruhaniah
Acknowledgment

In the name of Allah, the Most Gracious, the Most Merciful

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Finally, the writer hopes this paper will be useful especially for the writer and students who are interested in it.

May be greatest Allah SWT blesses and takes care of them all.

Jakarta, June 1, 2010

The writer
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A. Background of the Study

Literary work is an important thing because without literary work there will be no research, criticism, or literary criticism, but literary work is nothing if there is no its author, so that an author is more important than literary work.¹ This is because in the past time authors were assumed as philosophers. They were smart people who came from noble families. Because they were philosophers, their literary work was assumed as philosophies. People who wanted to find out the meaning of their literary work had to ask to its authors because the true meaning was coming from its authors.

Literary work is the way to find out the ideas, feelings, inspiration, and opinions because literary work is the expressions of the human being; those are experiences, opinions, thinking, struggles, the extent of opinions and the hypnotize form. Since 1960s, literary work has become a culture and has a strong attraction with the gender issues which understand a woman as a kindhearted person, a jewel, a rose, and contrary men as an intelligent, active, etc. and always colors the literature.² The development of feminism and the emerge of feminist criticism become the cause of that attraction. Literary works is now aware of gender roles the patriarchal society possesses.

In this novel, the writer tries to analyze one of the greatest literary works, which was written by Sandra Brown. British Novel entitles *Best Kept Secrets*. *Best Kept Secrets* describes about the characterization of Alexandra Gaither who is able to break through the dominance of men. Alexandra is an attorney who finally has the power to bring her mother’s murderer to justice that has never been solved during twenty-five years. She is an orphan girl; she grows up without parents. She is raised by her grandmother.

Her grandma is never affectionate towards her, no matter how remarkable Alex’s achievements are. She is never good enough to win her grandmother’s praise, but she is able to run her life independently, she can prove herself that she can do her best and she is well prepared to do what she must do.

It begins when she is a student at University of Texas. She can prove her qualities, which have excelled in school. She gets a scholarship to the University of Texas and receives financial assistance for Law School. Those are because her grades is so excellent, but she has to work after classes to keep her dressed and fed in order that her grandmother will not have those expenses to complain about.

After she has been graduated, she works as an attorney who finally has the power to get the justice she needs. Twenty-five years early, her mother is died with a scandalous death. Her struggle for getting a justice makes this novel interesting to be studied. In this novel, Sandra Brown tells about Alexandra’s struggle for keeping her law profession and standing up with what she believes that justice is for all. She tries so hard to be a good attorney.
Alexandra’s struggle for keeping her law profession begins when she is a district attorney staff and she has to face every risk. In spite of this, she decides to research the murder case of Celina Graham Gaither. After she has been sure with the decision that she takes, she finally travels back to the Purcell County to reopen a twenty-five years old murder case. She believes that one of the three powerful men is the murderer. They try to stop her investigation as many people as try to stop her investigation, but no one of them is not able to stop her passionate to search for the truth. She is more anxious to know who the real of her mother murderer was.

Alexandra learns and reads everything to find some information about the case. She gives her full attention for this case even though she has to receive an insult and disdain, but she is able to handle the case well. She proves that she can defeat the toughest man in her investigation and find out a man who kills her mother.

In this point, it is very interesting to see how the struggle and the spirit for liberating herself for getting what she wants are. Alexandra also wants to show that a woman has the same right as a man to decide something without restriction for people around her and that a woman can work as well as a man can work in all fields.

One of the reasons the writer chooses this novel is that the main character is a woman. Studying the image of women in the literary work is better to use a feminist approach. It can be analyzed through the approach if the literary work is related to a woman as one of the character in the story or being talked about.\footnote{Suwardi Endraswara (2003), \textit{op.cit} p. 146.}

Specifically, what the researcher wants to study is the image of Alexandra Gaither.
in the novel *Best Kept Secrets* based on feminist spirit, which is an obstinate, independent and optimistic woman in undergoing her life without feeling tired, giving up and hopeless. Through this consideration, the researcher decides to conduct this research.

**B. Focus of The Study**

In this research, the writer focuses her study only on analyzing the character of Alexandra Gaiter in the novel *Best Kept Secrets* by Sandra Brown through feminist approach.

**C. Research Question**

Based on the background of the study and the focus of the study above, the writer proposes the statements of the problems as:

1. How is Alexandra Gaither described in the novel of *Best Kept Secrets*?
2. Through the character, what is the novel position in relation with gendered power imbalances?

**D. The Methodology of The Study**

1. **The Objective of Study**

   The objective of this study is held to find out feminist ideas of Alexandra’s character in the novel *Best Kept Secrets* by Sandra Brown. Specifically, this study tries to find out:

   1. The description of Alexandra as a main character in the novel *Best Kept Secrets*.
   2. The novel position in relation with gendered power imbalances.
2. The method

To solve the problems that are presented in the statement problems of the research, the writer uses qualitative method, the content analysis. The writer analyzes the relationship between the main characters in the novel “Best Kept Secrets” with the feminism approach which relates to the theory of feminism.

3. The Instrument

The instrument of this research is the writer herself. She reads Best Kept Secrets novel written by Sandra Brown carefully and deeply, and identifies the feminist values that occur in Alexandra’s character. The writer looks the main data taken from the novel of Best Kept Secrets to find out the evidences and other aspects to a feminism approach.

4. The Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis in this research is the novel Best Kept Secrets, written by Sandra Brown, published by Warner Books in New York.

5. Data Analysis

The technique of data analysis of the research is done by trying to find out the main character and her characterizations with the evidences. To get the feminist ideas, the writer reads novel deeply, understands it comprehensively, gives some marks in each line on the text, and puts them in a paper. The feminist ideas that occur in the main’s characterizations are analyzed through feminism approach.

E. The Significance of The Study

With this research of Alexandra’s characters in the novel Best Kept Secrets, the writer hopes this research can:
1. Motivate individuals to be more interested in doing further analysis to the literature.
2. Help the readers and the writer apply the feminist theory on literary works.
3. Help the readers and the writer understand the images of women in the novel.
CHAPTER II

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

A. Character and Characterization

Talking about a fiction frequently uses terminologies of character, characteristic and characterization interchangeably by pointing out the similar meaning. Basically, those terminologies are not suggested to use precisely. The character name points out the person, the story player. For instance as the answer of the question: "who is the main character of the novel?”, ”how many players or characters are in the novel?” or ”who are the protagonist and antagonist characters in the novel?”, etc. Character, characteristic and characterization, referring to characteristic and attitude of the persons that are interpreted by the reader, are more intended to the individual quality of the characters. Characterization is often assumed having similar meaning to the character and characteristic, referring to the placing of the certain characters and characteristic in the story.

The using of the character itself in English literatures refers to the two different meanings. Those are as the story characters presented and as the characteristics; interest, desire, emotion, and moral principle that the characters have. Finally, character can be a story player and characterization, but the terminology of characterization has a wider meaning than character because it consists of who the character is, how the characterization is, and how the placing and describing of the character in a story is until those can give a clear description to the readers.4

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A character is a fictional person in a story, and readers’ first reactions to him or her are usually based on their subjective capacity to emphasize with the character’s experience. Many stories present a conflict between the protagonist (the story’s central character) and antagonist (the opposing character or force). Fictional characters are sometimes referred to as round or flat, static or dynamic:

A round character usually more fully develops, challenges readers to analyze the character’s motives and evaluates characters’ actions. In other word, round character changes, grows, and posses a credible personality. Flat characters, in contrast, usually plays a miniature in freeman’s story, act predictably, and are often presented as stereotypes.

According to the English novelist E. M. Foster, character may seem flat or round, depending on whether a writer sketches or sculptures them. A flat character has only one outstanding trait or feature, or at most few distinguishing marks. Round characters, however, present the readers with more facets—that is, their authors portray them in greater depth and in more detail that is generous. Such a round character may appear to the readers only as he appears to the other characters in the story. If their views of him differ, the readers will see him for more than one side. In other stories, the readers enter the character’s mind come to know him through his own thoughts, feelings, and perception.

A dynamic character is one who undergoes some significant change during the course of events related. He or she is generally rounded. In another side,

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6Ibid. p. 984.
static character is a character that his or her characteristic essentially does not change or develop the results of the occurrence of the events that happen.\(^9\)

Finally, character is of interest for the very personal reason that the writer and the reader want to see how other people live, how they make decisions and react to responsibility and how they pursue their goals.\(^{10}\) Major character is a main character that becomes the centre of the story and it is often narrated whether as a protagonist or an antagonist. The protagonist is generally the roundest character, most fully developed character in works of fiction. The protagonist may also be the most sympathy character.\(^{11}\) Antagonist is generally bent upon blocking or frustrating the protagonist’s aims, or else is intent upon causing harm.\(^{12}\)

The other characters besides major characters are classified as the minor characters. Minor character is often known as a foil, and typically contrasts physically and/or in personality with the main character. The contrast itself serves to emphasize the protagonist’s characteristics. A stereotyped character represents a category of people. The word *stereotype* comes from printing and refers to a mental mold used to mass produce duplicates of printing type.\(^{13}\) Meanwhile; characterization is a portray of clear picture about someone, which presents in a story.\(^{14}\) Characterization means how the writer tells the reader about the physical and non-physical characteristic of the person told in the story. As in fiction

\(^9\)Burhan Nugriantoro (2007), *op. cit.* p. 188.
\(^{13}\)Jane Bachman Gordon (1999), *op. cit.* p. 97.
characterization or personality is defined by what others say about them, and setting in which they move. The character is also defined in part by other characters whom they in some degree resemble or from whom they in some degree differ.\textsuperscript{15}

B. Feminism

There are many opinions about the feminist idea. The first wave of feminist movement began in the 19th century, precisely in 1848, when a convention was held in Seneca Falls. The convention appeared because of the American women’s dissatisfaction to the American freedom declaration in 1776, in which they declared that \textit{“all men are created equal”} without mentioning \textit{“women”}. The women thought that the government did not care of the women’s aspiration. So, in that convention which was assumed as the appearance of women movement structurally and as the \textit{“Women’s Great Rebellion”}, the women declared another version of the American freedom, that sounded \textit{“all men and women are created equal”}\textsuperscript{16}. Then, in 1960 it could be found as a second wave of feminist movement. This second feminist movement was born by being signed with publishing a book of the Feminine Mystique, written by Betty Fredian.\textsuperscript{17} Specifically, the second wave of feminist movement tried to condemn the sexual discrimination, get the right of dominating themselves, and divide the house job

\textsuperscript{15}Ibid. p. 746.
\textsuperscript{17}Ibid. p. 10.
fairly. The third wave, feminist expanded the fight for equal status. They were aware of the need to express their various identities, racism, ethnic, sex, politic and class as their feminist identity.\textsuperscript{18}

The definition of feminism always changes according to the reality of the social culture based on its background, conscious rate, perception, and the action that are done by the feminists themselves.\textsuperscript{19} The feminism should be defined clearly in order to avoid misunderstanding. Therefore: the writer gives the definition of feminism and explains it below.

Feminism is women movement that demands to have an equal right between men and women. Fakih (1997), in Gerung’s book, said that feminism is a theory about having equality between men and women in organized politic, society and activity which struggle for the importance of the women.\textsuperscript{20} The women’s demands basically only consist of law, economic and social field. They consider that the political right is not needed. In economiy, feminist also demands property right. Before the women get married, the women’s property belongs to their father or their brothers, but after the women get married, it automatically belongs to their husbands. Furthemore, most of working fields are limited for women. Even though they get an opportunity to get a job, the salary that they got is lower than that the men get. In social fields, feminist demands a right to get the same opportunity in education as men.

\textsuperscript{19}Pusat study Wanita (PSW) UIN & McGill Project /ISEP, \textit{Pengantar Kajian Gender} (Jakarta: PSW UIN, 2003), p. 86.
Women refuse to be a cast in the role of passive and problematically complex territory for men and to fight over. They are self-determining subject, and may often pay a high price for being so. And then, Men are active in the public sphere, women are centered in the private domain where cultural continuity is guaranteed along with identity of family, community and nation.\(^{21}\) The tradition wants the women to manage their households and their families until the whole of their life is spent only in their houses. It was seen as significant that women everywhere are associated with private, domestic sphere and men with the public sphere.

That women’s domestic work in their own homes is unpaid is not because their work is unimportant or involves less time or labor than the paid work performed by men outside the home, but because patriarchy defines women in their domestic roles as non-workers.\(^{22}\) In other words, in a patriarchy women do the domestic labor at home than men don’t want to do. The relationship between men and women is based on power: patriarchal men want to keep all of it; no-patriarchal women want power to be equally distributed.

The belief that men are superior to women has been used, feminists have observed, to justify and maintain that the male monopoly of position of economic, political, and social power, in other words, to keep women powerless by denying them the educational and occupational means acquiring economic, political and social power. That is, the inferior position long occupied by women in patriarchal


society has been culturally, not biologically, produced. Feminism believes in the importance of social and political activism in order to ensure equal opportunity and equal access to justice for women.

Feminism movement comes from the assumption and awareness that women are basically oppressed and exploited. An important assumption of feminist thought is that the subordination, oppression, and exploitation of women are not respecters of national boundaries. Therefore: they efforts to end the oppression and the exploitation of women occurring in family, workplace and in society. Feminism concerns equality and justice for all women, and it seeks to eliminate systems of inequality and injustice in all aspects of women’s life. Feminism is a social concept or a kind of women’s emancipation movement that focuses on the efforts of society awareness unto the suppression and gender injustice upon women in society.

According to Soenarjati Djajanegara, the aim of feminist movement is to have equal right and position between women and men although there are many schools of feminism itself. The main objective of feminism is to encourage the idea that women and men are totally different in biology but the same position and rights.

The feminists use education to liberate themselves as people who are able to achieve the happiness and to fulfill the pleasure. John Stuart Mill and Harriet

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23 Ibid. p. 86.
Taylor said that the usual way to get the totally maximal usages of the happiness and enjoyment is to allow every individual to pursue what they want as long as they do not limit or restrict into achieving process.26

With education, women can get freedom in all aspect of life, such as in politic, economic and in social life, they can get a job that they really like and they can show her ability and her capacity. The feminists propose the independent thought, and propose the stubborn characteristic, so women can be placed the same position as men.

Implicit in most feminist research is the assumption that gender relations are relations of power, indeed it has been argued that feminists are concerned with asymmetrical power relations not gender differed per se and that focusing on difference has been a way of de-politicizing feminism and making it acceptable within the academy. Power is therefore central to feminism.27

Feminism is a movement and a set of beliefs that problematize gender inequality.28 Feminist believes that women have been subordinated through men’s greater power and variously expressed in different areas. They value women’s life and, concern and work to improve women’s status. Meanwhile; this kind of definition is broadly inclusive and misleadingly simple.

C. Feminist Literary Criticism

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The feminists try to liberate women from their inferior knowledge. They do struggle by giving women a field of study so that gender study or women study has occurred. In the relationship to literature, there is a new mainstream that tries to discover about women in literary work and anything relates to women in literary work. The study aims to enrich the knowledge about experiences, needs, and life of women. Afterward, the study that give women a field of study that occurs in literary work which is denied as feminist literary criticism.29

Feminist literary criticism has mostly developed since the women’s movement began in the early 1960s.30 Feminist literary criticism became a theoretical issue with the advent of the new women's movement initiated in the early 1960s. In fact, feminist criticism starts as a part of the international women's liberation movement. Thus, feminist literary criticism is established as a form of woman’s protest toward discriminations in education and literature.31

Feminist literary criticism is the term for criticizing literary works through the examination of female points of view, concerns, and values. Feminist literary criticism encompasses not only male literary works but also female literary works, leaving men to be held accountable for their portrayal of women as well as men in their literary works." Feminism literary criticism makes an effort to redefine literary concepts in terms of gender in order to "create a new literary landscape and labels several branches of thought within feminist literary criticism.

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Feminist literary criticism is a political attack upon other modes of criticism and theory, and because of its social orientation it moves beyond traditional literary criticism. Feminism is concerned with difference and marginalization of women. Feminists believe that their culture is a patriarchal culture, that is, one organized in favor of the interests of men. Feminist literary critics try to explain how they term engendered power imbalances in a given culture are reflected, supported, or challenged by literary texts. Feminist critics focus on absence of women from discourse as well as meaningful spaces opened by women’s discourse.32

Feminist criticism aims to reinterpret literature from a female point of view. This is accomplished in several ways. Some feminist critics seek to interpret the works of male authors, with particular attention to women characters, in order to explore the moral, political and social restrictions women traditionally face. Other feminist critics choose to analyze the works of women authors that have been previously overlooked by male critics.33 Feminist criticism has successfully directed attention to the female intellectual tradition.

Feminist criticism is always political and always revisionist, no matter what the emphasis, and most feminists now agree that despite their diverse approaches there is a distinctive feminine sensibility. Some feminist critics feel they must make the effort to discover and work out of a female only sphere.

Feminist critics largely agree on a threefold purpose, such as: to expose patriarchal premises and resulting prejudices, to promote discovery and

33 http://www.nypl.org/branch/features/index2.cfm?PFID=185
reevaluation of literature by women, and to examine social, cultural, and psychosexual contexts of literature and criticism. As feminist critics reread male texts, they describe how women in those texts are constrained in culture and society. The second and the third purposes thus follow naturally from the first. The male tradition can be replaced with a new female tradition. With new methodologies, feminist literary critics quickly find themselves moving toward study of sexual, social, and political issues once thought to be “outside” the study of literature. Some feminist critics have attempted to use literature and criticism to promote social change. Feminist criticism examines the ways in which literature reinforces or undermines the economic, political, social, and psychological oppression of women.

Millett wrote that “the essence of politics is power,” and that the most fundamental and pervasive concept of power in their society is male dominance. She saw literature as a record of the collective consciousness of patriarchy. Some feminist offered a powerful challenge to archetypal social values of capitalism, violence against women, crude sexuality, and male power in general, while it also assaulted the reigning formalism in literary criticism of their day. As a “resisting reader” who focused on patterns of dominance and submission.

The political and methodological diversity of feminist literary criticism clearly reflects that of the larger women’s movement. As more and more critics came on the scene, they worked in a great variety of areas.

From the statements above, the writer concludes that feminist in both ideology and reform movement seeks the equality to improve the status and

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condition of women in every aspect of life. Generally, all things about women are always an interesting inspiration for the author either men or women in writing a story, especially about gender and feminist movement.

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH FINDINGS

A. Data Description

_Best kept secrets_ is novel written by Sandra Brown. It is about a woman with strong character. This novel tells about the women who seeks and attempts to get the justice. Alexandra struggles to keep her law profession and her belief that justice is for all. She tries so hard to be a good attorney. As a central figure, Alex is a round character. At the beginning of the novel, Alex is described as a bright student at University of Texas; her cleverness brings her to high position as an attorney. Her amateur standing in an attorney makes people don’t like her so much. Alex convinces that Buddy Hick not kills her mother; she decides to report it to her boss the District Travis County to reopen the case of her mother murderer. Greg Harper, her boss doubt her story because the three men that Alex suspects as the accused as person who have authoritative in that city. It makes Greg Harper do not really believe Alex’s word.

Furthermore, Alex makes big decision to go to Purcell County to investigate her mother murderer. She fights to get the justice by investigating the accused. When she attempts to get the information she gets the oppression and some treatments. Although many people try to stop her investigation, she does not
give up. After working hard, finally she can really find out the motivation of that killing of her mother. In fact, who has killed her mother is Sarah Joe, Angus’s wife. She has killed Celina because she thinks that Celina has disturbed her life.

Sandra Brown shows how Alex develops into a brave person. She never intends to succumb and surrender to get what she wants. Alexandra shows that woman actually has self-confidence to face public sphere. She directly attempts to become equal with man.

Here are the characterizations of Alexandra Gaither and the evidence based on the novel of *Best Kept Secrets* by Sandra Brown.

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<td>1.</td>
<td>An educated woman</td>
<td>15</td>
<td><em>Alex had excelled in school and had ultimately graduated from the University of Texas Law School in the top ten percent of her class. The law was the profession Merle had chosen for her, but thankfully it was a field that intrigued and delighted Alex. Her curious mind enjoyed delving into its intricacies. She was well prepared to do what she must.</em></td>
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<td>2</td>
<td>An independent woman</td>
<td>69</td>
<td><em>Alex’s grades had been high enough to earn her a scholarship to the University of Texas, but she’d worked after classes to keep herself dressed and fed so her grandmother wouldn’t have those expenses to complain about.</em></td>
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<td>13</td>
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This petty investigation of yours is going to cause him embarrassment. It already has. I abhor people who trample on the reputations of others for their own personal gain. Is that what you think I’m doing?” Alex asked, “Do you think I devised this investigation to advance my career?” No,” she answered, firmly shaking her head. “My mother was murdered in that stable. I don’t believe that the man accused of it was capable of committing that crime. I want to know what really happened. I will know what happened. And I will make the one responsible pay for making me an orphan. “I want justice” I was prepared to give you the benefit of the doubt, but I see it’s only revenge you want, after all. I want justice. No matter what it costs other people? I’ve already apologized for any unhappiness it causes you.

“The people have threatened to run me out of town.” “Did you expect folks to stand by and watch all their dreams go down the tubes because of your vindictiveness?” “I’m not being vindictive. I’m conducting a valid and long-overdue investigation into a severe miscarriage of justice.”

“I’d recommend that you stop cruising in hotbeds of trouble like you have the last two evenings. If you’ve just got to have it, there are a couple of fellas I could recommend. Don’t you ever give up?” he asked through bared teeth.

“You’ve hampered this investigation every step of the way. I have every right to conduct this investigation as I see fit.”

The pick up truck accelerated suddenly and liberately swerved, catching her front left bumper with his right rear one. She lost control of the car. Her car skidded off the loose shoulder and plowed into the deep, dry ditch. Alex was held in by her seatbelt, but
flung forward hard enough to bang her head on the steering wheel. The windshield shattered upon impact, showering the back of her head and hands with glass. It seemed to rain down forever.

“I tried to scare you off with letter. I made it look like it had come from that crazy Reverend Plummet, but I sent it.”
“You still didn’t take the hint, so I ran you off the road with one of the company pickups. Judge Waalace would probably still be alive, and the deal Angus made with him would still be a secret, if you had died when your car crashed.”
Alex lunged forward and stuck Sarah Joe’s wrist. She was stronger than she appeared. Alex tried to dodge the downward arcs if the blade, but the smoke was getting too thick for her to see it well. The knife slashed Alex’s ankle and she screamed. Its serrated edge caught her again in the calf, and she staggered back toward.

“she had given serious consideration to throwing in the towel, telling Greg that he’d been right, and that she should have taken his advice from the beginning. He would enjoy seeing her humility, and he would immediately assign her another case. That would have been the easier course. She would never have to enter the city limits of Purcell again.

“You should have been. I told you I wouldn’t give up.”

“Sarah Jo!” Alex cried. “what on earth are you doing?”
“I came to rid my life of another nuisance. Just I did back in Kentucky. My mother got the colt I wanted. It wasn’t fair. I had to get rid of him and that colt, or I could never be happy again. I lured him into the stable by telling him the colt had colic. Then, I locked the door and started the fire. I didn’t have to start a fire the night I murdered Celina.”
“Why not?
“That idiot man, Gooney Bud, had followed her to the ranch. I met him on my way out of
the stable. He went in and saw her. I saw
him pick up Dr. Collins’s knife. That’s when
I knew I wouldn’t have to start a fire and
destroy all those lovely horses.”
“You killed my mother,” Alex stated
tearfully. “You killed my mother.”
“She was a trashy girl.” Sarah Jo’s
expression changed drastically, becoming
spiteful.”
“So, you looked for an opportunity to kill
her.”

“Stay where you are!” Sarah Joe
commanded sharply, brandishing the knife
took a hesitant step.

Alex gagged on a mouthful of smoke.
Stretching her arms far out in front of her,
she groped for the women, but touched
nothing except the searing air. Sarah Joe!
Where are you?”

Alex opened her briefcase and took out a
manila envelope. “I’m not back to stay, Mr.
Minton. Actually, I’m acting in an official
capacity.”
Drawing herself up to her full height, she
said, “I am reopening a twenty-five-year-old
murder case.

She looked into Angus’s eyes, then into
Junior’s. Finally, she stared down hard at
the crown of Reede Lambert’s hat. “Before
I’m finished, I’m going to know which one of
you killed my mother.”

“I want you to issue a court order to have
my mother’s body exhumed.”

“I don’t want to. I wouldn’t ask for a court
order if I didn’t think exhumation was
absolutely necessary.”
“will you permit me to look for evidence,
Judge?”
“My mother’s remains might provide some”
B. Analysis

Characters are people in the story. They are the important elements to build the story. In narrative and dramatic works, the term character and characterization are usually used to refer to human creatures that live in fictional story. And then, characters are sometimes referred to round or flat and static or dynamic. These types depend on the role of characters in the story.

In this novel, Alex is a main or major character constructs the story. She has very important role in the development of the story because her character is presented with conflict and action that build the story. Furthermore, the writer gives some marks in each line on the text, and puts them in a paper as evidences of characteristic. Then, the writer analyzes the evidence of Alex’s characteristics and classifies them into several characteristics. Those are educated, independent, courageous, obstinate, heroic and decisive. For detailed explanation, it will be discussed below.

1. An educated woman

According to Rosemary Putnam Thong, education should be given to society and to all women like men because all human beings have an equal right to get an opportunity to expand the capacity of their intellectual activity and morality, so they can become a personhood.36

From these explanations, the writer can understand that women must be given an opportunity to get education as men. By getting education, they can sharpen their intelligences to expand themselves so that they are able to be the personhood.

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In this case, Alex has been given an opportunity for having higher education. She is able to reach high education.

*Alex had excelled in school and had ultimately graduated from the University of Texas Law School in the top ten percent of her class. The law was the profession Merle had chosen for her, but thankfully it was a field that intrigued and delighted Alex. Her curious mind enjoyed delving into its intricacies. She was well prepared to do what she must.* (Sandra Brown 1989, 15)

From the quotation above, Alex is a woman who is well educated. She can prove her good qualities and becomes a brightest student when she is studying at her university. Law school is chosen by her grandmother because she lives with her. She is intelligent and serious with what she does. She can also prove herself to do the best and she is well prepared to do what she has to do.

It shows that she is able to show her equality and her ability. Besides that, Alexandra is a woman who has strong desire for education. She uses her intelligence to expand herself to become an independent person. She is an independent woman who never depends on anyone.

2. **An independent woman**

Independence is the quality of someone who is able to do things alone in his/her own ways without needing help or advice from other people, having enough money to live and having to ask for help from other people.37 Woman who does not depend on man anymore is called independent, especially in financial. In this story, even though Alex has a grandmother, she can be an independent woman.

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Alex’s independence has grown up since she studied at university. She gets her freedom and independence to run her life as she wants. She works after classes to fulfill her daily necessary and she also works in public service.

*Alex’s grades had been high enough to earn her a scholarship to the University of Texas, but she’d worked after classes to keep herself dressed and fed so her grandmother wouldn’t have those expenses to complain about.* (Sandra Brown 1989, 69)

From the quotation, it can be said that Alex is active in public sphere; she has property and can control her property alone. She does not want to become woman who is only active in domestic sphere, to be passive and to be dependent on her grandmother.

Thus, the writer can analyze that as an independent woman Alex can decide what she wants to do, including her decision to work after classes. She can effort her needs by her own money from her job. It means that Alex does not have economical problem even though she is not a rich person and it has been enough for her.

Alex is independent not only in economics but also in mind and action. Here, she is able to do something. She can decide her will to do what she wants. When her grandmother tells that her mother dies because of her, it’s your fault she died, you know (Sandra Brown 1989, 11). She is shocked. She wants to tell the whole story about what has happened to her mother, but she does not want to force her grandmother to tell the whole truth story, because her grandmother always asks her to be responsible for her mother death, it’ll be upon to you, Alexandra, to set the record right (Sandra Brown 1989, 11), her grandma tells it to her almost everyday. Then, Alex decides to solve her problem and goes to Austin alone.
Immediately upon her return to Austin, she began to research the murder case of Celina Graham Geither. She spent many sleepless nights studying transcripts and court documents before approaching her boss, the district attorney of Travis County. (Sandra Brown 1989, 13)

From the quotation above, Alex feels very independent. Even though Alex rationally needs anyone to solve her problems, she does not do that and she herself can solve her problems. Before Alex goes to her boss, the district attorney of Travis County, to allow her to reopen the cases of her mother’s death, she spends the night learning the court document. She believes that the evidences can prove that Buddy Hicks is not guilty.

3. A courageous woman

Courageous is the ability to do something dangerous, to face pain or opposition with out showing fear. Alex is a courageous woman. She gets threatening when she is driving a car. There is a pick up truck which strucks Alex’s car.

The pickup truck accelerated suddenly and liberately swerved, catching her front left bumper with his right rear one. She lost control of the car. Her car skidded off the loose shoulder and plowed into the deep, dry ditch. Alex was held in by her seatbelt, but flung forward hard enough to bang her head on the steering wheel. The windshield shattered upon impact, showering the back of her head and hands with glass. It seemed to rain down forever. (Sandra Brown 1989, 348).

From the quotation, Even though she is frightened and annoyed, she tries to face them and she is aware that the more she gets close to the truth the more people wants to remove her.

Another event which shows Alex is a courageous women is when Sarah Joe tries to kill her by a knife. Even though she is terrified, she tries to be calm to

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face her to creep forward and move slowly. There is no one around them and Sarah Joe keeps walking to Alex with her knife while she talks that she will kill Alex because she has disturbed her life, but Alex lunges back to Sarah and paralyzes her successfully because Reasonly Alex herself has been distrubbed by her Sarah.

“I tried to scare you off with letter. I made it look like it had come from that crazy Reverend Plummert, but I sent it.”

“You still didn’t take the hint, so I ran you off the road with one of the company pickups. Judge Wallace would probably still be alive, and the deal Angus made with him would still be a secret, if you had died when your car crashed.”

Alex lunged forward and stuck Sarah Joe’s wrist. She was stronger than she appeared. Alex tried to dodge the downward arcs of the blade, but the smoke was getting too thick for her to see it well. The knife slashed Alex’s ankle and she screamed. Its serrated edge caught her again in the calf, and she staggered back toward. (Sandra Brown 1989, 419)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how Alex tries to be a courageous person. Even most of Purcell’s people do not like her so much, but she is not afraid of their threats. She knows very well what she has to do. It means she is never fear and always able to take risk on something dangerous.

The image of Alex is a courageous woman. It is also shown when she makes a decision to go to Purcell County to get the justice she needs. In this case, Alex gets oppression when she faces a new environment. There is Stacey who disagrees with what Alex does because what Alex will smash her father reputation. Stacy is hesitant about Alex’s decision and investigation just for her career only, but she denies the opinion. She is capable to defend her own opinion from other people who tries to influence her decision.

“This petty investigation of yours is going to cause him embarrassment. It already has.”

“I abhor people who trample on the reputations of others for their own personal gain.”.
“Is that what you think I’m doing?” Alex asked, “Do you think I devised this investigation to advance my career?”

“No,” she answered, firmly shaking her head. “My mother was murdered in that stable. I don’t believe that the man accused of it was capable of committing that crime. I want to know what really happened. I will know what happened. And I will make the one responsible pay for making me an orphan. “I want justice”

“I was prepared to give you the benefit of the doubt, but I see it’s only revenge you want, after all.”

“I want justice.”

“No matter what it costs other people?"  
“I’ve already apologized for any unhappiness it causes you.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 183).

From the quotation above, Alex is aware that becoming attorney is not easy. She is considered as a woman that knows exactly what she wants. Although she gets oppression, she is not influenced with it. It is because she has a good conviction. She does not believe that Buddy Hicks is the guilt. Her coming to Purcell County is not only for her career but also for getting the justice. She always tries to get everything that becomes her goals. She will work very hard to achieve it.

Another situation which supports that Alex as a courageous woman is because she can express anything in her mind. It is shown when she investigates Reede, she can say that she tries to get justice not revenge.

“The people have threatened to run me out of town.”

“Did you expect folks to stand by and watch all their dreams go down the tubes because of your vindictiveness?”

“I’m not being vindictive. I’m conducting a valid and long-overdue investigation into a severe miscarriage of justice.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 162).

“I’d recommend that you stop cruising in hotbeds of trouble like you have the last two evenings. If you’ve just got to have it, there are a couple of fellas I could recommend. Don’t you ever give up?” he asked through bared teeth. (Sandra Brown 1989, 163).

“You’ve hampered this investigation every step of the way. I have every right to conduct this investigation as I see fit.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 268).
The quotation above shows how bravely Alex says that she attempts to get the information for her investigation. She has to defend her argument that she believes in. Because of that trait, she can achieve what she wants, which is justice for all, including the case of her mother's murderer. Alex’s brave is one of her very important characteristics in her investigation. Alex shows her ability to everybody that she can be as good as men.

4. An obstinate woman

Alex is an obstinate woman. It is seen when she has to get the bitter reality that her grandma died. She does not feel down even she cleans her grandmother’s room at the nursing home. She only feels defeat because she cannot fulfill her promise for herself and for her grandma to reveal who Celina’s murderer is and get her grandmother’s absolution and love. She almost gives up continuing her investigation. Because she is curious to the three men who have ever loved her mother, she finally does not give up and continues her investigation.

After the burial, Alex had begun the unwelcome chore of clearing out her grandmother’s room at the nursing home.

She had become intrigued by the men who had loved her mother. She had to know which one of them had killed her mother.

_I wasn’t sure you’d be back_ (Sandra Brown 1989, 194).

_“You should have been. I told you I wouldn’t give up.”_ (Sandra Brown 1989, 195)

From the quotation above, the writer sees that Alex appears to become an obstinate woman. She will not let herself down. Although her grandma is gone, she keeps continuing her investigation. She knows very well what she has to do. It means she is always obstinate and never gives up to face her problem. With her strength, she survives and continues her investigation.
5. A decisive woman

Decisive is a characteristic of someone who is good at making decisions quickly and with confidence. In patriarchal society, a woman has no excuses to decide what she wants, because everything is controlled by a man and only the man has authority. In patriarchal society, women must obey the man. With their power they put the authority in their hands. In other words, women are subordinate through men’s greater power, but it does not work for Alex. She remains to have rights to choose what she wants. It is proven when she decides to go to Purcell County to reopen the murder case of Celina Graham Gaither. She has some reasons that the murder case of Celina Graham Gaither has to reopen.

Alex opened her briefcase and took out a manila envelope. “I’m not back to stay, Mr. Minton. Actually, I’m acting in an official capacity.”

Drawing herself up to her full height, she said, “I am reopening a twenty-five-year-old murder case.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 9)

She looked into Angus’s eyes, then into Junior’s. Finally, she stared down hard at the crown of Reede Lambert’s hat. “Before I’m finished, I’m going to know which one of you killed my mother.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 10)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how Alex becomes a decisive woman. Although all people who come to the meeting are men except Alex, but she is not afraid to say her purpose to come there. Her coming is not for revenging, but it is because she cares her grandma so much and she does not want if her grandma always blames her about her mother’s death. It shows that although she is a woman, she has a good conviction and can not be influenced by anyone. She is not afraid to take a decision for her and for her family.

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It also appears when Alex asks Judge Wallace to take out a court order to open up her mother’s grave. She wants to do it because her investigation has not yet found the supporting evidence, whereas the evil has be done. Therefore, it is really necessary to be done.

“I want you to issue a court order to have my mother’s body exhumed.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 97)
“I don’t want to. I wouldn’t ask for a court order if I didn’t think exhumation was absolutely necessary.”
“will you permit me to look for evidence, Judge?”
“My mother’s remains might provide some” (Sandra Brown 1989, 98)

From the quotation above, it can be seen that she is free to do anything she pleases. Though she is a woman and a new comer in the city, she is not afraid to face anyone. Her desire is in line with the feminist ideas which always suggest that women should develop before and after they marry. Women are supposed to get knowledge as high as possible so that they can achieve the position and status as men in society.

6. A heroic woman

Heroic is extremely brave or determined, and admire by many people. Alex in hers had the heroic characteristic. It appears when Sarah Joe comes to her apartment in which Sarah Joe wants to kill her. When Sarah Jo tries to kill her, behind Sarah Joe flames are picking up the walls of the living room beyond and her. When the smoke is so thick, Alex spontaneously tries to help her from the fire. When she is fighting for her freedom, then she is panicked at the thought of

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40 Della Summers (2003), op. cit., p. 763.
losing her attacker in the suffocating black smoke. It is so thick that she cannot even distinguish an outline of the other woman.

“Sarah Joe!” Alex cried. “What on earth are you doing?”
“I came to rid my life of another nuisance. Just I did back in Kentucky. My mother got the colt I wanted. It wasn’t fair. I had to get rid of him and that colt, or I could never be happy again. I lured him into the stable by telling him the colt had colic. Then, I locked the door and started the fire. I didn’t have to start a fire the night I murdered Celina.”

“Why not?
“That idiot man, Gooney Bud, had followed her to the ranch. I met him on my way out of the stable. He went in and saw her. I saw him pick up Dr. Collins’s knife. That’s when I knew I wouldn’t have to start a fire and destroy all those lovely horses.”

“You killed my mother,” Alex stated tearfully. “You killed my mother.”
“She was a trashy girl.” Sarah Joe’s expression changed drastically, becoming spiteful.

“So, you looked for an opportunity to kill her.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 417)

“Stay where you are!” Sarah Joe commanded sharply, brandishing the knife took a hesitant step. (Sandra Brown 1989, 418)

“A Alex gagged on a mouthful of smoke. Stretching her arms far out in front of her, she groped for the women, but touched nothing except the searing air. Sarah Joe! Where are you?” (Sandra Brown 1989, 420).

From the quotation above, it can be seen that Alex can prove that she has courage and a sense of heroism. Alex’s heroism appears when she saves Sarah Jo’s life from the fire caused by herself. Even though she often gets some threats from Sarah Joe, she still wants to help her, but Sarah Jo can not be saved. Alex does not feel satisfied because she cannot give a punishment to the person who has killed her mother, but she finally knows who has killed her mother.
C. The novel position in relation with gendered power imbalances through the character

1. Right to get justice

The feminists endorse women to be brave to show their power and get equality with men. Feminism concerns equality and justice for all women, and it seeks to eliminate systems of inequality and injustice in all aspects of women’s lives. All women’s problems never stop up to now. Women are never regarded having voices to say their will and they are always considered as dependent human beings. It will be connected with women’s oppression and suppression. Therefore, feminists struggle to destroy the patriarchal system and demand a right to get the same opportunities.

Feminism obligates women to express what in their mind. Although they live in the environment which does not support them, they must show their existences. It happens to Alex; she lived in the middle environment which did not support her when she came from Texas to Purcell County, small town, which believed the patriarchal society. They tried to keep Alex in a submissive position where she was unable to express her own thoughts and feelings. Nevertheless, she was against it by her actions and her thoughts. Even though she got some oppressions, the condition did not make Alex fall even she was brave to express and speak that she wanted justice, but the society did not believe and did not help her to get the justice. Although most people did not believe in her, Alex went on to fight to collect the evidence and investigate her case.

*Her caseload was heavy, and the time she had had to spend on her mother’s murder had been limited. She read everything she could get her hands on-newspaper accounts, transcripts of Buddy Hicks’s hearing-until she had the facts memorized.* (Sandra Brown 1989, 16 )
Alex did everything to get justice. She made a great effort to find an absolute proof and fight all people who did not believe her. Because of her struggle, heroism and courage, she finally knew who had killed her mother; Alex could win the case and prove to all people that her story was true.

“You killed my mother,” Alex stated tearfully. “You killed my mother.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 417)

“Stay where you are!” Sarah Joe commanded sharply, brandishing the knife took a hesitant step. “You came here and started causing trouble, just like Celina.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 418)

The knife slashed Alex’s ankle and she screamed. Its serrated edge caught her again in the calf, and she staggered back toward the living room. (Sandra Brown 1989, 419)

The smoke was so thick that she couldn’t even distinguish an outline of the other women. She turned, ducked, and plunged through the hallway. Screaming in fear and pain, she barreled through the door and out onto the porch. “Reede,” she croaked reaching for him. She fell, “Sarah Jo,” she wheezed. With an effort, she raised her hand and pointed toward their house.

“My God, Mother!” Junior went over the side of the Jeep and hit the ground at a run.”

“Junior, come back!” Stacey screamed. “No, God, no!”

“Son, don’t!” Angus reached for Junior’s arms as he sped past. “It’s too late!” (Sandra Brown 1989, 420)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how Alex won that case and all people in that town felt shocked and began to believe with her. Furthermore, Sarah Jo was declared guilt. In fact, the murderer who has killed her mother was not the three powerful men that she suspected.

Alex can reflect power balances because she is brave to fight to get the justice. Alex struggled continually to achieve equality and overcome oppression. She can get power balances determined as an educated, courageous, heroic, obstinate, decisive and independent woman. All of the characteristics are submitted by feminists for all the women in the world. So, women are able to have a same position as men to stand up in their own feet and to be proud of her.
2. Equality in social field

According to feminist, equality of a right and opportunity should be extended for woman in all areas of life. In other words, woman should have opportunities in all sectors such as in politic, economy, and also social. Feminist believes that there is gender injustice which is constructed both social and culture. The society still differentiates the class between women and men. The differentiation connects to the oppression of women. Social status and occupation field automatically determine one position in the society.

In this case, Alex shows equality in social by being against the opinion of society which differentiates women in some aspects for example in social class. The society believed that Alex just wanted to ruin the reputation of Judge Wallace and get the popularity because Alex was a lower attorney than Judge Wallace who was a lofty judge getting fort impeccable years.

“You want to publicly crucify my father. Don’t deny it, no matter how much you deny it, you’re leaving him open to ridicule. At the very least, you’re accusing him of making a serious error in judgment.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 183)

“Yes, I believe he made a bad judgment in the case of Buddy Hicks. If my investigation is petty, as you call it won’t affect his record, will it, Mrs. Minton? A lofty judge couldn’t possibly be brought down by a lowly public prosecutor with nothing except spite and vengeance for ammunition. Evidence would be necessary to support my allegations.”

“You don’t have any.”

“I believe I will before I’m finished. Stacey, I don’t want to ruin your father’s career or besmirch his tenure on the bench. I don’t want to hurt anybody’s feelings or cause any innocent bystander grief or embarrassment. I only want to see justice done. (Sandra Brown 1989, 184)

From the quotation above, it can be seen how Alex fought to prove to the society that what upper class people did was not always true and better than
the lower class people. It is proven when Alex got the justice and all people believed in her.

The writer assumes that the women still faces the problem getting the equality and the issues of women’s rights. Alex had to fight patriarchal domination which believed women to be inferior to men and tried to treat women. Feminist critics struggle to destroy the patriarchal system that is believed as the root of women’s oppression. “Punctuality is a virtue. So’s having guts.” (Sandra Brown 1989, 224)

The analysis explained above shows the women oppression, especially for Alex character. She could fight and get the justice only by herself. It shows that Alex as a main character in Best Kept Secrets novel portrays power balances which the women must get the equal right as men.

The feminist submits for all women in the world. Women are able to have the same position as men. Therefore, from the analysis the writer can see that Alex as a main character in this novel represents power balances in undergoing her life without feeling tired and even desperate. She finally proves who she is. The attorney is not only for men but also for women.

The ending of the novel in which Alex return to Texas with victory (gain justice and equality) once again emphasize the position of the novel regarding gender power imbalance. The novel does not approve with imbalance power women experience, it believes that through hard work women can gain balance power and be recognized by the society. The educated major female characteristics as educated, independent, courageous, obstinate and decisive
indicate her persistence to gain balance power. Her being called Alex is also a sign that the novel wishes to put the major female character on the same level as the male character.
A. Conclusions

Through the feminism concept, the writer focuses her research on Alex’s characteristics that implies a feminist concept as an educated, courageous, heroic, obstinate, decisive and independent woman. As an orphan girl, being raised by her grandmother, she has to work hard to get higher education. As a main character, Alex is obstinate woman. Although many people do not believe Alex and doubt with what she does. Alex fights to make people trust her and she gives great effort to prove it. Alex would do everything to find and get justice. Her courage becomes the source of strength in herself. Her spirit made her become obstinate to have a better life.

Alex also shows her struggle against the opinion of society which differentiates women in some aspects for example in social field. The society believes that people who come from upper class are always better than people from lower class. It happens to Alex. The society believes that Alex just wants to ruin the reputation of Judge Wallace and dissolves the city because Alex is just a lower attorney. Through the story, Alex is described as a woman who gets unfairness and oppression. It is showed in Alex’s characteristics which she gets the pressure from the society. She always fights to be an obstinate, not easy to give up in facing every problem.
From those explorations of the strong character, the writer concludes that she is a feminism character who can not only fight against the system of patriarchy but also can solve her life problem.

She is the representation of feminism that fights against patriarchy. It can be categorized as a feminism movement. Although Alex is always oppressed, she can survive through the oppression. Then, through the character of Alex, Sandra Brown tells to the reader especially women in the world who are oppressed by men to realize and to brave against the patriarchy. She also tells that women can decide their own life without any help of men. It then put the novel on the position of celebration balance power of female and male.

**B. Suggestions**

The writers suggest the people who are interested in literature study, especially in the novel *Best Kept Secrets*, they can use feminist approach in comprehending and understanding the image of women in the novel. Anyone who is interested to do deeper study about character and characterization that relate to feminism, can use feminist perspective as an approach in analyzing the literary work. The writer also expects that the research will be useful to the readers who want to analyze character and characterization in any type of the novel.
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Appendices

A. Best Kept Secrets
Appendix I

Summary of the novel Best Kept Secrets

Alexandra Gaither had returned to Purcell County in West Texas for the first time in 25 years, since she was a tiny baby and her mother was murdered. She was an attorney for the state in Texas and vowed to discover the truth. The man who was convicted and locked in a mental institution was not the murderer. She intended to discover who he was. He had to be one of three powerful men, Angus Minton, his son Junior, or Junior's best friend, Reede Lambert. Alex walked into their territory and tried to solve a 25 years old murder.

Angus and his son run Minton Enterprises, a horse farm and racing business. Minton Enterprises had just received state sanction to build a race track in Purcell County which would bring the economy of the area back up. Reede Lambert was a sheriff and a local small business owner. His business would benefit from a horse racing track as well. Junior and Reede were Celina Graham's best friends in high school. After she married Alex's father in El Paso and returned to Purcell County, they supported her when he died in Viet Nam and she was an 18 years old widow with a small baby. She was stabbed to death in a horse stall on Angus' ranch when Alex was two months old. Alex and her grandmother moved away to Austin after the funeral. She was raised by her grandmother who was just a widow lady.

Merle Graham and Her Grandma had provided for her physical needs, but she’d neglected her emotional ones. Alex had grown up with feeling inferior and unloved. Her grandmother had pushed her toward the Legal Profession. Because it
was expected of her, Alex had excelled in school and had ultimately graduated from the University of Texas Law School in the top ten percent of her class. Alex’s grades had been high enough to earn a scholarship to the University of Texas, but she’d worked after classes to keep herself dressed and fed so her grandmother wouldn’t have those expenses to complain about. She had received financial assistance for Law School, too, because her grades were so impressive.

The Law was the profession that Merle had chosen for her, but thankfully it was a field that intrigued and delighted Alex. Her curious mind enjoyed delving into her intricacies. She was well prepared to do what she might. Merle Graham must have spoon-fed her doses of determination, along with her vegetables, that Celina Gaither had not been murdered by the accused buddy hicks. Her grandmother had drummed that into little Alex’s head like a catechism all her life. Almost daily, her grandmother asked to Alex to set the record right of her mother death.

Merle held Alex to be responsible for Celina’s death; so much of Alex upbringing could be explained. Her grandma was never very affectionate with her, no matter how remarkable Alex’s achievements; she was never quite good enough to win her grandmother’s praise. She knew she was never considered as a gifted, clever, or charismatic granddaughter as the smiling girl in the photographs that Merle looked at with such sad longing.

Alex didn’t resent her mother. Indeed, she idolized and adored her with the blind passion of a child who had grown up without parents. She constantly worked toward being as good at everything as Celina had been, not only so she
would be a worthy daughter, but in the desperate hope of earning her grandmother’s love and approval, so it came as a stunning blow to hear from her dying grandmother’s lips that she must be responsible for Celina’s murder.

The ugly accusation had petrified; it reverberated in her brain and assaulted her soul. Finally, she decided to research the murder case of Celina Graham Gaither. After she’s really with the decision that she took, finally she traveled back to the small Texas town in which she was born to reopen a twenty-five years old murder case. Alex believed one of the three powerful men had murdered her mother. Each was charming, each was a suspect and each tried to shield her from his past. More people tried to shield her investigation, she more anxious to know who the real of her mother murderer is.

No one of them could stop her investigation search for the truth. Like her mother before, Alex sparked controversy and excitement in this remote Texas town. The handsomeness and the strength’s Reede made her love to him because Reede Lambert was all of that. So that, Alex didn’t want to believe that Reede could kill Celina under any circumstances, but she certainly didn’t want to believe he had killed Celina because of her.

Alex hadn’t found the motivation of that killing until her grandma was death. With her grandma’s death, she had felt an overwhelming sense of defeat. She had failed to fulfill the promise that she had made to herself and to her grandmother; she didn’t produced Celina’s murderer in time. She had failed to win her grandmother’s absolution and love.
She had given serious consideration to throw the towel, because from a Legal viewpoint, she still had a case too weak to stand up in court. From a personal perspective, she couldn’t quite. She had become intrigued by the men who had loved her mother. She had to know which one of them had killed her, so that, she would either have to deny her guilt, or learn to live with it, and couldn’t let it go forever unresolved. As she investigated the past of her mother’s lovers, she promised to face every risk to find out the secret behind the killing of her mother.

Alex had something to prove to her grandmother and herself that she, although a tiny baby, wasn’t responsible for her mother’s death. She knew that Buddy Hicks didn’t have the sense, intelligence, or temperament to kill her mother, but Angus, Junior, and Reede all did. After working hard, finally she could really find out the motivation of that killing of her mother. In fact, Sarah Joe, Angus’s wife, was the woman who had killed her mother. She had killed Celina because she thought that Celina had disturbed her life. After her investigation was finished, she came back to Austin Texas.
APPENDIX II

A. Biography of the writer’s Best Kept Secrets

*Sandra Brown* is the author of more than sixty books, of which over forty were New York Times bestsellers, including the #1 New York Times bestsellers *The Alibi*, *Ebny*, *The Switch*, *Standoff*, *Unspeakable*, *Fat Tuesday*, *Exclusive*, *The witness*, *Charade*, *Where There’s Smoke*, and *French Silk*. Her novels have been published in thirty languages. She and her husband divide their time between homes in Texas and South Carolina.

*Sandra Brown* began her writing career in 1981 and since then has published seventy-two novels, most of which remain in print. As of 1990, when *Mirror Image* made The New York Times bestseller list, each subsequent new novel has become a Times bestseller. In 1992 her novel *French Silk* was made into an ABC-TV movie. *Sandra Brown* now has seventy million copies of her books in print worldwide, and her work has been translated into thirty-three languages.

*Sandra Brown* was born in Waco Texas, grew up in Fort Worth and attended Texas Christian University, majoring in English. Before embarking on her writing career, she worked as a model at the Dallas Apparel Mart, and in television, including weather casting for WFAA-TV in Dallas, and feature reporting on the nationally syndicated program "PM Magazine." She is much in demand as a speaker and has appeared at the National Book Festival in Washington, D.C. and the Texas Book Festival in Austin, TX, as well as charity
functions throughout the year. True TV also sought Brown to host the 2007 premier of its popular series "Murder by the Book."

*Sandra Brown* was given an honorary Doctorate of Humane Letters from Texas Christian University. Other awards and commendations include the 2007 Texas Medal of Arts Award for Literature, the American Business Women's Association's Distinguished Circle of Success, B'nai B'rith's Distinguished Literary Achievement Award, the A.C. Greene Award and the Romance Writers of America's Lifetime Achievement Award. *Sandra Brown* was also named Thriller Master for 2008, the top award given by the International Thriller Writer's Association. In addition, *Sandra* is a member of Author's Guild, Mystery Writers of America, Novelists, Inc., Literacy Partners, and a founding member of International Thriller Writers.

She was married to Michael Brown, a former television anchorman who recently produced the award winning documentary film *Dust to Dust*. They live in Ft. Worth, Texas.
B. Sandra Brown (picture)