A STUDY ON THE PROBLEMS OF CAREER WOMEN AND THEIR FAMILIES IN CANDACE BUSHNELL'S LIPSTICK JUNGLE

(KAJIAN TERHADAP MASALAH MASALAH YANG DIHADAPI WANITA KARIR DAN KELUARGANYA DALAM NOVEL LIPSTICK JUNGLE KARYA CANDACE BUSHNELL)

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Abstract

Lipstick Jungle is a novel by Candace Bushnell published in 2005. The novel represents career women’s life who lives in the patriarchal system. The system causes some problems for career women. There are three problems to discuss in this study. The first problem is the point of view of the female characters about career women and families’ life. The second one is the difficulties experienced by the female characters related to career and families’ life. The last problem is the female characters’ decision to choose between career or families’ life. The problems are analyzed by using the theory of patriarchy proposed by Sylvia Walby. A patriarchy is a social system that men handle the power to all important sectors in family, society, government, economy, education and other sectors. This theory is used to analyze the data related to the problems of career women in the patriarchal system. The result of this study shows that the female characters as career women live without considering women’s role in the patriarchal system. They are the modern women who bravely say what they want to do and choose the way of life, whether they have to be a woman, a mother, an unmarried woman, a married woman, a housewife, or a career woman.

Keywords: Women, Career Women's Problem, Patriarchal System.

Introduction

Lipstick Jungle is the fourth novel of Candace Bushnell. The novel was published in 2005. The story tells about career women’s life who lives in the patriarchal system. Patriarchy is a system of social structures and practices, in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (Walby, 1990:20). The novel describes the female characters reflected women in the reality of society. The characters want to get freedom from social system. Society sets the role and image for women. Women cannot decide their own life. They belong to men. Men become the holder of authority in all aspects such as families, societies, parliaments, jobs, religions, and other sectors.

In addition, this researcher is interested to use Candace Bushnell’s Lipstick Jungle as the object of discussion because the novel explores the point of view of how women should live in patriarchal society that they can set an ideal life where they can say what they want to do. The problems are analyzed through the theory of patriarchy by Sylvia Walby. This theory is applicable to the topic of discussion that are related to women problems as career women in the patriarchal society.

Research Methodology

This research uses qualitative research. The qualitative research is the manner to collect the data. There are two types of data; primary and secondary data. In the research, Bushnell’s novel Lipstick Jungle is a primary data and
Sylvia Walby’s book *Theoryzing Patriarchy* is the main source. The secondary data are taken from books such as journals, dictionary, articles about the novel, reviews of research that contain the terms about women’s problem in their career, and other publications from the internet which contain the factual information of supporting sources for doing the research.

**Result**

Based on the data which have been analysed in this research, it is found that the female characters are not fully submissive in patriarchal system. The female characters portray the feminist figures. Their daily life reflect feminism in which they do not fully obey the paradigm of women’s role in patriarchal society. They are the types of modern women who bravely say what they want to say and do. They choose their own life style, even though it is totally different from women’s role in patriarchal society. They have made their confidence personally about their choice.

**Discussion**

*Lipstick Jungle* is the novel portrayed the social phenomenon related fiction and reality in literary work. Alan Swingewood states “The function of the novel is as medium for expressing a critique of society and of the social relationships within it remains assured” (1972:16). The novel portrays the modern women’s rights who have opportunity, liberty and equality to men in all aspect of life such as, family, education, economy, society and state.

In the novel, the female characters show that women need to have an opportunity in career. The characters have some reasons to be career women, such as an independent person, everything related to the educational aspect or upgrading skill, helping financial family, having an opportunity in job or career.

She was the president of Paradar Pictures, one of the most powerful women in the movie business, but to the photographers, she might as well have been someone’s assistant...

(Bushnell, 2005:7)

“Jenny Cadine is the most important movie star, and Victory is the most important designer.”

(Bushnell, 2005:10)

As the editor in chief of Bonfire magazine and one of the most important women in publishing... Ever since she’d become the editor in chief of the venerable (and dusty) Bonfire magazine six years ago, and had turned it into the glossy, pop culture bible for entertainment, media and politics, she’d been photographed at every event she attended.

(Bushnell, 2005:12-13)

The statements above show that women have opportunities in the public sphere. Women always look for opportunity to attain the highest position in career. Montagu says that women are taught that they can do anything with their talents and intelligence. Women should seek opportunity and equality to use their talents and should become capable workers in their respective fields. (http://www.thenurturingmother.com/Ashley_Montagu.htm)

The female characters show that being career women have certain advantages. There are getting satisfaction, getting a better condition, exploring women's abilities, fulfilling the economical demand, helping the other people, and making a good relationship to other people.

According to them, women have the same potential and power just like men. Wollstonecraft in *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* argues that women have equality to men in all positions. Women have equal power of reason to men, they should be granted equal rights. Women have the skills and abilities to compete with men such as career, politic rights, education, social and jobs (http://survivingbaenglish.wordpress.com/vindication-of-the-rights-of-women-mary-wollstonecraft/).

Therefore, feminism is reflected on the female characters who have an opportunity in the public sphere. The characters have talents in all sectors like men. They have to develop their talents because their talents are useful to find the appropriate career. In this case, wider education and employment are needed to support the idea of career for women. It is concluded that the female characters view career women that career women are very important in their life.

In other hand, the female characters have the legal marriage. Legal marriage is a legal status, condition, or relationship resulted from a contract where one man and one woman have an agreement, and mutually promise to live together in the relationship as husband and wife in all conditions such as sadness or happiness, rich or poor, sick or health. It is proven in the quotations below.

If she was really honest, she wanted one of her movies to win Best Pictures at the Oscars (so far, five of her movies had been nominated but none had won), and she wanted to walk down the red carpet and get up onto the stage and thank everyone (“And I’d especially like to thank my loving husband, Shane without whose support I couldn’t do this”), and be celebrate afterward. “I just want you to be happy, Shane,” and after a beat: “So we can all be happy.”

He was supportive of her and a great father and they had fun, so she didn’t care. And for reasons she could never quite understand, her career kept getting bigger and bigger.

(Bushnell, 2005:27-28)

“Poor Rebecca nothing,” Seymour scoffed. “You’ve got to develop a tougher hide. It’s not like you’ve got anything personal against her. You don’t even know her. It’s just business.”

(Bushnell, 2005:195)

The quotations above mean that family has contributed in all aspects especially in career. The family gives the big
value of the female characters in career life. The female characters’ families always give support, motivation and prayed for them. Without them, the characters’ career cannot get to attain the highest position as a successful female career. It is concluded that the female characters’ view of families’ life is very important in their life.

Besides, being career women are not easy to do thing. Women always become the inferior by nature and men become the holder of authority in all aspects. The rule is called a patriarchal concept. According to Abraham in A Glossary of Literary Terms, that:

“Patriarchal (ruled by the father)—that is, it is male-centered and controlled, and is organized and conducted in such a way as to subordinate women to men in all cultural domains: familial, religious, political, economic, social, legal, and artistic” (1999:89).

The statement above means that the concept is formed by men. Men organize in all sectors. It is represented in the Lipstick Jungle novel portrayed women do not fully get freedom. Based on the female characters, they get tension on family, career and also society.

Family is the basic tension in married women. The married-career women have two obligations; domestic and career. It is depicted in Wendy’s character who has three children. As a married woman, Wendy does not follow the rule of traditional marriage. Grosky emphasizes that the standard women in patriarchal society is those own virtuosity, obedience toward father, and performance of being submissive wife and nurturing mother (1992:3). Wendy Healy is a daughter who is not fully submissive to her parents. She rejects her mother about the ideal of traditional marriage. Her mother insists her to have a lower position than the husband. She believes that she has the rights for freedom in the traditional marriage. Wendy’s idea keeps working as a breadwinner of the family reveals in the phone conversation with her mother. It is described in the quotation below:

Of course, there were still women like that, women who believed that the only way a woman could truly define herself was through a husband and children. She had always felt deeply at odds with that particular type of woman- the type who thought it was desirable to be a housewife, to be independent on a man.

“Of course I wanted you to be successful,” her mother said. “But you don’t have to take over the world to be successful. I wanted you to be happy. I always thought you could have been very happy married to lawyer or banker. You could have had your children and still worked if you’d wanted to.” “You wanted me to work at some measly job?” She asked, her voice rising in anger.

“It wouldn’t have to have been measly,” her mother said patiently. “But your husband could have been the provider.”

She paused. “I know you don’t believe it, honey, but marriages only work when the man makes more money. Men need that kind of incentive to stay in a marriage. It makes them feel good about themselves.”

(Wendy, 2005:209,211)

Wendy also gets tension from her husband, Shane. Her husband wants to divorce her without significant reason. She feels shocked about her husband. She thinks that Shane is not serious because she believes that they have no problem before. Shane is not comfortable for his marriage. It is proven in the quotation below:

He took a sip of vodka and looked down at the floor. “I wasn’t kidding Wendy,” he said. “I want a divorce.”

“I don’t love you, Wendy,” he said.

“And I don’t think I ever here.” But I was never in love with you. The way I was in love with some of those other girls...?”

(Bushnell, 2005:137)

According to Grosky, patriarchy sets the concepts of marriage as a small institution that consists of father, mother and children. The father has a holder of authority to manage in a family institution. Mother and children must obey to their father. Women as a wife could not file for a divorce. If there is a divorce, it is usually the husband who asks for a divorce. The husband’s authority is higher than a wife. A husband can divorce a wife easily without her agreement in a marriage, but a wife cannot do it. Therefore a husband has a higher position than a wife (1992: 26). It shows that Shane as a husband is easy to ask divorce to his wife without a significant reason. This situation makes the Wendy wonder of his saying.

In other hand, Nico O’Neill has a problem with her husband, Seymour. Nico needs a biological satisfaction. It is described in the quotation below:

She and Seymour hadn’t had decent sex for at least three years. They’d often go for months without having sex at all.

“I’m not that interested in sex. It doesn’t have anything to do with you, but I’m not going to do something I don’t feel.”

She suspected that unraveling the mysteries and motivations behind his attitude about sex (and sex with her) would be painful and damaging to their marriage, so she just let it be.

(Bushnell, 2005:181-182)

The statement above explains that women are owned by men. Gilman in Listiari’s thesis argues, “When women become the property of men; sold and bartered, “given away” by their paternal owner to their maternal owner” (1911:31). Walby emphasize that men have the right of sexual access to wife’s body (1990:163). It shows that Nico are owned by Seymour. Seymour needs biological sex as he wants.

Based on the explanations before, women do not fully have equal position to men in marriage law. Men become the
holder of authority in the family’s situation. Walby argues that women have no legal rights as an independent person in legal marriage. In legal marriage, wife should be submissive for husband. The husband’s rights over his wife are extensive. He has rights to insist his wife lived with him. He legally owns all goods and property. He also has the rights of sexual access to his wife’s body. A wife cannot engage in any financial or legal transaction without husband’s request (1990:163). It is concluded that the female characters have family’s tension. The characters want to get freedom in marriage law.

Moreover, women have tension in career. According to Walby, patriarchal society sets woman in paid employment. There are discrimination toward women in work. Women get low salary because they have less skill. In job positions, women are just the labors. They have less skill because they have less access in education and skill. They also cannot get the higher education as men do. They just become a teacher in the domestic sphere. Women’s skill is usually soft skill such as tailor, chef and others. Commonly, their skill is inside the house and the male skill is outside the house (Walby, 1990:21).

Walby emphasizes that women also become the subordinate in work’s position. It is described in the quotation below.

Unlike in Japan, she thought fiercely, “Miss Victory. You don't say no to my proposition!” Mr. Ikito had insisted when she’d called him. “You woman, you listen to what the man says. What man say is better.” And finally, she had had to give in, agreeing to put off her decision for another day. (Bushnell, 2005:72)

The presented dialogue means men as the holder of authority and women as the subordinate in employment. According to Walby, this situation shows that women get paid less than men because they have less skill and labor market experience and fewer qualifications than men as a consequence of decisions as to the allocations of the time if men and women in households (1990:29-30).

Walby emphasizes that women have the lowest position at work. Women become employees. The woman employee should be submissive to manager. The employee works the jobs what manager requests and wants. The manager becomes the determiner in the work. Based on the character Victory becomes the employee and Mr. Ikito becomes her boss in a company. Victory is not submissive worker. She does not hear what manager requests and wants.

As a worker, Victory wants to get opportunity and equal position. She wants to explore the idea of creativity because she wants to do her best as a fashion designer. She gets depressed to choose between keeping the business and designing her own dreams. She wants to be free from Mr. Ikito’s pressure as her biggest investor. Her dream cannot be realized. She does not have power for that. She believes that a person works hard to create a new something with best creative imagination will also be valued other people. The quotation below describes Victory’s physical appearance that indicates her as a worker woman.

“Miss Victory. What happen to you?” he asked, turning the pages with disgust. “Where you get these ideas? This is not you. And who wears these clothes? No woman wears long skirt in springtime. Not fun, floppy fashions. Women want to show off legs.”

“Mr. Ikito,” she said, bowing her head to show deference (she hated having to do this, but it was important to respect foreign business customs), “I was trying something new. I’m trying to grow. Expand. As a designer.”

(Bushnell, 2005:61)

As a worker woman, Victory wants to prove on men worker that women can be equal at the work. She breaks the concept of man's authority that women depend on men. Walby mentions that women workers are typically less powerful than men workers (1990:31). Victory is a feminist character. She has rejected the opinion of women in the company in the patriarchal society. She can have equal opportunity as worker men. She also has the higher position in the male dominate. Tong emphasizes that women also have opportunity and equality in the workplace. They can be an equal participant with men in the various trades, professions and commerce (2009:21).

Candace Businell describes the modern women who challenge the patriarchal society. Selden mentions that ‘Patriarchy subordinates the female to the male or treats the female as an inferior male’ (1985:131-132). They are taken for granted to be fully submissive and obedient to men. They must respect and obey men’s decision. Women are made inferior and the oppression has been compounded by men’s belief that women are inferior by nature (Selden, 1985:129-130). Patriarchal society is a social system that men handle the power to all important sectors such as in society, government, economy, education, religion and politics. Society appraises the female position as the male subordinate. Although, women have the higher position or equal with men, they always become the male subordinate because of nature.

Gosky states that standard women in a patriarchal society are who have virtuosity, obedience to father and husband, nurturing mother (1992:3). It is depicted in Wendy’s character.

“Young Tyler has had an accident in his pants,” she said accusingly, as if this were somehow Wendy’s fault, which, she supposed, it was. “People shouldn’t have so many children if they can’t take care of them. You’d better get your husband back, dear.”

“I want Daddy!” Tyler screamed.

Wendy looked at Mrs. Minniver as if to say, “You heartless woman, now look what you’ve done!” But Mrs. Minniver was not about to take any of the blame. She pinched her lips together and shook her head, secure in her belief that Wendy was a bad mother and that was that.
The quotations above explain that Wendy is not a nurturing mother. The nurturing mother is women who do nursing, teaching, and taking care of their children. Wendy gets society’s pressure depicted on Wendy’s nanny, Mrs. Minniver. According to her nanny, Wendy portrays a bad mother because she has made failure to teach their children. She obligates to manage in the domestic sphere and also career balance. She chooses nanny for managing domestic sphere and also nursing her children.

Wendy’s nanny is a woman who is the submissive woman on marriage in patriarchal concepts. According to Mrs. Minniver, marriage is when a husband is fully responsible for external affair, while a wife who is fully responsible for internal affairs. Mrs. Minniver’s opinion, Wendy does not have a common marriage. She chooses to change the general assumption of patriarchal society that women can actually take the lead in the family. She becomes the family provider while Shane becomes in charge of domestic sphere.

In addition, society’s pressure is described in Victory’s character. Walby asserts that traditional women describe as a reproduction and a production in the works such as pregnancy, menstruation, childbirth, breastfeeding, child rearing, cooking, cleaning and others (1990:62), Victory rejects the assumption of traditional women.

Victory is a mature woman. The mature women are women who are ready for going into marriage. Marriage is a very important issue for mature women. That is the priority in life. If women have not got married, they have not yet become a perfect woman. Society considers that the successful life for women is those who make good family in married life where women work at home as a housewife and the men go to work as the breadwinner who supports their family's need.

Victory is depicted an independent woman. She wants to get women’s liberation in mature women. She works to look for money with herself. Her thought of women’s freedom is acquired through her speech that says, “... And slowly but surely a happiness spreads through my body. A joy. And I thank God that somehow, I’ve managed to remain free. Free to enjoy my life and my career.” (Bushnell, 2005:6).

Still being single in your forties, was a state of being the world couldn’t really comprehend, especially in Europe and England, where women as young as thirty panicked over their biological clocks. But if you were wildly successful, you could make your own rules how you wanted to live your life.

To be on her own in the world, free.

The statement above reflects the freedom’s life. Victory chooses to become a single woman than being a married woman. She thinks that being marriage woman is the basic failure for her career. She enjoys for her life as a single woman.

Based on the explanations above, it is concluded that the female characters reject the traditional custom. The traditional custom set women to be a daughter, household, wife or mother. Gorsky states that the archetypal good woman starts a virtuous, obedient daughter and ends as submissive wife and nurturing mother (1992:3). It means that the female characters reject the rules of patriarchal system.

The value of patriarchal society is not significant as the rural society. Women get oppression or tension mental pressure. Based on the female characters, they have got tension in family, career and also society. The tension makes them to solve their problem.

In the families’ tension, the female characters want to escape their problems. They make affair with other guys. It is depicted in Wendy and also Nico. Wendy has a problem about the legal divorce and Nico has a problem about the biological satisfaction. The quotation below describes the female characters’ physical appearance that indicates them as the married women.

“You mean...?”
“I mean like a date,” Selden said boldly.
“I guess that’s what they still call it. Although it seems kind of funny, people our age going on a date.” (Bushnell, 2005:476)

There was, Nico O’Neill thought, an ownership in sex. If you owned your sex, you owned the world. Or felt like you did, anyway. For the last six weeks, ever since she’d begun her naughty friendship with Kirby, she’d been on top of the world.

(Bushnell, 2005:179)

The statements above mean women right to behave like men. Gilman in Listiari’s thesis argues, “When women become the property of men, sold and bartered; “given away” by their paternal owner to their maternal owner” (1911:31). In the novel, the female characters always think why women cannot do the exact same things without giving stigmatization by societies. The female characters want to have the privilege as men in society. The characters want to find their happiness.

Wendy decides to keep her husband, Shane and her affair relationship with Selden. Polygamy is clearly reflected in the novel.

“First women are talking over the world, and now they’ve got two men. You’d think one would be enough...” Wendy had his baby, he would certainly be different. He would fall in love with that child, probably want to spend all his time with it. She did hope, for Wendy’s sake, that he would keep working, at least for a little while. Imagine having to support two men and four children!” (Bushnell, 2005:526-527)

Based on the statement above, it means Wendy as the subject of polygamy. Based on the statement above, it means Wendy as the subject of polygamy. Zuhur states in Indriani’s thesis, “a man must be able to divide his time and wealth in...
an equitable fashion before he is allowed to have more than one wife”. A man’s finance supports to fulfill more than one wife and existence of a public interest, such as the inability of the first wife to have children” (2014:37). It means that men usually become the subject of polygamy. However, Wendy rejects the paradigm of society that women can do as men.

In other hand, Nico decides to end her affair with Kirby. She decides to get back to her family and continues her career. The need of biological satisfaction is the main issue for Nico. Walby explains that wife should be submissive and also respect the husband’s argument in legal marriage (1990:64). It is proven that Nico wants to be loyal with her husband, Seymour. She follows the concepts of legal marriage which have an agreement, mutually promise to live together in the relationship between husband and wife in all conditions such as sadness or happiness, rich or poor, sickness or health. Finally, she chooses to survive her family and career.

She swallowed. “Kirby, you knew I was married.”

“So?” he said, spinning around.

“So, I do love my husband, Kirby. He’s a wonderful man, and I don’t want to hurt him.”

“If that’s show it feels to you, Kirby, I am sorry. I never meant it that way,” she said. “I thought we were friends, and were just having fun.” Oh God, she thought, that really does sound like a man.

(Bushnell, 2005:528)

In addition, Victory finds the typical man. She finds really hard to find a man who respects a woman and sees a woman as equal as men. She makes a relationship with a guy. She mostly finds men who spoil women with finance. She does not like to be spoiled by man. She prefers to do everything by herself and buys all the things she wants with her own money.

Rich men like Lyne Bennet had never been of much interest to her, but on the other hand, she wasn’t the type who attracted them either. She was too wild and outspoken to play the game of catering to a wealthy man, and she’d never brought that idea that a rich man’s money was the answer to a woman’s problems.

(Bushnell, 2005:71)

The evidence above means that Victory accepts the nature women. Walby emphasizes that a woman who defines as reproduction and production in the works (1990:62). It is proven that Victory makes a relationship with Lyne Bennet who gives to respect for herself as a woman, her freedom and also a job. Finally, Victory feels comfortable with her decision to make a relationship.

Based on the explanations above, it is concluded that patriarchal society judges good women if they obey the role of society under the male subordinate. In the novel, the female characters reject the social system. They want to have an opportunity, liberty and equality to men all important sectors such as in family, society, government, economy, education and others. Therefore, women believe they have a choice. Their choice will make them comfortable being a woman, a mother, an unmarried woman, a married woman, or a career woman.

**Conclusion**

*Lipstick Jungle* is a novel written by Candace Bushnell which was published in 2005. The novel represents the condition of career women. The female characters are portrayed as career women who live in the patriarchal system. In the novel, the female characters reject the social system. They want to have an opportunity, liberty and equality to men all important sectors such as in family, society, government, economy, education and others. Therefore, women believe they have a choice. Their choice will make them comfortable such as a woman, a mother, an unmarried woman, a married woman, or a career woman.

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