

THE REPRESENTATION OF WOMAN'S OPPRESSION THROUGH A FEMALE MAIN CHARACTER IN SUZANNE COLLINS' *CATCHING FIRE* (Representasi Penindasan Perempuan melalui Tokoh Utama Perempuan di dalam *Catching Fire* Karya Suzanne Collins)

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ABSTRAK

Penindasan terhadap perempuan adalah masalah sosial yang masih terjadi di dalam masyarakat. Pada lingkungan masyarakat Amerika, penindasan pada perempuan terjadi karena dominasi kekuasaan laki-laki. Dominasi kekuasaan laki-laki menyebabkan penindasan terhadap kaum perempuan melalui kekerasan dan diskriminasi. Penindasan terhadap perempuan tidak hanya melalui fisik tetapi juga psikologi atau mental. Penindasan terhadap perempuan disebabkan oleh ideologi patriarki dimana perempuan berada dibawah pengawasan laki-laki. Hal ini memberikan pengaruh terhadap penulis perempuan di Amerika. Penulis perempuan mulai memunculkan ideologi patriarki terhadap masalah sosial tentang penindasan perempuan. Salah satu penulis perempuan yang membicarakan ideologi patriarki adalah Suzanne Collins. Dalam karyanya yang berjudul *Catching Fire*, Suzanne Collins bercerita tentang seorang gadis bernama Katniss Everdeen yang mengalami penindasan di dalam hidupnya oleh laki-laki otoriter bernama President Snow. Dia tidak hanya mendapatkan penindasan dari President Snow akan tetapi juga dari orang-orang dibalik kekuasaan President. Dia tidak hanya mendapatkan penindasan fisik akan tetapi juga penindasan mental. Media juga mengambil peran penting di dalam penindasan hidupnya dengan cara menggunakannya sebagai alat untuk menutupi kebenaran dari pemerintahan President. Untuk membahas karya ini penulis akan memulai membahas dari masalah sosial yakni penindasan terhadap perempuan. Untuk detail dari permasalahan, penulis akan menggunakan ideologi patriarki. Dengan menggunakan ideologi patriarki untuk menganalisis masalah sosial yang terjadi pada karakter Katniss Everdeen, ini akan menunjukkan faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan penindasan terhadap perempuan serta bagaimana hal itu mempengaruhi hidup mereka. Pada akhirnya akan diketahui bahwa ideologi patriarki digunakan oleh penulis untuk menyampaikan bahwa perempuan berada dibawah dominasi kekuasaan laki-laki.

Kata kunci : penindasan perempuan, media, dominasi, ideologi patriarki.

ABSTRACT

Woman's oppression is the social problem that happen in society. In the U.S society, woman's oppression happens because the domination power of man. Domination power of man causes oppression toward woman through violence and discrimination. Oppression toward woman is not only physical oppression but also psychological or mental oppression. Woman's oppression is caused by patriarchal ideology where put woman to stay under control of man. This gives an influence toward women's authors in United States. Women's authors begin to rise patriarchal ideology toward social problem about woman's oppression. One of the women's authors who talk about patriarchal ideology is Suzanne Collins. In her work *Catching Fire*, Suzanne Collins tells the story of a girl named Katniss Everdeen who experiencing an oppression in her life by authoritarian man named President Snow. In this case, she is not only getting oppression from President Snow but also from people behind President's authority. She is not only experiencing physical oppression but also mental oppression. Media also take an important role in oppressing her life by using her as tool to distort reality of President's authority. To examine this work the writer begin from social problem that is woman's oppression that experienced by female main character. In detailing the problems, the writer use patriarchal ideology. By using patriarchal ideology to analyze social problem that happen in female main character Katniss Everdeen, it shows the factors that cause woman's oppression and how it affects her lives to be oppressed. In the end it will be known that patriarchal ideology is used by the author to present that woman in subordinate position to stay under the domination of man.

Keywords: woman's oppression, media, domination, patriarchal ideology.

Introduction

The social problem of woman's oppression has influenced some authors in their creative process. One of them is Suzanne Collins in her novel *Catching Fire* which is representing woman's oppression in society. Collins as an American woman author begin to elaborate the social condition about woman's oppression that happen in the United States of America. Collins her own perspective toward woman's oppression. Collins also delivered her purpose that she belongs to the patriarchy which means that she is under the domination of patriarchy. She shows that being woman is to stay under control domination power of man.

The story is mainly about a girl named Katniss Everdeen who becomes the victor in the Hunger Games. She as the victor of the previous game become the favorite victor in the Capitol. Capitol is a central government in Panem which consist of thirteen district. Capitol as the central government take all the rules in the whole districts in Panem. Each district got oppression from the Capitol. Capitol use a deadly game to make the people in the whole districts have fear.

In the third Quarter Quell, President Snow as the leader of the Panem government is making life hard for Katniss Everdeen because he makes her become the participant in that deadly game again. In fact, she as the winner of the previous game does not get her freedom as already promised by Snow. A female main character in the novel, Katniss, is described as a woman who lives in the oppressed condition in her life. She is a woman who is oppressed by President, an authoritarian man and also people behind President's authority. Media also take an important role in oppressing her life by using her as a tool to distort reality of President's authority. The domination of man toward woman in every single aspect of life is used as a chance to oppress woman in order that man takes the profit through it.

The brief explanations indicate that Katniss experiences oppression along her life. In order to analyze the social problem of woman oppression I use theory of representation to find the discourse of woman's oppression. In detailing the problems, I use patriarchal ideology in order to find the domination power of man in oppressing and controlling woman. This is exactly what Katniss encounters in her life as a woman. She feels her life is oppressed and controlled.

Research Method

The study is a qualitative research research in which the data are based on primary data from the novel *Catching Fire* by Suzanne Collins. While secondary data are taken from references, journal articles and materials related to study and also taken from books, dictionaries and internet. The theory of representation is used for analyzing woman's oppression which influences female main character's daily activity and behavior toward life that represented in the novel. The sources are primary data source is the novel Suzanne Collins's *Catching Fire*, which was published at 2009. The primary data in this research are in the form of text data such

as narration, quotations, dialogues, description or sentence that taken from Suzanne Collins's novel.

The next step is data processing and analyzing. The data processing is a part of a research where all of the data are categorized. Data processing is started from categorizing data taken from the novel. The first category is the data of oppression towards female main character that represented in the novel and the second category is the data which related to system of patriarchy and woman subordination. Therefore, there are three steps in order to achieve the subject matters of this research.

The first step, according to Stuart Hall's theory of representation, discursive approach is used as the system of representation. Hall states Foucault has mentioned that there are three ideas in discursive approach to representation, which are: concept of discourse, the issue of power and knowledge, and the questions of the subject (Hall, 1997:43). By using discursive approach, all of the collected data related to woman's oppression issues are classified into two categories. The first category is the data of oppression towards female main character that represented in the novel and the second category is the data which related to system of patriarchy and woman subordination. Those data are described and analyzed in order to answer the first question in the research.

The second step is explain about how the ideological positions of the author represented in the novel. Furthermore, I analyze the social context of the novel as well as background of the author that lead the ideological construction in the novel. This explanation aims to answer the second question of this research.

Result and Discussion

The oppression that is experienced by the female main character in *Catching Fire* comes from the social status in society. Katniss Everdeen is the female main character in the novel *Catching Fire* that gets physical and mental oppression from President Snow, people behind President's authority and media. The people behind President's authority take a role in oppressing the female main character. They use the female main character as a bait, a doll or a tool in rebelling the system of Capitol government. Meanwhile, media oppress her life by using her as a tool to distort President's authority.

Physical oppression toward female main character, Katniss Everdeen can be shown in the quotation below:

“And Peeta's team is probably still asleep.”

“Doesn't he need prepping? I ask.”

“Not the way you do, Effie replies.”

“What does this mean? It means I get to spend the morning having the hair ripped off my body while Peeta sleeps in.”
(Collins, 2009:47-48)

The quotation above shows that the female main character, Katniss Everdeen is treated differently. She has to let her body being tortured. Her body becomes government's property. On the other word, her body is not hers anymore. Here is the statement that portrays the condition where she gets physical oppression that make a fear toward Katniss' life. "...my abused body, my lack of sleep, my mandatory marriage, and the terror of being unable to satisfy President Snow's demands (Collins, 2009:49)". The quotation above represents Katniss' condition which gives all of her authority to the President Snow for his prosperity. She lets her body oppressed in order to make President and people in the Capitol satisfy. Katniss' existence is to produce President needs. She becomes the overworked labor and she follows the authority of the President.

President Snow used a harsh treatment. Katniss' physical condition shows that she is being oppressed hardly. This condition can be proved in the quotation below:

"I take the full force of it across the left side of my face. The pain is blinding and instantaneous. Jagged flashes of light cross my vision and I fall to my knees. One hand cups my cheek while the other keeps me from tipping over. I can already feel the welt rising up, the swelling closing my eye."(Collins, 2009:106)

The quotation above shows that Katniss gets a physical oppression. Her condition of her body show that her physical condition becomes worse. "Not just my heel and my tailbone. My whole body aches with exhaustion (Collins, 2009:159)". It shows that physical violence is the reason why Katniss is controlled by President. It is because she tries to give her best to President Snow even she has to sacrifice her own life in order to save her family from President's punishment. It can be proved: "I feel like dough, being kneaded and reshaped again and again (Collins, 2009:166)". It shows that she has no power toward her body. President operates her body crudely, like a machine.

The physical oppression toward Katniss Everdeen cannot be separated from the role of people in the Capitol. People in the capitol also have a big influence in oppressing her body especially Plutarch Heavensbee and Cinna. They belong to Capitol's resident or people behind President's authority. In this case, they use her as a doll in the arena to rebel President's system. They get advantages from it by using her as scapegoat to break down President's authority.

Otherwise, in the end of the Games, Katniss Everdeen realizes what Plutarch and Cinna have done to her. They only take advantage of her to rebel and reject President's system.

"It's an awful lot to take in, this elaborate plan in which I was a piece, just as I was meant to be a piece in the Hunger Games. Used without consent, without knowledge. At least in the Hunger Games, I knew I was being played with. My supposed friends have

been a lot more secretive."(Collins, 2009:385)

It can be resulted that her life is full of oppressions. The oppression toward Katniss happens everywhere. It is not only physical oppression but also mental oppression. Related to the character in the novel, Katniss Everdeen is treated by President Snow in bad way, such as adding a lot of fears and terrors in her life. The condition can be shown in the quotation below:

"How's the handsome cousin?"

"I don't know...I don't..." My revulsion at this conversation, at discussing my feelings for two of the people I care most about with President Snow, chokes me off."

"Speak, Miss Everdeen. Him I can easily kill off if we don't come to a happy resolution," he says." (Collins, 2009:24)

The quotations above are evidence that as a man, President has a power to oppress her life and Katniss as a woman, she has no power toward President Snow's demand. President Snow oppresses her and gives her more fear with some strict rules. President Snow forces her to obey and keep her duty. President Snow knows that Gale is not her cousin and he knows that she has a special relationship with Gale. The frightening imagination lives in Katniss' mind. In this case, President has been succeeded to make her suffered.

Katniss' personal love relationship also kind of mental oppression that is given by President. The love relationship between Katniss Everdeen and Peeta Mellark that made by President Snow in the novel is one of the representation how woman is oppressed and controlled by man. I see that the love relationship between Katniss and Peeta are not caused by feeling but President's constraint.

"I will never have a life with Gale, even if I want to...I will have to be forever in love with Peeta. The Capitol will insist on it."

"He means there's only one future, if I want to keep those I love alive and stay alive myself. I'll have to marry with Peeta." (Collins, 2009:44)

The mental oppression is not only happening outside the arena of Games but also inside the arena of Games. It is used by President to vandalize her mental condition. Her mind is fully tortured in the arena. Besides, the mental oppression still continued in Katniss' life. President returns what she has been done to him. President's punishment is unforgivable. President Snow destroys and bombs district 12 by sending the fighter airplane. This is the punishment that Katniss has to pay because her rebel action.

The second terror from President Snow toward Katniss Everdeen is bombing. Bombing is the President's way to show its great power after Katniss' rebellion. President

bombs some districts especially district 12 when the Quarter Quell was destroyed by Katniss. President bombs district 12 tries to oppress Katniss mentally because her lovely family and also her lover are still live there. President destroys district 12 when he realizes that Katniss Everdeen rebels his system and his authority. Katniss' life is so fearful.

"After the Games, they sent in planes. Dropped firebombs." He hesitate."

"The whole districts covered with the stuff. A new kind of horror begins to rise up inside me as I imagine firebombs hitting the Seam."

"But Gale is not one to keep secrets from me. "Katniss, there is no District Twelve." (Collins, 2009:391)

President Snow is so furious when he knows that Katniss Everdeen destroys the arena of the Quarter Quell Games. Then, President's first target is district 12 of course. First, it is because Katniss as the pioneer of rebellion comes from this district. And second, it is because her family and her lover is still live there. Furthermore, President will executes everyone who still related with her. There is nothing to left in district 12.

President Snow's decision in bombing was so fast and unpredictable. Katniss Everdeen cannot deny her violation toward President's authority. There is no forgiveness for Katniss who against President's system. She has to pay back expensively by sacrificing her family

Walby also states that in patriarchal system every individual man is always in a dominant position and every woman in a subordinate one. She also defines that patriarchy as a system of social structure and practices in which men dominate, oppress and exploit women (1990:20). In this case, President takes a role to dominate, oppress and exploit Katniss' life. The quotation above means that the main factor that takes an important role in oppressing the female main character is President's domination. He dominates Katniss' life in all aspects. His domination is not only in her daily life but also in her personal relationship. His super power of domination determine Katniss' future life. In conclusion, this phenomenon happens in the patriarchal system which put woman in subordinate condition.

The social context of the novel is necessary to be analyzed and discussed in this research in order to complete the understanding toward novel as the representation of society about social problem of woman's oppression. The woman condition in America was still subordinated in several cases for example in carrier or job. Besides, the domination and discrimination toward woman in U.S also happen in the media. Media are the most powerful influence because they distribute their message into society mind in their daily life. All kinds of media communicate influences how society view men and women. Media have their own standard toward women.

Media mentioned that man is cultural standard while woman is unimportant. It means that woman does not has important role in media. It can be called that woman is a supporter. Man as the cultural standard dominates the position in the media.

"Only about 5% of television writers, executives, and producers are women. Ironically, while two-thirds of journalism graduates are women, they make up less than 2% of those papers and in corporate management of newspapers and only about 5% of newspaper publishers. Female film directors are even scarcer, as are executives in charge of MTV. (Wood, 1994:32)

It shows that there is the lack of woman's worker in the media. There is discrimination toward woman that have done by media such as media only take a few woman's worker. In this case more men had positions of authority in every level even executive one. As the result, media would offer more negative portrayals of women because men dominates the position. It means that women as minorities are cast in support roles than men are in leading one. Media have their own perspective that women represented more submissive while men stay in control.

"In general, media continue to present both women and men in stereotyped ways that limit our perceptions of human possibilities. Typically men are portrayed as active, adventurous, powerful, sexually aggressive and largely uninvolved in human relationships. Just as' consistent with cultural views of gender are depictions of women as sex objects who are usually young, thin beautiful, passive, dependent, and often incompetent and dumb." (Wood, 1994:32)

The stereotype above is kind of discrimination toward woman. Woman always assumed as negative personality. As the result, it causes the oppression toward woman in their daily life and also in the work place because society assume that woman is subordinated one.

Collins as an American woman who works in the media, also understand the condition of woman's worker in the media. The result of analysis above shows that the ideological position of the author, Suzanne Collins is under the domination of patriarchy. She belongs to to the patriarchal concept where put woman in subordinated position.

Conclusion

Catching Fire novel is second novel of Suzanne Collins' trilogy. *Catching Fire* is analyzed using theory of representation by Stuart Hall which emphasizes to find the discourse of woman's oppression and its effects through the female main character's life and social condition in the story. Patriarchal ideology is applied in order to find the

domination power of man that causes some impacts for the female main character's condition and makes her to let herself to be controlled and oppressed. By reading this novel, Collins represents the social condition of the lower class society especially woman's worker. Collins portrayed the way of life of women in United States and how the women were oppressed by government and political condition.

The representation of woman's oppression in the novel is experienced by the female main character, Katniss Everdeen. There are two kinds of oppression. Those are physical oppression and mental oppression. The physical oppression is done by President Snow and people behind President Snow's authority. According to the analysis, I conclude that the representation of woman's oppression can be seen in female main character, Katniss Everdeen mainly. It begins from President Snow who controls her life entirely including her personal relationship. Then, Katniss gets more oppressions from Plutarch Heavensbee and Cinna who exploit and use her as a bait or scapegoat to bring down President's authority. Media also take a role in oppressing Katniss' life. Media use her as a tool to distort reality about President's authority by showing her personal life in public through television show. The second oppression is mental oppression. The mental oppression is experienced outside the arena and inside the arena. Katniss' oppressed life is added by President Snow outside and inside the arena of the Games. Discussing the problems in the novel, it is necessary to discuss the contextual background of the novel and the condition of woman's worker.

The contextual background of the novel, especially the social and political condition, gives a big influence to Suzanne Collins's writing. The society's perspectives toward woman position and condition also gives the impacts to woman's life. The existence of woman in social life causes the problem that is woman's oppression. Woman still experienced the miserable condition in the daily life, society and work place.

The last discussion is the ideological position of the author. *Catching Fire* is a literary work that represent the author's purpose, Suzanne Collins. The ideological position of the author is under the domination of patriarchy. Collins as a woman who works in the media really know how woman described in the media. Media described woman as a weak figure who stays under the control of man. She belong to the patriarchy where accepts the subordinated position of woman. Finally, this thesis show how woman's oppression that is represented by Suzanne Collins in her novel, *Catching Fire*. The oppression toward woman in the novel represented woman's oppression in United States that is caused by authoritarian government, economical condition of the women themselves and the social class in society.

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