Women’s Subordination and Women Struggle In Novel The Handmaid’s Tale: Analytical Essay

Introduction

1.1 Reason For Choosing

The Handmaid's Tale is a dystopian novel written by Margaret Atwood and released in 1985. This novel tells about a new country in the future that named Republic of Gilead. In the Republic of Gilead the government has the absolute power to regulate whatever is in the country. For women this is a disaster. Because women's lives are restricted. their position is subordination, especially for a Handmaid. Everything that had women's rights such as work, ownership of property, even reading and writing was then banned. Handmaid has the duty of giving offspring to the commander whose wife cannot get pregnant. Handmaid has no other duties. All their activities are always supervised. But this is not the end of the confined and constrained lives of women.

In the Republic Gilead, there are organization that do the struggle by stealth. This struggle was carried out by an underground organization called Mayday. Mayday is a secret struggle group that functions to oppose and bring down Gilead from within. People from all walks of Gileadean who want freedom are members, including Handmaid. This struggle aims to make women aware of their situation both in the community and at home, to shape their self-awareness as women, to demand equality with men and to gain their autonomy. struggle is the only way to achieve equality, dignity, and rights (such as the right to education, the right to birth, the right to divorce, and to participate in decision-making).

There are some previous studies that an analysis of Feminism specially in Women’s Subordination in the novel. The novel previously have been studied by Barbara Miceli (2018), Roohollah Roozbeh (2018) Fatima Zahra El Arbaoui (2018), Carol L. Beran (1990). But the writer do not found the analysis related to women’s subordination, especially in novel the handmaid's tale. By looking at this reason, the writer decides to analyzed the data from this novel by using the theory of women’s subordination and women struggle in Feminism Approach.

This research is significant for analyzing because the writer interested in studying this novel because almost all Margaret Atwood novels published are novels about feminism and all of the novel have the unique themselves. the author writes this novel because of imagining what would happen in the future if there was no technological progress from the time when the novel was published. by analyzing this novel the writer will know what will happen in the future if there is no technology. because as is well known the technological advances of today are very rapid. Especially for women in the future in novel Handmaid’s Tale..

1.2 The Objective and Scope of the Study

This research is analyzed by using Feminism Approach. There are two objectives of this

research:

1. To analyze the Women’s Subordination In Novel The Handmaid’s Tale.
2. To describe the Struggle of the women In Novel The Handmaid’s Tale.

For the scope of this research, the writer focuses on Women’s Subordination and Stuggle as seen In Novel The Handmaid’s Tale.

1.3 Formulation of the Problem

According to the objective and scope of the study, the problem of the research are formulated as follow:

1. how are the Women’s Subordination as seen in the novel The Handmaid’s Tale?
2. how do the women Struggle in patriarchal culture in the novel The Handmaid’s Tale?

1.4 Review of Related Literature

In this section, the writer discusses about the references related to Women’s Subordination and Struggle In Novel The Handmaid’s Tale. The reviews are related to previous studies(skip) and theoretical frameworks. The discussion as follows:

1.4.1 Previous Studies

This research focused on women subordination and women struggle in the novel The Handmaid’s Tale. The novel previously have been studied by Barbara Miceli (2018), Roohollah Roozbeh (2018), Fatima Zahra El Arbaoui (2018), Carol L. Beran (1990). Barbara Miceli (2018) in his research Religion, Gender Inequality, and Surrogate Motherhood in Margaret Atwood’s “The Handmaid’s Tale” found that this analysis is to show how the author has fractioned all the elements that form a family, as a small version of society itself, to foretell a possible outcome of many matters of debate, especially the role of women. In the same year, Roohollah Roozbeh do her research in The Handmaid’s Novel and she found The handmaids additionally stand as a symbol of proletariat, subjugated by the bourgeoisie to the point of slavery, harshly indoctrinated in a psychologically-damaging fashion, and are denied the basic freedoms. From a sociological perspective, Atwood’s story is an appreciated instrument to scrutinize through the theory of Marxism. And then Fatima Zahra El Arbaoui (2018) in her journal Feminist dystopian consciousness in Margaret Atwood’s the handmaid's tale this journal would be to focus on how Ofred combines her feminist consciousness, memories, and language as liberty instruments to detect her way towards freedom. How can this consciousness be the seed which grows into the sapling of self-expression she cultivates and nourishes through the novel. Carol L. Beran (1990) did analysis images in which forces outside the control of men or women have the ultimate control, levelling the power struggle to an insignificance in the larger scheme of things while attributing great power to artistic creation -- a human being's ability to liken.

Thus, the previous studies show that the studies on the novel involves the studies on feminism generally, Marxism, psychology and sociological perspective. The previous researchers do not study the novel in the women subordination and women stuggle in the novel The Handmaid’s tale.

1.4.2 Theoretical Framework

In doing the literary research, the writer needs the theory to analyzed the literary work. The theory of the research has the function as help the writer to understand the problem of the research and the writer can formulate the research question. Based on the title of this research focuses on analysis of Feminism, the writer use the feminism to analyzed " The Handmaid's Tale" novel.

1.4.2.1 Feminism and Patriarchy

According to Guerin L. Wilfred(A Handbook of Critical Approaches to Literature, 1999: 196) " Feminism theory is the theory of literary work that concerned with the marginalization of women with their being relegated to secondary position by patriarchal culture".

It can be known that feminism theory is the theory about women position under patriarchal culture as inferior in power.

"The word 'patriarchy' literally means the rule of the father or the 'patriarch', and originally It was used to describe a specific type of 'male-dominated family' – the large household of the patriarch which included women, junior men, children, slaves and domestic servants all under the rule of this dominant male. Now it is used more generally "to refer to male domination, to the power relationships by which men dominate women, and to characterize a system whereby women are kept subordinate in a number of ways" (Kamla Bhasin 1993:3).

1.4.2.2 Subordination of Women.

According to Sultana (2011:7) writes that "the term 'women's subordination' refers to the inferior position of women, their lack of access to resources and decision making etc. and to the patriarchal domination that women are subjected to in most societies. So, women's subordination means the inferior position of women to men".

Gerda Lerner's 1986 (The Creation of Patriarchy) traces the development of the patriarchy to the second millennium B.C.E. in the middle east, putting gender relations at the center of the story of civilization's history. She argues that before this development, male dominance was not a feature of human society in general. Women were key to the maintenance of human society and community, but with a few exceptions, social and legal power was wielded by men. Women could gain some status and privilege in patriarchy by limiting her child-bearing capacity to just one man so that he could depend on her children being his children.

By rooting patriarchy — a social organization where men rule over women — in historical developments, rather than in nature, human nature or biology, she also opens the door for change. If patriarchy was created by culture, it can be overturned by a new culture.

Part of her theory carried through into another volume, The Creation of Feminist Consciousness, is that women were not conscious that they were subordinate (and it might be otherwise) until this consciousness began slowly to emerge, starting with medieval Europe. Because of the position of women as inferior and powerless, is the reason why subordination happened to women.

It means that subordination is the power of men that can dominate on women.

Whyte's (1978) mention the subordination of women, there are:

- Lack of property control by women
- Lack of power of women in kinship contexts
- Low value placed on the lives of women
- Low value placed on the labor of women
- Lack of domestic authority of women
- Absence of ritualized female solidarity
- Absence of control over women's marital and sexual lives
- Absence of ritualized fear of women
- lack of women's indirect influence on decision-making.
- Lack of male-female joint participation in warfare, work, and community decision-making.

1.4.2.3 Women's Struggle.

To reach the rights, a woman must do some struggle.

In struggle, Vijay Prashad (Karma of Brown Folk in Nguyen, 2009:203) writes, "…we can recreate our bonds and we can fight, ceaselessly, for what we deem to be our rights and for what we envision". It can be concluded that people can fight to reach their dreams and rights.

A female is born and a woman is created. in other world, one's sex, be that male or female is determined at birth. one's gender, however, is a social construct, being created by cultural ideas and norms. consciously or unconsciously women and men conform to the cultural ideas establish for them by society... Women to be aware of their situation both in the society and at home, to form their self-consciousness as women, to demand their equality with men and to obtain their autonomy. The resistance is the one way to achieve equality, dignity, and rights (such as right to education, right to birth control, right to divorce, and to participate in decision-making). Kate millet in her book Sexual Politics(1970).

It can be concluded that the struggle for women is how they can return their rights. If they struggle, the can live as they are treated should be. Women lose their rights in many aspects. Therefore, women also can struggle for it. For example to get their right to speak and give arguments, the right to go outside, the right to get an education and the right to get money and to get some jobs.

1.5 Method of Research

This research focuses on women subordination and women struggle in the novel The Handmaid's Tale in the perspective of Feminism. This study concentrates on women subordination and women struggle in the Republic of Gilead. To conduct research and find answers to research problems based on Feminism Theory; women subordination and women struggle, the writer applies interpretation and close reading method.

According to Jacobus (1996) interpretation is exploring the meaning of the text by drawing our

own understanding, background, and observations. Interpreting literature is responses for examination: setting them forth for comparison, discussion, and development. The interpretation technique begins with close reading method.

According to Jacobus(2001:6) in the book Literature: An Introduction to critical reading writes that " Close reading takes the form of writing, discussion or silent observation, should be based on questioning the text. Close reading requires that you take the text seriously enough to study it, search for details that might otherwise go unobserved, examine the text for special words and term and refer to the dictionary to be sure of their meaning when necessary".

Method that applied in novel Handmaid's Tale is close reading technique based on feminism theory. The research problem of women subordination and women struggle are looking for in the text of the novel by way of interpretation. The interpretation begins with close reading. In the process, the text of the novel is read, find the difficult words and re-read. To get the meaning of the text with a view to answering the research by way examine special words, phrases, and sentences related to the research problem.

The details are examined based on Feminism. In Feminism, Women subordination shows the dominance of men against women. The position of men is higher than women. The men openly restricted women in many aspects of life. While women struggle is any attempt made by women to fight the dominance of men against women. To find the women subordination and women struggle in the novel, the writer reads it carefully and repeatedly words by words, phrases, and sentences. while noting when some details about the research are introduced by the writer.

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