

**A PORTRAIT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE TOWARD BLACK WOMEN
IN ALICE WALKER'S
THE THIRD LIFE OF GRANGE COPELAND**

A THESIS

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Sarjana Sastra*

By

JENNIFER AGUSTIA
05185032



**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FACULTY OF LETTERS-ANDALAS UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRAK

Dalam skripsi ini, penulis ingin membahas tentang kekerasan dalam rumah tangga masyarakat kulit hitam di Amerika Serikat bagian selatan. Hal ini terdapat dalam sebuah karya pertama penulis kulit hitam yang menyebut dirinya sebagai *womanist* bernama Alice Walker. Karyanya yang berjudul The Third Life of Grange Copeland menggambarkan kondisi kehidupan sebuah keluarga kulit hitam yang sarat akan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga.

Dalam menganalisa novel ini penulis menggunakan sebuah teori feminis minoritas yakni *black feminism* berkaitan dengan kehidupan wanita kulit hitam yang cenderung terabaikan dari dominasi feminis kulit putih. Penulis menggunakan sebuah teori yang diusung oleh Barbara Smith dan didukung oleh esai serta beberapa artikel penulis kulit hitam lainnya. Dalam menganalisa topik ini, penulis menggunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan kata-kata yang dirangkai sendiri oleh penulis.

Selanjutnya, penulis menemukan berbagai kekerasan dalam rumah tangga yang tergambar dalam novel ini, tidak hanya terhadap seorang istri, tapi juga terhadap anak perempuan yang dianggap sebagai objek dalam sebuah keluarga kulit hitam yang dapat dijual demi mendapatkan sejumlah uang. Novel ini menjadi istimewa karena dibawah tekanan dan dominasi pria kulit hitam, para perempuan ini masih bisa berusaha untuk menjalankan tugasnya sebagai ibu rumah tangga juga sebagai pencari nafkah untuk kelangsungan hidup keluarganya. Ditengah kemiskinan dan pemikiran bahwa perempuan kulit hitam hanyalah dianggap sebagai barang, mereka masih bisa berjuang mendapatkan pendidikan yang lebih tinggi dari pada perempuan kulit hitam lainnya.

CHAPTER 1

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE RESEARCH

According to patriarchal thought, women are the second sex under the domination of men. They are not allowed to do what they want; to get women's right as human being. They are forbidden to have high education, to be a carrier women, even they were not allowed to speak to deliver their desire as the society in their community. Women in this thought have to obey what men say and to be the slave under the domination of men. According to Helene Cixous in Lois Tyson book "the question of sexual difference is treated by coupling it with the opposition activity/passivity" (Tyson, 2006: 100). It means that women can not do anything although they want to oppose something that unsuitable or disadvantaged them.

We are living in the patriarchal world which is the entire manners are regulated by men. This kind of regulation in this case patriarchal are appeared in the whole world; northern, southern, eastern, and also western country. Women are considered as the second sex under men. Men tend to be a leader while women have to obey the regulation of men, although nowadays, many activist screaming about the equality of gender and there are law enforcement about that. But in reality, women are still placed under the domination of men and indirectly forced to deny the law of gender equality.

In western countries, the gender equality issues are still debated. The attitude toward women still different if we compare with the attitude toward men. In America, the attitude toward female are divided into two; the attitude toward

white women and toward black women. The gender discrimination toward white women are totally different with the discrimination toward black women where they are treated inhumanly because as the second sex, black women are also regarded as the lowest class in western countries. As Guerin said in his book "Black and lesbian have been violently attacked in all manners in Western literature and culture in general" (1999: 208). By the quotation above, we can see how black women are treated; they are abused physically, mentally, and verbally. Tragically, black women are not only attacked by the white men or women, but they are also hurt by their own community even their family (Lorde 857)

In this proposal, I choose the first novel of a very famous black woman writer Alice Walker entitled The Third Life of Grange Copeland which portrays several bad attitudes toward black women in Southern America. I choose this novel because the life of black community is described very tragically and clearly by the beautiful language of Alice Walker.

The novel tells about the life of a black tenant farmer named Grange Copeland. The novel describes his three period of life which each of the period was companied by women who are treated improperly. The first woman is his wife Margaret who are murdered by her husband, which was him self; Grange Copeland. The second woman is his daughter in law Mem who was also murdered by her husband, Brownfield Copeland, son of Grange. And the third women is Ruth, his grandchildren, unwilling daughter of Brownfield who is able to fight the pig headed of Grange and make him realize to pay his mistake in the past. The women in this novel are treated badly by her family member, especially their

husband. The causes are various, because of another women, because of the smartness envy of the men, and also because of the disobedience of women.

The novel itself delivers the situation of another side of discrimination toward women in Southern America. Most of feminist usually analyze gender discrimination in general ignoring whether they are white or black. But the black community especially women, regarded the attitude toward white women are not similar with the attitude toward black women. As Lorde said "As white women ignore their built in privilege of whiteness and define women in terms of their experience alone, then women of color become the other" (Quoted by Rivkin, 2004: 856). This indicates that black women are not regarded as the communities that have the human right as well as the white women.

I choose the topic about the domestic violence because the novel itself mostly describes the domestic violence faced by the black women, and it were done by the black men, their own community. Domestic violence is a very sensitive case that has to be regarded as the harassment of human right. The writer has the great interest to analyze this novel, and apply the black feminist criticism since the violence itself is faced by the black community.

In an article titled Combating Domestic Violence: Obligation of the State Radika Coomaraswamy said the definition of domestic violence itself is a pattern of abusive and threatening behaviors that may include physical, emotional, economic, and sexual violence as well as intimidation, isolation and coercion. The purpose of domestic violence is to establish and exert power and control over another (Coomaraswamy, 2000). The domestic violence breaks the fundamental

human rights and often results in serious injury or even death. In this novel, I find many cruel things faced by black women, but they still try to survive and do their best to continue their life.

I entitle my thesis "A Portrait of Domestic Violence toward Black Women in Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland" because most of the story in these novel talks about the violence toward women in the house of black community.

1.2 IDENTIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM

In this thesis, the writer focuses her analysis on the attitude of black men toward black women, such as physical, mental, and verbal oppression to show men's manliness. However, these women still show their capability to be independent and much more similar with the white. Black women can be an educated person, a working mother, and at the end they can speak their objection about the violence.

1.3 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

The writer wants to focus her analysis on the life of black women's life. There are two main points that will be analyzed in term of black feminist criticism, they are:

1. Kinds of domestic violence toward black women in the novel
2. The reaction of black women about the domestic violence in the novel

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the novel of Alice Walker, the writer can get a conclusion that women are still under the domination of men especially in the black community in Southern America during the African-American Civil Right Movement. The domestic violence such as physical, mental, and verbal abuse in a black family occurred in the situation of being poor and the depression of a black people. The violence happened because black people search for the way how to throw their anger and disappointed of their poverty.

The victim of this violence is always women, because physically they are weaker than men. The strong notion about black women as the lowest class in society makes it very difficult to be protested. But black feminist try to figure out their hope inside the novel. Black feminist criticism wants black women to be independent and strong. Women characters in this novel represent the hope of black women to be free from patriarchal boundaries.

Alice Walker's The Third Life of Grange Copeland describe how black women in a family struggle to face the violence done by her husband and her father. Begun with indirect confrontation and direct confrontation, black women are hoped to speak up and deliver their idea or disagreement. The novel also figures out women character as a working mother and an educated one.

Under the domination of black men and the depressed feeling of black women, a mother still tries hard to feed her children. Although they have limited strength to do men's job, a black mother give all her strength. Beside she also has

to take care of her children. The oppressed women are also described as an educated person in this novel, while at that time; black women get many difficulties to get high education. Through Mem and Ruth character, the novel shows that black women can be like that. Not only receive the cruel treatment, but under the violence, black women have to raise their value by being educated and independent.

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