

**THE PORTRAIT OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SOCIAL
UNFAIR TREATMENT IN GLORIA NAYLOR'S
*THE WOMEN OF BREWSTER PLACE***

A Thesis

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ABSTRAK

Dalam skripsi ini penulis menganalisis sekaligus memaparkan kekerasan dalam rumah tangga serta diskriminasi sosial terhadap masyarakat kulit hitam di Brewster Place Amerika. Paparan tersebut tergambar jelas dalam karya Gloria Naylor yang berjudul *The Women Of The Brewster Place*, novel ini menggambarkan kehidupan 7 orang perempuan kulit hitam yang sarat dengan kekerasan rumah tangga serta diskriminasi sosial.

Dalam menganalisis novel ini penulis menggunakan teori feminis minoritas *black feminism*, berkaitan dengan kehidupan wanita kulit hitam yang cenderung menjadi pihak yang ditindas di kehidupan domestik serta pergaulan sosial. Penulis menggunakan teori yang dipelopori oleh Barbara Smith dan melihatnya dari sudut pandang ekspresif, dimana adanya keterkaitan ide, pikiran ataupun pengalaman hidup sang pengarang dalam suatu karya.

Dari analisa novel ini penulis menemukan *double oppressions* yang dialami oleh perempuan kulit hitam. Dalam kehidupan domestik, perempuan tersebut dianggap sebagai tumbal yang sangat patut untuk disalahkan karena peliknya masalah perekonomian di Amerika saat itu, sementara di kehidupan sosial perempuan kulit hitam sangat didominasi serta ditindas oleh mereka yang berkulit putih. Terlepas dari permasalahan yang tergambar, novel ini menjadi unik dan istimewa karena ketujuh perempuan kulit hitam yang menjadi tokoh sentral dalam novel ini tetap mampu bertahan dibawah tekanan kehidupan domestik serta lingkungan sosial. Karena kesamaan akan kerasnya kehidupan, ketujuh perempuan ini pun merangkai hidup bersama dirumah susun di Brewster Place. Disana keajaiban muncul, mereka merasa adanya ikatan serta adanya rasa nyaman dengan mereka hidup bersama, jauh dari kekerasan rumah tangga dan terhapusnya perlakuan tidak adil diantara mereka.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of The Research

Feminism movement is a huge phenomenon. Every now and then women's idea keep growing and still debatable. The ideas of women liberation and fight against the patriarchy system have played a significant role in building and sustaining the movement of female liberation. Realize it or not today we are still living in a world that keep the patriarchal system grows well. Women are still in the second position, under the oppression, and controlled by men. Women just know what they must do, not what they have to decide. As the attempts to fight the patriarchy system women do some actions, one of them is through the literary world. Women share, write and criticize how the society treats them. Perfectly this is not an easy work, but women keep struggling through this way. Women are treated unfairly and cruelly, they have to face sexism from men whom view women as a thing who should not to be respected.

Since race also becomes the main issue in feminist movement, this effort becoming harder toward the black women. They have to face completely unfair treatment from black men and even white women also become an obstacle for them to be independent; they face the sexism of black men and the racism of white women. As Patricia Hill Collins stated in *Defining Black Feminist Thought*: "The Black Feminist Movement was formed to address the ways sexism, racism, and classism influence the lives of black women whose needs were ignored by the

black men of the Black Liberation Movement and white women in the Women's Movement" (20). The passage strengthens the goal of black feminist movement, free from sexism and racism. Moreover African-American women also demand their needs to be fulfilled. Those needs could be self-actualization, where every human being feels free to do anything in reaching the achievements in life.

Meanwhile in United States, feminism movement has been growing around since 1910. The lowest position of African-American women in America has been became the main issue of black feminist thinkers and activists in the United States. Since the problem of black women seems very complicated and harder than others phenomenon of feminist movement before, the writer has chosen *The Women of Brewster Place* by Gloria Naylor as the novel that is going to be analyzed.

Gloria Naylor is an African-American female writer who bravely explores the condition of her people through the literary work. This novel is her first work where she describes some domestic violence and social unfair treatment toward African-American women. With her incredible ability in writing and building the dramatic story, this work gets so many appreciations from many parties. Moreover, in this novel the readers also find some of her personal experiences as African-American woman affected the story. Her personal experiences have strengthened the reader to the sense of oppressions faced by black women and how miserable their life used to be.

The novel talks about a painful life and ultimately of hope. The book focuses on seven women who live on dead-end street at Brewster Place, which is

dark and badly crowded area. Their environment further complicates their lives. This work is quite complicated, there are so many problems described in; racism, religion, education, the legality of pregnancy, family relationship, parenthood, poverty, lesbian issues, urban violence, sisterhood and of course male domination. The women are forced to rely on each other when the world seems to shut them out. Despite their differences, *The Women of Brewster Place* is bound by a sense of community and sisterhood that enables them to deal with everyday pressures they face in the male-domination society in which they live.

There are several reasons why the writer chooses to analyze Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* to be analyzed. First, as one of literary canon, Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* is believed as one of literary works which contained the issue of black feminist which claimed as feminism minority where its existence used to be ignored especially in America. Secondly, the writer is interested in analyzing the struggles of African-American women to survive in a world that never been kind to them just because they are black. African-American women experienced racism from white people. They also suffered from black men. The oppression in domestic life happened in any relation between male and female in family. It could be between husband and wife, father and daughter and even mother and son. Furthermore, black women experienced sexual harassment, abusive treatment and gender discrimination. Those oppressions which were experienced by African-American women did not just setting them up in a painful life, but in the other side it has raised black women rebellious spirit. They fought against that oppression to reach their

freedom collectively and that oppression creates and strengthens the female bonding and sisterhood among them. The survival of African-American women can be seen in their struggle against male domination in term of marriage and social life as well as the poverty. Besides, this research aims to distinguish some oppressions that experienced by seven Afro-American women as reflected in *The Women of Brewster Place* and also to describe the struggle of Afro-American women in gaining their self-actualization. Therefore this research entitles "The Portrait of Domestic Violence and Social Unfair Treatment in Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*".

1.2 The Identification of The Problem

Gloria Naylor's *The Women Of Brewster Place* portrays black women's life, how the seven women in the novel; Mattie Michel, Etta Mae Johnson, Kiswana Browne, Luciellia Louise Turner, Cora Lee and The Two (Lorraine and Theresa) treated in society, since it has been crucial issue of black feminist that they are discriminated in life; social life, working life, domestic life, race, class and gender. They try to fight against the white to have the same right and lessen racism. The research focuses on the black women position; in domestic life, how they oppressed by black men, unfair treatment in sexual life and how is they struggle against those discrimination (the reaction) from the point of view of black feminism.

This novel is full of dramatic tragedies which show domestic violence toward the black women; physically, psychologically and verbally. Physical

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

Black feminism is a theory which is proposed by Barbara Smith. In his theory, she describes the way black women voice their experience as black women who live under double oppression; sexism and racism. Smith's theory Black Feminism in her essay "Toward a Black Feminist Criticism" lays a foundation for the explosion of both Black feminist critical theory and the creative writings of Black women in the 1970s and 1980s. Her argument exposes the flaws of considering literature through either the exclusive lens of race, as Black literary criticism tends to do, or the exclusive lens of gender, as predominantly White feminist criticism tends to do. She suggests that it is Black women who are in the best position to create an effective criticism that provides an integrated consideration of the roles played by race, gender, class, and sexuality in literature.

The application of Black Feminism can also be found in literary works. Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place* is one of literary works which contains the issue of Black Feminism. In the novel, after analyzing the novel of Gloria Naylor, the writer comes to a conclusion that women are still under the domination of men especially in the black community in Southern America. The domestic violence such as physical, verbal and psychological abuse in black family occurred in the situation of poverty and depression of black women. The domestic violence occurred as black people struggle to find the way out to channel their anger and disappointment as a result of poverty.

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