



## **MEN SUPERIORITY**

### **IN LYNN NOTTAGE'S PLAY *RUINED* (2009)**

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#### **Abstract**

The purpose of this analysis is to expose the issue of men superiority which have done through women in the Democratic Republic of Congo and to know the contribution of the character, plot/conflict, and setting in revealing the men superiority. This analysis is related to the feminist concept by Simone de Beauvoir. that is supported by the text and context based interpretation. The result of this analysis shows the characters experience the men superiority that can be seen from their mental and physical condition.

**Key words:** men, superiority, women, *feminist*

#### **A. INTRODUCTION**

Every society passes down a different system from generation to generation. Then society builds on certain values and cultures that make the system distinctive. One of the systems raised by the society is the patriarchal system, which overvalues men and make male's symbols more dominant than the women's. This symbol differences lead to the emergence of different perspectives, roles and status between men and women. This leads to the acts of privileged men over women. The result is women occupy the inferior positions.

In the patriarchal system, men and women behave, think, and aspire differently because they have been taught to think of masculine and feminine in ways, that are conditioned for the differences to occur. Bakuuro (2017:38) states that patriarchal system shows and accept that man have, or should have, one set of qualities and characteristics such as masculine qualities (strength, bravery, fearlessness, dominance, etc.). On the other hand, women must have the characteristic of feminine such as caring, obedient, timid, shy, submissive and so on. Patriarchal system can be harmful into women. It makes men superior to women. According to Merriam Webster Dictionary (2018) superiority means the state of being higher in rank, status or quality. It is socially-constructed attitudes

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that describe men as violent, unemotional, and sexually aggressive toward women. It shows the horror patriarchal system strategy that is segregating and subordinating women.

Due to male superiority, women face gross subordination and oppression in the conflict area. Different kinds of violence are used to control and subjugate women. Certain violences by men may even be considered as legitimate. Women are subjected to threats of violence such as rape and murder that are both designed to evoke terror for them. According to Esther Lubunga in his journal (2012), in the Democratic Republic of Congo which has supplied with wars, civil strife, and multiple rebellions movements, the women suffer greatly from gender-based violences, and other terrible horrors.

In reality, there are several people who have been through the men superiority. For example, Eugenie, 33, lives daily with memory of rape. According to her interview with WMC (Women Media Center), she was raped by 10 men. The attack happened in 2010 in her village outside Bunia eastern of Congo. Militia members raped her and she even does not know where the men are now; there were no arrests. The violence accompanies her every day of her life. She is still suffering and it is difficult for her to forget.

The ways to men superiority towards women of the Democratic of Congo can be also seen through the characters in Lynn Nottage's play *Ruined* (2009). The drama shows that women face the horror in the crossfire of men's war. They forced to survive by profiting from the men's loneliness, desire and violence. Men superiority in this analysis refers to the terrifying condition that caused by men's behaviors toward women in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

## **B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The analysis of the play script *Ruined* (2009) by Lynn Nottage is done through text and context-based interpretation. Fictional devices such as character, plot and setting are used to analyse this play script. These devices are related each other. Character is used to reveal the men superiority by analyzing character belief, attitude, and behavior or action. Plot is used to acknowledge the conflicts the character faced. Setting has a function to show the situation, atmosphere, and condition face by the character in order to reveal the suffering of the women which face the horror of men superiority. In addition, these elements are analyzed based on feminist concept by Simone de Beauvoir.

## **C. DISCUSSION**

This chapter analysis the fictional devices such as character, plot/conflict, and setting to reveal the way of characters experience *men superiority*. There are two signs that show men superiority which have done through the Women in the Democratic Congo; it can be seen from their mental condition and physical condition.

### **1. Mental Condition**

We can see men superiority which have done through the character from their mental condition. It is a condition that affects a person's thinking, feeling or

mood. There are three points to show that. They have traumatic feeling and bad memories that haunted them. They bear pain and shame. They feel displeasure and anger toward men. They are frustrated with their own lives.

The first point is they have traumatic feeling and bad memories that haunted them. Traumatic feeling can be seen as disturbing or distressing emotional. The first character gets traumatic feeling because of experiencing the brutal treatment from the men. It is hard for her to heal and forget the pain. It appears on the following quotation:

“SOPHIE: Is that what you think? While I’m singing, I’m praying the pain will be gone, but what those men did to me lives inside of my body. Every step I take I feel them in me. Punishing me. And It will be that way for the rest of my life.” P.7

The external conflict in this quotation is the harsh treatment toward the character. It must be really harsh because she could not even recover from what have done to her. It leads to internal conflict which makes her always remember about the bad memories. The setting refers to the sad atmosphere while she recounts about her past. The utterance “*what those men did to me lives inside of my body*” explains the character will never forget about the life-threatening event that happened to her. It caused the nightmares that shattered her. She always has a flashback about the brutal treatment from men. The traumatic feeling which she experienced shows the treatment of men is very disastrous into her life. The phrase “*Punishing me.*” also shows that bad memories are being a torture for her and how much she suffering from those memories.

The second point is they bear pain and shame. They have these feeling which they are not worthy of the respect. It is because of the rejection from her husband and family. Rejection as a result of the performance of masculinity terror shows how men never gets wrong in society. They keep blame the women as a victim. The second character, Salima, receives the ignorance from her husband and family. She could not even find the place as her home to stop her pain. It is point out in the quotation below:

“SALIMA: I walked into the family compound expecting wide open arms. An embrace. Five months suffering. I suffered every single second of it. And my family gave me the back of their heads. And he, the man I loved since I was fourteen, chased me away with a green switch. He beat my ankle raw. And I dishonored him? I dishonored him?! Where was he? Buying a pot? He was too proud to bear my shame... but not proud enough to protect me from it. Let him sit in the rain.” P.50

The conflict refers to the rape culture that happened in her society. It shows how the society blames the victims of sexual violence or rape. The setting shows the despairing condition when she is refused by her family. The utterance "*and my family gave me the back of their heads*" shows the disregard toward the character right and safety. They do not want to give the character a help even though she is in misery. The treatment from her family also can be seen as espouse of masculinity terror. It shows how the men is always not given a disadvantage from their relation with women even though it is an oppression. Society blames the victim of violence because they consider that women just let those things happened to her. They just keep rejecting the broken women in their place. It just adds more misery into the character when they are thrown out from their family. The quotation "*he beat my ankle raw*" points out there is no sympathy and support from their husband. Even her husband shows the horror of the men behavior who could callous to women. She receives the act of sour prestige from her husband.

The next point to show character mental condition experience men superiority is they feel displeasure and anger toward men. The second character feels really uncomfortable with the wildly and insulting treatment from the soldier. It appears on the following quotation:

"SOPHIE: Areyou all right, Salima?  
 SALIMA: The dog bit me.  
 (Whispered) I'm not going back  
 over there.  
 SOPHIE: You have to.  
 SALIMA: He's filth! It's a man like  
 him that—  
 SOPHIE: Don't. Mama's looking.  
 SALIMA (Tears welling up in her  
 eyes): Do you know what he said to  
 me—" P.19

The external conflict comes from bad attitudes of the soldier toward the character. It leads into the internal conflict that makes the character worry about herself. The setting refers to the tense condition because they must obey to keep the bar well-going. The quotation "*The dog bit me. (Whispered) I'm not going back over there.*" points out that she feels really uncomfortable about soldiers in the bar. She defines the soldier as a disturbing dog, which they only show their sexual desire. This is also seen in the quote "*He's filth!*". The character describes the soldiers who made women as sexual desire objects that made her very uncomfortable. She does not want to return toward the men party. Even though she lives at the bar, and forced to work as a dancer, she still avoids to be touched by cruel men. She really does not want to experience the brutality of the man again. This reveals how she reacted to what have done through her before.

The last point to show that the character experience men superiority is being frustrated with their own lives. Character does not even could not bear pain



that exist in her life anymore. She committed into suicide. It is shown in this following quotation:

“SALIMA (To Osembenga, the Soldiers and Fortune): You will not fight your battles on my body anymore. (Salima collapses to the floor. Fortune cradles her in his arms. She dies. Blackout.)” P.67

The conflict comes from the character loneliness into her body. She could not even control her body anymore. She is too frustrated with her life. Character's fatal un-belonging to her own body contributes to her suicide. Suicide is the profoundly tragic, though triumphant way which she can finally control her body. The utterance “*you will not fight your battles on my body anymore*” points out how brutal the man placing their attributes and their cruel behavior into women life. They found women as a range to distribute their strength, pride, and desire.

In short, through the mental condition of women we can see how the men superiority in to the women life. The way characters thinking, feeling or mood can reveal how the tormented life that they have because of men behavior. In this analysis, the setting refers to the horror, sad, and dangerous situation that the character faced. The external conflicts mostly come from the treatment of men towards women and it leads to the despair condition when they are feel so worthless and get traumatic feeling.

## **2. Physical Condition**

Physical condition is another sign to show the masculinity terror which have done through the characters. There are three points to show that. They experience violence and get non-human treatment. Their genital area got damaged. Their body got control in the bar and forced into sexual slavery.

The first point is they experience violence and get non-human treatment. The character shows that she got attacked by the soldiers which the most powerful in the conflict area. It is shown in the following quotation:

“SALIMA: One of the soldiers held me down with his foot. He was so heavy, thick like an ox and his boot was cracked and weathered like it had been left out in the rain for weeks. His boot was pressing my chest and the cracks in the leather had the look of drying sorghum. His foot was so heavy, and it was all I could see as the others “took” me. My baby was crying. She was a good baby. Beatrice never cried, but she was crying, screaming. “Shhh,” I said. “Shhh.” And right then... (Close her eyes). A soldier stomped on her head with his boot. And she was quiet.” P.49

The quotation above shows that the character Salima experience violence and get non-human treatment. The setting of the quotation refers to the chaos condition of her village. The soldiers suddenly come and make trouble in the

village. They beat and shoot people without any reason. She had been caught and got shackled forcibly. The external conflict of being tortured, then causes internal conflict to the character. She is suffering from worse treatment from soldier. It makes her scared due to the violence that comes from the soldier. The phrases *his boot was pressing my chest* and *a soldier stomped on her head with his boot* show the cruelty of men behavior toward women. They do not have compassion feeling even to the baby. The word “took” point out that the character is seen as a thing, not a human being. They just do non-human treatment because they have more physical power than women. It appears in the repetition of the phrase “*was so heavy*”. The character tells us that she is not able to fight the soldier because of the worse physical violence toward her. She is being victimized and feels so helpless.

There is a situation to support that character experience the violence even her genital got damaged. It is shown in the following quotation:

(Sophie shifts with discomfort. Her body aches, tears escape her eyes. Mama uses her skirt to wipe Sophie's eyes.)  
MAMA: Did they hurt you badly?  
SOPHIE (Whispered): Yes.  
MAMA: Of course. P.9

The external conflict here refers to the worse treatment toward the first character. It leads into the internal conflict that makes fear in the character life. The setting refers to miserable situation when she is brought by his uncle and rescued in the place of Mama Nadi. The quotation "*Did they hurt you badly?*" shows how the character condition is really seen very bad. The character here gets very bad physical conditions such as her body full of wound and damaged in genital area. Men treatment such as worse violence is a very big trigger for women fears. The performance masculinity makes the violence as a tool to control women.

The last point is their body got control in the bar and forced into sexual slavery. It can be seen from the following quotation:

MAMA: Do you understand me? You could have gotten all of us killed. What do you have to say to me?  
SOPHIE: Sorry, Mama.  
MAMA: You're lucky the commander is generous. I had to plead with him to give you another chance. Now you go in there, and you make sure than this cock is clean. Am I making myself clear?  
SOPHIE: Please— P.60

External conflict here refers to the treatment of commander who are really disturbing to the first character. Commander here shows how powerful they are as men. Violence and harsh treatment shows that they are as a form to subjugate women. This leads to internal conflict which cause the character rejects what the

man does to her. The character shows her actions to separate herself from the commander actions but she must follow the rules in the bar where she works. She must still have good attitudes to keep safe from the chaos or oppression that will be happen in the bar. The setting here refers to the horror situation that character faced. Their physical is controlled wherefore the bar visitors keep make the atmosphere of the bar is being fun. The character compulsion to entertain the soldier so that the condition of the bar remains safe is seen in the quote “*You could have gotten all of us killed*”. It shows they have to keep follow the rules in the bar so it causes no painful and disasters for them. Here, we can see how men use their strengths and pride to control the condition of women. This is a terror for them

The situation that support them forced to become sexual slavery is seen in the quotation “*Now you go there, and you make sure of this cock is clean. Am I making myself clear?*” It reveals how the character was forced to follow what is the commander ask for. No matter how strong the character do the rejection, but she is still controlled in the bar. An irony is also revealed here, even though Mama Nadi bar owner, give them a safe place to live and eat, but they must provide entertainments, drinks, and sexual services to soldiers. Their safe brothel, have a contradiction with a place where Mama is in charge and controls the women bodies. It is also a result of a lot of terror because it is very painful for them to fulfill the desires of men.

In conclusion, through the physical condition let us to see how the men superiority give the horror into women life. Not only their mental, but they are physically received the harsh treatment from the men. The character got control physically and forced into sexual slavery. The conflicts mostly come from the violence and harsh treatment from the men. The setting refers to the tense and dangerous situation when the character got caught by soldier.

#### **D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Play *Ruined* (2011), written by Lynn Nottage, reflects the issue of men superiority. The analysis of this drama deals with feminist concept by Simone de Beauvoir. Thus, men superiority refers to the impact of men in the state of being superior toward women in the Democratic Republic of Congo. It is represented through what is done towards the characters Sophie and Salima. They show men superiority through their physical and mental condition. Lynn’s Nottage play *Ruined* (2009) shows how the women experience the men superiority in their life, specifically in the conflict area. This makes people realize that how the brutality of patriarchal culture and male biology is deadly mix for violence against women. This work also represents the women are forced to face the sexual violence as a part and parcel of men superiority.

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