



WOMEN'S RESISTANCE TOWARD PATRIARCHY DOMINATION IN NOVEL THE VEGETARIAN (2015) BY HANKANG

Nahdatul Nisqa¹, Muhd. Al-Hafizh²

English Department

Faculty of Languages and Arts

Universitas Negeri Padang

email: nisqaahdatul@gmail.com

Abstract

This thesis is an analysis of a novel written by Hankang entitled *The Vegetarian* (2015). The problem of this analysis focuses on the issue of women's resistance toward patriarchy domination. This analysis deals with transformative ecofeminism theory. This study aims to find the forms of patriarchy domination toward women and to investigate women's resistance toward patriarchy domination.

Key words: Patriarchy system, domination, oppression, objectification, resistance, women.

A. INTRODUCTION

Patriarchy is a social system in which the male acts as the primary authority figure central in society. According to Kandiyoti, Patriarchy is a system where the societies portray men's domination over women and it continues to the male dominance in all aspects in society (Kandiyoti, 80). Every society gives higher status to male, power, authority, and position than to the non-maternal roles of female (Goldberg, 45). In other words, in this patriarchal system men have a stronger position to decide everything. Men always become dominant and women must obey all orders of men which increasingly restricts women. Within the family, a dominant authority is given to the father and husband. They have a right to control his family both in domestic and public spheres. Moreover, the supreme authority is given to male in all social life especially in family. They dominate over his wife and children. Consequently, women do not have the right

¹ English ELLSP of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang graduated on December 2022

² Lecturer of English Department of FBS Universitas Negeri Padang



to make decisions. Patriarchal system states that the decision is that the decision is on husband or father's hand. It is easy to understand that this condition brings disadvantage for women most of the time; women are more depressed than men in a marriage life and family life. Therefore, Tong suggest that women dependency emphasize that women are weak, passive, nurture, irrational, submissive, et cetera. In sexual politic, Millan says that the traditional patriarchy grants the father nearly a total ownership over wife and children including the power of physical abuse and even murder and sale. If a women accepts her social condition as a passive side, it drives her to be defenseless both physically and emotionally toward men's assault. Culturally, patriarchy gives permission of violence against women.

The patriarchal system that dictates women life triggers the women's struggle against male domination namely feminism. The ideology of feminism aims to change the condition and promote women attempt to increase their power. The feminist classified in the second wave feminism attempt to abolish the widespread sexism and gender. In addition, the rebirth of second wave feminism period broadened a wider-range of issue concerning of sexuality, in which women tried to gain legal and reproductive rights, pursue the higher education and reverse beliefs regarding their social life (Wolf, 2002, p.7).

In this analysis will focus about women's resistance toward patriarchy domination in novel *The Vegetarian* (2015) by Han Kang. In Merriam-webster (2022), the term resistance means the refusal to accept or comply with something; the attempt to prevent something by action or argument. Based on Barry (2002), women is a gender status, which is socially constructed. Women is defined as some one who is weak, irrational, emotional and, passive. Moreover, women is -the other self and the object of a man (MacKinnon, 1987: 55). In this analysis, women's resistance toward patriarchy domination refer to women desire to jump out from the boundaries of patriarchy domination and be freedom herself and be independent about her choice. This is focus of a South Korean women's resistance toward patriarchy domination. South Korea is known as one of the modern countries around the world. However, the issue of inequality gender still takes place in this country. According to Uhn Cho (2013), in his article which is entitled *Contemporary South Korean Society: A critical perspective* states that gender inequality in South Korea is consistently ranked as one of the highest in the world. It can be seen through how they adhere to the patriarchal system in treating women and differentiate between men and women in the family life, especially, in the traditional family. In a traditional family in South Korea, a male is centered, especially fathers. They are responsible for their families and must be both obeyed and revered by their family members. Father figures have the highest position and hold power. As expressed by Rich (1967) said that patriarchy itself means power of father. In the male position of absolute power and authority at the apex of the family power structure controlled all the members of the family. The status of a daughter in the family was usually low the same as the status of the wife who married into the man's family. Men control women in the family life and they are forced to do things that they not want. If they refuse, there is violence and rape in the family.

The existing patriarchal culture Korean people do not really is independent of the teachings of Confucianism. Confucianism is one of the teachings of the three main pillars of the belief system that is still firmly held to day by the people of South Korea. Confucianism is moral philosophical teaching that has entered Korea from the time of the Silla, Goguryo and Baekjae Kingdoms. In Confucianism there is a philosophy of "High Men, Low Women" which is the basis for men to dominate women. Confucianism teachings run by determining the roles and positions between women and men in family and society. The limited role of women by the teachings of Confucianism, minimize the right and the power of women, so that women become a minority. Women as a minority are considered to have their lives determined by men and must follow their husband's families (Rachmawati, 2014). Confucianism declares the family the fundamental unit of society, responsible for economic function of production and consumption, as well as education and socialization, guided by moral and ethical principles (Lee 1990; Park and Cho 1995a). In its teachings, Confucianism has traditionally deified ancestors, institutionalized ancestor worship, and delegated the duties of ritual master to the head of the male lineage, that is to the father and husband. Confucianism is a familiar religion (Lee, 1990). In Confucian patriarchal families, the family as an entity take precedence over its individual members and the family group cannot be separated from the clan. The most important function of family member is to maintain and preserve the household in the traditional Confucian system (Lee 1960). Society became organized around two principles: that the male would dominate the female that the older would dominate the younger (Kim 1993).

The idea of women's resistance toward patriarchy domination is one of the themes discussed in the novel *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang (2016), which shows about women desire to jump out from the boundaries of patriarchy domination and be free herself and be independent about her choice. Yeonghye is the protagonist in the *Vegetarian*. She plays the part of the dutiful young housewife in the context of 1980s in South Korea. At that time, the political turmoil in the country ended in democracy and brought a rapid development to society. However, South Korea was in essence still controlled by the patriarchal powers of different governments and it's remained strongly conservative (Kong, 1997; Chun, Doayl, Payne, Cho and Kim, 2006). It is fair to assume that Yeonghye was raised in the basic Confucian imperative of respect and loyalty to the group, so all that is expected from her is she behaves as a good wife and daughter. The novel reflects that Yeonghye suffers physical abuse from her father as a child, as the story unfolds and she rebels against the traditional value that have been set for her, she has to endure her father's physical violence again. Yeonghye conforms domesticity without complaint or questioning until she starts having repeated dreams of violence and blood that traumatise her and that she interprets as violence toward others. As a sequence, she decided to become a Vegetarian so that she does not participate in harming others. However, instead of liberating her from violence. Her decision of abandoning all animal product brings her physical abuse from her father, isolation from her family, and sexual abuse and rape from her husband, who wants to impose his authority in the face of her rebellion from established traditions. At the start of the novel, Yeonghye does not have any eating disorders; her vegetarianism is a survival mechanism to cope with the abuse and free herself and be independent about herself and choice.

The issue of women's resistance toward patriarchy domination in novel *The Vegetarian* (2015) by Han Kang is interesting to be explored. In this analysis, women's resistance toward patriarchy domination refers to women desire to jump out from the boundaries of patriarchy domination and be freedom herself and be independent about her choice. One of them is in the *vegetarian's* novel by Han Kang. The novel shows the reader how the patriarchal system takes control of the women in society and the real condition of women who are subordinate to men they get violence and sexual harassment. Therefore, this is explain the forms of patriarchy domination toward women and women's resistance toward patriarchy domination. The concept use in this study is transformative ecofeminism theory.

B. RESEARCH METHOD

This research uses a qualitative research approach because the goal of this research is to interpret a novel. The analysis of *novel the vegetarian (2015)* by Han Kang is analysed through text and based on interpretation. The novel is also analysed by using fictional devices on a novel such as characters, plot (conflict), and setting. These devices connected to each other and give the contribution to revealing the meaning of the novel. Characters are used to reveal the issue of objectifying women is done by men. The plot is used to find out the conflicts faced by characters. Setting deals with the situation, atmosphere, and condition faced by the main characters in the novel. In addition, this analysis deals with the concept of transformative ecofeminism.

C. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

This chapter discusses the issue about women's resistance toward patriarchy domination in novel *The Vegetarian* by Han Kang (2015). The first discussion is about the forms of patriarchy domination by suffered by the main character named Yeonghye. Then, the second discussion is about women's resistance toward patriarchy system. The concept used in this analysis transformative ecofeminism.

1. The form of patriarchy domination toward women

1.1 Objectification

Objectification can be defined from how men position women as an object. In other words, the subject who has authority to evaluate is a man. Men have superior to women and should rule over women. This quotation below show protagonist's husband describes about his impression in the first time meeting and the protagonist is describing as an ordinary women.

Before my wife turned vegetarian, I'd always thought of her as completely unremarkable in every way. To be frank, the first time I met her I wasn't even attracted to her. Middling height; bobbed hair neither long nor short; jaundiced, sickly-looking skin; somewhat prominent cheekbones; her timid, sallow aspect told me all I need to know. (p.3)

The passive personality of this woman in whom I could detect neither freshness nor charm, or anything especially refined, suited me down to the ground. There was no need to affect intellectual leanings in order to win her over, or to worry that she might be comparing me to preening men who pose in fashion catalogues. (p.3)

From quotations above show that Yeonghye's husband is giving objectification to Yeonghye. It can be seen from her manner to rate to rate types of women body. From sentence *I need to know* can be seen yeonghye husband appraisal of women is based on physical characteristics, without minding nonphysical thing, such as personality of women. Thus, based on quotation above, perception or ideal standard of women beauty is measured by men. Women's body shapes and ideal face characteristic are always referred from men's judgment. In other world, women cannot define their own beauty standard. However, despite yeonghye's body is not described as a kind of beautiful women based on her husband's objectification.

1.2 oppression

In Hankang's *The Vegetarian*, there are some kinds of oppression suffered by the main by the main characters as seen in several dialogues. According to Galtung, oppression is the acts destroy or dominates others in order to get what she or he need in order to get satisfying fell. There are much kind of oppressions such as, physical, psychological, sexual. (Galtung, 2009).

1.2.1 Physical oppressions

According to Galtung, one of the forms of oppression is physical oppression. Any act done to intentionally causing trauma and injury toward other people or animal which makes bodily contacts called as physical oppression (Galtung, 2009). Then, below are the evidences of physical oppression which maybe identified from following data:

a long bamboo stick strung with the great blood-red flashes of meat, blood still dripping down. Try to push past but the meat, there's no end to the meat, and no exist. Blood in mouth, blood –soaked clothes sucked onto my skin, somehow a way out. Running, running through the valley, then suddenly the wood open out. (p.19).

Dreams of murder. Murderer or murdered...hazy distinctions, boundaries wearing thin. Familiarity bleeds into strangeness, certainly becomes impossible. Only the oppression is vivid enough to stick. A sound, the elasticity of the instant when the metal struck the victim's head shadow that crumpled and fell gleams cold in the darkness. (P. 35-36).

From quotation above show that Yeonghye got physical oppression in the past while she still childhood, the line *murderer or murdered* show the role of Yeonghye and her father. For Yeonghye, her father becomes a murderer while she herself positioned as the murdered. *Boundaries wearing thin* means there are the reasons that occurred the boundaries with separate her with the father. *Boundaries* in this paragraph is a plural, means there are not only one but also many boundaries. Thus familiar bleed into strangeness is the statement how her family, which she hope becomes ideal family change into a strange family. Then, when she hopes an ideal familiarity she dreamed happened, she aware that it was an impossible certainty. Must be impossible the oppression she could not avoid. The oppression is vivid enough to stick that it was hard for her deny and erase it from her mind. *The oppression she remembered was clearly describe in the line a sound, the elasticity of the instants when the metal struck the victim's head..the shadow that crumple and fell gleams in the darkness.* Yeonghye was oppression by her father by striking her head into a metal. It makes her feel a person who is cold in the darkness. The evidence the physical oppression will support below:

Well, what are you waiting for? Come on, eat up!

The quotation above show about Yeonghye's father couldn't stand against Yeonghye's changing of habit. Then, he spat out of this anger in a family gathering. In this event, such as common Korea gathering, the dishes served are meat. Yeonghye's father sees her daughter not touch even a bit of the food. He yelled to her to hurried eat the food, where in this events, the food is meat. Yeonghye's response was just silent as if there is nothing she can eat. The shout is including in verbal oppression.

1.2.2 Psychological Oppression

The second kind of oppression is psychological oppression. To examine whether the data is psychological oppression, here are some characteristic of psychological oppression based on Gulting (2009). The following lines are the evidence of verbal oppression:

-What about you sister? He asked his wife, -what's happened now?! she finally got served with the divorce papers, of course! It's not that I don't understand Mr. Cheong's position, but all the same, he could have shown a bit more sympathy to just throw away a marriage like that (p.72)

This quotation show about Yeonghye's decision to be truly vegetarian has branched new problems toward her, his husband, Mr Cheong, take a new decision with his family. In the end, Yeonghye get divorced by her husband. The divorce also running unsymphatically, according to the line: *it's not that I don't understand Mr. Cheong's position, but all the same, he could have shown a bit more sympathy to just throw away marriage like that.*

“Every single one of them-her parents who had force-fed meat, her husband and sibling who had stood by and let it happen—were distant strangers, if not actual enemies (p.76)”

The quotation above show about Yeonghye felt that all her family becomes strange or so called the actual enemies. Every single person around, such as her parents, husband, and siblings are seen as not a family but enemies. Those all evidence were related with the characteristics of psychological oppression. Show us the main character psychologically hurt.

1.2.3 Sexual oppression

Sexual oppression violence occurs when a person is forced to unwillingly take part in sexual activity. It involves touching a sexual manner without consent (e.g kissing, grabbing, fondling). Forced sexual intercourse, forcing a person to perform sexual acts that may be degrading or painful, beating sexual part of the body (Galtung, 2009).

The main character also gets oppression sexually. She gets sexual oppression by her brother-in law, the one who ask to be his art model. The following paragraphs are the evidence:

-Can i turn to the light? she asked. She sounded perfectly composed. -what for? I want to be able to see you properly. She stood up and walked over the switch. Their sex had been fairly one-sided, and hadn't even lasted five minutes, so it was no wonder she didn't seem tired. When she flicked the lights on shaded his eyes from the sudden glare. He waited, blinking, until he was able to lower his hands, she was leaning against the wall. The flowers scattered over her body were as beautiful as ever (p.119)

This quotation tells about her brother in law asked her to do sex with him. Meanwhile, their sex fairly one sided. The who one enjoy their sex is her brother-in-law. Meanwhile, Yeonghye does not enjoy their sex. She is not given response while doing sex. So it was no wonder she did not seem tired.

2. Women resistance toward patriarchy domination

The main characters resistance toward patriarchy domination was not a simple act. Korean culture was full of patriarchy ideology which seen woman as second level of creature. Man was dominating all aspects of including domination toward woman. In this case, the domination was done against the main character. Yeonghye tries to resist toward domination by doing same act was seen in the novel. Will be explaining bellow:

Around her, the kitchen floor was covered with plastic bags and airtight contains, catered all over so that were was nowhere I could put my feet without trending on them....there was a rustling sound; my wife was busy putting the things around her one by into black rubbish bags, eventually I lost control. (p.17)

The quotation above tells about the researcher can conclude that were Yeonghye's resistance toward domination by not physically harm other person but to give metal distress toward other. Yeonghye throws all things, in above case is meal things such as milk meat, egg. While this case relate with transformation ecofeminism. It shows that Yeonghye's resistance is to get rid all animal domination things from her life. Mr.Cheong, as Yeonghye's husband, psychologically harmed. He got stress because this trail. He loves and admires Yeonghye's skills in the past slashing meat. Yeonghye's family was known for their skills in cut meat into flesh. Meanwhile, like other Korean, Mr. Cheong is a meat lover.

Other than throwing meat-things, Yeonghye's acts go further into aspects. Avoiding meat in her life understands not only from its outside surface, but also goes deeper into thoughtful understand. In quotation above:

Actually..what? ..it's the smell? The meat smell. Your body smells of meat. This was just too ridiculous for words. -didn't you see me just take a shower? So where's this smell coming from, huh?' from the same place you sweets come from? She answered, completely. (p.24)

From the quotation above shows that Yeonghye's avoiding meat is go deeply into deep understanding. She was told in the novel that she was avoiding sex in order to avoid other human flesh. Yeonghye saw that text is the form of uniting met with meat. In sex, there will be activities of meeting men and woman reproductions. Both of them are more covered by flesh which will meet while the infusing part is done. If she follows the sex an activity saucing infusing, means that she will contradict with the principle of transformative ecofeminism. Where in there theory, it said any form of meat abusing was against transformative ecofeminism. *From the same place you sweets come from? She answered;* completely tells that Yeonghye said it is in serious tone. Means that the religiously avoids any form of meat contact.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The vegetarian by Hankang (2015) reflects the issue about women's resistance toward Patriarchy Domination. Yeonghye avoid all the form of meat eating such as barbequing, meat firing, or abusing the animal for getting delicious flesh for eats. Those all happened due to Yeonghye's desire to fight against domination and violence or oppression she has suffered when child. The issue of women's resistance toward patriarchy domination is one of the theme can be discuss in the novel Vegetarian by Hankang (2015).

In this analyzing discusses kinds of patriarchy dominations which experienced by the main character in the vegetarian. Fisrt, The forms of patriarchy domination which occurred in the novel. Patriarchy domination consists to two forms, the first objectification and the second the forms ofoppression. The second problem in this analysis is about women's resistance toward patriarchy domination.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Abrams, M. H. (2005). *A Glossary Literary Terms*, 9th Edition. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning.
- Adam, Carol J. 2010. *The Sexual Politic Of Meat*. New York: The Continuum International Publishing Group.
- Beauvior, d.s. 1074. *The Second Sex*. NewYork: Vintage book.
- Barry, Peter. *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* Second Edition. Maschester: Maschester University Press. 2002.
- Creswell, John, (2012). *Research Design*. London: SAGE Publications.
- Cassel, Eric (1982), *The Nature of Suffering and The Goal of Medicine*. USA: Oxford University Press.
- Fitri Nurliana and Suparti Erni, (2016). *Analyzing the Potrayal of Patriarchal Oppression toward the female Characters in J.K Rowling's The Casual Vacancy: A Reflected Post-Feminist Critics*. Retrieved on February 17, 2020.
<https://knepublishing.com/index.php/KnE-Social/article/view/7428>
- Galtung, J. 2009. *Cultural Violence*. New York: Sage Publication.
- Gaard Greta. 1993. *Ecofeminism: Women, Animal, Nature*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.
- HanKang, (2016). *The Vegetarian*. South Korea: Portobello Book.
- Kim, Rosa (1994), *The Legacy of Instutionalized Gender Inequality In South Korea: The Family Law*. Retieved on February 12, 2022.
<https://lawdigitalcommons.bc.edu/twlj/vol14/iss1/7/>

Levinas, Emanuel (1988), *Useless Suffering*. The Provocation of Levinas: rethinking the other, edited by Robert Levine and David wood, Routledge. Pp. 156-167.

MacKinnon, Catharine A. *Feminism Unmodified: Discourses on Life and Law* Harvard University Press, 1987.

Mudau, T.J and Obadire, O.S (2017), *The Role of Patriarchy In Family Settings and Its Implications to Girls and Women In South Africa*. Retrieved, on February 14, 2022.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/321207230_The_Role_of_Patriarchy_in_Family_Settings_and_its_Implications_to_Girls_and_Women_in_South_Africa

Mitchell, Jessica Nicole (2009), *Power-Control Theory: An Examination of Private and Public Patriarchy*. Retrieved on February 12, 2022.

<https://digitalcommons.usf.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=3107&context=etd>

Siti Rahma, Setiawati Eti, Suknawan Sony, and Darihastining Susi, (2020).

Patriarchal Oppression in Kim Ji Yeong, born 1982 by Cho Nam Joo: a feminist literary study. Retrieved on February 17, 2022.

https://www.researchgate.net/publication/323964291_ANALYZING_THE_PORTRAYAL_OF_PATRIARCHAL_OPPRESSION_TOWARDS_THE_FEMALE_CHARACTERS_IN_JK_ROWLING%27S_THE_CASE_OF_VACANCY_A_REFLECTIVE_POST-FEMINIST_CRITICS