



**FASCISM DEMOLISHMENT IN *THE HUNGER ANGEL* (2012)
BY HERTA MÜLLER**

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ABSTRACT

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah: (1) mengungkapkan penghancuran ideologi fasisme oleh Russia, dan (2) mengetahui peran karakter, setting, dan plot dalam membantu mengetahui tindakan penghancuran fasisme. Kutipan teks dalam novel ini dianalisa menggunakan teori *power* dari Michel Foucault secara interpretasi teks dan konteks. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa penghancuran ideologi fasisme dilakukan dengan cara menghancurkan hidup orang-orang Jerman.

Kata Kunci: *fascism, demolition, power, isolation, terror, violence*

A. INTRODUCTION

World War II is well-known as a global war aiming for power expansion. It is related to the role of politics and ideology; the tool to gain power by a country to conquer the others. Tresiana and Syafei (2013) mentioned that people function as the objects of things. They are no longer being the controller of their environment but the social and economic circumstances determine much of their life. People become dependent upon an economic system that cherished two things: money and the power that wealth provided.

Russia and Germany, for example, were the countries that involved in this second war. This was caused by ideology differences between fascism (Germany) under Hitler's leadership and communism (Russia) under Stalin. The clashes between them caused a long-term war between Germany and Russia in Europe. Tresiana and Syafei (2013) mentioned that

The post-war time was the critical and essential time to maintain and gain the power of the most powerful ideology. To reach this purpose, it should make sure that the opposite ideologies had no chance to do any revolt by doing ideology demolition. According to Oxford Dictionary (2016) demolition or

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demolition is defined as the action or process of demolishing or being demolished. This is aimed at human being as the fundamental part of the ideology; the creator and the player of it. Since the war has ended, it was organized to be done secretly. Gulag, for example, was known as labor camp for rebuilding the damage caused by the war. However, based on the experiences faced by German ex-laborers, it was intentionally created as a secret place to demolish Russia's political oppositions during post-war period.

Russians did the demolishment by sending and isolating all Germans about the age of 17-45 to Gulag. The life in Gulag camps was very cruel. Inmates were shot for little or no reason. Torture was common and inventive. Kuusinen, one of the witnesses of Gulag survivor, in Applebeum (2004:378) says:

Even today, after thirty years, I can hardly describe the horror of that first night at Lefortovo. In my cell I could hear every noise from outside. Nearby, as I later discovered, was the 'interrogation department', a separate structure which in fact a torture chamber. All night long I heard inhuman screams and the repeated sound of lash.

Gulag inmates faced terrible life in Gulag. In addition to being exiled in a cell, they also had to face the violence and terror as their daily routine there. The violence was intentionally done to destroy inmates' life gradually. They were surrounded by death during their time in Gulag.

Herta Müller tends to talk about the persecution of German minority in Romania under communist regime. Her novel titled *The Hunger Angel* (2009), translated into English by Philip Boehm, was nominated for the prestigious [German Book Prize](#) in 2009. *The Hunger Angel* was inspired by Müller's mother experience as Soviet's Gulag forced laborers. Müller voices the unspoken darkness of the history with her works. She leads the readers to their deepest soul through her work.

The novel *The Hunger Angel* (2012), written by Herta Müller, reflects fascism demolishment. In this analysis, *Fascism Demolishment* refers to intentional attempts by Stalin's communism regime to demolish fascism in World War II. It is done through repressing the Germans by sending them to Gulag camp in Russia as forced laborers. It is represented through what is done towards the protagonist, a German lives in Romania, Leopold Auberg. He is still in his innocent seventeen years old. The Russian and Romanian police with the list came to take him to Gulag along with other listed Germans. He is accused as a fascist and Hitler's follower since his father was a German who had joined as Romanian soldier. His whole life has been destroyed during the acts of fascism demolishment. It is conducted by using isolation, terror and violence as the strategy to demolish the fascism.

First, Russians send the character to isolation. He is isolated for years. He is sent to remote area in Russia. He lives as a prisoner. He is directed to uncivilized life. His access for knowledge and information has been restricted. He is prevented to develop his skill. He is incapable to fit himself in after being released. He is trapped in his bad memories of the isolation.

Second, Russians do terror and violence to the character. He is accused as enemy of the state. He gets terror and feels intimidated by seeing physical punishment other laborers get. He sees other laborers' death in the camp. He is menaced by strict armed guards. He is forced to work like a machine in deadly circumstance. He is tortured with hunger. He faces insecurity for the rest of his life.

There are two studies about novel *The Hunger Angel* (2012) by Herta Müller. The first study is Daukšaitė's analysis of *The Hunger Angel* (2013) in European Academic Research is entitled *Hunger Trauma in Herta Müller's The Hunger Angel*. The analysis is about perspective of trauma, focusing mainly on the character's trauma. The analysis related to the concept of post-traumatic symptom from Farrell (1998) that shows traumatic event in the past can influence the future of the victim. The result of the analysis is the main character as German forced laborer got trauma from his five years experience in Gulag. This trauma is caused by the deadly hunger faced by the character.

Another analysis is from Bethany Amato Morgan in his Master of Art thesis (2013) entitled *Metaphorical Representations of Hunger and Labor in Herta Müller's Atemschaukel*. He focuses on Müller's use of metaphors, symbol, and allegory to reveal the meaning. The analysis related to the concept of recent developments in metaphor theory by Zoltán Kövecses (2011) that discusses the theory of metaphor as six different theories: "categorization, standard conceptual metaphor theory, blending theory, the neural theory of metaphor, conceptual metaphor theory as based on the idea of main meaning focus, and relevance theory. The result from the analysis shows that Müller achieves a trauma narrative of labor camps that is more poignant than any photograph could achieve and gives the power of language to victims of these camps.

This study is going to reveal the *fascism demolition* which refers to the acts done by Stalin's communism regime to destroy the fascism. It is related to the concept of *power* by Michel Foucault. Foucault in O'Farrell (2005:99) states that power is not a 'thing' or a 'capacity' which can be owned either by State, social class or particular individuals. It is a relation between different individuals and groups and only exists when it is being exercised. Furthermore, Foucault has classified power into different kinds called as modalities of power. Foucault in Fendler (2010:44) states that modalities of power can be divided into fourfold; sovereign power, disciplinary power, pastoral power, and bio-power. However, in this analysis, only sovereign power and disciplinary power are used since both of them are regarded as complex social functions and as political tactics. In addition, they are related in the practice.

First, sovereign power, according to Foucault in Fendler (2010:44), operates when authorities (people or laws) try to control other people. It is done through physical torture and violence such as punishment. Second, disciplinary power, according to Foucault in O'Farrell (2005:102), is a technology aimed at how to keep someone under surveillance, how to control his conduct, his behavior, his aptitudes, how to improve his performance, multiply his capacities, how to put him where he is most useful. It refers to systematic efforts to control movement and operations of the body and to exercise power over individuals in

order to produce docility and submission. Both sovereign power and disciplinary power were applied in Gulag. As a result, the German laborers lived under Russia's control.

B. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The analysis of novel *The Hunger Angel* is done through text and context-based interpretation. It is done by analyzing some part of fictional devices, such as; character, plot (conflicts) and setting. Character and conflicts are used to reveal the way to demolish the fascism by analyzing the effect of conflicts toward character. Then, the setting deals with the situation, condition, and atmosphere. It gives contribution in process of analysis by giving help in revealing the meaning. These elements are analyzed based on the concept of power by Michel Foucault.

C. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section reveals the *fascism demolition* by analyzing the fictional devices such as character, plot (conflict) and setting. The protagonist, a 17-year old German, shows that he is repressed by Russian—the Russia's government—during his time as Gulag's forced laborer. It is shown through the treatments he gets and how it affects his life even after sixty years since his re-deportation. He faces isolation, terror and violence done by Russians.

1. Isolation

One of Russian's ways to demolish the fascism is by demolishing the Germans—the most potential people to be included in fascism—who are represented by the main character. The demolition is done by isolating him in Gulag camp. The isolation can be seen from camp's location and condition, the character's prisoner-like life, and character's uncivilized life in the remote camp. His life has been destroyed during the isolation. Furthermore, the isolation affects his and other laborers' life in the future.

The character is isolated in remote area in Russia. He lives away from any society. It is aimed to lock him from outside of the world. It is shown in the following quotation:

When we arrived at the camp, our only point of reference was NOVO-GORLOVA, which could be the name of the camp or a town or entire the region. It couldn't be the name of the factory, though, since we knew that was KOKSOKHIM-ZAVOD. I did find a cast-iron manhole cover beside the well in the camp yard, and used my school Greek to decipher the Cyrillic letters as DNEPROPETROVSK, but that could be a nearby city, or some foundry at the other end of Russia. Whenever you were able to leave the camp, you got to see more letters—the wide steppe and the villages on the steppe. (p.50)

The text above shows that one of the Russians' ways to demolish the character is by sending him away to an isolated area. The Gulag camp is intentionally located in a huge rural and uninhabited area where no one knows where it exactly placed in the world. Gulag is an untouchable place since there is no information about the camp. The quotation "... or some foundry at the other end of Russia" shows

the camp is located very far from any civilization so that it cannot be reached. It seems to be placed at the end of the Earth which is impossible for the character and other laborers to escape. In this context, the setting refers to the condition of Gulag camp which is designed like a deadly town. It looks like a place to die. The condition of the camp influences his mental. The internal conflict grows within him. He is hopeless since he has no sign to go to another place. Besides, he cannot be found due to unknown location of the camp. There is no possibility for him to escape from the camp.

The isolation is also shown through the camp's facilities which are similar to prisoners'. One of the facilities is cloth to wear. The character and other laborers must wear camp uniform that is served by camp administration. It can be seen from this following text:

Our work clothes—we had nothing else—in other words, the camp uniforms, were distributed every six months. They were the same for men and women. (p.42)

The text above shows that the '*camp uniform*' is the only official clothes allowed for German laborers. The uniform is a mark of the character's isolation as both laborer and prisoner. He feels intimidated with his status which is possible to get harmful treatments in the camp. Besides, the camp uniform is the symbol of Russians' power over him that he is owned by the camp. As long as he wears the uniform, he is tied with the camp's rule along with its consequence. The everyday-uniform shows that he is tied to the camp forever. He has no way to escape from the camp just like he has no other clothes to wear. The external conflict here occurs between the character and the camp uniform's rule. Any effort to escape from the camp will be useless since the guards will instantly know him from his camp uniform. The external conflict, then, causes internal conflict occurs in character. He feels that he is eternally belonged to the camp. He is desperate with freedom and worried about the harsh punishment he may get. He has no choice except to admit all Russians' commands.

The ignorance towards laborers' health is a sign of uncivilized life the character faces in the camp. Healthy life is a person's right as civilized human being. By ignoring this, indirectly Russians have forced the laborers to live like a marginal person. Besides, the condition influences laborers' health. It is shown in this following text:

In the camp we had lice on our heads, in our eyebrows, on our necks, in our armpits, and in our pubic hair. We had bedbugs in our bunks.(p. 222)

The text above shows the portrait of uncivilized life the character faces. The setting here shows the damp condition in the camp. The presence of "*bedbugs*" shows the condition stimulates small animals for breeding. The camp is not a proper place for human being to live in since it is very dirty and unhealthy. Besides, "*lice*" that lives on his body shows that his condition is not different from the camp. He is as dirty as the camp. He, perhaps, is not given any facilities to clean his body. His bodies must be very dirty with the blend of his sweat and

many substances from the labor work. It stimulates the “lice” to live and breed on his body if he never get his body cleaned. The dirtiness shows that there is no attention to laborers’ health from Russians. This condition further leads to health problem. The character must live under this condition for years. It may be the main cause of some disease that can send him to his death. Indirectly, Russians have demolished him without doing any harmful action.

The continuation of the demolition can be seen through his social life after his re-deportation. He is incapable to fit in any society. The fear and worry grow within him during and after the camp’s isolation creates anxiety which causes him not ready to face the world outside of the camp. It can be seen in the following quotation:

I had broken down because I was afraid of being sent to freedom, afraid of abyss that loomed so close by, and my fear made the way home shorter and shorter. (p.270)

The text above shows that the character has complicated feeling within him. There is something that makes him not ready to live in freedom. He analogizes ‘freedom’ as ‘abyss that loomed so close by’ that shows his fear and worry about starting to live normally outside the camp. For years, he is accustomed to live only with other laborers. However, “freedom” means living along with other people from outside of the camp he never meet for years. He needs to readapt with a new life and world. The internal conflict here occurs between the character and his feeling. He lives without any interaction with others for years. He never involves in other societies except the camp’s laborers. He feels as if he enters a very different world. He totally feels like a stranger outside of the camp. He feels different with other. His past as ex forced laborer makes him feels so small among others. He is worried that he cannot find any place for him in the society. He feels anxiety within him to face a social life.

In summary, isolation is one of the Russian’s ways to demolish the fascism. It is done by demolishing Germans’ life through isolation in Gulag. The Germans are represented by the main character. The process of demolition happens during the isolation but the effect is forever. The isolation has destroyed both of character’s mental and physical. His horrible life in the camp has caused complicated feeling within him and influenced his future. He cannot feel the freedom. He never feels ready to continue his life after the isolation.

2. Terror and Violence

Another Russian’s ways to demolish the fascism is by destroying the Germans through terror and violence. The violence can be seen from the treatments laborers get in the camp. Terror, then, comes as the effects of the violence to laborers’ mental. Here, the laborers are represented by the character. He is accused as a fascist and intimidated with punishment. He is tortured with inhuman labor work and hunger. The violence he faces in Gulag creates massive terror for the rest of his life. Thus, the terror and violence has destroyed his life and indirectly becomes a part of strategy to demolish the fascism.

The terror begins when the character is accused as a Fascist. The purpose of the accusation is to emphasize that to be included in fascism is a fatal crime. It is shown in the following quotation:

You get accused of destroying the economy, of being a Fascist, a saboteur, a cement thief. You stumble ahead, deaf to all the yelling. (p.29)

The text above shows that Russians regard a fascist as a dangerous criminal. A fascist is claimed as a person who can destroy the whole nation through economy and politics. Thus, being a fascist means being the enemy of the State who deserves harsh punishment. Based on this, the Russians intentionally mention the Germans as a fascist in order to create terror among them. Even though they never involve in any action related to fascism, they are forced to admit the accusation as a fascist. It is an indirect warning for them not to be included in fascism, the enemy of communism. It is intended to attack a person mentally since it grows fear to oppose Russians among the Germans. The setting here refers to the character's complicated situation. He is accused as a criminal for something he never does. He does not do any crime but he is forced to admit it. The situation creates internal conflict in him that can be seen from his fear about his status and his security in the camp. As a criminal, he can be sentenced with punishment at anytime. He is helpless with the Russians' law. He lives along with his fear of being punished.

The character's fear grows along with the number of dead laborers. Even though he keeps alive, he sees others' death. He is alive among the dead. He feels as if he will be the next one to die. The horror atmosphere of laborer's death has suffered him. It is stated in the following text:

We no longer counted how many. But I knew that 334 dead internees were resting in peace according to the registry Trudi Pelikan kept in the sick barrack, and I knew which peace they were resting in—the first, second, third and fourth.(p.243)

The quotation above shows that he is haunted by the death around him. The camp is a place for him to wait for his death. The number of "334" shows that death has come in a great number among the laborers. He can be one of that "334" at anytime. This "334" sounds more horrible because it is only according to "the registry" which means that it is only mentioned as a formality for camp's report. There are many of other laborers' death that the camp's administration does not register. The death happens every year that means the number of dead laborer may be uncountable ones. The great number of death has spread massive fear to anyone in the camp.

Beside terror, the character faces violence in the camp. The hard labor work is the example of the violence. The character is forced to work like a machine in deadly circumstance. He is given a job which is impossible for human to do in such terrible circumstance. It is shown in this following quotation:

Tur had to give Shishtvanyonov's mumbling the tone of a command and shouted: Dig holes for trees.[...]We searched for the tools in the snow as if they were presents. The earth was frozen hard as bone. The pickaxes bounced off the ground, the crowbars clanged like iron against iron. Nut-sized clods sprayed into our faces. I sweated in the cold, and froze as I sweated. I split into two halves, one ember, one ice. My upper body was scorched with fire, it bent and blazed away automatically for fear of the quota. My lower body was numb with frost, my legs pressed cold and dead into my gut. By afternoon our hands were bloody, but the holes were only knuckle-deep. And that's how we left them.(p.64-65)

The text above shows that he is forced to work in the deadly winter. He is not given any proper tools to help his work. He is forced to do an impossible job—to dig a hole in the ground when everything is frozen. Even a human, too, can be frozen in that circumstance. The work is only suitable for a machine. However, there is a camp's rule of the quota that must be obeyed. There is a consequence along with a rule. The Russians use his "*fear of the quota*" as a warning to menace him. He is afraid if he cannot fulfill the quota. The setting here refers to the condition of the character. The extreme cold temperature has tortured him. His skin and body has slowly cracked due to the cold. The condition shows that the conflict here refers to external conflict which happens between the character and his work as forced laborer. His body is unable to face the cold air for hours. Forcing him to work in such condition means slowly sending him to his death. He forces himself to keep doing the work since he is afraid of the punishment.

The character's experience of terror and violence during the camp has an important part in demolition's continuation after his re-deportation. A massive fear has grown within him. He is worried if someone may recognize him. He becomes paranoid if he is caught when talking about the camp; a forbidden thing to do. He is afraid if he must live under similar situation for the second time. It is shown in the following text:

After those five camp years I roamed the busy streets, day in and day out, silently rehearsing what to say in case I was arrested, preparing a thousand excuses and alibis to counter the verdict: **CAUGHT IN THE ACT**. I carry silent baggage. I have packed myself into silence so deeply and for so long that I can never unpack myself using words. When I speak, I only pack myself a little differently.(p.3)

The text above shows that he never feels the freedom even after his re-deportation. He is trapped within his fear of the camp's experience. The feeling of insecurity always follows every move he makes. He is paranoid about everything. He locks himself to others due to his fear. He feels that it will be a crime to speak with others. "*CAUGHT IN THE ACT*" becomes his reason to spend his life in silence. His fear and silence shows his new life has almost no difference with the old one in the camp. The camp has tragically destroyed his new life. Thus, the

internal conflict here happens between him and his fear. Freedom has no meaning for him anymore. His body is free but his mind is still trapped within his fear. He cannot find the meaning of life. He thinks that freedom never exist for him.

In summary, terror and violence are intentionally done in order to demolish the character's life during the camp. The condition, somehow, continue after his re-deportation to freedom. He becomes paranoid to do anything in his new life. He feels that whatever he does leads him to his end.

D. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The novel *The Hunger Angel* (2012) by Herta Müller reveals fascism demolition done by Russians by sending Germans to Gulag camp. The issue of fascism demolition is exposed through text-based and context-based interpretation by focusing on fictional devices such as character, setting and conflicts. The demolition is done by Russians through isolation, terror and violence. The setting of protagonist's condition and situation in Gulag shows the horror of Gulag. This horror, then, create internal conflict that influences his life even after his re-deportation. Thus, the differences of ideas and political values between two ideologies have caused conflict to the people. Furthermore, the clashes between two ideologies have caused misery to humanity.

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