
**THE FIGHT AGAINST GENDER-BASED DISCRIMINATION
OF THE CENTRAL CHARACTER
IN THE NOVEL YALE NEEDS WOMEN BY ANNE GARDINER PERKINS**

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ABSTRACT

This study discusses about the fight against gender-based discrimination in Yale Needs Women novel by Anne Gardiner Perkins. In the novel, discrimination is derived from heteronormative attitudes in the community. Biased heteronormative opinions are widespread throughout the community. The existence of these attitudes is nothing more than a continuation of the patriarchal ideologies inherent in cultural and political systems for centuries. This research uses qualitative analysis methods and contains a number of intrinsic elements in the form of characters and characterizations, settings, and plot as well as extrinsic elements, namely the perspective of cultural studies focused on patriarchal concepts and feminism. The results of the research prove that gender discrimination can be eradicate and women should fight to get their rights back.

Keywords : discrimination; patriarchal concepts; feminism.

I. BACKGROUND

Humans are incredibly complex social creatures (Tirtawati, 2014). It is undeniable that humans unconsciously play roles that have been regulated in social norms. Those who are born male feel more superior than women. Without realizing it, the concept of masculinity becomes the main element that makes men feel superior (Kareithi, 21). Meanwhile, those who are born into women have a more limited life. This is indirectly related to the concept of femininity. Femininity is always associated with something that refers to women's traits, such as weakness and motherhood (Joko Purnomo, 2017: 112). The result of this paradigm makes human beings living in a categorized box. This eventually makes them, the women, isolated in the masculine norms prevailing in the society. The elimination of gender domination is mandatory.

The feeling of being safe about one sex must also occur even though the feeling is basically an illusion. These are the things that feminists must do to end oppression (Hooks, 1984:163). There is a hierarchy between women and men in all aspects of life, even in education. In a book, entitled *International Woman Suffrage Ius Suffragii Volume IV*, edited by Sybil Oldfield, stated "That technical education should be accessible to all and organized based on equality between the sexes." Technical education must be accessible to everyone and organized on an equal

basis between women and men. However, education that should be gender-neutral, without categorizing men and women, in fact, still adheres to a patriarchal ideology in its application. Therefore, it can be concluded that patriarchal ideology can enter into all aspects without being aware of society.

In simple terms, education which should be accessible for women to pursue gender inequality is a heavier burden to pass (Wrigley, 1992:6). However, it is undeniable that women can change this by fighting against the injustices they get. Feminism occurs because feminists feel patriarchal ideology marginalizes the position of women in society. Women tend to live in boxes that have been made by society and are limited in various ways.

Yale itself is one university that sticks to its mission of graduating a thousand leaders every year. In other words, Yale adheres to a homogeneous system. More than two and a half centuries, 268 years to be precise, Yale is a homogeneous campus with only men. Until finally in 1969 this campus started accepting women to become students, with a quantity that was not more than men.

Problems begin to arise when women enter the new academic year. Many women feel uncomfortable and insecure in a new environment, such as at Yale. Their movements are always followed by men. Even when they just wanted to grab a bite to eat in the cafeteria, they felt disarmed by the stares of the Yale

students. *Yale Needs Women* truly tells about the resistance of women in how they finally get the rights they really need.

This novel tells about the lives of five main characters, namely Kit McClure, Shirley Daniels, Connie Royster, Betty Spahn, and Lawrie Mifflin. The interesting thing about this book is that the five of them come from different backgrounds but have the same goal, specifically to study at Yale University.

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II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is a qualitative research that will be analysed by using descriptive analysis method. The technique used in this research is library research technique by observing the corpus, which is the novel *Yale Needs Women* by Anne Gardiner Perkins and supporting theories from theory books, scientific journals, and articles that support the discussion of this research.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The novel begins with an early depiction of coeducation at Yale. The patriarchal system makes this institution go backwards compared to its rivals, Harvard and Princeton, which have started to coed earlier. The patriarchal system is deeply felt in the depiction of the setting at Yale and America as a whole.

Yale is a staunch patriarch. This can be seen from the symbols that can be identified in this novel, such as the title of the novel itself. *Yale Needs Women* is a symbol of rebellion. Women are tired of injustice towards educational institutions, and Yale is one of those who embrace this gender injustice. With the motto "a thousand male leaders" which is always

applied, Yale is very discriminatory against women. Until finally, Yale students realized that Yale needed women to continue natural learning.

Told five central figures, namely Kit McClure, Shirley Daniels, Connie Royster, Betty Spahn, and Lawrie Mifflin. As a central character, this novel is centred on the stories of the five of them. The quantity of their occurrence is also persistent. However, the characterizations of these characters are depicted very differently. Kit McClure is described as a woman playing an unusual musical instrument, the trombone.

Physiological dimensions of Kit from the start that there is already a description of what women should be. Alternatively, at least, the readers have been given an idea by the author that there was a convention against what women should act like in the 1960s. One of them is not playing heavy musical instruments like the trombone.

Another convention on women is also shown in the physiological depiction of the character Lawrie Mifflin, who is described as a petite woman who likes sports. Being a female athlete is a paradox in the context of a patriarchal society. Women who should be gentle and submissive are described as very different if they are sporty. The depiction of female athletes is characterized by intense, aggressive, masculine and unattractive. However, this is depicted differently for Lawrie. It does not fulfil the demarcation of sporty women. Even though Lawrie is quite petite among female athletes, he is still an athlete and a woman regardless of stereotypes in society.

Meanwhile, Connie Royster, as a black woman, was lucky enough to be compared to other students. She has an organization that really protects her as a woman. That organization is the Yale Dramatic Association or The Drama. However, that is a bit of a good thing about the injustice that Connie feels. As a minority, female, and black, being on campus with a white majority doesn't make it safe. Racial injustice often occurs to those in the minority.

Then there is Shirley Daniels who feels the same way as other minority students. Sometimes, when entering a classroom full of other white students, the insecurity comes. Shirley is depicted as a woman who always speaks up about racial injustice. Coeducation arrived at Yale University to coincide with the era of the Black Power. There is a gap separating white and black students. On each weekend, they divided themselves by race. Those who were white chose to join their fellow race, as did black students. Life being a woman at Yale

University is tough but having a day as a black woman on campus is something else that is more problematic.

In this novel, *Yale Needs Women*; it can be seen that there are two settings that stand out against women's resistance. The two settings are place and social settings. New Haven, where Yale stands, is the setting of a prominent place in the writer's account. Social background and race are also told quite significantly by telling that the central figure comes from two different races, namely the Caucasian race and the Negroid race. As explained above, black women at Yale are a minority and life on campus will be more problematic than those of female students and from the Caucasian race. No group is the least recognized by society other than black women (Hooks, 1952:21).

Even though black women marginalized at Yale, it does not mean that those who are white or Caucasian women who attend Yale schools are exempt from this. Caucasian women at Yale also felt quite a lot of unwanted things at Yale. It was told by Betty Spahn, who in terms of her sociological dimension, described as a white woman with shoulder-length hair and a background with a lack of interest. This makes him set aside his time to work part-time. However, the harassment often occurred at the place where Betty worked. Betty works part-time at Silliman College as a waitress.

In this analysis, the starting point (inciting force) when the problem started was after the central figure became the first coed student at Yale. However, before they become students, they also have to pass the admission rule that doesn't make sense.

The conflict with man against the environment is quite dire. The rejection that occurs in women seen from the very unnatural admission rule. Discrimination against women occurs in admission of new students and rejection occurs twice as often against female candidates than for men.

With Yale still adhering to the motto "a thousand male leader", the problem of acceptance by determining gender quotas will always exist. Even though academically, female candidates are ahead of men, the possibility of being rejected is still very high. This is because the focus of student admission at Yale University is on its motto, namely, a thousand male leader, which means that the university pays more attention to "character" than academic intelligence. Until finally, Wasserman (Special Assistant to the President for the Education of Women) decided to add the quota for female students and the motto "a thousand male

leader" had to be abolished immediately. This is the rising action stage.

This happened because the complexity of the conflict that occurred between Wasserman and Brewster (President of Yale) was getting hotter (man against man) and then added to the protests made by students against the institution (man against environment) were also increasingly voiced. However, Brewster was at the forefront of disagreeing with Wasserman's decision. After many meetings held to end the injustice against women that did not work, Wasserman concluded that Yale supports discrimination against women.

The emergence of conflict between students and institutions (man against the environment) makes students weak and unable to fight. It is impossible to report this treatment because discrimination against women in 1968 is a legal thing that can be done by anyone, even the campus to students.

Yale opened for the third year of coeducation. Although not much has changed from the coeducation system, many female students feel the injustice, but this is gradually being eroded. Lawrie Mifflin has got access to be able to play field hockey. The Yale Athletic Department provided them with a training ground in a parking lot that used to be a football playground. Yale also gave them a coach. This is quite good progress after the occurrence of The Women's Strike for Equality which was carried out by women in front of The House of Representatives of America by signing the Equal Rights Amendment.

In the denouement phase, which shows progress towards completion, is illustrated in the novel when one by one the problems at Yale have begun to be resolved. After going through many protests and meetings between Yale University trustee boards and students, Yale finally decided that gender was not a major factor in the selection of new students. It didn't take long after the verdict was published the percentage of female students at Yale rose to forty-six percent.

The completion, which is the final stage in the story, is illustrated in the novel when the five central characters have graduated and lead a peaceful life while still upholding the value of feminism. Shirley Daniels worked as an assistant and then was promoted to become the Young Director of the Yale Upward Bound Program (Associate Director of the Yale Upward Bound Pro Like Shirley, Connie Royster works as a lawyer. After feeling a lot of gender injustice at his former job, he decided to change course and became a law student at Rutgers Law School and became a lawyer. The rest of his life is spent

helping to solve pro bono cases. Meanwhile, Betty (now Elizabeth) Spahn, who is still close friends with Connie, is also continuing her studies to become a lawyer. The cases taken by Betty always deal with reproductive justice and economic justice. gram), which focuses on helping junior and senior high school students cultivate the ability to get through life on campus. She is also a picture of a great woman who was very important in improving the mind-set of black students at Yale.

Lawrie Mifflin got into journalism. This began with the Yale Daily News reluctant to cover women's sports. Eventually, she wrote so many stories about women's sports that she got hired as the first female sports journalist by the New York Daily News after receiving a master's degree in journalism from Columbia University. Now he is a managing editor at The Hechinger Report.

Kit McClure, Lawrie's classmate, finally continued his studies at Yale and graduated in 1975. However, he continued his priorities as a band boy. Seven years after graduating he founded the all-female Kit McClure Band. The band kit grew up to be able to play on President Bill Clinton's inaugural ball in 1993.

Indirectly, coeducation describes the incorporation of minorities in the majority group. This is also in line with the inclusion of new values about minorities and how the majority can openly accept them. As a minority group, the atmosphere they feel when they are in a majority crowd is certainly different from those in the majority.

Women's efforts to normalize coeducation have been going on for a long time. The criticism of coeducation begins with a debate about women should be at home and not have educational interests like men. In many cases, policies to limit opportunities for women to get education come from men as well.

Resistance to discrimination by women means more than just emancipation. Women also seek to redefine their roles in a broader scope than just their community. This is due to the subordination that occurs in society towards women. The patriarchal system is indirectly a system that marginalizes women. (Lerner, 1987:5). Exclusion of rights which ultimately disadvantage women, makes them weary and engage in resistance. in the novel *Yale Needs Women*, it is also explained that the existence of resistance at Yale is a way to rebuild the concept of women through the five central figures.

The five central figures present in this novel make it clear that the concept of a new woman has been

described. The five of them show another side of women which is very contradictory to the previous convention of women. In the end, they can prove that even though they do not fulfil the convention of women, they are still human beings who have self-worth and cannot be discredited simply because of their differences in sexuality with men.

IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the discussion, there are five main characters in the novel. As explained before, those five main characters are Kit McClure, Shirley Daniels, Connie Royster, Betty Spahn, and Lawrie Mifflin. The addition of women at all-male land Yale is a bizarre thing and ultimately women feel alienated and invisible. The alienation that female students at Yale feel occurs indirectly due to the application of patriarchal ideology that occurs in society. With society having this perspective, gender discrimination cannot be avoided. The central character in this novel experiences countless gender discrimination. Gender discrimination occurs continuously without pausing. Until finally, they fought back. Gender discrimination by this institution can be seen from the rules that limit Yale students' movements especially women. There are so many gender-biased rules, such as the difficulty of women getting the opportunity to become students, not allowing women to do sport, the prohibition of becoming members of the Student Activity Unit, which has high prestige such as Whiffenpoff, and others.

Thus, it can be concluded that the fight against discrimination by the main characters can eradicate. Thanks to women at Yale, finally, the irrelevant view of the role of one gender can be eliminated and justice can be achieved. Ideology like this is usually called heteronormativity. The fight against discrimination by the main characters can eventually eradicate opinion bias that occurs in heteronormative ideology.

The fight against discrimination by the women in this novel, specifically the main characters, can eventually change gender-biased rules. This is also relevant because the rules at Yale have started to change bit by bit. The big change that has occurred in the rules at Yale is the addition of the quota for women in new student admissions. In the end, the fight, to some extent had an effect on changing the patriarchal rules that had long existed at Yale University and women regaining the rights they always own the first place.

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