

Women and the Powers of Novel May by Sandi Firly of Michel Foucault Study

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Abstract:

This research examines women and power using the theory of Michel Foucault. The object of study in this research is Novel May which contains a story about a dark incident that occurred in Banjarmasin City due to political unrest. The approach used is a historical and psychological approach that analyzes the history and psychology of society with a process of individual psychological analysis. The research method used in this research is descriptive analysis method with data analysis techniques, descriptive interpretive. The results of this study indicate that (1) May's life background is divided into three parts, namely: a) May's tortuous life struggle, b) May's tremendous mental stress due to the rioting, c) sexual harassment experienced by May. (2) May's character, namely: a) the subconscious, b) the unconscious, c) the conscious mind.

Keywords:

women; power; Michel Foucault

I. Introduction

Sandi Firly's novel May is a novel that tells about the history of a major conflict that occurred on May 23, 1997 in Banjarmasin. This novel tells the story of the life of a woman named May, whose psychology was disturbed from childhood to adulthood due to trauma to a major event she faced. The big incident he experienced was a tragedy of power struggle between the masses of political stakeholders which in the end caused many casualties and even the victims could not be identified because of the large fire that occurred.

Women and power, from these two words imply that women and power are two words that can be juxtaposed, but when examined closely, the two words seem to have the power to reject and contain very strong contradictory meanings. This meaning arises because of the patriarchal culture that is strongly embedded in the human mind. The word power is appropriate when juxtaposed with the word men or the government which has a share of power in deciding certain things. And as stated by (Foucault, 2005), he said that women do not understand the meaning of their bodies, the body is determined by a patriarchal culture so that it makes women an object and a complement to men. Because of this the body finally no longer has individual rights, is not free to express itself because it belongs to society. The state also has the authority to make appropriate discourses to regulate social norms regarding the body.

This research will focus on women and power. Where in this novel talks about the power that is able to influence the psychology of a female character who experiences tremendous inner pressure. This research uses Foucault's theory study. Previous research that

is relevant to this research in terms of objects has not been found, while in terms of studies there have been several, but different in terms of the approach used, in this study the approach used is historical and psychological approaches. However, the explanation of the relevant research must still be done in order to give meaning to a research. The following describes the research relevant to this research.

Sholikhah (2020) in his research on the novel *Orang-Orang Oetimu* by Felix K. Nesi using a study of Foucault's power found that there are two forms of power relations, namely the form of power relations with the mind and power relations with the body. The power relation with the mind is further divided into five forms, namely manipulation, control, objectification, stigmatization, and domination of the mind. Meanwhile, the power relationship with the body can be divided into two, namely the power relationship with the social body and the power relation between the individual body. In addition, in her research, Sholikhah also found a form of resistance to dominant power in the form of resistance to government power.

Asri (2020) in her research on the novel *Lady Audley's Secret* by Mary Elizabeth Braddon using Foucault's theory of the construction of madness that occurs in the subject. The results of her research indicate that the madness that appeared in Lucy was present due to the manipulative and deceitful actions she always did. This was considered to violate the norms and values of that era, so that it made him considered insane and put in a mental hospital until he died.

Based on the background and relevant studies that have been described above, the focus of this research is to support the emergence of Foucault's theory of power which can be conceptualized with feminism. The focus of this research is (1) to describe the background of May's life and the influence of power in it; (2) Describe May's psyche which was caused by the influence of power.

Iftode (2013) in his study discusses Foucault's genealogy theory of power. In this theory Foucault focuses on the formation of bodies, which with these human bodies can become a power relation. According to Foucault's method of thought, this is an important transformation regarding the history of ethics and also regarding the aesthetics of human existence which is very suitable in modern times as well as a form of resistance to politics.

Cooper (1994) in his paper criticizes the concept of power into Foucauldian feminism. Cooper focuses on two aspects of the framework, namely power as productive and power as relational. Although Foucauldian feminism combines the two frameworks, contradictions are still found, especially when used to understand resistance. In this way, power can be understood as historical change without impeding the possibility of social change.

Ideology, belief and power for some people according to Foucault (Hastuti and Septiawan, 2010: 62) cannot be distinguished from discourse, all three are projections of people's interests in a certain social location. This opinion was also reinforced by Fagleton, who stated that ideology was a discourse that brought together the struggle for central power. Gender discourse does not only arise from explicit talk about gender but also emerges through conversation about certain things.

This research uses a historical psychological approach. The historical approach is used to consider the history of a literary work. In this research, the historical presented is literary

works as representatives of the traditions of the times. According to Kuntowijoyo (2003: 28) Historical reconstruction is anything that person has thought, said, done, felt, and experienced. That is what is called history. While the psychological approach is an approach that views literature as a psychological activity, both from within the writer or the reader, the psychological approach in this study emphasizes curiosity about character behavior and motivation.

II. Research Methods

The research method used in this research is descriptive analysis method. According to Ratna (Yukiarti, 2014: 59) the descriptive method of analysis is a method used by analyzing and deciphering data to describe the state of the object under study which is the center of research attention. In other words, the descriptive analysis method is used to describe and then describe the state of the object under study with the things that are the center of attention. The data source used in this study is only the primary data source, namely the novel *May* by Sandi Firly. This research also uses data analysis techniques, namely interpretive descriptive techniques carried out by the following steps 1) reviewing the analyzed data, 2) coding, 3) analyzing by providing an underline according to the problem formulation, 4) providing an explanation of the story unit, and 5) present in a descriptive form.

III. Results and Discussion

There are two research results that will be discussed in this section: (1) May's life background, and (2) the psychology of May's character in Sandi Firly's novel *May* which is analyzed with a study of Foucault's theory.

3.1 Background of May's Life

The analysis of the background of the character's life aims to reveal the tragic incident experienced by a female character named May from her childhood to adulthood caused by a power conflict that has taken away all the happiness in her life. To analyze the background of life and power, a historical approach can be used to perfect Foucault's theory. This is in line with Dews' (1992) thinking, he explains Foucault's theory of his historical analysis of human sciences and forms of power and social control. He said that Foucault had always believed that the formation and transformation of discursive systems of human science required epistemological considerations to rule out questions of right or wrong. Based on this, the results of the analysis regarding May's life background found three discussions, namely a) May's tortuous life struggle, b) May's tremendous mental pressure due to the rioting, and c) sexual harassment experienced by May. The following is the analysis and discussion.

a. May's Tortuous Life Struggle

There are 15 quotation data obtained from the analysis of May's life background which is filled with tortuous life struggles. The results of the analysis of life's struggles discussed a lot about May's struggle from childhood to adulthood to struggle alone without her parents taking care of her. May works as a coffee shop waitress. He worked from day to night, it was an activity he would not stop doing. Sometimes May's mind is tired of doing the job, but there is no way to get a decent job for her because she is only a junior high school graduate. Until one day, a man who wanted to take him away from the city full of memories took him to Jakarta to live a good life and turn a new page. He, never felt happy in his life, his life was full of stress. Her parents have gone somewhere leaving her alone since the big riot happened.

May's life struggle is a form of women's struggle today. May loudly mentioned that she wanted to go beyond the horizon she saw at the end of a pier. Based on this quote, the character May shows her courage to live the tough life. Besides that, to change one's fate, people rise and leave their past because they have no choice but to live. May is a woman in today's era who positions herself to get up and fight for life. So far, many people think that women can only work at home. Quotes regarding May's courage to therefore they must be able to fight such assumptions. The resurrection arose because women did not want to be underestimated by their dignity. Amygot and Pujal (2009) in their article highlight some aspects of Foucault's theory which are useful for analyzing subjective production processes and power relations which are characterized by gender, which are then understood as dispositive. Feminist theory and practice offer basic resources both for the development of the Foucauldian perspective itself, and for the analysis and transformation of power relations. With regard to the tension between power and freedom, Amygot and Pujal highlight the importance of two issues: first, the intermediary space between the dominating states and the power relations established by Foucault allows more precise consideration of gender disposition and its transformation; second, the relationship between the practice of self-relation and power, which makes it possible to identify possible conditions for the exercise of resistance and freedom.

b. May's Mental Pressure was Tremendous due to the Riot

The rioting conflict that occurred on 23 May 1997 in Banjarmasin city traumatized many people when they remember it. The conflict occurred due to a political campaign, the power struggle of the rulers. The incident was also felt by May. May was very afraid of the gray Friday incident because she experienced it firsthand and she even lost her family in the incident. In this novel, 22 quotes are found that show how May experienced mental stress due to this incident. after the incident May dissolved in deep sadness all she could do was work and work. She couldn't even entertain herself, the inner pressure made her a woman who could only lament her sadness. Apart from parents, May also lost her lover during the incident. Her lover became a "lost victim". Lots of victims disappeared during the conflict, the missing people were not known whether they disappeared, were kidnapped or burned to death in the buildings at the time of the rioting.

The riot incident is a dark history of the city of Banjarmasin. But there is no monument or any marker for that event. Maybe this was because the incident was related to a political event so that the rulers of that era did not perpetuate it so that the Banjar people who did not know the details of the story would forget about this very terrible incident. This is also mentioned in the quote in Novel May.

"I also think so. Or maybe it is because those who died during the riots of 23 May 1997 in Banjarmasin were suspected of being rioters? So it is considered unfit to be questioned and remembered?"

"Maybe because our political condition at that time was in the heat of the day ahead of reform. So that any way can be done to maintain and or achieve power. Because it seems impossible for people to easily commit anarchist acts without anyone deliberately riding them, using them." (2017: 101)

The quote above, reinforces the reason why the public and government officials do not want to make a marker of the incident to commemorate the riot, because those who died in that incident can be called rioters and are not worthy of being remembered only making the city shackled by an extraordinary incident that took many victims. Innocent people became

victims because of the rioters' rampage. Only because of the political conditions of a party that wants to campaign.

The riot incident can still be seen in the archives at the Banjarmasin City Regional Library. This is because the incident was written by the media clearly about how the terrible incident occurred and the cause was suspected during the final round of the Golkar party election campaign, but it could not be held because of the mass throwing stones at Golkar party sympathizers and even everyone wearing clothes. Golkar party's signature yellow color will soon be massacred. The incident occurred because of the power struggle caused by politics. Until now there is no clarity regarding the incident of the riot. it can be seen in the following quote.

He also read the news about the arrival of Komnas HAM, people transported by truck, foreign journalists who came including, the comments of regional and central officials, mass burials, analyzes of cultural and political observers, as well as the grief of family members of victims and those who were missing. back. However, he did not find the slightest point on who or what organization was behind the heartbreaking events leading up to the elections held on May 29, 1997. (2017: 113)

Based on the quotation above, it explains that it is not clear what caused the attack, which claimed many lives and even gave deep sorrow to the victim's family. Lots of people were transported by truck because they were accused of being looters when the rioting occurred. However, those who were transported are not yet known about the news. This incident is still a mystery. The mastermind in the incident cannot be disclosed until now. Therefore, it can be concluded that there is a strong power behind the incident that cannot be disclosed, this is what Foucault calls power that can be anywhere. In line with this, Syafiuddin (2018) explained that Foucault emphasized that power can be everywhere, especially concerning power and knowledge discourse.

c. Sexual Harassment Experienced by May

Sexual harassment usually occurs against women. This happens because women are often seen as weak by men. There are 9 quotes that discuss sexual harassment experienced by May. May's sexual harassment was done by the owner of the shop where she worked. Here is how the power of a person who feels that he has helped May's life so that he feels he has the right to do anything to May. This is in line with what Foucault said about power can be anywhere. In addition, as a woman who is considered to be subject to May's power, she must be willing to experience sexual harassment, even though she always feels like fighting and leaving but she always feels shackled by the burden of her life all this time.

May has experienced many forms of sexual harassment, such as the lustful gaze the owner of the shop where she works at gazes at her body. This view made May always feel uncomfortable and afraid of being made, but because she did not have a place to live and could not find another job, she was forced to accept this. apart from the views of the tavern owner. The shop owner also without hesitation told May that he wanted May's body and if May gave him then he would consider May's family debts to be paid off, but May, who was very brave, didn't want to obey him, he kept his honor firmly. As a shopkeeper, May also has to be able to endure the temptation of the masher who often visits his shop. However, May, who is a strong and tough woman, can still withstand these temptations. She has the principle that a woman must have self-respect.

May's sexual harassment indirectly forges her life into a strong woman. May valued her body so much that she protected it with all means. Even in the midst of her fear, May is still able to stick to her principles of maintaining honor, making May stronger and brave enough to fight back. Power according to Foucault (1997: 117) is never separated from resistance. The resistance is always in a power relationship because everyone is certainly in a power relationship, there is no way out. It can be said that in a relationship that involves power relations in it, there must be power running and there will always be resistance to that power.

3.2 Psychiatric Figures May

May is a woman who has a very dark background in her life. She also has great trauma due to the big riot conflict she experienced firsthand. Her parents and boyfriend were victims of the riot, May also witnessed arson, massive looting and they were even taken somewhere by truck and until now they have not heard the news anymore, the incident was very cruel and has no sense of humanity. The incident affected his psyche. May has a fickle nature. The theory that discusses psychology according to Feist and Gregory (2010: 140) is divided into three parts, namely, a) the subconscious, b) the unconscious, and c) the conscious mind.

a. The Subconscious

The subconscious is a condition in which a person is in a state of mind that is not conscious of him. This condition appears quickly and suddenly. A person experiencing this condition takes action without realizing it so that when that person realizes he does not feel he is doing what he has done before. There are 5 quotes about May's subconscious mind.

The five quotes that contain information about May's psyche reveal that May has a changing attitude, sometimes she is happy, then quickly becomes sad. May looks happy but she seems to have a big secret in her. When May admitted that she was about to be raped by the owner of the shop where she worked, her friend Kin, who wanted to help her report the matter to the police, instead she ignored her and instead went away. he seemed to quickly forget what had happened to him. This made his friend confused by his attitude.

One quote explains that May is quite difficult in communicating with other people. This was due to his trauma to the major riot conflict he experienced. Sometimes what May is talking about is not necessarily the truth, she is not aware that all of her words are just hallucinations, she is very mentally disturbed. To return the focus it is recommended to read novels. The quote is as follows.

So far, May has had a difficult time communicating with other people. That's why sometimes he reads novels. I purposely provided several novels for him to read, because according to my friend who is a psychologist, reading activities, especially novels, can see him focus more. (2017: 216).

b. Nature is Unconscious

The unconscious world is a place for all the urges, urges and instincts of the mind to exist. While in the unconscious, a person will not be aware of the mental processes that are happening in him. There are seven quotes about May's unconscious nature. The seven quotes illustrate the mental condition of May's character.

In this section, it is explained that May, who has a changeable attitude, is due to an impulse from her soul. May herself was actually confused by this attitude because basically it

happened without her knowing it. May, who had great trauma due to conflicts in her life, spontaneously chose to avoid the problems that happened to her because of her unconscious impulses. This can be seen in the quote that describes the incident.

Kin stood up, looked at the river, and tried to see the truth
May's words that the river when touched by the rain will look blurry. And perhaps it was his thoughts that were now vague, and it was difficult to understand the change in May's attitude, which again seemed suddenly. (2017: 98)

c. Realm of Consciousness

The conscious mind is a thought that is owned by humans consciously. This thought comes from external stimulation. Consciousness itself is a level of mental life that can be immediately reached by humans. This consciousness works in the process of the human soul when it is in a conscious state and the person who does it feels and acknowledges what he has done. There are 9 quotes that discuss the conscious nature of May's character.

May is described as having a changing attitude due to subconscious and unconscious disturbances that make people around her and even herself confused with her attitude. Even so, May still has a conscious mind that when she is in that realm she will return to normal and become a woman who is strong and has a firm stand. But sometimes when she is in her consciousness, May will give a different response when faced with a sensitive condition that reminds her of her past events. This can be seen in one of the quotes which states that May has great doubts about being happy because she has never felt it.

May didn't answer. Her mouth wanted to say yes, but it felt inside her that there was a pressure denying it. "What is happiness, Kin?" evasively as if philosophizing. (2017: 63)

May's doubts are a form of trauma that she consciously limits herself to. He was afraid of being happy because he had lost that happiness, happiness was lost because he was taken away by a power. The resistance he can do is to survive and fight to get away from a place that makes him always remember the heartbreaking incident.

IV. Conclusion

The conclusions from the results of research on women and power with the study of Foucault's theory using historical and psychological approaches are obtained in the form of:

1. May's life background is divided into three parts, namely: a) The tortuous life struggle experienced by May, b) the tremendous mental pressure that May experienced due to a power conflict, c) sexual harassment experienced by May due to power man against her.
2. May's psychological aspects are divided into three parts, namely: a) the subconscious discusses the psychology of the main character which is sometimes difficult to understand because there is pressure within him, b) the unconscious focuses on conscious behavior but the process may not be realized but felt by people around, c) conscious mind, which is a psyche in which a person is aware of taking an action but is too sensitive if someone threatens him.

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