

Representation of Women as Subaltern in *Girls of Paper and Fire* by Natasha

Ngan

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Abstract

This study is entitled “Representation of Women as Subaltern in Girls of Paper and Fire Novel”. This study aims to analyzed subalterns are portrayed in the novel Girls of Paper and Fire and to analyzed impact of subaltern describe in the novel Girls of Paper and Fire. The object of the study is a novel, this study is attempted with a qualitative method to reveal the problems and the impact that occurs in the novel. This study applies the subaltern theory entitled Can the Subaltern Speak ? By Spivak (1985). The results of the study to find out subaltern in the novel Girls of Paper and Fire and to uncover the impact of subaltern in the women character in the novel Girls of Paper and Fire.. The impact that happens to the main character after becoming a subalternized person in this novel is related to his daily mental health, she is always feels in danger and Lei’s life is a terrible thing in his mind.

Keywords: *feminist, subaltern ,and women*

A. Introduction

The majority of feminist linguistic researchers do not tend to overtly define or align themselves with a specific feminist model, liberal or otherwise. There has also been some debate, in recent years, regarding the nature of ‘patriarchy’, that is, a social system which operates in the interests and benefit of men rather than women. According to Wollstonecraft in his book feminism is “[A] Vindication of the Right of Women”, (1792), is movement for women’s struggle for equality. The goal of feminism is that women have the same opportunities as men in the social, political, economic and educational fields. Feminist is not only aimed at women but also men who have feminine characteristics and feminist can be defined as a women’s emancipation movement that speaks of improving the position of women and equalizing differences in rights between women and men. In terms of discussion, feminism is part of a movement that will refer to the subaltern.

The impact that happens to the main character after becoming a subalternized person in this novel is related to his daily mental health, he feels that he is always in danger and Lei's life is a terrible thing in his mind. Talking about women as a subaltern is the same as discussing the invalidity of feminism in the social life of these women, this thing includes the visible gender differences between men and women.

“Feudalism into capitalist subjection. Such a definition theorizes the change within the great narrative of the modes of production and, by uneasy implication, within the narrative of the transition from feudalism to capitalism. The most significant outcome of this revision or shift in perspective is the agency of change is located in the insurgent or the ‘Subaltern’.” (Spivak, 1998, p. 7: 197).

According to Spivak’s quote above, hard to apply the great theorizes through the transition from feudalism to capitalism differentiation among social arise the variation opinion, that is why political itself is the part of subaltern as Spivak says. Based on the book of Gayatri C. Spivak subaltern is At this time the relationship between subaltern and feminism is very close, both of which discuss women specifically and in detail, for example, every time we discuss the subject of subalterns against women we will indirectly discuss the problem of feminism in it too, such as when the subaltern occurs in a princess who will marry a prince for political purposes. In this case, it is clear that women who cannot fight for their rights are a form of subaltern and the princess is a depiction of women whose rights are shackled by subatern, and that is what every feminist wants to fight for. So cleary expalin relationship about feminism and subaltern are very close. Based on the background namely in societies where men are the main power holders who dominate the role of leaders which is called patriarchy between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object formation, the figure of the women disappears, not into pristine nothingness (Spivak, 1985, p. 102) above, it can be conclude that the subaltern is a theory aimed at the oppressed in that women who are considered inferior do not have rights over themselves or it can be said that a woman's destiny has been determined since she was born. For the example, Drupaddi in the ancient literary work Mahabharata, where she was born, great things related to his life happened against her will.

In essence, women’s life is always faced with social realities that shape their identity. Identity as a woman raises several issues related to women’s rights, freedoms, roles and status. Women as subjects cannot determine their existence so that their position is inferior to men. Even women are considered to have limited capacity and access in politics and the public. So that, the women’s movement for equality emerged, namely feminism. Even in normal society women have been categorized as subalterns as the explains in the book can the subaltern speak (Spivak,1985, p. 74), namely in societies where men are the main power holders who dominate the role of leaders which is called patriarchy between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of the women disappears, not into pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the ‘third-world woman’ caught between tradition and modernization (Spivak, 1985, p. 102). The quotes above is explain “patriarchy is a system structure social and practice which positions men, as the dominate, oppresses, and exploits women” (Walby, S., & Towers, J. 2018).

The portrayed of Lei in our real life is that she is a prostitute who has an obligation to obey those who have paid for her. Just like what happened to Lei, who had been chosen by the king, whose rights had been bought by the king from the start, purchased in this case is a depiction of a king at this time, the man who has paid a prostitute is a king for the woman he has hired, such as what the king wants in Lei’s life is something that must be obeyed, so what has been done the commandment by the king he must fulfill. That case same as a man who wants to hire a prostitute of his choice, after the man pays a woman who has been chosen, the woman no longer has the right to herself, what is ordered by the man must be obeyed.

Gilrs of Paper and Fire is a 2018 science fiction and fantasy novel written by Natasha Ngan. Through this book Ngan wants to tell us about how the people fights feminism. this novel has got some achievements. A *New York Times* Bestseller A Barnes & Noble Most Anticipated YA Fantasy of 2018. The scope of the study is literature, while the limitations lay on disclaimer such potrayed and the impact of it in *Girls of Paper and Fire* novel, using Spivak theory (1985).

After reading and searching some related studies, similarities are found in some studies. There have been some students who analyzed the same topic, the studies were conducted by. Artanti, S. K. (2019) Rathod (2013), Megawati (2017).

The first study was done by Bawane (2020) from Vidyabharati International Interdisciplinary Research Journal. His thesis was entitled; “*SUBALTERN VOICES IN THE NOVEL UNTOUCHABLE BY MULK RAJ ANAND*”, he uses the humanist theory by Mulk Raj Anand (2001) his analyzed novel *Untouchable* is powerful documentation of subalterns who are suffering from socially setup manacles. The present research paper tries to find out how the term subaltern is applicable in Indian context and how the select novel expresses the voices of subaltern. It states a hope both for the untouchable Hindus and India, bringing the philosophy of Gandhi which efforts to raise consciousness with the purpose of removing the caste system as well as hierarchical system of the Indian culture. Issue subaltern with the background Hindus and India as the target this journal related to the subaltern by Spivak and of course the writer wants to show how the role of caste in India are related to the subaltern.

The second study was done by Artanti, S. K. (2019) from State University of Surabaya with the title, “*Sea of Poppies*” by Amitha Ghosh. He uses the postcolonialism theory by Homi K. Bhabha (2011). This study has the similarity meaning with the subaltern by Gayatri C. Spivak, overall, the expectations that theoretical productions will finally affect how is subalternity represented in *Sea of Poppies*? How do Indian Women’s struggle to fight against patriarchy in *Sea of Poppies* by Amitav Ghosh? The results of this study show that Subaltern represented by Indian Women. Then the struggle of Deeti as an Indian Woman and the other characters fights against the arrogance and vanity.

And the last study was done by Megawati (2017) “Subaltern Portrayals in the *Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1 Movie*” from UIN Alaudin Makasar the theory used in this thesis was Gramsci’s (1929 and 1935) Concept of Subaltern theory. The writer aimed to discuss about social and political aspect in the *The Hunger Games: Mockingjay Part 1 Movie*, using the theory of subaltern the writer wants to present social level and how the world affects in the movie the hunger games: *Mokingjay part 1* is related to the subaltern.

Based on of all the studies above, this study has a related object of the study. The previous studies have the same object and limited analyze by the narrative elements and subaltern. Since a story in this novel is using the narrative elements such as character, plot, point of view, setting, and theme were used in this study; along with the narrative and subaltern. All of the element were used to elaborate and analyze the object which the deeper aspect in the novel to reveal the issue from the studies the wants to analyze.

However, the majority of feminist linguistic researchers do not tend to overtly define or align themselves with a specific feminist model, liberal or otherwise. There has also been some debate, in recent years, regarding the nature of ‘patriarchy’, that is, a social system which operates in the interests and benefit of men rather than women. It is questionable whether ‘patriarchy’ is still the most effective term to use to talk about or conceptualise the exercise of societal power (Mills, 2003). The trouble with utilizing a term, for example, ‘Patriarchy’ is that it accepts a specific dependability to man centric society itself, along these lines making it harder to challenge and change. The utilization of the term additionally expects that a culture is man centric all through, causing it to appear as though ladies are totally weak. In later work, women’s activists have attempted to foster approaches to inspecting societies so these investigations can pinpoint areas of separation, while simultaneously featuring the procedures that ladies have used to oppose that segregation.

Language, Gender and Feminism presents students and researchers with key contemporary theoretical perspectives, methodologies and analytical frameworks in the field of feminist linguistic

analysis. (Mills, S., & Mullany, L. 2011). In the description feminism, the confidence in friendly, financial, and political balance of the genders. Albeit to a great extent starting in the West, women's liberation is showed worldwide and is addressed by different foundations focused on action for the benefit of ladies' privileges and interests.

Narrative elements is part of the novel itself, when you discuss about novel of course discuss about narrative elements, narrative elements is very important when you discuss about novel because it is part of novel. There are six elements in the novel such as character, plot, point of view, and setting. Discuss about the narrative elements is also talking about;

“A story does more than recount events; it recounts events in a way that renders them intelligible, thus conveying not just information but also understanding” (Velleman Vol.112, No.1 2003).

In this case it relates to the novel *Gilrs of Paper and Fire* written by Natasha with narrative elements helping to clarify the subaltern forms that occur, so that the forms of the subaltern are clear and can be understood more deeply by readers and also make the novel easier. This is for analysis. Introducing key concepts developed by previous theorist and contributing original ideas to the growing body of scholarship on stories (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), through the narrative elements of the story can be developed in a more directed and conceptual manner to highlight the narrative side hidden in the story that you wants to develop.

Character is assuming a significant part in the book. As one of the basic part of a story, a person's character, want and goal is reflected through the discourse and activity in a book. Abrams (1999) contends that characters are the people which is addressed in a story work who are deciphered by the peruser as being blessed with a specific virtue, scholarly, and passionate by derivations through they say, act and their unmistakable approach to saying it the discourse and from they do in the activity. Moreover, as indicated by Harvey (1965) states that character is individuals that was introduced by the writer's work like account work, screenplays, film, and story book. Character convey their own characteristics from the exchange and activity. In this manner, the peruser can comprehend their inclination, contemplations, goals, and passionate. Character is likewise can be ordered on the job of play. In the first place, it called a significant person or the primary person which is the person has huge aim and job in the story. Second, it called supporting person by which the person affects the plot.

Plot is a story line that occur in the book. It is additionally the game plan of occasion that assembled the story. (McKee, 1997) contends that plot configuration comprises of the grouping of exposition, rising action, climax, falling action, and resolution, a more present day kind of plot might have a scaled down plot and curve plot as a development of the exemplary plot. The contention in the story by and large is a substance of the artistic work that ultimately from the plot. As per (Mayer, 2011) there are two sort of contentions that occurred in each abstract work like inner clash and outer struggle. Inside struggle is kind of contention occur inside the person, and generally the contention about moral and mental issues. Outside struggle is a sort of contention that ordinarily happen in an artistic work with an undertaking type. It is called outside struggle on the grounds that the hero is confronting a contention physical against men, nature or society.

Point of view in literature enlarges students' vision and fosters critical thinking by dramatizing the various ways a situation can be seen. This is especially valuable in international classes, wherein students from traditional education systems are often unfamiliar with critical ways of reading, questioning, and analyzing texts. Short stories told from a single, limited point of view or through the

eyes of one character make excellent vehicles for demonstrating the extent to which limited knowledge or an emotional stake in the events colors a character's vision (Oster, 1989)

As reacted to stories and dissect their impressions, they perceive how their data was separated through a perspective and restricted by it; moreover, they start to perceive how their own encounters, societies, or values influence their perspectives. When understudies perceive how perspective and compassion can be controlled in a story, they are appointed composing undertakings expecting them to move perspectives in a given story or in their very own account. They should talk with various voices, see with various eyes, which encourages more adaptable perusing, composing, and thinking. In addition, contact with writing animates more inventive understudy composing, and with it an increment of critical detail and suitable non-literal language

Setting is by and large shape the time, spot, and social climate in the story. As per (Holman, 1972) setting is a foundation of the story. There are four components that comprise in the setting, for example, area, occupations and conduct of the characters, time which the activity happen, and the climate and the state of the characters. It implies that setting shapes the story to be totally wealth. Setting is likewise make the story more explicit so the peruser can envision and decipher the story into their own insight.

This study applied Spivak (1985) to find out subaltern portrayed and realize the impact of subaltern in *Girls of Paper and Fire* novel by Nathasa Ngan using Spivak Theory.

B. Method

The writer uses the qualitative approach to complete his study, in this case which generate qualitative data through the use to analysis the books. This allows the writer to talk deeper, analyze and determine the parts needed in giving the subaltern issue of the novel *Girls of paper and fire* by Natasha Ngan. According to Bodgan (1998) state that qualitative research is descriptive which the data is collected in the form of workor picture rather than numbers. Data in the form of quotes from documents, field notes, and interviews or except from videotapes, audiotapes, or electronic communication are used to present the findings of the study.

Speaks to the information statement writings collect from the content novel *Girls of paper and fire* since the subjective methodology wants to analyze the information in words structure and the story inside the books. It clearly instructs that the emotional philosophy can be used in separating unique capacities as the insightful works, generally, portray a wonder of individuals' lives, and it moreover gives an assessment or an examination, for instance, subtitles, implications, and discernment about the wonder in sentences or words. The main data sources were taken from novel *Girls of paper and fire*, released on November 6, 2018, New York. *Girls of paper and fire* are a 2018 American novel composed and coordinated by Natasha Ngan.

After the data were chosen and collected, this study define the analysis with the essay form. These essay describe a depiction also the impact of subaltern. The study was coordinated by Gayatri's theory. Start with understanding the theory, novel and analysis all of the aspect related to the novel and the theory subaltern.

C. Findings and Discussion

This chapter discusses about subaltern experienced by the characters in Natasha Ngan fiction novel entitled *Girls of Paper and Fire*. The novel represented a practice of subaltern as reflected on the character in the novel. The practice can be seen in the form of words that represents how the

characters experiencing the subaltern phenomenon. In her work *Girls of Paper and Fire* implicitly revealed the subaltern phenomenon in which the women in the lower status who is living in Ikhara kingdom which is forced to accept her destiny, move on to the kingdom by the order of the king to obey the calling that has been going on for years t. The story was about a young women names Lei. She has to deal with the king to come and serve the king as paper girl from her village by order of the king, what happens to her has done to the mother before and in here Lei prepare againts her destiny as the paper girl trough the big barrier called subaltern.

Subaltern Depicted in Girls of Paper and Fire

On the narrative element above, the relationship between subaltern and narrative element have been caught in these novel. Subaltern found through the characters, plot, point of view, and setting such as, Introducing key concepts developed by previous theorist and contributing original ideas to the growing body of scholarship on stories (John Wiley & Sons, 2009), through the narrative elements above refers to subaltern and the story can be created in a guided and theoretical way to feature the account side concealed in the story that you needs to create. As seen in the story.

Tien always laughs about that. “They don’t believe you are pure paper.” She tells me conspiratorially.

“They say must be part demon to have eyes the color of the New Year’s moon. What I don’t tell her is that sometimes I wish I were part of demon” (Ngan, 2018, p.5).

This quote explains his discontent with being part of the paper status and Lei wanting to be a part of the better status. This is a form of subaltern who come from herself, basically the main character can be whatever she wants in other words she has full control about herself such as the quote above even she has good eyes, the golden eyes here is the character of the demon status but she is just paper casted and she always wanted to turn as a demon, but in this case the main character does not have rights over herself because the rules in Ikhara was done by the king.

The oppression of women clearly described by Spivak in his book. Spivak emphasizes the importance of looking at the unconscious mechanism of hegemony, regarding the use of subaltern word attributes in labeling someone from the lower class and even from minority. They are in a hegemonic discourse which means there is some kind of unconscious manipulation of what they are doing (de Kock, 1992). The unconscious oppression that the royal soldiers do against people who are subalternized, is a hegemonic mechanism that occurs in the Ikhara community, Lei and the other girls have considered what happened to them as fate that they must accept and have to live because of it. is a must or it will become a black smudge in their future life, in other words they have no choice but to follow and accept what has been destined for them.

In the book *Girls of Paper and Fire*, the subaltern is represented by Lei as the main character, her mother, and seven of her friends. Not only that, Subaltern also lives under the patriarchy, and the subject is fighting the social patriarchy as the target of subaltern. As the Gayatri says “for if in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow” (Spivak, 1985, p. 27). She cannot speak to anyone much less against the life of a woman who is subalternized like living in a shadow like Lei said is refers to casted in the novel *girls of paper and fire* “cursed years to be played out in the fire and shadow” (Ngan, 2018, Casted). The following quote above what Spivak said representative how Lei feels in this book.

Ikhara Kingdom believes words have power, that the character of our language can bless or curse a live. Inside pendant is a single character one word that we believe will reveal a person to destiny

and my life will be blessed, as my parents hoped when they saved for my ceremony, or whether my fate is something far darker. Cursed years to be played out in the fire and shadow.

The words 'cursed years to be played out in the fire and shadow' Lei's feels her life like a curse because whatever she wants to do her life has been determined until her death, cannot fight and only accepts it follows the path that has been written, to change his life is a form of rebellion that occurs against the subaltern label on her to live freely and manage her life privately without any interference from others because living in the shadow means that he cannot show his true identity or personality and 'played out in the fire' means her life is always in danger. What has been said before are kinds of subaltern what happens to Lei have been explained by Spivak.

The impact of subaltern through the women in Girls of Paper and Fire

In the novel *girls of paper and fire* it is found that the subaltern has an impact on the person who is subalternized, this explains that the subaltern has a negative impact and it is related to the statement who support this case. As explained in the novel *the girls of paper and fire* "[c]ursed years to be played out in the fire and shadow" (Ngan, 2018, Casted) it can be happen because Lei is the paper strata and his mother are also the eight of chosen girls from the previous generation's paper strata before Lei's era. In other words, the impact that occurs on the main character has an impact on his psychology, which occurs in Lei's daily mental life as a sub-alternated person. In the quote above the main character feels that she is always in danger and his life is a very terrible thing as the explain above, she is always haunted by the shadows of her mother's that her life will be the same fate as her mother, departure when she was brought to the palace as the chosen one by the royal guard and it happened to her, Lei has been a part of the girls who has been chosen by the king. In this case it can be concluded the impact of the subaltern that occurs on Lei is influential on his life, so that her life always feels uncomfortable and her life is only a shadow, the meaning of the is Lei is never be as the main character in his own life because she lives under the rules by Ikhara, or it can be interpreted as shadow is a person who cannot show her true personality. In the explanation Spivak in her book of subaltern depicted as minority groups in the book *girls of paper and fire* Ngan's says;

"for all of you, to understand that you have free time to yourselves here in the palace. You can't just leave Women's Court as you like."(Ngan, 2018, p. 65).

D. Conclusion

From the data analysis, there are several points can be concluded. Regarding from the novel, which discusses about the depiction about subaltern after she has been chosen to Ikhara kingdom which reflected by the main character in the novel *Girls of paper and fire* by Natasha Ngan. It is also represented the effects of being subaltern. In the analysis, it is found that the protagonist Lai represents the subaltern after choosing to the Ikhara. The portrayal of subaltern in the main character is seen from her acts as the women who wants to fight her destiny.

Then, from the analysis is also found the impact of being subaltern. The first impact is the protagonist experiences the story of her mother who has been taken by the king of Ikhara kingdom is the same experience as her now. The second is protagonist try to escape and ignore her fate. Then, the last impact is the protagonist feels her life is nothing such as shadow cannot even show her true face. This study is analyzed the depiction of subaltern in *Girls of paper and fire* novel by Natasha Ngan. The first suggestion goes to the students who want to analyze subaltern and also the effects of being subalternized. Then, the writer also suggests for the future researcher in the same subject can use different theories and different object in order to reveal more about subaltern. moreover, in order

to make the analysis easier to do, please read the novel carefully to find the character's behavior easily. To the readers, *Girls of paper and fire* novel is very good novel that gives deep understanding about the women which is formatting the subaltern on the character in the novel.

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