

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter consists of five subchapters which introduces briefly about how this study would explain the analysis of the novel. It covers up the background of the study, research questions, research objectives, scope and limitation, and significances of the study. Moreover, further explanations are available in the following paragraphs.

1.1 Background of the Study

Women and men are two different kinds of creatures. Each of them has distinctive characteristics that set them apart. These distinctive characteristics include physical shape, way of communicating, behavior, and way of thinking. Cohen (2003) states in his book *The Essential Difference: The Truth About the Male and Female Brain* that there is "no doubt" that men and women think differently due to differences in our brain structure (p.1). Cohen's statement implies that men and women think differently due to differences in brain anatomy. Furthermore, women, as contrasted to men, tend to make decisions based on their feelings rather than logical thinking. As a result of this differences, men and society usually look down on women and treat women arbitrarily.

Since ancient times, men and society have impelled women to conform to their ideas of what women ought to be. Women must fulfill the obligations set up for them by society and men. What women wish to do or what they want to be cannot be freely chosen by them. Moreover, men and society always believe that women are subordinate and must bow down to men. Their actions indirectly become a form of normalizing patriarchal practices in a society based on patriarchal ideology.

In patriarchy, gender is defined similarly with masculine and feminine imagery which depicting male and female as two opposing types of human beings. Each gender is assigned an unchanging nature fixed in the body and permanently separated from the other in patriarchal ideology. Johnson (2014) proposed that “the patriarchal ideology that promotes male privilege and women's subjugation devalues the human traits connected with being female while also conditioning males to covet and despise women for being able to incorporate those same qualities into their lives” (p.61). Johnson's statement implies that patriarchy is tightly bound with two notions including male's privilege and women's subjugation. As a result, there are plenty forms of oppression happen to women.

The oppression experienced by women has more or less affected the identity and activities of women in society. In fact, because of this oppression, many women find it difficult to express their talents. Oppression of women can happen anywhere, not only in the domestic sphere but also in the public sphere. An example of oppression in the domestic sphere is the act of forcing women to serve their respective families and forbidding them to have a career according to their abilities. Meanwhile, examples of oppression in the public space that women often experience are restrictions on women's participation in several aspects of life, giving lower wages than men's wages, marginalization, subordination and also sexual violence.

Sexual violence is a form of oppression that is often experienced by women and it can happen anywhere and anytime. Katz (2006) states that "sexual violence can occur in a variety of settings, including homes, workplaces, schools, and public places." It can manifest itself in a variety of ways, including verbal threats, stalking, physical attack, and rape." (p. 16). Katz's statement implies that sexual violence can be in form physical or verbal. Some examples of sexual violence that women often experience are: rape, forced sex, or being given indecent comments related to their genitals. This action arises due to ideology that positions women as sexual objects and it also exacerbates the impact of

positions women as sexual objects and it also exacerbates the impact of oppression on women.

Recognizing that the oppression over woman has many negative effects particularly to the women as victims, there is a group of women who does various actions to fight for their rights. This group of women refuses to be subordinated and disrespected. They propose for equal rights including speaking and protecting themselves from men domination. The movement of women in fighting for their rights is known as the "feminist movement". The feminist movement has the goal of eliminating patriarchal culture or ideology and achieving equality between men and women in all aspects of life including: economic, political, legal, social, cultural and educational aspects.

Along with the emergence and development of the feminist movement in the world, many feminists start to dare expressing their ideas or complain about the oppression of the patriarchs. They began to express their feelings about the oppression they experienced through social media, print media, and in written essays. There are even many female writers that make literary works with woman struggle against oppression as their main idea. In addition, literary works that reveal women's lives under the patriarchal domination are worth reading, because they can broaden people's knowledge about the impact of women's oppression and the need for gender equality. Moreover, by reading these literary works, it can inspire women who are oppressed to start fighting for their equality.

In line with the background of the study, the writer interested in taking the issue about woman's struggle againsts the oppression as her focus of her study. The reason of taking that issue as her study depends on two reasons. First, the issue of woman's struggles against the oppression of patriarchal group is still relevant and widely discussed up until now. The second is it enables both the writer and the readers of this thesis to learn about how the oppression of woman and their struggle against the oppression being portrayed in a literary work such as novel, drama script, or prose. Besides, the author has big hopes that women in this

era will be aware of the way to against patriarchal groups after reading this thesis.

Aligned with focus of her study, the writer chooses *Milkman* novel which written by Anna Burns as the source of data. She chooses this novel because of three reasons. First, this novel has won three prestigious awards including Man Booker Prize for Fiction Awards in 2018, Orwell Prize for Political Fiction in 2019, and International Dublin Literary Award in 2020. Second, this novel is interesting to be read because it gives different vibes than the other novel because the writer names every character in the novel using the character's position in the society such as "*maybe boyfriend, first brother-in-law*", and "*third brother-in-law*". Last, *Milkman* novel appears to be one of the most readable novels for the reader, especially female readers, due to its unique touch within the plot and portrait of the main character's struggles to fight the oppression in form of marginalization, subordination and also violence done by men in her society such as: First brother-in-law, a Republican paramilitary named Milkman and also Somebody McSomebody that gives feminism sense.

The novel *Milkman* by Anna Burns tells the journey of the middle sister as the main character in the novel who lives in a society divided by religion and politics, and strict gender roles. The power dynamics in society create significant challenges for the middle sister. In fact, as the middle sister lives her life in the society, she experiences various forms of oppression from both men and the surrounding community due to rumors that she is having an affair with Milkman, a powerful figure in the society. Despite her insistence that the rumors were untrue, the rigid gender norms in the community led to her being ostracized and the subject of gossip.

The Middle Sister's interaction with Milkman also shows the dynamics of power and control that exist in society. Milkman, as the older and more powerful male, exerts significant control over the Middle sister and expects her to conform to traditional gender roles. The novel also shows that. throughout the story, the middle sister struggles to break free from patriarchal expectations and power

structures in her community. She resists pressure to conform to gender roles and rejects the notion that her worth is determined by her ability to marry and have children. Instead, she asserts her own independence and begins to discover her own identity as an individual. Despite the challenges she faces, the elder sister ultimately becomes a symbol of hope and resistance to the patriarchal system that limits women's choices and freedom.

Although the background of this story is not clearly mentioned in the novel, there are several sentences in *Milkman* novel indicate that the environment where Middle sister lives is embracing patriarchal ideology. One of the sentences in the novel that illustrates the existence of patriarchal ideology in the novel is as follows:

This was the 'I'm male and you're female' territory. This was what you could say if you were a girl to a boy, or a woman to a man, or a girl to a man, and what you were not – least not officially, least not in public, least not often – permitted to say. This was certain girls not being tolerated if it was deemed they did not defer to males, did not acknowledge the superiority of males, might even go so far as almost to contradict males, basically, the female wayward, a species insolent and far too sure of herself. (Burns, 2018, p.8)

The sentence above describes a society with strict gender roles and expectations, where women are supposed to submit to men and recognize their dominance. Women who do not conform to these norms are seen as "insolent" and "overconfident". This emphasizes how patriarchal civilization limits women's freedom and autonomy, and how they are punished for deviating from traditional gender roles. The sentence also implies that these gender roles are reinforced through social conventions and expectations, and that individuals who do not conform will face punishment.

Overall, the sentence shows how patriarchal civilization limits women's independence and agency, and how they are punished for questioning traditional gender norms. Moreover, the sentence above shows one of the characteristics patriarchal ideology which is in line with Millett's concept of patriarchal ideology in her book *Sexual Politics*. Millett (2000), states that at the core of patriarchal

ideology is the notion of male supremacy (p. 149). Millett's statement implies that one of the characteristic of patriarchal ideology is the existence of men domination over women.

Since the novel was published, there are four researchers who analyse it by making a journal or thesis with various focus or topic. The four examples of research which used it as their source of data are: First, journal under titled *Discursive Representation of Women's Subjectivity: A Feminist Critique of Ann Burn's Milkman* written by Fazl-E-Haq, Dr. Aamir Shehzad, Sumbal Parveen which attempts to analyse the novel *Milkman* by Anna Burn from a feminist perspective. The second is thesis under titled *Commodification of Women in Anna Burns' Milkman* written by Lochan Neupane which focused on examining how women are commodified in Anna Burn's *Milkman*. The third is thesis under titled *Narrating a Self Under the Shroud of Social Control in Anna Burns'* written by Ingvild Rytter which investigates how societal control mechanisms might affect self-development and how this is mirrored in Anna Burns' *Milkman*'s narrative voice. The last is journal under titled *Gender Inequality In Burns' Milkman: A Marxist Feminist Study* written by Tabassum Maqbool, Farhan Hafeez, and Yumna Shahid which focuses to investigates gender inequality in Anna Burns' novel *Milkman* by applying Marxist Feminism Theory.

All of those previous studies above tend to analyse *Milkman* novel by applying the same theory but with different focus. Those studies apply feminism theory since one of the problems shown in the novel is patriarchy and woman oppression. However, there is a little idea that readers and the previous researchers may not have recognized yet. This study seeks to shed light on the fact that *Milkman* novel depicts not only the problem of women's oppression, but also the struggles against oppression through some ways. The main character of the novel is an eighteen-year-old girl called Middle sister who experiences oppression and fights to oppose the oppression. In fact, Middle sister acts as the narrator in this novel who tells how the story goes on.

Furthermore, for data of her study, she uses the narrator's narrations on the basis of research questions or the focus of the study. Regarded to the data above, the writer is interested to analyse the novel by applying Radical Feminism theory proposed by Kate Millett. She interested in analysing this novel by applying Radical Feminism theory of Kate Millett because this theory focuses on vanishing patriarchal practices a way to liberate women from oppression which is correlated to the focus of this study.

1.2 Research Questions

In line with the title and the background of this study, there are two research questions as follows:

1. What oppression does the main character experience in the novel?
2. How does the main character struggle for being free from the oppression?

1.3 Research Objectives

Based on the research questions of the study above, this study attempts to discover:

1. The representation of oppression experienced by the main character in the novel.
2. The main character's struggle in order to free herself from the oppression.

1.4 Significances of the Study

These studies are concentrated on two prominent objectives. The first significance is theoretical, while the second significance is a practical. *Theoretically*, this study is expected to give various advantages in the development of science especially in literary research field. The first advantage is to enrich the development of Radical Feminism concept in literary works, especially in the topic of women oppression and the struggles against women oppression. The second advantage is to deliver a better understanding and a new perspective of the Milkman novel. The last advantage is to enrich the treasury of

literary work research, especially novels through the approach of feminism so that, the readers can know the relationship between literature, oppression toward women, male domination, and radical feminism.

Practically, it is expected that this study raised awareness of the seemingly innocuous Radical feminism idea. In addition, the result of this study is also expected to be a reference and alternative information for every writer of academic research especially for the students of English Study Program in University of Trunojoyo Madura that interest in analyzing woman oppression and the struggle against the oppression as the effect of patriarchy in a literary work. Hopefully, this study can be useful also for other researchers who do similar research.

1.5 Scope and Limitation

This study attempted to analyze the representation of women oppression and women's struggle against the oppression toward the main character as the effect of patriarchal practices. In order to set a better focus, the data that are analyzed are limited on the narrator's narrations which represent the oppression and struggles experienced by the main character in "*Milkman*" novel written by Anna Burns. In addition, the limitation gives better ways to the researcher in establishing direct study. Since the data collected are limited into the represent the oppression and the way to overcome the oppression experienced by the main character in the novel as the effect of patriarchy, the scope of this study is Radical Feminism theory proposed by Kate Millett.