

Misogyny Traces Behind Powerful Female Representation In George R.R. Martin's *A Dance With Dragons* (2011)

Maylda Auliffia Aztari

Magister Sastra, Universitas Gadjah Mada

Alamat: Bulaksumur, Caturtunggal, Kec. Depok, Kabupaten Sleman, Daerah Istimewa Yogyakarta 55281

Korespondensi penulis: mayldaau@gmail.com*

Abstract. *In spite of the progress made toward gender equality, women are still subject to harassment on the basis of the traditional gender roles in today's society. This research is intended to analyze the depiction or representation of women in literary work in order to reveal misogyny lurking in the text. The novel used in this research is A Dance with Dragons novel (2011) by George R.R. Martin. The issue of representation and misogyny tendencies are found in the novel. Qualitative research with a feminist approach was applied for the purpose to find the research objective which is to know the way Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre are presented in the novel and to identify the misogyny lurking behind Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre's efforts to maintain their position. This analysis employs de Beauvoir's Second Sex theory of women as "The Other". The research reveals that behind the three powerful female characters, there is misogyny lurking behind Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre's efforts in maintaining their powerful representation in George R.R. Martin's A Dance with Dragons novel. The novel contains several examples of misogynist depictions, some of which include the objectification of women and an underestimation or undervaluation of female characters.*

Keywords: *Feminist Criticism, Misogyny, Patriarchy, Representation, Second Sex.*

Abstrak. Terlepas dari kemajuan yang dicapai menuju kesetaraan gender, perempuan masih mengalami pelecehan berdasarkan peran gender tradisional dalam masyarakat saat ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis penggambaran atau representasi perempuan dalam karya sastra untuk mengungkap misogini yang tersembunyi dalam teks. Novel yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah novel *A Dance with Dragons* (2011) karya George R.R. Martin. Isu representasi dan kecenderungan misogini ditemukan dalam novel. Penelitian kualitatif dengan pendekatan feminis diterapkan dengan tujuan untuk menemukan tujuan penelitian yaitu untuk mengetahui cara Daenerys, Arya, dan Melisandre ditampilkan dalam novel dan untuk mengidentifikasi kebencian terhadap wanita yang bersembunyi di balik upaya Daenerys, Arya, dan Melisandre untuk mempertahankan posisi mereka. Analisis ini menggunakan teori *Second Sex* de Beauvoir tentang perempuan sebagai "The Other". Penelitian ini mengungkapkan bahwa di balik ketiga karakter wanita yang kuat, ada kebencian terhadap wanita yang bersembunyi di balik upaya Daenerys, Arya, dan Melisandre dalam mempertahankan representasi kuat mereka dalam novel. Novel ini memuat beberapa contoh penggambaran misoginis, beberapa di antaranya termasuk objektifikasi perempuan dan meremehkan karakter wanita.

Kata kunci: Kritik Feminis, Misogini, Patriarki, Representasi, Second Sex.

INTRODUCTION

Gender seems to be a component of our culture and society. Typically, the issue is group subordination—lack of protection for women's rights. Equality and ending all types of women's inequality are often discussed. The issue frequently involves males subordinating females, as a woman is usually subordinate to men in patriarchal societies. The patriarchal society that sees women as subordinates still exists (Sampson 2020, 187). Many writers and

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* Maylda Auliffia Aztari, mayldaau@gmail.com

theologians believe women are socially inferior. Alexander Pope, an Augustan poet, and satire said, "Most women have no character," displaying his lack of respect for women (Düllman 2009, 1). Poets view women as lesser and less valuable in society and literature.

Due to patriarchy, traditional stereotypes persist. In patriarchal civilization, women's oppression was natural. Oppression against women has many causes, including social standing. According to Rosida and Rejeki (2017), lower-status women are more likely to be oppressed by men. The patriarchy still limits women's rights today. This humiliating idea of women was common in Western society, so it is little wonder women accepted their inferior status. In English literature, Jane Austen is a prominent example. Women hid their brilliance instead of showing it off. In *Northanger Abbey* (1817), Austen urged educated women to hide it. Jane Austen published her novel anonymously to hide her talent (Irvine 2005, 13). It reveals how Western women accepted their subordinate role by avoiding labor for fear of being judged. Women aristocracy were expected to marry and have kids.

In the 19th century, women pushed for equal standing with men under feminism. Feminism seeks gender equality in politics, the economy, and society (Hawkesworth 2006, 29). According to Sarah (2001, 193), the feminist movement attempts to debunk gender stereotypes. In this scenario, critics examine the portrayal of women in literature to uncover misogyny. Misogyny manifests as objectification, anger, male privilege, and demeaning women. (Kramarae 2000, 1374). Men's hearts are full of hatred for women (Illing 2020). In this example, feminist critics believe the text contains misogynistic lurking.

George R.R. Martin's *A Dance with Dragons* (2011) is a unique case for feminist critique that should look for misogynist aspects in literary work. George R. R. Martin's novel was published on July 12, 2011, and won a Locus Award for Best Fantasy Novel in 2012. The fifth book in *A Song of Ice and Fire* is *A Dance with Dragons*. First released in 1996, *A Game of Thrones* is followed by *A Clash of Kings* in 1998, *A Storm of Swords* in 2000, and *A Feast for Crows* in 2005. The sixth volume, *The Winds of Winter*, and the seventh volume, *A Dream of Spring*, will be published. The study focuses on the fifth volume, entitled *A Dance with Dragons* because many female representation issues are found in novels.

A Dance with Dragons is about the war for the Iron Thrones when other countries threaten the Seven Kingdoms. Many women have major or minor roles in this work. The novel shows its female characters as brave and powerful, not misogynist. This image contradicts the notion that women are weak and inferior. This is seen in how Daenerys Targaryen commands dragons. She and her troops conquered Meereen, an Essos city. Another important character is Arya Stark. She is the daughter of northern house Stark. In the fifth book, the faceless man in

Bravos trains her as an assassin. Melisandre, the Red Priestess, is a formidable character. Because she can converse with God, the lady is brave and revered. Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre are prominent women in the plot.

In contrast to *The God of Small Things* (1997) by Arundhati Roy or *EILEEN* (2015) by Ottessa Moshfegh, which show women as weak and passive, this work masks the misogynist issue under a strong representation of women. Despite these strong female characters, this narrative is dominated by men, and women are unclear. This novel is ambiguous. It is vital to condemn this depiction. This study uses feminist theories, notably De Beauvoir's *Second Sex*. This notion connects with second-wave feminism's equality for women. Equal rights and opportunities for women are the goals of second-wave feminism. After World War II, this was especially significant to women's right to work and workplace equality. This approach allows the study to examine the novel's portrayal of women. This approach can show if powerful female representation challenges the stereotype or is still misogynistic.

Feminist literary critique arose in the early 1900s. Critics and researchers utilize this method to analyze literary works. However, many researchers use a female author's work to analyze the fight against patriarchy or women's empowerment. Seven related studies exist. Jasmine and Selvalakshmi (2021) study Arya Stark's struggle against gender stereotypes in the literature. Suárez (2017) analyses feminist value in *A Song Of Ice And Fire*. Alarcos (2010) and Susilowati (2021) studied female characters in their work. The last, Alqaryouti and Ismail (2019), Bozorgimoghaddam and Moeen (2014), and Resti and Soelistyarini (2016) analyze women's portrayal as the second sex. This research will be reviewed. This study aims to comprehend and do better research than the previous studies. This work is captivating because some female characters are powerful and equal to males in that era. Some patriarchal interpretations of their characters are intriguing. This study will investigate how each powerful female character is depicted in the novel and discover if misogyny lurks underneath powerful female representation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Beauvoir's beliefs of women's oppression were initially articulated in *The Second Sex*, in which she asserted that the essence of the problem is that women are framed by males as "the Other," while men are constructed as the self and the subject. On the other hand, females are the Other, neither self nor subject, but rather an object, because they do not define themselves; men do this for them. Aristotle once stated that a woman is just an imperfect form of a male. It is stated in the translated book *The Second Sex* by Judith Thurman (2011). Thus,

Beauvoir stated that it is not fair how women are subordinated just because they have different sex biologically. Women are depicted as the second citizen in society; that is one reason men seem superior and see women as weak humans that could not be equal to men. Therefore, the case of misogyny actions often happen.

Several studies have found that the portrayal of women in novels supports feminist principles like gender emancipation. Baines Alarcos (2010, 20) and Susilowati (2021, 8) studied women in novels. The research above contributes to the commonality of the idea that powerful female representation's resistance toward patriarchal treatment can take numerous forms, such as rebelling against it and speaking up for our choice.

This analysis follows three earlier studies on women's characterization as the 'Other' in novels. Alqaryouti and Ismail (2019, 209), Bozorgimoghaddam and Moeen (2014, 517), and Resti and Soelistyarini (2016, 136) portrayed female characters in novels employing Simone De Beauvoir's 'Other' notion. Simone De Beauvoir calls the novel's female protagonists *The Second Sex*. Even if the novel's female characters are active and skilled, they remain subordinate to men.

Jasmine and Selvalakshmi (2021, 1168) and Suárez (2017, 66) examined the same character on different objects. The research examined misogyny in the novel's portrayal of women. Previous studies have suggested that Martin's strong female characters, such as Arya and Daenerys, may inspire modern women to abandon traditional roles. This study, unlike others, explores the struggle behind literary women's depiction to evaluate if misogyny lurks.

METHOD

This study employs qualitative research with a feminist approach using de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* theory. Qualitative research will aid the researcher in building and providing a more in-depth understanding of the data obtained from the qualitative study (Tenny and Brannan, 2021). Moreover, as a male author writes this novel, the approach of feminism can dissect the misogyny tendencies of the author in creating the representation of powerful women.

The concept of 'the Other' assisted the researcher in finding the explicit and implicit data through the dialogue and narrative that includes a tendency of hatred towards women, especially Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre. Thus, the objective of this study can be met. Furthermore, feminism in literature is also employed in this study. The representation of women should be viewed with a feminist lens to dissect whether this representation is stereotypical or against traditional stereotypes.

The study employs two data sources to collect the data for the analysis. The researcher conducts a close reading of the novel to understand the novel deeply, collecting primary data from the novel, such as dialogue and narration that showed the portrayal of the characters. The researcher also reads and collects secondary data from books, journals, and website articles on a similar topic to this study. In the final step, the researcher concludes the main point based on the analysis.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Powerful Female Representation in the novel

Many researchers discuss the novel's portrayal of women. The researcher's story depicts women in various situations. Some women are considered heroic, valiant, and strong, whereas others are feeble, submissive, or reckless. The book's most brave and powerful characters are Daenerys Targaryen, Arya Stark, and Melisandre. They are the story's heroines. Women shape the remainder of their lives according to their ideals of a woman. Women should have self-worth and self-belief because they were not defined before birth. People must improve themselves to be seen for who they are (Adityawarman and Aryan 2019, 58). Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre are all destined to have the power to compete with the men.

Daenerys being a leader and queen shows that men and women have equal opportunities. Men respected her more once she gained authority because she was honored like a queen, and Arya, who, despite being a princess and lady of Winterfell, has defied traditional female norms from the start of the novel. Melisandre's magical power makes her attractive. Her presence is as significant as men's, if not more. She is valuable. Many obstacles stand in their way when they struggle for independence from patriarchal people. Men will rule a patriarchal society, says Napikoski (2020). Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre defy traditional gender roles to promote gender equality. Daenerys Targaryen is one of the most well-known fictional characters created by George R.R. Martin. She is a great female character because she opposes the patriarchal culture's gender stereotypes. Her own family trafficked her to a Dothraki tribe. She was obedient as a child. She learned to handle her faith over time. Her awful experience teaches her not to obey orders blindly. She needs courage and strength. Dany's work against slavery in one city region had a significant financial impact. Since she abolished slavery, most Meereen citizens, especially the men, have declared war against her.

After closely reading Daenerys Targaryen's character, researchers figured out how to portray Daenerys. The first portrayal is bold and courageous. Daenerys, 15 years old, is bold and ready to tackle any challenge because she has gone through a lot as a child. Here is some

evidence. *"Daenerys: Is that meant to frighten me? I lived in fear for fourteen years, my Lord. I woke afraid each morning and went to sleep afraid each night ... but my fears were burned away the day I came forth from the fire."* (523). Daenerys began to believe she needed to be fearless when she discovered she could finally stand independently. Virginia Woolf considers people who have authority and struggle for women's freedom are ideal females (Halijah 2021, 41). So women will not sink farther into patriarchy. Daenerys' representations are feminist ideals. Daenerys' bravery shines in this novel, especially after one of her soldiers is killed by the Sons of the Harpy. Her trusted Soldier's death has caused her much sadness. She realized then that many clans planned to attack her. Instead of being afraid, she confronted her Soldier's killer.

On the other hand, Arya Stark is different from other girls who merely want a title. She desired independence. Arya's character is unique. She is courageous and intelligent. Her journey was challenging. She can escape without a man's help. Arya Stark has brown hair, grey eyes, and a skinny body. Her appearance makes others think she is male. Arya is unlike her sister and other girls her age. Arya Horseface was her nickname since she was often dirty and had a long face. In the novel, she serves the House of Black and White in Braavos while blind. The researchers figured out Arya Stark's character after examining. Arya is brave like Daenerys. She becomes an assassin instead of a lady. Arya believes she can do whatever she wants and still be appreciated, even if society believes women should be feminine. *"How would she do that? Arya was always quick and clever."* (518). One of the female characters who is famous for her rebellious character toward the traditional gender roles is Arya. She proves that women can also do what men do, fighting or battling. His brother recognizes her and that she is clever and fast. She ran away from home to prove that she could be whomever she wanted to everyone who underestimated her.

Melisandre, unlike the two previously listed figures, is rarely discussed in academic discourses. Melisandre's character is appealing since she seems powerful throughout the text. Melisandre is considered stunningly gorgeous. Her red hair, eyes, and skin are perfect. Melisandre wears red, like her faith's scarlet priests. Melisandre's mystique makes her difficult to approach. Her natural magic power makes her unique, and many citizens accept Melisandre since she offers magical skills; her presence in the story is equal to men. *"She made it sound a simple thing, and easy. ... the more effortless the sorcery appears, the more men fear the sorcerer."* Melisandre needs no effort to prove that she can be around the male characters. She has a skill that is useful for everyone, especially men battling to achieve a throne. It is true that men are fear and more appreciate women because she is a sorcerer. That is why Melisandre is

essential and is accepted to be allied with men. Achieving gender equality requires the removal of social injustices and forms of inequality that affect both men and women; this is a necessary step toward accomplishing this goal (Maulana 2021, 2).

2. Misogyny Behind Powerful Female Characters

This novel is set in the Middle Ages. As a result, many believed women were inferior throughout that era. We all know sexism may lead to hostile behavior toward women, which is done in a sexist way. Despite portraying Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre as heroic and powerful women, researchers found elements of misogyny in the text. Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre live in a period where women are considered second-class citizens. Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* challenged the assumption that women lacked personality and quality. De Beauvoir and other feminists asserted that women have no "natural" distinctions. In this novel, some women have equal political chances as men. They believe women should have equal possibilities since patriarchal culture and gender stereotypes no longer restrict them. Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre agree.

As the city's leader, Daenerys is constantly putting all her efforts into ensuring her dominant position. However, Daenerys is a woman, which indicates that the society that surrounds her continues to consider her as a part of the Second Sex. No matter how efficiently Daenerys rules the city, society, and especially the male rivals competing with her to take control of the city, continue to underestimate her. Most of the male characters in this story seem to be of the viewpoint that males are superior to women in many aspects of life, mainly when ruling a city. *"Daenerys, let me be honest with you, as a befits a friend. You will not make Meereen rich and fat and peaceful. You will only bring it to destruction."* (229). Xaro misunderstands Daenerys' leadership abilities based on their discourse. He feels women shouldn't be very fatigued and always need male help. Xaro urged Daenerys to get aid from her male characters because males feel women are less competent when making decisions. Women are seen as socially inferior to men and more submissive. This is a product of social structure and organizations, not an accident (Ariani 2013, 53). Men think Daenerys will fail again because she failed once. Daenerys thinks she can handle things alone. Her councilors and other male characters feel men should accomplish more despite this.

In the narration of Jon Snow's point of view, it is mentioned, *"But in the end, she is just a little girl"* (518). The author's narration creates the impression that the novel looks down on women. Arya has a privilege, but, despite everything, male characters continue to place a low value on her. The novel's portrayal of Arya, which is demeaning and insulting, reveals that the novel believes that men are dominant and superior to women. Arya, however, is proving

through this book's journey that women can be just as equal as men. According to De Beauvoir (2010, 23), the expectations that are placed on a woman in order for another to achieve their goals make it more difficult for the woman to attain her own goals; after all, she must still be a woman, and that she should not lose her femininity. Arya believed that she could achieve her goals despite losing her femininity. From the early of the story, Arya is different from other girls of her age who look feminine and act like a princess. She does not like the idea that women could not look masculine and do masculine things.

Further evidence is portrayed in this narration, "*Melisandre had seen his danger before, had tried to warn the boy of it. Enemies all around him, daggers in the dark. He would not listen*" (448). As the ally of the male characters, she always does her best as a partner. Whenever she sees something terrible that will happen, she always warns those who will be battling in the land. However, she is still doubted by men for some reasons. Once she tried to warn them, but they ignored her, something horrible happened. As a woman whom men surround, she is still considered the unperfect one. As Simone De Beauvoir stated about women as 'The Other,' Melisandre is deemed the other in this case. It is generally accepted that women have a lesser social position than men and are more submissive. According to Andersen (2019, 5), when women are subjected to unequal or unfair treatment, it can marginalize them and make it more difficult for them to participate as productive persons who make significant contributions to society and the economy. Other forms of misogyny can also be shown through the practice of objectification.

Objectification is something that continues to happen on a worldwide scale in these days and eras. It does not matter who they are; everyone can experience this. The great majority of those who have been objectified are women. On the other hand, this does not guarantee that men will never be objectified. There have been some men who have also been exposed to objectification. "*I have been rained on, and I have been sold. It is not the same. No man wants to be owned*" (227). It is clear that women are sold quickly to people as if she is an objects besides slavery. Daenerys and many female characters in the story are sold and exchanged for something. In Daenerys's case, her brother sold her to Dothraki and exchanged her with an army from Dothraki. Daenerys admits that no one wants to be owned, and so does her.

The following evidence shows how a woman objectified another woman to please her guest. "*When he lay with her, your wife was his property, to do as he would. By law, there was no rape*" (47). This conversation is a clear illustration of the masculine privilege that exists. It demonstrates how wealthy guys degrade and insult women. How Daenerys speaks demonstrates that women are only objects that may be acquired with minimal effort. The fact

that women are referred to as "property" in the evidence shown above clearly indicates that they are believed to be objects. In addition, these individuals are wealthy and enjoy a certain level of privilege. This also occurred during that historical period since women were believed to be citizens of a lower class. Beauvoir once stated that the reason women bring themselves down to the level of men is not that they are conscious of the fact that they are less than what they appear to be, but instead because they choose to accept their lower status in order to bring it in. This was said about the fact that women bring men into their lives. The fact is that she uses that phrase for a specific purpose. She purposely mentioned it to males in order to obtain something from them.

Another evidence of women's objectification is shown in this narration "*He does not love me, will never love me, but he will make use of me. Well and good.*" (458). Even though Melisandre is one of the crucial people on her team, she is still used as if she is an object by them. Even Melisandre knew she was only being used as a tool by her team. Furthermore, women are taught that they need to make themselves smaller than men. As a direct consequence of this, women are constantly pushed to sacrifice their sense of autonomy (Beauvoir 2010, 21). She consciously let people, especially men, use her, and take advantage of her.

CONCLUSION

To conclude the analysis above, It is shown in the novel *A Dance with Dragons* (2011) written by George R.R. Martin that women are capable of being leaders and accomplishing their goals, even though the society in which they live frequently devalues them. They need to maintain their passion and dedication, and they will be able to escape the oppressive society. Even though Daenerys, Arya, and Melisandre are portrayed as feminist ideals that confront patriarchal society, it turns out that this story contains misogynists lurking in the text. The work depicts misogyny through objectification, underestimation, and male privilege. The male characters treat Daenerys Targaryen, Arya Stark, and Melisandre demeaningly despite their social status. Traditional gender-role adherents have a lot of masculine privilege. Female characters find maintaining power and status difficult. They are still undervalued and viewed as objects by male characters, hence it will be harder for them to advance than for male characters. Nevertheless, women are still regarded as "the other;" more specifically, by the male characters who believe they can exert greater control over women because they assume that women will be unable to do so. This novel shows us that even if a woman is an important figure, there will always be a way to devalue them. Regardless of who they are or what they do, women living in a patriarchal society are vulnerable to receiving misogynistic treatment.

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