

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

At the end of 2018, Saudi Arabia women have finally gained their permission to get an official driving license, within the fight that they have been through. The first movement began in 1990, and about 47 women were driving and proceed to be arrested. The movement keeps ongoing and of course, some activists were thrown behind the bars just because they are fighting for their rights. Despite that Saudi Arabia were finally allow women to drive, these activists still went through many oppression. Agreed, that these women were then released, but many activists have not free of charge, and worst, being tortured inside the bail. Loujain Al-Hathloul is an activist of the women's rights movement and joined the protest against the restriction of female driving. She was arrested in May 2018 due to her protest against Saudi Arabia ban on women to drive movement and being charged with "attempting to destabilize the kingdom". Her sister, Alia Al-Hathloul, delivered the condition of Loujain to New York Times that her sister has been tortured: held in solitary confinement, beaten, given an electric shock, sexually harassed and threatened with rape and murder (Hubbard 2018).

Thus, the driving license is not mere than just a pass through the street, rather a fight back against the misogyny that has been through to this nation. Additionally, banning women to drive is not as easy to just walk within the streets. In an article from the New York Times, Manal-Al Sharif (Sengupta 2017) admitted there is

neither a proper pedestrian city nor proper public transportation that would minimize the rate of sexual harassment on the streets. Even though Al-Sharif already has her driving license and her car after she got married, she is still banned from driving a car due to Saudi's Law. The importance of driving her car thus might protect her from the unwanted harassment on the street, but Saudi wanted women just to be dependent on their spouse or any other men in charge.

After uploading her video of driving through YouTube, Manal Al-Sharif was imprisoned, followed by the exile of her family out of Saudi Arabia. After she was released, she followed her family to work in America. She felt relieved about how she can shout her thoughts. Hence, she uncovers her veil as a statement that she does not belong to the state nor the family, she is on her own will. She began to make a voice through the abuse of human rights in Saudi Arabia through talk show, including Ted Talk. She talks about how Saudi women should engage more in society and hence, voicing the rights of women to drive as she describe it as “Awareness really changes the conscience of society and the policy. (Marwan 2018)”

Reflecting how Al-Sharif also free of her own will through her appearance and traits as women, hence women are capable of their authority through their bodies, it should not alienate them to commodify their body, meaning that women also have power through it (Aratani 2019). Through their own consent, women can do whatever they want, be it an office job, a service job, or even becoming a prostitute. As contradictory as it sounds, prostitution has existed for a very long time. Prostitution itself is labeled as objectifying women, degrading themselves, and

making them a sexual desire for men only. However, by taking advantage of lust from either men or women, it is believed to have an authority of their body, in which they are consent serving the needs of sexual desire rather than being oppressed and forced to work as sex slaves.

Comparing to the second-wave feminism, the movement within Saudi Arabia's women rights movements are similar. Both of them seek equality within women, fight for the discrimination of women. In the 1960s, women were fighting for their rights of equal payments named Equal Pay Acts (Tong 2014, 24). John F Kennedy acknowledged the imbalance payment of women's wages through those days. In contrast with Saudi Women's rights on driving a car, they were instead silenced and many of them are imprisoned because of the Women to Drive Movement. Even though at the end of 2018 the wish was granted by King Salman, those who were imprisoned were not granted to be free from their accusation. All in all, it resonates with how women are being discriminated against within the abuse of power that authorities gave.

Regarding to the issue of women empowerment in Saudi Arabia, Andy Weir wrote a novel about a Middle Eastern woman name Jazz Bashara in *Artemis* (2017). She lives and fights over a mafia corporation, in which she is the main figure on the portrayal of women empowerment. Previously, he had written his successful novel entitled *The Martian*, in which he won Goodreads Choice Awards Best Science Fiction 2017, for the best sci-fi. He also won Audie Awards for Science Fiction 2015 for *The Martian* itself. Nonetheless, Weir depicts her as an independent woman who starts from the bottom as a porter, although at the end of the story she

is not able to aim her dream to become wealthy, she finally saves her beloved home city from a corrupted mafia who wants to take over it due to their main sources of a fiber optic aluminum that can only be found in the moon. She is the opposite of the traditional gender role that has been set: she is neither emotional, weak, nurturing, nor submissive. She is professional over her work, eager to break certain patriarchal rules to achieve her work, and braves enough to fight over a powerful man, despite her background as a porter who lives in poverty and deals with the illegal package.

Jasmine is entitled to her thoughts, appearance, and acts that drag her into the dangerous syndicate of the corporation. Even though the things that she has done before has had placed her in trouble, she gives herself the best thing she could do: selling and embracing her sexuality, appearance, and the talent that she has. Jasmine is not a prostitute, but she is a porter who has to do anything to save herself, as well as her beloved city at the moon, Artemis. She acknowledges her body and she knows what her body is capable of, and take most of the advantage into it. This makes her identified as a woman who embraces her sexuality amongst her male friends. Jasmine is not alienated nor reduced by her appearance or thoughts: she empowers herself through it.

Nevertheless, the previous study on this novel is different within what the novel tries to portray. Saskia Van Beek wrote a thesis on *The Reception of Gender Portrayal of Characters in Young Adult Fictions* (2018), in which she tries to seek the portrayal of genders amongst male and female authors by conducting a sampling from *The Goodreads* review of the books. There are ten novels, consisting of five

male authors and five female authors. It is found that a male who wrote a female main character wrote fairly disappointing writing in depicting a female main character. One of the novels which got criticized is *Artemis* itself, in which the reviewer is disappointed with how the main character being seen as a male gaze by her friends. Reflecting from Van Beek's thesis on gender portrayal in young adult fictions, an issue focuses on the rejection of patriarchal ideology, especially seeing through the perspective of power feminism should be confined.

Considering how the texts might be first seen as a rejection of patriarchy and portrays towards the issue that the author trying to portray, Genz and Brabon (2009, 64) explains power feminism as a self-definition of women and simply need to take advantage out of it. Thus, this study will focus on the portrayal of Jasmine as a female main character, who is seen as a representation of the opposite victim feminism. She is the representation of power feminism. Based on Naomi Wolf's theory on power feminism, it is perceived on how women are seen merely as human beings; a sexual, individual, no better or worse than their male counterparts and lays claim to equality simply because women are entitled to it.

This study uses a feminist approach, along with *close reading*, focusing on its character and plot towards the female main character. Additionally, the female main character's friends will be conducted to support the representation of power feminism through Jasmine.

1.2 Statement of the Problems

- How is the portrayal of female power through the character of Jasmine Bashara in *Artemis* (2017)

1.3 Objective of the Study

This study discusses how the text can be seen as a portrayal of women empowerment, especially in equality and also sexuality, that the author of the novel wrote through the main character's portrayal in the text, from the perspective of power feminism.

1.4 Significance of the Study

First of all, this study has a contribution to Universitas Airlangga as a thesis from English literature, especially in a broad issue of Feminism. Furthermore, this study will focus on the study of power feminism, especially in the emancipation and equality of women. Thus, the specification of the issue is an important reference to be discussed due to the portrayal of female character that is written by a male author, whether the author rejects the patriarchal ideology or accepts the notion of it, and therefore will add another reference for future researcher to be considerate as a reading for their study.

This thesis is also intended to help read *Artemis* in the context of feminism, especially in the aspect of power feminism that is seen from Naomi Wolf's perspective on equality and emancipation through women. In which it will help further researchers to find gaps between the problems that this novel has.

1.5 Definition of Key Terms

Feminism: a belief in which it rejects the thinking of traditional gender role, in which there is only one single point of view. (Tyson 2015, 79)

- Power feminism: Sees women as human beings - sexual, individual, no better or worse than their male counterparts - and lays claim to equality simply because women are entitled to it. (Wolf 1993, xvii)
- Equality: Having the same ability and rights within men and women. (Subrahmanian 2005, 398)
- Sexuality: Someone's sexual activities and feelings about sex. (Stephanie Genz 2009, 35)