

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Discrimination is one of social phenomena that often happens in many areas. It happens when a group of people is subordinated, marginalized, or oppressed. The discriminated group might be considered that they are weak, inferior, and contemptible. Discrimination can happen to a group of people because they come from the different race, culture, ethnic origin, religion, or gender. The discrimination is caused by the gender, much often happen to women.

The phenomenon of discrimination happening in social life often inspires authors in making their literary works. The gender inequalities such as inequality of workload, women psychological violence, marital rape, and right discrimination can be figured out in a literary work. One of the examples of the literary work that figures the women discrimination phenomenon is *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood* written by Fatima Mernissi.

Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood is a 1994 book that tells about the life of Moroccan women in harem where they live together with all their family. The story starts out when Mernissi is quite young, and ends when she is around nine years old. She discusses the member of her family and their personalities, dreams, and hopes. Her work

is quite descriptive and contains many cultural illusions that are well described within the context of the story. In particular the incidents in the story are connected with freedom, feminism, and frontiers pertaining to harem life. It is a memoir that has 242 pages.

Fatima Mernissi was born to a middle class family in 1940 in Fez, Morocco. She grew in harem with her family that guarded strictly by a janitor so that the women could not escape from it. She is a Moroccan feminist writer and sociologist. Her primary education was in a school established by the nationalist movement while her secondary level education was in an all-girls school funded by the French protectorate. Mernissi studied at Mohammed V University in Rabat and later went to Paris where she worked briefly as a journalist. She pursued her graduate education in the United States and in 1973 obtained a PhD in sociology from Brandeis University, where she long lectured while holding a research appointment at the Moroccan Institut Universitaire de Recherche Scientifique, Rabat.

As sociologist Mernissi has done fieldwork mainly in Morocco. On several occasion in the late 1970s and early 1980s she conducted interviews in order to map prevailing attitudes to women and work. She has done sociological research for UNESCO and ILO as well as for the Moroccan authorities. Mernissi also contributed articles to periodicals and other publications on women in Morocco and women and Islam from a contemporary as well as from a historical perspective.

Mernissi is well known as a Muslim feminist in North Africa and is a prominent activist in the Islamic world. In 2003, she was awarded the Prince along with Susan Sontag. Intellectually, Mernissi goes swaggering off in unorthodox directions, barely acknowledging that she has strayed from a conventional path that she probably considers unworthy of consideration (Mahmada, 2003).

Mernissi has created many works such as *Beyond the Veil* (1975), her first monograph that tells about her research on Moroccan woman and about the sexual limits placed on woman. She critically examines the classical corpus of religious-juristic texts, including the hadith, and reinterprets them from a feminist perspective. In *The Veil and the Male Elite* (1987), Mernissi critically examines the historical context of Muslim law and tradition and argues that the original message of the Prophet Muhammad, which called for equality between the sexes, has been misrepresented by later political leaders and religious scholars. Fatima collected annotated interviews with Moroccan peasant women, women laborers, clairvoyants, and maidservants who present a lucid account of the painful reality of their lives as they struggle against poverty, illiteracy, and sexual oppression. It created her book entitled *Doing Daily Battle* (1988).

Another book, *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (1992), is an impassioned plea for Muslims to reclaim the best of their tradition and to cast off their fear of the West. Mernissi illustrates that religious teachings can be easily manipulated and for that reason she

believes that the oppression of woman is not part of the real teaching of Islam in *Women's Rebellion and Islamic Memory* (1996). *Les Aït-Débrouille* (1997), a lesser-known publication available only in French, explains social capital through the story of a group of rural non-governmental organizations in the High Atlas. *The Scheherazade Goes West* (2001) is Mernissi's book that tells about the western female as trapped in an invisible sociocultural harem, develops that feminist perspective from a different angle. In the work of *The Forgotten Queen in Islam* Mernissi shows that the defects within Arab governments are not inherent in religious teachings, but that they are due to the manipulation of the religious teaching by rulers for their own interests. (<http://www.librarything.com/author/mernissifatima>)

The setting of *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* is a harem in the 1940s city of Fez, where an extended family arrangement keeps the women mostly apart from society. Mernissi writes about feminism, French colonialism, politics, and westernization. Here she tells of a grandmother who warns that the world is unfair to women, learns of the confusing World War II via radio news in Arabic and French, watches family members debate what children should hear, wonders why American soldiers' skin doesn't reflect Moroccan style racial mixing and decides that sensuality must be a part of women's liberation. Women have to stay in harem with their entire mother, grandmothers, and other sisters. The harem is strictly guarded by janitor; no one could pass the gate except men who still belong to family. Children can step out of the gate, if their parents

permit it, but not grownup women.

She also tells some women figures who have big influence in an event like Scheherazade, the author of the thousand and one tales who is expert in telling story because she knows how to string words artfully together and it saves her from the King's punishment. Besides that, Fatima Mernissi also tells a beautiful singer, Asmahan, the singing princess.

The point of view of the book is single first person with Fatima Mernissi as the teller of the story. Here, Mernissi is a smart and curious girl and liked challenging and different things. She always questions if there is an approved boundary between boys and girls, why it is only girls who are covered and limited. Her beloved maternal grandmother, Yasmina, to whom she visits to once a year, likes to talk with her about frontiers and differences, and the way of it all. Yasmina loves Mernissi so much; she created a game called *mshia-f-lekha* to help put Fatima to sleep. Her cousin, Samir, often be her partner to discuss about harem, frontiers, politics and many others. Both of them were born in the same day. They love men's political discussion, because then they were allowed into the crowded men's salon.

Her father took only one wife and did not choose polygamy since the nationalists rejected polygamy. Even so, her mother was illiterate because she spent all of her time inside the harem. But, she has strong backing to women liberalization. She hates the tradition in the family, such as having breakfast together. She never joins the moment of having

breakfast together. She denied the tradition by doing the banned habit like waking up so late and makes her own breakfast in the noon.

Habiba, Fatima's aunt, who was divorced by her husband, liked telling story. She lived in the harem because she had no place to live. She liked to tell about women's liberalization and Fatima liked her tales very much. She could bring the listener to the place far away by her words. Her most popular tale, which she narrated on special occasions only, was about *The Woman with Wings*. She was illiterate too like Fatima's mother.

There are four reasons why the book is important to be studied in relation to the feminist theory; firstly, the work is narrating the subordination and discrimination against women and girls. In the work, it is told that women do not have the same rights with men; the rules are not fair to women. For example, both men and women work from dawn until very late at night, but men make money and women do not. Women are not allowed to get out from harem. The gate of the house is guarded by a doorkeeper; no one can pass the gate without his permission, except men of the family so that women do not have high education level like men. Besides that, women are not allowed to listen to the radio. The radio is kept in a locked huge cabinet in a salon and only men in the house were supposed to access it. There are still many other women prohibitions like going out for watching movie, walking around, dancing, singing, discovering the world, and expressing an opinion. But, all of the prohibitions make trespassing the frontiers become women's obsession.

Secondly, the story in the book is a true story that gives the readers knowledge about women and girls discrimination in Morocco in 1940s. The book is a memoir; it shows us the social life in Morocco which is ever happen. Mernissi tells her experiences in her work when she was in her childhood and lived with her mother, grandmothers, and other sisters in a harem. She covers the feminist problems in Morocco well. She tells the detail of the problems attractively.

The third reason is the origin of the work. The work comes from Fatima's place of birth, Morocco, which is a Moslem Islamic country. Islam teaches that there is nothing that makes human being different except his deeds, but in the work, it is told that in this country women are discriminated and subordinated. The writer wants to know how the discrimination and subordination against women in that country is. Besides that, most of literature researches in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta examine the literary work coming from west countries. It seems that research on the literary work coming from Middle East country would be different.

Then, the fourth reason is the case of polygamy that is told in the work. It is told that most of Moroccan husbands except nationalists have more than a wife who stay in a harem. It is narrated in the book the history of polygamy and harem in Morocco. Some parts of women say that polygamy has to be banned and so do the nationalist because it is not fair for women at all. On the other hand, some other parts, especially the old ones

say that it is alright for men to have more than one wife. Besides, today polygamy is still controversial.

By reading this book, the readers can learn that basically, women have their own ability like men, so they should have same rights and same position with men in the society. They should have high education like men. Women should be allowed to give their roles in society and give their aspiration in politic as men. They have their own dreams and they can make them to be true. Women are not inferior to men so they have the same position with men.

The writer uses feminist theory as an approach to analyze the book because the story of the book is about discrimination against women and girls which relates to social and political problem. The government of the country decides the rules that have to be obeyed. Most of the rules are regarded that they are not fair for women. This is accordance with social life that focuses more on politic, feminist, culture, and religion. The phenomena shown in *Dreams of Trespass* novel make the researcher interested to analyze the discrimination against women in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass* using the feminist approach and proposes to conduct a research entitle **DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN IN FATIMA MERNISSI'S DREAMS OF TRESPASS: TALES OF A HAREM GIRLHOOD (1994): FEMINIST APPROACH.**

B. Literature Review

After searching for several literary reviews, the writer found the review about *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood*. The first literature review is from MaileTou, about “Defining the Frontier”. On his review, Mernissi wanted to know what the “*hudud*” or frontier is. The truth is that the frontier is one of the main entities that shape someone’s life and being, but no one answers her question about it.

The second review comes from Karen Henry. In her review, she glimpses a world of Arab women struggling to maintain some aspects of tradition while emerging into a modern and freer world. As the women identify the nature and limitations of their power and the opportunities for change because of their oral tradition, a tradition that is very important to the Arabs, they do not abandon their dreams.

Here, the researcher will analyze *Dreams of Trespass* novel focusing on the discrimination against women based on feminist approach.

C. Problem Statement

Considering the phenomenon in the background of the study above, the researcher formulates the problem statement in this study as follow: “How is the discrimination against women reflected in Fatima Mernisi’s *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood*?”

D. Limitation of the Study

To make the research appropriate with the objectives of the study, the researcher makes a limitation to the research. The researcher will only

focus on how the discrimination against women shown in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood*

E. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem statement above, the researcher can propose some objectives of the study below:

1. To analyze the structural elements of the novel in order to identify the unity of the novel.
2. To analyze the discrimination against women in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass* based on feminist approach.

F. Benefits of the Study

The aim of conducting this research is to get the benefit from it. The benefits expected from the research are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

By conducting this research, the researcher hopes that she can give contribution in criticizing a literary work and producing criticism as objective as possible.

2. Practical Benefit

- a. This research can be used to know how discrimination against women effects on the women's life.
- b. This research can be used by the next researcher to do research related to feminist approach, especially on Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass*.

G. Research Method

In conducting a research, a researcher should apply a method so that the research can be done systematically. In this part, the writer presents five points of research method that can be clearly explained as follows:

1. Type of the Study

In analyzing the literary work, the writer applies descriptive qualitative method. Creswell (1998: 15) states that qualitative research is an inquiry process of understanding based on the instinct methodological traditions of inquiry that explore a social or human problem. The researcher explores the problems in the novel by analyzing the words and conducts the study in natural setting.

2. Object of the Study

The object of the study is Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood*.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Source

In this study, there are two sources of data namely primary and secondary data sources.

a. Primary Data Sources

The primary data taken from a novel entitled *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood* by which published in 1994 written by Fatima Mernissi.

b. Secondary Data Sources

The writer takes the secondary data sources from other sources which are related to the primary data that support the analysis. They are books and virtual references.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The method of data collecting is library research, released document to be observed. Meanwhile, the techniques are:

- a. Reading the novel repeatedly.
- b. Taking notes of the influence information both primary and secondary data.
- c. Arranging the data into several groups based on its classifications.
- d. Selecting particular parts considered important and relevant for analysis.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The steps of the data analysis of this research are by analyzing the structural elements of the work and analyzing the feminist perspectives of the work. Analyzing the data of this research is trying to clarify the obtained data by selecting the necessary ones.

H. Research Paper Organization

In order to make this research paper easy to be followed, the writer gives some order for the paper organization. Chapter I is introduction which covers background of the study, previous study, problem statement,

limitation of the study, objectives of the study, benefits of the study, research method, and research paper organization. Chapter II is underlying theory which covers theory about feminism, basic concept of feminism and structural elements of novel. Chapter III is social historical background of Morocco in twentieth century. Chapter IV discusses about the structural analysis of the novel. Chapter V will be the feminist analysis of the novel. Conclusion and suggestion will be found in Chapter VI.