

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Gender is defined by FAO as the relations between men and women. Gender is not determined biologically, as a result of sexual characteristics of either women or men, but is constructed socially (<http://www.fao.org/docrep/007/y5608e/y5608e01.html>). It is a central organizing principle of societies, and often governs the processes of production and reproduction, consumption and distribution. Despite this definition, gender is often misunderstood as being the promotion of women only.

However, as we see from the FAO definition, gender issues focus on women and on the relationship between men and women, their roles, access to and control over resources, division of labour, interests and needs. Gender relations affect household security, family well-being, planning, production and many other aspects of life (Baumann, 2000).

The problem of gender inequality is the problem of human right that appears in the surface in which woman's position is under men. Here men act as super ordinate while women as subordinate. It caused difference treatment, opportunity, role, right between men and women in social life. According to Horton and Hunt (1996: 157) women's public decision making has often been dismissed as illogical, emotional, and

subjective. Men on the other hand, have always been considered logical, rational, and objective.

Literature has been an inspiring part within history of man. The creation of literary work is closely related to its author and in turn humanity, the author is conditioned by certain circumstances. So literary work and social problems are possibly represented on the basis of the author's background and experience or an example of social problems can be reflected in the novel.

Dreams of Trespass: Tales of A Harem Girlhood is a novel which is made in 1994 by Fatima Mernissi. It has 242 pages which consist of 22 chapters inside it. This novel tells about Mernissi's memoir about her childhood in an urban domestic harem in Fez in the late 1940s recounts the life experiences of her female relatives and her own reactions to the world around her. The book demystifies the harem and puts a face on Arab Muslim women in a personal and highly entertaining manner, exploring the nature of women's power, the value of oral tradition, and the absolute necessity of dreams and celebrations.

As one of the best known Arab-Muslim feminists, Mernissi's influence extends beyond a narrow circle of intellectuals. She is a recognized public figure in her own country and abroad, especially in France, where she is well known in feminist circles. Her major books have been translated into several languages, including English, German, Dutch, and Japanese. She writes regularly on women's issues in the popular press,

participates in public debates promoting the cause of Muslim women internationally, and has supervised the publication of a series of books on the legal status of women in Morocco, Algeria, and Tunisia. Mernissi's work explores the relationship between sexual ideology, gender identity, sociopolitical organization, and the status of women in Islam. Her special focus, however, is Moroccan society and culture.

As a feminist, her work represents an attempt to undermine the ideological and political systems that silence and oppress Muslim women. She does this in two ways: first, by challenging the dominant Muslim male discourse concerning women and their sexuality, and second, by providing the silent women with a voice to tell her own story. Her later works, *Dreams of Trespass* (1994) and *Scheherazade Goes West* (2001), explore her childhood in a harem and the cultural encounter between East and West. These are autobiographical texts that have more in common with the narrative genre than social scientific discourse, which makes them very accessible and insightful.

Dreams are an examination of the experience of living in a harem at a time when the nationalist discourse concerning education of women had just started to gather strength. Dealing with relationship between the women and men in her family, between the women, and between the women and the outer world, Mernissi exposes largely unknown to the Western reader, that of the *harem*. She dismantles the exotic fantasy of the *harem* as a place of eroticism, and muses on the political (and politicizing)

aspects of this domestic space. Briefly put, she explores the ways in which the *harem* is a space of the everyday politics and acts of resistance. Other books which are written by Fatima Mernissi are *Beyond the Veil: Male/Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society* (1987), *Doing Daily Battle: Interviews with Moroccan Women* (1988), *The Veil and the Male Elite: A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (1991), *Islam and Democracy: Fear of the Modern World* (1992), *The Forgotten Queens of Islam* (1993).

Moroccan author and sociologist, Fatima Mernissi was born in 1940 in Fez, Morocco. Considered a world-renowned Islamic feminist, she grew up in a harem, surrounded by the women in her family, grandmothers, mother, and sisters. The strict separation she experienced between men and women in Moroccan society and between women and the public sphere have profoundly influenced her thinking and her subsequent intellectual and activist endeavors. Mernissi was enrolled in one of the first mixed private schools of Morocco at a time when the nationalist project made public education available for both sexes. This experience of liberation through education is discussed in her autobiographical book *Dreams of Trespass* (1994). She later pursued a political science degree at the Sorbonne and then at Brandeis University, where she obtained her doctorate. She is currently a professor of sociology at the University of Mohammed V in Rabat, Morocco. Although well

known for her research on gender dynamics in the Arab world, Mernissi has recently become interested in communication and the media.

Dreams of Trespass is an interesting novel. There are four reasons why the writer interest to study this novel. First, this novel tells about life experience that is very educational for the readers because it can give the readers more experience and knowledge about the freedom, especially for women. The readers can apply the spirit of Fatima Mernissi in this life. Mernissi tells that the women dreamed of trespassing all the time and that the world beyond the gate was their goal. But how they got to that world was an important part of achieving their goals. This statement can be found at page 60:

Confronting Ahmed at the gate was a heroic act. Escaping from the terrace was not, and did not carry with it that inspiring, subversive flame of liberation (DoT, 1994: 60)

The second reason that makes this novel interesting is important message inside its story. This novel not only tells about Fatima's childhood, but it also tells the readers about the other attractive story, for example *Scheherazade*, *The King*, and *The Words* and also *Princess Budur's Fate* which include in *A Thousand and One Nights*. There are some important messages about real life, for example about the important of justice, brotherhood, loyalty, rigidity, and life struggle.

The third reason is about the women's characters in this novel which struggle for justice. A lot of women who may say that they just want to play the traditional roles are simply fearful or unable to imagine other ways of being. Old roles can seem to offer a certain security.

Freedom can seem frightening especially if one has learned how to achieve a certain degree of power inside prison. Perhaps they are just afraid of choices. They do not seek to impose anything on women but merely to open up all possible alternatives. They do seek choice as one of the functions, which makes people human beings. They want to be full people, crippled neither by law or custom or our own-chained minds.

The last reason why the reader interest to study this novel because by reading this book, the reader can know about the tradition and culture in other world, especially Morocco at 1940s. It can easily make reader differentiate the life style in Morocco when life at 1940s and life at this age. The women who life at Mernissi's age could not felt the freedom because they must live in a harem. Only women who have spirit and power that can survive with its situation. From the Islamic point of view, the question of the equality of men and women is meaningless. It is like discussing the equality of a rose and a jasmine. Each has its own perfume, color, shape and beauty.

Men and women are not the same. Each has particular features and characteristics. Women are not equal to men. But neither are men equal to women. Islam envisages their roles in society not as competing but as complimentary. Each has certain duties and functions in accordance with his or her nature and constitution. The power of the oral tradition, a tradition that is very important to the Arabs, is manifested in this book as it

opens worlds, creates variety, provide sensuality and inspiration. Fatima's Aunt Habiba, who could take her listeners all over the world, said:

When you happen to be trapped powerless behind walls, stuck in a dead-end harem, you dream of escape. And magic flourishes when you spell out that dream and make the frontiers vanish. Dreams can change your life, and eventually the world. Liberation starts with images dancing in your little head, and you can translate those images into words. And words cost nothing (DoT, 1994: 113).

The statement above shows that magic flourished throughout this book as it educated and entertained the readers. It is wonderfully written and has the power to open Western eyes to a world often objectified and trivialized. In this process, it creates a new appreciation and understanding for the varied lives of Arab women.

Based on previous reasons the writer will observe *Dreams of Trespass* novel by using socialist feminist approach theory. So the writer constructs this research entitled **GENDER INEQUALITY IN FATIMA MERNISSI'S NOVEL *DREAMS OF TRESPASS* (1994): A SOCIALIST FEMINIST APPROACH.**

B. Literature Review

Dreams of Trespass is an interesting novel to analyze. As long as the researcher know, there is no research which has been conducted the study relates to the novel in Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta. In the contrary, the writer found two sources that are an essay and an article.

The first is an essay written by Maile Tou entitled " Dreams of Trespass Defining the frontier" on December 29th, 2003. He said that In Fatima Mernissi's widely acclaimed book *Dreams of Trespass*, the storyline

weaves around the tale of a young girls' life in a traditional Moroccan harem that is as much enchanting as it is disparaging. As we follow the young girl from day to day and experience all the little trivialities of her life, we notice that she is quite a precocious little child.

She sees how the frontier seems to be changing everything about her and her surroundings that Mernissi decides that she must figure out exactly how it works, before everything she knows slips under her feet. We will also see how the young Mernissi has an almost paradoxical relationship with the different frontiers. For her, it is both a source of happiness and a source of pain; it is mysterious to her but at the same time, she can feel how it smothers her and the other women.

Finally, she feels and understands what for years she has only experienced listening to the stories of the women in the harem. That day, she experienced her first feeling of prejudice. All the questions and misunderstandings that Mernissi was trying to understand, was wrapped up in one day when Samir and her were forced to grow apart. As we have seen, the frontier is indeed made up from different circumstances, identified by different individuals and administered by different powerhouses, but the main thread that runs through all of them is the distinctive oppression that divides everyone into strictly regulated categories.

The second is an article written by Karen Henry entitled “ Dreams of Trespass Tales of Harem Girlhood “ on December 28th 1995 Michigan America. He said that entering each chapter of *Dreams of Trespass* through an

exquisite photograph and are held there by the magic of Fatima Mernissi's words, proving that she has indeed become an expert storyteller. Mernissi's memoir about her childhood in an urban domestic harem in Fez in the late 1940s recounts the life experiences of her female relatives and her own reactions to the world around her.

The book demystifies the harem and puts a face on Arab Muslim women in a personal and highly entertaining manner, exploring the nature of women's power, the value of oral tradition, and the absolute necessity of dreams and celebrations. Magic flourished throughout this book as it educated and entertained us. It is wonderfully written and has the power to open Western eyes to a world often objectified and trivialized. In the process, it creates a new appreciation and understanding for the varied lives of Arab women.

The difference between the articles and this research is: if in this research the writer tries to make gender inequality be the theme. But on the article the researcher tells about the life of Fatima Mernissi in the Harem, from she was child until she become a woman. The researcher also tells about how Fatima tries to understand about Harem itself. In the second article the researcher tells about how well the story of this memoir and this book. The researcher also tells that this book is very educated and entertained. In this research, the researcher tries to analyze about how gender inequality reflected in this novel. And also the researcher explains all of the structural elements of this novel.

C. Problem Statement

The problem of this study is: "How is gender inequality reflected in *Dreams of Trespass* novel written by Fatima Mernissi?".

D. Limitation of the Study

There are many theories about feminism. To limit the subject matter and to avoid complexity in this research, the writer focuses his discussion on theory of feminism, based on socialist feminist perspective. The writer limits his analysis to understand the gender inequality which is reflected in *Dreams of Trespass* novel written by Fatima Mernissi. The writer investigates Fatima Mernissi as the major character by using an approach of socialist feminism.

E. Objectives of the Study

Based on the problem that has been stated above, the writer formulates the objective of the study as follows:

1. To describe the novel based on structural elements.
2. To describe the gender inequality based on socialist feminist approach.

F. Benefit of the Study

The study of gender inequality on *Dreams of Trespass* written by Fatima Mernissi has several benefits, as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

To develop the body of knowledge, particularly the literary studies on Fatima Mernissi's novel *Dreams of Trespass*. The study is also expected to enrich the knowledge, particularly structural elements, and socialist feminism analysis on *Dreams of Trespass* novel.

2. Practical Benefit

This study helps the researcher to enrich his knowledge dealing with structural elements and socialist feminism and to get more understanding about the novel, especially *Dreams of Trespass* novel.

G. Research Method

The writer will describe the methods that are used on the research. There are four elements to support in research method. They are:

1. Object of the Study

The object of this research is *Dreams of Trespass* novel written by Fatima Mernissi.

2. Type of the Study

This research will be a library research. The data used on the research have been collected with the library research. It purposes to analyze the novel using socialist feminism approach.

3. Type of the Data and the Data Sources

- a. The primary data source will be every data of the *Dreams of Trespass* novel by Fatima Mernissi which is related to the study.
- b. The secondary data source will be from all referential data related to the novel. It can be from books, internet, journals, etc.

4. Technique of the Data Collection

The technique of the data collection in this study takes the following steps to the data analysis.

- a. The writer views the novel several times, until the writer understands an information or data to be analyzed.
- b. Reading the novel and understanding the content.
- c. Reading some other resources related to the novel.
- d. Giving marks to particular parts in the novel, which are considered important for the analysis.
- e. Taking notes for important parts both in primary and secondary sources.
- f. Classifying the data into categories and develop them into a good unity.

5. Technique of the Data Analysis

The technique that is used to analyze the data is descriptive analysis. In analyzing the subject matters, the writer analyzes the structural elements of the novel and then analyzes the subject of the study by using socialist feminism approach and the last draw conclusion from the analysis.

H. Paper Organization

This research paper consists of six chapters. Chapter I is introduction which contains the background of the study, literature review, problem statement, objective of the study, benefits of the study, research method, and paper organization. Chapter II is underlying theory. It consists of notion of socialist feminism, major principles of socialist feminism, gender inequality, structural elements of the novel, and theoretical application. Chapter III deals

with social background of Morocco in the late of twentieth century which covers social aspect, economic aspect, political aspect, science and technology, religious aspects, cultural women and Morocco women. Chapter IV is structural analysis of *Dreams of Trespass* novel. It consists of the structural elements of *Dreams of Trespass* novel which contain of characters and characterization, setting, plot, point of view, and theme and the last is discussion. Chapter V is feminist analysis of *Dreams of Trespass* novel. It consists of social gender inequality, religious gender inequality, law gender inequality, economic gender inequality, education gender inequality, and political gender inequality. Chapter VI is conclusion and suggestion.