

OFFRED'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S THE HANDMAID'S TALE

by Dini Karina Anggraeni

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OFFRED'S STRUGGLE FOR FREEDOM IN MARGARET ATWOOD'S *THE HANDMAID'S TALE*

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Abstract

This research aims to discuss the issue of the Offred's Struggle to get freedom as reflected in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985) using a feminist perspective. The objective of this research is to analyze the cause of Offred's struggle to get freedom in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*, the effects of Offred's Struggle for freedom in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale*. This study uses references from journals, books, internet articles, and other sources that can support this research. The data analysis technique of this research is qualitative research. The result of the study shows that: (1) The cause of Offred's Struggle is Oppression that happen because the War in the United States that finally separates Offred, her husband, and daughter. (2) The effect of Offred's struggle is about Human Rights Violants obtained by Offred committed of his commander. (3) What she does to fight for freedom is by giving up her job as a Handmaid help of Nick and from other Mata members. Based on the analysis, the writer concludes that the struggle of Offred to get freedom because of the help of Mata's members.

Keywords : Struggle for Freedom, Feminist perspective, Oppression, Human Rights Violants.

1. INTRODUCTION

Living in the community does not make someone free from insults or problems. Everyone certainly is not free from mistakes, and sometimes those mistakes make people around feel disadvantaged. The society's environment influences human and the behavior of the people who live in it.

Struggle means requiring a great effort to achieve goal or task (McKenchie, 1989:367). In achieving a goal, extra struggle is needed and there must be certain obstacles. The stronger the obstacles, the stronger our struggle will be. Every person who lives will surely feel the name of struggle. The harshness of life makes all people have to struggle in order to continue their lives as they should. As one example is the struggle for freedom. Everyone has the right to struggle if her freedom is taken away, because, it is a person's obligation to maintain what should be the right of every individual. Freedom is the totality of human existence in one's environment, involving both choices and responsibilities, for human is always free within their situation to choose the meaning in their life (Sjell, 2005:52).

The issue above can also be found in Offred, the main character of *The Handmaid's Tale* written by Margaret Atwood's. She has struggle to get freedom. She is a female servant in the Gilead Republic. She is in charge of serving the Commander and his wife, a former gospel singer and advocate for traditional values. Every month, during the menstruation, she must have an intimate relationship with the Commander.

The main problem of this research is Struggle for Freedom toward Offred in Margaret Atwood's *The Handmaid's Tale* novel. The writer formulates the following research questions

(1) What is the cause of Offred's Struggle for Freedom? (2) What is the effect of Offred's Struggle for Freedom? (3) How does she struggle for freedom?

2. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

1 Struggle

According to Marsam (2000: 181) The struggle comes from the word that means struggle a fight for survival or independence of the states. The struggle in this research is the effort of a woman in order to defend the rights and dignity of women who are oppressed due to arbitrary injustice of considerable cultural flourishing in society. Struggle means a hard work and efforts in achieving a good thing as the key to success.

1 Kinds of Struggle

According to Luh Ketut Suryani(2014 : 195), There are three kinds of struggle as follows : The Struggle to accept the facts of life, The Struggle to achieve a dream, The Struggle in the form of affection.

Cause of Struggle

The causes of struggle are that it happens because of : a. Discrimination, This is the unequal treatment of individuals or groups, based on something that is usually a categorical or unique attribute such as race, ethnicity, religion, or social class membership, b. Oppression, is when people make other people less human. This could mean treating them in a dehumanizing manner. It is such as violence, rape and murder.

Effect of Struggle

The effect, women struggle to defend their rights as women. By all means they do, but it all must be a way and strategy, all good things do not have to be done in a hurry. Impact is the powerful effect that something has on somebody or something. It can be concluded, such as: Lack of Emphaty and Human Right Violants.

3. METHOD

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In this research the writer uses a qualitative research. Crabtree and Miller (1999:5) say that qualitative is "an interpretive research focusing on a natural, often human, or activity with the goal of generating realistic description or explanation. This, qualitative method is proper method to be used to analyze, explain, and narrate data in words or paragraphs.

The study applies the extrinsic approach in analyzing the Struggle for freedom. According to Wellek and Warren in the book 'Falacy of Origins', The extrinsic approach is the study that connects settings with the environment are related to Social Context.

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The source of data in this research is taken from novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood's, published in 1985. The novel consists of 15 chapters and 423 pages. The writer focused on analysis of Struggle of Women in the novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood's. The writer applies some steps as follow: 1. Focus on main character Offred, 2. Underlining quotation that are related to the topic of the research.

This research uses descriptive qualitative method consists of some steps, as follows: Finding the Novel *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood's, reading the data comprehensively, understanding the purpose and Storyline of the novel, classifying the data into the types of struggle which have been explained in the chapter two, finding out about Offred's struggle in the novel.

4. ANALYSIS

The writer will analyze the problem that is included in the problem formulation in chapter 1. In the first part of this analysis, the writer will find what are the causes of Offred's struggle for freedom. In the second part, the writer will analyze the effect of Offred struggle to get freedom from the Gilead Republic and the third, the writer will analyze how to get Offred freedom from her duties as a Handmaid.

4.1 The Cause Offred of Struggles to Get Freedom

Offred is the main character in *The Handmaid's Tale*. She is an ordinary woman who initially has the same life as another woman, whose rights are then taken away and which causes her to want to fight to regain her rights. She also has a husband named Luke and a daughter. She lives with her mother in the apartment. Offred is an office employee, who at the time was happy to raise money from her own business. However, during the Republican government Gilead Offred has to release her husband and daughter, including losing her job as an employee.

I am thirty-three years old. I have brown hair. I stand five seven without shoes. I have trouble remembering what I used to look like. I have viable ovaries. I have one more chance (Atwood, 1985: 214) ... I'm running, with her, holding her hand, pulling, dragging her through the bracken, she's only half awake because of the pill I gave her, so she wouldn't cry or say anything that would give us away, she doesn't know where she is (Atwood, 1985: 115).

Based on the quotation above, it can be seen that Offred's early life is fine. Offred is very happy with her husband Luke and her daughter. But that night, when Offred is enjoying her happiness with her husband Luke, suddenly a member of Gilead messed things up. There is a war that makes everything messy and unclear.

All forms of struggle in order to save the people she loves is extraordinary. She will do anything so she can reunite with her husband and children. She knows what she does not want to continue her life without children and her husband. She will get treatment that she does not want at all. In her hopes, she always imagines that no one will find her hiding with her husband. It was clear at that time that all truth is only in favor of men.

But all that vanishes, the Gilead members try to capture Offred and continue to pursue her. In truth women and men were very different in physical terms. Physically men are also stronger than women, but at that time Luke is swallowing a pill that makes him a little unconscious, so she is exhausted because she has to hold a child and hold her husband's hand. Conditions like that make her want to give up with circumstances but when she looks at the faces of her husband and child her enthusiasm continues to grow. Because, she does not want to be separated by the person she loves.

All of this can happen because of the war in the United States, so it becomes the name of the Gilead Republic. Because, with the war, all life there changes, and that causes Offred to struggle to get her rights to be free. Offred wants to fight for her right to be free to carry out all

activities as before without any rules or restrictions. The Republic of Gilead, or the equivalent of the Atwood Constitutional Republic: was the result of a revolution that destroyed the United States. The president and the Congress Council are killed by the coup group.

The Constitution and the Congress of the United States are no longer there. The Gilead Republic is built from the foundation of the 17th-century puritan movement that always exist behind modern America. Everything in Gilead is then regulated, women find it difficult to conceive, and miscarriage rates increase rapidly, as births decrease.

The difference is that in Gilead women are farm. Those who are considered fertile will be put into camp and set as a maid - The Handmaid. Her job, is to do a ceremony / do a prayer once a month during the fertile period of the Handmaid, and helps take care of the employer's house, call The Commander.

From Offred's point of view, she is a person who tries to accept reality. But, it does not rule out the possibility that one day she will rebel and not follow the rules set. The fate of someone no one knows, as well as with Offred. She just wants to live happily with her husband and children without interference from others. She does not want a situation like this. But, there is nothing she can do but surrender and accept the situation.

As a handmaid, her job is to produce a children. But besides that, shopping and also walking together with other Handmaid are also allowed as long as it does not violate the existing rules. In carrying out her duties as a handmaid, Offred meets with another Handmaid named Ofglen, she is the Offred couple for the past two weeks. Ofglen is the only person who can use as a forum to dig up information. Almost everything that happens in Gilead she knows.

The way to get rid of boredom or being bored when at home is shopping. The Handmaid uses this activity to meet with people they know. According to Offred, shopping is fun because she can meet the people they want to meet. During her time as a handmaid there is no maximum limit in terms of shopping, so she can go shopping as she pleases and after that can go anywhere. With such conditions, no one can speak freely. An unknown person can be a spy agent. Later, if anyone talks about war or other things that become a secret, will be reported to Aunt Lydia, after that will arrest. "Here, Shopping is a place where you might see someone you know, someone you've known in the time before or at the Red Center (Atwood, 1985: 47)".

Based on the quotation above, Offred only has a friend named Ofglen. However, actually outside that she has a little friend who is really close to her and understands everything about her. However, she does not know where her friend is. She is Moira, a friend of her from before this chaos occurs. They are close friends and make good friends.

As a Handmaid if you break the rules there will definitely be punishment. Republic of Gilead has never tolerated anyone who violates the rules whether male or female. The punishment given is not easy and life is a bet as a sanction if it violates the rules. The corpses hanging on the Wall are time travelers, human beings who violate the times. They come here from the past (Atwood, 1985: 59).

4.2 The Effect Offred of Struggles to Get Freedom

It has explained about the initial causes of Offred's struggle for freedom. That is because she wants to reunite with her child and husband. Also, she wants to find her mother who has long been lost to her. Based on the explanation above, it can be seen that during the Gilead period if there are even a few violations, there will be a penalty. So, Offred always follows the predetermined path. Because, she believes one day she will be free from Gilead.

Offred does not know where her husband's condition is right now. She does not try to find it, because it will be vain. She is not allowed to leave the house other than for shopping and indeed because there was an event with the Aunts and other Handmaid. At that time there is a law giving ceremony hanging in the field. She really does not like that, because she imagines it can be her husband who is there. "What I feel towards them is blankness. What I feel is that I must not feel. What I feel is partly relief, because none of these men is Luke (Atwood, 1985: 59)".

Based on the quotation above, it illustrates that Offred's feelings at that time are very happy because it is apparently not her husband who is among the hooks. During Gilead it is clear that all are in favor of men. Not only men, but siding with this who has a fairly high economy. This who have everything can pay and will be free from punishment if they make a mistake. But, a person like Offred who is now only a Handmaid cannot do anything.

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There are three new bodies on the Wall. One is a priest, still wearing the black cassock. That's been put on him, for the trial, even though they gave up wearing those years ago, when the sect wars first began; cassocks made them too conspicuous. The two others have purple placards hung around their necks: Gender Treachery. Their bodies still wear the Guardian uniforms (Atwood, 1985: 71).

The mistakes make determine a person's life. If someone makes a mistake, it will suffer the same fate as the person in the quote above. Such a tense situation requires everyone to be obedient and obedient to the rules in force. Offred's struggle for new freedom will begin. She must be ready to face all obstacles. Because, actually someone who wants to try to get something will not get it that easily.

In Gilead's Power, there are regulations that say that Handmaid with the Commander must not have a close relationship, or even face to face and talk face to face is also not allowed. Their relationship is limited to meeting sexual needs. Besides that, the Wife of the Commanders will never like that. Everything that she is doing has a limit. She must not do anything else besides Shopping and meet the sexual needs of the Commander. If she has a hard temper maybe she can have now left free from that place. However, in the story Offred is told to have a very gentle character and patience in dealing with all things. Unlike the other Handmaid who always wants to know about everything in Gilead and always try to find fault in order to be free from there.

As a result of the ban, the Offred Commander is now trying to find a way to meet Offred. He does not realize that what he is doing will have a dangerous impact on Offred later. The Offred Commander is an old man whose job is only to go to a club to meet with his coworkers and occasionally flirt with women and only show off his wealth.

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So why does he want to see me, at night, alone? If I'm caught, it's to Serena's tender mercies I'll be delivered. He isn't supposed to meddle in such household discipline, that's women's business (Atwood, 1985: 203).

Serena Joy is the person who can later save Offred if what she does is discovered. But, if seen from Serena's character, she is a very ignorant person, does not care about the people around and even tends to be stubborn. Because, for her, she has everything she wants. She does not accept if anyone interferes let alone seizes her husband. Serena and her husband is a couple who cannot have children, so they use the services of Offred as a Handmaid in order to provide children for both of them.

Being a Handmaid is not an easy job. Handmaid is not a job, but a call in the days of Gilead create specifically for fertile women who can still produce children. At that time, no woman can escape that rule. Nobody think that the aftermath of the war will be like this.

As a result of her meeting with the Commander, Offred is now a very inconsistent person. Day by day, her attitude change and she tend to be invite to meet with the Commander only to play Scrabble, which is clearly not allow to be play by a Handmaid. According to Aunts, the Scrabble game is a very forbidden game. However, Offred continues to play the game every night with her Commander in the reading room without the knowledge of Serena Joy. If this is find out it will be fatal.

She used tactics surreptitiously if she wants to meet with her Commander. She now has a person who is bolder than before. At first she does not wants to look at her Commander, does not wants to talk, even meet now that everything is no longer the same. Every night they meet either to play or talk together. When with the Commander, Offred remain in her feelings, she does not has the slightest liking for her Commander, she is very loyal to her husband Luke.

Offred is not the only Handmaid ever to occupy the room she is currently occupying. Previously, someone has occupy the room. But, the woman does not last long, because she cannot and finally chose to commit suicide. So far Offred is a person who is able to survive in a very torturous state.

4.3 The Ways of Offred's Struggle for Freedom

The way for she to be free from her duties as a Handmaid is by her following all the rules and trying to find out what is happening in Gilead and trying to follow what the commander and her wife have request. Serena is not aware of Offred's departure with her husband to Jizebelz. If Serena know this maybe she will never want to forgive Offred. It is Offred's duty to serve her Commander, but to be honest Offred is never happy to have sexual relations with her commander. Because, she never wants that. All she wants is to do it with Luke.

Just pretend, I screamed to myself. You must remember how. Just do it ² or you will be here all night. Force yourself. Move your body, breathe out. At least you can do that (Atwood, 1985: 369).

Based on the quotation above, it is clear that Offred's attitude is very dislike. But, she cannot refuse. The nature of the Commander there looks very passionate and tends to want to have Offred. Jizebel's is a city where no rules are applies like in Gilead. There is no such thing as a Handmaid. However, in that place there are only people who have rank and have a high economy. Lots of women are hired to fulfill their sexual needs.

The change of power does indeed make some of the women in Gilead suffer. They want to rebel, but no one dares because they cannot afford the risk. Here Offred uses a very clever method. She can see the situation first before she starts the action. Because, conditions that constantly urge her to do things she does not want to do so she continue to do it. She know that is the only way she could be free from the struggle that if it continue will end long or even end her own death. Indirectly, Commander Nick has put his heart on Offred. Secretly the two of them began to steal Offred's gaze. Offred has a very loyal heart. She does not wants her heart divide, for her Luke is a person who meant a lot to her life.

The culmination of all the problems in this story will end in the hands of Offred. Offred once made a big mistake with her Commander, and Serena does not know about it. Sooner or

later something that is cover will get caught too. Just like Offred do. The commander invites Offred by giving her a dress taken from Serena's clothes. Inside the dress is a scarlet red lipstick. Serena does not think long and immediately accuse if the one who have the heart to betray him is Offred. Because, feeling she has been trick by Offred, Serena threw the dress at Offred and promise that Offred would have the same fate as before.

Before being report, Offred actually still has several ways to free herself from the house. If she is good at turning her brain around and starting to think of a strategy she will be free from it. But, during this time she was too complacent with the existing situation. She seems to forget that every action there must be an answer. Regret now it's too late. She can only wait when she will be summons and taken away from there.

Miracles will come when the time is right. That is the most waiting by Offred. She does not want her life to end by being watch by many people and hang. She still wants to fight for freedom so she can meet her husband and children.

2 I thought I'd see a stranger, but it was Nick who open the door to my room, turned on the light. I can't understand this, unless he's one of them. There is always that possibility. Nick, the Secret Eye agent. Dirty work done by dirty people (Atwood, 1985: 420). 10

The hero who transform into a human finally appear again. Nick's role in this story seems to be special just to save Offred's life. She comes at the right time. When Offred hopes there is a miracle and Nick comes to grant Offred's hopes. In this story, it seems to be made even more curious and continue to want to know the final round of the Offred story, but this story has not yet been completely finished.

Serena's attitude in dealing with that she is very confuse. She does not even know who is in her house. She does not feel report the deed. Because, she does not want that to happen, she can still forgive Offred. The Commander's attitude just stayed behind Serena Joy's body. From this it can be seen that the Commander has bad behavior, he does not dare to defend Offred. The commander does not dare to take the risk, because he knew he is in the wrong position and there is nothing he can do now.

4 Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing: I have given myself over into the hands of strangers, because it can't be helped (Atwood, 1985: 422).

Offred continues to believe that this is not the end of everything. She feel she still deserve to fight for her right back. It is just a form of help give to Offred to get out of here and maybe the struggle will be even harder after she is from here. Cora was the only person who is kind to Offred who cannot hold back her tears when she known that Offred is carry by someone else. She still hopes that Offred is someone who can help her someday by giving a child the presence. Once again, she has make her hopes and the hopes of others vanish as a result of what she does. But, Offred is actually happy because she is not in vain. Nick make Offred's struggle in vain, he was an Eye Member who was actually send to save Offred's life. And now Offred is free to become a Handmaid.

5. CONCLUSION

The researcher find that there were three conclusions to answer the problem statement. The first is how the cause of Offred's struggle for freedom, the second is how the effect of Offred struggle for freedom and the last is what she does to gain freedom. In this analysis the

researcher use a feminist approach. All are more in favor of men and look more at social classes that have a high economy and have positions. Offred's character who is describe as looking for the life she wants back to normal as before. She is separates from her husband and child during the war in the United States and then the division and power becomes the Gilead Republic. Which is where a woman who is consider fertile must produce children to an elite couple who cannot provide children. And the woman will be called a "Handmaid". As a Handmaid has a role and duty only to serve the commander. She is not allowed to do all the activities she wants. Every day she can only shop and attend meetings with other handmaids, other than that her job is only to serve the sexual needs of her Commander.

The cause Offred struggle for freedom it is all based because she wants to hug her child back and her husband who has long been separates. The appearance of other characters is also an encouragement for Offred to be able to survive in a situation that is very stressful. The effect of Offred struggle for freedom as a result, she increasingly knows how to immobilize the aunt. She becomes a stronger person and believes in herself. She will see how her friend is free from the task of being a Handmaid. As a result of this she became even more brave and willing to accept the invitation of her Commander to meet and play the game Scrabble. Whereas in the third part will explain what she does to get freedom. There are two ways that can Offred do for gets freedom. 1. All she does is accept offers from Serena Joy and Commander. Serena Joy offers if she has to have sex with Nick and gives her a child, while the Commander secretly invites her to go to Jizebel's in Serena's dress without her wife's knowledge and does not think about the risks. She accepts Serena's offer because in fact she also wants it, she miss how it feel to enjoy a relationship by using feel.

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