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MAUPASSANT'S "BOULE DE
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A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE
ANALYSIS

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Submission date: 26-Jul-2021 07:08PM (UTC+0700)

Submission ID: 1624266360

File name: Christine_Saragih_1611700044_Jurnal_skripsi.pdf (343.16K)

Word count: 3931

Character count: 20018

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SEORANG PELACUR": A COMPARATIVE LITERATURE ANALYSIS**

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ABSTRACT: The study discusses oppression on women as second-class citizens in two short stories entitled "Boule de Suif" by Guy de Maupassant and "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" by Putu Arya Tirtawirya. This study is a comparative literary study that compares how women as second class citizens are treated in social life in the two short stories from two different countries, "Boule de Suif" from France and "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" from Indonesia, as it is reflected through the female characters, Boule de Suif and Neng Sum, and what similarities and differences can be found in the two short stories. In revealing the oppression on women as the second class citizens, socialist feminist criticism is applied. This study is designed as a qualitative study with descriptive method. The analysis of this study applies both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The result of the analysis shows that in the two short stories, Boule de Suif and Neng Sum are treated as second-class women and they are oppressed by most people around them. Oppression occurs in two short stories because of capitalism (social class differences) and patriarchy. While the similarities found in the two short stories are: two main characters who portrayed as prostitutes have positive sides as individuals, get the same oppression i.e. verbal oppression from the society, France and Indonesia society have the same attitude toward prostitutes, and the same theme, namely "society's stigma against prostitutes causes oppression". In addition to similarities, the two short stories have differences in conflict and resolution. Through these two short stories, the writer also finds out about life values that human beings must be respected not based on their class but based on their virtues.

Keywords: Women's Oppression, Comparative Literature, Socialist Feminist.

ABSTRAK: Kajian ini membahas penindasan terhadap perempuan sebagai warga kelas dua dalam dua cerpen berjudul "Boule de Suif" karya Guy de Maupassant dan "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" karya Putu Arya Tirtawirya. Kajian ini merupakan studi sastra bandingan yang membandingkan bagaimana perempuan sebagai warga kelas dua diperlakukan dalam kehidupan sosial dalam dua cerpen dari dua negara yang berbeda, "Boule de Suif" dari Perancis dan "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" dari Indonesia, sebagaimana tercermin melalui tokoh perempuan Boule de Suif dan Neng Sum, serta persamaan dan perbedaan apa yang terdapat pada kedua cerpen tersebut. Dalam mengungkap penindasan terhadap perempuan sebagai warga kelas dua, kritik feminis sosialis diterapkan. Penelitian ini dirancang sebagai penelitian kualitatif dengan metode deskriptif. Analisis penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan intrinsik dan ekstrinsik.

Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa dalam dua cerpen, *Boule de Suif* dan *Neng Sum* diperlakukan sebagai perempuan kelas dua dan mereka ditindas oleh sebagian besar orang di sekitarnya. Penindasan terjadi dalam dua cerpen karena kapitalisme (perbedaan kelas sosial) dan patriarki. Sedangkan persamaan yang terdapat pada kedua cerpen tersebut adalah: dua tokoh utama yang digambarkan sebagai PSK memiliki sisi positif sebagai individu, mendapatkan penindasan yang sama yaitu penindasan verbal dari masyarakat, masyarakat Perancis dan Indonesia memiliki sikap yang sama terhadap PSK, dan tema yang sama yaitu “stigma masyarakat terhadap PSK menyebabkan penindasan”. Selain persamaan, kedua cerpen tersebut memiliki perbedaan konflik dan penyelesaian. Melalui dua cerpen ini, penulis juga mengetahui tentang nilai-nilai kehidupan yang harus dihormati manusia bukan berdasarkan golongannya tetapi berdasarkan kebajikannya.

Kata kunci: Penindasan Perempuan, Sastra Komparatif, Feminis Sosialis.

INTRODUCTION

In some circles, people are often treated depending on their status or what position they occupy and have as citizens. Citizen is a person who has the legal right to belong to a particular country or a person who lives in a particular place. When people are at a high level of status they will be treated well and respected, whereas people who have low status as citizens will be discriminated against. This is often referred to by the term second-class citizen. A second-class citizen is resident of a country who have a low status in the country and is usually treated unfairly and badly or discriminated against by other residents of upper class status or first-class citizen.

Second-class citizen depicted as less imperative perspective that can be effortlessly depicted by the women. In this era, there are still some circles who still consider women as second class citizens because women are identical to weak creations. Because they are created as weak creations compared to men, it is not uncommon for many people to treat them badly and oppress them, especially the men. Women are segregated and treated as less critical angle in their life.

Apart from the sex perspective, women are also oppressed by other women who have high positions. This means that not all women can be said to be second class citizens. There are also women that belong to first class citizens, and they can hold power and oppress the minority. However, in this

study the writer only focuses on analyzing women as second-class citizens in two short stories. One of the short stories is entitled ¹⁴ **Boule De Suif** by Guy De Maupassant. The other is a **short story** entitled *Catatan Seorang Pelacur* by Putu Arya Tirtawirya. The issue about second-class citizen can be found in both short stories. Through these two short stories, Maupassant and Tirtawirya described the oppression of women who are considered as lower class society because they are prostitutes.

¹² Guy De Maupassant's **Boule De Suif** was published in 1880. It tells about a prostitute named Boule de Suif who is on a trip with nine other people in a carriage. They are leaving their hometown because their hometown is occupied by many Prussian soldiers who have colonized their country. Boule de Suif is a woman who is willing to sacrifice her dignity to sleep with Prussian soldiers and satisfying their sexual desire even though it really hurts herself. She has to do it for the sake of rescuing the French detained by the Prussian army while they are on their trip. However, her sacrifice is in vain because the people she has saved turn away from her and think that Boule de Suif deserves to do this because she is

indeed a prostitute woman who likes to sell herself to men.

Tirtawirya's *Catatan Seorang Pelacur* was published in 1986. It tells about a long reflection of a prostitute woman named Neng Sum about her life as a prostitute. She has tried to become a good woman by becoming a legal wife but the society still sees her as a bad woman and the men who have ever slept with her felt strange seeing her presence in the middle of their daily lives as a wife. Her own family are ashamed of her and think that her presence in their midst is like a number zero. Hence, she lives alone even though she still has a family. This situation makes her think that her life is really in her own hands. She can destroy it or build it.

The two short stories are chosen as the object of this research because it is assumed that both stories have similarities. The main characters in the two short stories have the same social background namely prostitutes. Moreover, the main characters in both stories also undergo oppression because they come from lower status. Therefore, this study will compare the oppression undergone by the main characters in the two short stories. This study will try to find out the differences and similarities

5 in Guy de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif* and Tirtawirya's *Catatan Seorang Pelacur*.

In conducting this comparative literary study, theory of socialist feminism is applied to analyze women's oppression. Socialist feminism is a kind of feminism which opines that woman's oppression happen because of class and gender differences. In *A Readers Guide to Contemporary Feminist Literary Theory*, Maggie Humm states that 6 socialist feminism believes that women are second-class citizens in patriarchal and capitalism which depends for its survival on the exploitation of working people, and on the special exploitation of women. (1994:270). This means that socialist feminism is a branch of feminism which argues that women's oppression is rooted in patriarchy and capitalism.

Therefore, the objectives of this study are: 1. To describe the society's stigma against prostitute in Guy de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif* and Tirtawirya's *Catatan Seorang Pelacur*. 2. To find out the forms of oppression undergone by women character as second-class citizen in Guy de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif* and Tirtawirya's *Catatan Seorang Pelacur*. 3. To find out similarities and

differences contained in Guy de Maupassant's *Boule de Suif* and Tirtawirya's *Catatan Seorang Pelacur*.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study is a qualitative study with descriptive method. This study applies both intrinsic and extrinsic approaches. The intrinsic approach is applied in this study due to the fact that one of the topics discussed in this study is society's stigma against prostitute. The extrinsic approach is also applied in this study because this study is focused on the oppression of women as the second class citizen. In revealing the oppression of women as the second class citizen, socialist feminist criticism is applied. According to Anderson in *Thinking about Women: Sociological and Feminist Perspective*, 7 socialist feminists is "a more radical perspective that sees the origins of woman's inequality in the system of capitalization and patriarchy (1983: 235)." So in this case the inequality of women that can lead to women's oppression is seen from the capitalization and patriarchy systems.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Society's Stigma against Prostitutes

Prostitute is a profession that is viewed negatively by society because this profession is considered deviating from the society's norm. Due to this condition, prostitutes are often stigmatized by the society. Stigma against prostitutes is reflected well in the two short stories "Boule de Suif" and "Catatan Seorang Pelacur". Boule de Suif, the main character in "Boule de Suif" and Neng Sum, the main character in "Catatan Seorang Pelacur", are prostitute who are stigmatized by the society apart from their good qualities as individuals. The following sub-sub chapters will discuss the society's stigma against prostitutes in spite of their qualities as individuals that are reflected in the two short stories.

Society's Stigma against a Prostitute in "Boule de Suif"

The characterizations that displayed by Boule de Suif such as a forethinker and a patriot are the good side of Boule de Suif as a prostitute. But that does not make the society's view of prostitute to be good. Society's stigma against prostitute is a lowly profession. It can be seen when the respectable matrons meet Boule de Suif in carriage

and know she is a prostitute, they finally berate her because society's stigma against prostitute is a naughty woman and a woman who becomes a public scandal. This is evidenced by the quotation below:

2
"As soon as she was recognized the respectable matrons of the party began to whisper among themselves, and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" were uttered so loudly that Boule de Suif raised her head." (Maupassant, 1880: 7)

French society's stigma against prostitute is also explained in the quotation which says that Boule de Suif is a disreputable woman. This clearly shows that prostitute in the eyes of society is a disreputable people. This is evidenced by the quotation below:

3
"All looks were directed toward her. An odor of food filled the air, causing nostrils to dilate, mouths to water, and jaws to contract painfully. The scorn of the ladies for this disreputable female grew positively ferocious; they would have liked to kill her, or throw, her and her drinking cup, her basket, and her provisions, out of the coach into the snow of the road below." (Maupassant, 1880:9)

From the statement above, it can be concluded that society's stigma against a prostitute will never go away, no matter how good a prostitute is, she

is still a prostitute who is viewed negatively.

Society's Stigma against a Prostitute in "Catatan Seorang Pelacur"

The characterizations that displayed by Neng Sum such as a forethinker and a person who not static and wanting to move forward are the good side of Neng Sum as a prostitute. Even though she has the good side but the society still hate her. When Neng Sum has repented and leave her life as a prostitute, they still curse her because society's stigma against prostitutes still attached. This is shown when Neng Sum becomes a legal wife but she is cursed by the surrounding community and do not accept her in their environment because of her profession which was once a prostitute. This is evidenced by the quotation below:

¹
"Bagi diriku yang telah terlanjur bergelimang lumpur, maka cinta (dalam arti berlaki-bini) adalah omong kosong. Beberapa lelaki telah mencoba melepaskan diriku dari kamar mesum ini, tapi semuanya menyadari keterbiusan mereka selama itu setelah kami berada di tengah masyarakat yang mengutuki pelacuran."

"For myself who is already covered in mud, love (in the sense of being husband and wife) is nonsense. Several men had tried to get me out of this

perverted room, but all of them realized their drunkenness that long after we were in a society that condemns prostitution. (Tirtawirya, 1986:2)

The society's stigma against a prostitute in short story "Catatan Seorang Pelacur" is also represented by Neng Sum's family who are ashamed of her and considers her does not exist. This means that prostitutes in their eyes are a disgraceful life. This is evidenced by the quotation below:

¹
"Hidup yang sebatang kara, meskipun aku masih punya keluarga, tapi mereka malu dan menganggap kehadiranku di tengah mereka seperti sebuah angka nol dan malahan bersyukur jika aku tak muncul-muncul lagi di mata mereka."

"Living alone, even though I still have a family, but they are ashamed and consider my presence in their midst like a zero and even grateful if I don't appear in their eyes again. (Tirtawirya, 1986:3)"

From the statement above, it can be concluded that society's stigma towards a prostitute will always be attached even though they do the good things, such as Neng Sum who leaves her life as a prostitute, but in the eyes of the people, Neng Sum is still a person who deserves to be cursed and shunned for being a prostitute.

Oppression on Women as Second-Class Citizens in two short stories

In this study, the writer finds that in two short stories, women characters are treated badly and oppressed by others. As the writer mentioned in the previous that oppression on women cannot be seen only from one aspect and cannot be understood only by one aspect. The oppression is built up on several aspects, but in this study, the oppression on women is seen from class and gender differences. This means that the oppressors and the oppressed have class and gender differences. In these two short stories it is clear that the oppressors are respectable citizens and people who have power while the oppressed are prostitutes whose class is very far below the oppressors. So in this case the oppressed people are called second-class citizens because of their status as prostitutes. This aspect creates inequality towards women, which causes oppression on women. The inequality of women that can lead to women's oppression is seen from the capitalization and patriarchy systems. As the writer mentioned in the previous

chapter that in a capitalist society, it can be seen that women are oppressed through social class, in this case, the oppression on women in two short stories occurs because of the influence of society's stigma against prostitutes. Whereas in patriarchy, women are oppressed by men because of gender and sexuality.

In *Boule de Suif*, the first oppression that *Boule de Suif* received is insults from the respectable matrons who are in the carriage. When they see the presence of *Boule de Suif* in the carriage, they immediately insult her because of her status as a prostitute. The society's stigma against a prostitute eventually leads to oppression. Although they do not say directly to *Boule de Suif* but by saying words "hussy and public scandal" are definitely aim to insult *Boule de Suif* because she is the only one who has the status as a prostitute in the carriage. This is the first form of oppression seen from the capitalist system, oppressors are respectable women so that they arbitrarily insult *Boule de Suif* whose different class from them. This statement is evidenced by the quotation below:

2
"As soon as she was recognized the respectable matrons of the

party began to whisper among themselves, and the words "hussy" and "public scandal" were uttered so loudly that Boule de Suif raised her head. (Maupassant, 1880:7)

Another oppression received by Boule de Suif was when their trip is detained by Prussian officer. He asks Boule de Suif to be his mistress as a condition that Boule de Suif and the other people can continue their journey. Even though she is a prostitute and it is her job to serve men, she does not want to do it because she keeps her own pride and the pride of her country. She does not want to do such dirty things with her country's enemy. This caused her to be repressed by Prussian officers, she is not allowed to continue her journey or in other words she is detained by the Prussian army until she is willing to become the mistress of the Prussian officer. If she does not accept the condition then they are not allowed to continue their journey. So, Boule de Suif is forced to sacrifice to become the mistress of Prussian officer so that the Prussian officer allow them to continue on their way. This oppression is seen from the patriarchal system, because the Prussian officer is the holder of power. The evidence of oppression by Prussian officer against Boule de Suif is proven in the quotation below:

⁴"The officer said to me, just like this: 'Monsieur Follenvie, you will forbid them to harness up the coach for those travellers tomorrow. They are not to start without an order from me. You hear? That is sufficient.'" (Maupassant, 1880:22)

While in *Catatan Seorang Pelacur*, it turns out that Neng Sum as a prostitute has ever tried to become a good woman by becoming a legal wife. Being a legal wife means she has a desire to change and repent. However, in society she is still treated badly because of her background as a prostitute. This society's stigma causes oppression of her. People curse her and even hate her. In the eyes of the society, she is still a despicable person. The men who have used her to satisfy their lust also really hate her. It was clear from the look in their eyes that they do not like Neng Sum to become a legal wife because they will not be able to make Neng Sum as their prostitute anymore. When Neng Sum is a prostitute, she is also treated like a female mouse being eaten by a hungry cat by those men. This means they make Neng Sum as a material to satisfy their lust. Therefore, when Neng Sum turns into a good woman, they really dislike her and curse her.

The oppression experienced by Neng Sum also comes from her own family. They do not consider Neng Sum as family and do not want to admit her at all. They are ashamed that Neng Sum becomes a prostitute and has a dark life so they do not want to see Neng Sum in the midst of their family. This is evidenced by the quotation below:

1
“Malam di luar yang begitu kelam seperti kopi, kegelapan yang seperti inilah terbentang di muka hidupku kini; tanpa batas waktu kapan akan berakhir. Hidup yang sebatang kara, meskipun aku masih punya keluarga, tapi mereka malu dan menganggap kehadiranku di tengah mereka seperti sebuah angka nol dan malahan bersyukur jika aku tak muncul-muncul lagi di mata mereka.”

“The night outside as dark as coffee, darkness like this spreads over the face of my life now; indefinitely when it will end. Living alone, even though I still have a family, but they are ashamed and consider my presence in their midst like a zero and even grateful if I don't appear in their eyes again. (Tirtawirya, 1986:3)

The Similarities and Differences Found in the Two Short Stories

There are several similarities contained in these two short stories, namely: the similarity of the social background and characterization of the

two main characters. This is to say they are both prostitutes and display the same characterization, which is both are forethinker. The next similarity is the form of oppression they receive are also the same. Both characters get verbal oppression. Another similarity is the views of the society in these two short stories towards prostitution. The writer concludes that the French society and Indonesian society have the same view of prostitution. They view prostitution as a disgraceful deed and prostitutes are considered as despicable scum of society. The last similarity is the theme. The theme of the two short stories is "society's stigma against prostitutes causes oppression". In addition to similarities, there are two differences in the two short stories entitled “Boule de Suif” and “Catatan Seorang Pelacur”, namely the conflict and resolution. The conflict in short story “Boule de Suif” is external conflict. It is the conflict between Boule de Suif and the society, represented by the people who are in the journey with her. They despised and shunned Boule de Suif because of her status as a prostitute. So that, the resolution is dare to face all ridicule. While the conflict in short story “Catatan Seorang Pelacur” is internal conflict, the conflict of Neng Sum with herself that is whether she has to build

her life or stay in her dark life as a prostitute. The resolution is to plan to get out of the shameful life of a prostitute by raising money so that she can build a small business and can live a proper life.

CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, it can be concluded that Boule de Suif and Neng Sum are treated as second-class women and they are oppressed by most people around them. Oppression that happen to the two main characters is in the form of verbal oppressions. Seeing from socialist feminist point of view, the oppressions occur because of two reasons, capitalization system and patriarchy system. Based on the capitalization system, there is a class difference between the oppressors and the prostitutes. The oppressors consider that their status is higher than the prostitutes. They see prostitutes are disgusting creatures so they arbitrarily insult the prostitutes. While based on patriarchy system, the people who hold power or the patriarchs oppress the

prostitutes when they do not get the satisfaction they want from the prostitutes.

Finally, through these two short stories, the writer can find out that in a story, the main character is not always judged from a good background. In these two short stories the writer finds out the good side of the main characters as prostitutes. Even though they come from the lower class and had the status as prostitutes, they are so tough to face their lives. Through these two short stories, the writer also finds out about life values that human beings must be respected not based on their class but based on their virtues.

9

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