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**DYSTOPIAN SOCIETY IN PETRICK NESS' *THE KNIFE OF NEVER*
*LETTING GO***

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Abstract

The dystopian society is a reflection of a bad social environment that happened in reality. In this study, the researcher has found three problems of study, the government control, the loss of Todd's individual identity, and how discourse works in the novel *The Knife of Never Letting Go*. It uses the sociological theory by Michel Foucault and uses descriptive method to analyze the data. The concepts from Foucault such as panopticon that underlined the boundaries in society to human being's freedom, it is going to be way to uncover the first and the second problem. By using the concept of discourse that influences choices and actions in society is used to uncover the third problem.

Keywords: Society, Panopticon, Discourse, Government Control.

I. INTRODUCTION

Dystopia is an unpleasant imaginary world. It is a condition in society that seems to be harsh to its citizens that can be found in many literary works. According to Atwood (2021: 1) dystopia literature explores the dangerous effects of political and social structures on humanity's future. There are several characteristics of dystopian literature, such as government control, loss of individualism, caste system, technological control, survival and environmental destruction. According to Mutakin (2014: 21) society itself is typically the antagonist; it is society that is actively working against the protagonist's aims and desire. This oppression is enacted by a totalitarian or authoritarian government. In a dystopian story, the typically antagonist society refers to the government system with its norms and rules that against the citizens' rights as the protagonist.

Dystopia is often seen through the lens of fiction to embody what happens in reality where dictatorships still exist. In reality, there is a fascist dictatorship that still happens in society that harm others and violate the human rights.

In a dystopian society the citizens seems to be inferior to the system which is the government with its rules and norms. It can be found in this novel where the city is ruled by a Mayor and make it seems to be a dystopian society with his strict rules and norms that no one is allowed to against it. It seems to be a dictatorship and his people under his leadership lost their individualism.

The novel pictures a twelve-year-old boy named Todd Hewitt live under a dictatorship of the leader as seen as a dystopian society in a place called Prentisstown. This place sets in 'New World' with several settlements. Prentisstown has some norms given by the mayor of the city that harm human rights. In this settlement, all boys become a 'man' when they turn thirteen years old, and Todd is going to become a man in 30 days left. He does not allowed to talk with others since he has not been accepted as a man. The rule for every boys must be killing someone else especially women in their thirteen birthday to be accepted as a man seems to be a harsh. Every citizens are not

allowed to study. Todd is frustrated because of the rules of Mayor Prentiss. He cannot communicate with others and he never gets any education because education is forbidden in there. He tries to escape from Prentisstown with his dog named Manchee to find a better life.

periphery ... in which each individual is constantly located,

II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

This research will be dissected by using the theory of sociology by Michel Foucault's concepts which are panopticon and discourse.

2.1 Panopticon

As the philosopher and historian of post-structuralism, Foucault views panopticon as a symbol of the disciplinary in a society. He develops the relation of panopticon and power. Panopticon also known as the prison building. It observes the individual from every single point where they live as a symbol of the disciplinary. According to Foucault (1979:197):

“this enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individual are interested in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which uninterrupted work of writing links the center and

examined and distributed among living beings.”

The quotation shows panopticon is a building which is visible from its single point that makes people who live in that building always controlled from every single point. It shows that in panopticon, the inspector of that prison knows what was the prisoners do while the prisoners do not know where they are observed. According to Foucault (1979: 200) he is seen, but he does not see, he is the object of information, never a subject of communication. Panopticon is not just an instrument or tools that

Foucault recognizes that placing people under surveillance is seen as more efficient and profitable than getting them to comply with certain laws. In short, an institution is lead by someone who can survey and has a power to controll the members, which is a knowledge. Power itself according to Foucault (2007, para. 95) is not a thing but relation and power operates at the mostmicro levels of social relation. Power is at every level of the social body. It means that there is no certain meaning of power but in this era, one who has power sometimes use it to manipulated others. It shows panopticon concept is used to examine power relation that operate in almost all modern

allows all the disciplinary system but also a place to collect information of individuals' behavior. Panopticon then gives power of mind in creating individuals expected to be usefull for the society. In this context, the instrument or supervisor engine shows the presence of power. The supervisor engine is an instrument that used to monitoring citizens that make them feel watched and control their behave.

Power is a way of influencing somebody's actions, thoughts and feelings. According to Foucault (1972:108) “Where there is power, there is resistance.” institutions. This is the perfect way to discipline society because all of the citizens must obey the norms and rules that set in the certain place automatically.

2.2. Discourse

Discourse can be identified as common sense like what people thought or said and it also can be form of historical things of what already said or thought. Foucault argues that there will always historical context of everything if people want to understand something. Discourse produces knowledge, objects, subjects.

and practices of knowledge which different between one period and another period. According to Foucault (1980:114-115):

“here I believe one’s point of references should not be great model of language and signs, but that of war and battle. The history which bears and determines us has the form of war rather than that of language: relation of power not relation of meaning.”

It simply, the knowledge and practices represented in discourse is created in power of knowledge that someone has and organized by discourse practices and disciplinary system of a specific culture. Discourse is knowledge, knowledge is power, hence, discourse is power. The truth of a discourse can be found in this world, it is created from the knowledge which is linked into power. When someones’ knowledge already linked to the power of his position it is not only assumes the authority of truth but there is a power to claim that the truth itself is true.

It happens because every society has their own truth formed by discourses which is accepted and run in everybody life in society. In political case, there is someone who has power to state a discourse itself is true or not. It can be power of his position or the more knowledge he has than the others. Concept of panopticon is used by the government to control, discipline, and observe the citizens whilst discourse is used by the government to influence choices, behavior and actions of the citizens. By using on the concept, this study is entitled Dystopian Society in Patrick Ness' *The Knife of Never Letting Go*.

III. RESEARCH METHOD

In doing this research, the researcher sees the data in sociologically. The researcher collected the data through close reading activity and found there are two library researches. The primary data is the novel itself, the secondary data is referenced book consist of theory which is needed for analyzing the novel and the previous studies, as well.

Then the researcher analyse and appreciates the data by using the qualitative in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs and not in the form of numbers. According to Creswell (2014: 185), qualitative research refers to the meaning, concepts, definitions, characteristics, metaphors, symbols and description of things. The last step, the researcher will report the data in descriptive way to analyze the characteristics of dystopian society.

IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

This research will be discusses about the way dystopian society represented in the novel, *The Knife of Never Letting Go* and how the main character lives in there. As the opposite meaning of Utopia, Dystopia is unpleasant imaginary world. It is usually sets in the future world. There are some characteristics of dystopian literature, such as government control, loss of individualism as individual identity, caste system, technological control, survival and environmental destruction. In this novel, there are two characteristics of it; government control and the loss of individual identity.

The researcher focuses to analyze the representation of a dystopian society by using Michel Foucault's sociological theory

sentence *Mayor Prentiss decided to get rid of most everything else* shows that the leader of the city is the one who can make a decision.

that have been explained in the review of related literature section.

4.1 Government Control In Todd's Life and Society

In society, there is power that influencing somebody's actions, thoughts and feelings. According to Foucault (2007, para. 95) power is not a thing but relation and power operates at the most micro levels of social relation. Power is at every level of the social body. It means in this era, one who has power sometimes use it to manipulated others. In this novel, Prentisstown is lead by Mayor Prentiss. He is the one who changed all of the institution life in that place because he has a power which is the highest position in Prentisstown to control the others. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“Not even after Mayor Prentiss decided to get rid of most everything else.”(2008: 129)

The quotation above indicates a power to control other people. Under his leadership, the originally peaceful city began to undergo many changes. The

It is because Mayor Prentiss has a power above all the citizens there which is his position as a leader.

Another government control that seen as a dystopian society is when Mayor Prentiss leads his people to kill women. Someone who against this rule will be killed as the punishment. It is become a rule since he found that women can hear men's thought whilst men cannot. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“The men of Prentisstown killed the women of Prentisstown.”
Viola gaspseven tho she's got to have guessed it, too. “Not all the men,” Ben says. “But many. Allowing themselves to be swayed by Mayor Prentiss and the preachings of Aaron, who used to say that what was hidden must be evil. They killed all the women and all the men who tried to protect them.” (2008: 216)

The quotation above shows a dictatorship of Mayor Prentiss in leading the city. Because of women's thought cannot be heard by men, he believes that all women is alien shown in the phrase *what was hidden must be evil*. He decided to kill every single women in there as seen in the sentence

the men of Prentisstown killed the women of Prentisstown. He make a rule to kill mothers, grandmothers, sisters and aunts in the city and no one can against it.

4.2 The Loss of Todd's Individual Identity

The norms in society is like a power to individual's mind to be what the society wants and as a reminder to what society do not want. According to Foucault (1977: 207) that discipline practices are expected to create the submissive people. Panopticon is one way to discipline people applied through hierarchical observation of military discipline in the society. Foucault explains that apparatus is able to monitor all of the activity of their subordinates. As a result makes people have to hold back because of fear being monitored even the monitor system is off. In this novel, every people in the Prentisstown loss their rights to speak up. They cannot giving opinion and keep follow the rules and norms that Mayor Prentiss given. Even they cannot think in their mind because there is noise germ that make their thought can be heard each other. The noise germ itself is like a prison building that monitor all their activities. It can be seen in below:

“If I told you now, it would buzz in you louder than a hive at honey-gathering time and Mayor Prentiss would find you fast as he could spit. And you have to get away from here. You have to, as far away as you can.” (2008:32)

The quotation above shows the use of panopticon to control Prentisstown's citizens. Because their thought is audible for everyone in the city, they cannot talk about something that Mayor Prentiss hide all this time and it indicates that the use of noise germ in *The Knife of Never Letting Go* is a symbol of the power of panopticon. It is used to discipline the society as seen in the sentence *If I told you now, it would buzz in you louder than a hive at honey-gathering time and Mayor Prentiss would find you fast as he could spit.* The phrase *it would buzz* shows that what are they thought is audible and the Mayor Prentiss can hear it, so they cannot say something that against the rules. The concept of panopticon can be found in daily life. People have their own panopticon inside themselves because it is like a machine that can change people like what society expected.

4.3 Discourses In Prentisstown

In this place, there are discourses to discipline society.

The leader of the city controlled the society by stated discourses instead of harming them physically. In society, there must be truth formed by discourses.

Someone who has power and state a discourse, it can be a truth for his followers. According to Foucault (1972: 25) discourse is secretly based on an 'already said'; and that this 'already said' is not merely a phrase that has already been spoken, or a text that has already been written, but a 'never said', an incorporeal discourse, a voice as silent as a breath, a writing that is merely the follow of its own mark. In this novel, the rules of not allows to study even at home is made by Mayor Prentiss. He is the man who has an authority to control all of the life there. It is because of his high position and what he says must be obeyed by everyone. As a leader, Mayor Prentiss has a power to make a statement as a discourse that sees as a truth. As it is found in the quotation bellow:

“Mayor Prentiss outlawed such things as “detrimental to the discipline of our minds”.”(2008: 15)

The quotation above shows a discourse

made by Mayor Prentiss shown in the phrase *detrimental to the discipline of our minds*. He stated that learning system destroys the human mind. This discourse sees as a truth and his people must follow what he said because of his power as a leader. Since the Mayor Prentiss said it, there is no more studying or learning system in Prentisstown. The discourse sees as a truth since there is a noise germ and learning system may not run well in there.

In Prentisstown there is a rule to follow as what being stated by the Mayor Prentiss. Once Mayor Prentiss said a statement, all his people must obey to it because he has a power over the others which is his position. It is like a discourse that can influence the mindset, behavior or habits of those we influence. It can be seen in the quotation below:

“I AM THE CIRCLE
AND THE CIRCLE
IS ME” (2008: 65)

The quotation above shows a discourse stated by the leader of Prentisstown. Todd and the rest of the citizens are follow the rules made by Mayor Prentiss. Without harming the other, he controls people’s mindset and behavior shown in the sentence *I AM THE*

CIRCLE AND THE CIRCLE IS ME. The sentence *I AM THE CIRCLE* shows that Mayor Prentiss is the center of the town. The phrase *THE CIRCLE IS ME* shows that every people in there must follow his rules with no exceptions. This statement can directly regulate all of the citizens in Prentisstown without harming them physically.

V. CONCLUSION

The dystopian society can be seen through the government control and the impact of it to the citizens where the system is applied. In dystopian society, the institution life seems to be strict. The people are under the dictatorship of the leader. There is a tradition as seen as the norm that harm the rights of the citizens. Dystopian society also can be seen from the loss of individuality of the citizens as the impact of the government control. Also, there are discourses that the government use to discipline the society in order to hid the way the government took over the society life.

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