



ISSN: 2406-8330  
e-ISSN: 2503-0302

**LINGUA LITERA**  
**Journal of English Linguistics and Literature**  
<http://journal.stba-prayoga.ac.id>

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**WOMEN' RESISTANCE DURING NAZI OCCUPATION IN  
KRISTIN HANNAH'S *THE NIGHTINGALE***

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**Abstract**

France as the German's mortal enemy ended in the hand of Hitler's Nazi occupation and forced the civilians to revolt, not only men but also women. The women's resistance represented the effort to get gender equality in life. To focus on the resistance, this paper aims to analyze the efforts of France women during the Nazi occupation portrayed in Kristin Hannah's novel, *The Nightingale*. The writer uses Liberal Feminism as the main theory to describe the women's movement in getting their freedom and equality. In completing the analysis, the writer uses qualitative and descriptive methods. In the results of the analysis, the author found that during the occupation, French women struggle to liberate and defend their families and country from the Nazi by doing certain attempts such as educating themselves to be as equal to men, developing themselves to fight as a resistance patriot and encourage themselves to be a woman leader.

Keywords: Resistance, Occupation, Self-development, Equality, Emancipation

## I. INTRODUCTION

France suffered difficulties and destruction during the four years of war because of the Nazi's invasion. Paris in those years became a city where many young and middle-aged men were in prison, concentration camps, in hiding, or the underground, therefore by the obliged condition, resistance became in significant measure movement of the young women and girls. It is accepted that the women's resistance played a significant role in the liberation of France and shortened the war. Women who participated in the resistance may have shared certain independence, idealism, or patriotism.

Women's resistance becomes an important topic to discuss for some reasons. First, *The Nightingale* portrays women's life during World War II whose stories are often being forgotten or overlooked. Weitz (1995) states in her book that countless French heroines willingly undertook any task offered to them no matter how dangerous it is, from distributing clandestine newspapers and espionage to parachute drops and armed combat. At the same time, French women also performed all the roles of their traditional domain in service to caregivers, nurses, providers of food and shelter, seamstresses, secretaries, mundane tasks that would prove crucial to the resistance effort, and that many

men could not or would not assume. Unfortunately, most of their activities have been largely overlooked or ignored. The second reason is the writer was mesmerized by the woman's courage and resilience during the war. Women resisters suffered the same fate as their male counterparts if they get caught. Isolation and concentration camps were filled with resistance, who were subject to the same beatings, torture, and execution as men, yet female resisters were much more vulnerable to having their children and loved ones held hostage, brutally beaten, or murdered before their eyes to induce them to talk. Many resisters, both women, and men remarked after the war that women held up better under torture than men. In doing so, they, along with other members of the resistance, saved the soul and honor of France. These courageous heroines put themselves directly in a harmful situation, and as the result, most of them paid a terrible price for their heroism.

The women's resistance was formed as a refusal to be silenced and an iron determination to fight against the destruction of freedom and human dignity. Based on the novel, it is a beautiful heart-breaking phenomenon that celebrates the resilience of the human spirit and the endurance of women. Based on the reasons above, the writer is interested in analyzing the novel. The purpose of this research is to show the

remarkable ingenuity, courage, and resilience of the main character had done during the Nazi occupation of France in World War II using Mill's theory of Liberal Feminism.

## **II. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

Liberal Feminist bases their thinking on the liberal concept which emphasizes that women and men are created equal and have the same rights and also must have the same opportunities. Mill (1986) states that Liberal Feminism is a particular approach to achieving equality between men and women that emphasizes the power of a person to alter discriminatory practices against women. Liberal Feminism emphasizes that women's freedom is the same as men's, so they can express themselves without limitation in society. Since men and women are equal, women have no limit in doing something, and they are free to decide to express themselves based on their own choice. Individual rights for Liberals should take priority over "goods". Each individual is given the freedom to choose what is "good" for himself as long as it does not harm others. Mill states several concepts about the women's movement; woman's equality, self-development, and emancipation. These concepts will be the guidance theory for

analyzing this research.

### **2.1 Woman Self-Development**

Mill described that Liberal Feminism consists of several concepts and principles, such as equality, autonomy, justice, self-development, women's emancipation, and the law of marriage. Mill (1986) argues about woman's self-development which means giving a woman a chance to develop their faculties and determine their life freely based on their desires and their logical thinking as human beings. Mill argues that women are naturally worse at some things than men and should, therefore, be discouraged or forbidden from doing them. Mill says that men simply do not know what women are capable of because we have never let them try one cannot make an authoritative statement without evidence. Men cannot stop women from trying things because they might not be able to do them. Whether women can do them or not must be found out in practice. In reality, men do not know what women's nature is, because it is so wrapped up in how they have been raised.

### **2.2 Woman Equality**

Mill (1986) states that the way to maximize the total utility (happiness/enjoyment) is to allow individuals to pursue what they want. If society is to achieve sexual equality and gender justice then society must allow women political rights and opportunities as well as education

as same as men. The legal position of women is incredibly bad, relieved only by the accident of men's behavior. The moral position of women is low, in servitude to brute appetites and whims. The power men have over women corrupts society, and the influence women have over men is generally selfish and contrary to social progress. A great result would arise from equality, and women must be given occupational and rights quality and civil rights.

### **2.3 Woman Emancipation**

Mill (1986) states that liberal feminism emphasizes women's emancipation, extends women's opportunities for self-development, and encourages socially responsible attitudes. Women are brought up to act as if they were weak, emotional, and docile a traditional prejudice. If society tried women equally, half of the population would be liberated, producing a great effect on human development. Mill justifies the necessity of women's emancipation mainly by the need to create room for each individual (which means not only men but also women) to develop their inclinations and talents, to realize the maximum of their happiness, and as a consequence, contribute to the development of the whole society. It is not difficult to identify the utilitarian principle of maximum happiness in the

background of such argumentation; for it is the well-being of the maximum number of people which Mill uses to demonstrate the disutility of women's oppression and exclusion from public life. Other principles which are central to his argumentation are the liberal principle of equality and freedom, the principle of equal opportunities, and the principle of free individual choice. According to Mill (1984), since human beings are equal, the fact that someone is born a woman should not determine her lifelong status and position in society but it shall decide the person's position throughout all life.

From the explanation above it can be concluded that the feminist movement aims to balance gender equality. After all, it is a liberation movement from racism, stereotyping, sexism, and oppression.

### **III. RESEARCH METHOD**

In this research, the writer used library research to obtain the data by studying the historical book and other sources in the library. In addition, this research was conducted in qualitative research. According to Creswell (2009), qualitative research is a form of interpretive inquiry in which researchers interpret what they see, hear, and understand. In other words, qualitative research is empirical research where the data are not in the form of numbers. It is a descriptive analysis that focuses on

interpreting the data. In consequence, it needs deep observation of the data to find the interpretation.

The writer used documents as a data collection. Documents including studying experts and quotations. Document analysis fits the writer's analysis because it used experts' quotations. In analyzing this research, the writer used *The Nightingale* novel as the primary data source. The secondary data in this research were collected from library research and other resources such as the historical book, websites on the internet, journal, and thesis which related to the topic.

#### **IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In an attempt against Nazi occupation, Isabelle Rossignol as the main character does certain efforts. There are several reasons for doing the resistance as it is presented below.

##### **4.1 The Desire to be a Female Hero by Developing the Education**

Women face different barriers concerning their education in different regions of the world. During World War II, French women are struggling for education because their country was occupied by Germany which cause destruction and chaos. Gender inequality and discrimination through education are experienced in varying forms and at all levels by women, depending on their personal, local, and national contexts.

However, despite progress, women and girls continue to face multiple barriers based on gender and its intersections with other factors, such as age, ethnicity, poverty, and disability, in the equal enjoyment of the right to quality education. This includes barriers among the others, at all levels such as to access quality education and within education systems, institutions, and classrooms.

Women often become the object of men and they used to make them pleased. Since women are treated as men's objects, they are being oppressed by society because women are more worthless than men. Because of this reason, it is important to make men and women equal to avoid oppression. Tong (2009) states that:

“If the society is to achieve sexual equality or gender justice, the society must provide women with the same political rights and economic opportunities as well as the same education that men enjoy.”

From the quotation above, the equality that men and women have is not only related to politics and the economy, but also to education. People demand that education is provided not only for men, but women also have the right to get an education, as well as men, can get. The Occupation unintentionally paved a path towards equality among genders

by providing the opportunity for women to demonstrate their equality.

#### **4.2 A Female Resistance Derived by Enhancing Patriot Spirit**

In the first philosophical book-length study of the subject, Nathanson (1993) defines patriotism as involving; special affection for one's own country, a sense of personal identification with the country, special concern for the well-being of the country, and willingness to sacrifice to promote the country's good. Accordingly, patriotism can be defined as love of one's country, identification with it, and special concern for its well-being and that of compatriots. From the definitions above, in general, patriotism can be interpreted as feelings of love and loyalty to the homeland and the desire for the welfare of the homeland which is manifested through a courageous attitude, belief in self-ability, loyal to social friends, abstinence giving up and be willing to sacrifice everything for the homeland.

Self-development is a conscious process of improving oneself in various aspects of life. It's a constant pursuit of growth by developing skills, competencies, and knowledge. The ultimate goal for self-development is to be a self-fulfilled person. As Mill (1986) states that the way to maximize the total utility is to allow them to

pursue what they want and allow women political rights and opportunities as same as men. In *The Nightingale*, the woman's self-development is shown by the main character Isabelle Rossignol to be a patriot and join the French resistance. Isabelle's rebellious personality is the root of her willingness to join the French resistance. After being sent to and expelled from a series of girls' schools, Isabelle puts her rebellious tendencies by joining the French resistance movement. Isabelle describes as the one who rebels the most with her perspective about freedom, war, and justice to defend her country. The main character Isabelle has a patriotic spirit and refuses to live passively under the German Nazi authority. Based on the reason above the main character is forced to join a resistance movement to push back the German Nazi army. In 1940 after German succeeds to do an invasion in Poland and Belgium and Czechoslovakia, they began to enter the central city of France which makes the condition in France getting worse. When most French people try to hide their fear because of the war terror, Isabelle bravely decided to join the French resistance, taking a risk on everything that she has to save her fellow countrymen, even her own life. A book by Edith Cavell inspires Isabelle to be a patriot or female hero and save her country from Nazi occupation, as can be seen from the quotation below:

“A woman can go to war these days,” Isabelle said when the Paris traffic finally forced her to slow down. “I could be an ambulance driver, maybe. Or I could work on breaking secret codes. Or charming the enemy into telling me a secret location or plan. Remember that game— ” “War is not a game, Isabelle.” “I believe I know that, Christophe. But if it does come, I can help. That's all I'm saying.” (*The Nightingale*, 2015: p.26)

From the quotation above, Isabelle has a patriotic spirit that drives her to be a female hero and help the French resistance army. Isabelle's efforts to be a patriot process her ability to achieve her goal which is joining the resistance. Knowing Edith Cavell's history, it is not surprising that Edith became Isabelle's hero and the source of great inspiration. Still, regardless of Edith Cavell's braveness and remarkable acts, Julien refuses Isabelle to join with the resistance, the sentence “war is not a game” indicates that Julien believes being resistant and joining with them is dangerous for her. Furthermore, Julien makes sure to remind her how Edith Cavell died, executed by the Germans. Because of their massive patriotic spirit, Isabelle tends to ignore her father.

### **4.3 The Efforts to be A Courage Spy Woman**

Being a leader requires both a set of skills that can be learned as well as certain attributes that can be nurtured. The main character of *The Nightingale* has the skill as a female spy and the spirit to liberate her nation from occupation. Leaders inspire, challenge, and encourage others. The main character's emancipation as a leader can be seen when Isabelle joined the resistance as a delivery message yet when Isabelle found the British pilot who was shot down by German troops, Isabelle helped the pilot to escape into Spain and for this operation, Isabelle adopted the codename as the Nightingale the symbol of hope.

“So,” Lévy said after an uncomfortable pause, “Isabelle has a plan.”

Gaëtan didn't smile. “Does she?”

“She wants to lead this airman and others across the Pyrenees on foot and get them into Spain. To the British consulate, I assume.” (*The Nightingale*, 2015: p.150)

This quotation shows how they gathered to discuss the plan how to smuggle the British down pilot into Spain. It represents the woman's emancipation as a leader when Isabelle promotes herself to lead the British pilot. She discussed the plan with the other resisters but all of them rejected it because Isabelle is too young yet she is a woman. At some point, all resistance participants knew

the penalty and consequences for helping British airmen because it was announced on billboards all over town, that the helper will be imprisoned or dead. Certainly, Isabelle had been afraid sometimes, she let fear give her a little shake and she almost gave in to it. Then she thought about the swastika that flew from the Eiffel tower and her sister Vianne living with the enemy and her husband lost in some prisoner of war camp and also about her inspired person, Edith Cavell.

Liberal Feminism looks like an individualistic which argues that woman has full freedom in all aspects of society like the freedom to express themselves without limitation in society, the freedom to get an education, and also have the same equal rights and opportunities. Liberal Feminism concentrates on the freedom and equality of rationality where the woman is a rational human being and they have the same ability as the man.

Based on *The Nightingale* novel that has been analyzed by the researcher, it is assumed that women also can be equal to men. It can be seen from the effort of the main character to develop her thinking capacity. The efforts continue by doing certain actions through the dangerous condition. During World War II, society's condition forced people to suffer and made

certain women brace up their spirits to be patriotic and fight for freedom. The efforts to fight the occupation done by Nazi was the evidence that a woman becomes an important person during the war. The spirit to be patriotic and leader also develop themselves to be equal to men

## V. CONCLUSION

After analyzing the data, the writer concludes that the resistance movement derived from the influence of the role model and accepting the exclamation to resist the occupation so that the woman can defend their rights against the Nazis. The efforts to develop education prove women's resistance to getting education equality. The efforts to be patriotic is another form of woman's self-development to transform their individuals to be more courageous and liberate themselves from gender discrimination. Later, the effort to be a leader is a kind of woman emancipation to show that woman is equal to man in societal aspects and that they can achieve certain goals.

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