

The Construction of Women in *Aroma Karsa* Novel by Dewi Lestari (Semiotic Study)

Rokhyanto*, Kingkin Puput Kinanti*, Vrestanti Novalia Santoso*

*Indonesian Language and Literature Education, IKIP Budi Utomo Malang, Indonesia

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Abstract- One of the media that can build social construction is novel. Analysis of the construction of women in *Aroma Karsa* novel by Dewi Lestari uses semiotic study. Semiotics is defined by Saussure (Sobur, 2004: 12) as a science examining the life of signs in a society. Semiotics as a systematic study involving the production and interpretation of signs in the meaning process. Since it is seen as a kind of code that is composed of meaningful signs, it convinces researchers used Roland Barthes semiotic study categorizing five semiotic codes namely hermeneutic code or puzzle code, semic code or connotative code, symbolic code, proairetic code or action code, and genomic code or cultural code. The study of *Aroma Karsa* novel used a qualitative approach because the data studied are in the form of words, phrases, and sentences. Data collection technique used was text analysis in the form of novel language exposure. Women in *Aroma Karsa* novel are portrayed as more dominant than men. This is motivated by the figure of the writer in the novel who is also a woman, namely Dewi Lestari/Dee. Dee's alignments with female characters in the novel are clearly revealed through her dominance in the story line. This shows the special attention of the author towards intergender relations. Dee realizes the imbalance of relations between women and men in real life so that she deconstructs it in her writing. The female figure in the novel is constructed as a female leader in power.

Index Terms- construction, women, *Aroma Karsa*, semiotics

I. INTRODUCTION

The theory of social construction is a theory of sociology. Social construction is a statement of belief (*a claim*) and also a point of view (*a viewpoint*) that the content of consciousness, and how to deal with others are taught by culture and society (Ngangi, 2011: 1). In social construction, there is a relationship between reality and social life. The figure who plays a role in social construction theory is Peter Berger. According to Berger, reality is formed socially. Berger and Luckmann say that social reality consists of three types, namely objective, symbolic, and subjective reality. *First*, objective reality is a reality that is formed by experience in the objective world that is outside the individual self, this reality is considered as reality. *Second*, symbolic reality is a symbolic expression of objective reality in various forms. Subjective reality is a reality that is formed from the process of re-absorption of objective and symbolic reality into individuals through internalization (Arawinda, Ucca, 2012: 5).

One of the media that can build social construction is novel. Novel is a written and narrative prose fiction work; usually in the form of story. The author of a novel is called a novelist. Aminudin (1987: 66) states, as a fiction work, a novel contains a story or tale carried by certain actors with certain characters, setting, and stages, also a series of stories that depart from the imagination of the author, thus intertwining a story. It can be understood that a novel is a fiction or story that is formed according to the imagination of the author which contains culture, norms, values, and rules that apply in society. The novel also describes the social situation of the community at a time and place.

Aroma Karsa novel by Dewi Lestari is a best seller novel telling the story of the search for Puspa Karsa which is a plant that has supernatural powers. Various methods were carried out by Raras Prayagung as the main character to get Puspa Karsa. In this novel, many female characters become the center of the story.

The researchers are interested in analyzing the construction of women in *Aroma Karsa* novel by Dewi Lestari by using semiotic study. Semiotics is defined by Saussure (Sobur, 2004: 12) as a science examining the life of signs in society, and thus this science becomes part of social psychology. Semiotics is a science or method of analysis to study signs (Mulyana, 2008: 15). Semiotics is the study of signs, the functioning of signs, and the production of meaning (Tinoburko, in Malinda, 2011: 36). According to Ratna (2016: 256) Semiotics is defined as a systematic study involving the production and interpretation of signs in the meaning process. In essence, this science intends to show how the formation of signs and rules governing it. Thus, basically semiotics is a sign science concept. A sign is something that for someone means something else. In Zoest's view, everything that can be observed or made observable can be called a sign. Therefore, sign is not limited to objects. The existence of events, absence of events, structure found in

something, habit of all these can be called signs (Tinoburko, in Malinda, 2011: 36). The sign object according to Peirce is not only a systematic language and communication system but the entire contents of the world as far as related to the human mind so that humans can establish relationships with their surroundings. Although Peirce included the entire contents of the world as a sign, he did not deny that language is the most basic sign system. While others such as gestures, thought forms, forms and ways of clothing, ways of speaking: high and low tones, human creative works, how to look at an object, selection and rejection, etc., are seen as a kind of code that is composed of signs meaningful signs that are communicated based on relationships.

Roland Barthes categorizes five codes in semiotics, namely hermeneutic or puzzle code that revolve around the reader's expectations to get the truth to questions that appear in the text, semic or connotative code, symbolic code, proairetic or action code, and genomic or cultural code. This study describes the construction of women in *Aroma Karsa* novel analyzed by Roland Barthes's semiotic study.

II. METHODS

This research uses a qualitative approach. The study of *Aroma Karsa novel* used a qualitative approach because the data collected and examined are in the form of words, phrases, sentences in the novel. This data research are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogue of the characters *Aroma Karsa* novel, such data were obtained by reading carefully, meticulously, and repeatedly so that the researchers got what they wanted in their study. The data source in this study is the novel's text entitled *Aroma Karsa* written by Dee Lestari. The identity of the data source are: the novel's title is *Aroma Karsa*, the author is Dee Lestari, the page number is 702, the publisher is PT Bentang Pustaka Sleman, Yogyakarta, and the first print was on March, 2018.

The data collection technique in this study was text analysis in the form of language exposure in the novel. This textual technique was used to collect research data in the form of literary works by (1) the researcher read carefully the research data source, (2) the researcher identified the absurd event units of each paragraph, (3) the researcher put a code on the language exposure contained in *Aroma Karsa* novel by Dee Lestari. In this study the data collected were data having a relationship with the analysis being studied, namely natural, current, and original data in *Aroma Karsa* novel. In the data collection, the researcher played active roles and could not be represented. In this case the researchers were also the data collection tools and even the key instruments. The data analysis in this study used the method of interpreting data. The method of interpreting this data is was translated into: (1) targeted objectives, (2) procedures, (3) roles of other element relationships, (4) roles of data unity, (5) and steps of interpreting the data with the analysis method of the absurdity of the characters. The data presentation was done informally by using words that are easily understood.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Novel Synopsis

This novel tells about the search for Puspa Karsa, which is nothing but a legendary plant only considered as a fairy tale, in fact it is actually hidden in a secret place. Starting from Raras Prayagung's obsession to hunt Puspa Karsa, a magic flower able to control willing and can only be detected through its scent. The core theme of the novel is about scent and smell. This led to several figures with a high sense of smell to compete with one another in searching for Puspa Karsa, such as Jati Wesi and Tanaya Suma.

The second meeting do not start well. Tanaya Suma, the eldest son of Raras Prayagung considers Jati Wesi to be full of negative views. During the time with the intensity of frequent meetings, it grows the love between Jati Wesi and Tanaya. The expedition continues until various mysteries begin to unfold, including the true figure of *Aroma Karsa*.

The Women in *Aroma Karsa* Novel by Dewi Lestari

1. Janirah – Court Retainer - Female Thief

Janirah is a court retainer who has lived for 300 years living in a palace for generations. She lives rather freely in and out of the Yogyakarta palace. With a 'less grateful what given by others' soul, Janirah tries to pry the cupboard and takes the contents in the cupboard.

By using her two flagship tools, Janirah manages to break through the mysterious cupboard. There are various abysmally goods in it. One that draws her attention. An iron box as big as a shoe box. Dull and simple. Far from the sparkling shadows of treasure chests in his fantasy. The box, somehow, is like wailing to be opened (p.7).

Janirah is described as someone who wants to learn. This can be seen when she tries to read the papyrus pages she found.

.... With a strong desire, Janirah then secretly watches a private teacher who was brought in to teach noble children in the palace. From a distance Janirah joins in practicing writing, reading, and arithmetic (p.8).

After four months Janirah has able to read the *Hanacaraka* script series with an oil lamp. After few years and Janirah has begun to mature, she leaves the palace and does not want to be a court retainer and wants to open an herbal medicine and scrub business for women. The business has rapidly advanced in Yogyakarta, so Janirah moves to Sentul, South Jakarta.

At that time Ibu Janirah has been married, but Janirah's husband lives in abundant wealth and squanders company assets until he is sick to death.

2. Raras-Billionaire-Woman in wheelchair

Raras is the central figure in this novel. She is Janirah's granddaughter and successor. Raras has an ambitious nature. Raras curiosity is very high, so she trisd to find the existence of Puspa Karsa. Raras is also a warrior figure. This can be seen from her efforts to carry out an expedition looking for Puspa Karsa. Raras is also a smart and successful businesswoman. Her wealth is abundant. Her ambitious spirit has made her a successful businesswoman who can bring her cosmetics company from adversity.

3. Puspa Karsa-Myth and Mysterious Figure

Puspa Karsa is a respected sacred figure. Is a magical figure and tangible secret. In every story, Puspa Karsa is always portrayed as a figure of secret nature and magical power. Supposedly, there is no power in the world can match the power of Puspa Karsa. Even in each appearance, the power from Puspa Karsa itself is able to change the order of the archipelago. In addition, Puspa Karsa is also described as a figure that can only be found by selected people who are able to detect his/her body's scent.

4. Tayana Suma

Tanaya Suma is another important figure, she is a child of Raras Prayagung. Since childhood, Suma always lives with wealth. She is also talented in dealing with several obstacles in her company. Suma also has a strong smell instinct besides Jati. In contrast, unlike Jati who had never been sick, since childhood Suma had often been sick and weak. Suma is easily offended, her character is curt, ignorant, arrogant, but she also has her own good side.

The Construction of Women in *Aroma Karsa* Novel by Dewi Lestari

The women in *Aroma Karsa* novel are portrayed as more dominant than men. This is motivated by the figure of the writer in this novel who is also a smart woman, Dewi Lestari. Dee Lestari's alignments with the female characters in the *Aroma Karsa* novel are clearly revealed through their dominance in the story line. Male figures, except for Jati Wesi, are imaged as having many weaknesses and comply to the rules made by female figures. This shows the author's special attention to this intergender relationship. It seems that Dee Lestari is aware of the imbalance of relations between women and men in real life, so she deconstructs it in her writings. Gender construction can be created and socialized through media, one of which is novel. In the view of feminism, there are fundamental differences between sex and gender. Gender can be constructed by humans so that their position can change. Priyatna (2018) outlines Moi's statement in his essay *Feminist, Female, and Feminine* (1991) states that femininity is a set of characteristics that are culturally defined, feminism is a political position, while femaleness 'readiness' is a biological thing. Thus, all biological facts (menstruation, pregnancy, childbirth, and breastfeeding) are "destiny" which is more or less irreversible. Furthermore, femininity and gender are socio-cultural constructions attributed to women. Because social construction is created by humans, femininity and gender are liquid, not steady, and can change. Something that is considered 'feminine' depends on who defines it, where these people are, and what have influenced their lives.

The women in *Aroma Karsa* novel are constructed as women in power. Raras as the main character is depicted as a dominant figure whose position influences men's actions. Even though she is married, Raras' power does not change. In line with the results of research by Kartika, (2019) which states that the activeness of women in the public sphere is more taken into account than its role in the domestic sphere. Thus, marriage does not become a barrier to the growth of women in public spaces.

IV. CONCLUSION

The women in the *Aroma Karsa* Novel are portrayed as more dominant than men. This is also motivated by the figure of the writer in this novel who is also a smart woman Dewi Lestari. Dee Lestari's alignments with the female characters in the novel *Aroma Karsa* are clearly revealed through their dominance in the story line. The women in *Aroma Karsa* novel are constructed as women in power.

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AUTHORS

First Author – Rokhyanto, Indonesian Language and Literature Education, IKIP Budi Utomo Malang, Indonesia, rokhyanto3@gmail.com

Second Author – Kingkin Puput Kinanti, Indonesian Language and Literature Education, IKIP Budi Utomo Malang, Indonesia, kinantipuput8@gmail.com

Third Author – Vrestanti Novelia Santosa, Indonesian Language and Literature Education, IKIP Budi Utomo Malang, Indonesia, vrestantinov@gmail.com