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An Analysis of Women's Subordination in Eka Kurniawan's Magical Realism Novel Entitled *Beauty is a Wound* (2015)

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ABSTRACT

Women's subordination is one of the most prevalent topics in the study of feminism. One of the novels that portrays the issues of women's subordination in Indonesia is Eka Kurniawan's magical realism novel titled *Beauty is a Wound* (2015). By applying descriptive qualitative approach and textual analysis method, the study analyzes how women's subordination is portrayed in the novel based on Juliet Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory. The study found that women's subordination occurred in four sectors of production, reproduction, sexuality, and socialization. Women's subordination is portrayed through the men and women characters' actions, behaviors, and thoughts. The study also found that women's subordination in every sector is interrelated and occurs frequently in the sexuality sector. It can be implied from the portrayal that women's subordination is a rampant issue in Indonesia, especially in terms of women's sexuality.

Keywords: *Beauty is a Wound, magical realism, socialist feminism, women's subordination*

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INTRODUCTION

The subordination of women is one of the most prevalent topics in the study of feminism. Women's subordination can be described as the inferiority of women due to patriarchal domination in most societies which makes them powerless, discriminated, and lacking in self-esteem, resources, decision making, etc. (Sultana, 2012). Since gender equality is a condition in which women and men "enjoy the same opportunities, outcomes, rights, and obligations in all spheres of life" (Chowdhury & Patnaik, 2010), it is argued that women's subordination is a condition where women are considered as the second-grade citizens, treated unequally, and discriminated in all spheres of life. Therefore, it is necessary to study women's subordination in order to attain gender equality.

Several works of fiction tried to bring up issues of women's subordination by using multiple genres, one of which is magical realism. Magical realism is a literary genre that depicts reality setting as having a nuance of magical elements and distorts the line between fantasy

and reality (MasterClass, 2020). The term itself first coined in 1925 by a German art critic, Franz Roh, to describe an art category that "strayed from the strict guidelines of realism" (McKinney, 2014). One characteristic of magical realism is the element of magic in a realistic setting. Unlike fantasy novels, magical realism novels treat their magical elements as ordinary occurrences. The study of magical realism and feminism are intersected since magical realism challenges the dominant reality and historical narratives with marginal ones by giving voice to the experiences of oppressed groups (Adams, 2011). Thus, the study of feminism, including women's subordination, in the magical realism genre is important to amplify the voices of women in literary works.

Beauty is a Wound (2015) by Eka Kurniawan uses magical realism to criticize several issues in Indonesia, most notably issues concerning Indonesian women. The novel had been compared to other prominent works such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude* by Gabriel Garcia Marquez because of their way in moving

beyond “tormented history” by portraying it through the story (Domini, 2019). Kurniawan’s novel sets in Indonesia during the Dutch colonization era until the New Order era. The novel explores the struggle and subordination of women, to expand on the idea that beauty is a wound. In fact, a number of studies had analyzed his work through the lens of feminism: Kurniawati et al. (2019) who examine gender inequality, sexual violence, and the main character’s struggle in the novel; Widya and Asnani (2020) that analyze radical feminism and the role and position of women as pimps; and Mulia and Pardi (2020) who examine woman’s strength in the novel. Although the studies focus on the character of Dewi Ayu, they did not discuss how magical realism is integral to the feminism study of the work.

One branch of feminism that analyzes women’s subordination is socialist feminism. Socialist feminism is a branch of the feminist movement which bloomed in the 1960s and 1970s. Socialist feminism centers around the interconnection between

patriarchy and capitalism (Kennedy, 2008). Sheila Rowbotham (as cited in Thornham, 2010, p. 9) even argues that capitalism plays an important role in the analysis of women’s subordination. In *Women: The Longest Revolution*, Juliet Mitchell (1966) argues that the socialist movement recognized the problem of women’s subordination and their liberation. Mitchell also claims that the key of women’s subordination is located in their ideological and socioeconomic roles as mothers and household keepers. Therefore, women’s exploitation will cease to exist by achieving a socialist revolution and gender distinction will no longer be relevant (Hollway et al., 2015). Mitchell’s socialist feminist theory examines women’s

subordination in four main sectors: production, reproduction, sexuality, and socialization. The four sectors give an insightful analysis of women’s subordination for the study.

By incorporating Juliet Mitchell’s (1966) socialist feminist theory, the study examines how women’s subordination is portrayed in the novel *Beauty is a Wound*.

Mitchell's socialist feminist theory is used since it examines women's subordination in four main sectors: production, reproduction, sexuality, and socialization. While socialist feminism centers around the interconnection between patriarchy and capitalism, Mitchell (as cited in Tornham, 2010, p. 77) argues that the liberation of women could succeed if those four sectors are completely transformed. Although the novel is fiction, it can be argued that the portrayal of women's subordination is a reflection of how a patriarchal society like Indonesia subordinates its women citizens.

METHODOLOGY

The research uses descriptive qualitative design to analyze women's subordination in the novel. According to Hancock et al. (2007), qualitative research mainly focuses on different individuals' perspectives and on "description and interpretation" that will develop a new theory. In order to find out how women's subordination is being portrayed in the novel, textual analysis is used to describe and interpret the portrayal. McKee (2002)

argues that textual analysis is making an educated guess that can be interpreted from a text in a form of film, magazine, advertisement, and etc. as ways of gaining understanding towards a particular culture. To achieve a better understanding of the meanings behind the portrayal, the research uses Juliet Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory.

The data of the study were collected from the English translation of Eka Kurniawan's novel titled *Beauty is a Wound* (2015) translated by Annie Tucker. *Beauty is a Wound* is a magical realism novel that tells the story of the most famous prostitute in a fictional Indonesian town of Halimunda named Dewi Ayu. It chronicles the struggle of Dewi Ayu and the people in her life to endure histories of oppression and abuse from the colonized nation, authoritarian government, patriarchal society, and occurrences of magic and spirits. However, magic occurrences also play a role in helping the women characters to escape from the idea that beauty is a wound.

The research aims to explore the subordination of women characters in

the novel in order to find and analyze how it is being portrayed in the book. The research was conducted by collecting, categorizing, and interpreting textual evidences. Excerpts from the novel that contain the portrayal of women's subordination were collected and categorized based on the four social structures of Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory:

(1) production, (2) reproduction, (3) sexuality, (4) socialization. The collected data were then analyzed to explain how the female characters in the novel are being subordinated.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory, the study found that women's subordination is portrayed in the novel in four sectors. Based on the collected data, the portrayal of subordination in the sexuality sector is the most frequent sector. Each portrayal of the four sectors is further discussed below.

Production

Mitchell (1966) argues that women are being subordinated in the production

sector because of their biological differences from men. Since women are presumed to be physically weaker than men, men are capable of asserting themselves against women and women are prone to be subordinated in the production sector through coercion. Thus, coercion prevents women from taking the same job roles that men have. The study found three occupations that are given to the women characters in the novel through coercion: concubines, prostitutes, and housewives.

First, women are coerced into becoming concubines. In the novel, women are taken as concubines after the Dutch colonial army arrives in Halimunda. The concubines are provided by a notorious Halimunda's pimp, Mama Kalong, in order to stop the spread of syphilis. Mama Kalong always asks for an expensive indemnity fee when the soldiers decide to marry their concubines. While Mama Kalong's concubines are not forced into their role, their livelihood depended on men's ability to free them from their role. However, not every woman taken as a concubine comes from the brothel. This is portrayed

through the character of Ma Iyang when she tells her lover, Ma Gedik, that she is going to Ted Stammer's house to become his concubine.

“Where are you going?”

“To the house of a Dutch lord.”

“Why? You don't have to become a maid for the Dutch.”

“I'm not,” said the girl. “I'm going to become his concubine. You can call me Nyai Iyang.” (p. 32)

The excerpt shows the confusion of Ma Gedik seeing Ma Iyang makes a sudden trip to the Dutch Lord's house. Ma Gedik's assumption about Ma Iyang becoming the maid indicates the notion that women's roles in production sectors are based on domestic labor. However, the fact that Ma Iyang accepts her role to become a concubine illustrates the subordination of women because of their sexuality.

“Why do you want to become someone's concubine?”

“Because if I don't, Mother and Father will be made into breakfast for the *ajak*.” (p. 33)

The excerpt shows that Ma Iyang is forced to become a concubine to save her parents which implies that women are coerced to be concubines as they have limited choice and power.

Next, women are coerced into prostitution. This is portrayed through the characters of Dewi Ayu, Ola, and several Dutch woman prisoners. After two years of being held captive in the prison camp by the Japanese army, women prisoners between the ages of seventeen and twenty-eight are listed and selected to be prostitutes.

They stood in front of each woman, laughing quietly while scrutinizing her body, from the top of her head down to the tips of her toes. Sometimes, to get a better look at her face, they'd lift up her chin with their fingertips. (pp. 74-75)

The way the Japanese soldiers' treatment in selecting the women prisoners indicates the power that the men have over the women. The way women prisoners are treated also indicates that coerced into prostitution because of their sexuality. The twenty

women prisoners who are selected are “young, pretty, healthy, and strong” (p. 75), all the girls are then given new names based on flower names (p. 88), and they are given “good food, a house, and clothing” (pp. 81-82) since the Japanese army demands new prostitutes that are “truly pristine and excellently cared for” (p. 86). These attributes, flower names and cared for, relegate women as objects to be seen, not as people who have feelings and thought. Moreover, they become sexual objects to satisfy men.

However, there is also evidence that the women accept this subordination both by perpetuating or by complying with the situation. The perpetuation can be seen from the fact that it is Mama Kalong who recommends the Japanese soldiers to make the women prisoners into prostitutes. It indicates that the women characters, Mama Kalong in this particular case, also subordinate other women. Ola thinks that they are chosen to become Red Cross volunteers and not prostitutes which also illustrates women’s role in the production is based on their expected ability to nurture and illustrates

subordination of women in the sexuality sectors since they are relegated into prostitution. Dewi Ayu’s calm affirmation that they are “going to be made into prostitutes” (p. 82) illustrates her acceptance of taking the role of a prostitute. In fact, Dewi Ayu is more concerned by the fact that they are not “going to be paid” (p. 87). Some of the girls tried to fight and escape but the Japanese soldiers easily capture them “like sick kittens thrashing about futilely” (p. 88). The ‘sick kitten’ metaphor suggests the women are treated as weak, harmless, and powerless. However, Dewi Ayu does not struggle since she knows that their misfortune is inevitable which indicates her acceptance towards the subordination.

“Are you all prostitutes?” he asked.

Dewi Ayu nodded. “We are caring for the souls of sick soldiers,” she said. “This is how we have been made into whores, by force and without pay.” (p. 94)

From the quote, it can be seen that women are coerced into becoming prostitutes and receive no payment for

their work. Furthermore, sexuality also plays a major part in why women are relegated to prostitution.

Last, women are coerced into becoming wives. In the novel, the roles of a wife are compared with the roles of a prostitute. This can be seen from the character of Ma Gedik who believes that “prostitutes are paid with money and not with love” (p. 34) while wives “could be slept with for love, not money” (p. 34). Another comparison between the role of wives and prostitutes is said by Dewi Ayu:

“A wife has sex on a voluntary basis, but a prostitute is a commercial sex worker. The thing is, I don’t like to have sex without getting paid for it” (p. 124)

It can also be seen from the character of Kliwon who in a jealous rage called Alamanda “a princess of whores” since he thinks Alamanda chooses to marry her rapist, Shodancho, for “money and social status” (p. 238). It can be inferred from those quotes that sex is portrayed as

the main job of housewives. It can also be seen from the exchange between Kliwon and Alamanda before she marries Shodhanco and she still becomes Kliwon’s lover.

“Please ravish me before you go.”

“No.”

“Why not? You have slept with almost all the girls in Halimunda but you won’t ravish your own sweetheart?”

“No, because you are different.”

Comrade Kliwon would not be swayed, and was determined to not even lay a hand on the girl. “Not until we are married,” he said, like a pious youth (p. 207)

Kliwon’s refusal to have sex with Alamanda before marriage implies the importance of sex as one of the main jobs of housewives.

However, women also become wives because of coercion. The first example comes from the legend of Princess Rengganis, the most beautiful princess in Halimunda, who is suddenly married off since her beauty

is seen as a danger by everyone in her kingdom, including her own parents.

They sent ninety-nine messengers to the farthest reaches of the kingdom and even to neighboring countries to announce a contest for princes and knights and whoever else. The first prize was the right to marry the most beautiful woman in the world, Princess Rengganis. (p.116)

The way Princess Rengganis' parents deciding her suitor with a contest shows that women have no voice in deciding their own marriage. It is also portrayed through the character of Maya Dewi who is married to Maman Gendeng when she is only twelve years old by the instruction of Dewi Ayu. Maman Gendeng tries to argue that it is impossible for him to marry his lover's daughter, but Dewi Ayu insists him to marry Maya Dewi. When Maman Gendeng tells her that he cannot marry Maya Dewi who is still twelve years old, Dewi Ayu argues that "dogs get married at two years old and chickens get married at eight months" and "human is a mammal" (p. 255) so she

believes it is okay for him to marry her daughter. Maya Dewi who is compared to animals implies the notion that women are seen as sexual objects for men who are seen as the dominant party.

"There's no way I would sleep with such a young girl."

"You'd only have to wait about five years." (p. 255)

The quotes show how women are forced into marriage even though they have not developed their sexual organs yet which also implies that women are subordinated in the production sector since they are seen as sexual objects. Furthermore, the fact that Dewi Ayu is the one who suggests the marriage implies that women can also subordinate other women, in this particular case, her own daughter. From the analysis, it can also be gathered that the roles of concubines, prostitutes, and housewives are given to women because of their sexuality. It indicates that sexuality plays a part in the

subordination of women in the production sector.

Reproduction

In terms of reproduction, women are being subordinated because of their reproductive function. Mitchell (1966) argued that women are excluded from the production sector is not only by their lack of physical strength but also their reproductive function. Therefore, one way for women to take control of their reproductive systems is through contraception. She argues that contraception might potentially transform the mode of reproduction and change women's position in terms of production. However, contraception might become a source of women's subordination when it is forced upon them against their will.

The evidence of contraception as a source of women's subordination can be seen from the characters of Dewi Ayu, Ola, and several Dutch woman prisoners when they are forced into prostitution. Every morning, the girls received a routine massage to avoid getting an unwanted pregnancy and prevent them from performing their duty as prostitutes.

Dewi Ayu is the only one who does not care about the massage and ends up getting pregnant.

She took the risk, and after one month in that whorehouse, she was the first woman to get pregnant. Mama Kalong advised her to abort her fetus. (p. 92)

The excerpt shows how women's pregnancy is seen as an obstacle in performing their work. It also shows how contraception is being forced on women who are also being forced into prostitution. Although Dewi Ayu manages to keep her baby, Mama Kalong's suggestion to abort it indicates that women have less power in controlling their own reproductive system since it is controlled by others. However, other girls do not want to take the same risk as Dewi Ayu. because they do not want to be "sent home to their mothers with round bellies" (p. 92). It implies that women feel the need to use contraception not because they want to but to avoid shame.

Contraception also fails to liberate women from subordination since men are the ones who take control of women's reproductive systems. One of the reasoning behind it comes from the idea that women's reproduction role in capitalist society is merely seen as a "spiritual complement" (Mitchell, 1966, p. 20) of men's role in production. This is portrayed through the characters of Alamanda who put on a pair of enchanted metal underwear so her husband, Shodancho, can never have sex with her.

That night, Shodancho tried to break the padlock using a number of different tools: he tried prying at it with a screwdriver, he pounded it with a nail and axe, and he even shot it with a pistol, which made Alamanda practically faint with fear. But everything failed to open the lock on that metal underwear and, finally caught in between lust and anger, all he could do was have relations with his wife without being able to actually penetrate her. (pp. 225-226)

It can be seen from the quote that Alamanda's enchanted metal underwear is the application of

magical elements of the novel. It gives power to Alamanda's character in controlling her reproductive system. However, the action of Shodancho indicates that men do not support women's means to have control over their own reproductive organs. Shodancho even manages to rape his own wife when Alamanda is "completely naked with her iron underwear resting on the edge of the tub" (p. 230) and ties her up on the bed so he can rape her whenever he wants. These imply that men do not respect women's choice to use contraception.

Even after Alamanda is pregnant, the existence of her baby is in the hand of other men characters. First, she threatens Shodancho that she is going to abort the baby. However, she decides to keep it since her husband swore he will never rape her again. When her lover, Kliwon, sees her belly, he exclaims:

"There's neither a girl nor a boy inside, it's filled with nothing but air, like an empty pot." (p. 242).

Assuming that their baby's disappearance is because of Kliwon's

words, Shodancho breaks his promise and rapes Alamanda again which makes her decide to put on a complicated enchantment in her private area. This event implies that Alamanda has less power in controlling her reproductive system but gains power through another magical element. Shodancho feels defeated after he lost his child two times in a row which illustrates the importance of the baby as his achievement while his reckless treatments to his wife are disregarded. Later,

Alamanda agrees to break the enhancement and have sex with Shodancho to save Kliwon from being executed. When Alamanda is pregnant and Kliwon sees her belly again he says:

... "I swear that this is not an empty pot like it was before," he proclaimed. (p. 335)

It can be inferred from those quotes that, despite Alamanda's contraception, her ability to have children, still lies in the hand of her

husband respecting her consent and her lover's confirmation of its existence. The nonsensical disappearance of her baby also demonstrates the use of magical realism to amplify the issue of women having less power in taking control of their reproductive system.

Sexuality

According to Mitchell (1966), women have always been treated as sexual objects. However, it is also important to note that sexuality does not represent beauty as many of the characters in the novel suggest. This is portrayed in the novel by the characters of Moyang, Beauty, and Isah Betina. Moyang is an ugly woman who works selling drinks and cigarettes in the bus terminal and also keeping Maman Gendeng money safe. Her ugliness, however, does not hinder the men from having sex with her.

... and at night she would get fucked by men who didn't care about her ugly face (because what's the difference between a pretty face and an ugly face when you are behind some dark bushes?) and didn't want to spend their

money at the whorehouse, because Moyang never asked for any payment. (p. 419)

Meanwhile, Beauty who is described as the ugliest woman character is also treated as a sexual object by his nephew, Krisan, after the spirit of Ma Gedik tells him to find an ugly lover so he will never get hurt.

For years, Krisan had kept thinking about that idea, about having a hideous lover. "What's wrong with ugly women?" he asked himself. "They can be fucked just like beautiful women can." (p. 469)

Because of that idea, Krisan also thinks that there is no difference between sleeping with a beautiful woman and sleeping with Beauty since they both still fulfill his sexual desire. Beauty's nonsensical ugliness and misogynistic idea from an evil spirit are also instances of the implementation of magical realism elements to magnify issues of women's subordination. Another example of dissimilarity between beauty and sexuality is found through

the character of Isah Betina, a young beggar who has troubled mind.

He [Kliwon] saw her twice. Once was while she was getting raped by five rampaging vagrants near the edge of the dump and it was obvious that he would be unable to fight off her attackers. But he had also seen her pass by before being ambushed by those five bums, looking pretty but also stinking to high heaven after weeks untouched by water or soap. (pp. 181-182)

Although considered pretty by Kliwon, Isah Betina's mental and physical condition does not exclude her from becoming sexual objects by other men. The difference between beauty and sexuality can also be found from the character of Dewi Ayu. When Dewi Ayu works as a prostitute for the Japanese, Mama Kalong tells her about her other brothel where native Indonesian women are taken as prostitutes for the low-ranking Japanese officers to which Dewi Ayu remarks:

“There’s no difference between low-level officers and the Emperor of Japan,” said Dewi Ayu. “They all target female genitalia.” (p, 91)

Unintentionally, Dewi Ayu points out the reason women are being subordinated is simply because of their sexual organs. Meanwhile, women who are beautiful, like Princess Rengganis, are considered as “rare specimen” (p. 115) worthy to be wed and Dewi Ayu as “kind of like a mascot” (p. 121). These name callings show that women are treated as sexual objects not because of their beauty but because of their sexuality or their ability to give men sexual pleasure.

Another reason why women are treated as sexual objects is because sexual intercourse is treated as one of women’s main contributions in the production sector. As previously mentioned in previous section, sexuality plays a huge part in the subordination of women in the production sector which relegates them to work as concubines, prostitutes, and housewives. Because of this, women must perform sex acts

in order to work and to exchange them for favors. The examples of sex as an exchange for favors can be seen from characters such as Dewi Ayu who has sex with a Japanese commandant to get a doctor and medicine for Ola’s mother, Alamanda who has sex with Shodancho to save Kliwon, and Rosinah who has sex with a school principal to grant permission for Beauty to attend the school. Each of those events shows how women feel that they have nothing of value to

trade off other than their body which further indicates their acceptance of being seen as sexual objects. However, it is important to note that women are treated as sexual objects all through their life.

Women are treated as sexual objects from the time they are born. This is portrayed through the character of Beauty. When Beauty is born, Dewi Ayu feels hopeless when she thinks she has yet another beautiful daughter. Dewi Ayu believes that giving birth to “a pretty female in a world of men as nasty as dogs in heat” (p.5) is a form of a curse and she is bored of having

three beautiful children who she compares to “mannequins in a storefront display” (p. 6).

“Four daughters, all of them beautiful,” said Dewi Ayu in a tone of complete annoyance. “I should open my own whorehouse. Tell me, how pretty is this one?” (p. 3)

From the excerpts, it can be seen that the newly born Beauty is already perceived as a sexual object and also is appointed as a prostitute because of her sexuality. This implies that women are predestined to become the target of subordination because of their sexuality.

Women who have not fully developed as an adult are also considered as sexual objects. This is portrayed through the characters of Maya Dewi and Alamanda. As previously mentioned in the previous section, Dewi Ayu marries Maya Dewi off to Maman Gendeng when she is only twelve years old. While Maman Gendeng agrees to marry Dewi Ayu’s daughter, he still cannot imagine sleeping with Maya Dewi for she is

“such a little girl” (p. 258) also “too adorable” and “too pure” (p. 261). The same sentiments can also be seen when seventeen-year-old Kliwon falls in love with Alamanda who is only eight years old. However, Kliwon cannot bear the fact that he falls in love with an underage girl.

“The problem is, her breasts haven’t even started to grow, and she doesn’t even have any pubic hair yet. She’s only eight years old, Mama.” (p. 167)

The character of Rosinah also portrays this issue. When she was fourteen years old, her father decides to trade her to Dewi Ayu as payment for sleeping with the prostitute.

But the old man was hell-bent to sleep with her and die in her arms and give her the mute young girl as payment. She could do whatever she wanted with the girl. “You can turn her into a prostitute and take the money she earns for as long as she lives,” said the old man. (p. 15)

The excerpt indicates that underage women are still considered as sexual

objects to be traded. In this particular case, the woman is also predestined to work as a prostitute. The next evidence of underage women as sexual objects is found in the character of Dewi Ayu when she is only sixteen years old and goes to Franciscan School.

They were impressed by her natural intelligence, but worried by her beauty, and a number of nuns tried to persuade her to take the vows of poverty, purity, and chastity (p. 41)

Regardless of Dewi Ayu's intelligence, her beauty is seen as a danger which further shows how women are merely seen as sexual objects. The same can be found in the characters of Dewi Ayu's granddaughter, Rengganis the Beautiful, when she shows up naked in the classroom and tells everyone that she is raped by a dog in the toilet. The scene itself causes an uproar in her school where the old math teacher is aroused while other students struck dumbfounded.

“Damn it, a dog?! As if none of us could have raped Rengganis the Beautiful.” (p. 367)

The male characters' resentment implies that women are supposed to fulfill men's sexual urges, even if said women are still teenagers. Even Rengganis the Beautiful's cousin, Krisan, thinks that her body is “delicious” (p. 406) and only sees her as a sexual object.

There are two kinds of women that a man can love: the first kind of woman he loves in order to dote upon and cherish, and the second kind he loves in order to fuck. Krisan felt he now had both kinds: Ai was the first kind of girl, and Rengganis was the second. He wanted to marry Ai, but he always dreamed of one day having sex with Rengganis the Beautiful, despite the fact that he had never succeeded in declaring his love to Ai and he had no idea how to have sex with Rengganis the Beautiful without getting in terrible trouble. (p. 406)

Krisan believes that Nurul Aini (Ai) is suited to be his wife while Rengganis

the Beautiful is merely an object to fulfill his sexual fantasy. In fact, Krisan is the one who raped Rengganis the Beautiful in the school toilet by convincing her that in order to marry they needed to have sex since married couples have sex too. From those quotes, it can be gathered that women are seen as sex objects since their sexuality plays a huge part in determining their roles to fulfill men's sexual urges later in life.

Also previously mentioned in the production section, women who had developed their sexual organs are prone to be relegated to jobs based on their sexuality. This idea is explored in the novel through the character of Dewi Ayu who becomes a prostitute. Dewi Ayu believes that becoming a prostitute means that she has to "love everybody, everything, all of it: penises, fingers, and cow's hooves" (p. 130). Dewi Ayu's believes that becoming a prostitute will stop men from having their own concubine. indicates that her role as a prostitute is comparable to the role of concubines. She is then considered as the best prostitute in Halimunda or, as men of

Halimunda tell Maman Gendeng, "kind of like a mascot" (p. 121). Maman Gendeng also declares that he is going to have sex with Dewi Ayu "like a tiger marking his territory" (p.121). Those quotes imply that men see Dewi Ayu who works as a prostitute as a sexual object. Thus, women are being exploited in those jobs because of their sexuality. This aligned with Mitchell's (1966) arguments that in some societies, women are dominated by men in a form of "polygamous exploitation".

Moreover, since women are considered as sexual objects, being concubines, prostitutes, and housewives do not free them from the risk of exploitation. For examples, Dewi Ayu who works as a prostitute is raped by Shodancho after his proposal to marry Alamanda is denied and Alamanda who is raped by Shodancho after the marriage. Women who work as prostitutes are also at risk of not getting paid because of forced prostitution as previously mentioned and also because women are treated as sexual objects whose job is to fulfill men's sexual desires. The examples

can be found from the characters of Kliwon and his friend who refuse to pay a prostitute on the pretense that they have sex because “she liked it” (p. 162).

Women in other work fields are also subordinated because of their sexuality. One of the examples is Maman Gendeng’s mother who works as a kitchen maid in a Regent’s house.

No one knew when they began their secret affair, but everyone knew that the Regent’s hearty sexual appetite meant that his wife and concubines and mistresses alone could never satisfy him. On certain nights he would still drag one of the servants into his quarters. (p. 110)

From the excerpt, it can be seen that the Regent treats his women servants like his possessions who he can have sex with whenever he wants it. Another example is how Dewi Ayu and other Dutch women who were no longer prostitutes are both almost raped by a Japanese soldier and the victims of rapes by the guerilla soldiers. It can be inferred that women

in any work field are still being exploited because of their sexuality.

Even after their death, women are still treated as sexual objects because of their sexuality. The sentiment is found through the character of Alamanda who believes that her husband, Shodancho, will still rape her even after she dies. Alamanda’s cry signifies her desperation of escaping from subordination. Different from Alamanda, Dewi Ayu’s death is mourned by every man who has ever slept with her and so raises jealousy among her lovers’ wives. They “were sure that those horny men would still fight each other for the opportunity to sleep with Dewi Ayu again, not even caring that she was now just a corpse” (p.13). It shows how Dewi Ayu’s sexuality is seen as a threat even after her death by other women. Another example can be seen through the character of Ai when her corpse is taken from the grave by Krisan. Krisan can even smell the fragrance of blossoms from her corpse. The corpse’s capability in producing flower fragrance is another application

of magical realism to exemplify the sexual objectification of women.

...But then the tone of his weeping changed, into cries of gratitude, thanking Ai because even though she was dead she hadn't let herself rot. She remained in a state of eternal beauty, and he believed that she was doing it for him. Before he knew it, he was kissing the cheeks of that girl's corpse. (pp. 390-391)

The excerpt shows that Krisan still considered Ai's corpse remains beautiful for him which indicates that Ai's corpse is treated as his sexual object. Therefore, it is implied that women cannot escape subordination even after death because of their sexuality.

Socialization

Lastly, women are predestined to work as a mother since nurturing children has become a cultural purpose of women. Women are expected to fulfill their socialization role by their physiological condition: producing milk and inability to work (Mitchell,

1966). This sentiment can be seen from the interactions of Mama Kalong who told the Dutch soldiers to make love in her whorehouse as if as they are in their own home to which one of the soldiers replies:

"That's ridiculous," said one soldier. "All I've got at home is my mom and my old granny." (p. 84).

The soldier's response indicates that women in a household are assumed to work as caretakers, unlike prostitutes who work to fulfill men's desire. The sentiment that women are subordinated because of their role as caretakers can also be seen from the characters of Adinda and Kliwon's mother.

The kiosks asked for more shorts, and Comrade Kliwon had to work harder. Adinda could sew a little, but she usually just helped out with the bookkeeping, because she had to take care of little Krisan. When it seemed that there were too many orders to fill, Comrade Kliwon would throw some of the work his mother's way. (p. 353)

Adinda's inability to fully help her husband's business because of her responsibility to take care of her child indicates that women are relegated to nurture children. In fact, Krisan's mother is given the role in the production side of the business because her role to nurture children is assumed to be done. It solidifies the suggestion that women are relegated to nurture children and subordinate them in the production area.

Furthermore, the responsibility to nurture children has always been imposed on women. Women characters in the novel are expected to nurture by the time they give birth to children. When Dewi Ayu gives birth to her last child, the midwife already dismissed Dewi Ayu's inability to give milk because of her age.

...Trying to ignore the question she said, "You're already an old woman, so I don't think you'll be able to nurse."

"That's true. I've been used up by the three previous kids." "And hundreds of men."

"One hundred and seventy-two men. The oldest one was ninety years old, the youngest one was twelve, one week after his circumcision. I remember them all well." (p.3)

From the excerpt, it is shown that women are supposed to be the nurturer of their children and, in this case, women's age also becomes a factor to judge their ability in nurturing, especially in giving milk to their babies. It also signifies that their ability to produce milk is seen as a sexual activity which means that women's ability to nurture children becomes the subject of subordination in sexuality and production sector considering Dewi Ayu's work as a prostitute.

"The baby cried again. The midwife said that she had to find breast milk for the little one. If there was none, she'd have to look for cow's milk, or dog's milk, or maybe even rat's milk. Yeah, go, said Dewi Ayu." (p. 3)

Dewi Ayu's inability to produce milk results in the responsibility for the midwife to nurture her child. In

Beauty's case, Rosinah also ends up becoming the sole nurturer since she cannot depend on Dewi Ayu's other daughter as all of them have their own family.

"They have never set foot back here, ever since they discovered men's dicks," wrote Rosinah, repeating what Dewi Ayu had once said to her. (p. 341)

Although it is revealed later that the reason Alamanda, Adinda, and Maya Dewi never visit the house because Dewi Ayu tells them not to, Rosinah's acceptance of Dewi Ayu's statement also shows how women who have become housewives are expected to be less sociable outside of their main family. Rosinah's decision to take the responsibility as Beauty's caretaker also means that the responsibility of nurturing children is the responsibility of women. Another example of this can be seen when Ma Iyang gives birth to Aneu Stammler.

Even though Ma Iyang lived in a different house guarded by two tough guys, Ted had decided to bring Aneu to live with them after she was born.

At first Marietje put up a terrible fight but what could be done, after all most men had concubines and bastard children. She finally agreed to let the child live in their house and gave her the family name, to avoid any gossip at the club. (p. 43)

Since the status of concubines is lower than the status of wives, the responsibility of nurturing Ma Iyang's child is given to Marietje, Ted Stammler's wife, to maintain their social standing. Therefore, the responsibility of nurturing children is entrusted to women not only because of their physiological condition but also to maintain social standing.

Discussion

Like previous studies that used Mitchell's (1966) socialist feminist theory, the study found that all four sectors of women's subordination are portrayed by the novel and each sector is interrelated. Furthermore, it is not only the men characters who subordinate women but the women characters also subordinate other women and themselves. Similar to the study by Fauziah (2018), the novel's

portrayal of women's subordination in the sexuality sector is also more frequent than the other sectors which signifies the importance of sexuality in analyzing women's subordination. However, the current study only focuses on the portrayal of women's subordination in the novel and did not make any comparison to women's subordination in real life. Therefore, the finding can only give implications of how women are being subordinated, especially in Indonesia.

Unlike previous studies of the same novel, the study found that the issues of feminism are portrayed through several women characters and not only centered on Dewi Ayu as the main character and further research on other women characters in the novel can contribute to the study of feminism. However, it is also important to note that the novel *Beauty is a Wound* is written by a male author. Although there are several previous studies that analyze the works of other male authors through the lens of feminism, it is suggested for future research to analyze other works in similar genre by female authors, especially Indonesian female authors,

so the study can focus on the analysis of female experiences and voices.

Regarding the magical realism elements in the novel, the study found that a few elements are used to amplify the portrayal of women's subordination. However, those elements only appear in the reproduction and sexuality sector. Furthermore, since the study focuses on the acts of subordination, the characters' resistance towards it is also not fully explored like previous studies that analyze magical realism works. Therefore, it is recommended for future research to analyze how the novel uses magical realism to amplify issues of feminism.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study is to analyze how women's subordination is portrayed in Eka Kurniawan's magical realism novel *Beauty is a Wound* (2015) based on Juliet Mitchell's socialist feminist theory. Based on the findings, the subordination of women in each sector is portrayed through the men and women characters' actions, behaviors, and thoughts. In the

production sector, women are coerced to work as concubines, prostitutes, and housewives. In the reproduction sector, contraception is being forced on women and men take control over women's reproductive system. In the sexuality sector, women are seen as sexual objects all through their life. In the socialization sector, the responsibility to nurture children is imposed on women. Since the most frequent portrayal of women's subordination is in the sexuality sector, it can be inferred that sexual objectification of women is one of the most prevalent issues concerning women's subordination, especially in Indonesia.

The findings indicate two recommendations. First, women's subordination is a prevalent issue which needs to be dealt with. As fiction is a good source to raise awareness of this issue, more studies on women's subordination and feminism in general is deemed necessary. Second, the present study focuses on the issue without considering its genre, magical realism. Further studies on how magical realism addresses issues of feminism

may give a more comprehensive idea about the treatment of women in society.

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