

## Woman Resistance Against NAZI Regime Reflected in *The Book Thief* Novel

Farras Windratama<sup>2\*1</sup>, Yeny Prastiwi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Faculty of Teacher Training and Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Surakarta, Surakarta, Indonesia

### Abstract

The research aims to investigate woman resistance against Nazi Regime in *The Book Thief* novel written by Markus Zusak. In analyzing *The Book Thief*, this research using the liberal feminist theory and theory of resistance of James Scott which includes public resistance and hidden resistance. The research belong to qualitative research. The research is focused in analyzing the indicator of main character's resistance towards Nazi. By analyzing main character's background, social relation and discrimination, the result of the research shows that the indicator of main character resistance are classified into four forms which consist ideology differences, making alliance with Nazi enemy, humiliation which leads the main character to resistance, and feeling empathy towards other race and ethic. Thus, *The Book Thief* novel are written in order to give the reader awareness towards woman resistance during Nazi Regime.

### INTRODUCTION

Resistance is an action that commonly happens in every state. It happens and carried out by individual or group of society because the presence of injustice situation in the government system. Furthermore, oppression, frustration, human discrimination, violence towards other race, and gender inequality can makes the act of resistance appeared. Tarrow (1994) Zubir (2004); Yasin (2013) stated that the social movement or resistance can take effect on the economic, political, and social or even can overthrow injustice government system. In accordance with the feminism theory, resistance become the key for women in achieving equality and ending man domination. Scott (1990) argued that men ideas or concept are dominating the women's life, freedom and liberation. It means that many woman feel discriminated and oppressed which leads them in doing act of resistance. Thus, human discrimination also become the reason for women resisting injustice situation in society or government. For example, during Nazi Regime they overcome difficult obstacle in resisting and defending other race, ethnic and ideology that are being discriminated and rejected by Nazi Regime in order to gain rights, equality, and liberation.

In relation with the definition of resistance and feminism which helps women to get equality and human rights, there are many novel author who inspired in creating a literary work especially novel related to these issue. One of them is Australian writer, Markus Zusak, young-adult novel author who inspired in creating *The Book Thief* novel based on resistance issue. The novel was first published in 2006 and become the most international best seller novel in the the world. He also created six fiction books including *The Book Thief* and *The Messenger* which makes his work become popular.

*The Book Thief* tells the story about young girl without word from communist family, named Liesel Meminger who live in suffering and sadness during Nazi Regime. Being communist means the Nazi enemy and must be punished. Then, she was adopted by foster family who live in Molching. Hans Hubermann, her foster father is one person who defies Nazi rules and he also known as jewish house painter. Hans teaches Liesel in reading some books until she realized herself as communist

2 Corresponding author: [A320150236@student.ums.ac.id](mailto:A320150236@student.ums.ac.id)

and know that her suffering because of Nazi. Her foster mother, Rosa Hubermann also teaches Liesel about life and makes her become tough woman. In Molching, Liesel also saved a Jewish man named, Max Vandenburg from Nazi and hides him inside the basement of her house. Then, both of them become friends and learn more about books and sharing some story they have experienced. Her hatred towards this regime brings her out to the act of resistance. Through ideology, hiding the Jews, family motivation, and small action of thievery indicates that she rejects and disagrees with Nazi. In here, Liesel wants to defend other people that being discriminated by Nazi especially for Jewish and Communist. In the end of story, Germany was lost in World War II and Liesel lives peacefully.

The act of resistance that Liesel did in the novel became the most visible issue that attracted the researcher in raising it. Liesel Meminger as the main character in the novel can be said as feminism because of her good attitude, caring, and kindness towards other people. Moreover, the presence of an injustice situation, motivation, support from family and friends. The other reason of Liesel's resistance is she believes that through her small resistance she can defend and end discrimination that Nazi had done. As a result, this leads Liesel to do hidden resistance against Nazi in order to overthrow them.

In accordance with this issue, literary work gives the reflection of information about several things that happen in real life including resistance. Knowing that *The Book Thief* background setting is set between 1939 and 1945 during Nazi government. The author, Markus Zusak surely wants to give the reader awareness about the woman's effort and resistance in Germany at that time during Nazi government through his work. Therefore, it becomes a good idea for the researcher in conducting research about woman's resistance against Nazi in the novel as an interesting topic that should be analyzed, and even using liberal feminist theory in order to support the research.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several relevant theories and previous studies that help the researcher in raising a new issue. The previous researcher, Adams (2010) investigated about how consolation and confrontation as a degree are delivered in *The Book Thief*. Ardyanti (2016) focused on analyzing literacy as power and its effect in *The Book Thief*. The other research from Rizka (2018) adopted the issue of minor character loss and emptiness in *The Book Thief*. Wardhani (2018) focused on analyzing resistance against the negative temptation in *The Devil and Miss Prym* novel while Karimah (2017) investigated the main character's awareness towards discrimination in *Golden Web* novel. Based on the review of these researches, it can be seen that there are no previous researches that use resistance as the issue in *The Book Thief* novel. Besides that research from Wardhani and Karimah using the issue of resistance in different novels. Therefore, it is a good chance for the present researcher in raising the issue of resistance and using liberal feminism as theory in developing the research.

In analyzing the data, resistance and liberal feminist theory are needed. Scott (as cited in Horsley, 1990 p.2) argued that "resistance as an action which is done by subordinate groups who fight against superordinate groups which are dominating the government system". It means that the act of resistance appeared because of an injustice situation in society such as feeling oppression and discriminatory practices from people or government that dominate them. Scott (as cited in Susilowati, 2019) the act of resistance can be classified into two forms which aim, public transcript resistance and hidden transcript resistance. The public transcript resistance is a revolutionary action that is done by factions in society which focus on imposing the unjust government system and replacing it with a new system. In addition, Zuraida (2013) stated that public transcript resistance

is marked through the appearance of direct communication or interaction between two opposing group. Saputra (2013) argued that hidden transcript resistance can be defined as an act of resistance which is done indirectly such as underground movement, small thievery and other action that are done secretly. The hidden transcript resistance is a kind of resistance that carried out by individual or personal without revolutionary action which means the resister tend to stay alive or survive in the injustice government system.

The relation with resistance, liberal feminist theory help women in achieving equality and ended discriminatory practices to people who dominated them. Meiliana (2016) said that some injustice action, oppression, and discriminatory practices can be ended through feminist movement. The liberal feminist theory is based on human rights which has definition that every women reserve their right including right to life and right to get freedom and liberation. The example of feminist can be seen through the effort and woman resistance during Nazi Germany through several action such as thievery, aiding the Nazi enemies and other movement to overthrow Nazi Regime. they According to Wales (2013) in resisting the Nazi Regime, there are many women from various background want to defend their rights and overcome difficult obstacles in ending Nazi discriminatory practices towards other race and ethnic especially for Jewish and communist.

## METHOD

The research belong to qualitative research because the researcher analyzed the data descriptively and the result are informed in written form. According to Fraenkel and Wallen (2012) qualitative research can be defined as study that investigates activities, situation, and material which is focused in describing the data systematically based on the fact a certain object. In addition, the goal of qualitative research is to gain the information through material object or novel in descriptive form. The primary data source in this research is *The Book Thief* novel written by Markus Zusak. The secondary data source are the biography of Markus Zusak, journal article, literary books which supported this research. In collecting the data, the researcher reading the material object in order to gain the understanding about the characterization and storyline of the novel. Then, the researcher tabulates the data by underlying the important lines such as dialogue and narration which are supported the research. Afterwards, the researcher make the analysis and conclusion systematically by using liberal feminist theory to solve the problem which include the indicators of main character's resistance.

## FINDING AND DISCUSSION

The act of resistance sometimes happen and occur spontaneously in the public sphere of society. Zubir (2004) affirmed that this action can carried out by group of society or individuals because of injustice situation, discrimination, and even more the government policies that burdening its people. Through *The Book Thief* novel, Markus Zusak seems to inform the phenomenon of woman resistance as the issue of the novel and puts this in the main character life story which includes the experience and suffering. Liesel Meminger as the main character in the novel is a young girl who life in pain and suffering because the horror of war in Nazi Germany. Liesel rejects is one of woman in the novel who rejects and disagree with Nazi Regime. Nevertheless, the reason that she defies Nazi Regime based her life background includes her suffering, discrimination she had experienced. Pager and Shepherd (2008) argued that discrimination refer to unequal treatment towards one person or group of society which includes race, gender, ethnicity, and ideology. The fact shows that Liesel has different thoughts with Nazi Regime. Through the discrimination she had experienced in the past become leads her in doing act of resistance.

Regardless that Liesel is a girl without word, her foster family send her to school to get proper education. At the first time in school, she thinks that in school she can make a new friends but she feel disappointed because that is betond her expectation. Yusuf (as cited in Komarudin, 2017) stated that school is apropiate place for student in improving their abilities such as reading and writing. Her inability to read and understand word makes her get several problem which include bullying and humiliation. Liesel is a tough girl because her foster mother, Rosa Hubermann taught her to be strong. Then she turns humiliation and bad experience into power and motivation in learning especially in reading books. In accordance with feminism, some feminist believe that every woman and men should be equal in all aspect of life includes in education, economic, social and political opportunities. Meiliana (2016) argued that men and women must be equal in education without viewing on the terms of phisycal and strength.

Being Humiliated doesn't mean that she give up in learning some words but it gives motivatiion in reading book she gain from her brother funeral. In her new life in Molching, her foster father named Hans Hubermann also teaches her in reading an understanding the meaning of word. Hans also teach her about frindship and kindness. Her social relation with Hans immediately grows stronger because of his hostility, support and motivation that Liesel gets in learning. According to Weber (1987) conflict, hostility, attraction, and friendship are the kinds of mutual orientation which refered to social relation. Besides that, Hans in one person in who refuse or reject in joining Nazi Regime that can be seen in the naration below :

“In 1933, 90 percent of Germans showed unflinching support for Adolf Hitler. That leaves 10 percent who didn't. Hans Hubermann belonged to the 10 percent. There was a reason for that.” (Zusak, 2007, p.67)

Through the naration above she has reason in rejecting the Nazi because of his promise he made during World War I with jewish-man. In the public he supports Nazi but he secretly rebell behind them. He realize that Nazi Regime would punished every jewish and communist. Wales (2013) argued that many communist and jewish were slaughtered because Nazi regards them as enemies that should be removed.

The knowledge that Liesel learns from Hans emerges her sympathy and empathy towards other race and ethnic epecially when Liesel and Hans saving jewish-man who looking for help in front of their house at night. The jewish named Max Vandenburg, a son from jewish man who saved Hans life during World War I. In here, Hans explains the reason that he alwayys remember his promises would save Vandenburg family when faced several serious problem. Then, Liesel and Hans agreed in giving Max a place to hide in order to safe from Nazi. Max was so thankful because his life was saved by Hubermann family and live with them in the basement. In here, Hans warned Liesel which can be seen in the quotation below :

“Liesel, if you tell anyone about the man up there, we will all be in big trouble.”

“If you tell anyone about that man . . .”

“For starters,” he said, “I will take each and every one of your books— and I will burn them.” (Zusak, 2007, p.205)

Through the quotation, it can be seen Hans warns Liesel harshly and threatens her if she tell anyone about the jewish-man. In here, Liesel begin to realize about the importance of friendship and caring to others without disciminate them. In the other words, she thinks that helping others is a good thing. Then, she starts to accept Max as the part of her little family.

The presence of Max in Liesel family gives her major changes especially her attitudes. Max and Liesel become friends, they sometimes sharing their knowledge, experience, and struggle in living around Nazi government. The friendship between Max and Liesel suddenly grows fast when she knows that Max is a good man which can be seen in the quotation:

“Liesel read and viewed Max Vandenburg’s gift three times, noticing a different brush line or word with each one.” (Zusak, 2007, p.242)

The datum shows that Max always giving her a gift when he lives with Liesel. Max also teach Liesel about reading as same as her foster father does. Not only reading some words or books but also telling the Liesel about the meaning and the power of word. Therefore, the behavior that main character done can be defined as an action that rejects and resist the Nazi Regime indirectly or secretly. For those people who not obligate to Nazi and doing opposite actions including rebellion, resistance, aiding the jews would be punished cruelly.

In Molching, Liesel also making friends with a boy, named Rudy Steiner. He is a boy who obsessed with black american runner Jesse Owens. The social relation between Liesel and Rudy makes them become best friend and lover. Through the novel it can be seen that Rudy is only boy that always accompany, help and support Liesel when she going to somewhere especially when she gets some trouble at school.

The several action that are opposite with Nazi Regime that main character had done such as aiding the jews indicates that she resisting the Nazi Regime indirectly. Besides that, Liesel also doing many action which are categorized as the indicator of resistance which contains, ideology differences with Nazi, the alliance she had made with the jewish-man named Max Vandenburg, the humiliation she experience, and the empathy feeling towards other race that are being discriminated by Nazi.

Through the novel, Liesel has different ideology with Nazi. In her past, she was born from communist family. The word “communist” means Nazi enemy and she doesn’t know the meaning of it because she is a girl without word. When she living in Molching with her foster family, she dimly realized herself as communist and started to resist the Nazi Regime which can be seen through the dialogue below :

“Is my mother a communist ? —They were always asking her things, before I came here.”

“I have no idea—I never met her.”

“Did the *Führer* take her away?”

“I think he might have, yes.”

“I knew it. I hate the *Führer*. I hate him.”

“Don’t *ever* say that!”

(Zusak, 2007, p.119–120)

The dialogue between Liesel and Hans shows that Hans unwillingly tells the truth about herself as communist. Despite of that, Hans also defies Nazi regime secretly which can be seen through his refusal in joining Nazi Party. This scene indicates that both of them are rejects the Nazi Regime in same way. In accordance with the ideology communist, her hatred toward Nazi grow up rapidly and she begin to resist Nazi by stealing some propaganda book from bonfire. It means that she shows her act of resistance through ideology differences. According to Syafie (2001) ideology can be defined as the guidance and foundation life of every nation that should be achieved. In addition, ideology as the give influence of every nation in all aspect of life. Thus, resistance through ideology become the reason in removing the barrier that restricting women in achieving equality and calm

their rights including rights of choice, rights to get freedom and liberation. Handiki and Indayani (2018) stated that ideology differences sometimes causes several conflict such as resistance because ideology as a guideline that determine friends and enemies. The other action that indicates main character resistance can be seen in the quotation below :

“You know something?” Hans said. He leaned toward the fire. “Liesel’s actually a good little reader herself.” Max lowered the book. “And she has more in common with you than you might think.” (Zusak, 2007, p.221)

The datum above shows that Liesel family truly accepted Max as part of the family. In the quotation, Liesel and her foster family doing small conversation with Max in one evening. The conversation or interaction with the jewish during Nazi means a betrayal and considered them as enemies. These action can be defined as alliance making. Griffiths and O’Callaghan (2002) defines alliance as interaction of two or more person which has same purpose. As a girl with communist ideology, it is a good oportunities for main character in making alliance to overthrow Nazi Regime that discriminate them. Fouque (2003) argued that behind men success there are women who always supporting them. Thus, alliance between men and women are needed in achieving equality and freedom between race and ethnic.

Besides that, the presence of injustice situatiion such as deragradation or humiliation that is experienced by main character also indicates her resistance against Nazi. Leask (2013) defines humiliation as the behavior in making the vitim become shame and disgrace. The humiliated victim would be frustrated, angry, thirst to take revenge which involves rebellion and resistance. Through the novel, Liesel is being humiliated by her classmate but she can still forgive him. The other humiliation she experience from mayor of Molching town when she deliver mayor’s laundry. In there, the mayor who fanatical Nazi asking to Liesel not to come his house again. It means that he fired Liesel’s foster mother indirectly which can be seen in the quotation.

“The fact that harder times were coming was surely the best reason for keeping Rosa employed, but no, they fired her.” (Zusak, 2007,p.264)

The datum shows that the mayor fired her foster mother, Rosa Hubemann. Liesel feel ashamed and confused because she realize that laundress is the only job to fulfill economic needs in her family. In relation with liberal feminist, Beauvoir (1953) argued that women more sensitive than men which includes their mental and feeling. It can be seen that being humiliated cause the main characters to take revenge and doing hidden resistance such as small book thievery in mayor’s library.

Liesel is a kind girl and her kindness makes her become aware to the other race and ethic who are being discriminated by Nazi Regime. Her kindness and caring attitude cause to emergi her sympathy and empathy. Lahami (2014) empathy describe the discomfort feeling towards other people. It can be seen when Liesel feel compasionate when she first time seeing the parade of jewish prisoner that mach foward form Molching to Dachau. Thus, Liesel and Rudy decided to give them bread without noticed by Nazi soldier which can be seen in the quotation below :

“Hey!” Rudy was livid. “Don’t move. If they find us here and match us to the bread, we’re history.”(Zusak, 2007, p.433)

The fact shows that, both Liesel and Rudy tries to give the starving jewish prisoner some food. Their empathy towards the other emerges the caring attitude towards other people. The action means that both of them are defy Nazi Regime by doing hidden resistnace because the discrimination that this regime did towards other ideology, ethnic, and race especially for jewish and communist. It can

be seen that through friendship and solidarity bring out them in several action which opposite with Nazi Regime policy and rules.

## CONCLUSION

The implementation of liberal feminist theory in literature and theory of resistance from James Scott leads the researcher tries to find out the reason of the author, Markus Zusak who tries to tell the reader about the woman resistance during Nazi Germany. In *The Book Thief* novel Markus Zusak describe the main character as a young girl who resist and rejects the Nazi in different ways. The main character resistance are affected by the family, friends, and other people that giving her support. Through deology, ethic, solidarity, and empahty towards other give these women power in resisting Nazi in order to end the discrimination.

Based on the analysis above, the research classified the indicator of main character resistance into four forms which based on Markus Zusak views towards the woman resistance in Nazi Germany. The indicator of main character's resistance include ideology differences, making alliance, being humiliated and feeling empathy. Threrefore, those indicators give the description that the main charcter's tries to defend her right, equality, and end the discrimination of Nazi in order to gain freedom and liberation.

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