

Misogyny Portrayed In Christina Dalcher's *Vox*

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Abstract

*Misogyny is described as hatred of or prejudice against women. It comes together as the cause and effect, part of the cycle with Patriarchy and feminism. The research focuses to find the cause of misogyny and show the portrayal of misogyny reflected by the male character in Christina Dalcher's *Vox*. This study is also aimed to explain the effect of misogyny toward Jean McClellan's life as the main female character in the novel. The writer uses the aspect of misogyny by Kate Manne which discusses two aspects of misogyny, overt, and violent to describe more on the portrayal of misogyny in the analysis. This study uses qualitative research as the method of the study. The results show that there are two causes that arise misogyny through the novel such as women's character achievement, and pure movement. The misogynist shows the discrimination, harassment, and social judgment toward Jean in workplaces and society in the story. It affects Jean's life, makes her life in terrified feeling, and constantly losing confidence in herself.*

Keywords: *Misogyny, feminism, women's rights and patriarchy.*

I. INTRODUCTION

Feminism often discuss as one of the most frequently encountered issues in everyday life. This issue usually exists side by side with gender inequality which later became the cause of the birth of the movement. Feminism is a struggle to correct laws and practices that prevent woman from achieving full equality with men in all aspects of domestic and public life. But the deeper struggle is against the stereotypes of men dominance against women in society, psychological need and others.

One of the topics discussions in feminism which is misogyny. The definition of misogyny is hatred of or prejudice against women. It's known as a part of the cycle of cause and effect side by side with patriarchy as ideology and feminism as movement. Based on *The Logic of Misogyny* by Kate Manne (2018) Patriarchy comes first as an ideology that oppresses women that lead the movement of women to claim their right [1]. Four waves of feminism then happen and success makes women get their position in all fields of society.

Misogynist is the name for people who have the feeling of misogyny. Basically, misogynist not hate all of the women, but women with power, outspoken, and have many achievements. Misogyny is often found from men, but found out that it also exist by women, either against another women or themselves (Flood, 2007) [2]. The misogyny system always portrays women as a weak person. Women are considered unfit to lead and fight for something. Depiction of this misogyny can be seen in everyday life including physical and sexual violence against women, catcalling, and also bullying about the way a woman looks and dresses.

One of a literary work which shows the portrayal of misogyny is *Vox* by Christina Dalcher [3]. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* known as feminist novel tells about women in the US who are not allowed to speak more than one hundred words in a day. If they across that limit, the bracelet that they wear at their wrist will give an electric shock that get more painful for time to time. Not only lost their right to speak, in this novel, women are also not allowed to read or write, have a job, have bank account or passport. All of that is forbidden. Jean, the main character of this story then tries to stand against women and gets all of their rights back.

This novel is chosen because relevant with the research that will focus with misogyny and its effect. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* leads the readers to know how women in this case, cannot do anything that they want to do, or just get a proper education. Discussed how a new government make a rule that cause a disaster and upset the

balance between men's and women's rights just because the misogyny, they are afraid about the fact that women can also be a leader or can be smarter than men. Misogyny is often not being realized by many people like what happen in the novel, when women realize, somehow the situation is already bad. It shows how misogyny study is important to give better understanding of the existence of hatred or prejudice toward women, and its effect on women's lives.

II. METHODS

This study uses feminist literary approach as the extrinsic approach to analyze the novels because it's discusses the hatred toward woman or misogyny that faced by the female character in Christina Dalcher's *Vox*. The Feminist literary criticism uses to analyzed the feminist movement as the effect of misogyny through the story. The source of data of this research is the novel, *Vox* written by Christina Dalcher. The writer focuses on the cause, portrayal, and the effect of misogyny toward female protagonists.

To present the result, this study uses descriptive qualitative method. It is define as the method that present the result of data analysis in the description form [4]. In collecting data, the writer applied several procedures such as; read the novel, makes notes, and categorizing the data based on the cause, effect, and the portrayal in two aspects of misogyny, overt and violent by Kate Manne. In analyzing data, the writer interprets and concludes the data in order to answer the statements of the problem.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Misogyny as hatred toward women always causes a condition in society. *Vox* by Christina Dalcher shows the stories that not only highlight the portrayal of misogyny, but also explain the cause and the effect. This research using two aspects of misogyny by Kate Manne to analyzed the portrayal. First, the overt aspect which highlights the openly behavior such as domination and control over women. Second, violent aspect which highlights verbal and non-verbal abuse with women as victims. The result of analysis about three problems that occur can be seen in the following discussion:

The Cause of Misogyny

Back again to the cycle of Patriarchy, misogyny, and feminism, women's achievement is one of the strongest reasons why misogyny can appear in society. The Jealous and hatred feeling when women can achieve many things, become a leader, and outspoken about what they think is the sign of misogyny. Manne (2018) also mentions that men may assume powerful women who don't use their power and ability to service men's interest as rude and threatening. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* women character potential can be seen from the quotation below; "You're the cognitive linguist," Patrick says, gathering empty plates, urging Steven to do the same. [5]. Jean, the protagonist is one of brilliant women in the story. She is the cognitive linguist like what Patrick says, neurolinguist. Dr. Jean, what she is often called by others that also leads a laboratory, later success to develop a cure for Aphasia problems in the brain that cause a person difficulty to speak. Jean also has a bunch of friends which gather and talk about many things together. It can be seen from quotations below; As for me, on my own, I used to have girlfriend. "Hen parties," Patrick called my nights out with the girls, but I know he didn't mean it unkindly. It was just one of those things guys said. That what I tell myself, anyway. We used to have book clubs and coffee chats; we debated politics in wine bars, later in basements [6]. Jean and her women friends is the example of carrier women who have ability and broad insight. They have book clubs to discuss about many issues and gain more knowledge by listening to the others opinion. They debate about politics and aware about several problems that happen in current society, that has the potential to harm them. Typical of women, who have a value, outspoken, and act outside their gender role. The awareness of women's character in the political situation can be seen more in the quotation below; "Nineteen percent down to ten percent, and that's only because of California, New York, and Florida." Jackie paused to make sure I was still listening. "I mean, we're gonna be back in the early nineties after the next midterms. Cut the representation in half again, and we're headed into the dark ages of 1970-something." [7]

Jackie talks about the House of Representatives in the quotation above. The House of Representatives who shares equal responsibilities in lawmaking with the senate. Based on Jackie statement, the presentation of House Representative continue to decrease, it suspected as the government attempts to reduce people involvement in lawmaking and the government finally can dominate the country. Jackie also explains the worst effect if the situation keep happen which the country will be back in early nineties or 1970. Jackie analyzes the whole politic situation appropriately, she is the example of well educated woman who can lead and achieve many things. The protest that Jackie leads according to the senate and the House of Representatives situation, later makes the misogynist character in the story show the hatred toward outspoken women.

Another cause of misogyny appear in the novel is the belief of religious people, kind of similar with patriarchal ideology which underlined men domination towards women in social hierarchy. Christian people in the story have their own specification to women similar with traditional gender role that good women must consider. The religious people feel uneasy whenever women do something that cross their belief. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* shows what kind of rules that the religious people enforce and become the cause of misogyny.

“The head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God.” Fantastic. Further along, chapter twenty-seven began with this nugget from the book of Titus: “Be teachers of good things; teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good obedient to their own husbands.” [8]

The quotation mentions about the head of every woman is a man which means that women cannot be the leaders of men in every field of society because the head of every man is Christ only. The next sentence above mentions about young women that must be sober, love their husband, children, and become the house keepers. It means, the religious people in Christina Dalcher's *Vox* believe that women must stay at home and take care of the family. This belief will lead to misogyny when comes to judge modern women like Jean who becomes the leader of the research team, and working. Another rule can be seen from the quotation below;

"We are called as women to keep silence and to be under obedience. If we must learn, let us ask our husbands in the closeness of the home, for it is shameful that a woman question God-ordained male leadership." [9]

The quotation above talks about women and knowledge. Religious people in the novel have such a rule about how women study. It mentions in the quotation that women must keep silent and obedient. If women must learn, they must ask their husbands. Women must depend on their husbands and not find it by themselves. Most of the women characters in Christina Dalcher's *Vox* are well-educated people such as Jean, Jackie, and Lin. They go to college, graduate, and have a job. Jackie even becomes an activist and fight for the feminist movement. Women like these characters exceed the rules and cause misogyny to arise to bring back women in their place based on religious belief.

Jean as Victim of Misogyny in Workplaces

The portrayal of misogyny can happen in every field of life. This discussion, highlight how women being the victim of misogyny portrayal in economy field. It's also mention about the discrimination and harassment that women face in workplaces. It contains overt aspect which underline about the openly behavior of misogynist people when it's come to speak about position in workplaces. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* hardly mention about the rules that make women lost their job, lost their bank account including email, and also communication tools. Women only can have money from their husband. It can be seen from the quotation below:

“So,” he says. “Shall we get to business? I’ve got some paper-work for you to sign, and we’ll need to set up a direct deposit to your husband’s account. Whew. Hot in here.” --- No sense in asking why my pay-checks will go to Patrick’s account: all my money has been sitting there since last year. Words, passports, money. [10]

Based on the quotation, Jean is the one who works and have a business with the project. But, instead of asks Jean about her bank account, the government choose to asks about his husband bank account. The money from Jean works will send to Patrick bank account as Jean’s husband. Jean then mentions that all of her money is kept in Patrick account since last year. Giving salaries based on gender instead of occupation is a form of misogyny mentioned by Anderson (2015) [11].

“You’re in the dark as much as I am, aren’t you, Jean?” Lin says.

“Shut up!” Jack tells her. He turns to Lorenzo. “Dr. Rossi, please take a seat. Right hand on the screen.” Asshole, I think. [12]

The quotation above shows a conversation between Jean, Lyn, and Jack. Jack speaks rudely without any respect, like, *shut up!* to stop Lin from talking. But, after that, he completely shows different behavior by speaking politely to Lorenzo. Call him doctor and give him directions. It includes the portrayal of misogyny by underlining the different treatment of men and women in the quotation.

“Because Morgan wasn’t going to ask for you. Or Lin. He didn’t want any women on the project. I guaranteed him we’d have a successful trial before the president left for France, but only if you two were on the team.” [13]

The quotation shows how Lorenzo must offer something to make Morgan agree, including Jean and Lin, two women on his project. Morgan is misogynist, as can be seen from Morgan’s mindset, which does not want any women to take part and become his teammate. The behavior of excluding women and thinking that they are not capable as men is included as the portrayal of misogyny.

The next quotations below will more highlight Morgan as misogynist with Jean as his main target. Morgan is the one who replace Jean position as the head of the laboratory after the new rules for women arises. Because of that background, Morgan often feel intimidated whenever Jean around and do great jobs with her research. The intimidated feelings then lead to Morgan behavior which often threaten Jean to show his domination and his position in front of her.

“See,” he says, “this is why the old way didn’t work. There’s always something. Always some sick kid or a school play or menstrual cramps or maternity leave. Always a problem.” [14]

There’s always something that becomes a problem when women have a job. Morgan shows his hatred and prejudice against Jean, women who already have a son or daughter, have a family, and even have such a condition like menstrual cramps as the reason for women being incompetent. This kind of hatred include as part of misogyny because besides throwing irrational complaints, Morgan also degrades women.

Jean as Victim of Misogyny in Society

The next discussion is women being victim of misogyny portrayal in social field. It contain overt aspect which underline about the openly behavior of misogynist people when it’s come to speak about women position in society and also violent aspect which highlight the discrimination and harassment that women faces in society. Christina Dalcher’s *Vox* reflect the toxic society that not safe for women as the effect of misogyny and the born of rules after the new President election. When it comes to society, many people will get involves as well as the relation. The writer then underlined several quotations that explain how women are treated in society. Start from household, quotation below picture what kind of expectation that people burden to women in the first place.

Another glass of milk disappears down Steven’s gullet “Save some for cereal tomorrow,” I say. “You’re not the only human in this house.”

“Maybe you should go out and get another carton, then. It’s your job, right?” [15]

The quotation highlights the conversation between Steven and Jean about women's role in society. Steven asks Jean to go out and get another carton of milk for the family and mentions it as Jean's duty as the woman and wife in the household. Go shopping and buying a carton of milk clearly can be done by anyone, not based on gender, man or woman. Steven's way of thinking reflects how misogynist people see the roles of women and men in the household.

"You're not getting married at eighteen, kiddo." A smile works onto Steven's face, only a touch of a smile that isn't joined by his eyes. It's really not a smile at all. "You don't have anything to do with it, Mom. It's Dad decision." [16]

The quotation shows how Jean is against Steven's idea to marry Julia at such a young age, with a misogynist mindset. But, Steven does not hear Jean. He even talks back to Jean and says that his mom cannot forbid him. All of the decision is on his dad. Disrespectful behavior toward women and only shows respect for men is one of the portrayals of misogyny. Besides the explanation about how women who has a family being treat in society. Christina Dalcher's *Vox* also pictures how activist women get mistreatment and struggle to fit in the abnormal society through the story. The quotation below show the misogyny behavior that faces by women activist:

Now she's screaming at the interviewer, who probably shouldn't have said "Feminazi."

"You know what you get if you take the feminist out of Feminazi? Jackie doesn't wait for an answer. "Nazi. That's what you get. You like it better?" [17]

The quotation shows how society judge women who becomes activist to fight for women's rights. The interviewer screaming Feminazi at the activist. Feminazi itself refers to the hard or extreme feminist that sensitive with every issue about women. As mentioned by Anderson (2015) in her book *Modern Misogyny: Anti-Feminism in a Post-Feminist Era*, society often see feminist as humorless, sensitive, aggressive, and grumpy women with persecution fantasies [18]. Women who outspoken often being the target of misogynist hatred.

Christina Dalcher's *Vox* also shows another feminist movement that being target to government that full of religious and misogynist people. It is the protest against the new president after the election and after the domination of government in lawmaking process. The portrayal of misogyny in that moment can be seen in the following quotation:

They separated our crowd, sending the man away. I watched Lin fold and bend and collapse on herself, wordlessly, only the thread of a pained sigh, high pitched and taut, coming from her lips. Five of us ran to the crumpled mass of woman on the tile floor, only to be beaten off. Those who lingered were also tased or stunned. Like misbehaving animals. Cows. Pets. [19] . The quotation begins with the government who separate the crowd, divide demonstrators into men and women. They send men away and leave the women behind. Then, women get beaten very badly. Jean uses the parable of misbehaving animals to show how hard they are treated just to stop protesting. Misbehaving animals always being hit and slashed until obey their owner. The government do not treat women's demonstrator like a human, but like cows, like a pet.

"Oh man, this is too sweet. The poor, star-crossed, moon-eyed lovers. Tell me, Lorenzo. Is she good? Looks kind of old from where I stand. But maybe you like your bitches run hard and put away wet." [20] . The next quotation, talk about Lorenzo and Jean's relationship. Morgan shows hatred by asking if Jean is good. Like Jean is an object in sexism. Then it continues with other harsh words such as "*bitches run hard and put away wet.*" This one includes a violent aspect as well because Morgan has no respect for Jean. He also verbally abuses Jean by using harsh words to call her.

The Effect of Misogyny to Jean's Life

Every social phenomenon that occurs in society always comes together with the cause and effect. Causes means the reason meanwhile effect is the consequence of every problems, every human behavior that begin to identify after the phenomena happen is specific condition for a times. Misogyny is one of social phenomena that happens and done by some people that later causes some serious effect to another people in society. Some researches already underline about misogyny that not only harm the others but also can make someone blame themselves by doing self-judgment. This discussion will show the analysis occur with the effect of misogyny to Jean's character in Christina Dalcher's *Vox*. The effect will be written based on what Jean experiences and feels toward the portrayal of misogyny that happen to her.

Based on Christina Dalcher's *Vox*, Jean McClellan is neurologist who becomes the main character of the story. The readers follow the whole story by using Jean's perspective. It makes Jean's way of thinking, condition, and situation be the one that readers can understand the most. Jean is mothers of four children, three boys and one girl. She is woman with brilliant talent, carrier woman who have many achievement behind her name. After the condition that occur in the novel, where women rights and movement being limitation by the government, and men, the portrayal of misogyny often happen to women around Jean, even Jean herself. As the main character Jean also struggle with the effect of misogyny in her life. The following quotation will show how Jean's life changes, how her relation with men around him starts to changes, and how she makes a deal with some traumatic portrayal.

I hand him the bowl, not turning from the TV. Something about the ball gags bother me – even more than a Raggedy Ann with a red ball strapped to her face should bother me. It's the straps, I think. The black X with the bloodred center crossing out each doll's face. They look like half-assed veils, obliterating every feature but the eyes. [21]

The quotation above mention about Jean's uncomfortable feeling when sees the advertisement from the television. It shows the ball gags, the straps, the black X crossing the doll's face. The ball gags, the straps, kindly remain of her condition. Her words are limit, just like gag by the bracelet in their wrist. It's the effect of the portrayal of misogyny which limitation the women's words. The feeling of cannot speaks freely and have to worried about the amount of words, about the counter all the time traumatized Jean.

Instead of standing next to Patrick, or even at the far end of the family line, bookending our kids, I'm fifth. After my husband, after Steven, after the eleven-year-old twins. And Sonia has made me smaller than everyone except for her. I manage a forced smile and take her into my lap, pressing her head against me so she can't see the tears that are welling up, that I won't be able to contain. [22] . The next quotation above, mentions the uncomfortable, anger, and sad feelings that comes together to Jean when Sonia shows her result of drawing. Jean describes the position of the whole family in Sonia's drawing. Jean as the mother, standing far away from Patrick. She stands at the end of the family line after Patrick and the boys. Sonia draws Jean smaller than the others except Sonia. It shows the effect of misogyny, when women enforce to become submissive, Jean seems powerless.

Morgan's words come back to me, his matter-of-talk about how things were better before, long ago, when men worked and women stayed in their private sphere of cookery and cleaning and baby making. [23]

Morgan's words comeback to Jean. The first sentence in the quotation, show how the manipulation and threat that Morgan gives has an effect to Jean. The words that mention about condition which better long way ago when men and women do their roles correctly based on patriarchal ideology. Jean might not really realize that she slowly lost the faith on herself. She doubts herself and thinks about the better world that Morgan mention, again and again.

Moreover, the ideology that misogynist beliefs, the portrayal of misogyny that Jean faces also affecting her relation with her family, especially her oldest son, Steven. Steven is teenager, in the age where someone can get the bad influence from their society. This condition also happen to Steven, he absorb the patriarchal

ideology and start to think and act like misogynist. The following quotation below will show the amount of time Jean has an argument with Steven because of his misogyny behavior.

“You got the new model! Awesome. Julia has one too, except here is purple with silver stars.”

I don't hate my son. I don't hate my son. I don't hate my son. [24]

The next quotation about Steven and Jean's relation begins with Steven mentioning Jean's new bracelet with excitement. He is babbling about the new model of Jean's bracelet before mentioning Julia's bracelet which has purple colors and silver stars. Steven talks about the counter that shut his mom like it is nothing, like it's an accessory that must be appreciated. Steven's ignorance about women's struggle includes misogyny behavior, and again this makes Jean really disappointed and angry. She even keeps telling herself to not hate his own son.

IV. CONCLUSION

Misogyny as one of the encountered issues that is often failed to be realized and prevented before it occurs to women is clearly shown in the novel. The discussion draws some points about the reason misogyny can happen, the portrayal, and the effect to Jean as the female protagonist. The American government in the novel which is dominated by the men, feeling jealous and threatened by the success of women characters like Jean who manages to occupy the position of head of the laboratory. Therefore, male characters like Morgan who is supported by the government and the ideology of pure movement, do the action to push women back to their pure gender roles [25].

Morgan shifts Jean's position after the government enacts a rule that women can only speak 100 words per day, and are not allowed to work. Even when there are circumstances that require Morgan to work with Jean, Morgan continues to abuse Jean in overt and violent aspects. Morgan also acknowledges the success of the project from Jean's team as a success of his own. The things Morgan and the government do then result in Jean struggling with trauma, she also gets losing confidence and doubting herself in many ways.

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