THE REPERCUSSION OF TRAUMA IN CHANG-RAE LEE'S NOVEL THE SURRENDERED (2010)

THESIS

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ABSTRAK

Gumara, Gino. 2014. "The Repercussion of Trauma in Chang-Rae Lee's Novel *The Surrendered* (2010)". Thesis. Universitas Negeri Padang.

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Skripsi ini merupakan analisa novel The Surrendered (2010) karya Chang-Rae Lee. Permasalahan yang dibahas dalam analisa ini adalah sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan dampak jangka panjang dari trauma sebagai akibat dari pengalaman masa lalu. Analisa ini menerapkan text-based interpretation yang mempertimbangkan unsur-unsur di dalam teks secara spesifik sehingga memberikan kontribusi dalam pengungkapan makna. Selanjutnya penganalisaan novel ini dilakukan dengan menggunakan fictional devices. Tujuan analisa ini adalah (1) menganalisa sejauh mana novel ini merefleksikan the repercussion of trauma, (2) menunjukkan kontribusi elemen fiksi (fictional devices) dalam mengungkap the repercusion of trauma pada novel ini. Data penelitian ini adalah teks tertulis yang dikutip dari novel. Kutipan teks tersebut kemudian diinterpretasi dan dianalisa menggunakan elemen fiksi fictional devices (characters, setting and plot) lalu dikaitkan dengan konsep psychoanalysis oleh Freud dan Helman. Hasil analisa menunjukkan bahwa para karakter mengalami gejala yang muncul sebagai akibat dari post trauma yang terpendam di alam bawah sadar mereka. Hal ini terbukti dari tiga gejala yang timbul yaitu: re-experiencing, avoidance dan hyperarousal. Gejala-gejala tersebut muncul diluar keinginan karakter hanya dengan pemicu kecil, namun dapat mempengaruhi kestabilan mental para karakter. Dampak jangka panjang dari post trauma inilah yang akhirnya mengganggu aktivitas dan keseharian para karakter dalam berinteraksi sebagai makhluk sosial.

Keywords: repercussion, trauma, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

In millenium era, war is still an crucial topic between countries since the war always comes with cruelty, violence and genocide. The horror of war is continuing unspeakable up to now as war happens in several parts of the world. As it is shown through the news paper, television and the internet, the number of individuals killed in combat during the war increase through the time. This condition has cause both physical and psychological strike. The deaths continue to increase in numbers beyond human believe. Moreover, most of the casualties which are civilian must also bear the intentional demolition of their social, culture and economy.

Nevertheles, the effect of the war and mass violence is not simple that it is not only about the death and the destruction but also the psychological effects toward the victims. The real casualty does not merely occur right after the war. The indirect effects happen months and years after the events, deal with the survivor and the witness. Traumatic events such as witnessing death, being threatened to be killed and getting serious injuries may develop their mind into great stress. The victims frequently experience "survivor's guilt" for remaining alive while others died. During this time, the victim may experience fear, anxiety, anger and nightmare as the repercussion of their trauma.

Direct experience of war potentially trigger trauma and influence the quality of the victim life and interaction in the future. One form of trauma is Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Muller (2014:1) writes that eighteen million children are the victims and witnessed the chaos of war. It causes them to suffer PTSD. The children lived in violent environment and witnessed brutality such as destruction of their homes, and the death of parents, siblings, neighbours and friends. Muller's interview with some refugees found that most of children refugees suffer the deep feelings of depression, worry about public places and frightening thoughts. Children are more vulnerable to post-traumatic stress since they are helpless in most situations and incapable of overwhelming stress. If trauma happens in early life and is left without treatment, the following developmental stages will be damaged.

Along with the injuries and loss, the repercussion of trauma toward women cannot be reputed as usual case. According to (Astgeirsdottir, 2001:12) though men are more likely to experience a traumatic event, women are more likely to experience the high impact of traumatic event. Experiencing traumatic event such as interpersonal violence and sexual assault are definitely harmful to women and may have lasting effects on their physical and mental health. Thus, at the moment mental states go down, woman frequently engage with the anxiety, fright and numbing.

In addition, Muller (2014:2) also states that war veterans speak of the horror images, sounds and smells of war that continue to haunt them. They got nightmares, flashbacks and deep grieves. According to his study, he found that

Mick, a fourty-years old veteran, is considered suffered from Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) about a year ago, after he spent his 20 years in infantry. The study described that he had seen very horrible things in infantry. He saw homes burnt down, people screamed, many of them with terrible injuries or crying over the body of a dead loved one. Even after years, Mick cannot forget that terrible memory. A picture of a young child who had been mutilated but left alive, came back over and over again. As the result, this makes his emotion out of controll, short-tempered and affect his relationship with his family. War veterans suffer the scars of such terrible memories whether they have a scratch on them or not.

The survivor and witness of war have been subject to atrocious forms of torture as starvation, physical mutilation, humiliation, sexual degradation and severe sickness. Therefore many soldiers and civilian suffer from critical trauma. The repercussion of the trauma can disrupt and impair daily life if symptoms are severe and lasts long enough. According to Eth et.al (2005:118) among the mental health problems, the symptoms of post trauma are remarkable. It can be present in adult who endures or witnesses childhood maltreatment or abuse. It has been mental health consequences in particularly among those who experienced sexual abuse and physical violence.

The case about the repercussion of trauma can also be found in literary works. *The Surrendered* (2010) which is written by Chang Rae Lee reveals the repercussion of trauma phenomenon. *The Surrendered* shows the unforgettable images of war and traumatic experience around the three characters: June, Hector

and Sylvie. The novel gives an idea of the terrible impact of war toward the victims and perpetrators involved in the war. It shows how past experience of war affects character's future life because of their trauma. The trauma in this analysis is focused on Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. This makes this novel interesting to be analyzed in terms of the repercussion of trauma.

1.1.1. The Repercussion of Trauma

There are two term needed to be explained in this study: repercussion and trauma. According to Oxford dictionary (2014), repercussion deals with indirect effect which is usually bad or unpleasant happens as a result of an action and affects people for a long time. Meanwhile, Rosenbloom (2010:13) states that trauma is a bodily or mental injury usually caused by an external agent. Traumatic events are called extraordinary, not because they occur rarely, but because they overwhelm the ordinary human adaptations to life. Traumatic events generally involve threats to life, or a close personal encounter with violence or death. The common denominator of trauma is a feeling of intense fear, helplessness, loss of control, and threat of annihilation.

In this analysis the repercussion of trauma refers to a long lasting unpleasant feeling, emotional and behavioral that happens in the present life due to the terrible past experience which influence the quality of life. Moreover, the term trauma is limited into Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). The indirect impact of this trauma is the development of clinical symptoms following exposure and direct personal experience to an extreme traumatic events. This event involves actual or threatened death and serious injury. The symptoms resulting from the

exposure include re-experiencing, avoidance and numbing, and increase arousal. Chronically traumatized people tend to suffer from distinct alterations in states of consciousness, flashbacks nightmares of specific events, distrust, suspiciousness, and problems with intimacy which results in social isolation.

1.1.2. Chang Rae Lee

Chang-Rae Lee was born on July 29th, 1965 in South Korea. He is a Korean American novelist and a professor of creative writing at Princeton University, where he has served as the director of Princeton's Program in Creative Writing. He immigrated to the United States with his family when he was 3 years old. He was in Westchester, New York, Lee attended Phillips Exeter Academy in Exeter, New Hampshire. He graduated from Yale University with a degree in English and from the University of Oregon with a MFA in writing. He worked as a Wall Street financial analyst for a year before turning to writing full time.

Lee's first novel, *Native Speaker* (1995), centers on a Korean American industrial spy, explores themes of alienation and betrayal as felt or perpetrated by immigrants and first-generation citizens, and played out in local politics. In 1999, he published his second novel, *A Gesture Life*. This elaborated on his themes of identity and assimilation through the narrative of an elderly Japanese-American doctor who remembers treating Korean comfort women during World War II. His 2004 novel *Aloft* received mixed notices from the critics and featured Lee's first protagonist who is not Asian American, but a disengaged and isolated Italian-American suburbanite forced to deal with his world.

Lee's first novel won numerous awards including the PEN/Hemingway Award. His second novel, A Gesture Life, received the Asian American Literary Award. His another novel, *Aloft,* received the 2006 Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature in the Adult Fiction category. His 2010 novel *The Surrendered* won the 2011 Dayton Literary Peace Prize and was a nominated finalist for the 2011 Pulitzer Prize for Fiction. Lee is also the recipient of an Anisfield-Wolf Book Award, a Gustavus Myers Outstanding Book Award, and a NAIBA Book Award for Fiction, an Asian American Literary Award, and an American Book Award from the Before Columbus Foundation, the Oregon Book Sward, a Barnes & Noble Discover Great New Writers Award, and QPB's New Voices Award. He is elected by The New Yorker as one of the twenty best writers under forty.

Chang-rae Lee has established himself as one of the most talented writers of contemporary literary fiction. Sankovitch (2010:1) writes that *The Surrendered* is a brilliant, haunting, heartbreaking story about how love and war inalterably change the lives of those they touch. According to Sankovitch, Lee's description of each characters demonstrate his family history.

The Surrendered is an epic novel about the personal costs of war. It is powerfully written and shows the reader the unforgettable images of war, the dispute of character, and jarring propositions as to the nature of survival. In addition, Rafferty (2010:1) proposes that *The Surrendered* is the most ambitious books talks about the horrors of war and the sorrows of survival. However, She

said that the novel's manner is quiet, watchful, and expectant where the readers are waiting for what might come.

1.1.3. The Surrendered

The Surrendered (2010) is a novel written by Chang Rae Lee that reflects the repercussion of trauma. In this novel, there are three characters experience trauma due to their past experience. The first character is June. She faced the brutality; her sister and mother were murdered in front of her. The second character is Hector, a soldier who faced psychological and physical casualties such as: murder, slaughter and injury. The third character is a civilian, Sylvie. She witnessed her parents were tortured by the soldiers in front of her. Each of the character suffers trauma even after several years of the traumatic event. Thus, the repercussion of the trauma emerges in three symptoms: re-experiencing, avoidance and hyperarousal.

Three characters in this analysis experience re-experiencing through flashback and nightmare. Re-experience is the recollection of terrible past memories. It happens due to the triggers which occurs through certain situation. The first character (June) always suffers nightmare about violence and murder even though she has got married for years after the war. This trigger emerges since she lives with a man who is her husband. This nightmare causes her to feel panic, distress and helpless since the perpetrator is a man. Another character (Sylvie) also gets flashback after she had seen her own blood. The blood as the trigger reminds her about the image of the war. It causes severe fear inside her and makes her mind become unstable. The third character (Hector) gets flashback

from the previous life. The trigger is the description of the war from a book. All of the vision about cruelty, misery and brutality come to his mind at once whenever something reminds him about the war. He feels so numb, shame and guilt for his role as a soldier at that time.

Avoidance is the effort of run away anything that reminds the sufferer of the trauma. The internal conflict within the characters causes them to avoid any interaction. The first character (June) tends to isolate herself and never want to involve in society. She prefers to be a closed person. She always wants to be alone and will run from any activity deal with others. Another character (Hector) restricts his interaction with the society. He avoids playing with children due to his guilty. Eventhough he likes the children, he forces himself not to get close with them for his guilty and shame is very deep.

The last symptom is hyperarousal which include irritability, anger and overreact. The circumstances create conflict toward the characters that disturbs the state of their mind. The character (June) easily feels panic when she faces a man. Since the man is a sign of danger for her, she acts overreacting. She always looks for signs of danger and will lost control of herself. She is also angry and feel severe fear when she is surprised by something that in fact is not danger. Her trauma has caused her to be irritability toward any case.

1.2. Problem of the Study

The repercussion of trauma emerged as an important issue in Chang Rae Lee's novel, *The Surrendered* (2010). Thus, there are two research questions used to analize the repercussion of trauma which are formulated as follow:

- 1. How far is the repercussion of trauma exposed in the novel *The Surrendered*?
- 2. To what extend do fictional devices: characters, setting and plot in novel *The Surrendered* contribute in revealing the repercussion of trauma?

1.3. Purpose of Study

This study is aimed to seek how far *The Surrendered* exposes the repercussion of trauma. Furthermore, it is conducted to figure out the role of characters, setting and plot in revealing the repercussion of trauma.

1.4 Previous Study

A study about the novel *The Surrendered* (2010) has been done by Joanne Yoon. It is in a journal entitled *Remembering a Forgotten War: Witnessing Trauma and Inadvertent Erasures in Chang-Rae Lee's The Surrendered 2011.*The study analyzes characters and plot in this novel. It uses the concept of trauma from Felman and Laub. According to Laub, trauma is an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore continues into the present and is current in every respect. The result of the study says that the bodies of the characters are also the manifestations of the repressed trauma, suffering, shame and regret which is continuously relived in the present. Each character becomes a witness to the trauma in the other and within themselves. *The Surrendered* is a testimony to personal and inherited histories and trauma, and a commemoration not just of victims of war, but of those who are subject to the war. Thus, this study gives contribution to the repercussion of

trauma topic since it shows how the character repressed trauma and suffering from its horrible long time after the traumatic event.

The other study that gives contribution to this analysis is in a journal written by Ying-bei Wang entitled *History, narrative, and trauma: writing war crimes in Chang-rae Lee's A Gesture life (2010).* The study analyzes how the characters explore the trauma of past experience. The author relates the analysis with the concept of trauma by Freud, Lacan, and Caruth. According to this journal trauma is a problem of mental health. It could happen to all human beings when facing too much violent of war. A number of incomprehensible, misfortunate events happen again and again to the character. The study concludes that the memories of the devastating events that occurred to character have an unstoppable force to disturb his narrative. As a result, trauma not only troubles Hatta's life, but also governs his language. His life is filled with the repetitions of catastrophic events, while his language reveals considerable distorting tendencies. With the memory vividly in the character's head, Hatta feels an impulse to repeat the same experience. The conflicts that happened to him are consequences of his experiences during the war.

Both of the studies above give contribution and inspiration to the topic: the repercussion of trauma. The studies above show how past traumatic events can affect people's life including their mind in negative way. Thus, this study focuses on how far do the fictional devices in Chang Rae Lee's novel *The Surrendered* (2010) reflect the repercussion of trauma as an effect of post traumatic experience.

1.5 Theoretical Framework

The word trauma is used to describe a situation or experience that is full with pain and overhelm someone's ability to deal with. Zetterberg (2010:11) explains that according to Freud trauma draw extreme stimulus which proves overwhelming to the mind. This state causes the person cannot deal the experience and as a defense mechanism toward the overwhelming mental stress, the tool of repression is used. The development of traumatic reactions within the body and mind is due to the repercussion of being restricted. Thus, when our mind cannot find any chance to resistance or escape (fight or flight), the human system of self-defense becomes overwhelmed and disorganized.

Traumatic events can bring a wide consequence to the invidu who suffers it. Curnow (2007:2) states that according to Freud, trauma occurs when there is a disruption of a protective barrier in a person's mind. He also states that there are two distinct phases emerge after a traumatic experience. The first is an initial breakdown when the protective shield is breached by trauma, and the second is a catastrophic disruption of functioning. This is known as flashbacks since it refers to the image that happened in the past and relives again in the present. Therefore, the past becomes real in the present and is accompanied with a flood of anxiety, numbing or avoidance. In this analysis the form of trauma is focused on one classification which is known as Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD)

The concept Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is also named Vietnam syndrome. This disease is a clinical diagnosis which represents symptoms that in common is triggered by a trauma. Trauma has been examined

widely in the field of cultural analysis which includes analysis of formative narratives that use 'flashbacks' to the traumatic event. It also talks about symptoms of PTSD such as denial and unwillingness to talk about the traumatic event (Peraica, 2009:18). According to Zetterberg (2010:6), Post Traumatic Stress Disorders (PTSD) develops when there is a trauma of threat upon death. For example experiencing or witnessing of a stressor event involving death, serious injury or such threat to the self or others in a situation in which the individual felt intense fear, horror, or powerlessness. Typically the individual suffers PTSD persistently avoids all thoughts, emotions and discussion of the traumatic event. However, the event is commonly relived by the individual through intrusive, recurrent recollections, flashbacks and nightmares.

In addition, Eth et.al (2005:2) shows that the essential feature of PTSD is the development of a set of characteristic symptoms and responses after exposure to an extreme traumatic stressor or event. The characteristic symptoms can be summarized as follows: re-experiencing of the event or stressor; avoidance or numbing; and hyper arousal.

Re-experiencing happens when a person recollect or relive the memory of traumatic events through flashback or nightmares. This symptom can be triggered by something that reminds the sufferer of the trauma, such as when a combat veteran hears firecracker or a rape victim sees a news report of sexual assault. These memories can cause reactions emotionally and physically. The memories can be felt so real if the trauma is severe and may cause intense feeling of fear and helplessness. Avoidance is efforts to avoid anything associated with the trauma.

The sufferers try to avoid situations or conditions that trigger memories of the past experience. They may avoid being near places where the trauma occurred and tend to avoid sight, sounds or people that remind them of the events. Numbing is another effort to avoid the traumatic event. The sufferers may feel emotionally numb and it causes them to isolate themselves from others. It is difficult for them to express their feeling toward people. They are sometimes less interested in activities others do or enjoy. Hyperarousal is often manifested by irritability, nausea, difficulty in sleeping and concentrating. The sufferers always defensively watchful and overlook for signs of danger. People with PTSD may find that they get startled and move or jump suddenly because something surprises of frightening them (Larson et al, 2006:8).

The form of this analysis is supported by text-based interpretation. Guerin (2005) explains that text-based interpretation focuses on the work itself. It implies that the meaning of the story is found in the text by examining the interrelationship of the formal elements.

In analyzing this novel, fictional devices; character, setting and plot are essential to be examined. Character refers to a textual representation of human being. The analysis of the characters can be done through actions, thoughts, dialogues and how they act in response toward certain conflict of circumstances. Setting has a great relation with situation, location and atmosphere of the characters in the story. It is everything that surrounds the character such as environment, condition, belief and nation where the character being. Madden (2002:66) states:

Setting in fiction is the location and atmosphere of the story. It has a direct and indirect impact on character and conflict. It supports and emphasizes the story meaning.

The setting, here, plays an important role in influencing the character's condition. Thus, it supports and complements the conflict in order to express the story meaning.

Another device that will be examined in this analysis is plot which is focuses on conflict. The plot serves the series of events that contribute conflict and effect. According to Jacob (2003), plot and conflict can be discovered by examining the quarrel between the protagonist and the antagonist. There are four conditions following; the conflict between character and the opposite character, against nature, society and even the characters against itself or in another word, internal conflict. In this analysis, conflict is focused on internal conflict.

1.6 Methodology

The analysis of this novel focuses on text based-interpretation. Moreover, it is done by exploring fictional devices; characters, setting and plot (conflict). Both characters and setting are inseparable since they are interrelated each other. Here, characters are used to evoke the repercussion of trauma by examining the character's behavior and way of thinking. The setting deals with the atmosphere and temporal environment which contributes in revealing the meaning. Meanwhile, plot (conflicts) has a role in conveying the meaning of the novel. Furthermore, this analysis is based on the concept of psychoanalytic by Freud and Helman.