

**GAMBARAN REZIM NAZI DALAM PERADABAN JERMAN  
DALAM BEBERAPA PILIHAN PUISI SYLVIA PLATH**  
*THE REPRESENTATION OF THE NAZI REGIME IN GERMAN CIVILIZATION  
SEEN FROM THE SELECTED SYLVIA PLATH'S POEMS*

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**ABSTRAK**

Rezim Nazi adalah tragedi besar dari peradaban Jerman pada abad 20. Nazi merupakan sebuah partai yang sarat dengan pemerintahan diktator yang dipimpin oleh Adolf Hitler. Partai Nazi mencapai masa keemasannya pada tahun 1933-1945 (periode Perang dunia II). Kemudian pada tahun 1962, Sylvia Plath membuat sebuah potret keNazian dalam karya-karyanya di *Daddy*, *Lady Lazarus*, dan *Mary's Song*. Pikiran imajinatif Plath sebagai anak perempuan Jerman mengungkapkan representasi yang berdasar sejarah kedalam puisi. Untuk itu, new historicism bagi Stephen Greenblatt merupakan sebuah perangkat dalam menguraikan wacana yang ada dalam teks puisi. Kemudian, hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan potret Nazi sebagai produk laki-laki dalam sudut pandang perempuan. Atribut-atribut Nazi yang digunakan dalam teks puisi itu merupakan sebuah estetika dalam mengeksplorasi kebrutalan Nazi yang dibayangkan sejajar dengan kebrutalan laki-laki dalam sistem patriarki. Kemudian, eksplorasi atribut-atribut itu menunjukkan kekuatan Nazi dalam menghegemoni orang-orang Jerman untuk menganggap program-program Nazi sebagai kehendak Tuhan. Akibatnya menunjukkan bahwa ada penyalahgunaan ajaran agama untuk kepentingan-kepentingan tertentu. Jadi, melalui teks puisi itu, Plath membawa bagian-bagian dari sejarah Jerman melalui emosinya terhadap rezim Nazi.

**Kata Kunci:** *Greenblatt new historicism*, ke-Nazian, representasi, sistem patriarki, wacana.

**ABSTRACT**

*Nazi regime is a huge calamity of German civilization in 20th century. It is a party that has totalitarian dictatorship ruled by Adolf Hitler. Nazi party had reached their golden era around World War II (1933-1945). Moreover, in 1962, Sylvia Plath makes a portrayal of Nazism in her works. Those works that convey Nazi's issue are Daddy, Lady Lazarus, and Mary's Song. The imaginative thought of Plath as a pure German daughter reveals the representation of diachronic history into poetry. Henceforth, Stephen Greenblatt's new historicism becomes a device to reconstruct the discourse that lies down in the poetic text. Moreover, the results of the research show the portrait of Nazism as the male product in female tongue. Nazism attributes are used in the text of the poems as an aesthetic way in exploring the Nazi's violence that is imagined paralel to male's violence in patriarchal system. Hence, the attributes exploration shows the power of Nazi in hegemonizing German people to take Nazi's program as God's will. The result shows that there is a misapplication in religious dogma for certain goals. Moreover, through the text of the poems, Plath brings parts of the German history through her emotion toward the Nazi regime.*

**Keywords:** *Discourse, Greenblatt's new historicism, Nazism, patriarchal system, representation*

**1. Introduction**

Through the Nazi party, Hitler as the leader has an obsession to make Germany as a central of civilization and history. Through the slogan of Nazi is “*Ein Reich! Ein Volk! Ein Fuehrer!* One

state! One country! One leader!”, Nazism is popular with its cruelty. Furthermore, Nazi has high nationalism toward Germany, they are extremely proud of Aryan as the original race. Moreover, they judge other minority races (Jews,

Gypsies, Roma Sinti, slave, etc) in Germany only the destroyer for the nation. Furthermore, concentration camps which is built in Auschwitz, Dachau and Belzec become a place of genocide for Jews and other minority races. Hitler thinks that by killing Jews and other minority races in Germany, he will had *lebensraum* (living space) for Aryan (Sanford *et al.*, 2007: 5). hence, the dominant ideology of Nazi is felt by women. In the era, women have only three roles in their life; “*Kinder, Kirche, Kueche*; children, church and kitchen” (Purcell, 2004: 60). Recently, the history of Germany in 20th century; Nazi, is constructed in literary works such as: poetry, drama, short story, novel or other documents (film). According to Foucault:

“History is the work expended on material documentation (books, texts, accounts, registers, acts, buildings, institutions, laws, techniques, objects, customs, etc) that exists, in every time and place, in every society, either in a spontaneous or in a consciously organized form. To be brief, then, let us say that history, in its traditional form, undertook to ‘memorize’ the monuments of the past, transform them into documents”. (2003: 6)

The transformation of history into document is the representation of language about history itself. Through document, history is represented with text or other documentations as the monument of past. As also stated by Linda Hutcheon that,

“History is not made obsolete: it is, however, being rethought—as a human construct. And in arguing that history does not exist except as text, it does not stupidly and “gleefully” deny that the past existed, but only that its accessibility to us now is entirely conditioned by textuality. We cannot know the past except through its texts: its documents, its evidence, even its eye-witness accounts are texts. Even the institutions of the past, its social structures and practices, could be seen,

in one sense, as social texts”. (1988: 16)

From the citation above, Hutcheon emphasizes that there is no history except its documentation in textuality. The textuality itself is a representation of history. Moreover, history is unstable because it is the product of human construction in a certain period. History is always rethought with contemporary paradigm that is influenced by different knowledge and experience. Hence, according to Gallagher and Greenblatt in new historicism, the discussion about art in literary works is transformed into representation. Moreover, the exploration of human subject or race of history through the investigation of empirical explanation. Hence, discussion of ideological critique in literary work is also transformed into discourse analysis (Gallagher & Greenblatt, 2000: 17). Furthermore, based on Herder’s paradigm in Gallagher and Greenblatt proclaims that, history consists of some fragments of phenomena which are located in various times and places. Hence, those fragments lead to plurality and history is defined as a progressive thing in contemporary paradigm. Herder adds that any particular historical manifestation in literary work is an element of universal validity of history (2000: 5). In other words, it states that literary works bring particular discourses that become a part of the general history. Furthermore, in 1962, Sylvia Plath writes some poems that constructs the portrait of Nazism. She transforms her judgment towards Nazism through her poetic text. Although Plath has no direct experience of Nazism, her work can give knowledge about the Nazi regime. Based on the Herder’s statement above, I find Nazism in Plath’s selected poems. Nazism is a general history for humanism, and works of art as Plath’s has done is particular thing but related to the general thing. Hence, the discourse that lies down in the poetic text is reconstructed in some fragments of Nazism. Those fragments are the attributes of Nazism that crystallized in the selected poems, the superiority of nationalism in the Nazi regime embedded in the poems, and religious analogies toward Nazism in the selected poems. By Nazi discourse in the poems, hermeneutic sensibility reveals the knowledge of Nazi's history outstandingly. This study can

complete the discourse of Nazism that is not mentioned in the prior studies. Based on the description, this article entitles "The Representation of the Nazi Regime in German Civilization Seen from the Selected Sylvia Plath's Poems".

## 2. Research Methodology

Research method is presented to give the reader the understanding how research is conducted. The type of research in this study is qualitative research. It means that the study concerns with collecting and analyzing in many forms except non-numeric source (Blaxter, 2006: 64). Text of the selected poems involve interpretation and description about discursive formation related to Nazism. Moreover, the data collection of this study applies library research. According to Blaxter *et al.*, library research is identified as a research process which do not necessitate going into field (2006: 65).

The data explores in library or using internet. The primary data in this research is the selected Sylvia Plath's poems and the secondary data is the prior researches of the selected Plath's poems. Hence, the data is compiled, classified, and verified based on the issue about Nazism. In the process of the data, Greenblatt's new historicism is applied. As the problems to discuss mentioned before, this research investigates the portrait of Nazi regime in German civilization seen from the selected Sylvia Plath's poems. In this case, I see the Nazi regime as a great ideology (a major discourse) that crystallized in the selected poems. Therefore, this research uses inductive method. This method establishes a general truth from the specific one (the observation of facts). So, I start this research from the specific problem (the selected poems) to broader one (the portrait of Nazism). Moreover, this research explores the discourses lie down in those poems related to the Nazi regime that happened in Germany without ignoring Sylvia Plath as the author of the selected poems, who has a big contribution to write the selected poems.

## 3. Result

Through discursive set in the selected poems, the portrait of Nazi regime is revealing. In *Daddy*, Sylvia states the attributes of Nazism

(Swastika, *Mein Kampf*, camp concentration; Auschwitz, Dachau, Belsen, war, German language, Luftwaffe, and Aryanism). Hence, in *Lady Lazarus*, the author tends to show the superiority of nationalism parallelizes the execution toward Jews or another race minority. Plath uses her female body as the object-text. It signifies the sensitivity of female as the narrator. She creates a female figure with powerful struggle against male dominated system. The author confesses herself as Lazarus in Biblical story. The last, *Mary's Song* seals the the portrayal of Nazism with religious analogy. Plath reveals her judgment with moral values by analogies to some figures in Christianity. Furthermore, the selected Plath's poems have diachronic history toward Nazism. It is formed by some categorization in the textuality of the poems.

## 4. Discussion

The deciphering of discursive Nazism in the poems is reconstructed by Greenblatt's new historicism. To grasp the discourse of Nazism, the historical narrative in the poems is categorized in the episteme. According to Baldick, it is a term gained from Foucault's paradigm in *The Order of Things*. Episteme is a series of discourse in certain period that is formulated as a knowledge (2001: 84). In *Daddy*, Plath cultivates the emblems of Nazism into the discourse. One of the emblems is German language. The author presents this language to emphasize the touch of the Germanness. The language is also created in the rich portrait of Nazism. As a great nation, German language also becomes the pride of the nation. As stated by Plath in *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, "Ach du/ Ich, ich, ich, ich/Herr Doktor, Herr enemy/Herr god, Herr Lucifer" is German language that represents the subjectivity of Nazi. Moreover, 'Ach du' represents an exclamation of in reverence and abhorrence toward her father. It also emphasizes her Electra complex. Her father figure becomes a great persona for Plath. Those words refer to the Plath's judgment toward Nazis. German people in the Nazi regime are proud of their language as cultural product of Aryan.

In *Daddy*, Plath also proclaims that German language is bad or obscene. It signifies that the language becomes representation of Nazi's

subjectivity. Hence, another attribute of Nazi is swastika. In *Daddy*, the author states that "not God but swastika" (Plath, 1981: 223). The statement represents swastika can change the position of God. In fact, swastika is believed by German people as a lucky emblem. The symbol manifests an expectation of them.

Furthermore, Sylvia mentions some concentration camps; Dachau, Auschwitz, and Belsen. Those camps parallelizes to the cruelty of Nazism. In some regions, more than 6 millions Jews are dead. Moreover, another attribute that shows by Plath in *Daddy* is Aryanism. Through discourse that is distributed by Hitler about Aryan that becomes a great race in the world. The effect, it raises hegemony in German's thought. Furthermore, the superiority of nationalism (ultra-nationalism) about Aryan makes the destruction of Jew and other race minority conducted. In *Daddy*, Plath also investigates the physical appearance of Aryan as the exploring of human race in anthropological circumstance. From the representation of describing Aryan race, Plath wants to make a stereotype of Aryan in female's perspective.

Another attribute is *Mein Kampf*. It is an autobiography of Hitler. The book is created when he becomes a prisoner in Landsberg. The book contains of Hitler's paradigm in his Germanness. Moreover, *Mein Kampf* is published in two volumes, the first on 19 July 1925 and the second on 11 December 1926 (Blamires, 2006: 414). In *Daddy*, the author states that "A man in black with a Meinkampf look" (Plath, 1981: 224). The author explores *Mein Kampf* by juxtaposing Hitler with the book.

By and large, through representation of the attributes in *Daddy*, it leads to hegemony toward German people. Strong belief that Aryan can dominate all the world refers to the nationalism of German people. The superiority of nationalism constitutes a reason to annihilate Jews. In *Daddy*, the cruelty of Nazism based on the female tongue. Plath uses woman perspective to define a woman in male dominated system. Plath explores the brutality of Nazism in camps and outside camps. She also describes war and bomb that also becomes a method in the execution of Jews. According to Hegel in Shirer, war is a great purifier. War is the highest expression of man. It

is a product of man's supremacy as the holder of power (1960: 89). War also destructs cultural heritage in Germany.

Furthermore, through the power of discourse that is lying down in the attributes, hegemony toward German people persist. The effect is ultra-nationalism happens. According to Griffin in Blamires, ultra-nationalism promotes as ethnic concept in a nationality that stresses the primacy of identity in a nation (2006: 2). They are extremely proud of Aryan. It becomes one of causes in annihilation of race minority in Germany at the regime. In the selected Plath's poems, the author describes the execution toward Jews through the cruelty in camps, war, and bombing. The describing of Nazi's cruelty in the text is a major point. Plath does not mention in detail information. The cruelty here is a bias of her life. Plath lives in two governments that have different social atmosphere. As stated by O' Connor that "Plath sees the official language of the authorities that governs her life; the British and especially American governments as similarly dehumanizing" (2008: 189). Both of social atmosphere influence Plath in historicizing what she knows about Nazism.

In the selected Plath's Poems, the author serves the brutality of Nazism through a woman's perspective. In the, selected poems, she uses some parts of her body as language object to represent her sensitivity toward Nazi's cruelty. Those parts are foot, toe, tongue, jaw, eye, heart, chin, bones, blood, skin, nose, teeth, flesh, hand, knee, hair, and mouth. Another Nazi's brutality is explained by describing war and bombing. In *Lady Lazarus*, Plath states that "Ash, ash/You poke and stir/Flesh, bone, there is nothing there" (1981: 246). The statement means the genocide toward Jews and other races. Ash here is the final effect of the annihilation. Even more, the author emphasizes that there is no more flesh or bone in the genocide.

In addition, Plath connects to her religious knowledge that is formulated in some analogues. In *Lady Lazarus* and *Mary's Song*, the author states her religious knowledge in thick description. It shows her Americanize thought influence her written discourse. Plath makes an analogy of Nazism with Lucifer, black devil as a figure of Hitler, and Lazarus as a victim.

According to Paulson, Lucifer is a demonic angel that fallen from heaven. He emphasizes that Isaiah makes Lucifer “bright star”, an angelic power with associated with its pride and arrogance (2007: 17). Related to Nazism, the figure of Lucifer in *Lady Lazarus* can represent Hitler. Her deep knowledge about religious Christianity becomes a fashion in describing Nazism as product of violence. It is a bias of the trial of Adolf Eichmann in murdering six millions Jews be televised in the first time in 1961 (Gill, 2008: 21).

Furthermore, the social condition of political circumstance in her nation also supports Plath's notion about Nazism in the text of the selected poems. In the period, April 20, 1962 (Hitler's birthday), National Socialist Movement is formed in UK. It is a movement of British Neo-Nazi. This movement also makes *Mein Kampf* as their ideological value ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National\\_Socialist\\_Movement\\_%28UK,\\_1962%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/National_Socialist_Movement_%28UK,_1962%29)). Through that political condition, Nazism's issue becomes popular issue in the period.

#### 4. Conclusion

The selected Sylvia Plath's poems constitute a construction of the Nazi regime which is crystallized in discursive poetry. The author makes a monument of the German past through the representation in the text of the poems. Because of a woman as the narrator in the poems, the portrait of Nazism tends to its brutality as the product of male's force. In Nazi period, woman has worse experience than man in the regime. Plath uses various representations to create its strong signification. In the selected poems, the author alerts to religious discourse, Biblical story, and myth. Finally, her selected poems culminate the diachronic history of Nazism.

In *Daddy*, plath mentions some attributes of Nazism; German language, Aryanism, swastika, *Mein Kampf*, concentration camps (Dachau, Auschwitz, Belsen), and Luftwaffe. Those symbols become a device to represent Nazism in broader circumstance. Hence, from those attributes, the author parallelizes toward the ultra-nationalism as the effect of the power of discourse in those attributes. Moreover, the effect of the ultra-nationalism itself, the annihilation of race

minorities is conducted. Moreover, Aryanism becomes racial pride to annihilate Jew as the main target. Through the poems, Plath explores the cruelty of Nazism with her sensitivity. Moreover, *Mary's Song* as the final poem of the sequence of the selected poems constructs moral values of Nazi's brutality with religious analogy. Those analogies are Lazarus, Lucifer, Mary and Christ. The construction of religion in the poems is in rich representation. Furthermore, the construction proves her Americanized thought in her belief. However, the discourse of Nazism embedded in the selected poems is not complete like the history of Nazism in German civilization. The author does not have direct experience with Nazism. She only mentions the discursive Nazism which she knows. She makes a metaphor of holocaust imagery for her father and her adulterous husband.

Inside the selected poems, Plath describes the position of a woman in patriarchal culture and how woman is defined in male dominated system. Nazism is a product of male's power and favored for man. The major references of the selected Plath's poems are the representation of biblical, historical, political, and personal experience. In *Daddy* and *Lady Lazarus*, she recognizes her body as object-text. The characteristics of the selected Plath's poems are the using of female body, some figures and colors as the key word of the poem's meaning. Through the context of Nazism, the author defines woman in male's force. Based on female tongue, Nazism is the greatest contemporary calamity in 20th century. The reference of Lazarus in *Lady Lazarus* as a symbolic figure signifies a woman beneath persecution. The figure is brought by the author to build a discourse about Nazism in female's perspective. The poem constructs Nazism through the victim of Nazi's persecution by figuring out Lazarus in Biblical story. In addition, *Mary's Song* recognizes the discourse of Nazism through holocaust imagery which is analogues with the Crucifixion of Christ.

Furthermore, the social politic condition in Plath's nation also supports the notion about Nazism's construction in the poems. In the period, Plath also often involves in discussion about Nazism. In overall, the selected poems is a device to reveal Plath's ideology that is anti-Nazi.

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