

THE PORTRAIT OF DYSTOPIA SOCIETY IN FLAWED NOVEL

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Abstract:

This study looks at how control and resistance are portrayed in Cecelia Abern's dystopian novel Flawed and how the main character reacts to it. The goal of this study is to examine the concepts of control and resistance as they are presented in the book Flawed. Michel Foucault's theory of power and knowledge was applied to this study. The descriptive qualitative approach was used to carry out this study. The researcher discovered sixteen data sets with resistance elements from Celestine as the main character and fourteen data sets with control aspects from the government. The research's conclusions demonstrate how the government exercises its authority and existence through various means of control, including prohibitions, surveillance, and retaliation against the Flawed (opponents). Contrary to this, Celestine's resistance as the major character demonstrates that she typically resists verbally rather than physically. Celestine chooses to rebel and resist this system of control, which inspires a resistance movement and gives hope to those who are suppressed. The resistance carried out by Celestine shows that the power and knowledge held by the government are not absolute.

Keywords: Control, Dystopia, Power, Resistance

Abstrak :

Studi ini melihat bagaimana kontrol dan perlawanan digambarkan dalam novel dystopian Cecelia Abern, Flawed dan bagaimana tokoh utama bereaksi terhadapnya. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengkaji konsep kontrol dan perlawanan seperti yang disajikan dalam buku Cacat. Teori kekuasaan dan pengetahuan Michel Foucault diterapkan pada penelitian ini. Pendekatan kualitatif deskriptif digunakan untuk melakukan penelitian ini. Peneliti menemukan enam belas set data dengan unsur perlawanan dari Celestine sebagai tokoh utama dan empat belas set data dengan aspek kontrol dari pemerintah. Kesimpulan penelitian menunjukkan bagaimana pemerintah menjalankan otoritas dan eksistensinya melalui berbagai cara kontrol, termasuk larangan, pengawasan, dan pembalasan terhadap Cacat (lawan). Berlawanan dengan ini, penolakan Celestine sebagai karakter utama menunjukkan bahwa dia biasanya menolak secara verbal daripada fisik. Celestine memilih untuk memberontak dan melawan sistem kontrol ini, yang mengilhami gerakan perlawanan dan memberi harapan bagi mereka yang tertindas. Perlawanan yang dilakukan Celestine menunjukkan bahwa kekuasaan dan ilmu yang dimiliki oleh pemerintah tidaklah mutlak.

Kata Kunci: Kontrol, Distopia, Kekuatan, Resistensi

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PENDAHULUAN

Dystopia literature that flourished during the nineteenth century began and developed primarily as a critical response and an antithesis to utopian fiction and showed utopia as having gone. It is believed that the word dystopia first appeared in English in the year 1747, spelled as dustopia. The following year, dystopia is spelled to describe "an unhappy country" (Claeys, 2016). Dystopia literature can be considered a "strategies of warning" since it compels its readers to consider what the future holds for future generations if our society's problems are not rectified (Gottlieb, 2001). Gottlieb argues further that dystopian literature projected the fears of its authors: that the society depicted in their works could become a reality if the flaws are not exposed, specifically totalitarian dictatorships such as those experienced in the historical reality of Eastern and Central Europe and the USSR respectively (Gottlieb, 2001). The genre's popularity extends from the Cold War, and the "dystopian turn" in literature was visible in the 1960s and certainly in the early twenty-first century when utopian writings were supplanted by dystopian texts (Marks et al., 2022). From many dystopia literatures that appears, it can explain the picture of dystopia literature and how the characters represent the true meaning of dystopia.

Novels are one of the types of dystopian literature that are beginning to surface in today's literary landscape. In several dystopian novels, the protagonists or main characters lose their identities. *Anthem* (1938), a book written by Ayn Rand, is an example of a dystopian novel. The individual has lost all of their distinctive qualities, such as name, the choice of work, partner, home, and even the ability to be alone. Everything that took place could not avoid the intervention of the dominating class, which held complete control over everything (Demerjian, 2016). Almost all dystopian literary works contain some form of totalitarianism, typically imposed by the authoritarian government depicted in the text. In some dystopian novels, more recent works include *The Hunger Games* (2012), *Divergent* (2014), and *The Maze Runner* (2009). They embody the concept that "these are works in which society is depicted in totalitarian extremes" since they depict such societal issues as corporation control, the reintroduction of diseases, and a worldwide struggle over natural resources (Campbell, 2019). Totalitarian government is a political concept in which there is usually social control and power. The concept that social control and power ultimately dominate and seek to uphold and regulate behavior, imagination, thought, and desires to allow for limited individualism is a prevalent theme in dystopian literature (Booker & Thomas, 2009). Dystopian literature depicts a totalitarian government that controls society and instills a great deal of fear among its citizens. The majority of dystopian novels center on various aspects of control as their central focus. Readers are frequently captivated by the excitement and amusement, to the point where they skim over the more profound issues of government control and restricted freedom. The authors of these novels observed that by focusing their societal critiques on more imaginative settings, dystopian literature provide new perspectives on problematic social and political activities that considered ordinary or perceived as natural and inevitable (Booker, 1994). The presence of a totalitarian government usually brings with it the presence of resistance from certain individuals.

As a form of literary work, the novel is used as a tool to clarify that totalitarian government, which is an inequality that appears as a dystopia phenomenon, exists clearly. Several novels that exemplify this inequality are the novel entitled *Flawed*. *Flawed* is a dystopian novel about a fictional city named Humming that has a committee called a Guild where the committee is tasked with investigating society for wrongdoing and monitoring individuals accused of being flawed. The Guild was formed with the aim of having a morally and ethically flawless society. Every individual who has made moral or ethical mistakes in society will get a flawed label, and their body will be given a mark or stamp that will be permanent. This novel will focus on the life of a 17 years old girl named Celestine North, who had a perfect life until she finally made an instinctive decision that earned her being labeled as flawed. Celestine fights against the power of the government that punishes the people for violating the Guild rules. The forms of resistance and inequality in society

are depicted in these novels in a manner that is extremely real and can be experienced, and this is one of the representations of the society that exists in reality today. While power relations exist everywhere, relations or states of domination are a social group's consolidation of power. When domination exists at the societal level, reversal is only possible through revolution or collective resistance (Foucault, 1982).

Based on the description above, this research focuses on the resistance of the main character in Flawed novel to the control of the totalitarian government by applying the theory of power and knowledge established by French philosopher Michel Foucault. Foucault argued that the connection between power and knowledge was extremely intimate, he used the term "power and knowledge" to emphasize how inextricably linked the two concepts are (Foucault, 1980). Foucault states that power can come from anywhere because of one's knowledge. The use of power takes place because of a person's choice to rule or be controlled. Power derives from the accumulation of knowledge that an observer achieves through the process of observing actions, and knowledge and power are complementary. According to Foucault, "by their union and generalization, they have reached a level where the development of knowledge and the rise of power often assist each other in the cyclical process" (Foucault 1977). As a result, the ideas or theories that Michel Foucault developed on power and knowledge are relevant to be used in this research. In addition, Foucault's interpretation of the British philosopher Jeremy Bentham's Panopticon will contribute to an understanding of surveillance. Panopticon is one of the regulating modes of power that Foucault identifies and describes. Jeremy Bentham, in the middle of the nineteenth century, conceptualized the panopticon as an architectural setting. The use of violent measures and dungeons was discontinued and replaced with observation and surveillance. The Panopticon is a contraption for dissociating the see or being seen dyad: in the ring, one is entirely seen (Julius, 1831). The design for this prison called for a central guard tower, and the cells for the prisoners were to be arranged all around it. The walls of the cells that faced the guard tower to be made of transparent material so that the prisoners could always be seen by the guards. The structure to be put up in such a way that the guards would not be visible at any time, despite the fact that the prisoners would always be visible. This would ensure that the prisoners were never sure whether or not they were being watched. Those who are in the cells must therefore keep a close eye on their own behavior presumably in order to fulfill the expectations of the guards, if they were observing (McLaren, 2002).

Some writers have conducted the research about control and resistance in some dystopian novel. The first is, "Control and Resistance in Dystopian Society in Lois Lowry's *The Giver* (1993)", conducted by Sarah and Toufik (2021). The research analyzes the novel with the theories of panopticism, postmodernism, and dystopia in order to understand how the Elderly gain power and project it over the entire society. The researcher investigates how the government employs disciplinary restraint to abuse the body and mind of the individual. And investigates how dystopian citizens liberate themselves from control and resist the authority's oppression. The next previous study is "Hierarchy of Needs Analysis of the Main Character of a Novel Entitled *Flawed* by Cecelia Ahern" conducted by Fiana and Devi (2020). This research aims to find out what are the hierarchy of needs that have been fulfilled by the main character and how the main character fulfilled the hierarchy of needs. This research analyzes the levels of needs that the main character obtained using Maslow's hierarchy of needs theory such as physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging needs, self-esteem, and self-actualization. The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative research method is a procedure for doing research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). The data source used in this research is *Flawed* novel by Cecelia Ahern. The data in this research are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogue that describe control and resistance. Data collection was done by reading, note-taking, identifying,

and classifying the data. The data were analyzed by describing, interpreting, analyzing, and concluding the data findings based on the research questions.

The researcher chose this topic because the researcher will highlight that government control in the novel is very closely related to real society. Through the novel *Flawed*, which describes control and resistance, the researcher will see the correlation of power and knowledge as a tool to overthrow the ruling government in the novel. Celestine, as the main character in the novel, seems to show that a society that the government already controls will find it difficult to resist if knowledge is not associated with power itself.

METODOLOGI PENELITIAN

The method used in this research is a qualitative descriptive method. A qualitative research method is a procedure for doing research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words from people and observable behavior (Bogdan and Taylor, 1975). The data source used in this research is *Flawed* novel by Cecelia Ahern. The data in this research are in the form of words, phrases, sentences, and dialogue that describe control and resistance. Data collection was done by reading, note-taking, identifying, and classifying the data. The data were analyzed by describing, interpreting, analyzing, and concluding the data findings based on the research questions.

PEMBAHASAN

Control and Resistance Portrayed in *Flawed* Novel

This chapter presents the study that consists of two main findings. The researcher will analyze how the control exercised by the Guild, which is part of the government, affects the main character's life and how Celestine carries out the resistance as the main character in this novel. The researcher uses the theory of power and knowledge by Michel Foucault to elaborate on how control and resistance are applied in *Flawed* novel. Control from the government shows that there are forms of control in the form of restrictions, surveillance, and punishment for the *Flawed*. Meanwhile, Celestine's resistance as the main character shows that her form of resistance is not through physical resistance but tends to be verbal resistance.

Government Controls in the Novel

Dystopia is a type of narrative fiction depicting a society controlled by an authoritarian, oppressive, and frequently unjust system. In *Flawed* novel by Cecelia Ahern, society is controlled by a totalitarian government and committee. This dystopia is depicted through a society where individuals can be labeled "Flawed" if they are deemed to have violated the morals and ethics set by the government. Each individual must adhere to highly stringent rules, and the punishment for violating these rules is severe. *Flawed* novel depicts a dystopian society in which the government and committee called the Guild have complete control over every aspect of the life of the people there. As indicated below, several forms of control were discovered in the form of restrictions, surveillance, and punishment. Being labeled as *Flawed* in the novel results in a variety of restrictions, the most significant of which is that the individual is prohibited from engaging in certain activities. As a result of the rules that restrict their movements, it is unavoidable that they become isolated from society.

“There are two seats for the *Flawed* on the bus, because rules state that three or more *Flawed* are not allowed to gather together at any one time. It's to prevent the riots that broke out when the *Flawed* punishments were introduced”. (Ahern, 45).

The quote above indicates that the Guild exercises control. A form of control that the Guild uses to limit the movement of *Flawed* is the regulation that there are only two seats for

Flawed and that three or more Flawed are not allowed to gather together at any one time to prevent rioting. In this case, the Guild employs controls to restrict the actions of the Flawed to prevent them from organizing a resistance movement in response to the punishments that are meted out to the Flawed. This can be seen in the sentence "Rules state that three or more Flawed are not allowed to gather together at any one time." The use of power and knowledge by the Guild to regulate and control the Flawed in society is shown in their ability to set limits on the number of Flawed who are permitted to gather.

According to Foucault, knowledge is power, and power institutions utilize knowledge about the Flawed and the potential for riots that occur to maintain control and social order. The restrictions imposed by the Guild created the required surveillance and discipline to separate the Flawed and prevent them from forming groups that could threaten the authority and order.

The novel shows that there is control from the government in the form of surveillance. The panopticon theory of Michel Foucault describes a form of control based on invisible control. The Panopticon is a contraption for dissociating the see or being seen dyad: in the ring, one is entirely seen (Julius, 1831). Jeremy Bentham, in the middle of the nineteenth century, conceptualized the panopticon as an architectural setting. The use of violent measures and dungeons was discontinued and replaced with observation and surveillance. The concept is illustrated by the prison structure, which places the prisoner in the center of a watchtower so that the guards can observe every movement the prisoner makes without them being aware of it.

On Naming Day, the judges decide whether the accused are Flawed. If so, their flaws are publicly named and their skin is seared with the F brand in one of five places. The branding location depends on the error of their judgment.

For bad decisions, it's their temple.

For lying, it's their tongue.

For stealing from society, it's their right palm.

For disloyalty to the Guild, it's their chest, over their heart.

For stepping out of line with society, it's the sole of their right foot.

In the quote above, the Guild has the authority to determine whether or not a person is Flawed. This demonstrates the Guild's power over the fate of the person being tried. When labeled Flawed, people are given an F brand on their skin as a measure of control and identification. In the eyes of the community, their position as Flawed will be recorded and restricted as a result of this action. This can be seen in the sentence, "their skin is seared with the F brand in one of five places." Furthermore, the placement of the F brand on the body is determined by the mistake they made. The placement is decided by the type of violation they committed and served as a symbol or marker showing the violation they made. This control system uses brands to ensure the Flawed adherence to Guild regulations and to limit their freedom.

According to Foucault, power relations are not hierarchical structural relations, which presuppose there are those who control and those who are controlled. Instead, power relations are directly tied to knowledge and have a tight connection to it (Foucault, 1978). The fact that the body was branded with the F brand indicates control efforts. This action aims to curb individuals who are deemed to have violated existing authority. Individuals considered Flawed are controlled and identified as potentially dangerous or breaking the rules by placing an F brand on the body. This action also reflects the power of knowledge. The Guild has knowledge of what it considers to be faults or weaknesses, and this knowledge is used to govern and control individuals. The branding of the bodies becomes a means of control and knowledge used by the authorities to maintain and strengthen existing rules. The Panopticon concept is reflected in Celestine's character, who always feels watched and afraid of making mistakes, even in personal situations that are very important to

her. In this regard, Flawed Novel can be seen as an example of the Panopticon structure emphasized by Foucault, where individuals constantly feel watched and are afraid of breaking the rules, thus creating an effective form of social control. The Guild has the authority to impose an appropriate punishment on an individual in a situation where an individual labeled as Flawed is discovered to have violated the rules.

Mary May is having none of it. "For a total of one week, starting Monday, you will be under house arrest. You cannot leave this house after school hours." She signs a form, leaves it on top of the newspaper, and leaves. (Ahern, 216).

The form of control in the quote is the use of the punishment or sanction given by Mary May to Celestine, the house arrest for one week after seeing a photo of a violation of the Flawed rule by Celestine. This can be seen in the sentence, "For a total of one week, starting Monday, you will be under house arrest." This punishment is intended to control or limit Celestine's freedom due to her breaking the rules. Mary May played a part in the knowledge and authority of the situation. In this case, Mary May's knowledge of applicable rules and procedures gave her the authority to impose controls, restrictions, and punishment on Celestine.

Resistance by Main Character

The control exercised by the government in Flawed novel resulted in resistance from Celestine. Foucault explains that this resistance occurs as a form of resistance or reaction to existing power (Foucault, 1980). Celestine resisted the power and control of the government over society. As a teenager who is considered "perfect" in the eyes of society, Celestine becomes a Flawed after committing an act that is considered to be against the rules. Here are some of Celestine's resistances in Flawed novel:

"Don't," he says firmly.

"Ow!" I try to move, but instead his grip feels like a red-hot iron. "You're hurting me."

"And do you think when they sear your skin it won't hurt more than this?" He squeezes tighter.

"Art, stop! Ouch!" I feel my skin burning.

He stops. "How is this fair?" I hiss. (Ahern, 53)

The beginning of Celestine's act of resistance can be seen in Flawed novel, where Celestine knows the rules set by the Guild that it is not permissible to aid a Flawed, but she violates this. The quote shows the forms of resistance that occur when Celestine attempts to help a Flawed older man, despite this action violating the existing rules. The rules state that the public is not permitted to aid the Flawed in any way. The older man was Flawed, and he could not find a seat where he could sit. The Flawed chair that he should have been able to sit on was occupied by two women who were not Flawed, so he finally stood up, holding onto a pole to stand straight. Celestine, who heard and saw the older man, quickly got up from her seat to help the older man because she felt that it was all unfair, even though her boyfriend had prevented her. Celestine said the statement "How is this fair?" to show the injustice of people who did not help and ignored the Flawed old man. She sees injustice in a system that punishes people without mercy. Celestine was well aware that her actions could have terrible consequences for her.

According to Foucault, control exercised by power can gain resistance from individuals. Celestine raised questions about the injustice. She felt that these actions were unfair and voiced her disapproval of the justification of the Guild's power. Resistance to control also involves individual awareness of injustice. Hence, the presence of this consciousness of Celestine becomes an incentive for resistance and disclosure of injustices to her and the older man she helped. Foucault argues that

power and knowledge are always closely related and influence each other (Foucault, 1977). Using her knowledge of the injustices from power, Celestine feels that the Guild's rules against aiding the Flawed are unfair and unreasonable.

He wants me to call out, to repent. I don't (Ahern, 138).

Based on the quote above, Celestine put up a fight in the form of refusing Crevan's order to correct her words during the trial. Even though she would be met with the injustice of having new tires rolled down her spine, Celestine still refused to do so. This shows that she will not want to be forced or persuaded by Crevan into doing something she deems illogical. Thus she maintains her right and freedom to make her own decisions. Celestine demonstrates an awareness of the attempts of forces to control her thoughts and behavior by using knowledge to suppress and force desired actions. Celestine took a position of resistance and refused to submit to knowledge imposed by power by using her knowledge of what she truly believed.

SIMPULAN

Based on the analysis of control and resistance in the novel *Flawed* by Cecelia Ahern using the theory of power and knowledge from Michel Foucault, it can be concluded that in *Flawed* novel there are various forms of control exercised by the government over individuals who are considered "Flawed." This form of control includes surveillance, restrictions, and punishments given to individuals who are considered to have violated the rules or who are considered to have violated the perfect standards. The government in *Flawed* novel has the power to determine the perfect standards that society must obey and punish those who violate them. Individuals who violate these standards are people to be shunned by the rest of society and will accept many rules in their lives. The use of power by the government has a significant impact on the society it controls. This is reflected in the main character, Celestine, who experiences intense oppression and control because she is deemed flawed.

In *Flawed* novel, it is shown that there is resistance from Celestine, who is the main character. Celestine chooses to rebel and resist this system of control, which inspires a resistance movement and gives hope to those who are suppressed. The resistance carried out by Celestine shows that the power and knowledge held by the government are not absolute. Individuals considered "Flawed" also have the power to fight and change systems that are detrimental to them by using their knowledge to produce power for each individual. By using Foucault's Power and Knowledge theory, power can be generated through knowledge, such as legal provisions in society. Where this power exists, there will be resistance from certain individuals or groups fighting for their rights.

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