

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

The Other Boleyn Girl is a historical fiction which was published in 2002 based on the life of 16th century aristocrat, Mary Boleyn. History pictures her as one of the Mistresses of Henry VIII and the maternal aunt of Queen Elizabeth I of England. The Mary Boleyn in the novel has the same role with the Mary Boleyn from the 16th Century. In addition, both the real person and the character in the novel share the same fate of being overshadowed by their sister, Anne Boleyn, hence people tend to forget about them. In the novel, the story begins with Mary Boleyn in her 14, already marries to William Carey for two years, but unintentionally receives King Henry VIII's attention; hence it opens the curtain to the complicated and problematic relations in the court and the horrid tension of deadly rivalry between families to win the heart of the most powerful man in England. Since people mostly remember Anne Boleyn more than Mary Boleyn, then it must be very interesting for this old tale of love and betrayal to be adapted into a new story with historical fiction genre. Historical fiction itself

features fictionalized or dramatized accounts of actual historical figures, events, or places. These books are typically set in a specific historical time period or location, and may include real historical figures as either primary or secondary characters. ("Historical Fiction", paragraph 1)

Historical fiction is worth discussing since it presents a story which takes place during a certain significant period in the past, only with different perspective. Moreover, some parts of the real story are altered in accordance with the author's will in remaking the already-known story into a new one, added with some essence of contemporary topic. Historical fiction often uses a real character from the past to tell the tale. In *The Other Boleyn Girl*, the point of view of the narrator is of Mary Boleyn's. The different perspective opens up our chances to take a close watch of the same event through another set of eyes whose owner is supposedly not appear to be of much importance or at least less important than the actual main character of the real version of the story. Furthermore, when we hear

the term historical fiction, usually we will suddenly think of some exotic place in a faraway land, with men in tailcoat or knights in shining armor and women in heavy but colorful dress, playing the roles of men and women with politic and love matters to handle. That image is not wrong since most historical fictions appear to be that way. However, there is more beneath the exotic setting and extravagant characters of historical fiction that the author actually wants to say.

The artist had no other intention than to give expression to his own (contemporary) attitudes and a subjective (but in no sense historical) view of the world, and to do so in a way that these could be perceived directly by the reader. Whenever he chose to use historical wrappings, it was for the purpose of elevating the subject out of the personal and private realm in order to set it on a platform and achieve a degree of distance. ... it is surely for the sake of improving our perspective according to the principle that it is easier to recognize the shape of a mountain range from a distance than when you are in the midst of the mountains themselves. (“The Purpose of the Historical Novel”, paragraph 4).

To put it simply, by wrapping the story in historical setting the author wants to present his/her idea through an event in the past from which his/her idea will obviously stand out. Hopefully it can be understood easily by the readers who are not part of the events as the story unfolds but can grasp the meaning simply from reading it without the need of taking part in it themselves. Thus, it is intriguing to know what kind of idea that the author of this novel wants to present to the readers, especially using some well-known and charismatic characters from 16th Century of England. The more intriguing matter is whether that idea truly reflects the present or not. Hence, historical fiction is really worthy to be analyzed. Furthermore, the writer of *The Other Boleyn Girl* is Philippa Gregory who is the bestselling author of several novels.

Philippa Gregory as the author of *The Other Boleyn Girl* was intrigued by the story of Anne Boleyn's little sister, Mary Boleyn, who has apparently been forgotten by history because she lacks political importance and overshadowed by the impact of her sister. Gregory's format of putting Mary Boleyn into the center of attention is her uniqueness. Gregory is fascinated by Mary's story and wants to

write a story about her and it resulted on *The Other Boleyn Girl* which is the most successful of her novels. This novel has a huge number of fans who are not only interested in the novel itself but also in the Tudor era. *The Other Boleyn Girl* won the Parker Romantic Novel of the Year and it has subsequently produced some sequels namely *The Queen's Fool*, *The Virgin's Lover*, *The Constant Princess*, *The Boleyn Inheritance*, and *The Other Queen*. Moreover,

Miramax bought the film rights to *The Other Boleyn Girl* and produced a film of the same name starring Scarlett Johansson as Mary Boleyn and co-starring Natalie Portman as Anne Boleyn, Eric Bana as Henry Tudor, Juno Temple as Jane Parker, and Kristin Scott Thomas as Elizabeth Boleyn. It was filmed in England and generally released in February 2008. (“Philippa Gregory”, paragraph 4)

The movie is actually the second production of the novel. The first one was a BBC television drama in January 2003, starring Natascha McElhone as Mary and Jodhi May as Anne.

The Other Boleyn Girl portrays the Boleyn-Howard family in a way that has not often been seen in fiction. Inspired by the life of Mary Boleyn, Philippa Gregory depicts the divorce of one of the most significant royal marriages in English history (that of King Henry VIII and Katherine of Aragon) and the seemingly never ending struggle to meet the end of the great need of a male heir to the throne. All the characters are real but the plot is the altered version. To see the same person takes different role of a twisted real story is fascinating and worthy to be analyzed. In fact, Mary was less popular than Anne, and she still is, yet Gregory takes her, of all people, as the main character in her novel and twists the story so that the readers have the point of view of Mary Boleyn. Gregory’s decision leads me to the different side of an aristocrat girl who strives to win the heart of the most powerful man in the world and comes head on with her one and only sister, the ambitious and charismatic Anne Boleyn. The bad news is Anne is not the only hindrance that Mary gets, for she has to cope with her parents’ demands and plays submissive all the time for she is a woman and woman has no say in family matter, let alone objects to do as she is told. In this novel, as a child Mary, Anne, and George have to live their life based on their parents’ will. They

will marry if their parents say so, they act the way their parents have taught them, they will do as they are told to, and they must look happy while doing it. However, in some parts of this novel the parents and the children actually work together in the scheme. Indeed, the parents rule over their children but, surprisingly, the vice versa also happens, that children are also able to overpower their parents with hints of, using Foucault's terminology, power relations here and there. When someone demands another to act accordingly, it indicates that, to some extent, that someone needs the other's help or needs something to be done that only the other can do. This is what happens with the parents and the children in *The Other Boleyn Girl*. At one time the parents demand their children to do something and then, in return, the children demand their parents to do another thing. Thus, the parents-children relationship between the Boleyn siblings and their parents creates power relations. This kind of relationship is unique in terms of the ones involve in the relationship which are the parents and the children for common belief says that usually it is the parents who claim the superior position for all the time, not both or the children only.

Based on that unique phenomenon in *The Other Boleyn Girl*, I come up with the issue of the power of children. Power itself, according to Chris Barker, is "conceptualized as a force by which individuals or groups are able to achieve their aims or interests over and against the will of others" (Barker 162). Moreover, Foucault says that "power is also productive and enabling (power to), circulating through all levels of society and within all social relationship" (Barker 162). It means that children might have some power in them that enables them to counter or back talk their parents. Related to the topic at hand, the issue of power of children is against the popular belief that parents are the almighty ones while the children have no other choices but to obey since the act of trying, even just trying, to bend the parents' law and teaching would be considered as disobedience. Through *The Other Boleyn Girl*, it seems that the children are used as mere tools or means to gain a promising future by their parents. In this case, the idea of the importance of having children is no longer pure, not because children are gifts God bestowed on parents to be cared for, since parents only desire children with valuable exchange value. A child is considered valuable if the child is able to give

something to return the favor to his or her parents or simply put if the child can be exploited to achieve something. For example Anne Boleyn and Henry VIII need a child and the child must be a male child to be the heir of the throne. Hence, ensuing the post of the Tudor (Henry VIII's lineage) and the Boleyn-Howard (Anne Boleyn's lineage) in the court, for what comes from being in the court is prosperity. However, from the example, I feel that somehow the children have power that their parents do not have because in parents-children relationship, power does not only belong to the parents but also to the children. It means that the parents depend on their seemingly powerless children and the children are able to do things their way without their parents' approval. Thus, I say that the power of parents is doubtful based on the power relation that happens in the novel in a sense that the seemingly powerful parents actually depend on their children to reach their goals.

1.2. Statement of the Problems

I am curious to know how power relations within filial relationship happen in the novel. Viewed from Foucauldian perspective, 'power relations' is not hierarchical in that children may be more powerful than their parents.

1.3. Purpose of the Study

My purpose is to find out the way power relations within filial relationship happen in the novel to prove that children may be more powerful than their parents.

1.4. Significance of the Study

Through *The Other Boleyn Girl*, parents are seen as the figures of power, ones who decide on things and leave no room for arguments, let alone disagreement from their children. The whole family members will join forces when it comes to expanding the family fortune, but the children's freedom and happiness always come second after the future of the family. It always comes to the parents' decision to decide on anything regarding their children and the future of the family. However, contrary to popular belief that parents are the one who

hold power over their children, I would like to show that actually the reverse also happens in this novel. The parents in this novel put up a solid front by the name of parents' power over children while lecturing and commanding their children, but in fact when I look deeper and read between the lines the children have an important role on whether their parents' lecture and command turn out to be fruitless or blooming with passion. Fruitless if the children somehow disobey their parents and got derailed by their own personal desires, or blooming if the children simply nod their heads and do their job as a devoted child with passion. Parents may decide, demand one thing after another, even force their children to do things they hate, but actually it is the children who do the task, not the parents themselves. Parents may let their desire soars, but the desire will be nothing but a mere desire unless the children struggle to make it into reality while the parents only watch from the sideline and be selfish by playing safe all the time. Owing to the fact that the parents entrust their future in the palm of their children, hence, children own a significant role in deciding their parents' future that will lead into two different endings, heavenly living or miserable end in a guillotine. Heavenly living for the whole family if the children succeed, heads rolling down the guillotine if the children fail, or should I say a do or die bet for the whole family. Once the children fail, they will drag the parents down with them with almost non-existence chance of crawling upward again because the life at court is cruel and unforgiving, a single mistake could be one's doom. This is the hint of the power relation and might be the perfect material to prove the power of children.

This kind of the common relation between parents and children also happens in the society today, including in Indonesia. The concept of power between parents and children is always in vertical line, hierarchical, with the powerful one on top where the parents are and the powerless, that is for the children, on the bottom, not the vice versa. That is all changed when I read this novel because the vice versa does happen and it is possible in the novel. Thus, related to the genre of this novel that is historical fiction, the anomaly of the practice of power between parents and children in this novel might be what Gregory wants to convey implicitly to her readers; hence such anomaly catches my attention to analyze and to prove it that it is time for children to tell their

parents to get down off their high horse and admit that children are of equal and sometimes higher power than their parents since, according to Foucault, power is not hierarchical. There are power struggles happen in everyday life of every people, the ups and downs of one's power is possible and unpredicted for power is not entirely in the possession of one person only. This is why analyzing the power relation in the novel is significant to prove the anomaly of parents-children relationship and the power struggles that happen as a means to take oneself into the top of the hierarchy of power in both filial and political relationships.

1.5. Theoretical Framework

I am going to use Foucault's theory of power that will be my main theory to analyze power relation in this novel and the outcome of the analysis will decide which one is the more powerful one, the parents or the children. As the supporting theory, I am going to use the concepts of female body and female's roles in the society. These concepts will be used to analyze how female children cope up with the society's demand as well as the way power relations work within the inferior beings namely children and female.

1.5.1. Theory of Power Relations

People used to think of power as a hierarchical matter, those who stand at the top has power over the rest which is at the bottom part of the hierarchy. However, such common view is the total opposite of Michel Foucault's theory of power known as power relation. According to Foucault, power "needs to be considered as a productive network which runs through the whole social body, much more than a negative instance whose function is repression" (Gordon 119). It is a mass of information that power truly needs instead of science or something theoretical and the information strategic position will make the information itself available to be exploited (75). In order for people to make use of power effectively, people have to gain access to several things namely the bodies of individual, to their acts, attitudes, and modes of everyday behavior (125). "Power is not an institution, a structure, or a certain force with which complex people are endowed; it is the name given to a complex strategic relation in a given society"

(236). Hence, “every relation of force implies at each moment a relation of power” (189). Moreover, the analysis of power-mechanisms “has no built-in tendency to show power being at once anonymous and always victorious” since power-mechanisms is more about the way of establishing “the positions occupied and modes of actions used by each of the forces at work, the possibilities of resistance and counter-attack on either side” (163-164).

Power strategy needs a certain kind of maneuver for power does not only need to maintain itself but also to accentuate, stabilize, and broaden itself (206). The way power works is not always in offensive; it can retreat, re-organize its forces, and even invest itself in somewhere else so that the battle continues (56). It is also more efficient to put people under surveillance rather than to subject them to exemplary punishment (38). In reality, power in its exercise goes through ambiguous channel because “each individual has at his disposal a certain power” (72). Thus, there is no power which is wholly the possession of an individual only so that he can use it totally on others (156). In the exercise of power, “the individual is not a pre-given entity”, with the individual’s identity and characteristics it becomes “the product of a relation of power exercised over bodies, multiplicities, movements, desires, forces.” It results in a problem of a conflict that occurs between regional identity and national identity (74). In addition to the conflict between identities,

the great strategies of power encrust themselves and depend for their conditions of exercise on the level of the micro-relations of power. But there is always also movements in the opposite direction, whereby strategies which co-ordinate relations of power produce new effects and advance into hitherto unaffected domains (199-200).

Resistance happens and causes people to plan on another strategy to counter it for the sake of continuing one’s reign of power.

Briefly said, the theory of power relations suggests that power is something productive that every people possess, hence it is possible for some power to clash with each other because of the different interests. Power is not hierarchical meaning that every people need others to be the object of power in order to make use of his power. The need of others as the object of power means

that power is not the wholly possession of one person only and that other people might resist or even battle to overpower one another in order to bring as many advantage as possible to his side. The battle of power happens by strategically using one's power to diminish other's. People might opt to aggressively use their power or choose the less imposing method. There are various methods as to how, manifesting or retreating one's power are two of the possible methods.

I will use Foucault's theory of power relations to answer the statement of the problem by analyzing how the relation of force between the parents and the children happens within filial relationship. Because the theory says that power is not hierarchical, I will apply the theory to analyze the filial relationship in this novel in order to find out whether the one on the top and the one on the bottom truly need each other. The theory saying that power needs strategy to maneuver will help me to find out the ups and downs of the parents and the children's powers because power resides within every single person and may cause some resistance. The resistance will be analyzed for the purpose of discovering the manifestation of the children's powers which are used by the children to rebel againsts their parents. Moreover, when the theory states that every individual possesses a certain power, added with the fact that the children rebel againsts the parents in the novel, I will prove that children may be more powerful than their parents in a sense that they are able to break away from their parents' control.

1.5.2. Concepts of Female Body

As I have mentioned previously, to support the Foucauldian theory of power I will use the concepts of female body and the role of women. Firstly, I will explain the meaning of female body. What I mean by female body here is not in its biological description that according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary female is "belonging or relating to women, or the sex that can give birth to young and produce eggs" while body is "the whole physical structure that forms a person or an animal". Here, female body is "a passive site that is fought over by its inhabitant, the woman's male keepers (partner, doctor, etc), and, of course, the various ideologies of patriarchy" (Pearce 128).

In accordance with the role of female as daughters in a society, “daughters have a certain intrinsic value in that we represent the reproducers of the next generation. If there is to be a future generation, women must be raised to produce it” (Helly 220) or in other words one of women’s roles in the society related to their roles as daughter is to be the offspring bearer. Women in the past and in all cultures have usually realized that female reproductive powers are important to women as a source of “adult status, respectability, bargaining counters, and economic insurance, at the same time that they constitute possible limitations on autonomy, health, and life itself” (197). When old age brings loss of economic security, just like what happens with Katherine of Aragon in the novel, children are an insurance policy. Moreover, “when status in a husband’s family depends on the production of sons and heirs, achieving that goal is central to survival” (197). The importance of a male heir constitutes as a must as well as an anxiety for Henry VIII for he is a king and a king needs an heir to replace him. This is why Henry VIII has many mistresses though still legally married to Katherine of Aragon and beds them one after another to have an heir as if his life depended on it.

Furthermore, in accordance with the role of female as the offspring bearer, “where inheritance through male line is practiced, marriage legitimates a wife’s children’s claim to their father’s property, titles, rights, and group membership” (247). However, when asked about the importance of man’s presence to help woman rear her child, it depends on the circumstances. “If society denies women the kind of jobs which pay enough to enable women to support themselves and their children, or if society denies women the training and education women need to obtain such jobs, a woman may as well need a husband” (247-248). This is what happens in the novel, where women are dependent upon their husbands. Traditionally, “men could divorce women for barrenness; women who depended on husbands for economic support and protection had no choice but to try to become mothers” (302). However, not only that women are sometimes forced to, or obligated to become mothers, and for the most part, to bear children if they can, the extent to which women have control over their children once they were born is quite variable, patriarchal societies have viewed children legally as

well as by custom as the ‘possession’ of their father and his kin group, and these relatives have determined how children should be raised, taught, married, and employed. Often this kin group was not formally obligated to consult or even inform the children’s mother about decision that has been made for them (303).

When worse comes to worst, women are always on the losing side. After losing their womanhoods, they may lose their children too. Such powerless condition but still able to put up a fight as can be seen from the female characters in the novel is intriguing to be analyzed.

Firstly, I will use the concepts of female body by stating that daughters have a certain intrinsic value which is the producers of the next generation to analyze how the female children’s reproductive ability is exploited by the parents to gain power. Since the female children are treated as commodity, it means that their sexuality is exploited, so does their reproductive ability. From the word “value” I can see that on one hand the female children have power over something valuable that is possible to be exploited by the parents. On the other hand, “value” has a positive connotation, so if someone uses the “value” he somehow depends on the “value” since it is a needed and important aspect. Hence, there is a hint that might lead to the findings of the parents dependency on their female children’s value that is the producers of the next generation. Secondly, because marriages legitimize a child’s claim to his father’s property, I will use this theory to find out that the unborn ‘male’ children and Henry Carey are exploited but still powerful nonetheless.

1.6. Organization of the Study

The next three chapters which are chapter two, chapter three, and chapter four will cover the analysis of my thesis. Chapter two consists of the analysis of the parents’ power over their children and how the parents subdues the children under their regime, especially the female children¹. In chapter three, I will analyze how the female children are exploited as the after effect of the patriarchal society that is explained in chapter two. At the end of chapter three, I will reveal the way

¹ Mary Boleyn and Anne Boleyn.

the female children rebel against their parents and the society and turn the tide into their own favour. In chapter four that will be the last chapter of my analysis, I will discuss how the male children's power will bring more power for both themselves and their parents. Just like with the female children, the male will also rebel against his parents but only George who partakes in the rebellion². In chapter five, I will elaborate the significance of the study and state the summary of my analysis.

² The reason will be explained in chapter 4.