



Intersectionality of Race and Gender in “Harry Potter: The Deathly Hallows”

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Abstract

The term “intersectionality” appears back in the day of oppressing still incurred upon black women, the condition that has been spoken up for hundreds of year but never come to an end. Kimberlé Crenshaw as an advocate of American civil right for black women is voicing her thought regarding the intersection of race and gender from the clashes in treatment upon black women among the society. The theory of intersectionality questions the power of black women that is in bare minimum, likely none, in opposite to the power of white men as the highest in the society. Thus, the theory is used to analyze the intersections of human being in the term of race, gender, and sex as well. This research found the intersectionality of race and gender from the perspective of Crenshaw over the characters in the novel “Harry Potter and The Deathly Hallows” written by J.K. Rowling. The findings show the intersections of human and non-human creatures appeared in the novel along the terms of wizarding world of Harry Potter.

Keywords: Intersectionality, Race, Gender, Harry Potter.

Introduction

Feminist movement is swiftly spreading and developing as global trend, especially in third world countries. This European-rooted supporting woman movement however is equally loud in developing countries that have been accepted and implemented human rights law, because after all, the gender issue seems to be imperishable as long as conventional patriarchal ideology is still people’s everyday life.

Not only the issue of patriarchal point of view or problems referring to patrilineal customary law, the era of colonialism too arising new problems that not only differentiated the degrees of men and women, but also penetrated into racial differences characterized by skin color, physical form, and knowledge. When European countries began to expand

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to other continents of the world, slavery emerged. This is the main root of racial problems in the world that persists to this day. But the example isn't that far. Within the European community itself, especially the monarchical countries, the analogy of racial division is seen in the division of social class. A group of people with one genealogy become different in social status due to the factors of economic and power.

From the point of view of Marxism, economy as one of social institutions is dominating and determining the society. The institution is called superstructure, including political systems, family, beliefs, religion, and education (Macionis, 2017). Moreover, Foucault as cited by Deacon (1998) states that power becomes one with all form of social relation including gender, sexuality, and knowledge. Thus, the social issues revolving around race and gender can be arised from the problem of economy, power, and education. However, the intersectionality idea between group of people in society is happened around the issue of gender, where black men can get a better life and position than white woman only because they are men (Crenshaw, 2017). Reskin (2012) stated that discrimination refers to different actions towards members of certain group of people whether the actions are intentional or automatically happened, as well as the different way of interaction with no reasons. Racial discrimination is then become one of the worst, as what happened in USA in case of education. When formal education becomes the basic knowledge and skills, it unfortunately not opens for all citizen of USA. It is related to the assumption of the intellectuality of black people in which white people use theirs as the standard, and assume that black people as having no or low intellectual so that they can't think or work to meet the standard (Rahmawati, Karsa Sunaryono, & Utami, 2021). From the condition can be assumed that the intersectionality is build-up from the discrimination happened toward women in the term of gender, and toward the black people in the term of race.

With the complexity of social problems that are actually raised by groups of people who claim to be the most civilized groups exist, criticisms and movements that demand equal rights and status emerge. One of them is the feminist movement that is started at the end of the 18th century. Until now, the development of feminism is no longer to just wanting women to get the same rights as men. Started from the conventional movement, groups of people who also want complete freedom for women in any case were emerged, as well as the desire to positioning all races in the world in equality.

Feminism was then not only raised through the thoughts or activities of feminist movements. When art and literature began to develop and gain a place in society, these two things soon became the instruments for voicing critics, thoughts, expectations, and visions with various purposes. Literature and art are media which considered capable to reach even the lowest levels of society. Thus, various works that put forward feminism contents later appeared. This paper will prioritize in analyzing literary works as the instrument for voicing feminist criticism.

One of the interesting literary works to be discussed from feminism point of view is Harry Potter, a saga that is nuanced with gender and race issues. This novel has seven volumes, tells the story of wizardry life that live side by side with non-magical humans, by hiding their wizard identities. Harry Potter is the main character in this saga, a young wizard who started his adventure at Hogwarts (Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry) when he was 11 years old, until he finishes his adventure –he unfortunately did not pass his education– at the age of 17. Harry Potter and his two best friends, Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley, spend their seven years at Hogwarts filled with adventure and struggle. Not only fight against the dark forces, they also fight for the equal rights of the living not only humans but also other magical creatures. Therefore, the Harry Potter saga is very appropriate to be analyzed from the point of view of feminist theory, particularly with theory of intersectionality which primarily criticizes the oppression and division of women in terms of their race and gender as women.

This paper will analyze the last part of Harry Potter saga “The Deathly Hallows”. This seventh volume tells the culmination of Lord Voldemort terrors. Lord Voldemort whose goes with byname The Dark Lord wants the world’s ultimate power to be in the hands of wizards, particularly pure-blooded wizards. Harry Potter and his friends together with wizarding community who also against Lord Voldemort’s are join forces and end the chaos of the wizardry world by defeating Lord Voldemort in the Battle of Hogwarts. Of course, Harry Potter’s struggle could not be separated from the help and support of many parties with multiple gender and racial backgrounds.

Harry Potter saga is adorned with gender and racial issues, in which the wizarding world also adheres to racial and social status grouping. Therefore, the arising problems that can be questioned to be answered in this paper are: 1) The forms of gender and racial class that appear in the novel; and 2) The intersectionality issues that emerge in the novel. This paper will provide the answer of these questions.

Intersectionality

The theory of intersectionality refers to the term which according to thesaurus dictionary means as a complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups. This term directly refers to the theory of intersectionality initiated by Kimberlé Crenshaw. The theory of intersectionality is the idea that when it comes to inequality, categories such as gender, race, and social class are best understood as overlapping and constitutive of one another, rather than being isolated and distinct.

Kimberlé Crenshaw's thought is triggered by the problems faced by black women. Crenshaw himself defines intersectionality as a lens from which we can see the powers collide then intersect. It is not as simple as the issue of gender, race, or social class. In an interview with Columbia University, Crenshaw emphasized the essence of intersection theory which has been wrongly perceived as a major theory for all, while the main concept is to criticize the complexity of the problem of black male and female workers. The problem highlighted is black women who seem to be at the bottom class of human. It becomes complex because with the anti-black racism in America, black men can actually get a better place than white women, just because they are men.

In a journal, Crenshaw describes the intersectionality as an intersection in which racial discriminations can come from any direction, so that if an accident occurs then it can be caused by events from various directions. Thus, intersectionality in the applications can be in form of any event, not only of skin color issues (1989, 139-67). Crenshaw explains that cases of discrimination experienced by black women can be because they are women, because they are black, or because they are black women. The discriminations can also come from other black races. Simply said, at the end discrimination can happen to white women because they are women.

Furthermore, Patricia Hill Collins in her book raises the problem of intersectionality by mentioning that this idea is related to the system of excessive oppression and discrimination faced by women, ranging from issues of ethnicity, sexuality, economic background, and other pieces in their lives. Thus, that the idea is called intersectional feminism (2004). Based on these views, intersectionality is closely related to the complexity of power and control which in the end does not only happen to women, but also to minority and marginalized individual groups, both in physical and social status.

Intersectionality of Race and Gender

"The Deathly Hollows" (1998) written by J.K. Rowling revolves around Harry's final battle with his eternal enemy, Lord Voldemort. In this series, Harry together with Ron and Hermione become key characters in the drama of the defeat of Lord Voldemort, a wizard with the dark power who is feared by the entire wizarding community because of his actions and cruelty. Lord Voldemort wanted to build the world in which wizards and non-wizards were coexisting. However, he rejected the ancient practices of having the wizarding community to hide their identity since it's seen as the ultimate form of weakness as wizards who were clearly stronger than humans, for being incapable to state their importance without restraint. Lord Voldemort believed that the world should be ruled by wizards, particularly *pure-blood* wizards, and ordinary human (*muggles*) should be subjected to their power and authority.

Within the wizarding community itself, they are divided into groups: *pure-blood*, *half-blood* and *mudblood*. The latter is a mockery for *muggle*-born (ordinary human) wizards, means that the wizards who belong to this group doesn't have any drop of wizardry bloods in their family. Each of these groups is represented by Harry and his best friends. Harry was a famous *half-blood* for his predestination to be the genesis of the Battle of Hogwarts, with his existence to fight Lord Voldemort since he managed to make Lord Voldemort lost his powers. The journey of Harry Potter was actually started when The Dark Lord tried to kill Harry when he just one years old but failed, until Lord Voldemort later finally rose again when Harry was eleven years old. Because of this incident, Harry, the son of a *pure-blood* wizard named James Potter with a *mudblood* named Lily Evans was honored by the wizarding community with the nickname "The Boy Who Lived".

The second character in Harry's friendship that represents the *pure-blood* in wizarding community is Ron Weasley. He was portrayed as a boy that often received secondhand stuffs from his brothers due to his family's economic problems, thus he occasionally got harassed from his wealthier school mates for that financial condition. The Weasley family was the representation of the lower class in the hierarchy of social status in British society because their economy could be considered as middle-low.

The last is Hermione Granger, a *muggle*-born wizard that makes her a *mudblood* with both of her parents work as dentist. Hermione was a child with an extraordinary intelligence close to a genius because she was able to absorb all the lessons that had nothing to do with algebra or the process of photosynthesis in plants, which became her only weakness in study. Her status as the lowest in wizarding community social status didn't stop her to achieve a lot of things with Harry, she even took the important role on their friendship.

The Battle of Hogwarts which becomes the final point for the struggle of Harry and his friends involved all parties, all groups, and all races in the wizarding community. Races in this case refer to non-human magical creatures such as werewolves, centaurs, house elves, giants, trolls, and ghosts. Within the magical community, these creatures also experience discriminations. An example is the centaur which is a creature in a form of half horse and half human, but has intelligence and wisdom that surpasses human. In the era where Lord Voldemort reigned, the centaurs had exiled themselves into the forests because their intelligence was not considered as worthy and did not get respects, confirmed by the following quote from the novel (1998):

Harry wondered how many centaurs were watching their procession pass; he dared not open his eyes to look. Some of the Death Eaters called insults at the centaurs as they left them behind. A little later, Harry sensed, by a freshening of the air, that they had reached the edge of the forest (p. 728)

However, a centaur named Firenze wanted to cooperate with the group of wizards who opposed Lord Voldemort, so that at the Battle of Hogwarts, other centaurs were also willing to help defeated Voldemort and his henchmen called the Death Eaters, which shown in the following quote:

Chaos reigned. The charging centaurs were scattering the Death Eaters, everyone was fleeing the giants' stamping feet, and nearer and nearer thundered the reinforcements that had come from who knew where; Harry saw great winged creatures soaring around the heads of Voldemort's giants, thestrals and Buckbeak the hippogriff scratching at their eyes while Grawp punched and pummeled them; [...] The centaurs Bane, Ronan, and Magorian burst into the hall with a great clatter of hooves, as behind Harry the door that led to the kitchens was blasted off its hinges. (pp. 733-734)

Grawp is the name of a of giant creature. Giants have to live in the mountains in order to hide from muggles and are not treated as fully human by the wizarding class. Grawp was a younger half-brother of Hagrid which was one of Hogwarts professors. Hagrid was a half-giant wizard, and he got the opportunity to work at Hogwarts because his mixed blood made his body size wasn't as big as normal giant.

Then, there are werewolves that quite savage and can easily beat wizards because of their speed and physical agility, but categorized as non-human beings so they don't get rights to work in the Ministry of Magic. In the novel, the Ministry of Magic even being an anti-werewolf at a particular point of time, as said by a character named Tonks. In wizarding world, only human wizards who had the rights to held roles in the government of the magical community. Werewolves also seen as unpretty and unpleasant creatures that can't be in the same level with human wizards, as shown in following lines:

"Silence," said Voldemort, with another twitch of Malfoy's wand, and Charity fell silent as if gagged. "Not content with corrupting and polluting the minds of Wizarding children, last week Professor Burbage wrote an impassioned defense of Mudbloods in the Daily Prophet. Wizards, she says, must accept these thieves of their knowledge and magic. The dwindling of the purebloods is, says Professor Burbage, a most desirable circumstance... She would have us all mate with Muggles... or, no doubt, werewolves..."

Nobody laughed this time: There was no mistaking the anger and contempt in Voldemort's voice (p. 12).

In *The Deathly Hallows*, one of the werewolves that joined the Death Eaters was Fenrir. The ferocious character of Fenrir exhibited the unpretty and disgusting traits of werewolves, as appears in the following quote:

"Harry's stomach turned over. He knew who this was: Fenrir Greyback, the werewolf who was permitted to wear Death Eater robes in return for his hired savagery" (p. 447)

“It is you! If they find out who they’ve got — ! They’re Snatchers, they’re only looking for truants to sell for gold —”.

“Not a bad little haul for one night,” Greyback was saying, as a pair of hobnailed boots marched close by Harry and they heard more crashes from inside the tent. “A Mudblood, a runaway goblin, and three truants. You checked their names on the list yet, Scabior?” he roared (p. 449)

By the word “permitted” in the first quote above, it strongly implies that werewolves must abide to the rules under the authority of human wizards to exist. Likewise, the second quote that represents the werewolf’s low status is by being called as ‘snatcher’, which is attached to him and other lowly wizards who work as gold-hunters.

Furthermore, apart from the pressure to subject that gets resistance from magical creatures like centaurs, there is another magical creature who has basic instincts as slaves, thus they place themselves in a lower class of creatures and voluntarily become slaves. They are the house elves. A house elf can only be freed from its status as slave if the owner gives him a personal item for free. Though, house elves in fact also possess magical abilities that have no boundaries compared to wizards. It means that the magical power of wizards still has limitations, unlike the magical power of house elves. This fact is provided by the conversation between Ron and Harry about the fact that house elves’ magic is way better than wizards, in which they can do magic to go in and out of Hogwarts by doing magical actions called Apparate and Disapparate when the wizards couldn’t.

House elves own magical features that wizards don’t have, proving that wizards in fact are not the most qualified one in the hierarchical structure of creatures in the wizarding world in term of magical power. However, wizards see house elves as lowly beings, as found in the following lines:

“Kill him, Cissy!” shrieked Bellatrix, but there was another loud crack, and Narcissa’s wand too flew into the air and landed on the other side of the room. “You dirty little monkey!” bawled Bellatrix. “How dare you take a witch’s wand, how dare you defy your masters?”

“Dobby has no master!” squealed the elf. “Dobby is a free elf, and Dobby has come to save Harry Potter and his friends!” (p. 474)

Those quotations are the examples for the forms of racial and gender problems in the wizarding community, where wizards glorify their position as human and set other creatures below them by placing them in lower classes either by force or voluntarily. In other words, the existence of these divisions creates problems when dealing with the group who wants power, in this story is Lord Voldemort as the representative of *pure-blood* wizards who wants to rule the wizarding world by making *pure-blood* wizards as the one with full authority, as well as controlling the non-magical world by making *muggles* to be submitted to the wizards.

Lord Voldemort and his henchmen oppress, humiliate, and treat *half-blood* and *mudblood* wizards in terrible manners. For instance, by capturing and interrogating them. One example of it that appears in the novel is when a *pure-blood* employee of Ministry of Magic gets into trouble for marrying a *mudblood*, which appears in the quote below:

“You realize that I am on my way downstairs to interrogate your wife, Cattermole? In fact, I’m quite surprised you’re not down there holding her hand while she waits. Already given her up as a bad job, have you? Probably wise. Be sure and marry a pureblood next time.” (p. 243)

“Spare us,” spat Yaxley. “The brats of Mudbloods do not stir our sympathies.” Mrs. Cattermole’s sobs masked Harry’s footsteps as he made his way carefully toward the steps that led up to the raised platform (p. 259)

Mrs. Cattermole was a wizard of human descent who had no wizarding family members at all, much like Hermione, which was why Yaxley called her *mudblood*. This confirms that the oppression upon female magicians of the non-wizarding race is even more severe, as also experienced by Hermione.

Hermione who excels in all subjects at school and had an important role in her friendship with Harry and Ron because of her intelligence was still being treated badly. She got unpleasant treatments not only from her fellow wizards but also from house elves who were in fact, a kind of creature with a role of slaves to wizards by nature. This is stated in the following quotes:

“Master,” croaked Kreacher in his bullfrog’s voice, and he bowed low, muttering to his knees, “back in my Mistress’s old house with the blood-traitor Weasley and the Mudblood —” (pp. 190-191)

“Oh, Kreacher!” wailed Hermione, who was crying. She dropped to her knees beside the elf and tried to hug him.

At once he was on his feet, cringing away from her, quite obviously repulsed. “The Mudblood touched Kreacher, he will not allow it, what would his Mistress say?” (pp. 196-197)

The naming of *Mudbloods* has become a kind of expression, even as curse word toward wizards who aren’t *pureblood*. This oppression is obtained by Hermione not only from Kreacher, but also from other Lord Voldemort henchmen who are not of the human race as well. An example appeared in the previous quote which shows the scene when Harry, Ron, and Hermione were captured by a group of Snatchers led by werewolves. Fenrir mentioned *Mudblood* as a mock, while in reality of the story, the position of werewolves were under wizards. The werewolf also stressed the unworthy of a *Mudblood* which said as traitor, as shown below:

“A Weasley?” rasped Greyback. “So you’re related to blood traitors even if you’re not a Mudblood. And lastly, your pretty little friend...” The relish in his voice made Harry’s flesh crawl.

“Easy, Greyback,” said Scabior over the jeering of the others (p. 448)

Another example that emphasizes the difference in rights and treatment of non-human races is when Hagrid as a half-human is not allowed to drink a potion called Polyjuice which functions to transform one’s appearance into the person whose body parts are taken as the main ingredient of the potion. Polyjuice is made by using small part of body such as nail or hair, and drink the potion will make the person to transform into the one whom the body part belongs to.

“So why aren’ you checkin’ me?” panted Hagrid, still struggling to fit through the door.

“You’re half-giant,” said Lupin, looking up at Hagrid. “The Polyjuice Potion is designed for human use only.” (pp. 69-70)

From the lines above, the descendants of half-giant are considered not qualified for a potion to work perfectly. Except for his big and tall build, Hagrid himself does not hold special characteristics of giant races depicted in the story, for example: stupid and unreasonable, ugly face, unable to speak human language, and so on. Hagrid’s height is almost two and a half meters, which still belongs to the category of tiny, compared to other giant races that can reach three times size of Hagrid.

Further addressing the issue of intersection, the use of the word “wizard” in the story also strengthens the form of intersectionality. Referring to the thesaurus dictionary, wizard is defined as old man while witch means ugly old woman. There are some using of the word “wizard” throughout the novel, as in the term “Triwizard Tournament” which is a sport festival between magical schools, “The Wizard and The Hopping Pot” which is the title of a children’s story in the wizarding world, or “Wizarding Wireless Network News” as the mass media in the wizarding world. Meanwhile, the word “witch” only appears in “Twelve Fail-Safe Ways to Charm Witches”, which is a guidebook for seducing girls (witches) in wizarding world.

The underlining on the use of the word “wizard” for more general things describes the influence and power held by men over women. Witch is only used for female witches, while wizards can cover all classes of witches, both male and female, and are more likely to be used than witches. There appears overlapping meanings and mentions. If we refer to the literal meaning of “witch” based on dictionary references, the figure of a “witch” which is defined as an ugly old woman is not found throughout the novel. Likewise, the wizard which is defined as a wise old man appears in the figure of the headmaster Dumbledore who has

the special characteristics of a wise old-man. Dumbledore is an old wizard with white beard, wise manner, and well-loved.

Moreover, the characterization of wizards in Harry Potter generally includes all types of human characters ranging from evil, cunning, stupid, innocent, cowardly, simple, arrogant, sociable, cheerful, gloomy, and so on. In this way, the depiction on the complexity of intersectionality in gender and race is truly represented in the novel, calls the possibility to understand the roots of the problems of gender and race itself. That in fact, in terms of gender, the social construction that places men as the top layer in the structure of mankind will always be the cause of women exclusion with whatever label they bear, for the opportunity to be valued as much as men. Not to mention the other factors attached in women that worse their position, particularly when it comes to skin color and background.

By the using of Asian names such as Chang (Mandarin) and Parvati (India) as characters who often appear, as well as Karkaroff (Russia) which represents the image of the fusion of Europe and Asia, the novel itself seems to try exceptionally hard to place each type of individual group based on race, background, social status, and gender classification equally and fairly, which can be assumed as an attempt to criticize racism and gender issues that endlessly appear.

Conclusion

Tracing back the basis for the emergence of intersection theory initiated by Kimberlé Crenshaw, the problematic life of black women in the United States at that time could be said to be the worst and horrible, because they have to fight the patriarchal ideology in their context as part of a minority group consist of women, as well as them as a part of minority group in their social community based on skin color, bring the label “black women”. But in its development, the title black women also penetrated other categorization, such as white women among black men, black man among white men, black men among white women, old white women among young black women and men, and so on, in which all minority individual is likely to become the oppressed group. This generally establishes the position of young white men at the very top of the human structure, and old black women as the lowermost.

With such assumptions, the purpose of determining the characters in the Harry Potter novel can be questioned as they are very complex and diverse in terms of gender and race. By taking Hermione as a great example, all the complexities and overlapping issues of race and gender that overshadow her character can already represent the problem of intersectionality. Thus, we can conclude that by placing the smart and prominent Hermione as an individual but not as the main character in the Harry Potter series, J.K. Rowling is not mocking the

position of women as an affirmation that women will never occupy the main position under any circumstances, but criticizing the social conditions that will always put women as the second class instead. That way, the reader can understand that as long as the conventional patriarchal ideology is still part of the universal thought, women will remain and will always be oppressed and marginalized.

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