
POWER RELATIONS ON THE FEMALE BODY IN SENO GUMIRA AJIDARMA'S SHORT STORY "ISTANA TEMBOK BOLONG"

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the practice of power relations and the panopticon as a disciplinary mechanism in Indonesian author Seno Gumira Ajidarma's short story "Istana Tembok Bolong". The term *istana tembok bolong* in this literary work refers to an imaginary place near a train station that is separated from the outside world by a wall with a hole in it. *Istana* literally means palace, and that is how this space is viewed by members of the lower-class community who occupy it. Employing a Foucauldian approach, this study examines the circumstances around the "match selling" that becomes the story's central subject. Based on a real-life phenomenon that occurred in Yogyakarta, Indonesia, in the 1970s, "match selling" became a medium for the exercise of power over street prostitutes. The research findings show how power relations operate as a means to control the body, particularly the female body. This is due to the fact that women and their bodies are commodities in the eye of capitalism. However, in certain situations, the street prostitutes hold power in how that their bodies are used. In addition, it can also be said that social norms outside "the palace" function as a panopticon, which gives inhabitants of the place a sense that they are constantly being monitored.

Keywords: *power, panopticon, the female body, "match selling", Istana Tembok Bolong*

ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini mengeksplorasi praktik relasi kuasa dan panoptikon sebagai mekanisme pendisiplinan dalam cerita pendek *Istana Tembok Bolong* karya Seno Gumira Ajidarma. 'Istana tembok bolong' dalam karya sastra ini merujuk pada sebuah tempat di dekat stasiun kereta api yang terpisahkan dari area luarnya oleh dinding yang berlubang, yang dianggap sebagai istana oleh masyarakat kelas bawah yang menempati ruang tersebut. Dengan menggunakan analisis Foucauldian, penelitian ini melihat fenomena 'jual korek api', yang merupakan isu utama dari cerita yang dibahas di sini. Fenomena yang terjadi di Yogyakarta, Indonesia, pada tahun 1970-an tersebut menjadi media perwujudan kuasa terhadap pekerja seks jalanan. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa relasi kuasa beroperasi sebagai alat untuk mengendalikan tubuh, terutama tubuh perempuan. Hal ini karena tubuh perempuan menjadi komoditas sebagai akibat dari kapitalisme. Namun, dalam situasi tertentu, pekerja seks jalanan tersebut juga dapat memegang kekuasaan terkait bagaimana tubuh mereka dinikmati. Selain itu, norma-norma sosial di luar istana berfungsi sebagai panoptikon yang membuat penghuninya memiliki kesadaran diri karena mereka merasa terus-menerus diawasi.

Keywords: *kuasa, panoptikon, tubuh perempuan, "jual korek api", Istana Tembok Bolong*

INTRODUCTION

Gender inequality remains a central issue in current social circumstances as women continue to perceive unfair treatments in various domains. Despite some observable progress towards balance in terms of opportunities available in the public domain, many challenges persist in various aspects of everyday life (Farid, 2019; Heilman & Eagly, 2008). Regrettably, the lack of equality is primarily experienced by the lower class of society due to economic problems. The inability of this group to fulfill their needs leads to the emergence of hierarchical relationships, placing women in disadvantageous positions.

On the practical level, female bodies tend to be more and more often used as objects because women's positions commonly place them as The Other (*liyan*) compared to male dominance (Muzakka & Suyanto, 2020). The abuse is generally connected to rape and sexual violence, which ranges from insults and humiliation, physical contact, harassment, being stripped naked, to forced abortion (Grose et al., 2021; Ozcurumez et al., 2021). This imbalance of power over the female body — especially the one encountered by the working class — is often explored in literary works.

Among Indonesia's most prolific authors, one stands out as a short story writer who frequently explores the issue of women as an object of power. Senior writer and journalist Seno Gumira Ajidarma began his involvement in news reporting in 1977, and made his way into fiction-writing the following years. Critics think that his significant contribution to Indonesian literature can be seen in how his numerous works, which have for so long been periodically selected and published in mass media or compiled in short story anthologies, have consistently captured contemporary Indonesian culture (Danerek, 2013; Kurnia et al., 2021). His works that explore the themes of women, gender, and sexuality, for example, can be found in his short stories titled "Clara atawa Wanita yang Diperkosa", "Dilarang Menyanyi di Kamar Mandi", "Si Kupu-Kupu", and, of course, "Istana Tembok Bolong".

The short story "Istana Tembok Bolong", or literally "The Palace with a Hole on its Wall" emphasizes gender construction. This story tells the life of a street prostitute named Tumirah, who consciously peddles her body as an object of sexual

desire through "jual korek api" or "match selling", namely the lighting of matches in darkness to enable the lighter to see what is underneath her skirt. In the story, the perpetrator who enjoys Tumirah's body as a commodity is — unfortunately — a young, unnamed boy. Eleven years of age, he is still in search of the answers to his curiosity about the genitals of the opposite sex. He is not equipped with a proper understanding of what is acceptable and what is not, and all he wants to do is hand the money he has raised to Tumirah and light those matches.

Traced further, Tumirah's poverty results from the practice of the power of capitalism which sends her to become a member of the disadvantaged party. The cycle of capitalism continues to demand her to make her body a commodity. Meanwhile, the party that benefits, in this case, are the power holders — the owners of capital. As the story is inspired by real-life, it gives readers an idea of how the female body was used as a commodity by street prostitutes in Yogyakarta in the 1970s to meet economic demands. Worse still, the one that holds the power to make Tumirah his object is an eleven-year-old boy with little capital in his hand.

To examine this issue, this study used textual analysis as the research method. Ajidarma's *Istana Tembok Bolong* served as the primary material. Supporting texts relevant to this study were evaluated by adopting the theoretical frameworks of power relations and the panopticon proposed by Foucault. The data analysis process was carried out by reading the data thoroughly, making categories by organizing the data, and interpreting the data.

Previous studies have investigated the issue of power relations through various perspectives. One of the effects of power can be seen in spatial politics as depicted in Viet Thanh Nguyen's "The Refugees", as elaborated in a study by Asl (2020). The study argues that practices based on desired knowledge can manifest power among the Communist Vietnamese in the framework of a heterotopic space. Still in the same field, Shimal and Hanif (2020) analyze the exercise of knowledge and power in dystopian space in two works by George Orwell.

On the other side, some researchers criticize Foucault's disciplinary power theory due to its ineffectiveness in controlling subjects regarding particular cases. In the scope of women's prisons, the Jifen Kaohe System, which draws from Foucault's ideas, is considered a failure (Zhang, 2020). Other studies

look into this matter, from neoliberal governmentality (James, 2020) and educational discipline (Norlin, 2020), to ethical issues (Souza & Furlan, 2018) and criticism of Foucault's theory itself (McGushin, 2005).

As a social phenomenon, power is rooted in every layer of an individual's life. The discussion of power cannot be separated from discourse and knowledge because the power that produces knowledge operates through discourse (Foucault, 1977). Power is also an organized system which forms a network and works by spreading and absorbing in all linkages that connect social life. Moreover, it is a system that is in order and operates with particular rules. In its process, it involves a set of issues and a series of influences. Thus, it can be considered that power is constructed not on the basis of individual or group desires (Foucault, 1980).

Foucault (1980, 2008) also argues that among every single part of a person's body, among family members, between men and women, between teachers and students, and between every well-educated and uneducated individual, power relations exist. This relation does not purely stem from the power of authorities over individuals. However, the power relation allows the dominant power to operate through the support of the other power underneath (Maemanah, 2012). To put it another way, the relationship between entities that have differences gives rise to power.

Regarding power relations, Foucault asserts that although there are parties who occupy the top or bottom positions, it does not mean that power is centered at a certain point. Power does not directly originate from specific interests. The nature of power is not centralized at one point and flows linearly, but spreads in many directions. The power is not even at the top, in the center, or inside. The power is present in the intersections of life by spreading, is scattered, and even transpires everywhere like a net that traps individuals who are within the scope of its control (Foucault, 1998). Furthermore, power is spread in various structures that exist in people's lives.

Discipline functions as a general formula for subjecting the individual's body (Suyono, 2002). Through this discipline, the individual's body will always be monitored, resulting in certain use-values. These use-values can be in the form of political compliance or other values that produce benefits, for example in social or economic terms. Regarding

this discipline, Foucault (Sarup, 2011) proposes a surveillance system called the panopticon. The panopticon system aims to shape subjects who are responsible for submission to themselves. This system is discontinuous, but the effect will remain automatically applied in the subject. This model of supervision system is considered very effective because it makes individuals feel constantly monitored, which eventually leads to a self-formed awareness to regulate themselves.

In Foucault's point of view, power relations are not limited to the relationship between an individual and the holder of power at the governmental level (Fikrawin, 2007). Power operates in a variety of areas, including in the individual's body. The individual's body can indeed be one of the areas that make power relations possible. In practice, the body is controlled in the way it is manipulated, trained, and corrected in order for it to become obedient and answerable to the holder of power.

Foucault's theory has been mostly used to map the structure of discourse in literary works, which is evidenced in the previous studies mentioned above. As explained before, prior studies have applied Foucauldian analysis to investigate various topics from different fields of study. However, studies on the repercussion of power relations and panopticon on the female body, specifically in Indonesian literature, are still limited. Therefore, this study intends to discuss disciplinary efforts that operate on the female body in Seno Gumira Ajidarma's "Istana Tembok Bolong" through the concept of power relations and panopticon.

The researcher also sees the urgency of this study from the lenses of the underclass, who are prone to becoming the victim of gender-based violence. It is expected that, by observing this case from a different standpoint, the underprivileged group will get back their rights. Thus, this present study proposes novelty in terms of its integration of gender issues and Foucault's theory, focusing more on how power relations are strongly connected to the panopticon in controlling the (female) body. Furthermore, it contributes to the field by the way it proposes a different way of examining gender issues, namely by questioning the problems beyond language and practices.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Female Body as a Controlled Area of Power in "Istana Tembok Bolong"

The practice of operating power in Ajidarma's "Istana Tembok Bolong" is presented with ease. As underlined by Arcana (2017), Ajidarma commonly avoids vulgar descriptions in his short stories. Arcana is the editor for *Cerpen Pilihan Kompas 2016*, an anthology of short stories selected out of all the short stories that had been published in *Kompas* in the titular year. Based on Arcana's words in his introduction for the book, it seems as if Ajidarma had been excavating archives about Yogyakarta in the 1970s before he recounted his discovery in an artistic way. Through the story, Ajidarma carries out a social reconstruction to objectively reveal the practice of prostitution in the suburbs at the time.

"Istana Tembok Bolong" portrays how the body of a low-class woman can be used as a commodity. The phrase *istana tembok bolong* refers to an imaginary place near a train station that is separated from the outside world by a wall with a hole in it. *Istana* literally means palace, and that is how this space is viewed by members of the lower-class community who occupy it. The story is inspired by the "match selling" phenomenon that occurred in Yogyakarta in the 1970s, namely the lighting of a match underneath a prostitute's skirt in darkness to enable the lighter to see her genitals. Ajidarma describes this as a way for Tumirah, a prostitute in the short story, to turn her body into an object for the fulfilment of men's desires. She does this in a defunct train carriage, making a living from a practice that is considered immoral by societal norms. However, this is not done on the basis of personal desire, but rather of life's demands that have left her with few options.

In life in general, the female body tends to be suppressed by those who own capitals. In this short story, the suppression is represented by an unnamed character — a boy — who enjoys Tumirah's body in an act that serves as an extension of the power exercised by the arms of capital owners. The imbalance of power, which is the impact of the discourse of capitalism, creates a gap among different social groups in society. This situation is detrimental to the proletariat, especially women who are often considered objects or even The Other. Certain conditions leave women with no other choice than to give up their bodies as

commodities. Below is a paragraph at the beginning of the short story that explains the use of the female body as an object:

Dengan cahaya yang seadanya seperti itu, ia masih bisa melihat sejumlah perempuan yang berdiri sepanjang persilangan. Jika kereta api melewati persilangan mereka akan menyingkir, dan jika kereta api sudah lewat mereka akan berdiri di tempat itu lagi. Begitu seterusnya sepanjang malam, selama malam masih disebut malam... (Ajidarma, 2016: 74)

In such dim light, he could still see a number of women standing along the level crossing. When a train came to cross it, they would walk away, and once the train had passed, they would be standing in that spot again. This repeated throughout the night, for as long as the night was called a night... (Ajidarma, 2016: 74)

The excerpt illustrates how commercial sex workers peddle their bodies to earn money. To deconstruct the common assumption, this practice can be revealed as a form of resistance to breaking the power relations over them. Foucault (1982) divided these attempts into three types of struggles: struggles against domination; struggles against exploitation; and struggles against subjection, against forms of subjectivity and submission. Tumirah, by choosing a path as a street prostitute, actually attempts to confront the circle of capitalism. Paradoxically, as a part of the lower class of society, this attempt only turns her body into a site for exploitation, no matter how much she enjoys the practice.

This shows that Tumirah makes her way to freedom to withstand the submission she experiences. In her effort to keep the exercise of power or the influence of the authority in check, she creates her own rules regarding how her body is to be explored. This is in line with Schubert (2020) who introduces a new concept called "freedom as critique" to respond to the absence of freedom in Foucault's theory of power and subjectification. This type of freedom is the capability of a subject to condemn the practice of subjectification. From this perspective, Tumirah has the freedom as a critique to take control of what she carries out, even though it is the freedom in being a street prostitute.

The term "street prostitute" can well be linked to the author's descriptions in the narrative. In the

opening paragraph, Ajidarma mentions passing trains which come and go periodically through the spot. These trains might well be interpreted as a symbol of the street prostitutes in that the sex workers offer their services to customers at a public place. Moreover, similar to trains that pass for a brief moment and then disappear, street prostitutes also roam around on the streets at a certain time of the day before they leave when morning comes.

In the short story, the street prostitutes choose the level crossing near the train station because it is a strategic place that remains obscured from the hustle and bustle of the city. By standing on a path that does not have much lighting, they are hidden from the Public Order Agency officers. Despite the poor lighting, they are well-prepared with gimmicks to draw their customers' attention. However, these prostitutes do not only rely on the full makeup on their faces. The strategies employed to attract their targets vary; one of which is illustrated in the following description of Tumirah:

Perempuan yang mengaku bernama Tumirah itu menyalakan rokok baru. Waktu korek api menyala ia melihat wajahnya. Sekilas. Rambutnya yang lurus tampak terurai, dan seperti kecoklatan mungkin karena cahaya api dalam kegelapan. Meskipun segalanya kembali gelap, ia telah mengingat semuanya. Perempuan itu mengenakan kebaya berbunga-bunga yang tidak terkancing di luar kutang yang bagian atasnya terbuka, bawahnya kain batik yang tergulung pada pinggang. Kakinya berjuntaian di tepi gerbong. Hanya berdua dengan perempuan itu membuat hatinya tenang. (Ajidarma, 2016: 78)

The woman who introduced herself as Tumirah lit a new cigarette. As the match burned, he saw her face. At a glance. Her straight hair looked loose, and somewhat brown, probably because of the fire in the dark. Even though everything became dark again, he had remembered everything. The woman wore a floral *kebaya* that was unbuttoned outside of the bra with an exposed top, the skirt was a batik cloth that was rolled up at the waist. Her legs hung over the edge of the carriage. Being alone with that woman made his heart calm. (Ajidarma, 2016: 78)

The way Tumirah dresses, as described in the above passage, indicates a certain intention. The way Tumirah does not fasten her *kebaya* and let her undergarment be exposed — while Ajidarma described that the weather was very cold — was due to specific reasons. What she does there is one of the strategies she had mastered well to attract her targets. However, this does not make her feel uncomfortable, even though she is definitely an object in that situation. This irony is even emphasized by Tumirah's offer to the main character of the short story to "play" with her genitals.

This is in line with the analogy of showing power as a channel that allows the shift of power across various categories, including in the context of sexuality. Philosophically, the manifestation of power that influences individual bodies can form social bodies (Foucault, 1980). The social body is a body that is subject to certain powers, so that it becomes obedient, responsible, and skilled — which is apparent in Tumirah. When it becomes an object of power, the body is also very much in contact with sexuality, which is one of the realms of operation of power.

"Kawan-kawan precilmu semuanya juga mau," kata perempuan itu, setelah menghisap rokok cap Pompa kuat-kuat sampai letik baranya beterbangan ditiup angin, "tapi aku tidak akan menambah dosa-dosaku yang sudah bertumpuk ini dengan merusak jiwa anak-anak."

Malam sungguh kelam. Ia hanya mampu menduga-duga apa yang dimaksud perempuan itu.

"Kalau masih memaksa juga kamu boleh bermain korek api. Dengan uangmu kamu bisa menyalakan batang korek api sepuluh kali." (Ajidarma, 2016: 79-80)

"All your little friends want this as well," said the woman, after sucking so intensely on the *Pompa* brand cigarette that the sparks flew in the wind, "but I'm not going to bump up my accumulated sins by damaging the souls of children."

The night was very dark. He could only guess what the woman meant.

"If you insist anyway, you can do the matches. With that money, you can light ten matchsticks." (Ajidarma, 2016: 79-80)

The sentence said by Tumirah above shows her strategy to sell her body for profit. She, as the morally aggrieved object, becomes the party that offers the use of her body as commodity. For the sake of material interests, she offers her genitals to the opposite sex in exchange of Rp50. In the 1970s, that figure was relatively substantial, especially for a child with no job. With this money, Tumirah gets to play the role of a powerful subject.

In line with the perspective described by Foucault (Edkins & Vaughan, 2010), power does not operate linearly, but spreads in a network, so that the individuals involved in it can become an object of power at times, but in other conditions can also be a subject. In this short story, an individual who maintains resistance as a reaction to the powers that imprison them is seen in Tumirah.

In general, women have been discursively shaped socially and culturally as inferior objects when compared with men. Despite this label, Tumirah attempts to refuse to accept the stereotype. In other words, she does not want to be the "prisoner of gender", to use a terminology by King (2004: 29). Tumirah indeed turns the phenomenon of "match selling" into a game to hold power over the young child who wants to buy her services. She firmly sets a limit of 10 matches without giving any further offer. She also counts with certainty the number of matches the child has lighted. The boy, however, keeps failing to see what is underneath her skirt all the way until his last match.

When doing her "job", Tumirah sits in a certain position; she does what she wishes, not wanting to be controlled. This way, she again plays the role of a subject of power, knowing full well she is much more experienced than the child. The description is seen in the paragraph below:

Di gerbong, perempuan itu kembali duduk, lantas menarik kainnya dengan dua tangan sampai ke lutut, kemudian menaikkan kedua kaki sampai tumitnya menempel di tepi lantai gerbong. Di tangannya masih ada rokok, yang dihisapnya kuat-kuat sampai bara merah itu menyala terang, dan lagi-lagi tembakaunya gemeretak dan letik baranya tersapu angin yang bertiup kencang. (Ajidarma, 2016: 81)

In the train carriage, the woman sat down again, pulled her cloth with both hands all the way

to her knees, and then pulled both feet until her heels pressed to the edge of the carriage's floor. In her hand the cigarette remained, which she smoked so keenly that the ember burned brightly, and again the tobacco rattled and the sparks were swept away by a strong wind. (Ajidarma, 2016: 81)

The above passage shows Tumirah's expertise in doing her work. The position she chooses should make it easier for the young child to see her genitals — proof of how experienced she is in serving her customers, even though her customer this time is an underage child. As a victim of the vicious cycle of capitalism, Tumirah may have been blinded to the long-term effects of her work. She is simply making her resistance in order to earn profits and to ultimately climb out of the lower classes of society, even if it is through peddling her own body.

In this instance, Tumirah underlines how she manages to react to the power that exists as biopower. Biopower is a form of power that is present in daily life without the subject even being conscious about it. In this concept, the body appears as the site of subjugation, which means that the body subjugates itself due to the subjects' self-awareness (Pylypa, 1998). Thus, individuals are not aware of the oppression because they engage in daily bodily rituals and activities.

Dari dalam gerbong-gerbong barang, mereka yang masih mengeluarkan suara tertahan-tahan itu tertegun, ketika di antara suara deras hujan yang mendadak turun diiringi halilintar yang menyambar-nyambar, terdengar raung tangisan seorang perempuan, yang raungnya begitu keras seperti jerit kepedihan yang tiada duanya di dunia... (Ajidarma, 2016: 85)

Inside the freight carriages, those who were still making muffled sounds became stunned, because in the midst of the sudden heavy downpour accompanied by flashing thunderbolts, the howling cries of a woman could be heard, so loud that it sounded as if the scream of pain had never been heard anywhere in the world before... (Ajidarma, 2016: 85)

This closing paragraph of the short story shows that the immoral practice that Tumirah does to the young child is not necessarily her desire. Although the

woman is experienced and skilled at doing her work, what she does is simply the demand of the job. The practices of capitalism cause “the line of destiny” — borrowing Ajidarma’s term (2016: 71) — to give her no achievable solution. Tumirah realizes that she is the victim after all, despite her ability to toy around with the child. Her regret stems from her desire to stop peddling her body, which is immediately met by her inability to break free from the power that shackles her.

Social Norms as a Panopticon to Control Subjects in “Istana Tembok Bolong”

As a disciplinary model, the panopticon system fosters self-awareness in every subject because they feel they are continuously monitored. The panopticon concept adopted by Foucault from the prison building designed in 1875 allowed a single supervisor to oversee all inmates in a prison without their knowledge. Thus, the panopticon building became a monitoring solution of individuals in large quantities in an easy way. That concept was then used by Foucault as a replica of the surveillance system introduced in his theory.

In Ajidarma’s short story “Istana Tembok Bolong”, social norms play a role as a panopticon that oversees all social behavior of subjects within the scope of “the palace” (“*istana*”). Foucault explains that prison can be one of the means used to discipline subjects (1980). Following such a concept, “the palace” with a hole on its wall is a place separated from life and the regulations that apply on the outside. This separation is due to the social norms outside the walls that classify prostitution as immoral. On the contrary, “the palace” isolates and controls the individuals within it with more flexible regulations. An example of the workings of social norms as a panopticon can be seen in the paragraph below:

Sebenarnya mereka tidak benar-benar berdiri di tepi jalan, melainkan agak masuk ke dalam wilayah stasiun, artinya berdiri di antara rel-rel yang hanya tampak sebagian karena segera menjadi bagian dari kegelapan. Dari jalan hanya wajah mereka saja yang terlihat, seperti topeng-topeng putih tanpa tubuh, karena pupur yang lebih tampak seperti labor. (Ajidarma, 2016: 77)

They were not exactly standing on the sides of the road, but rather inside the station area,

were standing between rail tracks that were partially visible as they easily became part of the darkness. From the road, only their faces could be seen, like white masks without torsos, because they had applied their face powder more like a paint. (Ajidarma, 2016: 77)

They — the street prostitutes — were offering their services along a level crossing. The women deliberately make themselves invisible because they feel that they are *constantly being watched* by social norms. These norms are not even written. However, the monitoring model of the panopticon makes the subjects feel accountable on their own. It makes them recognize that their job is categorized as immoral, they have the self-surveillance and self-discipline not to be seen directly by the people around them.

The social norms as a panopticon are also emphasized in the following paragraph:

Suatu tembok, seperti suatu batas, tetapi yang tidak membatasi apapun, selain menandai terdapatnya rel tempat kereta api berlalu-lalang di baliknya. Tembok itu juga menandai wilayah administrasi Stasiun Tugu di bilangan Bong Suwung, untuk menegaskan betapa segala peraturan yang berlaku di balik tembok itu sungguh berbeda dengan yang berlaku di luarnya. (Ajidarma, 2016: 71)

There was a wall, like a border, which did not really border anything, other than to mark the existence of the railroads behind it upon which trains came and went. The wall also marked the Bong Suwung segment of Tugu Station’s administrative area, to emphasize how all the regulations that applied behind the wall were truly different from those that applied outside. (Ajidarma, 2016: 71)

In real life, “the palace” was nothing more than a corner near Yogyakarta’s main train station — an area called Bong Suwung — that was illegally converted by lower-class people into a prostitution den. As Ajidarma portrays in the above paragraph, the wall which is deliberately holed for access functions as a barrier between the nook and the outside world. Moreover, in a sense, the wall also provides certain restrictions that distinguish the regulations inside and outside of the wall. Such restrictions can be seen in the following dialogue:

"Anak kecil! Mau apa di sini?"

Ia tak melihat apapun. Lampu tiang listrik di sekitarnya habis dicuri. Cahaya dari peron di kejauhan pun tidak sampai ke mari.

"Oh, mencari Mbak Tum."

Terdengar suara tawa dari kegelapan itu.

"Asal anak kecil kok mencari Mbak Tum."
(Ajidarma, 2016: 73)

"Hey, kid! What are you doing here?"

He saw nothing. The light bulbs for the electric poles around him had been stolen. The beam from the platform in the distance did not reach here.

"Oh, I'm looking for Mbak Tum."

A laugh was heard from the darkness.

"It's always the kids who look for Mbak Tum."
(Ajidarma, 2016: 73)

The excerpt above shows that there is actually an age restriction in "the palace". Even though the expression above does not really signify the age restriction, the dialogue emphasizes that children are basically not permitted to enter the prostitution den. Social norms that apply in society emphasize things that are considered taboo or not taboo. The regulation that is used as a reference for people's behavior creates the limitation that prostitution — although immoral and illegal — should only involve adults.

The crisis of morality in Ajidarma's "Istana Tembok Bolong" becomes increasingly problematic when the young child, who happens to be the main character, does not really understand what he really wants from the prostitution area. In the description of the setting of the place below, the character fails to predict the function of the unused freight carriage in one corner of the station. Since he is only eleven years old, he does not even have an idea of the side function of that rusty, mossy carriage. This is how Ajidarma describes his innocence:

Gerbong barang itu pintunya besar dan terbuka, di dalamnya hanya terdapat kegelapan sebuah gua. Gerbong seperti itu biasanya membawa bungkusan-bungkusan besar, mungkin pula hewan, atau sepeda motor, tetapi tidak ada yang dapat diandalkannya untuk menduga, digunakan untuk apakah kiranya gerbong ini sekarang. (p. 76)

The freight car had a large, open door, with cave-like darkness inside of it. Such a carriage usually transports large packages, maybe animals too, or motorbikes, but there is nothing he could rely on to guess what it may be used for now. (p. 76)

In addition to the innocent thoughts above, the problems in this short story are also emphasized in the following dialogue. When Tumirah asks what the child wants from her, the little boy does not know what to say. He has basically come to the place because his friends said they had met Tumirah. The boy was probably from a middle- to an upper-class family as he is able to gather Rp50 from his savings, not by selling anything. He is also literate as he has read various children's books. However, such background does not guarantee any sufficient control from his family, and so he becomes lured to a world that is not suitable for children his age. This is why he cannot grasp Tumirah's question of his intention coming to such a place, as illustrated below:

"Kamu mau apa?"

Mulutnya terkunci. Terdengar perempuan itu tertawa ringan.

"Kamu juga mau ya?" (Ajidarma, 2016: 76)

"What do you want?"

His mouth was locked. The woman laughed lightly.

"You want it too, don't you?" (Ajidarma, 2016: 76)

Based on the description above, we can find out how social norms as a panopticon operate in the area of control to discipline individual bodies. These social norms provide unwritten regulations in the form of prohibitions, doctrines, rules, etc. that subject an individual's body and turn it into a controlled one. Because of this surveillance model, the wall in the story serves the objective of keeping "the palace" in check, preventing any violation against the outside world's societal norms.

CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that in Ajidarma's short story "Istana Tembok Bolong", power relations operate to discipline the body,

especially the female body. The female body becomes a commodity as a result of the capitalist culture, which is controlled by capital owners. However, in line with the concept carried by Foucault that power circulates in a network so that individuals can be objects as well as subjects of power, the street prostitutes can also hold power over their bodies in certain conditions. Although they have to give up their genitals to satisfy men's desires, they can also take control by determining how their bodies are to be used.

In the effort to control the female body, social norms work as a panopticon that builds self-awareness in individuals, in this case, the street prostitutes. This supervision model makes individuals in a certain area of control feel accountable because they believe that they are constantly monitored. With the panopticon in the form of social norms, the holed wall of the "palace" was built to provide clear boundaries between the prostitution area and public space. Furthermore, unwritten regulations that apply in the community indirectly make people apply age restrictions for those who wish to enter "the palace". Thus, it can be summed up that, social norms, as a panopticon, provide oversight to individuals who are in their area of control, turning the female body into a compliant body in particular power relations.

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