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Beyond Victimhood: Vanessa's Post-Traumatic Growth in Kate Elizabeth Russell's "My Dark Vanessa"
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This study examines Vanessa's psychological development in *My Dark Vanessa* by Kate Elizabeth Russell, focusing on how Strane's manipulation leads to Vanessa's unconscious victimhood and influences her coping process before her awareness of victimhood contributes to Post-Traumatic Growth. This study employs a library-based method, using the book *My Dark Vanessa* as the primary source of data, supported by relevant secondary sources. This study applies a psychological approach using Nils Christie's concept of the ideal victim, Cathy Caruth's trauma theory, Lazarus and Folkman's coping theory, and Tedeschi and Calhoun's theory of Post-Traumatic Growth. The findings reveal that Strane's manipulation, through emotional control and grooming, intellectual influence, and the romanticization of abuse, including the influence of power imbalance and the illusion of consent, prevented Vanessa from recognizing herself as a victim and understanding her relationship as sexual abuse. This is reinforced by Christie's theory, which shows that Vanessa does not meet the criteria of the ideal victim due to the influence of Strane's manipulation. It affected Vanessa's understanding of her position as an acceptable victim in society. From Caruth's perspective, Vanessa's inability to process her trauma results from her failure to integrate the traumatic meaning of her experience into consciousness, leaving her in an unconscious status as a victim. This unprocessed trauma influences her coping strategies. Vanessa relies more on emotion-focused coping, such as denial and self-blaming, to maintain her identity through the narrative Strane instilled. However, the contradiction between Strane's narrative and the reality she experiences creates moments of re-appraisal that provide an opening for her to reassess her experiences and recognize herself as a victim. This awareness becomes the foundation of Vanessa's transformation toward Post-Traumatic Growth by fulfilling the five aspects described by Tedeschi and Calhoun in their theory: reconstructing personal strength, building new relationships with others, discovering new possibilities, gaining a greater appreciation for life, and transforming her existential understanding. This study concludes that Vanessa's Post-Traumatic Growth does not indicate a complete disappearance of the trauma. Rather, it reflects her ability to integrate that traumatic experience, rebuild her sense, and move beyond the identity previously shaped by Strane. Vanessa's psychological situation is also known as Psychological Preparedness.

Keywords: *My Dark Vanessa*, grooming, unconscious victimhood, coping process, post-traumatic growth, psychological preparedness

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Penelitian ini menganalisis perkembangan psikologis Vanessa dalam novel *My Dark Vanessa* karya Kate Elizabeth Russell dengan berfokus pada bagaimana manipulasi Strane menyebabkan Vanessa mengalami *unconscious victimhood* serta memengaruhi proses kopingnya, sebelum kesadarannya akan status sebagai korban tersebut berkontribusi pada *Post-Traumatic Growth*. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode studi pustaka (*library research)* dengan buku *My Dark Vanessa* sebagai sumber data utama, didukung oleh sumber-sumber sekunder yang relevan. Penelitian ini menerapkan pendekatan psikologis dengan menggunakan teori *ideal victim* oleh Nils Christie, teori trauma oleh Cathy Caruth, teori coping oleh Lazarus dan Folkman, dan *Post-Traumatic Growth* oleh Tedeschi dan Calhoun. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa manipulasi Strane melalui *emotional control and grooming, intellectual influence and romanticization of abuse,* serta pengaruh *power imbalance and the illusion of consent* mencegah Vanessa mengenali dirinya sebagai korban dan memahami hubungannya sebagai kekerasan seksual. Hal ini diperkuat oleh teori Christie yang menunjukkan bahwa Vanessa tidak memenuhi kriteria *ideal victim* karena pengaruh manipulasi Strane yang memengaruhi pemahaman Vanessa tentang posisinya sebagai korban yang diakui dalam masyarakat. Dari sudut pandang Caruth, ketidakmampuan Vanessa untuk memproses traumanya dipengaruhi oleh kegagalannya mengintegrasikan makna traumatis dari pengalamannya ke dalam kesadarannya, sehingga ia tetap berada dalam status tak sadar sebagai korban. Trauma yang belum diproses ini memengaruhi strategi penanganannya (*coping*). Vanessa lebih bergantung pada penanganan emosi, seperti *denial* dan *self-blaming,* untuk mempertahankan identitasnya melalui narasi yang dibangun oleh Strane. Namun, munculnya kontradiksi dari narasi Strane dan realita yang dijalaninya menciptakan momen penilaian ulang (*re-appraisal)* yang memberikan celah baginya untuk menilai kembali pengalamannya dan mengenali dirinya sebagai korban. Kesadaran ini menjadi dasar transformasi Vanessa menuju *Post-Traumatic Growth* dengan memenuhi lima aspek yang dijelaskan Tedeschi dan Calhoun dalam teorinya, yaitu *reconstructing personal strength, building a new relationship with others, discovering new possibilities, gaining a greater appreciation of life,* dan *transforming an existential understanding.* Penelitian ini menyimpulkan bahwa *Post-Traumatic Growth* Vanessa tidak menunjukkan hilangnya trauma sepenuhnya. Melainkan kemampuannya untuk mengintegrasikan pengalaman traumatis tersebut, membangun kembali pemahaman tentang dirinya, dan melampaui identitas yang sebelumnya dibentuk oleh Strane. Kondisi psikologis Vanessa ini juga dikenal sebagai *Psychological Preparedness.*

Kata kunci: *My Dark Vanessa*, *grooming, unconscious victimhood*, proses koping, post-traumatic growth, psychological preparedness