

# Women's Rebellion towards Patriarchal Culture in Latest Indonesian Novels

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**Abstract**—This article aimed to expose the portrayal of women's rebellion in the latest Indonesian novels through characters description. Method of the research was content analysis method to interpret literary works through certain perspectives. Data of the study were collected from selected latest Indonesian novels published from 1940s until 2000s. The analysis found that women did a rebellion towards patriarchal culture with purpose to have similar chance on education, social life, socio-economic, political right and cultural. The forms of women's rebellion are direct confrontation and indirect attempt. Direct confrontation depicted in the attitudes and statements of women characters in the novels. Meanwhile, indirect attempts are reflected through the utterance of women's thought and feeling.

**Keywords:** women's rebellion, patriarchal culture, Indonesian novels

## I. INTRODUCTION

In patriarchal's point of view or tradition, women are frequently described as the belonging to men. In other words, women do not belong to themselves; everything women do is oriented to the interests of men, such as serving the needs of men, being entertainers of men, and becoming the reproduction machine. It makes women extremely dependent on men which further creates women do not to have similar competitiveness as men. This inequality causes women have an unequal position with men in any fields.

These phenomena are taken seriously by feminist activists who think women are not "slave" of men or woman as "the other" people in this world. Feminists also emphasize that women and men have the same rights and roles. The seriousness of the demands of the feminist movement is also reflected in the literary works.

In the world of literature (which is an imaginative world), many works deal with issues related to women regardless of the authors' sex. In literary works composed by male authors are also often found female characters. The descriptions of women in those works are multiple diverse. However, these male authors still identify the problems facing the female characters from their point of view as man.

In the early 2000s, women's protests in the world of literature became much stronger. For example, Oka Rusmini tries to attest her local traditions and her ethnic cultures through her novel *Tarian Bumi*. Novelist AniSekarningsih also attempt to raise the decline of Asmat's women through novel *Namaku Teweraut* and many other female authors which raised women's suffering issues in their work (Mahayana, 2005)

Kolodny (in Djajanegara, 2000), a feminist critic from United States, defines feminist literary criticism as follows "it involved, exposing, the sexual stereotyping of women, in both our literature and our literary criticism and as well, demonstrating inadequacy of established critical schools and methods to deal fairly or sensitively with work 'written by women'." The statement above states that women are identified through sexual stereotypes, both in literature and in our literary criticism. It also shows that schools and inadequate methods that used to study women's writings are unjust and insensitive.

According to the literary scholars, literary works of male usually display female stereotypes in the frame of binary opposition such as faithful-traitorous wives, careful-wicked mothers or submissive-spoiled women etc.,. The images of women are displayed by such literary works are not in harmony with the reality because the judgment about women is perceived as unfair and unconscionable. In some perspective, women have very personal feelings, such as suffering and disappointment, or range of emotions that cannot express appropriately by male authors. For example, a man will not be able to write in detail about the pain, anxiety, and happiness of a woman in process of childbirth.

Referring to the above definition of feminist literary criticism, Kolodny proposes some of the most important objectives of feminist literary criticism. First, the feminist critique is able to re-interpret and re-assess all the literary works generated centuries ago. Feminist literary criticism is a tool for studying and approaching that text. In short, one of the most important things in feminist literary criticism is the attempt to escape from hierarchical conflict between women and men, often presented through a discourse. It happens because of the power factor in the relationship and the dominance of one party against

the other. The feminist critique finally is an attempt to disclose the binary opposition, opposition between femininity and masculinity, as Moi states it as purpose of the whole feminist struggle (Moi, 1985).

One thing that cannot be removed from feminist literary criticism is the core of the analysis. The analysis applied is gender analysis. In the gender analysis, critics should be able to distinguish between the concept of gender and sex. The difference between the two has been explained in the introduction. In gender analysis, research must involve both types of human sex in expressing the lives of female characters.

Gender analysis concepts are used as a basis for analysis. The concepts are as follow: **First**, gender differences are differences on social attributes, characteristics, behavior, appearance, outfit, expectations, roles, and so forth which is formulated for individuals according to birth rules. **Second**, the gender gap is the difference in the right of political participation, the right to vote, and the right to decide an affair. **Third**, *genderzation* is a conceptualization in an attempt to locate the gender at the center of an identity and views of and from others; for example, prostitutes in Indonesian refer to female sex workers, *Gigolo* refers to male sex workers. **Fourth**, gender identity is a picture of the sex that should be owned and displayed by the person in question. It is also of concern to feminist literary critics in literary works.

In line with ideological-feminist literary criticism, this is a concept of *reading as women* (Culler, 1975). This concept is proposed and used to dismantle the presumption and ideology of male power generally approaching the concept of *androcentrism* or *misogynist* which until now is assumed, still dominates the world of literary writings and literary readings (Gilman, 1911),.

In the critique of feminist literature, critics should view literary works with special awareness; the awareness that there is one sex that has much to do with culture, literature, and life.

Reading as a woman, which is proposed by Culler, means reading a work with the consciousness to uncover the presumption and ideology of male power which tends to be *androcentrism* or *misogynist*, which until now still overshadow the world of literary writing and reading.

The theory of *reading as woman* is used as an analytical tool to discover elements of women's rebellion and resistance against the patriarchal culture depicted in Indonesian literary works from the decade of the 1940s to the 2000s. The application of this perspective is aimed to obtain several findings that address the problems that have been formulated: what is the form of women's rebellion against patriarchal culture in the latest Indonesian novels? The objective of the study is to explain the forms of women's rebellion against the patriarchal culture depicted in the latest Indonesian novels.

## II. METHODS

This research was a qualitative research with sampling research using purposive sampling technique. The sample of research (research objects) were Indonesian novels published from 1940 through 2000s that wrote by male and female authors. Research data were obtained in the form of narration from the narrator or the conversation of the characters, the behaviors of the character, and the thoughts of the character indicating the resistance of women toward the patriarchal culture. Data were analyzed by using content analysis method. Content analysis was used to reveal, to understand, and to capture messages from a literary work. Research content analysis in the field of literature was based on the axiom that the authors manage to convey messages in secret to their readers. The message was the content (meaning) that should be built by the reader. Endaswara says this research was

*“suatu langkah strategis untuk menyibak dan memahami fenomena sastra, terutama dalam mengungkap kesusastraan yang bersifat simbolis”*

*“a strategic way to uncover and to understand the literary phenomenon, especially to unlock symbolic literature”* (Endaswara, 2003).

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on data analysis, several points were found as manifestation of women's resistance toward patriarchal culture in Indonesian literatures published in the period 1940-2000. The resistance was seen from women's perspective on several things such as education, household, social life, workplace, and ideals, which are summarized in the table 1.

**Table 1. Changes in Women's Views as found in Literary Works between 1940s to the 2000s**

No	women's perspective	view on education	view on household	view on social life	view on working world	view on ambition
	Dekade					
1	period of 1940s	Education is not important for women because their place is domestic	Love and integrity is the most important for women.	Women tend to preserve social bond.	Women manage domestic tasks	Women's purpose is marriage.
2	period of 1950s	Education is no important for women; physical appearance is fundamental	the integrity of the house is the most important for women	Women tend to preserve social bond.	Women manage domestic tasks	Women's purpose is marriage.
3	period of 1960s	Education is not important for women; their main	Love between parents and their children is essential	Women tend to preserve social bond.	Women manage domestic tasks	Women's purpose

No	women's perspective Dekade	view on education	view on household	view on social life	view on working world	view on ambition
		purpose is to maintain their husband's love	as affection towards spouse.			is happy marriage.
4	period of 1970s	Education is important for getting job outside of the house and decreasing their independency towards their husband.	Love and integrity are still important; however women must survive even without love. Women is capable to divorce their husband	Women tend to preserve social bond.	Domestic and undomesticated works are equal.	Women's purpose is to get higher job position.
5	period of 1980s	-Education is important because women is capable to reach higher achievement. - Education is important for getting greater husband	women are independent but marriage and family are still crucial.	Women tend to preserve social bond.	Women begin to search outside works.	Women's purpose is their individual happiness.
6	period 1990s-2000s	Women are generally well-educated; they have similar chance to get job as men.	Household is no longer important. Women must and should capable to survive. Women are indifferent to social status.	Women begin to prioritize her privacy. .	Works outside of the house are important than domestic role	Women's purpose is to achieve success.

In the decade of the 1940s, education for women was considered unimportant. Because of the view of community stated that women are a mother who must always be on duty in the house, to manage the household as well to raise her children. Men were allowed to study as high as possible. As a wife, a woman must support her husband's needs and she must allow her husband to left her. Even if a woman could get higher education, she would not be able to work according to her education, because the basic role of women was domestic things.

From a women's perspective on educational issues in Indonesian literature in general, there were some significant setbacks. For example, Tuti character in the novel *Layar Terkembang* (1933) has begun the struggle of women in education. Tuti character was created by a male author, has begun to open her point of view about the importance of education. It is seen from the attitude of Tuti that stating that if women intend to get freedom and stand equal with men, she must strengthen herself and claim that she is able to stand alone without dependence (Alisjahbana, 1999). It means women should have an adequate education.

The view on the unimportance of education for women in short stories of women from the 1940s to the 1970s does not mean that the short stories supported the ideology of *gender*. This situation may be used to touch the hearts of readers. Furthermore, the degree of women can be raised through the idea that education is important for making women equal to men.

The subsequent development of women's view on education in the short stories of women has made little progress in the 1970s. In this decade, women have realized that education is quite important. Adequate education can bring goodness to women, such as getting a decent job that later can support the financial of their household.

The above perspective can be seen in several literary works written by male author. AA. Navis in his novel entitled *Eclipse* (1975) tells about two women, namely Kartini and Ana Karina who received a college education. Higher education for these two female characters was not intended to change their life and to make them equal with men. Higher education for them is used as a way to avoid matchmaking (for Ana Karina) and to find a mate in order to get a rich husband (for Kartini). This novel was Navis' criticism on campus life which is unable to provide moral education for its students. The campus is fed with intrigue between lecturers, corruption and hypocrisy.

In the 1990-2000s periods, there was an encouraging change for women's view of education. In that decade, education has become a priority for women. Women and men are deemed to have equal rights to education. Women no longer have to pursue education only in the field of housekeeping. Women are free to study what they love. This is evident from the diversity of women's professions portrayed by authors; it is also consistent with what Fakhri has suggested that the number of illiterate women in recent decades has considerably decreased (Fakhri, 2003).

Women are often regarded as the most responsible party in education and the application of cultural values to their children. As a person who must pass on the values for the younger generation, women are expected to have personality with traits such as sensitive, religious, and polite. As these obligations shall be borne by women; they from an early age have been prepared to be able to carry out these tasks. To achieve that mission, young women are taught about the prevailing values and accepted norms in the community.

In the 1940s, women perceive love and loyalty as essential elements in their life. Their lives will be beatific if they get the love and loyalty of their beloved. On the contrary, their lives are dejected when their husbands betray their marriages. As the result, these women frequently find themselves desperate until trying to commit suicide.

A very prominent phenomenon in women's views in this decade was certain women tend to retain their marriage and the integrity of their household; they also choose to wait for their husbands to come back and easily forgive them. This women's

attitude may be caused by a very high sense of dependence on men; they have no confidence when living their lives without their husband. This case is also supported by socio-cultural background that always discourages women who are widowed. The society will identify a widow (no matter how good and praiseworthy) with a negative view. The stigma of the community towards the widow makes women prefer to maintain their household rather than being a widow. Another reason that causes women to maintain their marriage is the consideration of their children.

In agreement with traditional views in the previous decade, the literary works of the 1950s also led women's perspective to uphold the integrity of their household. This view presupposes women to always keep their husbands faithful and to preserve the view that women should pay attention to their appearances. If their husbands continue to betray their marriages, they seem hopeless and some even commit suicide. Similar to the previous leading women's point of view, their children are the most important reason in all efforts to maintain the unity of their household.

In this decade also described the efforts of women in maintaining their households. One effort that always dominates the view of women until the literary works of the 2000s is to preserve their appearance to always look beautiful and attractive. If women are not able to provide the best physical appearance for their husbands, then they should be prepared to lose their husbands. In other words, men will always hunt for newer and fresher objects to fulfill the desires of their lives. In such circumstances, the integrity of the household is in an 'understudy' situation.

The fundamental problem facing women is basically not on aspects of physical appearance; it is the demands of socio-cultural conditions that make women look extremely dependent on men. Women, who were left behind by their husbands on the grounds of remarriage with other women, were regarded as an unlucky and fatal mistress. In this case, the society looks like not giving equal portion between women and men. In fact, in those two decades, the depictions of male treachery were prominent in many literary works. However, women are portrayed as a person who is always more responsible for keeping the unity of their household.

In the decade of the 1960s, love and the integrity of the household still seemed important to women as well as the affection between parents and their children. Love between parent and child should not be deterred by any reason, even if the children are not their original offspring. In this decade, love was depicted to enable people to accept each other's flaws and strengths. There has been little change in the views of women in this decade. This is because perspective of the society about love and loyalty has not changed much at the time.

In the literary works of 1970s, there was a fundamental change in women's views. In this decade, women have dared to sue their unfaithful husband for divorce. In this period, women are able to live independently without relying on their husbands. The perspective of the society has also begun to change. They no longer always cornered women; they begun to see the problem objectively and fairly.

In this decade, the government issued a regulation to ban civil servants from having more than one wife; the government regulation is contained in PP 10 year 1974. This regulation more or less does little to pacify the women who are the wife of the civil servant. On the other hand, this regulation makes men (as civil servants) unable to conduct polygamy in an official approach. It then caused the men to deal with the women as their mistresses without any official marriage certificate from the authorized institution. This condition raises new detriments for women. Since there are no parties can be held accountable in the event of separation between them, especially if the woman has children. Men could have handed off on the grounds that there was no written evidence of the agreement they had made.

In the 1980s, women perspective towards household is still similar with previous decade. Women in literary works still perceived that the integrity of their household is essential. However, women were portrayed as educated characters. Their independency and education led them to preserve their marriage and family. They did anything to keep their family safe and sound. The descriptions about these women's struggle are implied through unit of narration.

In Umar Kayam's novel entitled *Sri Sumarah* (1986), there were some efforts of women in order to maintain the integrity of her household. As a male author, Kayyam described women's views in accordance with his wishes as a man and also the willingness of the society toward the female figures. These women's efforts were called "the science of household perfection," whereby according to Sri's grandmother sayings "it is all about to 'keep men' (Kayyam, 1986) as seen in the following quotation:

*Demikianlah Sri diwajibkan minum galian secara teratur agar badannya tetap singset dan sintal (ingat nduk, laki-laki tidak senang meliat badan istrinya gombyor-gombyor)*

*Sri diwajibkan dalam waktu-waktu tertentu makan kencur dan kunyit mentah, agar keringat dan badannya tidak bau..*

*("Ingat, nduk, kalau kau tidak waspada jaga bau keringat seluruh bagian badanmu akan bau anyir dan amis terutama di bagian bawahmu itu. Kalau sudah begitu bagaimana suami akan mendekatimu?")*

*Thus Sri is required to drink mineral water regularly to keep her body slim and plump (remember nduk, men are never happy with ugly body)*

*Sri at certain times are necessary to eat aromatic ginger and raw turmeric, to avoid smelly sweat and body..*

*("Remember, nduk, if you are not careful with your sweat, your body will smell of rancid and fishy, especially in your vital parts ... If it is not tempting anymore, how to expect your husband will be close?") (Kayyam, 1986)*

These women's activities were called as *beautification* whereby it was a systematic attempts and direct efforts aimed at improving beauty and strengthening sexual attraction (Dailey, 2009).

In the next decade, the 1990-2000s, women were portrayed as a strong man; they no longer feel discouraged when betrayed by their husbands. For these women, the most important thing was to prepare their life and to develop their children. Some of the roads they take were to work outside, to develop themselves and to expand their knowledge. Women's view on social life in literary works has not changed significantly. From the decade of the 1940s to the decade of 2000s women considered it important to maintain good relationship with the social environment and the communities around them. If women were not able to maintain good relationship with the surrounding community, then they cannot be well-received by the community. As a result, they would get social sanction (unwritten) from society that was marginalized from the environment.

In general, women character in literary works had similar goal: they wanted to be successful women, both as individual (careers), wife ('producing' successful children and harmonious families), as well as community service. If women were able to reach all three at once, then they would get some acknowledgements from the surround society and they would attain ultimate happiness.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

According to the results of research towards selected literary works, the views of women in literary works have changed in accordance with the development of society outside of literary works. It shows that when authors write a novel, they are affected by socio-cultural circumstances that surround them. The shift in women's perspective includes women's views on education, household, social life, workplace, and purpose.

The view of women in the selected works has been drastically changed. For example, the women in the decade of the 1940s to the 1960s, view education as unimportant matter. However, in the next period (i.e. 1970s-2000s) women consider that education is important part to elevate their status and to remove some stereotypes already attached to their sex.

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