
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Women's Resistance Against Patriarchy in the Novel *Garis Perempuan* by Sanie B. Kuncoro

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ABSTRACT

Injustice to women has made feminists fight the threats and all the attachments they experience. With that, women are considered capable of presenting themselves as independent figures free from adversity. The novel *Garis Perempuan* is one of the feminist-themed works present in revealing the resistance of the four female characters. This novel by Sanie B Kuncoro was published in 2010. This novel is a literary work that reveals things related to the attachment of female characters named Ranting, Tawang Sari, Gendhing and Zhang Mey with patriarchal culture and other threats they face. Research on the novel *Garis Perempuan* aims to describe the resistance of the four female characters against patriarchal domination. To achieve this goal, this study uses the theory of feminist literary criticism. This study shows that the four female characters managed to defend themselves and their virginity from the threat of a patriarchal culture that is contrary to themselves. With all their uniqueness, they can have an opinion and hold fast to their position as a form of appreciation for themselves as women.

KEYWORDS

Patriarchal domination, feminism, resistance, novel

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1. Introduction

Gender talk seems to be a conversation that always increases in various activities. Understanding gender issues is seen from a scientific point of view and looks at the further impact arising from gender differences, for example, related to discrimination that leads to losses experienced by women either from certain attitudes or up to virginity issues. Astuti (2018) suggests that gender inequality or discrimination is manifested in several forms, namely, marginalization, subordination, stereotypes, violence, and workload. There are many forms of injustice due to gender discrimination in society. Unsriana (2014) states gender discrimination as an injustice with different attitudes and treatment towards fellow human beings based on gender. The gender point of view forms a subject that is solely seen from biological sex but is also interpreted as applying to masculine and feminine.

Nenden (2012: 114) states that although feminism originates from the West, the conditions of oppression of women exist in the West and occur locally. That is, the awareness that there is no difference in attitudes between the sexes does not only belong to the West or occurs in the West but also belongs to the people in the East, and the impact has already spread. For this reason, from several incidents, the discrimination of men against women is widely expressed in Indonesian literary works, either in the form of writing or even made into films.

Indirectly, gender stigma has an impact, especially on women. Gender discussions related to feminism actually make women oblige themselves to survive in the existing situation but also try to break the existing stigmas. Feminist themes have spread to the world of literature, especially novels which are mostly written by women. In this case, the female author tries to uncover the existing reality of how women are positioned, both for themselves, their families, and a man. One of the novels that quite reveal women's side, especially in terms of virginity, is the novel entitled *Garis Perempuan*, written by Sanie. B. Kuncoro. This novel raises one main thing, namely virginity. For the characters in this novel, virginity is seen as a form of self-defence against patriarchal law.

Resistance occurs because there are elements in power limiting gender in an environment. Wahyuni (2018) says that resistance is resistance (either secretly or openly) against a policy that is released or published by a party. In Maburri (2010:28), Kurniawan suggests that resistance appears in human life and is considered a natural thing to look for new things. But in the midst of that quest, some things are completely unattainable that give rise to resistance or resistance. In this case, the author is said to be a mediator in the idea of resistance between reality and reality fiction in a literary work. Therefore, resistance in a literary work is often associated with social relations that exist in society.

The novel *Garis Perempuan* is presented by four female characters: Gendhing, Ranting, Tawangsri and Zhang Mey. In this novel, the four characters reveal the meaning of virginity which is contrary to patriarchal culture. The four characters do have their own way of interpreting virginity, but through the plot that is delivered, at the end of the story, the four characters still instill values and norms according to their integrity as a woman.

The cultural backgrounds of the four characters have been very firmly embedded, namely Javanese and Chinese cultures, so their lives are indeed required to follow a predetermined line. These four characters have almost similar realities of life and treatment of character. These four characters depict the side of a gentlewoman who is full of patience. A character named Twig is a woman from a lower-middle-class family who lives alone with her mother. Gendhing, although his parents are still complete, his economic life is also not much different from that of Branch. Tawangsri is a woman who has met her idol, even though she is already married. Zhang Mey is a woman of Chinese descent who spends her days with the natives. The four female characters each have their own way of resisting and living as complete women. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to reveal the ways in which female characters defend themselves according to their respective perspectives on the prevailing patriarchal law and find out their meanings.

This research was conducted by analyzing feminist literary criticism. Suraiya (2016) reveals that feminist literary criticism is a literary study that directs the focus of its analysis on women who want justice in viewing the existence of women and trying to understand the oppression of women, and looking for ways to overcome this oppression. In line with that, Bilga (2017) argues that feminist literary criticism looks at literary works by borrowing the feminist movement. Therefore, there is a match between the object of research, namely the novel *Garis Perempuan* and the technique used.

2. Literature Review

According to Sugihastuti and Suharto (2007), literary criticism of feminism originated from a desire to criticize the works of women writers in the past and to show the image of women in the works of male writers who presented women as creatures who were in various ways suppressed, misunderstood. Interpreted and underestimated by the dominant patriarchal tradition. According to Faqih (2008), the notion of feminism is about politics, a politics that directly changes the life force relationship between women and men in society. This power also concerns all sectors of life, aspects of life, family, education, culture, and power, aspects of life that determine who, what, and for whom, and what a woman will become.

Furthermore, Sugihastuti (2010) stated that the feminism movement is the result of gender prejudice that tends to subordinate women. Women are seconded because of the assumption that men are universally different from women. The differences are limited to biological criteria and social and cultural criteria.

According to Ruthven (1984:24-58), the study of feminist literary criticism includes the following three things: (1) Women's study of men's views of women and how women's world is depicted (2) A study of women's creativity related to women potential in the midst of the tradition of male power (3) Studies related to the use of theory in research on women.

Furthermore, Djajanegara (2003: 4) reveals that the core goal of feminism is to increase the position and degree of women to be equal or equal to the position and degree of men. Facing a reality that is always biased, literature has a role in voicing. Therefore, feminist literary criticism emerges as a feminist lens with a motive to get equal rights to express new meanings that are different from old texts.

According to Bhasin (1996:3), the patriarchal system controls the field of productive power or labour women, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's movement, property rights and other economic resources. In line with that, Sylvia Walby (in Connell, 2002:58) explains that patriarchy is structured in six fields: company, home stairs, culture, sexual, violence, and country. According to Sakina (2017), the patriarchal system that dominates society's culture causes gender gaps and injustices that affect various aspects of human activities. Men have a role as the main control in society, while women have little influence or can be said to have no rights in general areas in society, both economically, socially, politically, and psychologically, even including the institution of marriage.

This opinion is in line with the novel's content that will be discussed. This relates to the views of the four figures who prioritize women's rights against the patriarchal culture that has bound them with their respective views.

The synopsis of this novel is fronted by four women who do not have many different points of view. Twigs has a firm character. This was seen when Branch came to Basudewo House intending to exchange food coupons. Basudewo then invited Branch to talk about his mother's illness. Basudewo offers a choice. The choice was very cornering, and they saw Twig as a person that money could buy. That's why Branch thinks that Basudewo has harassed him.

Gendhing, a woman full of patience and beauty, attracts attention. There is a kind of understanding raised by Gendhing that all problems raised by his parents are his responsibility to solve. The incident that supports this statement is when his mother was in debt to a loan shark and was unable to pay it.

Tawangstri has the view that women have their own rights over their bodies. So he felt virginity was something that could not be related to other people.

Zhang Mei is the only female character who is not ethnically Javanese. Zhang Mei was born and raised by Chinese culture, which makes women the other, who is subject to and governed in such a way by their cultural order. Zhang Mei tries to unravel and release the shackles of the traditional order that exists in his family by giving up his virginity to whom he chooses even though the marriage bond has not been carried out.

3. Methodology

This study uses a critical discourse analysis method with a feminist literary criticism approach by Sara Mills. Data collection techniques used in this study are reading and note-taking techniques. Reading technique is the most important thing in the implementation of this research because the researcher directly processes data from reading and understanding activities. Data is not generated without going through the reading process. Reading in scientific works is done by giving attention that is really focused on the object under study. The reading technique, in this case, means that the researcher reads the entirety of the two data sources in novel form. This is done to obtain data as research material. After reading, the note-taking technique was carried out as a continuation of the research process. Messages that have been read are then recorded according to the main things to be studied. This finding is the fourth form of defence for women. The type of data used is qualitative data in the form of a description of the results of observations.

Huberman and Miles in Denzin and Lincoln (1994) state that qualitative methods use data management processes and analysis. According to Moleong (2010), qualitative research is research that is intended to understand various phenomena about what is experienced by the research subject, such as behaviour, motivation, perception, action, which are holistic and descriptive in the form of words and language, in a special context that natural and utilize various scientific methods. Data analysis techniques using reading and note-taking techniques are carried out by reading data in the form of words, phrases, sentences, or paragraphs that describe the contents of the novel, then the interpretation is carried out, followed by categorization according to characterizations, then analyzed by rereading and concluding.

Method feminist literary criticism work, according to Winata (1988:1), summarizes various existing approaches such as sociology literature, reception, structuralism, textual, semiotics, psychology, sociology, anthropology, and so on. Based on the description above, the purpose of this study is to describe the form of defense of the four characters with different characters in the patriarchal domination in their environment.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Ranting

Ranting lives only with his mother, and they belong to a poor life. Twigs are forced to sell karak to meet their daily needs. In addition to that, her mother is suffering from a serious illness and requires a lot of money to provide for it. Even though selling karak is still not enough for their living expenses. In those difficult times, a man with three wives namely, Basudewo, who wants to take Twig as a wife; of course, he is lured with help from him to overcome Ranting economic problems pay for his mother's hospital fees and other lucrative facilities.

- (1) "I mean, Mbok War might be able to make him understand that not all women have to be first wives. In ancient times or today, it was common for a man to have more than one wife, as long as he could fulfil the rules of law and religion in force. That for women to be the first, second, or third wife, it tends to be the same, not too much of a difference" (Kuncoro, p. 62).

It can be seen what Basudewo's statement meant, that he seemed to divide women's rights and felt that being the first, second or third wife was not a serious problem. Can also be arrested; Basudewo considers Twigs only as "goods" that can be exchanged, because like his promise to marry Twig and pay for it with an asset that can pay off all the sufferings of Ranting and his mother. Obviously, the marriage is seen as just an "exchange" even Ranting position is not the only wife.

Although it was very difficult for Twig to follow Basudewo's requirements at first, her mother's suffering that had to be ended was more important than her happiness. She remains as Basudewo's wife even though there is no sincerity in her heart. It didn't stop there, and at his wits end, he was still looking for a way to end his marriage with Basudewo, even sooner or later.

- (2) "I'll count every time he comes and does it. I will record the date of his arrival, as evidence and supporting data at the end of the calculation later." (Kuncoro, p. 99).

From the quote, it can be seen that this is one way for Ranting to defend himself better by ending his marriage with Basudewo. Ranting makes his sexual relationship with Basudewo a calculation that will pay off in time. This is a form of her independence as a woman in defending her rights from all forms of oppression. In the problems faced by the Ranting, it can be said that the Ranting used his virginity as a form of exchange for paying off his debts. Virginity was used as a solution which Ranting was forced to hand over to Basudewo for the sake of guaranteed property; it could be a cost and a facility in his and his mother's life. Based on this explanation, it can be seen that Ranting indirectly has had a business in demanding equality between the rights of women and men.

4.2 Gendhing

Not much different from the problems faced by Ranting, Gendhing and his family also come from a lower-middle-class family who is struggling economically. Gendhing is just an ordinary woman who graduated from high school and can't afford to continue her education to college because of the cost. Even though he was squeezed by costs, it didn't make Gendhing discouraged and lazy at home. He tried himself to work to help his parents. Like the following quote;

- (1) "I also have the right to plan for my future, which is probably the same and in line with their plans. With or without higher education, I will find my own way to that future." (Kuncoro, p.167).

It can be seen from the quote above, Gendhing is the type of woman who works hard and does whatever she wants. Gendhing works in a salon owned by his mother's employer, and there he meets Pak Indragiri, a man who can attract him but unfortunately, he is already married. Starting from Gendhing's parents, who were completely deceived by a cooperative institution, that's where Gendhing intended to sell his virginity to Pak Indragiri to pay off his mother's debts because he had no other way and didn't know where to borrow tens of millions.

- (2) "What I'm doing is a transaction. I just did one time, he took my virgin, I received the money, then it was done." (Kuncoro, p. 196).

The wrong relationship was initially believed by Gendhing, and he lived with innocence, but along the way, he remembered his parents. If his parents knew what he was doing to pay off the debt, he would have really disappointed them, and he would feel that his self-esteem was too low. Instantly he remembered, if the virginity that he had was not only able to be assessed in terms of material, it was much more than that.

What Gendhing did was not much different from what Branching did, willing to exchange his virginity for a treasure, but in this case, Gendhing had not gone too far into the wrong relationship and valued his virginity far more than just material things. In this case, it can be said, Gendhing really respects himself, including his virginity and the role of his family, which deserves respect.

4.3 Tawangsri

Tawangsri is a woman who has lost a father figure in her life, so she really misses a father figure who is able to protect her. So that one day, when she met a man, she did not linger in love with him, namely Jenggala. Jenggala is a widower who was left behind by his wife while giving birth to his son, Langit. Starting from the same profession, Tawangsri has an interest in Jenggala, who secretly also has the same feeling.

- (1) "There is no need for me to remain a virgin for a marriage. Being a virgin or not is a choice, and I will only do it with someone I want, with or without marriage." (Kuncoro, p. 274).

It can be seen from the quote there are differences between Tawangsri's views and culture in general. A woman should be able to maintain her virginity until she gets married; Tawangsri is the exact opposite of that. Tawangsri willingly surrendered his virginity to Jenggala without marriage. But in the middle of the intercourse, Tawangsri was surprised by his own feeling that it was as if he had met Langit and was looking for his father. There was guilt in Tawangsri's heart, so he chose to stop the intercourse and intended to end it all.

- (2) "You know, with what we have done, for me, there is nothing to bear and no questions to answer. I'm not bartering my virginity in an attempt to get you. Nor am I a moral woman who distances herself from my erotic desires for the sake of preserving an image." (Kuncoro, p. 283).

From this quote, it can be seen that Tawangsri's point of view in interpreting virginity is considered as a decision for himself, with whom and how, even if there is no official marriage. Tawangsri considers that sexual relations are only based on attraction and the emergence of love from both parties regardless of official or unofficial ties.

Tawangsri's problems and views in interpreting sexuality and virginity are in accordance with the opinion of Prabasmoro (2007: 31), who says that, after all, a woman is, first of all, a human being. His body should not be seen as a prison and a limitation, but a "hold", a touch, on the world. In this case, Tawangsri considers the decision to be in his own hands, and he himself has the right to his body.

4.4 Zhang Mey

Zhang Mey's character is in a family environment that really values the concept of virginity, which should be maintained until there is a definite marriage. Zhang Mey comes from a traditional Chinese culture that highly respects women's rights in general.

- (1) "Only once you become a virgin, you must take care of that one seriously until the time comes. Your mother-in-law will prepare a white handkerchief to collect your virgin blood when you get married. You have to be able to prove that it's your first blood." (Kuncoro, p. 296).

Zhang Mey's mother's words mean that there are actions that she must take to maintain the existence of women in a patriarchal culture, namely by maintaining virginity until marriage, even more important, it is not only maintained, but it is also important to prove the tearing of a woman's blood membrane.

Zhang Mey's problem is to love a man with a different cultural background; he's named Tenggar. Zhang Mey considers his cultural rules too strict so that as a form of the vent, and his love is too deep for Tenggar, making him desperate to give up his virginity. But the intention was cancelled because Tenggar did not agree. In this case, Tenggar becomes a protective figure which is supposed to be done by men.

5. Conclusion

The novel tells the story of four women who are firm and strong in living their lives as women. Each character has their own decisions regarding their virginity. This novel indirectly describes the uniqueness of four women in Indonesia to survive in order to achieve inner comfort as women and uphold justice for women. This study aims to describe the resistance of the four female figures to patriarchal domination. The results of this study showed that the four female figures managed to defend themselves and their virginity from the threat of patriarchal culture that contradicted them. With all their uniqueness, they can argue and hold fast to their position as a form of appreciation for her as a woman.

This research is limited to the discussion of Indonesian women's resistance against patriarchal culture. The research that has been done can contribute to the reference of similar research related to gender, feminism, and women's resistance. Suggestions for further research may include broader discussions, such as women's resistance in the realm of the world that is specific to education, society, family and others.

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