
Woman's Potrayal in Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam: Feminist Perspective

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ABSTRAK

Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam menceritakan diskriminasi tokoh perempuan dari adat Kawin Tangkap yang merujuk pada penculikan dan pemerkosaan. Pergeseran budaya tersebut merendahkan martabat serta mendiskriminasi keberadaan perempuan sebagai mahluk yang bebas kehendak dan kuasanya. Sejatinya penelitian ini penting untuk melihat bagaimana makna dari adat Kawin Tangkap yang mengalami pergersaran makna seiring dengan waktu, sehingga menyebabkan kerugian pada pihak perempuan. Dalam hal ini tentu penelitian ini diharapkan dapat menjadi rujukan dalam melihat kasus-kasusa serupa berkaitan dengan adat-adat di Indonesia yang berkaitan dengan kontruksi budaya dan perempuan dalam masyarakat. Perempuan dalam novel ini berusaha ditundukkan dengan superioritas laki-laki meski akhirnya perempuan sang tokoh utama dalam karya ini menunjukkan hasil bagaimana merebut kebebasan yang sudah dirampas paksa oleh lelaki. Metode kualitatif digunakan sebagai metode analisa, metode ini fokus pada narasi dan juga dialog yang dilakukan oleh antar tokoh cerita yang merujuk pada pandangan masyarakat patriarki pada perempuan dalam masyarakat. Selanjutnya, dilakukan pengumpulan data dengan memilah narasi dan dialog yang menggambarkan posisi perempuan dan juga sesuai dengan rumusann masalah. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan sistem patriarki merepresi keberadaan perempuan melalui narasi yang menujukkan sub ordinasi, diksriminasi dan juga pelabelan perempuan. Dapat disimpulkan bahwasanya, perempuan dalam masyarakat digambarkan sebagai manusia yang keberadaaannya terkungkung dalam bayang-bayang laki-laki, meski demikian perempuan seharusnya tetap memperjuangkan hak-haknya sebagai manusia bebas meski jalan yang ditempuh tak akan mudah.

Kata Kunci: Kebebasan Perempuan, Kajian Sastra Feminis, Kawin Tangkap

ABSTRACT

Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam describes the discrimination of female characters in the Kawin Tangkap custom, which refers to kidnapping and rape. This cultural shift demeans and discriminates against women as beings with free will and power. This research is indeed important to see how the meaning of the Kawin Tangkap custom has shifted over time, thus causing harm to women. In this case, this research is certainly expected to serve as a reference in examining similar cases related to customs in Indonesia related to the construction of culture and women in society. Women in this novel try to be subdued by male superiority, although ultimately the woman, the main character in this work, shows the results of how to seize the freedom that has been forcibly taken by men. Qualitative methods are used as analysis methods; this method focuses on narratives and dialogues carried out between story characters that refer to the patriarchal view of women in society. Furthermore, data collection is carried out by sorting narratives and dialogues that describe the position of women and also in accordance with the formulation of the problem. The results of the study show that the patriarchal system represses the existence of women through narratives that show subordination, discrimination and also labeling of women. It can be concluded that, women in society are depicted as humans whose existence is confined in the shadow of men, however women should continue to fight for their rights as free humans even though the path taken will not be easy.

Keywords: Captured Marriage, Feminist Literary Studies, Women's Freedom

INTRODUCTION

Literature and the values of life are two social phenomena whose existence is closely interrelated, much like cause and effect. As a form of art, the creation of literature is grounded in life that is structured by values, and in turn, literature also contributes to the formation of those values. This indicates that literary works are essentially reflections of real-life phenomena that have occurred. However, as products of creative imagination, literary works naturally contain elements that differ from life itself. Therefore, according to Setyami, literature is a special use of words or signs that exist in various forms of human culture anywhere and at any time (2022).

Moreover, the creation of literary works that reflect social environments or situations is often demonstrated through writings on the theme of women. This is because women, with all their strengths and weaknesses, have always been an interesting source of inspiration to explore. In today's society, the image of women is still often regarded as weaker compared to men. Women are frequently viewed merely as complements, expected only to develop themselves as wives and mothers (Purwanti et al., 2020; Rahmawati, 2016; Sari & Nuryatin, 2017). Yet on the other hand, women are also closely associated with beauty. Their charm can captivate men. With all their uniqueness, women have become a recurring theme in literary works.

The theme of women in contemporary literature no longer focuses solely on discrimination related to domestic roles and burdens imposed on women within the family, both in private and public spheres. It has expanded to include issues such as the restriction of women's thoughts and control over their bodies (Agustin et al., 2022; Dewi & Primasti, 2022; Nurtjahyo, 2020; Sadrinah et al., 2022; Sapiro, 2022). Many cases of violence, harassment, abuse, and other forms of mistreatment limit women's freedom and even threaten their lives. In order to raise awareness of these issues, many authors choose to address such themes in their literary works. Through these works, readers are left with impressions of women's daily lives—not only from what they hear, but from what they read and mentally process—allowing them to reconstruct these experiences in their own imagination.

Human life itself cannot be separated from the process of cultural formation. Patriarchal culture within society focuses on the concept of male dominance and superiority, which is strongly emphasized in social structures (Cahyani & Amelda, 2022; Nurcahyo, 2016;

Turaeni, 2010). As a result, the ideology that men hold higher positions than women have become widely accepted and normalized. Consequently, discussions about women in social reality never seem to end. These discussions cover a wide range of complex aspects. The portrayal of women in society as weak beings, symbolized by the phrase “Macak, Masak, Manak” (dress up, cook, give birth), still persists as a common narrative (Anggraini et al., 2018; Roazah, 2020; Sukerti & Ariani, 2014). Therefore, women must struggle to claim their rights and break free from the labels imposed on them by society. This struggle for rights becomes a form of renewal in shaping women’s identities in the broader social perspective.

Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam was inspired by Dian’s six-week stay in Sumba, where she discovered how the tradition of “kawin tangkap” was highly detrimental to women. By raising this theme, she expressed her struggle through the medium of a novel. Kawin tangkap is a marriage tradition in Sumba. In its true form, the tradition does not imply violent abduction. Ideally, the kawin tangkap ceremony must be accepted by both parties without coercion. Alfred Samani states that kawin tangkap conducted by a man must have the consent of the Marapu (the woman’s family), and if the Marapu do not agree, certain customary signs will be given as a form of rejection so that no coercion occurs (Tuasikal, 2020).

Magi Diela is the female protagonist of the story. Magi work as a non-civil servant employee at the Sumba Agricultural Office. The initial conflict begins with an abduction in a small village while Magi is on duty. While riding her motorcycle, a man suddenly approaches her, and shortly afterward a pickup truck appears and ambushes her, pulling her into the vehicle. This event traps her in a grim reality—being caught in a cultural practice she never wished to experience. That day she becomes a witness to a cultural tragedy that has lost its true meaning, leaving behind distorted values that demean women. The tradition is known as “Tradisi Kawin Tangkap.” In this practice, a man kidnaps the woman he desires and rapes her in order to force her into marriage without mutual consent. This clearly shows that women’s safety is still not guaranteed, as cultural practices continue to threaten women’s lives and freedom in Sumba.

Therefore, the researcher is interested in uncovering how women are portrayed in the novel *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* with feminist approach. According to Wafik and Solihat (2022), the feminist movement of the 1960s had a broad impact, not only

on women but also on American society as a whole. This movement made society aware of the inferior position of women. Various groups provided strong support for efforts aimed at improving the status of women. The emergence of the new term “sexism” opened a new chapter in women’s lives, whether in relation to family, sexuality, and employment, or in connection with education and training (Geleuk et al., 2017; Nasiru, 2017; Septiani & Eliza, 2021).

In relation to literary studies, Tong (2010) explains that feminism is closely linked to the concept of feminist literary criticism, namely the study of literature that directs the focus of analysis toward women. Furthermore, Satoto and Fananie (Abazeri, 2022; Ahmadi, 2021) state that feminist literary criticism can be simply defined as a form of literary criticism that views literature with a particular awareness of gender issues, which are closely related to culture, literature, and human life.

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In analyzing the character of Magi Diela, this study specifically applies the perspective of radical feminism, as proposed by Rosemarie Tong. Radical Feminism is considered the most relevant framework because the central problems experienced by Magi’s rape, forced marriage, and social coercion represent clear forms of patriarchal control over women’s bodies. Tong argues that sexual violence is not merely a personal crime but a systemic tool used by patriarchy to maintain male dominance over women. Through this perspective, Magi’s suffering can be understood as part of a broader structure of gender-based oppression that objectifies and silences women (2008).

Moreover, Radical Feminism highlights that women’s resistance to such oppression is an essential form of reclaiming bodily autonomy and personal dignity. Magi’s struggle to confront the perpetrator and seek justice demonstrates an act of resistance against patriarchal

power. Therefore, the application of Radical Feminism in this analysis enables a critical examination of how patriarchal norms legitimize violence against women and how female characters challenge those oppressive structures.

The main objective of feminism is to improve the position and status of women so that they are equal to that of men. The struggles and efforts of feminism to achieve this goal encompass various approaches. One of these approaches is to obtain equal rights and opportunities with those possessed by men. In this regard, the term “equal rights movement” emerged. This movement aims to liberate women from the constraints of family and domestic environments(Abazeri, 2022; Anam, 2018; Irshad & Yasmin, 2022; Patil, 2013; Ratnawati, 2016).

Feminist literary criticism originated from the desire of feminists to examine the works of women writers from the past and to reveal how women are portrayed in the works of male writers, who often depict women as beings that are oppressed, misinterpreted, and underestimated by the dominant patriarchal tradition(Bauer, 2001; R. Tong, 2008). This critical approach seeks to challenge and dismantle the biased representations of women that have long been embedded in literary traditions.

Thus, feminist literary criticism is essentially an act of “reading as a woman.” What is meant by “reading as a woman” is the reader’s awareness that there are important gender differences in the meaning and interpretation of literary works (Napikoski, 2017; Ratnawati, 2016; Sugihastuti & Suharto, 2013). Through this awareness, feminist criticism attempts to uncover perspectives that have been neglected and to provide a more just and balanced understanding of women’s experiences in literature. This conceptual framework forms the theoretical foundation of the present study, which seeks to analyze the portrayal of women in literary works from liberal feminist perspective. There are several research discussed about woman’s portrait in this novel (Agustin et al., 2022; Nissa, Anas, et al., 2021; Nissa, Sriwulandari, et al., 2021) and the results are talking about woman’s oppression and discrimination. However, these results differ from what the author sought, namely that women are constructed as powerless but capable of fighting and succeeding. The main point to be highlighted is women's empowerment after becoming second-class in society.

Based on the feminist approach, the researcher determined the main in Dian Purnomo’s novel *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. The research problem is

how woman in *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* is portrayed based on Men's perspective in patriarchal society. Moreover, a qualitative method is required to analyze the novel, as the focus of the study is to identify portrayals of women through phrases, words, and both direct and indirect quotations found in the literary work. It is hoped that this research will reveal the reality of how women are constructed within society, so that the position of women will no longer be associated solely with gender-based stereotypes but also with their strength as women. This novel pointed out about woman's struggle from helplessness to full awareness of her own body's power to resist. Therefore, the portrayal of women in this novel can raise awareness about women's power within a patriarchal system.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employs a qualitative approach using a descriptive-analytical method. The qualitative approach was chosen because the research focuses on an in-depth understanding of the meanings, symbols, and representations of women contained in literary works (alamona, 2017; Karim, 2014; Moeleong, 2007; Sugiyono, 2011). This method is considered the most relevant for interpreting literary texts, as literature cannot be analyzed solely through numbers or statistics, but rather through the interpretation of language, dialogue, plot, and character portrayal. Qualitative research enables the researcher to explore deeply how women are constructed in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* by Dian Purnomo.

The primary data source in this study is the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*, published by PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama in 2021. The novel serves as the material object of the research, while the formal object is the portrayal of women within it. In addition to the main data source, this research also utilizes supporting data in the form of books, academic journals, and other references related to literary studies, feminist literary criticism that is focused on image of woman in the text which related with how is women are constructed in patriarchy society. The data collected in this study consist of words, phrases, sentences, dialogues, and narratives that depict the position, roles, and experiences of women in the novel.

Data collection techniques were carried out through library research and the read-and-note technique (Lexy, 2007). The researcher repeatedly read the entire content of the novel in order to understand the storyline, character development, and the social context that forms its

background (Creswell, 2017). Afterward, the researcher recorded sections of the text considered relevant to the research focus, particularly those related to the depiction of women, forms of gender injustice, violence against women, and women's struggles against oppression. The collected data were then classified based on specific themes and categories to facilitate analysis.

Data analysis in this research was conducted using Tong's perspective in radical feminism. This approach was applied to examine how women are positioned in literary texts, both as individuals and as part of a patriarchal social structure. The stages of analysis included data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing. In the data reduction stage, the researcher selected and sorted important quotations related to the representation of women. The data were then presented in descriptive form based on three points; women's subordination; Sexual Objectification and Gender-Based Abuse and women's empowerment. The final stage involved drawing conclusions in order to answer the research questions. These three parts will be the limits of the author's interpretation of the data that has been found.

The validity of the data in this study was maintained through triangulation of theory and sources. Theoretical triangulation was conducted by comparing the results of the analysis with concepts found in feminist theory and literary criticism. Meanwhile, source triangulation was carried out by using various relevant academic references to strengthen the interpretations. Through these techniques, the research findings are expected to have academic validity and credibility.

Through this research method, the study is expected to systematically reveal how women are portrayed in the novel *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. Furthermore, this research is also expected to provide broader insight into the social realities faced by women, particularly within the context of a still-dominant patriarchal culture. The results of this study are expected not only to contribute to the development of literary studies but also to serve as a critical reflection for society regarding the importance of gender equality and respect for women's rights.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

1. Women's Subordination

Magi meronta, mencoba melepaskan diri, memukul ke segala arah, menendang, berteriak, menggit apapun yang bisa dijangkau oleh mulutnya. Namun, nihil. Tenaga seorang perempuan mungil yang sedang dalam keadaan terkejut karena diberhentikan dalam perjalanan tidak sebanding dengan lima laki-laki muda yang berbekal parang di pinggang kiri mereka. Namun, Magi tidak berhenti meronta, sampai dia direbahkan secara paksa di lantai pickup dengan semua laki-laki memeganginya, lalu pintu belakang bak itu ditutup dan pickup melaju (p. 41)

Women and their physically weak condition have long become a characteristic of how women are viewed in society. The association of women with weakness is one of the social realities that is very commonly found (Nissa, et al., 2021). Therefore, in literary works, discussions about women also tend to represent this condition. The sentence describing how the strength of a small woman who is in shock after being stopped on her journey is no match for five young men armed with machetes clearly illustrates this perception. The phrase “small woman” refers to physical appearance, pointing to a small body that is considered powerless (Tidd, 2004). Furthermore, the assumption that women are physically weak is also depicted as one of their inherent limitations. The statement that her strength was no match for five young men carrying machetes shows that women’s physical weakness is also caused by their inability to resist the power of men who threaten their lives, even though they try to fight back. The weakness of women’s actions in this novel does not only highlight physical limitations but also limitations in agency. The main character, Magi Diela, although portrayed as petite and lacking the strength to fight five men, is still shown to struggle desperately to resist, even though she knows the final outcome will remain the same. Her physical limitations cannot be overcome when faced with five men carrying sharp weapons. The excerpt describing how Magi continues to struggle even when she is forcibly held down demonstrates that although women may be physically weaker than men, their will to survive is just as strong. Her effort to escape from the kidnapping carried out by five unfamiliar men is made with great determination, even though she knows she cannot win against the grip of ten human hands.



Figure 1. Magi's problem due to Kawin Tangkap Tradition

“Sa mau ko jadi sa istri. Tidak ada niat buruk lain jadi diam dan jadi istri yang baik buat sa” (p. 53)

The coercion experienced by Magi shows not only physical weakness but also a lack of power. Women are considered powerless in the face of male superiority. Control over women's bodies and minds seems impossible for women to exercise freely. The sentence telling her to be silent and become a good wife explains how men take advantage of women's vulnerability to make them feel even more powerless beneath male authority. Silence in this novel represents how women are expected to obey men, regardless of the decisions imposed upon them, because that is what is considered normal. Whatever the origins of this mindset, problems like this frequently occur in real life. Many women are unable to express their power because they are constantly overshadowed by male dominance that has controlled every aspect of women's lives, both in private spheres such as family and in broader public spaces within society.

2. Sexual Objectification and Gender-Based Abuse

“Bukan keperawanan yang hilang yang Magi sesali, dia tidak peduli perawan atau tidak. Yang membuatnya marah adalah orang lain yang memberitahunya bahwa dia baru saja diperkosa dalam keadaan tidak sadar dan sekarang dipaksa menikah dengan pemerkosanya” (52–53)

Instead of being positioned as victims, women are often treated as captives (Agustin et al., 2022). In many cases of sexual harassment, women are not seen as victims

but are instead blamed as perpetrators. The stigma placed upon women who have experienced sexual abuse in society is often that they somehow provoked the assault. In reality, acts of violence or sexual harassment are not caused by clothing or behavior, but by the malicious intent of the perpetrators (Dayanti, 2011). Women are constantly faced with a double-edged sword. On one hand, they must fight against harassment, and on the other, they must be ready to endure criticism and condemnation for resisting. The quotation showing Magi's anger after being told she was raped while unconscious and forced to marry her rapist illustrates how deeply violated, she feels. She is informed that she lost her virginity while being unaware of what was happening. Rather than depicting a woman who only cries helplessly after being raped, the quotation shows Magi as a woman filled with anger, refusing to be defeated by her circumstances. In this novel, this perspective is demonstrated through the central female character, who remains resilient despite the many losses and hardships she experiences. In this novel, this perspective is demonstrated through the central female character, who remains resilient despite the many losses and hardships she experiences.

“Kalau Tamu terus melawan, Tamu sendiri yang akan sakit. Kita ini perempuan. Mengalah sa, sudah. Melawan pun akan kalah,” Kata Magi Wara pelan sambil mengangsurkan handuk kecil pada Magi (p. 57) From this quotation, it can be seen how women's voices are often silenced and forced into submission. In the novel *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*, this reflects how women are subdued, as if being born a woman is already a definitive defeat. Women in this passage are portrayed as people who must obey and are not allowed to fight back (Asrita, 2018). Any resistance they attempt is considered useless and meaningless. In reality, resistance against injustice should be carried out by both men and women alike, as free human beings equally entitled to fair treatment. The statement that “we are women; it is better to give in, because even if we fight, we will lose” reinforces the limited position of women. The phrase “we are women” serves as a boundary restricting their actions. Women are assumed to have no free will, as their freedom and rights are determined by men (Mahsus, 2020). This deprivation of rights occurs simply because Magi is a woman. Such injustice is truly suffocating. Women are always considered incapable of resisting and voicing their opinions. This

depiction shows that women's position in society is often reduced to that of lifeless ornaments, like chess pieces moved by others.

3. Women's Empowerment

“Magi memilih tidak mendengarkan, dia tahu jalur yang dipilihnya akan sepi. Mungkin beberapa bertepuk tangan dan berterima kasih, tapi semua itu akan dilakukan dalam diam. Saat ini mendapati Leba Ali meringkuk di dalam penjara saja sudah cukup buatnya. Ini adalah pesan yang ingin Magi sampaikan kepada setiap orang yang ingin merampas hak orang lain” (p, 308-309)

However, this work also portrays how Magi Diela, as the main character, breaks through the many assumptions attached to women. Despite her weak physical condition, lack of power, and limited freedom of movement and thought, she refuses to allow these limitations to define what she can achieve. Her unwavering determination to bring to justice the man who abused her and arrogantly married her under the excuse of tradition demonstrates her courage to challenge the boundaries imposed upon her. The social limitations constructed around her as a woman are gradually challenged through learning and persistent struggle(Sumakud & Septiana, 2020). Throughout the years after becoming a victim of kidnapping and sexual violence, she never ceases to fight for her dignity and rights.

Magi's struggle reaches its most crucial point when she chooses to confront the perpetrator through legal means. This decision represents a significant form of subversive action, in which she strategically employs modern legal instruments to resist and dismantle traditional customs that have been misused to justify violence against women. By turning to the law, Magi challenges the patriarchal authority embedded in local traditions and exposes the injustice hidden behind cultural norms. Her action illustrates a powerful shift from being a silenced victim to becoming an active agent who reclaims control over her life and body.

As an intelligent and determined woman, Magi expands her horizons by joining women's organizations that advocate for the elimination of injustice and discrimination. Through these organizations, she gains access to knowledge, solidarity, and legal awareness, which become essential tools in her fight for justice. This highlights that literacy, education, and collective support among women function as key mechanisms of

empowerment. For nearly four years, she persistently searches for legal and social openings within a society that glorifies male power while marginalizing women.

Although Magi ultimately succeeds in imprisoning the perpetrator, her struggle does not end there. Her statement that she chooses not to listen and understands that her chosen path will be lonely indicates that resistance against patriarchy often requires personal sacrifice. In a society that strictly upholds tradition, Magi's actions are considered an affront to customs that have existed for generations. This situation reveals that social awareness and empathy toward women's suffering remain limited. Therefore, a feminist approach is essential to help society understand women from their own perspectives and experiences. Such understanding must go beyond mere reading; it should encourage deeper recognition of the structural injustices that women have long been forced to endure.

CONCLUSION

This novel represents a critique of the patriarchal system which refers to the culture of Kawin Tangkap which has experienced a shift in meaning, thus harming women in their social reality. Thus are classified into three themes; women's subordination (women are still considered weak beings who can only depend on men); sexual objectification and gender-abused; and women's empowerment. It can be concluded that although women's power is very limited to certain spheres, which causes discrimination and injustice toward women to continue increasing but when women realize about their power, they can actualize their power to resist the patriarchy system. Magi as a portrait of women in modern era. She represents how women struggle to obtain their rights. Even though it is will be a long and difficult struggle, yet Magi Diela is able to demonstrate that her hard efforts ultimately produce real and meaningful results. In addition, the results of this study can be a reference for other researchers who will examine the same object of study to deepen the study of feminism more complex. Moreover, how women who are oppressed by customs do resistance through a psychological approach or others, so that the research approach can show a variety of research results that are useful for empowering women and enriching studies on culture or traditions that repress women.

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