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confirmation of article submission

WAJIRAN WAJIRAN <wajiran@enlitera.uad.ac.id> to Muhammad Tue, Dec 29, 2020, 10:09 AM

Dear Muhammad,

I have submitted my revised article to your journal since 14th December 2020. If you don't mind I need a letter of acceptance. The letter is very important for me to be a part of my research funding report.

Many thanks for your help.

kind regards,

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Muhammad Faiq <mfaiq08@gmail.com> to me Wed, Jan 6, 2021, 10:20 AM

We consider to publish your article, but you are supposed to add another reputable name for authorship....with id scopus is required.

WAJIRAN WAJIRAN to me Wed, Jan 6, 2021, 12:13 PM

Ok, I will do that. Thanks

WAJIRAN WAJIRAN to me Thu, Jan 7, 2021, 7:13 AM

Dear Muhammad, As advised I have put my colleague as the second writer on this manuscript. document attached. I am looking forward to seeing your furthe...

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Walisongo@walisongo.ac.id

Wajiran Wajiran <wajiran@enlitera.uad.ac.id> to Muhammad

Fri, Jan 15, 2021, 5:42 AM

Dear Muhammad,

Dear Muhammad,
As I have revised the article based on your advise can you send me the acceptance letter of the article. I need that letter to be a part of the report of my final project.

Many thanks for your help.

Kind Regards,

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Article Letter of Acceptance Walisongo.pdf

January 15, 2021

Wajiran S.S., M.A.
Head of English Literature Department
Universitas Ahmad Dahlan
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ARTICLE ACCEPTANCE LETTER

Title of the Journal : Walisongo: Jurnal Penelitian Sosial Keagamaan
Article Title : **Women's Socio-Political Dynamics In Indonesian Literature**
Author(s) : Wajiran S.S., M.A.
Article Type : Original Article

Dear Mr. Wajiran,
Thank you very much for your submission to our journal. We are pleased to inform you that your paper has been reviewed, and accepted for publication Volume 28, No. 2 (2020).

Thank you for making the journal a vehicle for your research interests.

Best wishes,
Editor-in-Chief

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Women's Socio-Political Dynamics in
Indonesian Literature

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Abstract

Literary works have been believed to be media to spread ideas or ideology. This paper seeks to examine the images of women before Indonesia's Reform Era as reflected in Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and after the Reform Era as reflected in Ayu Utami's *Saman*. By employing qualitative modes of inquiry and theories in the sociology of literature, this study has shown that images of women before and after Indonesia's Reform Era are depicted differently. Before Indonesia's Reform Era, the image of women tends to be submissive in dealing with the socio-political dynamics, while after the Reform Era in 1998, they are depicted as progressive and even rebellious. However, it is also important to notice that this difference indicates the writers' political and ideological preference in describing the women's position in Indonesian society in their era. The findings of this study support Gramsci's idea about ideological or cultural hegemony presented by literary work.

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Karya sastra diyakini dapat menjadi media penyebaran ide-ide atau ideologi. Penelitian ini berusaha mengungkap potret perempuan sebelum Era Reformasi yang tercermin dalam Novel Bekisar Merah karya Ahmad Tohari dan setelah Era Reformasi yang tercermin dalam Novel Saman karya Ayu Utami. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif serta teori-teori sosiologi sastra, artikel ini menemukan bahwa citra perempuan sebelum dan sesudah Era Reformasi di Indonesia digambarkan secara berbeda. Sebelum Era Reformasi, citra perempuan cenderung patuh dalam

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menghadapi dinamika sosial-politik, sedangkan setelah Era Reformasi 1998, mereka digambarkan sangat progresif bahkan pemberontak. Namun, perbedaan citra perempuan sebelum dan sesudah reformasi tersebut juga menunjukkan kecenderungan politis dan ideologis sang penulis dalam menggambarkan posisi perempuan di tengah-tengah masyarakat pada zamannya. Temuan penelitian ini mendukung gagasan Gramsci tentang hegemoni ideologi atau budaya yang ada di dalam karya sastra

Keywords: image of women; Indonesian literature, reflection; reformation era, society;, socio-political dynamic

Introduction

Every civilisation has various perception toward women. Most of them regard that being a woman is unlucky. Many social scientists and philosophers such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas and Plato believe that women are weak creature. Therefore, women are unlucky, they are full of weaknesses and unrespected (Selden, 1985, p. 128). Philosophers assume that women's physical and psychological condition make them has low quality than men. This inappropriate perception makes women have unsafe in the social and political position. Women are regarded as the *second-class people*.

Because of the negative stigma, women cannot participate in public sphere. Their activities are very limited to domestic jobs. Women was not allowed to participate in political and social sphere (Norquay & Park, 2006). As a result, they could not participate in taking the decision dealing with their society (interest), such as taking a part in general election and so on. As a consequence, what was produced in social and political arena always benefit for men but not good for women. Women always placed as an object of the social policy rather than the subject. Although the situation has changed, the stigma of women's inferiority still can be found in the society.

This paper tries to describe women's social and political dynamic in Indonesia based on the evidence. The discussion will be based on the literature, especially written after the reformation era (the era of *Reformasi*). The Reformation era occurred in 1998 has changed many life aspects in Indonesian society. After *Reformasi*, there are many new perspectives about female characters in Indonesian literature. Therefore, this paper will be more focused on how the writers present the image of women as the main character. How writers depict the female characters in their social and political position. Is there any different between male and female writer in presenting about women?

This paper applies qualitative research method. The main data are taken from novels as the object of this research. The data is in the form of quotation that reflects the ideas dealing with women's issues or image. The data that being analysed are based on the theory of the sociology of literature. Which mean whether the reflection of the literature presents what is occurring in the society. To support the analysis, this paper also gathers the data from other resources such as books, journal articles, and research paper, such as thesis.

Some previous research dealt with the image of women in Indonesian literature. However, they do not really deal with the difference between male and female writers' points of view. Herry Aveling writes the first paper with the title *Indonesian Literature after Reformasi: The Tongues of Women* (2007). This paper asserts that female writers' existence brings good news for women. Female writers will bring women's voice, that represent the women's social and political interests (Aveling, 2007).

The second publication is written by Diah Ariani Arimbi, *Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers: Representation, Identity and Religion of Muslim Women In Indonesian Fiction* (2009). This book is not so different from Aveling's ideas, yet it focuses on the issues of ideology brought by the female writers and their identity as female writers. The existence of female writers is believed supporting the ideology

which will give 'benefit' for women. Therefore, the existence of female writers will defend women's political interest.

Meanwhile, Barbara Hatly also writes an article entitled *New Direction in Indonesian Women's Writing: The Novel Saman* (1999). This paper is a response toward the competition held by Jakarta Arts Council which gives best appreciation to Ayu Utami's novel, *Saman* (1998). This paper deal with the reason why this novel gets the best nomination. As mentioned by Hatly, this novel is regarded bringing new perspectives in presenting female characters. Before reformation era, female writers present the female character as an obedient as the member of society, but *Saman* presents different views, the female character is depicted as a woman who want to be free and having personal choice. In addition, this novel presents female characters who want to run away from the social norms.

Wajiran (2020) in his Ph.D. thesis titled *Images of Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesian Literature*, focuses on how Muslim writers present female characters in their works (Wajiran, 2020). The thesis deals with the difference between male and female writers in presenting female characters, especially those called the writer Period of 2000 (*Sastrawan Angkatan Reformasi*). Wajiran (2019), in his article *Male's Perspective on Women in Contemporary Indonesian Literature*, focuses only on how male writers depict female characters in their writing. This paper focuses on Muslim male writers: Habiburrahman El Shirazy dan Wahid Hasyim. Both writers are Muslim and activists in Islamic organizations; El Shirazy in FLP (*Forum Lingkar Pena* [Pen Circle Forum]), while Hasyim in Muhammadiyah.

From the previous publications, this paper presents different perspectives. This paper compares male and female writers' point of view toward women. Besides that, this paper also compares the ways of depicting women in Indonesian literature. Therefore, we choose two writers whose works are contradictive; *Bekisar Merah* (Tohari, 2005) represents patriarchy's ideology, while *Saman* (Utami, 1998) represents the ideology of feminism.

Political Condition after Reformation Era

The fall of Suharto provides enormous political change in Indonesia. This is because Habibie's administration made some changes to the system of government in this country, including the law No. 40 1999. The change was continued during the reign of Abdurrahman Wahid. Wahid, well known as Gus Dur, revamped the condition that freedom of expression significantly influences Indonesian people (Yulianeta et al., 2016). At this time, each man was given leeway in the expression, do the associations both political and non-political. It was characterised by the abolition of the Ministry of Information Department (*Menteri Penerangan*). Thus, each press got a good ease of licensing in publishing mass media such as newspapers, magazines, tabloids and all types of publications.

The abolishment of the Information Department (*Departemen Penerangan*) also impacts press agencies' freedom to deploy information. In the New Order era, the Press Council's function was the government's extension, but the Press Council is more independent at the reformation era. The formation of the Press Council chairman was appointed from its members directly. Despite their endorsement fixed through a presidential decree, but no entanglement between government and Press Council. That's why the difference under Sukarno and Suharto press agencies is like a government mouth-piece, but during Habibie, Gus Dur and Megawati the press Agency was more independent (Yuri, 2003).

It needs to know that in the period of reform, there were important events that mark the freedom in the reformation era. There are some important events that the influence the social and political situation in Indonesia: on May 21, 1998, Suharto stepped down from his post and B.J. Habibie replace him. Riots of 13 to 14 May 1998 resulted in many malls on fire, which claimed many lives. Many Chinese women of descent are victims of rape (Turner, 2003). Some books by LEKRA (*Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat*) writers can come to the surface. Ayu Utami hoist sex

scented literature through *Saman*. In 1999, the second democratic elections held in Indonesia after the 1955 elections led PDI Megawati Sukarnoputri gained most votes. However, the elected president is K.H. Abdurrahman Wahid (Gus Dur). In 2001 the award Equatorial Literary Award (KLA) is given to writers who produce the best literature. Those who have ever received this award include Goenawan Muhammad, Remy Sylado, Hamsad Rangkuti, Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Linda Christanty, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Joko Pinurbo, Gus TF., Acep Zamzam Noor. In 2002, the magazine publishes books *Horizon*. *Horizon Literature Indonesia* which consists of four books, the books of poetry, short stories, novels, and plays. In this book, Hamzah Fansuri who lived in the 17th century, was the first Indonesian writer. In 2003, Sapardi Djoko Damono and Ignas Kleden awarded Ahmad Bakrie Award for his services in the field of literature and thought. Writers and intellectuals who received the same award in subsequent years is Goenawan, Nurcholish Madjid, Budi Darma, Sartono Kartodirdjo. Frans Magnis Soeseno who should get the award Bakrie company refused because of the relationship with the Lapindo mudflow disaster in Sidoarjo, East Java. In 2004, literature on the Internet is a breakthrough for the writers to freely express and publicise their work. Novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy published. Lontar Foundation documented Indonesian biography writers, Pramoedya Ananta Toer, Rubén Martínez Dalmau, Ahmad Tohari, Umar Kayam, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Sutan Alisjahbana, Putu Oka Sukanta, and others. In 2005, the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata was published. *Laskar Pelangi* and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* became the best-selling novel (best-seller) in Indonesia's history of publishing novels. Both the novel is also transformed into the film (Rampan, 2000).

Those important events result from the reformation era where people get their freedom of opinion, expression and groups. Habibie's administration policies continued by Gus Dur have spawned various important events that make community participation in building the country (Heryanto, 2014). No exception literary movement began to squirm with

the birth of literary works different from the previous one. Ayu Utami has pioneered in fragrance literary work that becomes striking example. There are also some re-publications forbidden book written by Pramudya Ananta Toer, *Tempo* magazine and many others.

In addition to the above-mentioned events, the *Reformasi* also has provided fresh air for women's courage to voice their thoughts (Arimbi, 2009; Aveling, 2007). At this time, many women writers were born, carry a distinctive colour of literary works. Some women writers were born during the reformation besides work in the form of novel is also short stories. They are Oka Rusmini (*Sagra*, 2002), Djenar Maesa Ayu (*Mereka Bilang Saya Monyet*, 2002; *Jangan Main-main (dengan Kelaminmu)*, 2004), Intan Paramaditha (*Sihir Perempuan*, 2005), Nukila Amal (*Laluba*, 2005), Weka Gunawan (*Merpati di Trafalgar Square*, 2004), Labibah Zain (*Addicted to Weblog: Kisah Perempuan dalam Dunia Maya*, 2005), Ucu Agustin (*Kanakar: Kumpulan Cerpen Ucu Agustin*, 2005), Evi Idawati (*Malam Perkawinan*, 2005). These authors seem to want to follow in the footsteps of his senior, NH Dini, Titis Basino, Leila S. Chudori, Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim or Abidah El-Khalieqy.

The reformation era has been providing fresh air of freedom from the various groups in Indonesia, including groups of women. Small groups or organisations in the community that Suharto era escort or even ban now flourished in all aspects of society (Aveling, 2007). Suharto's fall has given freedom for all groups to participate in fulfilling country's independence. No exception to women who initially considered inferior. Post-Reformation, women have a place to be equal with men, especially in politics (Soejipto, 2011).

Since the days of the Old Order and New Order era, the women's movement is long-hosted or facilitated. In each of these periods has a style and different condition. In the Old Order era, women's role is still very alarming because it does not have the bargaining power comparable to men. At that time, many women do not have the same rights in the public arena. Women in the Old Order era is still regarded as the second class.

The second class of human existence is still very dependent on men. Practices of polygamy, mistress are still rampant in the Indonesian community.

Although progress, the New Order government also does not offer a wider position of women's role. At this time women were still controlled to support the interests of men. During the New Order government even more tightened the women's movement. It is caused by the presence of control and prohibition of some activities that would disturb public order indicated or ideological threat (especially the movement of communism). New Order government through the Directorate of Culture supervise, assess, and control every cultural activity, including women's activities (Jones, 2012).

Kartini is considered the pioneer of Indonesian women who dare to open discourse injustice against women (Schmidt, 2012). Kartini has a major role in opening doors of Indonesian public awareness of the importance of equality. Even though it still revolves around the issue of equality in education. With Kartini's thoughts, women began to receive attention from the government. Nevertheless, the ideas are still tailored to the desires of men. Kartini's views on gender equality in traditional Java, for example, have been implicitly conveyed in Pramoedya A. Toer's novels, one of which is in *Gadis Pantai* (Sofi, 2018).

Suharto's government was very concerned about women's condition in the New Order era. Dharma Wanita -government employee wife organization- activities were very encouraged in the New Order era. Activities such as PKK (*Program Kesejahteraan Keluarga*, family welfare program) is evidence that women got a position to participate in the nation's development. Still, women's role and function in this case is simply meet or support the struggle of men (Fatimah, 2007).

Such conditions rouse the attitude of unacceptable or dissatisfaction of women. They still feel the inequality between men and women. The differences of treatment in employment and coverage makes women feel always in the shadow of male's power. That is why, the imbalance of women's participation is considered to have caused injustice to women.

Violence against women is considered a result of the injustice that sees women as inferior beings. As a result, many movements born women demanding equal rights. The demand for equality is expected to reduce discrimination that result in violence against women.

There have been many studies conducted by experts in the field of women's empowerment, both in Indonesia and foreign countries. Scientists have formulated how injustice and oppression against women can be addressed immediately. We know the program of Woman in Development (WID) was initiated by Woman's Committee of the Washington Chapter of the Society for International Development in the early 1970s. However, because this term still positioned women as the objects, in 1990s it changed to Gender and Development/GaD (Nugroho, 2011). The changes are expected that women are not merely the object of development, but women should be the development itself.

The cause of discrimination against women is not purely economic problems. In the sense that the scope of work and wealth is not the main factor causing violence against women. Cultural factors are determinants of everything that happens in the social groups including women. The existence of ideology, values, and beliefs held by a nation largely determines how we see and put a group (including women) in society. In Indonesia, Muslim is the majority population, the largest ethnic group is Javanese and Sundanese seems to help determine women's position in this country.

As described above, political conditions would greatly influence the government policies that eventually lead public opinion on a class. The government's role in taking policy will have a great effect on the perception of the wider community. As women's scope is determined based their gait because of the role and merits are determined by government policies, they generally also consider local culture. The limitation of the scope of the women's role who put them only as a supporter of their husband, attention to children health, a good house keeper and be a good wife to her

husband and children is an example of a policy that is considered detrimental to women (Hooker, 1993; Schmidt, 2012).

The movement's scope revealed the need for reconstruction of the role of women. Gender labour division should be abolished because it makes women become inferior. Women should be able to play an active role in the development of the participating productive chores. Limitations for women who do domestic work are the starting point of women's dependence on male domination. Barbara Rogers calls that "the domestication of women" (Mosse, 1993). The question is whether the uniform distribution over all types of work for women will further improve the lives of women?

That question is becoming opposite with what was originally be a women's demands. After having an opportunity to participate in the public sphere, they have to take double jobs; jobs to earn money and household. Women feel burdened with the tasks that are dealing with matters relating to children and housework. Households are considered too time-consuming, and women are blocked to progress as men. As a result, many women's movement considers that the gender division of labour is the politicisation of men, so that they remain in power against women.

Indonesian Writers

Before the reformation era 1998, literary works were dominated by male writers. Some of male writers deal with women as the main character. Their works still supported men's interest or men's domination toward women. According to Hellwig (1994), literature that male writes does not spread the ideology of patriarchy, but it confirms domination of male toward women in society (Mohd, 2006). As a result, male author writing will be beneficial for men.

Hellwig inserts that the different point of view between men and women confirms that men have a special position in Javanese culture (Hellwig, 2012). This situation is legitimated by the values of religion and

local customs that do not support women's emancipation in public sphere. Women have 'special' time period: menstruation, giving birth, and breastfeeding confirm that women's position is weak. In this period, women's experiences the physical weakness therefore they have low quality of life. Women in this period is regarded as unproductive human beings.

Based on the situation above, is there any correlation between psychological condition with the literature she produce? Or the literature written by female writers is an expression of dissatisfaction of the un-beneficial condition in their society? Is that true that female literature is only an emotional expression therefore their works have low quality?

The characteristic of female writer becomes so variative. The light difference is on the theme and word choice in their literature. After the reformation era, the theme about sex and women's bodies are the two dominant themes for female writers. The vulgar word choice also marks this in literature. Some critics assume that this expression caused by women's disappointment. In other words, female writers want to show that they do not want to be the subordinate in their socio-political position. They want to escape from confine of the men. Women's position as the second-class people makes them experience unhappy-treatment in social sphere.

Ayu Utami is regarded as the pioneer in the freedom of expression in literature. She writes about sensitive issues that encourage the contradictive opinion from critics. Her works that deal with women's bodies and sexual freedom are 'unusual' in the Indonesian context. These themes were regarded as forbidden and taboo in New Order and Old Order regime. Thus, Ayu Utami's work is regarded as the progressive literature in women's social and political dynamics (Nurhadi, 2007). If we see the work of Ayu Utami, we will find that the ideological issue that is reflected in her literature is a kind of rebellion. The rebellion to social and religious norm and moral values. It is because, sexuality, women's body or erotism are the private matters that cannot be discussed in public sphere.

According to Herry Aveling (2007), the existence of female literature after reformation era makes it possible for everybody to listen her own voices. Female literary work is an expression about women's true soul. They represent the dream, ideas, and hope of women. This is because in the previous era, literary works that presented women are commonly based on male's perspective (Wajiran, 2019). Aveling asserted that some literature that deal with women issues did not represent women's idealism. As can be seen in *Siti Nurbaya* (1921) by Marah Rusli, *Layar Terkembang* (1936) by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Belenggu* (1941) by Armijn Pane, *Gadis Pantai* (1987) by Pramudia Ananta Toer and *Bekisar Merah* (2005) by Ahmad Tohari.

According to Aveling, male literature that deals with women's issues still tells the real condition that happens in society. The female characters are still regarded as the subordinate people. Women's existence is regarded only as the supplement of men to get their success. Because of that, women have very limited space to do and to speak. Women's existence is to support men's success and help men's job, giving birth for their children, keeping the children and the households, and keeping the community (Aveling, 2007). Therefore, it confirms the inferiority of women in social and political dynamics.

Hellwig affirms that male writers' work confirms the social tradition placed women as an object not as a subject. Novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruh* for instance, describes how the term "open the curtain" (Bukak Kelambu) illustrates how the women are controlled and managed by men. Men have the dominant and higher position or authority toward women. The novel's main character illustrates that women are only as the object for men's wishes and authority. Women can be bartered, sold, and exploited. This is also seen from the government rule in New Order regime that places women as the subordinate. The New Order regime develops the institution special for women to control their activity. Five women's principle (*Panca Darma Wanita*), the prosperity of the family (*Pembinaan*

Kesejahteraan Keluarga) and the organisation of the official's wife of the government (Mohd, 2006).

To see the difference between male and female writers in presenting their ideas about women's image, this following chapter presents two writers: Ahmad Thohari and Ayu Utami. The reason of choosing these two writers is because both are famous writers. Ahmad Thohari represents male writer, while Ayu Utami represents a contemporary female writer.

The Female Characters in *Bekisar Merah*

The novel *Bekisar Merah* is one example of the women position based on the male's perspective. This novel is written by Ahmad Thohari a productive writer whose writing based on Javanese culture. He can be categorised as the old generation. He was born on June 13, 1948. *Bekisar Merah* was firstly published in daily newspaper, *Kompas*, from February to May 1993. Then, it was published in a book in 2005. Even though it was written since 1990s, but the theme is still relevant with the contemporary issues about women's social and political condition in Indonesia. This novel represents Javanese social and cultural dynamics. Therefore, this novel is regarded as representing males' perception of women reflected in literary work.

It is possible to assume that literature's subjectivity is very dominant on this novel. The writer's background of social, political, and ideological influence the writer in presenting the issue of women. The political interest of the writer is also important. As a result, male writer will support and give benefit for men, while female writers will also give an opinion based on their interest.

Bekisar Merah contradicts modern women's social and political idealism because the female character's position is very weak. It can be assumed that the main character is placed as the second-class people in society and the family. Women are regarded as a weak creature not only in physic, but also economic, social and psychology. As a result, the main

character of the novel presents that the main character has no social and political bargaining dealing with her own problem. The main (female) character becomes the victim of men's domination. The issue that occurs to the main character, Lasi represents the social attitude toward women in Javanese culture.

Lasi is a poor young woman who live in a village, Karangsoa. The setting of the village in this novel indicates that a woman who is from village is associated with an ignorance and poverty.

Besides as a poor girl, she is not originally Javanese, because she has Japanese blood from her father. Lasi becomes the object of racism because of her father who is not Javanese. Every people in the village knows that she was born unwanted because her mother becomes the victim of sex abuse by Japanese trop. Therefore, she is called as *anak Jadah* or *Haram child* (illegitimate child). Because of that, even she is very beautiful, no one of Javanese men wants to be her husband. Every young man who knows her family background do not want to marry her. This is caused by the negative stigmatisation that illegitimate child. It is believed that illegitimate child will bring bad fortune in their lives. This situation makes Lasi gets difficulty to get married. As a result, her mother asks Darsa, the village's poor young man to marry her (Tohari, 2005, p. 40).

Darsa is a young man who lives in the village and woks as coconut picker. He is poor and has no social position. He is the only young boy who stays in his village because of his economic difficulty. He has no capital to go to the big city to find better job. Besides that, he is also not enough educational background to work in a big city.

After getting married, both Lasi and Darsa have no better economic condition. They still live-in poor conditions because they have no skill to make their lives better. Nevertheless, the family's economic condition becomes worse when Darsa got an accident. Darsa falls from coconut tree when he was working. He hurt and his body is broken. Darsa cannot work to earn money for his family, therefore Lasi has to work for herself. Lasi works to get money and also to cure her husband. The limited of money

makes the family becomes so difficult. Lasi must borrow some money from a rich man in the village.

The poorness makes Lasi's life become so difficult. She must borrow some money from Mr. Tir to cure her husband illness. Mr. Tir is Kanjat's father. Kanjat is a university student who have a feeling of love to Lasi.

Lasi has no other choice, therefore she asked a soothsayer to cure her husband. The soothsayer's name is Bunek. In the beginning, Bunek always come to Lasi's house to cure Darsa's health problems. Nevertheless, after Darsa's illness is getting better, Bunek asked Darsa to come to her house. Unfortunately, after Darsa looks better, Bunek asks Darsa to sleep with her daughter. In the end, Bunek's daughter getting pregnant. It means that the cure process is successful (Tohari, 2005, p. 62).

The story becomes so complicated after Bunek's daughter, Sipah is pregnant by Darsa. Sipah is mentally ill. She has old enough without husband. This condition used by Bunek to encourage Darsa to marry her. Because of Sipah's pregnancy, Lasi's marriage is broken. Lasi's life becomes so worse. Lasi must share her husband to others woman. This situation makes her life becomes so complicated and frustrated. She should accept Sipah as the second wife of Darsa.

Lasi decides to go out from her village. She runs away to Jakarta. She met *seorang germo* (pimp) in Jakarta and stayed there for several days. At the first, she lives with Mrs. Koneng, whose house becomes the food store in which Pardi and Sopan (Mr. Tir's truck driver) always visit. After several days, Lasi was asked to live with Mrs. Lanting. She is a professional pimp, who always find girls for a rich man to get second wife. Mrs. Lanting treated Lasi very well, therefore Lasi does not know that Mrs. Lanting wants her to get married with a rich old man. Mrs. Lanting treats Lasi as if she is her daughter. She does it because Mrs. Lanting will get good tips (salary) from the rich man. Lasi is excellent girl for the rich old man. Mr. Handarbeni is the lucky rich old man who gets the chances to marry Lasi.

After they marry, Lasi is unhappy. Although she gets many 'benefits' in that marriage, such as wealth and good social status but that cannot help her to be happy. Her husband, Mr. Handarbeni cannot give her sexual happiness which make her very frustrated. This condition makes her life in very poor condition. Ironically, Mrs. Lanting advises her unbelievable solution. She told her to find another man to have sexual happiness. This is false principle that is done by many women who are in frustration situation. They do it even their conduct contradicts with the social norms.

Lasi has no power to go out from her problem in this difficult situation. Everything depends on her society and the society will be depends on men's decision. As a result, this situation makes her more difficult to get out to her own decision. Her problem can be only solved if she has "perfect" man in her life. Even though she gets good social status and wealth, they are in her husband's name not because of herself. Lasi is under control of her husband. Lasi has no power in social, economic and political bargaining. Her activities must be authorised and approved by society and her husband. If she does something contradict with the social norms she will be in big problems.

The Female Character in *Saman* by Ayu Utami

Saman is Ayu's first novel. Even this is her first novel, it has very good responses from critics and *readers*. This novel gets awards not only in Indonesia but also in Western countries. One of the prominent award was nominated by Prince Clause in 2000. Before that, this novel also gets the award from the Jakarta Council of Art (*Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*) in 1998.

Besides getting the appreciation from critics, this novel is also criticised by many people. The criticism is caused by the vulgarity of the language of the novel. The novel presents sexual activity and women's body very open. In Javanese, especially in Islam, these themes are regarded taboo in the public sphere. Sexual activity is very personal. Therefore, many Muslim scholar do not respect with this novel. For example, Taufik Ismail says that

this kind of novel is not appropriate for Indonesian especially Muslim (see Wajiran, 2018).

The description of female character in *Saman* has different perspective with *Bekisar Merah*. This is caused by the writer's worldview that makes it different. Ayu Utami represents female's perspective, while Ahmad Tohari represents male's worldview. In *Saman* the main character is depicted as a stronger and independence woman, while in *Bekisar Merah* the female character is a very weak. In Ayu Utami's novel, women have their freedom. The female character is depicted very strong in keeping the personal principle therefore they are tough in facing the life problems. The domination of men toward women is very weak in *Saman* and *Larung*. Furthermore, the female character in Ayu Utami can be called more than independence, they try to rebel men's domination in social and political sphere.

Saman can be interpreted as an expression of disappointment because of the women's unbeneficial situation. The limitation of women's activity and speech is the reason why women have not good position in social and political spheres. In the reason of morality and religious values, women are limited to do and speak. This condition makes them subordinate. The upset expression can be interpreted from the word choice and the expression of the character that seem too expressive in dealing with women's freedom. An example of this issue, can be seen at the beginning of the novel. It shows how to be an independence human being like the free bird. The words order and words choice determined and influential to readers.

The word choice presented in the beginning chapter is reflected in the following chapter. The word 'freedom' reflected in the main character "I" in the novel. The main character is a woman who has freedom of thought and expression in her life. Therefore, she chooses to do free relationship with the male character, Sihar. She chooses the New York city as the setting to represent free place for the action of free sex. In this city, no one care about others, dealing freedom of sex. There will be no one who care about their activity. They can forget the family, child, father, mother, and the society will not know what they are doing (*Samar*: 28).

Ayu Utami describes sexual activities in vulgar way. Without using the personification or illustration. This way is unusual and very immoral based on eastern moral values especially Islamic moral values. The way of telling the sexual activity is inhuman and unacceptable for Indonesian society. This way is very rare to be found in Javanese culture or in Indonesia in the Old Order and New Order regime. For the male writers, they commonly use personification in dealing with the sexual activity in their literature. Because of this way, Ayu Utami is regarded as the female writer who rebel the social and religious norm in Indonesian context.

The way of the depiction in *Saman* contradicts with the eastern culture that respect morality or ethical values. Furthermore, many Muslim critics regard this novel encourages teenager to do free sex without marriage. As Taufiq Ismail, a famous Muslim poet called this kind of literature as "fragrant literature" or groin literature (see in Marching, 2007). The freedom of expression contradicts with religious or social norm in Indonesia. Therefore, this novel is regarded as a dangerous reading material for young generation in Indonesia.

The depiction of the female characters in *Saman* is more progressive or even be called rebellious characters. This can be seen from how the female character which is depicted as having freedom and un-controllable in her life. She lives with her own free-life choice. Therefore, this is an indication that the writer wants to show how women should be in her life. This depiction can be interpreted as the author's strategy to get 'special' attention from readers. Therefore, what is intended by the author comes true when her novel become a very controversial in the society. Many readers give response to the novel; some support the idea of the female character and some reject it as a part of good literary work.

This way of depiction is very different with what is by Tohari. The female character in *Bekisar Merah* looks like very depend on the society. The female character always tries to follow the social norm although sometime she faces some difficulties in her own life. In *Bekisar Merah* the female character cannot choose her own life decision. This way of depiction can be interpreted that the male author put the female character to follow

the social norm which is determined by men. In general, the leader of Javanese society from the village to big city led by men.

Conclusion

This discussion leads us to know that there are differences between male and female writers in depicting female characters in literature. This is an important clue that the different perspective causes the difference in seeing the issue. This difference can also be the sign that the writer's political and ideological interest in describing the main characters.

Discourse in literature is very important in gaining the opinion from the readers therefore literature has good position as the media of transformation. The discourse that is presented in the literature will influence the society. Therefore, it is important to see the problem from both sides dealing with women's issue, from male and female writers. This way of seeing an issue, especially about the women's social and political position will be very important to be a wise decision. This way will make our decision fair and acceptable in modern social context.

However, from this point of view we can see that what is described by male's writer is just the reflection of what is happening in the society. On the other hand, female writer is look like an ideal about the women's position in Indonesian society. What is reflected in women novel is not the real condition that happen in Indonesia but it still as the new discourse that is proposed by women to change their condition in Indonesian society. However, it can be concluded that Ayu Utama presents more progressive and even rebellious female characters than Ahmad Thohari.

Based on what has been discussed above, we can conclude that literary work is influenced by the social and political condition of the society. As a part of society, a writer tries to follow the trend or the suitable situation that supports his/her ideas. Furthermore, the worldview about women also much influenced by the socio-political situation whereby the writer wants to express his or her opinion or expression.

The intention of the writer in expressing his/her opinion also can be part of propaganda. Suppose the author has an affiliation with a specific social organisation or a political party. In that case, the writer should bring the idea based on the interest of his/her community or ideology. In Indonesian context, can be seen in the case of *Lekra: Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* –the Institute of People’s Culture, the cultural wing of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)– which member are the writers who bring the ideology of communism in their works. This case also the same with what is happening in Islam. Many writers who are joining the FLP (*Forum Lingkar Pena*, Pens Circle Forum) who bring Islamic moral values as their foundation (Wajiran, 2020).[w]

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Women's Socio-Political Dynamics in Indonesian Literature

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Abstract

Literary works have been believed to be media to spread ideas or ideology. This paper seeks to examine the images of women before Indonesia's Reformation Era as reflected in Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and after the Reformation Era as reflected in Ayu Utami's *Saman*. By employing qualitative modes of inquiry and theories in the sociology of literature, this study has shown that images of women before and after Indonesia's Reformation Era were depicted differently. Before Indonesia's Reformation Era, the image of women tended to be submissive in dealing with the socio-political dynamics, while after the Reformation Era in 1998, they were depicted as progressive and even rebellious. However, it is also important to notice that this difference indicated the writers' political and ideological preference in describing the women's position in Indonesian society in their era. The findings of this study support Gramsci's idea about ideological or cultural hegemony presented by literary work.

Karya sastra diyakini dapat menjadi media penyebaran ide-ide atau ideologi. Penelitian ini berusaha menguak potret perempuan sebelum Era Reformasi yang tercermin dalam Novel Bekisar Merah karya Ahmad Tohari dan setelah Era Reformasi yang tercermin dalam Novel Saman karya Ayu Utami. Dengan menggunakan pendekatan penelitian kualitatif serta teori-teori sosiologi sastra, artikel ini menemukan bahwa citra perempuan sebelum dan sesudah Era Reformasi di Indonesia digambarkan secara berbeda. Sebelum Era Reformasi, citra perempuan cenderung patuh dalam menghadapi

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dinamika sosial-politik, sedangkan setelah Era Reformasi 1998, mereka digambarkan sangat progresif bahkan pemberontak. Namun, perbedaan citra perempuan sebelum dan sesudah reformasi tersebut juga menunjukkan kecenderungan politis dan ideologis sang penulis dalam menggambarkan posisi perempuan di tengah-tengah masyarakat pada zamannya. Temuan penelitian ini mendukung gagasan Gramsci tentang hegemoni ideologi atau budaya yang ada di dalam karya sastra.

Keywords: the image of women; Indonesian literature, reflection; reformation era, society; socio-political dynamic

Introduction

Every civilization has various perceptions toward women. Most of them regard that being a woman is unlucky. Many social scientists and philosophers such as Aristotle, St. Thomas Aquinas, and Plato believe that women are the weak creature. Therefore, women are unlucky, they are full of weaknesses and unrespected (Selden, 1985, p. 128). Philosophers assume that women's physical and psychological condition makes them have low quality than men. This inappropriate perception makes women have unsafe in the social and political position. Women are regarded as *second-class people*.

Because of the negative stigma, women cannot participate in the public sphere. Their activities are very limited to domestic jobs. Women were not allowed to participate in the political and social sphere (Norquay & Park, 2006). As a result, they could not participate in taking the decision dealing with their society (interest), such as taking a part in a general election and so on. As a consequence, what was produced in the social and political arena always benefits men but not women. Women are always placed as an object of the social policy rather than the subject. Although the situation has changed, the stigma of women's inferiority still can be found in society.

This paper tries to describe women's social and political dynamic in Indonesia. The discussion will be based on the literature writing, especially written after the reformation era (Era Reformasi). After the reformation

era, there were many new perspectives about female characters in Indonesian literature. Therefore, this paper will be more focused on how the writers present the image of women as the main character. How writers depict female characters in their social and political position. Is there any difference between a male and female writer in presenting about women?

This paper applies the qualitative research method. The main data are taken from novels as the object of this research. The data are in the form of quotation that reflects the ideas dealing with women's issues or image. The data were analyzed applying the sociological theory of literature, which meant that the reflection of literature presents what is occurring in society. To support the analysis, this paper also gathers the data from other resources such as books, journal articles, and research papers, such as the thesis.

Some previous researches deal with the image of women in Indonesian literature but they do not deal with the difference between male and female writers' points of view. Herry Aveling writes the first paper entitled *Indonesian Literature after Reformasi: The Tongues of Women* (2007). This paper asserts that female writers' existence brings good news for women. Female writers will bring women's voices, that represent the women's social and political interests (Aveling, 2007).

The second publication is written by Diah Ariani Arimbi, *Reading Contemporary Indonesian Muslim Women Writers: Representation, Identity and Religion of Muslim Women In Indonesian Fiction* (2009). This book is not so different from Aveling's ideas, yet it focuses on the issues of ideology brought by the female writers and their identity as female writers. The existence of female writers is believed to support the ideology which will give 'benefit' for women. Therefore, the existence of female writers will defend women's political interests.

Meanwhile, Barbara Hatley also writes an article entitled *New Direction in Indonesian Women's Writing? The Novel Saman* (1999). This paper is a response to the competition held by Jakarta Arts Council which

gives the best appreciation to Ayu Utami's novel, *Saman* (1998). This paper deal with the reason why this novel gets the best nomination. As mentioned by Hatley, this novel is regarded as bringing new perspectives in presenting female characters. Before the reformation era, female writers present the female character as obedient as a member of society, but *Saman* presents different views, the female character is depicted as a woman who wants to be free and have a personal choice. Besides, this novel presents female characters who want to run away from the social norms.

Wajiran (2020) in his Ph.D. thesis titled *Images of Muslim Women in Contemporary Indonesian Literature*, focuses on how Muslim writers present female characters in their works (Wajiran, 2020). The thesis deals with the difference between male and female writers in presenting female characters, especially those called the writer Period of 2000 (*Sastrawan Angkatan Reformasi*). Wajiran (2019), in his article *Male's Perspective on Women in Contemporary Indonesian Literature*, focuses only on how male writers depict female characters in their writing. This paper focuses on Muslim male writers: Habiburrahman El Shirazy dan Wahid Hasyim. Both writers are Muslim and activists in Islamic organizations; El Shirazy in FLP (*Forum Lingkar Pena* [Pen Circle Forum]), while Hasyim in Muhammadiyah.

From the previous publications, this paper presents different perspectives. This paper compares male and female writers' points of view toward women. Besides that, this paper also compares the ways of depicting women in Indonesian literature. Therefore, we choose two writers whose works are contradictive; *Bekisar Merah* (Tohari, 2005) represents patriarchy's ideology, while *Saman* (Utami, 1998) represents the ideology of feminism.

The Flourish of Literary Works after Reformation Era

The downfall of the Soeharto regime marked the beginning of freedom of expression in all aspects, especially in the writing tradition. Since then, lots of writers came to the surface such as from *LEKRA: Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* (People's Cultural Institute). Ayu Utami, one of the

women writers, hoisted sex scented literature through *Saman*. Then, in 2001, the award Equatorial Literary Award was given to writers who wrote the best novels. Those who have received this award were Goenawan Muhammad, Remy Sylado, Hamsad Rangkuti, Seno Gumira Ajidarma, Linda Christanty, Sapardi Djoko Damono, Joko Pinurbo, Gus TF., and Acep Zamzam Noor. In 2002, *Horizon* was published. It consists of four books including poetry, short stories, novels, and plays. In this book, Hamzah Fansuri who lived in the 17th century was the first Indonesian writer.

Then, in 2003, Sapardi Djoko Damono and Ignas Kleden were awarded Ahmad Bakrie Award for their services in the field of literature. Writers and intellectuals who received the same award in subsequent years were Goenawan, Nurcholish Madjid, Budi Darma, Sartono Kartodirdjo. Frans Magnis Soeseno who should get the award Bakrie company refused because of the relationship with the Lapindo mudflow disaster in Sidoarjo, East Java. In 2004, literature on the internet is a breakthrough for writers to freely express and publish their work. Novel *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* by Habiburrahman El Shirazy was published in 2004. In the following year, 2005, the novel *Laskar Pelangi* by Andrea Hirata was also published. *Laskar Pelangi* and *Ayat-Ayat Cinta* became the best-seller novels in Indonesia's history of novel publishing. Both novels were then filmed (Rampan, 2000). There were also some re-publications of forbidden books written by Pramudya Ananta Toer, *Tempo* magazine, and many others.

Thus, the reformation era has brought a fresh air for women to voice their thoughts (Arimbi, 2009; Aveling, 2007). At this time, many women writers were born and coloured literary work such as Oka Rusmini (*Sagra*, 2002), Djenar Maesa Ayu (*Mereka Bilang Saya Monyet*, 2002; *Jangan Main-main dengan Kelaminmu*, 2004), Intan Paramadhita (*Sibir Perempuan*, 2005), Nukila Amal (*Laluba*, 2005), Weka Gunawan (*Merpati di Trafalgar Square*, 2004), Labibah Zain (addicted to weblog: *Kisah Perempuan dalam Dunia Maya*, 2005), Ucu Agustin (*Kanakar: Kumpulan Cerpen Ucu Agustin*, 2005), Evi Idawati (*Malam Perkawinan*, 2005). These writers seemed to follow the footsteps of their senior like

NH Dini, Titis Basino, Leila S. Chudori, Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim or Abidah El-Khalieqy.

The above condition was much different from the previous regimes, Old Order and New Order. During the Old Order era, women's role was still alarming as they did not have the bargaining power compared to men. At that time, many women did not have the same rights in the public arena. Women during the Old Order were still regarded as the second class. Practices of polygamy were still rampant in society.

Meanwhile, the New Order regime also did not offer a better position for women. They were still controlled to support the interests of men. Women's movement was also restricted. It was caused by the presence of control and prohibition of some activities that would disturb public order or ideological threat, especially communism. New Order government through the Directorate of Culture supervised, assessed, and controlled every cultural activity, including women's activities (Jones, 2012).

Male and Female Writers Tendency in the Novels

Before the reformation era in 1998, literary works were dominated by male writers. Some male writers deal with women as the main character. Their works still supported men's interest or men's domination of women. According to Hellwig (1994), literature that male writes does not spread the ideology of patriarchy, but it confirms the domination of males toward women in society (Mohd, 2006). As a result, male author writing will be beneficial for men.

Hellwig inserts that the different point of view between men and women confirms that men have a special position in Javanese culture (Hellwig, 2012). This situation is legitimated by the values of religion and local customs that do not support women's emancipation in the public sphere. Women have a 'special period: menstruation, giving birth, and breastfeeding confirm that women's position is weak. In this period, women experience physical weakness therefore they have a low quality of life. Women in this period are regarded as unproductive human beings.

Based on the situation above, is there any correlation between psychological condition with the literature that she produces? Or the literature written by female writers is an expression of dissatisfaction with the un-beneficial condition in their society? Is that true that female literature is only an emotional expression therefore their works have low quality?

The characteristic of the female writer becomes so versatile. The difference is on the theme and word choice in their literature. After the reformation era, the theme of sex and women's bodies are the two dominant themes for female writers. The vulgar word choice also marks this in literature. Some critics assume that this expression is caused by women's disappointment. In other words, female writers want to show that they do not want to be subordinate in their socio-political position. They want to escape from the confine of the men. Women's position as second-class people makes them experience unhappy-treatment in the social sphere.

According to Herry Aveling (2007), the existence of female literature after the reformation era makes it possible for everybody to listen to her voices. Female literary work is an expression of women's true soul. They represent the dream, ideas, and hope of women. This is because, in the previous era, literary works that presented women are commonly based on the male's perspective (Wajiran, 2019). Aveling asserted that some literature that deals with women's issues did not represent women's idealism. As can be seen in *Siti Nurbaya* (1921) by Marah Rusli, *Layar Terkembang* (1936) by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana, *Belenggu* (1941) by Armijn Pane, *Gadis Pantai* (1987) by Pramudia Ananta Toer and *Bekisar Merah* (2005) by Ahmad Tohari.

According to Aveling, male literature that deals with women's issues still tells the real condition that happens in society. The female characters are still regarded as subordinate people. Women's existence is regarded only as the supplement of men to get their success. Sofi's (2018) work on Pramoedya A. Toer's *Gadis Pantai*, for instance, examines the complexity

of political forces that shape female identity at the beginning of 20th century Java. His work found that women were doubly discriminated; they find themselves subject to higher powers, i.e. the powers of the local lord and the male. Because of that, women have very limited space to do and to speak. Women's existence is to support men's success and help men's job, giving birth to their children, keeping the children and the households, and keeping the community (Aveling, 2007). Therefore, it confirms the inferiority of women in social and political dynamics.

Hellwig affirms that male writers' work confirms the social tradition placed women as an object, not as a subject. Novel *Ronggeng Dukuh Paruh* for instance describes how the term "open the curtain" (*bukak kelambu*) illustrates how women are controlled and managed by men. Men have the dominant and higher position or authority toward women. The novel's main character illustrates that women are just the object of men's wishes and authority. Women can be bartered, sold, and exploited. This is also seen from the government rule in the New Order regime that places women as the subordinate. The New Order regime established the institution special for women to control their activity such as *Panca Dharma Wanita* (the Five Women's Principle), *Pembinaan Kesejahteraan Keluarga* (the Family Welfare Development), and *Dharma Wanita* (the wife organization of the government officials) (Mohd, 2006).

To see the difference between male and female writers in presenting their ideas about women's image, this following chapter presents two writers: Ahmad Thohari and Ayu Utami. The reason for choosing these two writers is because both are famous writers. Ahmad Thohari represents a male writer, while Ayu Utami represents a contemporary female writer.

The Female Characters in *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Thohari

The novel *Bekisar Merah* is one example of the women's position based on the male's perspective. This novel is written by Ahmad Thohari a productive writer whose writing is based on Javanese culture. He can be categorized as the old generation. He was born on June 13, 1948. *Bekisar*

Merah was firstly published in a daily newspaper, *Kompas*, from February to May 1993. Then, it was published in a book in 2005. Even though it was written in the 1990s, but the theme is still relevant to the contemporary issues about women's social and political condition in Indonesia. This novel represents Javanese social and cultural dynamics. Therefore, this novel is regarded as representing males' perception of women reflected in literary work.

It is possible to assume that literature's subjectivity is very dominant in this novel. The writer's background of social, political, and ideological influence the writer in presenting the issue of women. The political interest of the writer is also important. As a result, the male writer will support and give benefits to men, while female writers will also give an opinion based on their interests.

Bekisar Merah contradicts modern women's social and political idealism because the female character's position is very weak. It can be assumed that the main character is placed as the second-class people in society and the family. Women are regarded as weak creatures not only in physic but also in economic, social, and psychology. As a result, the main character of the novel presents that the main character has no social and political bargaining dealing with her problem. The main (female) character becomes the victim of men's domination. The issue that occurs to the main character, Lasi represents the social attitude toward women in Javanese culture.

Lasi is a poor young woman who lives in a village, Karangsoa. The setting of the village in this novel indicates that a woman who is from a village is associated with ignorance and poverty.

Besides as a poor girl, she is not originally Javanese, because she has Japanese blood from her father. Lasi becomes the object of racism because of her father who is not Javanese. Every people in the village knows that she was born unwanted because her mother becomes the victim of sexual abuse by Japanese troops. Therefore, she is called *anak Jadah* or *Haram child* (illegitimate child). Because of that, even she is very beautiful, no one

of the Javanese men wants to be her husband. Every young man who knows her family background does not want to marry her. This is caused by the negative stigmatization that illegitimate children. It is believed that illegitimate children will bring bad fortune in their lives. This situation makes Lasi gets difficulty getting married. As a result, her mother asks Darsa, the village's poor young man to marry her (Tohari, 2005, p. 40).

Darsa is a young man who lives in the village and works as a coconut picker. He is poor and has no social position. He is the only young boy who stays in his village because of his economic difficulty. He has no capital to go to the big city to find a better job. Besides that, he is also not enough educational background to work in a big city.

After getting married, both Lasi and Darsa have no better economic condition. They still live-in poor conditions because they have no skill to make their lives better. Nevertheless, the family's economic condition becomes worse when Darsa got into an accident. Darsa falls from a coconut tree when he was working. He hurt and his body is broken. Darsa cannot work to earn money for his family, therefore Lasi has to work for herself. Lasi works to get money and also to cure her husband. The limited money makes the family becomes so difficult. Lasi must borrow some money from a rich man in the village.

The poorness makes Lasi's life so difficult. She must borrow some money from Mr. Tir to cure her husband's illness. Mr. Tir is Kanjat's father. Kanjat is a university student who has a feeling of love for Lasi.

Lasi has no other choice, therefore she asked a soothsayer to cure her husband. The soothsayer's name is Bunek. In the beginning, Bunek always comes to Lasi's house to cure Darsa's health problems. Nevertheless, after Darsa's illness is getting better, Bunek asked Darsa to come to her house. Unfortunately, after Darsa looks better, Bunek asks Darsa to sleep with her daughter. In the end, Bunek's daughter getting pregnant. It means that the curing process is successful (Tohari, 2005, p. 62).

The story becomes so complicated after Bunek's daughter, Sipah is pregnant by Darsa. Sipah is mentally ill. She has old enough without a

husband. This condition is used by Bunek to encourage Darsa to marry her. Because of Sipah's pregnancy, Lasi's marriage is broken. Lasi's life becomes so worse. Lasi must share her husband with other women. This situation makes her life becomes so complicated and frustrated. She should accept Sipah as the second wife of Darsa.

Lasi decides to go out from her village. She runs away to Jakarta. She met *seorang germo* (pimp) in Jakarta and stayed there for several days. At the first, she lives with Mrs. Koneng, whose house becomes the food store in which Pardi and Sopan (Mr. Tir's truck driver) always visit. After several days, Lasi was asked to live with Mrs. Lanting. She is a professional pimp, who always finds girls for a rich man to get a second wife. Mrs. Lanting treated Lasi very well, therefore Lasi does not know that Mrs. Lanting wants her to get married to a rich old man. Mrs. Lanting treats Lasi as if she is her daughter. She does it because Mrs. Lanting will get good tips (salary) from the rich man. Lasi is an excellent girl for the rich old man. Mr. Handarbeni is the lucky rich old man who gets the chance to marry Lasi.

After they marry, Lasi is unhappy. Although she gets many 'benefits' in that marriage, such as wealth and good social status but that cannot help her to be happy. Her husband, Mr. Handarbeni cannot give her sexual happiness which makes her very frustrated. This condition makes her life in very poor condition. Ironically, Mrs. Lanting advises her unbelievable solution. She told her to find another man to have sexual happiness. This is the false principle that is done by many women who are in a frustrating situation. They do it even their conduct contradicts the social norms.

Lasi has no power to go out from her problem in this difficult situation. Everything depends on her society and the society will depend on men's decisions. As a result, this situation makes her more difficult to get out of her own decision. Her problem can be only solved if she has the "perfect" man in her life. Even though she gets good social status and wealth, they are in her husband's name not because of herself. Lasi is under the control of her husband. Lasi has no power in social, economic,

and political bargaining. Her activities must be authorized and approved by society and her husband. If she does something that contradicts the social norms she will be in big problems.

The Female Character in *Saman* by Ayu Utami

Ayu Utami is regarded as the pioneer in the freedom of expression in literature. She wrote about sensitive issues that encourage the contradictive opinion from critics. Her works that deal with women's bodies and sexual freedom are 'unusual' in the Indonesian context. These themes were regarded as forbidden and taboo in New Order and the Old Oder regime. Thus, Ayu Utami's work is regarded as the progressive literature in women's social and political dynamics (Nurhadi, 2007). If we see the work of Ayu Utami, we will find that the ideological issue that is reflected in her work is a kind of rebellion, the rebellion against social and religious norms and moral values. It is because, sexuality, women's body, or erotism is private matters that cannot be discussed in the public sphere.

Ayu's famous work is *Saman*. It is her first novel and got good responses from critics and *readers*. This novel gained awards not only in Indonesia but also in Western countries. One of the prominent awards was nominated by Prince Clause in 2000. Previously, this novel also got an award from the Jakarta Art Council (*Dewan Kesenian Jakarta*) in 1998.

Besides getting appreciation from critics, this novel is also criticized by many people. The criticism is caused by the vulgarity of the language of the novel. The novel presents sexual activity and women's body very open. In Javanese, especially in Islam, these themes are regarded taboo in the public sphere. Sexual activity is very personal. Therefore, many Muslim scholars do not respect this novel. For example, Taufik Ismail says that this kind of novel is not appropriate for Indonesian especially Muslims (see Wajiran, 2018).

The description of a female character in *Saman* has a different perspective from *Bekisar Merah*. This is caused by the writer's worldview that makes it different. Ayu Utami represents the female's perspective,

while Ahmad Tohari represents the male's worldview. In *Saman*, the main character is depicted as a stronger and independent woman, while in *Bekisar Merah* the female character is very weak. In Ayu Utami's novel, women have their freedom. The female character is depicted very strong in keeping the personal principle therefore they are tough in facing life problems. The domination of men toward women is very weak in *Saman* and *Larung*. Furthermore, female characters in Ayu Utami can be called more than independence, they try to rebel against men's domination in the social and political sphere.

Saman can be interpreted as an expression of disappointment because of the women's unbeneficial situation. The limitation of women's activity and speech is the reason why women have not a good position in social and political spheres. In the reason of morality and religious values, women are limited to do and speak. This condition makes them subordinate. The upset expression can be interpreted from the word choice and the expression of the character that seems too expressive in dealing with women's freedom. An example of this issue can be seen at the beginning of the novel. It shows how to be an independent human being like the free bird. The word order and word choice determined and influential to readers.

The word choice presented in the beginning chapter is reflected in the following chapter. The word 'freedom' is reflected in the main character "I" in the novel. The main character is a woman who has freedom of thought and expression in her life. Therefore, she chooses to do a free relationship with the male character, Sihar. She chooses New York City as the setting to represent a free place for the action of free sex. In this city, no one cares about others, dealing freedom of sex. There will be no one who cares about their activity. They can forget the family, child, father, mother, and society will not know what they are doing (*Saman*: 28).

Ayu Utami describes sexual activities in a vulgar way. Without using personification or illustration. This way is unusual and very immoral based on eastern moral values especially Islamic moral values. The way of telling

the sexual activity is inhuman and unacceptable for Indonesian society. This way is very rare to be found in Javanese culture or Indonesia in the Old Order and New Order regime. The male writers commonly use personification in dealing with sexual activity in their literature. Because of this way, Ayu Utami is regarded as the female writer who rebels against the social and religious norm in the Indonesian context.

The way of the depiction in *Saman* contradicts with the eastern culture that respects morality or ethical values. Furthermore, many Muslim critics regard this novel encourages teenagers to do free sex without marriage. As Taufiq Ismail, a famous Muslim poet called this kind of literature “fragrant literature” or groin literature (see in Marching, 2007). The freedom of expression contradicts religious or social norms in Indonesia. Therefore, this novel is regarded as dangerous reading material for the young generation in Indonesia.

The depiction of the female characters in *Saman* is more progressive or even be called rebellious characters. This can be seen from how the female character is depicted as having freedom and un-controllable in her life. She lives with her own free-life choice. Therefore, this is an indication that the writer wants to show how women should be in her life. This depiction can be interpreted as the author's strategy to get ‘special’ attention from readers. Therefore, what is intended by the author comes true when her novel becomes very controversial in society. Many readers give responses to the novel; some support the idea of the female character and some reject it as a part of good literary work.

This way of depiction is very different from that of Tohari. The female character in *Bekisar Merah* looks very dependent on society. The female character always tries to follow the social norm although sometimes she faces some difficulties in her own life. In *Bekisar Merah* the female character cannot choose her own life decision. This way of depiction can be interpreted that the male author put the female character to follow the social norm which is determined by men. In general, the leader of Javanese society from the village to the big city was led by men.

Conclusion

This discussion leads us to know that there are differences between male and female writers in depicting female characters in literature. This is an important clue that the different perspective causes the difference in seeing the issue. This difference can also be a sign that the writer's political and ideological interest in describing the main characters.

Discourse in literature is very important in gaining the opinion of the readers therefore literature has a good position as the media of transformation. The discourse that is presented in the literature will influence society. Therefore, it is important to see the problem from both sides dealing with women's issues, from male and female writers. This way of seeing an issue, especially about the women's social and political position will be very important to be a wise decision. This way will make our decision fair and acceptable in the modern social context.

However, from this point of view, we can see that what is described by male writers is just the reflection of what is happening in society. On the other hand, the female writer looks like an ideal about the women's position in Indonesian society. What is reflected in women's novels is not the real condition that happens in Indonesia but it still the new discourse that is proposed by women to change their condition in Indonesian society. However, it can be concluded that Ayu Utama presents more progressive and even rebellious female characters than Ahmad Thohari.

Based on what has been discussed above, we can conclude that literary work is influenced by the social and political conditions of society. As a part of society, a writer tries to follow the trend or the suitable situation that supports his/her ideas. Furthermore, the worldview about women also much influenced by the socio-political situation whereby the writer wants to express his or her opinion or expression.

The intention of the writer in expressing his/her opinion also can be part of propaganda. Suppose the author has an affiliation with a specific social organization or a political party. In that case, the writer should bring the idea based on the interest of his/her community or ideology. In

the Indonesian context, can be seen in the case of LEKRA: *Lembaga Kebudayaan Rakyat* --the Institute of People's Culture, the cultural wing of the Indonesian Communist Party (PKI)-- which member are the writers who bring the ideology of communism in their works. This case also the same as what is happening in Islam. Many writers who are joining the FLP (*Forum Lingkar Pena*, Pens Circle Forum) bring Islamic moral values as their foundation.[w]

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