

Women's Reistance Against Hegemony In Nathaniel Hawthorne's The Scarlet Letter and Ahmad Tohari's Bekisar Merah: A Comparative Study

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Abstract: Hegemony is a dominance treatment from one to another. This article tried to compare women's resistance against hegemony from novels. Lasiyah, the protagonist in *Bekisar Merah*, and Hester Prynne, the protagonist in *The Scarlet Letter*, both encountered oppressive hegemonic values from their patriarchal societies, namely Javanese and Puritans. Using Hegemony and Comparative Literature theories, this research reveals the two protagonists' resistance to hegemonic values, which caused them to become new people with new personalities and identities. They were also reborn. Both women were motivated by similar factors, such as pride and dignity, to engage resistance. Women, who are generally regarded as weak and powerless, are, in fact, strong and powerful.

Keywords: *Women resistance, Hegemony, Comparative*

INTRODUCTION

Literature gives the value of universality, making it a form of human expression that is shared by all people. Universal refers to the fact that the work portrays human life despite the cultural and traditional variations among all peoples. The fundamental emotions of people in this world include anxiety, courage, love, hate, jealousy, passion, impatience, dream, happiness, sorrow, and pain. *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *Bekisar Merah* by Ahmad Tohari both highlight universal truths about women's issues and their fights to

defend their convictions in the face of oppressive, hegemonic, and dominant values or authority in their society.

Both novels are important parts of society and are products of its time, people, and setting. They mimic or reflect society in some way. According to Lotmanas, stated in Goldmann (1981:8), “An artistic work shall be connected with its cultural context; otherwise, it is like an inscription on a tomb in an unknown language” and a writer cannot be isolated from his or her social and cultural background when producing a literary work (Pradopo, 1995:113).

The hegemonic patriarchy's control over the female characters is a similar concept in both novels. As illustrated by the protagonists of the novels, women are subjected to both mental and physical violence. In fact, the terms patriarchy and patriarchal do not refer to a particular philosophy or philosophy of feminism. All institutions concur and employ this phrase in their discourses. This phrase refers to the widespread belief that the majority of cultures and social structures in the world are constructed and structured within the framework of male dominance and “maleness or masculinity being the norm for humanness or humanity” (Cudd, 2007:1).

According to God's laws, women are submissive to males, and this creates opposition. In the two novels, the women's resistance is a quiet one. This article's usage of the term "resistance" refers to a personal resistance in which a person goes with the flow of his or her society to a certain degree. It is a process of psychological growth in enduring and fighting hegemonic norms, the transformation of women's personalities from conformity with dominant ideals to a resolute rejection of the pressures they must endure. When societal ideals conflict with their fundamental beliefs or principles, they communicate their rejection in a way that does not hurt the opposite. Jonathan D. Katz connects quiet resistance to the queer resistance of the Gay movement in the United States since it does not involve forward physical activity and the like. "Silence was and proved to be an effective tool for protest. It demonstrates opposition

without articulating the perspective or identity from which that resistance emanates (Katz para. 13, 22). Being silent does not equal silencing. In fact, it might indicate the reverse, a display of authority. Thus, the term quiet refers to personal and internal resistance to tyranny without action, revolts, or demonstrations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Hegemony

It is a form of hegemony to position women as subordinates to men in almost every aspect of life, a position that is frequently supported by religious interpretations (Rorintulus, 2018); (Rorintulus, 2020); (Makalew et al., 2022). As time passes and humanity advances, the hegemonic power that has dominated and subjugated women for countless millennia loses its grip. Therefore, hegemony necessitates the subordination of the other classes to the dominant or ruling class. Hegemony can generally be defined as the preeminence or dominance that states, social groups, or even individuals exercise over others through the use of their substantial authority.

There are two possible responses to hegemony: obedience and resistance. Obeying both written and unwritten values, such as social conventions, cultural traditions, cultural philosophy, and personal ideology, is an obvious manifestation of obedience.

The majority of societies have established that women are second to men and are governed by men. Thus, a woman without her man is "misguided" by herself (Hawthorne, 1998:45). As subordinates to men, women frequently experience both physical and non-physical forms of oppression from men. Women's subordination to men is believed to have existed from the time God created humans until the present day. This pertains not only to social life, but also to religious, political, economic, and cultural life. In short, problems associated with women's subordination exist in nearly every aspect of life.

Resistance

Resistance is the result of a protracted process of mistreatment, rejection, subordination, detachment, or even marginalization. When hegemony exists, there will be opposition. Once, Michel Foucault stated, "where there is power, there is resistance" (as cited in Sandoval, 2000:1). It is an individual resistance that does not result in forward physical movement and such things. It is a process of the protagonists' psychological development, the transformation of their personalities from conformity with the dominant values to a resolute rejection of pressure. It provides personal and internal resistance to oppression and hegemonic values in the absence of movement, revolts, or protests.

Novel

The word novel is come from the Italian "novella", which implies a tiny or newly hired workforce. The book was created in both England and America. The novel was first adapted locally from various narrative nonfiction genres, including letters, biographies, and history (Talumepa et al., 2022). But as society and technology change, novels are no longer just based on factual information; authors now have more creative freedom.

A novel is a narrative text that includes certain persons and fictional events and has a long structure (Onthoni et al., 2022). Plot, setting, character development, point of view, and topic are the fundamental components of a novel. According to Sumardjo (1998: 29), a novel is a story written in a long prose style with a complex plot, numerous characters, and varied settings. A novel is a whole, a creatively comprehensiveness. The novel as a whole has a number of chapters, the majority of which are closely tied to and dependent upon one another. Intrinsic and extrinsic factors make up the two categories of elements in a novel.

a. **Bekisar Merah**

Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* tells about the life of the Karangsonga Community. On a daily basis, they mostly work as tappers for coconut sap to make brown sugar. Therefore, the majority of them are from the lower classes who just have a hard time eating.

In it tells the story of a husband and wife named Darsa and Lasiah who have to endure a hard life. Darsa, who is a tapper, has a beautiful white-skinned wife, Lasi, who has a physical value above the average of the wives of other tappers. It turned out that Lasi was of mixed descent between mbok Wiriyaji and a Japanese soldier who after his marriage, never returned to the village and lost his jungle – reportedly detained by the Dutch.

The poverty of the population is very detailed in this novel. The understanding of the social conditions of the poor, which is closely related to the structure of the sugar trade which is never fair, is described in great detail. Another strength of his novels is the highly articulate presentation of rural nature. It is as if the reader has been transported to the countryside so that they can feel the cool breeze of the early morning, watch the starlings feeding their young, the sound of the gongs of pongkor (bamboo to collect sap sap), or the gurgling of the clear Kalirong river whose water flows through the rocks. - mossy rock. Understanding of natural resource issues is also very deep, for example about the destruction of forest cover by local people due to their poverty. There is no alternative to making a little extra profit, by 'stealing' the wood as fuel to make tengguli, the material for brown sugar.

The opening conflict in this novel is that the people of Karangsonga have to risk their lives while climbing a coconut tree to collect sap. Likewise Darsa's fate. Due to falling, which is known by the community as a “jumping frog” (not to mention falling from a coconut tree—as a denial of communal fear), Darsa had suffered from abnormalities around her reproductive organs, weak shoots. He

too, because he was poor, was only cared for by a dukun, Bunek. Lasi faithfully accompanied her husband even though he was weak and always wet the bed. Over time, because of Bunek's intensive treatment, especially around Darsa's groin, she was able to recover. On the night of Darsa's "resurrection", Bunek asked to try it on Sipah, the old maid of Bunek's own child. Darsa, who was in a difficult choice, finally accepted the offer. Until it led to the departure of Lasipah to the city to leave him. He also married Bunek's son.

The story then dissects Lasi's mind a lot. As a beautiful country woman who has been used to living with all her poverty for twenty-four years, she is suddenly faced with the norms of big city life that are very, very foreign to her. She, who was temporarily accommodated by Ibu Koneng, the manager of the shop where the truck drivers stop by which is also the place where the women "girlfriends" of the truck drivers come from, witnessed social values that were very difficult to understand for a simple village woman with a low level of education. For example, the intimacy of men and women, which has been understood as behavior based on a spark of soul and love, can happen in a shop so easily, by anyone, with the basis of a few bills.

Long story short, Lasi, who has the advantages of a beautiful body and face, becomes a rare and very valuable "new merchandise" for Koneng's mother, who is then handed over to Ibu Lanting, a high-ranking pimp who serves officials, in exchange for a diamond ring. . Government officials at that time are said to have a habit of looking for the umpteenth "girlfriend" or wife who has a face like the Japanese. This was the result of the talkative behavior of the bureaucrats as his Grand Master introduced a geisha into the palace and eventually became the first lady. It fits, with Lasi. She who has the face of a Japanese woman, became the target of officials. He was then exchanged for a Mercedes and several tens of millions of rupiah by Lanting's mother to Pak Handarbeni, a retired overste who became an official, almost sixty-five years old, fat, and already had two wives. Lasi-also became a bekisar that became a display in his new and luxurious house

in Slipi. Bekisar are hybrids of jungle fowl and native chickens that have beautiful shapes, feathers, and crows. Usually this type of chicken is used for decoration in beautiful cages by the rich.

Lasi, who finally married Pak Handarbeni (a playful marriage according to Lasi's term), enjoyed all material luxuries that a former wife of penderes nira could never imagine from the village of Karangsoaga. But behind all material luxuries, Lasi's inner suffering is very heavy. He misses his village, his mother, and Kanjat, his schoolmate who is now a student and almost graduating. Meetings with old figures in her life made Lasi even more confused because she was standing between two values of life that were separated by a very deep chasm.

b. The Scarlet Letter

Nathaniel Hawthorne wrote *The Scarlet Letter*, which was first published in 1850. It is regarded as a classic moral study and a work of American literature.

The book is set in Boston in the seventeenth century, which was under harsh Puritan law. The novel's protagonist, Hester Prynne, is carried out of a prison holding a child named Pearl in her arms as the story opens. Her breast is embroidered with a bold red "A." As Hester is compelled to ascend a scaffold to bear public disgrace for her wickedness, a throng watches expectantly. Hester is scared to see her estranged husband Chillingworth amid the audience as she is on the scaffold. He is surprised when he also recognizes her. A man in the throng tells Chillingworth that Hester was married to an English scholar who was scheduled to join her to Boston but never showed there. Chillingworth makes it appear as though he doesn't know Hester. After two years, she committed adultery, giving birth to her child and leaving a red "A" on her breast as a result. When the adored local Reverend Arthur Dimmesdale orders Hester to give the man's identity, as predicted by Chillingworth, she refuses and is thrown back to her prison cell. Chillingworth convinces Hester to make a commitment never to

reveal that he is her husband in order to speak with her inside the prison under the guise of a doctor.

There are three years. Hester is released from prison and relocates to the suburbs of Boston, close to the woods. She works as a seamstress to support herself, but her clients continue to avoid her. Pearl develops an obsession with the scarlet letter when Hester won't explain what it means. Chillingworth, who lacks professional medical training, is currently employed as a doctor in Boston. Dimmesdale, who has heart problems, is one of his patients. Chillingworth moves in with Dimmesdale to provide for him full-time and starts to wonder if Hester's murder and Dimmesdale's heart condition are related. Chillingworth realizes that Dimmesdale is Hester's lover when he sees that he has a scarlet letter-like mark over his heart that is similar to Hester's. Chillingworth makes the decision to humiliate and reveal Dimmesdale.

Dimmesdale's condition deteriorates under Chillingworth's merciless supervision. Dimmesdale experiences severe emotional pain as a result of his guilt for committing and covering up adultery. He even punishes himself by starving and spanking himself. One evening, Dimmesdale ascends the same scaffold that Hester was publicly humiliated upon. Hester and Pearl happen to be there at that same time and they join Dimmesdale on the scaffold. A meteor that resembles a scarlet "A" in the sky also illuminates Chillingworth as he stands close.

Hester, who has made up her mind to assist Dimmesdale, begs Chillingworth to stop tormenting him. Chillingworth admits that he has been evil and harsh, but he contends that by keeping his identity a secret from the world, he is actually guarding Dimmesdale. Then Hester takes action by stopping Dimmesdale in the forest and telling him who Chillingworth really is. She persuades Dimmesdale to emigrate to Europe with her and Pearl, and they arrange to board a ship the day as Dimmesdale is due to deliver a significant sermon. The sermon is delivered by Dimmesdale (the best of his life). He understands, though, that he is dying and cannot reach Europe. He begs Hester and Pearl to join him as he climbs the

scaffold. He bares his chest as he apologizes to the gathering for his wrongdoing and reveals a scarlet letter etched into his skin. As Pearl gives him her first kiss, he passes away.

Pearl and Hester depart Boston. A year after Dimmesdale, Chillingworth passes away, leaving Pearl with a little legacy. Hester visits her cabin outside of town many years later. She continues to don her letter "A." Pearl, who lives in Europe and married into wealth, occasionally writes to Hester. Hester lives in Boston until she passes away, and she is buried next to Dimmesdale. The letter "A" appears on their combined tombstone.

METHODOLOGY

This study is a comparative literature. It is challenging to define the phrase "Comparative Literature" because it develops not just one, but two or even more literatures in comparison at the same time. When the comparatist must take into account the many facets of comparative literature, such as linguistic, cultural, religious, economic, social, and historical characteristics of various countries, the task becomes much more challenging.

Comparative literature is a broad word that encompasses several literary genres. Through the analytical approach to the literatures being compared, its reach embraces the entirety of human experiences, realizing all internal human relationships among the many regions of the world. Narrow national and international barriers are made to disappear, and the universality of human interactions takes their place. The study of regional, national, and worldwide literatures is encompassed by the phrase "comparative literature."

In this study, the author compares the gender hegemony against women and the opposition to it in the novels *Bekisar Merah* and *The Scarlet Letter*.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the different time, setting, etc from both novel.

	The Scarlet Letter	Bekisar Merah
Time	17th century	1961
Setting	Puritan Society, Boston	Karangsoga
Patriarchy	Reveals the atrocities of the patriarchy and masculine hegemony in society and thereby perceive women as the current redeemer of humankind's sin.	Portrays the practice of patriarchy culture which legitimates presents violence against women which are practiced in different way.
Character	Hester	Lasi
Hegemony	Hester got punished alone for the sin she made with the Puritan Priest.	Sexually judged, underestimated, subordinated, placed as a sexual object.
Struggle	Hester struggles for her existence as an independent woman in the society. To get respect from the society she also does charities. She fights for the sake of her child and also her secret lover.	Lasi been discriminated by her husband. She wanted to release the "bekisar merah" (herself) from the "cage".

Female's Resistance towards hegemony in Novel Bekisar Merah

a. Hegemony in Bekisar Merah

Women are not perceived based on their inner traits but more on their outward appearance. This is demonstrated by the tale of Lasiyah, who became affluent after only around six months of residing in Jakarta. The residents of Karangsoga thought it was because Lasi was so attractive.

"Kalau bukan karena cantik, di Jakarta Lasi paling-paling jadi babu"

Trans: *"If not because of her beauty, Lasi would probably have become merely a house maid in Jakarta"* (page.242)

Woman is undervalued and seen merely as a means of gratifying a man's sexual appetite. This is a misogynistic, sexist viewpoint toward women. Lasi was in a relationship with Pak Handarbeni as well, and this is seen as another proof of his hegemonic sexual dominance over Lasi. Another form of male hegemony over women was demonstrated by their viewing of pornographic movies. Pak Handarbeni's offer to Lasi to engage in sexual activity with another guy under his control was the worst example of how Lasi was treated subordinately by him and used as a sexual object. Lasi's divorce from Pak Handarbeni served as a stark reminder of her dependence on male power and her exploitation by gender inequality. Both obtaining divorce decrees from Darsa and Pak Handarbeni as well as moving to Bambang's residence were simple processes for Lasi. She was merely an object, one that people desired sexually. She was not treated with respect and decency as a human being as a result.

Even worse than that, Lasi was subjected to sexual judgment and desire. Because she was young, lovely, and hence sexually desirable, Lasi was subjected to double mental repression by her society. Before she became a wife, whose role necessitated her subordination in the marriage bed, Lasi was thought of as a sexual person and was expected to be a passionless creature (Kerber, 1982:7). People not taking into account how she felt as a human being was the second form of suppression. She was reduced to nothing more than a plaything for the amusement of men, subjugated, and sometimes violently victimized by pornography (Harlan, 1998:75). Lasi was compelled by a social custom that prioritizes men over women to marry Kanjat, a man who is two years her junior. Lasi was required to call him "Kang" (translation: "big brother"), whereas Kanjat may refer to Lasi simply by her name.

b. Female Resistance in Bekisar Merah

Accidentally, Lasi's detachment from her society caused her to develop a deep-seated disposition of resistance. She frequently pictured herself as a crab

with extremely powerful pincers crushing anyone who had wronged her (Tohari, 1993:33,35,74).

“Lari dan mbalelo adalah satu-satunya cara untuk melampiaskan perlawanan sekaligus membela keberadaannya”.

Trans: *‘Running and rebelling were the only way to resist and defend her existence as well’*(page. 83).

Lasi resisted her own flaw of going with the flow that suppressed and made her lost, an identity loss. She ran away from her village and did not want to return although Sapon and then Kanjat pursued her to do so.

Lasi’s resistance grew stronger after staying in Jakarta. She refused and rejected any intimacy from both Pak Handarbeni and Bambang due to her believing in the bond of marriage and the holiness of the baby within her womb. She showed her resistance, a strong resistance based on her being under hegemonic religious values.

“Saya tidak mau kesucian kandungan saya dikotori”

Trans: *‘I don’t want the holiness of my pregnancy to be stained’*(page.119).

Lasi put up a fight against Bambang's attempt to dominate her and the norm of female subordination. Anxiety and worry can lead a person to act irrationally, as was the case with Lasi, therefore it's important to try to avoid these emotions if you can.

“kalau dipaksa kandungan saya mau nekat”,

Trans: *‘if forced to terminate this pregnancy, I promise you I will commit a daring action’*(page.118).

The fact that she expressed an interest in seeing her uncle Ngalwi in South Sulawesi was an additional indication that she was experiencing anxiety, which

ultimately led to the development of a level of self-determination that she had not previously possessed. The only way for her to fight back against the oppressive hegemony that was being pushed by her anxiety and terror was for her to travel to her uncle Ngalwi's house in South Sulawesi.

It was her pregnancy that brought about the enormous psychological adjustment that enabled her to have dignity, pride, and self-determination, which ultimately led her to her last stand of silent resistance. There was a power that seemed to come from Lasi's lack of power.

“kekuasaan dapat hadir dari ketidakberdayaan dan ketertindasan”

Trans: ‘power may come from powerlessness and oppressedness’. (page.3),

Female’s Resistance towards hegemony in Scarlet Letter Novel

a. Hegemony in Scarlet Letter Novel

The Puritan priest Arthur Dimmesdale also benefited from an environment in which women were subordinate to men. Hester Prynne's failure to identify the man who made her pregnant allowed Arthur to retain his position as an idolatrous priest inside the Puritan society, while Hester Prynne was forced to endure the Puritans' severe sanctions for the sin they had committed.

Hester Prynne's horror and dread of seeing her ex-husband Roger Chillingworth demonstrated the dominance of gender norms. She was overcome by the possibility that he would seek retribution for her treachery. Consequently, she felt horrible and was experiencing a form of hegemony; "hegemonic masculinity involves fear of and flight from women" (as cited in Howson, 2006:3).

b. Female’s Resistance in The Scarlet Letter Novel

Hester Prynne was a strong woman who had the self-reliance and integrity to stand for her beliefs. From the very beginning, she displayed opposition.

“on the threshold of the prison-door, she repelled him, by an action marked with natural dignity and force of character, and stepped into the open air, as if by her own free will” (Hawthorne, 1998:39).

Hester Prynne was very adamant in her refusal to reveal the identity of her former lover. She dared to question the authority and her ex-husband by refusing to reveal the man's identity on the grounds that he was deeply ingrained in her heart, like a scarlet letter. In addition, she demonstrated her strong personal resistance by contacting the magistrates and refusing their plan to release Pearl from her own supervision and care.

“I will not give her up” (Hawthorne, 1998:78).

Hester Prynne relied on her own principles, independence, pride, and dignity in order to challenge the hegemony of her society. She engaged in personal, silent opposition without inciting others to follow or join her; she did so by herself.

“Here, she said to herself, had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthy punishment; and so, perchance, the torture of her daily shame would at length purge her soul, and work out another purity than that which she had lost; more saint-like, because of the result of martyrdom” (Hawthorne, 1998:57).

By choosing to stay in Salem while being humiliated and tortured, Hester Prynne demonstrated her resistance to the dominance of a more powerful group in the region. It also demonstrates Hester Prynne's determination and courage to live a new kind of life and attain purity in an excruciating environment.

Hester Prynne learned much from her miserable existence. This horrible existence, this enormous anguish, had educated her to be much stronger in her heart and more empathetic towards the suffering and sin of others.

“Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, í stern and wild ones, í and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss” (Hawthorn, 1998:136).

She altered the negative perception of the scarlet letter. The letter A, which is intended to represent "adultery," becomes "affection" and "ability." Hester Prynne knew, as a woman, that she lacked both social and political strength to resist. However, love, dignity, pride, and self-determination gave her the fortitude to survive and reject all of the suffering she was forced to experience. The first time Hester Prynne visited her ex-husband in prison, she was resistant but appeared weak and powerless, however on the second occasion, when they met on a peninsula, she exuded a new aura, as evidenced by Roger Chillingworth's perception of a change in her demeanor.

In addition, her awareness of the crimes buried deep within the hearts of others has altered her perspective and perspective on other people's matters. She had evolved from feeling bitter agony and hatred into a heart filled with love and passion, from a powerless woman into a strong one, and from a reckless and obstinate resistance into one with dignity. The connotation of the scarlet letter had shifted from negative to positive, and as a result, its bearer had transformed from a 'adulterer' to a 'affectionate' and 'capable' lady. Her resistance had gradually succeeded over her enemies.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

This study demonstrates that both Hester Prynne and Lasiyah confront the hegemonic ideals of their respective communities and display a silent opposition motivated by self-determination, pride, love, and dignity. From the preceding discussion, five universal values emerge:

(1) the characters' resistance against the oppressively hegemonic values of their societies; (2) the process of acquiring a new identity; (3) the factors

driving both women to carry out their silent resistance; (4) women's subordination and men's hegemony; and (5) the characters' power within their powerlessness.

These sculptures communicate three ideas that are intricately interconnected. The first is respect and honor. The possessors of this pride and dignity were in some ways more stronger than they believed they were. The second is the power inherent in weakness. They were viewed as weak creatures, yet they were in fact incredibly powerful, far stronger than man. Third is passive resistance.

The fact that the characters rejected repressive hegemonic values with pride and dignity demonstrates that women were in fact quite powerful. The author would like to make some recommendations, such as: For future research, it is suggested to compare more than two works. It is hoped that readers will be more concerned about hegemony in literary works because it can be a source of new information.

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