

# Women's Perspective on Love, Loyalty, and the Other Woman in Indonesian literature

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**Abstract**—This paper tries to see how women writers see topics of love, loyalty, and the other woman through literary works spread across the periods in Indonesian literature. The data in this study were taken from short stories written by various female authors published in 1940-2000 which were assembled in a collection of *Dunia Perempuan* short stories. Data were discussed by using the theory of *Gynocritics* and analyzed with the content analysis method. Based on the results of data analysis, it was found that female authors tend to assume that love and loyalty are the most important thing in their lives, particularly in their marriage lives. Moreover, they do not associate the other woman who is present in the midst of their household negatively.

**Keywords:** *female short stories, Gynocritics, women's perspectives*

## I. INTRODUCTION

The discussion of literary works with gender-based ideological tools analysis can be conducted with feminist literary criticism. According to Djajanegara (2000), feminist literary criticism arises from the fact that both in the traditional and contemporary literary canons, there is always gender inequality. Continued efforts by literary critics strongly need to describe and expose these phenomena.

Moreover, other efforts are needed to expose women's work that has been forgotten and excluded with the intention of re-evaluating the works in a proper perspective and manner. One of which is through '*Gynocritics*', a literary criticism that focuses on the work of women writers with the goal of creating a canon of women's literature (Showalters, 1979). In addition, *Gynocritics* also aims to explore the construction of gender culture and identity in literary works (Damono, 2002)

Related to the talk about the literary canon, a survey in the United States revealed that the literary canon in the land of Uncle Sam—with only a few exceptions—is the product of the work of a male writer. Elaine Showalter (1978), a prominent feminist literary critic, states that a large number of literary forms, over a period of even centuries in American literary history, do not mention any female writer.

This also happened in the world of Indonesian literature (Priyatna, 2018). At the beginning of the presence of women writers, their works were never considered as 'real' literary works (Perron, 1975). The literary works by female authors are

only considered as lowly or petty works, which will never be aligned with the writings produced by male writers (Suryaman, Wiyatmi, & Liliani, 2011). Therefore, one of the long-term visions of feminist literary critics is to explore, study, and select the potential and unique women works and writers to be compiled into their own literary canon.

At the beginning of the development of literature in Indonesia, the authors were introduced to the public and studied extensively is only limited to male authors. In fact, literary works written by women have existed since the beginning of the development of literature in Indonesia. Some examples that can be mentioned are Hamidah with her work entitled *Kehilangan Mestika* (1935), Selasih with her works *Kalau tak Untung* (1933), and Suwarsih Djojopuspito with her short stories *Manusia Bebas* (1939) which are most widely known in Europe.

Entering the 1950s, NH Dini enlivened Indonesian literature by productively producing short stories and novels. NH Dini's works are not only dominant in terms of quantity, but also have notable quality (Prihatmi, 1977). After the New Order, Indonesian literature was shocked by the presence of women writers who were regarded as revolutionary and courageous authors; the author is Ayu Utami with an influential work called *Saman*.

According to Rampan (1992), until the early 1990s, there were only around 40 Indonesian female writers who wrote prose, poetry, and drama. In another book, Rampan (1982) noted that there were 22 women who wrote short stories that were considered to have quite high-quality literary values. Despite these facts, female authors still have not been taken into account in the development of literature in Indonesia.

Like female authors, short stories written by female authors also experience the same disclaimer. At the beginning of its birth (around the 1930s), a short story was not considered as a literary work because it does not have a complete structure as the novel. In fact, the freeze (impasse) of the Indonesian literature in the 1950s would not cease if the short stories did not flourish at that time. Although the presence of the short story at first was unclear, at the next stage the short story became a color that enlightened the development of literature in Indonesia. This is evidenced by the presence of a collection of short stories published by prominent publishers. For example, Kompas which periodically (annually) publishes a

collection of short stories which are the choice of short stories published every Sunday.

In the book *Angkatan 2000*, Rampan (2000) clearly explained that the short story became an icon of the birth of a new generation in Indonesian literature. Of the 76 authors representing the *Angkatan 2000*, thirty of them are short story writers. The rest are composers of poetry, and only one novelist (discussed in the book) is Ayu Utami. From this explanation, it appears that the appearance of short stories has become a phenomenon in the development of Indonesian literature since its emersion.

This article aimed to discuss female writers' perspective especially about love, loyalty, and other woman which described in short stories various time periods. In addition, this study also highlighted the development of women's perception of these three issues from the 1940s to the 2000s illustrated in the short stories.

## II. METHOD

*Gynocritics* literary criticism was used as the theory for examining women's views about love, loyalty, and other woman. The term *Gynocritics* (origin *gynocritics*) was introduced by Elaine Showalter as one of the two main approaches to feminist criticism. In the Gynocritical approach, some issues have been investigated include specific patterns that emerge in women's writing, women's subjective experiences, cultures formed between women and psychological aspects that are only felt by a mere woman. For example, the representation of women who are different and more positive about the figure of women who are not married, the influence of female writers on other female writers, a portrayal of relations between women or the women's community in texts. Issues like this are considered not important because the choice of topic is not in accordance with the tastes of the majority dictated by masculinity.

The source of this research data were the short stories written by female authors in the collection of short stories entitled *Dunia Perempuan*. This collection of short stories contains 55 short stories published in different time frames, from 1940s to 2000s. Purposive sampling was conducted to sort out the data. Data requirements were short stories that present female figures and discuss female's issues. Based on this determinant, 20 short stories were selected to represent the issues. The list of short stories is as presented in Table I.

TABLE I. TITLES OF SELECTED SHORT STORIES

No	Title of shot stories (simbol)	Authors
1	"Kalau Timur Masih Memanggil" (C1)	Saadah Alim
2	"Keseharian" (C2)	Suwarsih Djojopuspito
3	"Dua Kerinduan" (C3)	Salsiah Tjahyaningsih
4	"Jakarta" (C4)	Totilawati Tjitrawarsita
5	"Meja Gambar" (C5)	Titis Basino
6	"Lereng pegunungan" (C6)	N.H.Dini
7	"Hati-hari terhadap Orang Asing" (C7)	Th. Sri rahayu Prihatmi
8	"Tiga Wanita" (C8)	Yati Setiawan
9	"Istri Model Baru" (C9)	Rayni N Masardi
10	"Bintang Jatuh" (C10)	Lili Munir C
11	"Perempuan" (C11)	Fitri Astuti Lestari
12	"Peristiwa Semalam" (C12)	Sirikit Syah
13	"Dunia Ibu" (C13)	Ratna Indraswari Ibrahim
14	"Pernikahan Kisah Perempuan Nadin" (C14)	Mona Sylvia
15	"Pemahat Abad" (C15)	Oka Rusmini
16	"Secantik Senyuman" (C16)	Sari Narulita
17	"Tulip" (C17)	Nina Pane
18	"Tiga Helai Rambut" (C18)	Hana Rambe
19	"Menembus Kabut" (C19)	Agnes A.Majestika
20	"Tikus" (C20)	Upita Agustin

\*Note: C1-C20 are symbols for short stories title.

Mimetic approach is an approach that studies literary works in terms of extrinsic elements. Mimetic approach is important to be performed to uncover the unabridged meaning of literary works comprehensively considering the literary works born of certain groups of people. This process allows the social elements of the community around literary works to influence the substance of the literary works.

## III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

From 20 short stories by female authors published from 1940 to 2000, it is found an adjustment in women's views about love, loyalty, and other woman from time to time. The changing is caused by the author's personal experience factor related to their understanding of gender diversity, social, psychological issues, and the advancement of science and technology.

### A. The 40s Short Story

In the 1940s, women perceived love and loyalty as very fundamental in their lives. The success and failure of a woman in living her life fully depend on her success in undergoing a full of love and faithful marriage. Therefore, success in running a household depends on the ability of women to look after and care for them. An affair committed by a husband is considered as a result of a woman who is unable to take good care of her husband and the household.

A very clear perception in the view of women of this decade is women tend to maintain marriage and the integrity of their households. The women prefer to accept husbands who have an affair and forgive their husbands although proven to betray a marriage promise. This attitude was taken on the basis of consideration of a very high sense of women's dependence on men. So, the women do not have the confidence to live alone without a husband. This is also aggravated by the socio-

cultural background which gives a negative stigma to women who have widowed status.

Another reason that also causes women to maintain their failed marriage life is a great responsibility for the children. Children are considered innocent victims of the woman's inability to succeed in her marriage. As a result, these women are willing to accept unpleasant treatment from their husbands, as shown in the following quote.

*"Aku tiada berhak merusak kehidupannya, menjadikan dia tiada berbapa. Tambahan pula, akupun tak rela menerima kasihan orang berkelilingku," kata Marliah antara sejourus. (C1, p.10)*

("I have no right to ruin his life, leaving him without father. In addition, I will not be willing to accept the pity of people around me," said Marliah.) (C1, p.10)

#### B. *The 50s Short Story*

Similar to the decade of the 40s, in the 1950s, female authors still emphasized that household integrity was a priority. To keep the husband loyal, women must pay great attention to the appearance. However, if it turns out the husbands continue to betray the marriage, they will blame themselves. Even so, the child factor is the most important reason in the effort to maintain the integrity of the household. That is the nature of women as mothers in caring for children is a nurturing habit that cannot be denied (Hayati, 2014).

*Pada dekade 1950-an ini digambarkan usaha-usaha perempuan dalam mempertahankan rumah tangga mereka. Salah satu usaha adalah menjaga penampilan agar selalu terlihat segar dan cantik. Apabila perempuan sudah tidak mampu memberikan penampilan terbaik mereka untuk suami mereka, maka mereka harus siap-siap dihianati oleh suami mereka. Dengan kata lain, laki-laki akan selalu mencari objek lain yang lebih segar dan cantik untuk mengisi hidup mereka. Saat itulah keutuhan rumah tangga berada dalam situasi 'siaga'. Dalam C2 (dekade 1950-an) terlihat gambaran tersebut, seperti berikut ini.*

(In the 1950s, the efforts of women in defending their households were described clearly. One of their efforts is to maintain the appearance to always look fresh and beautiful. If women are not able to give their best performance to their husbands, then they must be prepared to be betrayed by their husbands. In other words, men will always look for other women who are fresher and more beautiful to fill their lives. In these circumstances, the integrity of the women's household is in a 'warning' situation.)

*Suaminya tiba-tiba berdiri diam dan memandang seorang perempuan yang lalu. Perempuan cantik, dengan segala gerak geriknya memang berlainan dengan dia, Hastuti yang berparas biasa saja...*

(Her husband suddenly stood still and looked at a woman who had just passed. Beautiful women, with all their movements are different from her, Hastuti with an ordinary face...)

*...pandangan dari Supomo penuh berahi ditujukan pada wanita-wanita lain yang segar jelita, berpakaian baik...*

*...Supomo's gaze is lustful directed at other women who are fresh, well dressed...*

*Dulu sebelum kawin ia mengira bahwa Supomo takkan melihat orang lain...*

(Before marriage, she thought that Supomo would not see anyone else...) (DP.C2:13)

The quote above explains that physical appearance is the most important aspect of a woman in order to bind her husband's heart and not throw away their marriage. However, in this case, the female writer implicitly expressed her concern about Hastuti's fate which is also suffering for many women in life who have the same situation. Many women want to have an enchanting and attractive appearance but do not have the money for afford the treatments, meanwhile their husbands, who are supposed to finance that, prefer to admire other women beauty.

The basic problem dealt with the women characters is basically not a physical appearance; it is a socio-cultural condition that makes women very dependent on men. The woman who was left by her husband to remarry with another woman was considered shameful, and they have made a big mistake. Society never sees that men also have a big role in that failure.

In these two-decades literary works, the portrait of male betrayal is very observable. Women characters are described as those who are always obliged to maintain the integrity of their household, while men are never burdened with the same matter. This bitter and painful reality is a fragment of experiences that women writers want to convey through their works.

#### C. *The 60s Short Story*

In the 1960s, love and marriage integrity were as important as the relationship between parent and child. Love between parent and child should not be broken by anything, even though the child's status is not biological. Love is still believed by the characters to be able to accept each other's weaknesses and strengths. There have not been many changes to the views of women in this decade. Public perceptions of love and loyalty are still relatively the same as the 50s.

#### D. *The 70s Short Story*

The decade of the 1970s became a milestone for fundamental changes in women. In this decade, women who find their husbands betraying their marriage, have dared to ask for a divorce. That is caused by the woman already having a bargaining position, that is, women are able to live independently without depending entirely on their husbands. The views of the people began to shift; they are no longer blame women completely for the failure but have started to look at the problem objectively.

One of the short stories that illustrate the courage of women to separate from their husbands is C5. In this C5, female figures are depicted as independent individuals with their own income. By having financial independence, the bargaining power of the woman is equivalent to her husband so they

seemed sure to make the decision to separate. Therefore, there is no reason to retain men who have betrayed their marriage vows.

In this decade, a government regulation (PP) was issued which prohibited civil servants from having more than one wife. This regulation initially calmed the hearts of women who became civil servants' wives. On the other hand, this PP prevents men (whose civil servants) from officially practicing polygamy. However, the negative side of this regulation is that there are many men turn women into mistresses without official marriage certificates from authorized institutions. The above conditions are of course very detrimental to women because men can escape responsibility if there is a separation between them, especially if they have children. Men can argue with the excuse that there is no 'black and white' evidence about the relationship they have.

#### E. *The 80s Short Story*

In the 1980s, women's views on domestic life remained the same as in previous decades. Household integrity is something important that must be cared for and maintained if there is no betrayal by their husbands. A striking difference is that many women characters are financially independent and highly educated.

Women began to make modern efforts to look after the household and maintain their husband's love. One way that is taken is to always maintain the physical appearance, as shown in the following quote.

*"Dia selalu memuji saya bahwa saya ini adalah istri pilihannya yang cocok dengan bayangannya sewaktu masih bujangan dulu. Katanya saya seperti tokoh pewayangan Dewi Subadra." jawabnya singkat. (DP.C8:420)*

("He always praised me that I was chosen one that suited his imagination when he was still single. He said I was like a puppet figure Dewi Subhadra." She answered simply.)

From the above quotation, we can see a change in the views of women in an effort to maintain a marriage. They realize that appearance is an important aspect of maintaining their husband's views from temptations that come from outside. Because in this decade, there have been many women who dress up beautiful, pleasing to the eye, neat, and fragrant due to the advancement of education and career.

Analogous thought also appears in stories written by male authors. For example, Umar Kayyam's novel entitled *Sri Sumarah* (1986) shows women's efforts in maintaining the integrity of the household. As a man, Kayyam describes the view of the woman based on the perspective of men (male gaze) and stated the matter as the will of the community as well. Those women's efforts were called "the science of household perfection". We can see this tenet in the quotation below.

*Demikianlah Sri diwajibkan minum galian secara teratur agar badannya tetap singset dan sintal (ingat nduk, laki-laki tidak senang meliat badan istrinya gombyor-gombyor) (Kayam 1986:15)*

(Therefore, Sri is required to drink herbal medicine regularly so that his body remains tight and plump (remember my daughter, a husband don't like to see a wrinkled-body wife)) (Kayam 1986:15)

Women are required to make strenuous efforts in maintaining and caring for their physical beauty. This routine is called beautification which is, systematic direct efforts with the aim of enhancing sexual beauty and attractiveness (Dailey, 1986). This 'beautification' puts the female figure is only an object of sight and further becomes a mere sexual object. In this case, women are marginalized and cornered unconsciously and structured by the visions of men and the will of society.

#### F. *The 90s Short Story*

In the next decade of the 1990s, women are portrayed as strong figures in the face of divorce and not despair if betrayed or abandoned by their husbands. The most important thing for them is to prepare themselves to survive and take care of their children. One of the ways they take is to work outside the home and making development for themselves.

In addition, women are generally portrayed as loving figures for their families and children. For the sake of their love for children, they do anything for it, as seen in C10. They are also portrayed as figures who are not easily tempted by male seduction, as illustrated in C11.

Nevertheless, there are some portrayals that are quite surprising. There is a woman who is described as someone who is dissatisfied with her husband's loyalty and asks her husband to betray her. This is very different from the view of women in the previous decade who did not accept the betrayal of her husband. This idea certainly deviates from the habits of Indonesian people who crave for commitment and loyalty.

#### G. *The 2000s Short Story*

In the 2000 literary work, for the first time, women characters were found who were not involved in marriage. The views of society (or women authors) on this phenomenon are quite positive. For example, in C12 the main female character is depicted as a person who has a full activity in the public rather than the domestic world. Women are no longer afraid of being called 'old maid', because there has been a shift in perceptions about female personality. Women in this decade are no longer judged solely on a good body and beautiful face, but also on wider insights. In this decade, it is important for women to have 3B, namely brain, beauty and behavior.

In this decade, depictions of women who dare to take actions that justify any means to get her ideal man are found. Actually, it is not the man's love that the woman wants; but rather the position and power and popularity possessed by him. Women of this decade are depicted as human beings who tend to be materialistic. Concepts like love and responsibility are no longer the foremost thing as love can be 'created' when meeting with the man who has everything that women dream of.

In addition, women are also described as having dignity as in the following quote in C10

"Perempuan zaman sekarang, kalau tidak hati-hati akan dianggap sepele oleh laki-laki"(DP.C10:90)

("Women at this time will be considered insignificant by men if not being careful") (DP.C10:90)

The phrase 'if not being careful' in the sentence above contains several meanings. One of them is that women must have good capabilities to be considered in association with men. Because women are considered equal to men, women must be able to achieve the same level as men demand. Women can no longer position themselves as passive creatures under the command of men.

Another finding is the emergence of female characters who act as antagonists in other women's marriages. This woman is present and decorates the life of a married man. The depiction of this second female character causes the reader to feel no sympathy for her. The presence of this character is analogous with a parasite that damages beautiful flowers.

The depiction of the image of the second woman is as follows

... *Kabur ingatannya, sehingga antara beberapa bulan saja ia telah terkongkong oleh seorang perempuan di sana, tak dapat berlepas diri lagi. Dan belum setahun meninggalkan istri dan Tanah Air, suratnya telah melayang, mengabarkan pada Marliah bahwa ia akan kawin dengan perempuan itu seorang nona Belanda.* (DP.C1:7)

(... with blurred memory, in a few months he had been trapped by a woman there, unable to break away. not yet a year he left his wife and the Motherland, the letter has floated, told Marliah that she would marry the woman, a Dutch lady.) (DP.C1:7)

The presence of the second woman in this short story seems to be the cause of the male figure (husband) forgetting his promises and responsibilities to the first woman (wife). So it can be concluded that the presence of the second woman had a negative impact on the lives of the first woman.

In actual circumstances, the presence of a second woman in another woman's household has always been seen as negative perceptions of the woman. In the story above, although there is no explicit negative depiction of the figure of the second woman, the community still considers their presence as the beginning of a disaster.

But in some other stories, female authors try to understand that all women have the same right to achieve love, regardless of being a second woman or entering someone else's marriage.

The depiction of the image of the second woman is also found in C2 as follows.

... *Ia teringat beberapa malam yang lalu bagaimana hangatnya ia memeluk si jelita, anak dari majikan hotel tempat ia menumpang. Anak itu biasa menyiapkan makan paginya pada pukul satu malam. Anak segar dan jelita itu, menampakkan berahinya pada Supomo. Dan apakah yang ia dapat berbuat mendapatkan sebuah "jambu" sesegar dan semanis itu disodorkan padanya pula dengan tak usah*

*bersusah payah. Ia mengambil jambu itu dan merasa bahagia dengan cinta sepiintas lalu, sambil menyelam.* (DP.C2:17)

(He remembered a few nights ago how warmly he hugged the beautiful one, a daughter of the employer of the hotel where he was staying. The girl used to prepare her breakfast at one o'clock in the evening. The fresh and beautiful child revealed her lust for Supomo. There is no other choice when he getting a "guava" as fresh and sweet as that and offered to him for free. He took the guava and felt happy with one-night love, he just took the chance.) (DP.C2:17)

In the quote above, the image of the second woman is depicted as a woman who deliberately offered her body to be enjoyed by a married man. In this description, it is seen that the author blames the attitudes and behavior of the second female figure which represents the attitudes of the general public who also hate the attitudes and behavior of women as described above.

The second female character reappears in C5 but the depiction of the second female character is not as explicit as in C1 and C2. The image of the second woman is only depicted at a glance. However, the presence of the second woman in C5 was able to bring destruction to a household.

Different from the two previous short stories that the protagonist female characters still accept their husbands despite committing a treason, this female character in C5 has taken a brave step. She asked for a divorce from her husband, and let her husband go with other women, as in the following quote.

*Itulah akhir perkawinanku. Suamiku tiap malam bergadang di night club yang penuh tawa dan dekapan remaja ...* (DP.C5:78)

(That is the end of my marriage. My husband stayed up late every night in a night club full of laughter and teenager's hugs ... ) (DP.C5:78)

The attitude of the female characters above is caused by—one of them—the woman has been able to break away from dependence on men. In a patriarchal society, women are always positioned in a subordinated point and conditioned in such a way to always depend on men. This mechanism causes women to be unable to do anything if they receive unpleasant treatment from men. Another reason that can be offered is the consideration that their children still need a father figure in their developmental period. In C5, female figures are described as established women who are active in the public space, having a decent job with sufficient salary to support her child. Achievements like this make her able to take the decision to divorce from her treacherous husband.

The three short stories above feature the second woman negatively. This thing is evidenced by the effects felt by the female protagonist. Another case with C10, the presence of a second woman was responded by the female character as a mistake of a male character who is unable to resist lust and still needs to show manliness.

The author of C10 does not blame the presence of a second woman as a mistake. She described the image of the second woman here as a critique of men's attitudes and behavior, as in the following quote;

“Dia itu bukannya kambing bandot, sebab kalau kambing bandot sukanya kepada daun muda. Pak tuamu kambing saja, entah kambing apa, mungkin kambing kampung. Apa saja yang lewat ditelannya, daun tua, daun kering mungkin daun busuk juga lewat...” (DP.C 10:91)

(He is not a perverted goat, because if a perverted goat likes young leaves. Mister, you just a goat, I don't know which one, maybe a wild goat. He ate everything even though rotten leaves...) (DP.C 10:91)

“Laki-laki memang aneh,” katanya sendiri. “Kalau tidak ada mereka, sunyi hidup kita ini, gersang macam gurun tanpa air. Tetapi kalau ada mereka, tingkah lakunya macam binatang jalang...” (DP.C1 0:97)

(“Men are indeed strange” she said. Without them, our lives will be horrible. However, if they exist, they behavior is kind of a bitch ...) (DP.C1 0:97)

The portrayal of man as ‘goats’ and ‘lewd animals’ shows the author’s criticism of men’s attitudes and neutrality towards the second woman.

General views in society often blame women as the cause of infidelity. Then, the woman will be criticized, both by men and by their own gender. Criticism for treacherous women is heavier than men. This is an analogy to the term “*homo homoni lupus*” which is known in the discourse of modern capitalistic culture which creates a new meaning as “women are wolves for other women.”

The depictions of the negative image of the second woman in the short stories above do not necessarily mean that these women authors support gender ideology in society, but it can be interpreted as a critique of patriarchy.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

For most female author’s perspective, love is a very important aspect in their life because it makes them stronger. Besides love, women adore loyalty, especially in married life. That is because women are more concerned with the integrity of the household rather than themselves.

Based on the analysis of the data, female characters in the short stories argue that the presence of another woman in their lives is not entirely their mistake. In this case, the men figure has a big role in this case. In particular, female authors tend to criticize the nature of men who are unable to resist their lust as a cause for the appearance and presence of another woman in their marriage lives.

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