

**Unveiling Patriarchal Structures and Female Defiance in Dian Purnomo's
*Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam: A Feminist Analysis***

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ABSTRACT

*This article investigates the intricate dynamics of systemic patriarchy and women's resistance as portrayed in Dian Purnomo's novel, *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. Utilizing Sylvia Walby's structural theory of patriarchy alongside bell hooks' feminist perspectives on resistance, the study examines how the protagonist navigates the deeply oppressive cultural tradition of bride capture (kawin tangkap) in Sumba. Adopting a qualitative descriptive methodology, the research analyzes textual data to uncover the underlying mechanisms of male domination and female agency. The findings demonstrate that patriarchal control is systematically enforced through the cultural normalization of subjugation, multi-dimensional gender-based violence, and the institutionalization of forced marriage. In response to this profound oppression, the protagonist exhibits a dynamic trajectory of defiance, evolving from immediate verbal and emotional rejection to strategic silence and, ultimately, open physical rebellion and formal legal confrontation. This study concludes that the novel serves not merely as a fictional narrative, but as a critical socio-literary document that exposes tradition-based violence while emphatically championing women's inherent capacity to challenge and dismantle entrenched patriarchal frameworks.*

Keywords: *Patriarchy, Female Resistance, Feminist Literary Criticism, Kawin Tangkap, Dian Purnomo*

ABSTRAK

Artikel ini menginvestigasi dinamika kompleks dari sistem patriarki dan perlawanan perempuan sebagaimana digambarkan dalam novel karya Dian Purnomo, *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. Dengan menggunakan kerangka teori struktur patriarki dari Sylvia Walby dan perspektif feminis tentang perlawanan dari bell hooks, studi ini meneliti bagaimana tokoh utama menghadapi tradisi budaya yang sangat menindas, yakni praktik kawin tangkap di Sumba. Mengadopsi metodologi deskriptif kualitatif, penelitian ini menganalisis data tekstual untuk mengungkap mekanisme dominasi laki-laki dan agensi perempuan secara mendalam. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa kontrol patriarki ditegakkan secara sistematis melalui normalisasi budaya atas penundukan, kekerasan berbasis gender yang bersifat multi-dimensi, serta pemaksaan perkawinan yang terinstitusionalisasi. Sebagai respons terhadap penindasan yang struktural ini,

tokoh utama menampilkan lintasan perlawanan yang dinamis, berkembang dari penolakan verbal dan emosional pada tahap awal, menuju kebungkaman yang strategis, dan pada akhirnya bermuara pada pemberontakan fisik secara terbuka serta konfrontasi jalur hukum. Studi ini menyimpulkan bahwa novel tersebut tidak hanya berfungsi sebagai narasi fiktif belaka, melainkan sebagai dokumen sosial-sastra kritis yang membongkar kekerasan berkedok tradisi sekaligus menegaskan kapasitas inheren perempuan untuk melawan dan meruntuhkan belenggu patriarki yang mengakar.

Kata Kunci: Patriarki, Perlawanan Perempuan, Kritik Sastra Feminis, Kawin Tangkap, Dian Purnomo

A. Introduction

The intersection of literature and gender inequality remains a critical focal point in contemporary academic discourse. Far from being a mere aesthetic endeavor, literary production functions as a vital instrument to interrogate the entrenched patriarchal systems that dictate cultural norms (Tyson, 2006). Through narrative exploration, authors frequently question the systemic allocation of power to men and the concurrent marginalization of women. This dynamic reveals that texts are not neutral; rather, they reflect the profound social issues and gender disparities embedded within human history and actively reproduce or challenge circulating ideologies (Bendouma & Zitouni, 2023).

At the core of this marginalization is patriarchy, which operates not as a series of isolated, individual incidents,

but as a complex, institutionalized network. According to Sylvia Walby's (1990) theoretical framework, patriarchy is defined as a comprehensive social structural system that facilitates male domination across multiple domains. This structural approach emphasizes that gender disparity is deeply rooted in everyday institutions, which collectively force women into secondary, subordinate roles. Consequently, women are subjected to immense pressure, resulting in restricted autonomy in both their private domestic lives and public spheres (Walby, 1990).

The reach of these patriarchal structures is extensive, affecting women's lives across both traditional landscapes and modern society. Scholars have noted that gendered power relations persist stubbornly even in progressive, professional

environments like academia, where men still systematically receive more institutional support and funding than their female counterparts (Steinþórsdóttir et al., 2020). This proves that patriarchal mechanisms are highly adaptable, functioning everywhere from rural customary villages to contemporary offices. Regardless of the setting, these societal frameworks actively limit female agency and subject women to various forms of coercion and violence.

Feminist literary criticism provides an essential analytical lens to deconstruct these pervasive power dynamics within textual narratives. As noted by prominent critics, literature acts as an ideological product that frequently mirrors and reproduces the patriarchal values circulating within society (Tyson, 2006). By positioning women as “the Other”—a concept demonstrating that women are defined relative to men—dominant cultural narratives historically relegate female characters to secondary, passive roles that exist solely to support male subjectivity (Beauvoir, 1949/2011).

Nevertheless, contemporary literature increasingly disrupts this

passive representation, offering narratives where female characters actively navigate and resist these systemic inequalities. A profound exemplar of this thematic shift is Dian Purnomo’s novel, *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. Set against the stark landscape of Sumba, the novel meticulously unpacks the operation of patriarchy in Indonesia, centering specifically on the controversial customary practice of kawin tangkap or bride capture.

Purnomo’s work transcends standard fictional boundaries, acting as a crucial socio-political document that reflects the genuine lived realities of gender-based violence survivors. The narrative exposes how the guise of ancestral tradition and cultural preservation is frequently weaponized to legitimize gross human rights violations. By detailing the protagonist’s harrowing subjugation, the author sharply illustrates how deeply ingrained cultural violence is utilized to exert absolute control over the female body and dictate her future.

Understanding the depth of this subjugation requires acknowledging how power operates invisibly through societal norms. Power is not merely

wielded through overt physical dominance but is internalized through discourse, making unjust social identities appear entirely natural (Foucault, 1980). Consequently, oppressive gender roles are continually produced and reproduced through repetitive social practices, leading communities to accept violent gender disparity without critical scrutiny.

However, the recognition of structural oppression is only one facet of the feminist discourse presented in the novel. To fully analyze the protagonist's response to her victimization, the theoretical perspective of bell hooks becomes indispensable. hooks (2000) conceptualizes feminism as a proactive, collective movement dedicated to eradicating sexist exploitation and dismantling systemic oppression. Central to this ideology is the belief that women are not merely passive recipients of subjugation, but rather possess the innate capacity for dynamic agency and self-determination.

Within this framework, resistance is characterized as the fundamental act of reclaiming one's voice and

subjectivity in the face of absolute control. hooks' (1989) concept of "talking back" highlights the revolutionary transition from imposed cultural silence into active, political speech. This defiance is not exclusively limited to overt, physical rebellion; it encompasses a broad spectrum of responses, including internal emotional fortitude, strategic silence, and subtle psychological rejections of dominant norms.

While existing academic research has extensively documented the representation of female oppression in literature, there remains a noticeable analytical gap within the discipline. Many previous studies predominantly focus on the mechanisms of victimization without sufficiently exploring the complex, dynamic interaction between systemic control and active female defiance. A comprehensive understanding of gender narratives requires examining exactly how female characters internalize, negotiate, and ultimately challenge the specific structures that attempt to confine them.

Previous studies on Indonesian literature have indeed utilized feminist criticism to analyze stereotypes,

women's marginalization, and generalized resistance strategies, such as examinations of patriarchal ideology in novels by Indonesian female authors (Junaidi, 2018) or resistance against overarching cultural dominance (Febria Prasetyo & Suryaman, 2022). However, research that specifically bridges the structural mapping of patriarchy with nuanced theories of vocal and psychological resistance remains highly limited, particularly concerning Purnomo's contemporary text. This current study differentiates itself by synthesizing Walby's distinct structural categories with hooks' active resistance paradigms to offer a highly targeted, robust analysis.

Therefore, this research intends to thoroughly investigate the deeply rooted patriarchal structures depicted in *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* and explore how the protagonist's multifaceted resistance serves to challenge those very frameworks. By intentionally combining Sylvia Walby's (1990) systemic theory of patriarchy with bell hooks' (1989, 2000) concepts of empowerment and resistance, the study aims to illuminate the delicate balance between overwhelming social

systems and indomitable personal strength. Ultimately, this analysis seeks to affirm the power of literature as a critical voice advocating for gender justice and the dismantling of exploitative traditions.

B. Research Method

Research Design

This study employs a qualitative descriptive approach to investigate the thematic elements of patriarchal oppression and female defiance within a literary context. The qualitative paradigm was deliberately chosen because it facilitates an in-depth exploration of textual meanings, character representations, and complex social dynamics without relying on numerical or statistical data quantification. The descriptive method is utilized to systematically articulate and map the protagonist's lived experiences regarding systemic subjugation and her subsequent strategies of resistance. Analytically, this research is firmly anchored in feminist literary criticism, specifically synthesizing bell hooks' concepts of feminist resistance (hooks, 1989, 2000) with Sylvia Walby's structural theory of patriarchy (Walby, 1990) and Michel Foucault's postulations on the

internalization and mechanisms of power (Foucault, 1980). This multi-layered theoretical framework enables a comprehensive interpretation of how systemic authority and critical individual consciousness intersect within the narrative structure.

Subject and Setting of the Study

The primary subject of this investigation is Dian Purnomo's novel, *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* (Purnomo, 2020). This literary work was specifically selected as the focal point because it meticulously chronicles the traumatic journey of a young Sumbanese woman whose modern professional aspirations violently clash with the rigid expectations of her traditional society that most notably through the deeply oppressive practice of *kawin tangkap* (bride capture). Rather than merely depicting a passive victim of circumstance, the narrative presents a dynamic character who develops acute critical awareness and multifaceted resistance against systemic subjugation, making the text an ideal subject for robust feminist analysis. Because the primary data is entirely textual, the research functions fundamentally as a library-based study. Consequently, the analytical

setting is independent of a physical geographical location, relying instead on the intense scrutiny of the primary novel alongside a comprehensive collection of secondary sources, which include academic journals, books, and theoretical literature concerning feminism, patriarchal systems, and power dynamics (Walby, 1990; hooks, 2000).

Data Collection Techniques

Data acquisition was executed utilizing formal documentation techniques. The primary data was gathered through intensive, close readings of the novel (Purnomo, 2020) to establish a holistic understanding of the overarching narrative structure, character arcs, and contextual nuances. Following this comprehensive textual review, specific segments directly pertinent to the research focus, the distinct manifestations of oppression and the protagonist's corresponding acts of defiance that were identified, marked, and systematically recorded as primary textual evidence. Subsequently, this extracted data was categorized according to predefined analytical themes, such as physical, psychological, and symbolic forms of resistance, ensuring all collected

information remained highly relevant to the core objectives of the study.

Data Analysis Procedures

The data analysis in this study employs an interactive qualitative analysis model, conducted in several stages based on the established theoretical framework. The steps of data analysis include: Data reduction, namely selecting and focusing on data relevant to the research objectives. Data display, namely organizing data into descriptive forms or categories in accordance with the research focus. Conclusion drawing, namely, interpreting the data based on feminist theory, patriarchy, and power.

In the analysis process, the collected data are examined using Sylvia Walby's perspective to identify patriarchal structures, Michel Foucault's theory to understand mechanisms of power, and bell hooks' feminist thought to analyze critical consciousness, resistance, and empowerment of the character. Thus, the analysis is not only descriptive but also interpretative.

Trustworthiness of the Data

To ensure the validity of the data, this study applies several trustworthiness criteria, namely:

1. Credibility

Credibility is ensured through in-depth and repeated reading of the text, as well as careful interpretation that aligns with the context of the novel. The use of relevant theoretical frameworks also strengthens the validity of the analysis.

2. Dependability

This research is conducted systematically and transparently, from data collection to data analysis, so that the process can be traced and understood by other researchers.

3. Confirmability

The data used in this study are based on clear textual evidence taken directly from the novel. This ensures that the findings are supported by verifiable data and are not solely influenced by the researcher's subjective interpretation.

4. Transferability

The findings of this study are expected to provide relevant insights for similar research, particularly

studies focusing on feminist analysis in literary works.

C. Result and Discussion

The textual analysis of Dian Purnomo's *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* delineates two primary thematic categories: the systematic enforcement of patriarchal structures and the multifaceted trajectory of female resistance. The narrative exposes how deeply ingrained socio-cultural paradigms subjugate women, while simultaneously chronicling the protagonist's evolution from a captive to an active agent of defiance.

Manifestations of Patriarchal Dominance

The novel elucidates patriarchy not merely as individual prejudice, but as an institutionalized cultural apparatus. This systemic oppression is predominantly mapped through three intersecting practices:

Cultural Normalization of Subjugation

The narrative highlights how the tradition of *kawin tangkap* (bride capture) is fiercely protected by the community under the guise of ancestral heritage. The text reveals that this practice is often justified for its

procedural and economic efficiency, effectively reducing women to transactional commodities. This normalization is explicitly captured in the text:

“Dia tahu, di dalam kepercayaan adat Sumba memang dikenal adanya kawin culik yang sudah terjadi sejak zaman nenek moyang mereka.”
(Purnomo, 2020, p. 19)

“He knows that in Sumbanese traditional beliefs, there is indeed a practice of kidnapping, which has been going on since the time of their ancestors.”

Consequently, collective cultural preservation supersedes women's fundamental rights, demonstrating how patriarchal ideology is seamlessly woven into customary law, justified by the notion that it “shorten[s] customary procedures to avoid excessive costs and time” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 19).

Multi-Dimensional Violence

Patriarchal authority in the text is continuously reinforced through physical, sexual, and psychological aggression. The protagonist, Magi Diela, is subjected to severe physical coercion by multiple armed men,

illustrating a stark gendered power imbalance:

“Magi meronta, mencoba melepaskan diri... Namun, nihil. Tenaga seorang perempuan mungil... tidak sebanding dengan lima laki-laki muda yang berbekal parang di pinggang kiri mereka.” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 40).

“Magi struggled, trying to free herself, but to no avail. The strength of a petite woman was no match for five young men armed with machetes at their left waists.”

Furthermore, sexual assault is weaponized as a tool to degrade her dignity, as seen when “another man grabbed her breast” as retaliation for her physical resistance (Purnomo, 2020, p. 41). Psychologically, this violence strips the protagonist of her humanity, pushing her to the brink of profound despair where she feels “as worthless as an animal” whose dignity is being destroyed (Purnomo, 2020, p. 42).

Institutionalization via Forced Marriage

The subjugation reaches its apex when the victim is compelled to marry

her abuser. Forced marriage operates as the ultimate mechanism to legitimize sexual violence:

“Dia diperkosa dalam keadaan tidak sadar dan sekarang dipaksa menikah dengan pemerkosanya.” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 52).

“She was raped while unconscious and subsequently forced to marry her rapist.”

By dismissing the woman’s explicit lack of consent, the patriarchal framework prioritizes male entitlement and familial honor over female autonomy, locking the victim into a permanent state of domestic control.

Mechanisms of Female Defiance

Despite facing overwhelming systemic pressure, Magi Diela’s narrative arc is characterized by continuous, evolving resistance. Her defiance manifests across a spectrum of strategic responses:

Verbal and Emotional Rejection

Magi initially combats her subjugation through direct verbal refusal, adamantly rejecting the legitimacy of her captor and the forced union. She boldly declares:

“Lepaskan saya! Sa tidak mau jadi ko pung istri. Lebih baik sa mati daripada jadi ko pung istri.”
(Purnomo, 2020, p. 53).

“Let me go! I don’t want to be a wife. I’d rather die than be a wife.”

Parallel to this, she utilizes emotional resistance, cultivating deep-seated anger as a psychological fortress. She meticulously observes her surroundings to “remember who she would curse through her prayers” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 46), ensuring she does not internalize her victimhood.

Strategic Silence and Concealment

Recognizing the peril of constant open confrontation, Magi pivots to a survival strategy of silent resistance. She outwardly projects obedience to lower the guard of her captors:

“Magi berusaha menjaga sikap selama berada di rumah. Dia tersenyum untuk hal-hal yang membuatnya marah, tertawa kecil untuk hal-hal yang membuatnya tersinggung, bersikap hormat kepada orang-orang yang ingin dibunuhnya.”
(Purnomo, 2020, p. 114).

“Magi tried to behave himself while at home. He smiled at things that angered him, chuckled at things that offended him, and showed respect to people he wanted to kill.”

This calculated restraint is not a surrender, but rather a covert exertion of agency. She strictly governs her emotions, realizing there is “no time to be a crybaby now” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 115), allowing her to navigate the oppressive environment while planning her escape.

Open Rebellion and Legal Confrontation

The protagonist’s resistance eventually erupts into overt rebellion. This includes direct physical retaliation against her abuser:

“Leba Ali menampar wajah Magi. Magi membalas menampar wajah Leba Ali, cukup keras untuk membuat laki-laki itu terkejut.” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 290).

“Leba Ali slapped Magi in the face. Magi slapped Leba Ali in the face back, hard enough to surprise the man.”

Crucially, Magi bypasses the biased customary dispute resolution systems by escaping to report her assault directly to the formal authorities:

“Magi langsung menuju ke kantor polisi. Tidak mudah bagi Magi untuk sampai di sana dengan selamat. Dia harus sampai di kantor polisi, apa pun yang terjadi.” (Purnomo, 2020, p. 297).

“Magi headed straight to the police station. It wasn’t easy for Magi to get there safely. She had to get there, no matter what.”

The findings from *Perempuan yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam* vividly illustrate the complex theoretical intersections of gendered power dynamics, structural oppression, and feminist agency.

Structural Subjugation Through Walby’s Lens

When examined through Sylvia Walby’s (1990) theory of patriarchy, the protagonist’s ordeal exemplifies the rigorous operation of structural male dominance. Walby posits that patriarchy is sustained through interrelated social structures, which

are explicitly mirrored in the novel’s depiction of customary traditions and cultural institutions. The communal acceptance of *kawin tangkap* aligns with Walby’s assertion that cultural institutions are complicit in reproducing gender marginalization by framing female subordination as divine or traditional necessity. Furthermore, the sexual and physical abuse Magi endures substantiates Walby’s identification of male violence as a core structural instrument utilized to paralyze female autonomy and maintain the patriarchal status quo. By forcing the protagonist into marriage, the community attempts to transition her into the sphere of “private patriarchy,” where male authority is absolutely consolidated within the domestic household (Walby, 1990). This systemic normalization of abuse underscores Foucault’s (1980) concept of power, wherein dominant norms are internalized by society to the extent that grave injustices appear entirely natural and unquestionable.

Agency and the Politics of Resistance

In opposition to these rigid structures, the protagonist’s evolving defiance robustly aligns with bell hooks’ (2000) conceptualization of

feminism as an active struggle against systemic exploitation. hooks emphasizes that oppressed individuals possess the inherent capacity to cultivate critical consciousness. Magi's initial verbal refusals and eventual legal confrontation perfectly encapsulate hooks' (1989) concept of "talking back" that the revolutionary political act of moving from an imposed state of silence into active, self-defining speech. By refusing to reconcile emotionally with her captors, Magi protects her psychological integrity, demonstrating that patriarchal dominance is rarely absolute because it constantly breeds the potential for resistance (hooks, 2000).

Moreover, the narrative's depiction of Magi's strategic obedience introduces a highly nuanced layer of defiance that resonates with James C. Scott's theory of hidden resistance (as cited in O'Brien, 2026). Scott argues that subjugated demographics often challenge dominance through disguised, indirect actions rather than immediate open warfare. Magi's performative submission and emotional self-regulation function as a critical survival mechanism, proving

that female agency in oppressive environments is not always overtly confrontational. Ultimately, her decision to seek formal justice serves as the ultimate reclamation of her subjectivity, transforming her from an objectified victim into an empowered agent who actively disrupts the patriarchal structures attempting to define her.

D. Conclusion and Suggestion

Conclusion

This research systematically unpacks the intricate manifestations of systemic patriarchy and the corresponding modalities of female defiance within Dian Purnomo's *Perempuan Yang Menangis Kepada Bulan Hitam*. By synthesizing Sylvia Walby's structural frameworks with bell hooks' feminist paradigms, the analysis confirms that patriarchal oppression operates extensively through the cultural normalization of restrictive traditions, multifaceted gender-based violence, and the institutionalization of forced marriage. These deeply embedded systemic mechanisms collaboratively function to curtail female autonomy while reinforcing male supremacy within the societal hierarchy.

Conversely, the study demonstrates that the protagonist, Magi Diela, embodies a dynamic spectrum of resistance—ranging from immediate verbal and emotional rejection to strategic silence, culminating in overt physical and legal rebellion. Her trajectory actively dismantles the archetype of the passive victim, underscoring that marginalized women possess the inherent agency, critical consciousness, and fortitude to challenge dominating power structures. Ultimately, Purnomo's narrative transcends fiction, functioning as a profound socio-literary critique against oppressive customs that marginalize women and normalize violence under the guise of ancestral heritage.

Suggestion

Based on the analytical findings and the theoretical scope of this study, several recommendations are proposed to advance future discourse. For future researchers, subsequent academic inquiries are strongly encouraged to examine this novel through alternative critical lenses, such as psychoanalytic feminism, broader gender studies, or sociological literary criticism.

Employing these varied theoretical frameworks will cultivate a more exhaustive and multi-dimensional interpretive discourse regarding the text's complex socio-cultural themes.

Furthermore, general readers are urged to utilize the profound insights derived from this narrative to foster a heightened critical awareness regarding the detrimental impacts of entrenched patriarchal cultures. Recognizing these systemic power dynamics is essential for promoting a more equitable societal ethos—one that fundamentally respects women's autonomy, fundamental human rights, and inherent dignity in all everyday social interactions.

Finally, regarding its contribution to academic disciplines, it is anticipated that this investigation will meaningfully enrich the broader field of literary studies, particularly feminist literary criticism. By integrating the structural mapping of oppression with nuanced theories of active resistance, this research provides a robust analytical framework for understanding the complex intersections of patriarchy and female agency within the continuously

evolving corpus of Indonesian literature.

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