

WOMEN'S SILENT RESISTANCE AGAINST HEGEMONY IN THE *SCARLET LETTER*, *BEKISAR MERAH*, AND *BELANTIK*: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS

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ABSTRAK

Sistem patriakal dalam masyarakat merupakan pranata sosial yang bersifat hegemonik dan merugikan kaum perempuan tetapi menguntungkan pihak laki-laki. Lasiyah, tokoh utama dalam novel Bekisar Merah dan Belantik, dan Hester Prynne, tokoh utama dalam novel The Scarlet Letter, sama-sama mengalami penindasan hegemonik dari masyarakat mereka, Jawa dan Puritan. Dengan menggunakan teori Hegemony dan teori Sastra Bandingan, tulisan ini mengungkapkan perlawanan diam yang mirip yang dilakukan oleh kedua tokoh utama. Tindakan perlawanan diam ini membawa kedua tokoh tersebut menjadi manusia dengan identitas dan kepribadian baru. Mereka seolah terlahir kembali. Kedua tokoh tersebut memiliki unsur-unsur pendorong yang bisa diperbandingkan dalam perlawanan mereka, yaitu harga diri, martabat, dan cinta kasih. Perempuan yang pada umumnya dianggap lemah tak berdaya sesungguhnya adalah makhluk yang sangat kuat dan penuh daya.

Kata Kunci: hegemoni, penindasan, perlawanan diam, pranata patriakal

ABSTRACT

Social patriarchy is a gender-biased hegemonic value that is structured for the benefits of men but unfortunately disadvantages women. Lasiyah, the protagonist in *Bekisar Merah* and *Belantik*, and Hester Prynne, the protagonist of *The Scarlet Letter*, experienced those hegemonic values that were oppressive, from their patriarchal societies, i.e. Javanese and Puritans. By using the theories of both Hegemony and Comparative Literature, this research reveals the two protagonists' similar silent resistance against the hegemonic values in that this brought them to become new persons with new personality and identity. They were similarly reborn. Both women had comparable factors driving them to conduct silent resistance: pride, dignity, and love. Woman, who is in general considered weak and powerless, is in fact strong and powerful.

Keywords: hegemony, oppression, silent resistance, patriarchy

INTRODUCTION

Literature is a universal expression of human beings for it brings the value of universality. Universal means that the work reflects human life despite the differences in culture and tradition

among peoples in the whole world. The similar idea of resistance expressed by the protagonists of three novels confirms the "supranationality dimension, which is of necessity a human dimension" (Guillén, 1993:17). Everybody is psychologically the

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same. Fear, courage, love, hate, envy, passion, frustration, dream, happiness, sadness, and pain are the basic feelings of human beings in this world. Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* and Ahmad Tohari's *Bekisar Merah* and *Belantik* lift up the universal values concerning women's problems and struggles to uphold their principles against the suppressive, hegemonic, and dominating values or power in their respective societies.

The three novels are the products of the moment, people, and land (society) and are inseparable from the society. They are reflections or imitations of society. "An artistic work shall be connected with its cultural context; otherwise, it is like an inscription on a tomb in an unknown language" (Lotmanas cited in Goldmann, 1981:8); and a writer cannot be separated from his social and cultural background in creating a literary work (Pradopo, 1995:113).

The three novels have some similarities related to the hegemonic patriarchy over the female members. There is mental suppression on women and even physical oppression toward them as represented by the protagonists of the novels. The term patriarchy, along with its adjective form patriarchal, in fact does not refer to certain concept or school of feminism. All schools agree and use this term in their discourses. This term refers to a general and common idea that most cultures and social organizations in the world are built and structured in the frame of males' domination and of "maleness or masculinity being the norm for humanness or humanity" (Cudd, 2007:1). Kate Millett states that "patriarchy is pervasive male control of nearly all aspects of public and private life" (as cited in Cudd, 2007:8-9). She wrote that "patriarchy's chief institution is the family. It is both a mirror of and a connection with the larger society; a patriarchal unit within a patriarchal whole. Even in patriarchal societies where they are granted legal citizenship, women tend to be ruled through the family alone and have little or no formal relation to the state." (as cited in Cudd,

2007:42) Bell Hooks used the term "patriarchy and capitalist patriarchy" in her article "Black Woman: Shaping Feminist Theory" (as cited in Cudd, 2007:63).

In 1873, the U.S. Supreme Court perfectly described the prevailing idea of womanhood by stating that "The paramount destiny and mission of women are to fulfill the noble and benign offices of wife and mother. This is the law of the Creator" (Cott, 2000:365). Women are subordinate to men and this is the law of God, and thus it provokes resistance. In the case of the three novels, the resistance of women is a silent resistance.

The term silent resistance used in this article is a personal resistance in which the person goes with the flow of his society up to a certain degree of his/her quality. It is a process of psychological development in enduring and resisting the hegemonic values, the development of women personalities from going with the flow with the dominating values into a firm attitude rejecting the pressures they have to accept. When the social values collide with their basic faith or principles, they express their rejection through a way without harming the opposite.

Jonathan D. Katz compares silent resistance to queer resistance of Gay movement in America since it does not bring forward frontal physical movement and the like. "Silence could and did prove effective as a strategy of dissent. It manifests resistance, but does not articulate the position or identity from which that resistance comes" (Katz para. 13, 22). To be silent does not imply being silenced. It can indeed imply the opposite, an exercise in power. Thus, the word silent offers personal and internal efforts to resist oppression without movement, revolts, or protests.

This paper applies Gramsci's theory of hegemony to analyze the oppressive and dominant authorities in the society, along with the social norms and values, toward especially women in that this situation gains resistance from the women. According to Gramsci, hegemony means

“the supremacy of one group or class over other classes or groups; it is established by means other than reliance on violence or coercion” (Fontana, 1993:85). Moreover, “there must also be a focus on resistance, and to see how this operates we must elaborate the nexus of subalternity and common sense to now include power” (Howson, 2008:5). Hegemony occurs when there are different classes or strata in the society in that it requires subordination of certain class to the one having the power or ruling the society.

Through a comparative study, this paper attempts to disclose the hegemonic patriarchal social norms toward the protagonists in the three novels. It is also to peel the way, the silent resistance, in which women reacted to such patriarchal dominations. Another reason to bring forward the topic is the backgrounds of the women resisting the suppressive dominating values in the society. One very important thing to conduct this paper is to reveal the significance of the universal values of the three works.

Thus, this analysis endeavors to explore the ideas of Guillén on supranationality and those of Jost on comparative literature. “Comparative literature represents more than an academic discipline. It is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary *weltanschauung*, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive” (Jost, 1974:29). According to Guillén (1993), basically, the concept of literature is world wide or universal; “specifying exclusively in one nation or one nationality is not adequate and cannot be sustained as a practical matter” (p.6). Methodologically, the two theories become the basis of the research.

Literature is in fact the story of human life; it is universal. Cioranescu said that “the idea was taking root of an underlying unity of all literatures, above boundaries of peoples and their languages” (as cited in Guillén, 1993:14). Universal values, which Faruk (2008) calls *hukum alam atau hukum Tuhan yang universal*, natural laws or universal God's laws (p.225), refer to the supranationality of the values surpassing the local values or locality.

HEGEMONY

Positioning women as subordinates to men in almost all aspect of life, often supported by religion interpretations, is a kind of oppressive hegemony of patriarchal society. As time goes by and humanity progresses, the hegemonic patriarchal power dominating and subordinating women for thousands of years gets resistance in time, “where there is power there is resistance” (Michel Foucaults cited in Sandoval, 2000:1).

The protagonists resisted the oppressive values they have to deal with. Their resistance was personal and silent supported by a feeling of affection and love. Che Guevara says that “The true revolutionary is guided by great feelings of love,” and Bell Hooks also says that “Love . . . is an important source of empowerment when we struggle to confront issues of sex, race, and class” (as cited in Sandoval, 2000:139). The protagonists' resistance can thus be said as a new perspective in the frame of fighting against hegemonic patriarchy, “a global feminism, one that reaches beyond patriarchal political divisions and national ethnic boundaries, can be formulated from a new political perspective” (Alice Chaias cited in Sandoval, 2000:41)

There are at least three kinds of hegemonic values revealed by the three novels *The Scarlet Letter*, *Bekisar Merah*, and *Belantik*, i.e., religious or spiritual, social and political, and gender values. The values established were strict and created dread for them who were against. These values, overwhelmed by gender-biased behaviors, suppress women to be subordinates to men. This is the hegemony with which the protagonists had to deal in relation to their being females.

Therefore, hegemony requires subordination of the other classes to the one having the power or ruling the society. These other classes are called “subordinate, subaltern, or sometimes instrumental” (Hoare, 1983:xiv). Hegemony can generally be stated as the preeminence or supremacy that states, social groups, or even individuals may exercise their powerful authorities over others. The Puritans and some powerful people in Jakarta became the group

having supremacy over both protagonists as the ruled class. Puritans laws and Javanese philosophy became the ruling as well as dominating values.

Hegemony has three forms, i.e., hegemony of people, hegemony of system, and hegemony of ideology. The first refers to the relationship between two sides of people in which one is more powerful and dominant than the other. There is no written set of rules which they may consult when coming into a dead end of interpreting the dominant will. Bambang's applying strict rules for Lasi to obey is an example for this type. In addition, his dreadful power, that most top ranked people in the government including *Pak Handarbeni* were afraid of him, is another example.

The second concerns both social conventions and institutionalized regulations or laws. People live in society under certain laws and conventions that force them to behave accordingly. Cultural values that are mostly not written and political power from tyrannical government belong to this category since they become a set of systems in society. The last one is hegemony of ideology that exists within the mind or thought of people or a person. When people want or dream to reach certain goals and they strive hard to embody their dreams with all their strength and will, they behave under a hegemonic ideology. Idolization that leads one to live modeling the idol is also an example of hegemony of ideology. These three forms of hegemony can be seen in the three novels analyzed.

Hegemony may lead to two responses, i.e. obedience and resistance. Obedience is obviously seen from the people obeying all values both written such as laws, regulations, rules, and legal agreements, and unwritten such as social conventions, cultural traditions, cultural philosophy, and personal ideology. Applying the values like *pasrah* 'giving in', *nrima ing pandum* 'accepting destiny' is a form of obedience towards the hegemony of socio-philosophical values. Some people may resist certain hegemonic values since they cannot endure anymore the oppressive

pressure of this hegemony. With their own ways, both Hester Prynne and Lasiyah practiced resistance against the oppressively hegemonic values they were dealing with.

HEGEMONY OF RELIGIOUS AND SPIRITUAL VALUES

Religious values are those based on religious teachings or dogmas. Religious values are hegemonic because, as the theory says, they coerce and force people to obey. They also, to certain extent, become social values that may also become a kind of tradition to hold regularly, for instance *Sekaten* and *Grebeg Maulud* in Yogyakarta. Sin and hell are believed to be the punishments for those who reject, violate, and are against these values. In some regions, religious values are transformed into political laws regulating people to behave in their daily social life. Thus, the hegemonic religious values become obvious and real.

Spiritual values in this paper are those based on the belief, soul, psychology, or the inner heart of people. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, spiritual, an adjective, means "1 nonmaterial; of the nature of spirit: *one's spiritual nature*; 2 religious; SACRED: *spiritual songs | an advisor in spiritual matters*; 3 related or close to spirit." Meanwhile, the word spirit, as the noun of the adjective spiritual, in the same dictionary, means "1 a person apart from the body; one's mind or soul [...] *the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak*; 4 a power regarded able to take control of a person: *one possessed by a spirit*; 7 an intention or feeling in the mind; 14 in spirit in one's thought or imagination" (Procter, 1983:1076).

The hegemony of religious values in *Bekisar Merah* and *Belantik* is different from that in *The Scarlet Letter*. In Puritan society, the religious values were transformed into political laws and social rules in which people violating them would gain punishments from the authority, as experienced by Anne Hutchinson, Mary Eastey, and others in real life, and Hester Prynne in the novel. The doctrines became rules to be totally

obeyed. In Javanese spiritual values, people violating the values will not obtain physical punishments from the authority, but it is believed that God Himself who will be just through giving bad luck to the trespassers. Thus, this creates a total obedience of the people, based on their frightened feeling upon the abstract effects of violence, towards the values. Referring to Faruk's term, these two different atmospheres are called "*etis dan filosofis*" (2008:230), ethical and philosophical, in which the first concerns the formal laws as people's rule, something normative, while the latter is concerned with human conscience and belief, something beyond and abstract.

Having sexual intercourse resulting in a baby named Pearl, Hester Prynne was considered violating social, religious, and political norms in Salem. Hester was, in terms of religious values, convicted as a sinner for adultery. Hawthorne (1988) believed that the character of Puritan was "severe" (p.36). The punishments were hard, painful, and sometimes even deadly. "It might be, too, that a witch, like old Mistress Hibbins [...] was to die upon the gallows" (Hawthorne, 1988:37).

The angry crowd in the market place showed a collective oppression that then transformed into a hegemonic attitude towards Hester Prynne. The severe punishment by Puritans upon a sinner of adultery was a response towards their belief in Exodus 20:14 saying "Thou shalt not commit adultery." Hester Prynne was convicted committing one. There were the ruler and the ruled, the oppressor and the oppressed.

Agony became Hester Prynne's life to live on. Wherever she went out of her cottage, she had to deal with rude mockery of the crowd; even when she went to the church, she became the sampling object of living infamy and sin. "She would become the general symbol at which the preacher and moralist might point, and in which they might vivify and embody the images of woman's frailty and sinful passion. [...] as the figure, the body, the reality of sin. [...] it was often her mishap to find herself the text of the discourse" (Hawthorne, 1988:56, 60).

Hester Prynne's reluctance to tell her child, Pearl, about her father, is a sign of her life under the hegemony of religious, social, and political norms. She knew that revealing the father's name could bring hard, terrible, and bad consequences toward him.

Pearl was perceived as "a demon offspring" (Hawthorne, 1988:69,80,165,166,176), and thus she had to be discharged from her mother and taught heavenly teachings by Puritan people in order to detach her from her demon state and make her religious one. What Hester Prynne was experiencing was "situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure, or deprivation" (Frye as cited in Cudd, 2007:85). It was then an example of hegemony for her.

The scarlet letter A is both a punishment of her infamous sin and a sign of the Puritans' being cruel and oppressive, and it is believed that this punishment is based on faith in God.

Lasi, in being *pasrah* 'giving in' to her husband defect, kept struggling to find the cure. This is a total surrender to the hand of God. However, there is also another negative side of being *pasrah* as once happened to Lasi, "*Saya hanya menurut; semua terserah Ibu bagaimana baiknya. Saya pasrah*", 'I will do whatever you think is good for me, Madam. I give in' (Tohari, 1993:210). Lasi was experiencing "situations in which options are reduced to a very few and all of them expose one to penalty, censure, or deprivation" (Frye as cited in Cudd, 2007:85); hence, she was embraced by the hegemonic value of Javanese philosophy that she believed to be a general truth, and thus the term psychological oppression as proposed by Fanon occurred to Lasi in that she was co-opted into oppressing herself through her internalization of inferiority.

Another hegemonic spiritual value is "*manusia mung sak derma nglakoni*", 'human being is no more than just living on' (Tohari, 1993:77,114). Lasi had to *nrima* 'accept' and be *pasrah* without protest or complaint because *wrip mung sak derma nglakoni*, 'life is just to live on'. She had to *nrima*, 'accept'

“pada diri Lasi masih tersisa keyakinan hidup orang Karangsoga; seorang istri harus narima, menerima suami apa adanya”, ‘in Lasi’s heart, there still remained the faith of Karangsoga people; a wife had to take her husband for granted as what he was’ (Tohari, 1993:266).

This value is closely related to the other one, “*Gusti ora sare*” ‘God does not sleep’ (Tohari, 1993:68). With such a belief, Lasi was expected to be patient and strong to run her very severe life and ask Him as well for the betterment of her life without stopping striving because *Gusti ora sare*. However, Lasi was shocked and lost. Between believing and not believing, between consciousness and unconsciousness, between “realite and surrealite” (Soemanto, 2008:106), Lasi got lost. Her “realite” was broken into pieces while her “surrealite” could not even ease her painful heart.

Lasi was dominated by her memory, her past that she was bound to. The feeling of fear, anxiety, insecure, alienated, and uncertainty in an unknown new place terrified her. Memories are for certain people hegemonic. “Ideology, culture, philosophy, [...] are thus intrinsic to the notion of hegemony” (Fontana, 1993:140). “*Keterasingan juga sangat menggelisahkan Lasi. Dia merasa terdampar ke suatu dunia lain*”, ‘Alienation upset Lasi. She felt that she was stranded in another world’ (Tohari, 1993:151).

HEGEMONY OF SOCIAL AND POLITICAL VALUES

The established ideas and rules for people to live on transform into a set of values believed as the general truth. These are then called as social values and norms. Wisdom words, conventions, customs, and tradition are some examples of social values infiltrating and controlling the people’s mind, thoughts, and ways of life. Jail, scaffold, regulations, and legal rules are some examples of political values managing people to live in society or in a larger scale, country or state. These values are then hegemonic to the people in the society.

In *The Scarlet Letter* the first political value bringing forward hegemonic atmosphere to the people is the scaffold. The scaffold is in the form of a pillory “to confine the human head in its tight grasp, and thus hold it up to the public gazed” (Hawthorne, 1998:41), and it is hegemonic because this device brings horror to the people dealing with it. By applying this kind of punishment Puritans “gives to the intrinsic brutal coercion the external form of persuasion and consent” (Smith as cited in Howson, 2008:110), in which Hawthorne regarded the machine as “the very ideal of ignominy” (p.41).

Hester Prynne together with her daughter lived in seclusion, in an isolated cottage, from human society. The psychological torture from the society came to her as if a never-ending story. She was not merely an outcast, but also so low in the opinions of others. “Everything was against her. The world was hostile” (Hawthorne, 1998:113). The lonely life she had to live on, with only her child, was another form of oppressive hegemony from both the society and the authority, in that at the end she had lived a living of “the whole seven years of outlaw and ignominy” (Hawthorne, 1998:136). Hester Prynne felt alienated by the Puritans.

The intention of the ruling authority to discharge her daughter to be educated under the guidance of puritan rather than the mother showed hegemony of political values deriving from religious point of view. “It is because of the stain which that letter indicates, that we would transfer thy child to other hands” (Hawthorne, 1998:76).

Being alienated from society can also mean being oppressed by the society. Lasi was not “purely” born as a native Karangsogan since her father was a Japanese, thus she had mixed blood. She was alienated because of this hegemonic social and traditional value. She was thought of being from “another world” (Soemanto, 2008:105). This gave pain to her heart. She felt angry, disappointed, hated, and cast out. She was even doubtful about her existence.

Her not getting married until the age of twenty years shows another social hegemony

that people still believed that marrying a girl of an unclear history could bring bad luck. At least people of Karangsoga did not like to marry a girl of Lasi's identity.

The existence of *Bu Lanting*, *Pak Han*, and *Bambung* is another form of hegemony of power for Lasi. Lasi's run away from Jakarta to Karangsoga proves the existence of hegemonic power toward the ruled party. Lasi was frightened; she was afraid of *Bambung* forcing her to be his mistress, a play thing for the sake of his sexual pleasure.

A Javanese wisdom concerning *bobot*, *bibit*, *bebet* 'quality, origin, status' is another social hegemonic value experienced by Lasi. "*tidak mudah bagi seorang insinyur, anak bungsu Pak Tir, melakukan itu semua. Karangsoga bakal gejer; ada perjaka terpelajar dan kaya mengawini janda miskin, lebih tua pula. Bahkan sangat mungkin orang tua mas Kanjat sendiri tidak akan mau punya menantu Lasi*", 'It is not easy for an engineer, the last child of *Pak Tir*, to do it all. There will be uproar in Karangsoga. It is even possible that your parents are not pleased having Lasi as their daughter-in-law' (Tohari, 1993:192). *Kanjat* even said to *Pardi*, "*Bahkan sesungguhnya aku merasa malu bila orang-orang Karangsoga tahu bahwa aku menyukai Lasi*", 'In fact I would be ashamed if Karangsoga people knew that I like Lasi' (Tohari, 1993:193). Lasi's refusal of *Kanjat's* feeling and will to marry her was based on this hegemonic value. Thus, Lasi felt worthless being a wife of *Kanjat*.

HEGEMONY OF GENDER VALUES

Most societies have determined that women are the second after men, and they are under the guidance of men. Thus, a woman without her man is lost on her own "misguidance" (Hawthorne, 1998:45). As subordinates to men, women often experience oppression from men in the forms of both physical and non-physical ones. Women subordination towards men is believed to have occurred since the creation of human beings by God up to this present time. This is not only a

matter of social life, but also religious life as well as political, economical, and cultural life. In short, the problems of women subordination can be found in almost every aspect of life.

Furthermore, the hegemonic atmosphere applied to women is not only conducted by men but also by women towards other women. *BuKoneng* and *BuLanting* are an example of women conducting women subordination, although they did for the sake of business. They even emphasized the folks' assumption that woman is a source of man's pleasure but not vice-versa. A Javanese philosophy mentions that there are three things to be possessed as the symbols of men's wealth and pleasures i.e. *tahta*, *wanita*, *lan kukila*, 'power, woman, and birds.'

Woman is not seen from her other qualities; rather, she is seen from her physical beauty. This is proven by the story about *Lasiyah* being wealthy after having been staying in Jakarta for about only six months. People of Karangsoga believed that it was because of Lasi's beauty. "*Kalau bukan karena cantik, di Jakarta Lasi paling-paling jadi babu*", 'If not because of her beauty, Lasi would probably have become merely a house maid in Jakarta' (Tohari, 1993:242). Woman is underestimated and positioned only as a source of man's sexual pleasure. This is a gender-biased injustice opinion towards woman.

It has to be admitted also that not all men practice oppressively hegemonic attitudes to women, but at least they take benefits from this atmosphere (Howson, 2006:3). *Arthur Dimmesdale*, the Puritan priest, was also one benefiting from such an atmosphere in which woman was subordinate to man. *Hester Prynne's* refusal to name the man making her pregnant made *Arthur* keep having the privilege as an idolatrous priest within the Puritan society, while *Hester Prynne* had to bear the Puritan's harsh punishments for the sin they both committed.

Hester Prynne's fear and dread to see her ex-husband *Roger Chillingworth* also showed hegemony of gender value. She was overwhelmed by her own thought of betraying him that he might want to avenge her severely. Thus, she felt dreadful, and she was experiencing a kind of

hegemony; “hegemonic masculinity concerns the dread of and flight from women” (as cited in Howson, 2006:3).

Gender disgrace is not only conducted by men but also by women as well. Both *Bu Koneng* and *Bu Lanting* placed their own sex within the subordination of men. They even believed that woman was a play thing for man either socially, in which woman is a complement of men’s prestige, or sexually, in which woman is a medium for man’s release of sexual desire. Both ladies were experiencing what Frantz Fanon defined as psychic alienation and psychological oppression in that both *Bu Koneng* and *Bu Lanting* were co-opted into oppressing themselves through their internalization of inferiority. It is to have a harsh dominion exercised over one’s self-esteem. The psychologically oppressed person becomes one’s own oppressor. Psychological oppression can be regarded as the internalization of intimation of inferiority (as cited in Cudd, 2007:105). Hence, they lived and behaved within the hegemony of one of gender biased values.

Lasi’s having relationship with *Pak Handarbeni* was another piece of evidence of sexual hegemony in which Lasi was a subordinate to him. Their watching a pornography film was another kind of gender-biased oppression or hegemony of man towards woman. Radical feminist ideology furthermore believes that “the male has oppressed and victimized the female through pornography, violence, and the militarization of the world” (Harlan, 1998:75). The worst thing showing how Lasi was subordinated by *Pak Handarbeni* who placed her as a sexual object was his offer to Lasi to have a sexual intercourse with another man under his control.

The process of her getting divorced from *Pak Handarbeni* emphasized Lasi’s subordination to man’s power and her living under the hegemony of gender injustice. It was very easy for Lasi to get divorce letters from both *Darsa* and *Pak Handarbeni*, and it was also easy that Lasi was then transferred to *Bambung’s* house. She was just an object, a sexually wanted object. Thus, she was not treated as a human being with dignity and honor.

Being a widow brings uncomfortable feeling to a Javanese woman, moreover if the widow is considered beautiful by people in the neighborhood. Rumors and gossips spread over the entire village. Men’s talks are driven by sexual attractiveness while women’s talks are driven by fear of forthcoming nuisance to their husbands. Many women get distressed with such a judgment that they choose not to get divorced despite their receiving bad treatment from their husbands. Being a widow is then regarded more terrible than being an oppressed wife.

Lasi was sexually judged, and worse than that, she was sexually wanted. Lasi thus experienced a double mental suppression from her society because she was young, beautiful, and thus sexually attractive. Lasi was regarded as a sexual being and was supposed to be a passionless creature until she would become a wife whose duty required her submission in the marriage bed (Kerber, 1982:7). The second suppression was that people did not consider how she felt as a human being. She became no more than a play thing for the sake of men’s pleasure, and was both oppressed and victimized through pornography and sometimes violence (Harlan, 1998:75).

When Lasi was finally married to *Kanjat*, a man who is two years younger, she was forced by a social tradition of placing a man above a woman. Lasi had to call him “*Kang*” ‘big brother’, while *Kanjat* might call Lasi just by her name. *Sugihastuti* (2007) said in her book that as the opposite sex of male, women are described with certain stereotype showing their being inferior within both social structure and social culture (p.83).

SILENT RESISTANCE

Resistance is a response of a long process of someone’s experiencing oppression, suppression, subordination, alienation, or even marginalization. When there is hegemony, there will be resistance. Michel Foucault once said that “where there is power there is resistance” (as cited in Sandoval, 2000:1). Silent resistance is a personal resistance

which does not bring forward frontal physical movement and the like. It is a process of psychological development of the protagonists, the development of the protagonists' personalities from going with the flow with the dominating values into a firm attitude rejecting the pressures. It offers personal and internal efforts to resist oppression and hegemonic values without movement, revolts, or protests.

Hester Prynne was a strong woman having self determination and dignity to stand on her principle. From the very start she had shown her resistance, "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 stern in refusing to give the name of the man with whom she had shared her love. She defied telling the name with a reason that the man was like the scarlet letter very deeply rooted in her heart, and thus she dared challenge the authority and her ex-husband.

Her strong personal resistance was moreover seen in her visiting the magistrates and rejecting their intention to discharge Pearl from her own guidance and care. "I will not give her up" (Hawthorne, 1998:78).

In resisting the hegemony of her society, Hester Prynne counted on her own principle, self determination, pride, and dignity. She conducted silent resistance, a personal one, without provoking others to follow or join her action; instead, she did all alone. "Here, she said to herself, had been the scene of her guilt, and here should be the scene of her earthly 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 deciding to choose the place, Salem, to stay despite her having humiliation and torture, Hester Prynne showed her resistance against the hegemony of more powerful party in the region. It also shows Hester Prynne's will and courage to run her different kind of life, and to get herself purity within agonizing atmosphere.

Hester Prynne learnt a lot from her misery and bitter life. This bitter living, this great agony had taught her to be much stronger inside her heart and more passionate towards others' misery and sin. "Shame, Despair, Solitude! These had been her teachers, – stern and wild ones, – and they had made her strong, but taught her much amiss" (Hawthorne, 1998:136). She changed the bad image of the scarlet letter into the good one.

The letter A, meant to stand for 'adultery', changes to become 'affection' and 'able'. "Love . . . is an important source of empowerment when we struggle to confront issues of sex, race, and class" (Bell Hooks as cited in Shandoval, 2000:142).

There was a psychological process or development of the protagonist's efforts in resisting social, political, spiritual, religious, and gender oppressive hegemony. As a woman, Hester Prynne realized that she did not have both social and political power to resist. However, love, dignity, pride, and self determination had given her strength to endure and resist all misery she had to bear. There was an obvious different feature within Hester Prynne between the first time she met her ex-husband in the prison, in that she was resistant but still looked weak and powerless, and the second meeting with him on a peninsula, in that she was strong enough that Roger Chillingworth felt a different atmosphere of this lady.

Furthermore, her being aware of other people's sins hidden deeply within their hearts had changed her attitude and way of thinking of other people's matter. She had developed herself from feeling a bitter misery and hatred into a heart full of love and passion, from a powerless woman into a powerful one, from a reckless and stubborn resistance into a dignified one. The scarlet letter had changed its meaning from the negative meaning into the positive one, and so had the bearer from being an 'adulterer' into being an 'affectionate' and 'able' woman. Her resistance had silently won over the society's hegemony upon her.

Lasi's experiencing alienation from her society created resistance within her deep heart

without her being aware of it. In many occasion she imagined herself to be a crab with very strong pincers crushing those who had been unjust to her (Tohari, 1993:33,35,74). "*Lari dan mbalelo adalah satu-satunya cara untuk melampiaskan perlawanan sekaligus membela keberadaannya*". 'Running and rebelling were the only way to resist and defend her existence as well'(Tohari, 1993:83). Lasi resisted "her own flaw" (Soemanto, 2008:107) 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, (Tohari, 1993:169,200,201,211,227,228, 230; 2001:57,58,119).

"*Saya tidak mau kesucian kandungan saya dikotori*", 'I don't want the holiness of my pregnancy to be stained'(Tohari, 2001:119). With this statement, she resisted Bambang's domination upon her, hegemony of gender subordination. Anxiety and fear may drive one to make an unpredictable decision as what happened to Lasi, "*kalau dipaksa menggugurkan kandungan saya mau nekat*", 'if forced to terminate this pregnancy, I promise you I will commit a daring action'(Tohari, 2001:118).

Her wanting to go to her uncle Ngalwi in South Sulawesi was also a sign of anxiety resulting in a growth of self-determination that she did not have before. Going to her uncle Ngalwi in South Sulawesi was the only way she took to resist the oppressive hegemony driven by her having anxiety and fear.

Returning to Karangsoga and being married to Kanjat had shown a development of self-determination and dignity within the personality of Lasi since she got a hurricane in her marriage with Darsa. In the last meeting with Bu Lanting who yielded on her to return to hedonism life, she ignored her.

Lasi had turned to be someone new. She was reborn. When the first time she left Karangsoga, she was a young woman without a strong self confidence. She was still a person living under hegemony of suppressive social values. She ran her life in misery and agony that taught her to be strong, resistant, and confident. She fled to Jakarta and found her turning point to be someone differently new. Her pregnancy gave her a significant psychological change to have dignity, pride, and self-determination that drove her into her final silent resistance. There appeared power within Lasi's powerlessness. Christina Handayani (2004) says that "*kekuasaan dapat hadir dari ketidakberdayaan dan tertindasan*" (p.3), 'power may come from powerlessness and oppressedness'.

It is obvious that the three works relate or even represent the culture of the societies they come from, as proposed by Nostrand, "Literature reflects accepted patterns of thought, feeling, and action, including patterns of expression and the society's unconscious assumptions" (as cited in Albrecht, 1970:562). This idea is emphasized by Commager who said that the imaginative literature could faithfully replace the documentary record of the contemporary scene (as cited in Albrecht, 1970:617). It is true then that the authors opinions conveyed through their works are "authentic expression of one culture bearers" (Albrecht, 1970:564).

UNIVERSAL VALUES

A cultural reality is factually or idealistically interconnected conditions link one literature to others(Jost, 1974:21). The fundamental principle of comparative literature consists of the belief in the wholeness of the literary phenomenon. Comparative literature is an overall view of literature, of the world of letters, a humanistic ecology, a literary *Weltanschauung*, a vision of the cultural universe, inclusive and comprehensive (Jost, 1974:29).

The universal values or supranationality revealed from the novels are first the silent resistance. Both different protagonists present

similar silent resistances driven by their inner personality and will. It offers personal and internal efforts to resist oppression without movement, revolts, or protests. "It manifests resistance, but does not articulate the position or identity from which that resistance comes" (Katz para. 22). Resistance is universal due to the fact that every living thing in this universe will endeavor to resist when oppressed and cannot endure that oppression. "Universal values refer to the supranationality of the values surpassing the local values or locality. [...] supranational [...] go beyond cultural nationalism, beyond using literature in nationalistic ways" (Guillén, 1993:3).

The next supranationality is the process of gaining a new born identity. Both characters live through a very hard life. They run misery and agony. Through severe life they both strived for their being reborn to be new people. The scarlet letter A symbolizing Adultery then symbolized Affection and Able. Lasi's getting married to Kanjat was the end point of her resistance that she finally gained a new positive identity and status.

A further supranationality is the factors driving and strengthening the character's silent resistance. Both of them were pushed by their self-determination, pride, love, and dignity in carrying out their silent resistance against their society's hegemonic values. Everybody is psychologically the same. Thus, these create what is called universality.

Women's problems are also a universal value emerging from the novels. Their basic problem as female creatures is the same, subordination and male hegemony. Both Puritans and Java are patriarchal societies where women are on the second level under men. Feminists of all schools believe that societies are patriarchal and are advantageous to men. However, both characters showed that within their being powerless lied powerfulness by which they could endure and win over the oppression they suffered.

CONCLUSION

This paper shows that both Hester Prynne and Lasiyah face their respective societies'

hegemonic values and express a silent resistance driven by their self-determination, pride, love, and dignity. From the foregoing discussion, there emerge five universal values: (1) the characters' resistance against oppressively hegemonic values of the societies, (2) the process of gaining a new born 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' powerfulness within their powerlessness.

There are three significantly interlocking ideas conveyed through these works. The first is pride and dignity. These pride and dignity drove, to a certain extent, the possessors to be much stronger than they thought they were. The second is the powerfulness within powerlessness. They were considered as weak creatures but at the same time, they were strong and even much stronger than the men were. The third is silent resistance. Thus, with these pride and dignity, the characters resisted oppressively hegemonic values in their societies, and this has proven that women were in fact very powerful.

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