

Description of the Noble Girls of Indonesian 1930s in Alisjahbana's Selected Novels

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ABSTRACT: This article describes the noble young women of Indonesian 1930s in two novels by Sutan Takdir Alisjahbana. Molek in the novel *Dian Yang TakKunjung Padam* (1932) reflects the noble girl who lives in the order of traditional society, while Tuti in the novel *Tengge lamnya Kapal Van Der Wijck* (1936) is an educated noble girl who lives in the order of modern society. This research is a literary research that is oriented on structural aspects, namely characterizations on the two novels so in processing the data is using the Structuralism Approach. Feminist theory is used in analyzing the conditions and thoughts of female characters in both literary works, namely Molek and Tuti. The result of this article was found that Molek's condition as a noble girl who lives in the order of traditional society was confined in a house that was closed to the social life of the surrounding community, his fate was determined by the wishes of her parents and family, no accesses to formal education, and others. On the other hand, Tuti as a noble girl in the order of modern life is actively participating in social activities such as organizations, has freedom in determining her life choices, gaining access to formal education, and others.

KEYWORDS -modern,noble girls, novel *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam*, novel *Layar Terkembang*, traditional

I. INTRODUCTION

The condition of a society can be traced through various media, including literary media so that studying literature can also be categorized as an effort to uncover certain phenomena in society. Literary stories are indeed fiction, but the experience of authors who live in a certain age and society is a fact. The novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam* is a fictional story, but the reality of people's lives in Palembang (the capital of South Sumatra Province today) witnessed by SutanTakdirAlisjahbana is a social fact against the traditional values of the 1930s society. Likewise, the novel *LayarTerkembang* is an imaginary story, but the lives of people in the capital city of Batavia (the capital of Indonesia now named Jakarta) are a mirror of the modern social order witnessed by SutanTakdirAlisjahbana. Based on this fact, the writer viewed that characters of Molek and Tuti in the novel are a mirror of the lives of noble girls in Palembang and Jakarta in the 1930s imagined by SutanTakdirAlisjahbana so that the writer in this article formulates the title of *Description of The Noble Girls of Indonesian 1930s In Alisjahbana's Selected Novels*.

The social fact that attracts the attention of the writer is the various conditions experienced by aristocratic girls in Indonesia in the 1930s based on the arrangements held by family and society as experienced by characters of Molek and Tuti in literature. The influence of family and society predominantly determines the social conditions of women is expressed by Fromm who says that the family, especially both parents have internal strengths that are traditionally able to determine the fate of their daughters [1]. Freud once described someone who tried to fight his desires like a girl who tried to fight the decisions of both parents and family on her [2]. The views of the two experts clearly indicate that the hopes, desires, happiness, suffering, and reality

experienced by a girl are determined by the order shared by both parents and their families internally and public pressure externally.

The thoughts of Fromm and Freud became the basis of the writer's thought that various conditions could befall the aristocratic girls in Indonesia in the 1930s because the order adopted by the people in various regions of Indonesia was as varied as happened in the city of Palembang and in the capital city of Batavia. The similarity of social status as noble girls does not mean that their conditions are the same. Although Molek and Tuti are both noble girls, but their social conditions are different because the order shared by both parents and their families is different. The condition of Molek and Tuti as well as the background of the socio-cultural order are social literary facts which will be described by the writer in this article as a description of the various conditions of Indonesian aristocratic girls in the 1930s.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

Characterization in literary works has a very important position in order to uncover the social facts of literature and social facts of the community. Wellek and Warren once said, "... *sastra "menyajikan kehidupan", dan "kehidupan" sebagian besar terdirikan dari kenyataan sosial, walaupun karya sastra juga "meniru" alam dan dunia subjektif manusia*"[3]. They described the world of literature is a world of imitation that comes from the life experience of an author in the real world. Likewise, a painter creates a tree through the stroke of his canvas, then connoisseurs of art believe that it is a picture of a tree. The painter is able to create trees in his paintings because he has seen trees before, while art connoisseurs believe that paintings are trees because they are similar to trees in the real world. It can also happen to a literary author that the fictional characters can be identified by the reader as a reflection of the life of a particular society because there is a resemblance to the reality of society as a form of social imitation.

Literature reviewers must have sensitivity to the reflection of the community carried by the characters in the literary work. Fiction is understood as the work of the author's imagination which stores a hidden message to the reader that in society there are problems that need to be known or criticized. An author has a source of imagination that comes from the universe in the form of social life, objects, messages, events, and others. The source of imagination is obtained through life experiences that are experienced alone or witnessed or told from various sources. So in essence, the imagination of the literary author has a connection with certain problems in the social life of the community as expressed by Ratna in her thoughts, "*Sumber-sumber imajinasiperludijelaskandengantujuan untuk menghubungkannya dengan masalah-masalah yang berkaitan dengan masyarakat*"[4].

Literary stories are driven by the presence and interaction of fictional characters. The author in presenting fictional characters has considered various aspects that support the purpose of the creation of the literary work. The author wants to describe the condition of women in the traditional order, naturally creating characters that are able to be identified by readers as female figures who are different from the characterizations of modern girls. On the other hand, the reader can also judge that the fictional character presented by the author is a forward-thinking girl in the modern order who escapes from the shackles of the traditional order. Fictional characters are made by the authors as if they are real figures in people's lives so that the reader is led to an atmosphere as if the events played by fictional characters exist in real life in the community. The reader ultimately feels that a fictional character is a human being in real life. The ability of fictional characters to influence the reader's evaluation of the condition of the community is the author's success in documenting social reality through portrayal of events in literary stories.

The fictional characters named Molek in the novel *Dian Yang Tak Kunjung Padam* and Tuti in the novel *Layar Terkembang* were able to influence the writer of this article that Molek and Tuti's situation was similar to the various conditions of noble girls in Indonesian society. The writer who feels the inner condition of Molek and Tuti believes that the condition of these two fictional characters is a description of Indonesian aristocratic girls around the 1930s. Endraswara said that literary research can be done through two conditions. First, readers or literary researchers enter to feel the events experienced by fictional characters as if they are part of the circumstances that occur. Second, the readers or researchers must be sure that the presence of a particular

fictional character is not a coincidence, but based on the author's inspiration in criticizing the social conditions of society [5].

The focus of this research on the condition of females in literary works can be categorized as gender relations research. The writer's reason is the conditions that occur in noble girls in these two literary works are related to the presence of male characters in the story. The description of the noble girls' condition was a response to the values and order of society that led to patriarchal culture. Based on the fact that this research focuses on the issue of women in gender relations, the writer compiles the stages of the study by referring to the feminist literary research methods described by Sugihastuti and Suharto [6], namely:

1. Read the script of novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam* and novel *LayarTerkembang* as a whole and understand every event that happened.
2. Sorting out the position and role of female and male characters who are the main movers of fictional story.
3. Explore the mindset, attitude, behavior, and events experienced by fictional noble girls of Molek and Tuti who have been designated as research objects
4. Examine events that address the issue of gender relations that occur to Molek in novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam* and Tuti in novel *LayarTerkembang*.
5. Describe the conditions through the meaning of events in the fictional characters of Molek and Tuti as a variety of conditions of noble girls who existed in Indonesian society around the 1930s.

III. RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The writer begins this section by discussing the novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam* and the novel *LayarTerkembang*, then analyzes the condition of the fictional characters of Molek and Tuti as a description of noble girls in Indonesian society around the 1930s

3.1 Novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam*

The main characters in this fiction are Yasin and Molek. Yasin is an orphan from ordinary people in the countryside, while Molek is a noble girl who lives in the city of Palembang near the Musi River. The background of the Yasin family in Palembang is known as Uluan, which means rural people. Everyday life in mountainous areas is gardening and living on a boat while exploring the wide and long Musi River. On the other hand, the background of the Molek family was a wealthy high aristocrat who was domiciled in Palembang society known as Raden, the title of aristocrat. Molek's father named Raden Mahmud was a rich man, living as a successful merchant respected by people in the city of Palembang. Palembang aristocrats view the Uluan people as a lower social strata society than they are.

One day, Yasin and his mother went to Palembang to sell their garden produce. The boat was docked on the banks of the Musi River behind Raden Mahmud's mansion. The sight of Yasin suddenly came to a close with a beautiful girl about seventeen years old named Molek, the youngest daughter of Raden Mahmud. The gaze kept them from remembering each other until the love in their heart grew. Yasin dared to write her heartfelt letter and Molek also responded to the letter with longing. This correspondence is kept secret because they are afraid that others people will find this love relationship. Yasin is really in love to Molek and Molek is also nice to Yasin. These two teenagers with different family backgrounds and social strata eventually fell in love.

Yasin's love for Molek cannot be dammed anymore, even though they know that this is forbidden love because of different social statuses. Yasin's mother and her family knew that her son's love was like a dream that could not be realized. Yasin continued to urge his mother to immediately propose Molek and the proposal process was carried out. Raden Mahmud and his wife named Cek Sitti were shocked because Uluan people like Yasin and his family dared to propose to their daughter. Yasin application was rejected and humiliated as someone who did not know the customs. Yasin's mother and her family returned to the hinterland while thinking about the fate of Yasin who still loved Molek and he could no longer love another girl.

Molek has suffered physically and mentally since her parents refused Yasin's proposal. Molek was beaten and locked up in the house by her father because before she dared to make love secretly with an inland

youth, Yasin. Molek's body grew thinner and sicker, although his heart was healed because she could secretly send letters and receive letters from Yasin. In the letters, Molek told of his suffering and promised to continue to love Yasin and hope that one day, her parents bless their love relationship.

One day, Molek was proposed by a richest Arab descendant in Palembang named Sayid Mustafa. Raden Mahmud accepted the proposal and vanished Molek's wish could marry Yasin. Molek could only cry, she then asked Yasin to run away, but this escape plan failed. Molek and Sayid Mustafa finally got married. Molek was unhappy with her household because Sayid Mustafa apparently did not love Molek, but he was only after the wealth of her parents. Molek continued to suffer physically and mentally until finally she died mysteriously and Yasin was not married forever, "*Beberapa hari Yasin tinggal di kubur bersama-sama dengan orang mengajikan arwah perempuan yang telah berpulang itu*"[7].

3.2 Novel *LayarTerkembang*

One of the main characters in this fiction is Tuti. She and her sister named Maria were daughters of a famous nobleman named Raden Wiriatmadja, a former Banten district officer. Their house is at the end of the Gang Hauber street, precisely at the intersection of Cidengweg Gang, Batavia which is also the capital of the Dutch East Indies (now Indonesia). This family is an educated aristocrat in formal education, Tuti is a graduate of the Dutch East Indies teacher school and is teaching at the Holland Inlander School (HIS) Arjuna in Petojo, her younger sister named Maria while completing his studies at the HBS school Carpentier Alting Stichting.

Tuti has a lover named Hambali, but she broke off the engagement. She then concentrated on her job as a teacher and was busy as an activist in the women's movement called Putri Sedar Organization. Tuti was once proposed by her fellow teacher named Soepomo, but she refused this proposal. Tuti's sister, Maria, has a boyfriend named Yusuf, he is a final year student at the High Medical School. He will complete his studies in May, living in Sawah Besar, Batavia. He is the son of a government official named Demang Murad in Martapura, South Sumatra. Raden Wiriatmadja and his family have never managed or meddled in the love affairs of their daughters, Tuti and Maria.

Tuti is a formal educated noble girl who is idealistic minded. She canceled her engagement with Hambali and then refused Soepomo's proposal because she did not want a marriage for women to merely fulfill the demands of the family and undergo nature. She criticized the domestic life that was made by man as a space to confine woman so that she had not the opportunity to develop her potential in the public. Tuti was also unhappy with her sister, Maria, who loved Yusuf too much because it was only based on impulse heart-desire, not built by logic or common sense. A girl who make love solely because of feelings will become a game of men's desires.

One day, Maria contracted tuberculosis, which became more severe day by day. Treatment must be transferred from the center hospital of Central BugarlijkZienkenhais (CBZ) Batavia to a rehabilitation site on the slopes of Mount Gede around the Sindanglaya area. Before dying of her illness, Maria had asked Tuti and Yusuf to be willing to marry as a married couple. This request was fulfilled by Tuti and she lived happily with Yusuf, "*Alangkah berbahagia saya rasanya di akhirat nanti, kalau saya tahu, bahwa kakandaku berdua hidup rukun dan berkasih-kasihannya seperti kelihatan kepada saya dalam beberapa hari ini...*"[8].

3.3 Description of Indonesian Noble Girls in the 1930s

The writer describes Indonesian girls in the 1930s referring to two fictional stories by SutanTakdirAlisjahbana, namely Molek in novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadam* and Tuti in novel *LayarTerkembang*. The description of traditional Indonesian aristocratic girls in the 1930s included women confined in homes that were closed to the social life of the surrounding community, the fate of girls was determined by the wishes of their parents and family, girls did not get access to formal education. On the other hand, modern Indonesian aristocratic girls in the 1930s included girls actively participating in social activities such as organizations, girls having freedom in determining their life choices, and girls gaining access to formal education.

3.3.1 Traditional Noble Girls

In the writer's opinion, traditional aristocratic girls are females who live in the bonds of the customs of the community. Traditional females are not determined by time and age, but based on living conditions and

outlook on life. Molek is a traditional noble girl whose life is tightly regulated by her parents based on cultural values in the local community in Palembang, South Sumatra

3.3.1.1 Girls locked up in the house

Molek from birth to become a seventeen-year-old girl only stayed at home to take care of household needs. Her daily chores are to help her mother cooks in the kitchen, fetch water in the well, sweep the floor of the house, arrange furniture, make the bed, and clean the yard. All work assigned to Molek is work normally done by women in preparation for becoming a wife later. The wife's work is identified with taking care of the house and serving the needs of her husband and children.

Molek as unmarried girls cannot go far away from home so she does not know much about outside the house. An aristocratic girl should not associate with society at all, especially those with lower strata. She was only allowed to stay indoors and play around in the yard so she only knew her home and family, she did not know the social life of the community. When CekSitti went to the market buying kitchen utensils, Molek could not follow and was only asked to stay at home to clean the house and yard. A noble girl like Molek would later be allowed to participate in community activities after she was married and living in a house.

3.3.1.2 The fate of a girl is determined by the wishes of her parents and family

Parents and families manage and determine the fate of their daughters, especially the nobility. It is reflected in the condition of Molek who does not have the power to determine her life choices, all aspects of her life are governed by her parents, Raden Mahmud and CekSitti. Molek should not go far from her home because her parents have set her work only around the kitchen, wells, rooms, and yards. Molek's desire to be married by a young man whom she loved named Yasin failed because his proposal was rejected by Raden Mahmud and CekSitti. This rejection was due to Yasin being a youth from among the common people, rural people, poor, and lower social strata. Molek's meeting with Yasin was just a coincidence when Molek was standing at the back door of his house, her eyes met with Yasin who temporarily moored his boat on the riverbank just behind Molek's house.

Molek was married by her parents to a rich man and had a high social strata of Arab descendants named Sayid Mustafa. Molek suffered the physical and spiritual pain of this marriage because Sayid Mustafa's main goal to marry her was wealth, not the sincerity of love. Molek's helplessness in facing her parents' power over her brought disaster with her mysterious death. She died at the peak of his suffering, failed to get married to her boyfriend, while suffering from physical and inner feelings from the treatment of a husband chosen by her parents. The cause of Molek's death is still mysterious, whether caused by illness or suicide.

3.3.1.3 Girls do not get access to formal education

Traditional aristocratic families adhere to a patriarchal mindset, it is meaning that men get priority in public access, including education. Girls are placed in the position of domestication, which is taking care of life in the home so that formal education is considered not important for her survival. It is sufficient for girls only acquire skills in managing the home, including cooking, sewing, embroidering, arranging furniture, and washing. This condition is reflected in the life of Molek who does not have access to formal education. She only stayed at home and around the yard accompanied her mother, CekSitti. Molek only gained the skills to take care of the house from her mother as a provision to become a wife in serving the needs of her husband and children at home.

3.3.2 Modern Noble Girls

The writer thinks that the modern aristocratic girl is an independent female who is oriented to career and public life also reconstructs the customs and norms of society that domesticates women's social life. Tuti is a modern noble girl who is free to develop her career and be independent in determining her life choices as well-educated, forward-thinking women in Batavia. Tuti according to Abbas is a character of educated female who is ideal for the Indonesian people in bringing this nation into a dignified and advanced nation [9].

3.3.2.1 Girls actively participates in community social activities

Tuti actively follows developments in the social life of the community, especially the issue of the movement of women. Tuti was involved in various youth organizations, including the PutriSedar Organization. It is a women's organization that actively fights for the fate of women in community life, including socio-

economic independence, freedom of access to formal education, and the opportunity to be actively involved in the public order. Tuti is active as a speaker at various women's congresses and she even chairs the branch of the PutriSedar Organization in Batavia. In some of his speeches, she criticized the patriarchal order of society which places the domination of men over women to the detriment of women in obtaining their rights.

Tuti was not married until she was twenty-seven years because she was more focused on her career as a teacher and actively organized rather than thinking about love. She aspires to create a new social order by reconstructing customs that place women as partners with men in various aspects of life. She rejected the domestication of women who lost their potential in the public world. She wanted to harmonize men and women together to create a new world that led to an independent Indonesia and developed. Tuti appears as a figure of a new Indonesian female who is forward-thinking and independent.

3.3.2.2 *Girls freely to make choices their life*

The family does not impose a desire to regulate the fate of their daughters, but they only direct and provide views, then the choice is up to the girl. It is reflected in the attitude of RadenWiriadmadja and his family who never forced the wishes in responding to Tuti's choice. The family only gave a view regarding Tuti and Hambali's relationship so that it could be continued at the marriage level, but Tuti ended the relationship and the family respected her decision. Likewise, the family did not force their wishes when Tuti refused Soepomo's proposal.

Tuti focused on developing her potential as a teacher and enjoying her public life as an activist in the women's movement organization. Tuti broke her engagement with Hambali and rejected Soepomo's proposal because they had the potential to limit her career and eliminate her capacity for public life. Even though the family is worried about Tuti, who is twenty-seven years old, she is not married because of her career and public focus, but they have never stopped Tuti's career and forced marriage. Tuti finally married Yusuf because of her own awareness. Tuti believes that Yusuf can be a partner in developing the screen of life and progress of the Indonesian nation in the future.

3.3.2.3 *Girls have access to formal education*

Forward-looking aristocratic families consider education for daughters as important as sons. It is reflected in the attitude of RadenWiriadmadja who gave the opportunity for his two daughters to take formal education to empower themselves in the career and the public world. Tuti went on to start elementary, secondary, vocational teacher education, to work as a teacher at the Holland Inlander School (HIS) Arjuna in Petojo, Batavia. Her sister was named Maria, while pursuing her final year education at HBS CarpentierAltingStichting and while also teaching at one of the schools. This education becomes a door for women to devote their potential to public life so that they are no longer placed in the position of domestication which only takes care of their husband and children. Tuti as an educated female can partner with an educated male named Yusuf in building a family and nation. It indicates that formal education becomes a door for female to partner with male in developing life.

IV. CONCLUSION

Novels of *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadamandLayarTerkebang* by SutanTakdirAlisjahbana describe Indonesian aristocratic girls in the 1930s, some of which are traditional and modern. Traditional aristocratic girls are confined to the home, parents and families determine their destinies, and do not get access to formal education. On the other hand, modern aristocratic girls are able to empower themselves in public life, independently determine their destiny, gain access to formal education. Traditional and modern girls are not separated by a period of time, but they are distinguished based on the way of thinking, attitudes, and insights that underlie the lives of these girls as experienced by Molek in the novel *Dian Yang TakKunjungPadamandTuti* in the novel *LayarTerkebang*.

Molek's life as a girl of traditional aristocrat only spent her life in the domestic world. Her daily activities are cooking in the kitchen, taking water in the well, sweeping the floor of the house, arranging furniture, making the bed, and cleaning the yard. She did not know the difference between her rights and

obligations because she did not have intellectual awareness. The misery of her experienced physical and heart due to her inability to fight the decisions of her parents and family, was the main cause of her mysterious death.

Tuti as a modern aristocratic girl gained public access as an organizational mobilizer and was free to pursue a career as a teacher. She also gained freedom in determining her life choices, including in matters of love and marriage. Her father and family were only entitled to give their views and thoughts, but the decision was on her. She ended up living happily with a man of her choice named Yusuf, an educated young man who was able to appreciate the position of females and provide opportunities for females to actualize their potential for the advancement of society and nation.

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